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# Co-Create: The People's Guide to the Queens International

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CO-

CREATE

THE  
PEOPLE'S GUIDE

TO THE QUEENS INTERNATIONAL

Zine Issue #1 | October 2018

**The People's Guide to Queens International  
Zine Issue #1: Co-Create**

Edited by Brian Droitcour

Designed by Christine Wong Yap

Published October 2018

Queens, NY

*The People's Guide to the Queens International* is a collaborative art project organized by Brian Droitcour and Christine Wong Yap. We invite the public to write reviews of artworks in the *Queens International 2018* exhibition at the Queens Museum from October 7, 2018 to February 24, 2019.

Thanks to the contributors, Sophia Marisa Lucas, Baseera Khan, and Lindsey Berfond.

For more info, to read more, or to write:  
[ThePeoplesGuideQI.org](http://ThePeoplesGuideQI.org)

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# Introduction

“Co-create” is the first of three zines published by *The People’s Guide to the Queens International*. It draws on **responses contributed by audience members** at the exhibition’s opening on October 7 (in particular, to **Kim Hoeckele’s performance Rosy-Crimson**, for which performers in flowing, colorful robes moved through the museum reading translations of *The Odyssey*) and at our first workshop, held on October 13 at the Queens Museum as part of the program on “Convening the Commons.”

Several of the writing prompts we devised for the People’s Guide submission forms respond to the themes articulated by the curators. The workshop was similarly organized around the day’s topic of the commons. We asked participants to write **short responses to the works installed in the museum’s central skylight gallery**, a big open room with the shape of a town square (the curators call it “The Agora”). We also did **some exercises using questions raised by the two guest speakers** who gave presentations earlier in the afternoon, Shannon Mattern and Ron Morrison (Shannon generously joined us in the workshop). Is the museum a commons?

How does it feel to walk through Flushing Meadows Park to get to the Queens Museum—to pass through one kind of public space to another? What techniques do people use to adapt “universal” spaces for personal and community needs? “What are we inherently making unknowable by making the world more measurable, familiar and predictable?” as Ron asked in their talk. These are the questions we wanted to pose in the workshop; we wrote them on pieces of paper and passed them around as we answered them, so each sheet would collect the handwriting of a few different people, and the responses would build into collective ones, or fragment into contradictory individual ones, or both.

Of course, the questions we discussed at the workshop weren’t just drawn from the topics of the day; they are at the heart of the People’s Guide. This project was conceived in the spirit of commoning the museum. We wanted to put the interpretation of the work of the show up for negotiation. We wanted to expand the range of aesthetic experiences recognized as valued and valid, by giving viewers a platform to express how they made the exhibition meaningful to them.

We recognize the exemplary work the Queens Museum has done in the field of community organizing; over the last fifteen years the staff has opened the space and the mission of the museum to provide services for its neighbors. Our object of critique is not so much the Queens Museum but the protocols of the museum: the definitions of works in walls texts and the choreography of passive contemplation that contribute to an aura of exclusivity. “Co-create,” the title of this zine, refers not only to the fact that some of its contents were produced through a collaborative writing exercise, but also to how we imagine the audience’s role in defining their experience of an exhibition. We hope that you will read this zine as a companion to the *Queens International*, letting the voices here jostle with yours, encouraging you add contributions of your own.

—Brian Droitcour

# Kim Hoeckele's *Rosy–Crimson*

*When the child of morning, rosy-fingered dawn appears  
when the early dawn shone forth, rosy fingered  
when the early dawn was born: her fingers bloomed*

## The Odyssey

Translation  
Communication  
Time  
Atmosphere  
Interpretation  
Story  
Literature  
(Historic)  
—Katie

**The only remainder** of a performance—a pink take-away with an image of columns + poetry on one side, with info about the artist + performers on the reverse. It's evocative but also somewhat opaque.  
—Bean



SKETCH: CHRISTINE WONG YAP

**humans need to share** with one another  
from an observer standpoint, humanity  
seems to break down when the sharing  
stops

There is a level of vulnerability to this  
sharing

they must believe and trust in their fellow  
humans  
—Anonymous

## Alien Anthropologist



Pretend that you are an alien from another planet, and that your ship has beamed up an artwork for study. You are a researcher and your goal is to understand humans, but this object is the only thing you have to work with. You don't know anything else about humans or Earth. Working from this perspective, write a report that addresses questions such as: What are human bodies like? What do humans need to survive? What are their belief systems? What are their values?

THE HUMAN BODY IS:

Red purple orange tan flesh figures hand in hand. Long and lean and slow motion sticky. The woman in red needs the man in tan because he needs her too. They believe in teamwork; they believe in each other.

CONTINUE ON REVERSE IF NEEDED

If you didn't mention this in your writing, which work did you write about? Who made it?

the performance piece

Your Name/Alias

Jessie and Brian



# Voices from the Agora

weird-shaped speakers  
help electronics blend into  
colorful gestural painting  
—Brian

A soaring mural depicts a bright, lush  
garden. Sound of birds and insects  
adds to the sense of fecundity. But the  
middle-aged lady who stands among  
the flowers looks confused.  
—Bean

***Relative Fields in a Garden***  
**Heidi Howard and Liz Phillips**

***Volumes Cyanotype***  
**Essye Klempner**

Linear Judy Chicago  
upside-down, in  
negative  
—Shannon

Inversion  
Scroll  
Lunar phases  
Remnants  
Document  
—Katie

*fractured\_fag\_poetry\_2\_doom*  
*digital.nations.feeds.w..out..*  
*logical.vol...*  
Haley Bueschlen

Sideways scroll demands tilted head  
+ crouched intimacy for randomized  
textual-visual content  
—Shannon

An interloper on the  
steps, a ghost lurks in  
the phone (or on it)  
—Brian

Cell phone scrolls through Instagram, it's on  
its side so it's hard to make out the content—  
videos and poetry, advertisements, etc. It  
frustrates me that I can't hold it in my hand  
and watch it comfortably.  
—Bean

Sixteen black oblong castings are scattered  
across a large gray wall—fossil-like impressions  
show everyday objects—flowers + bug tracks,  
but also plastic hair combs, coffee lids, spoons.  
What future archaeologists might find.  
—Bean

*A Future Sample from Local  
Gathering Series*  
Essye Klempler

Dead thorns, nettles, crumpled  
papers—refuse of people and  
nature, printed in clay  
—Brian

Register objects to make  
and leave impressions.  
—Greg

*UltraViolet Archive*  
Christina Freeman

Make resources  
available, please  
—Greg

***Curves  
and Points***  
**Mary Valverde**

An interruption  
in the wall, these  
rigged blinds are  
ominous as talons  
—Brian

Arcing patched  
bound bamboo,  
aligned in sloping  
rows  
—Shannon

Diorama  
Education  
Colonialism  
History/Historical  
Cheap/Disposable  
Environmental  
—Katie

***Excelsior:  
Ever Upward,  
Ever Afloat***  
**Camille  
Hoffman**

Reminds me of FEMA  
roofs in New Orleans  
and birthday parties in  
Flushing Meadows  
—Greg

Ethereal  
Synthetic  
Watching  
Forlorn  
Future  
Found/Constructed  
Present/Presence  
Space  
—Katie

Broadcast and modulate  
sound, feedback frequencies  
—Greg

**amplification of  
*Nothingness & Specter***  
**Asif Mian and HPrizm**

# Is the museum a commons?

Sure, but not for everyone, at all times. It is a place where people can congregate, to share time + space, but the parameters of that time and space are pre-determined by the objectives of the museum. There is a sharp consciousness that shapes how people approach objects, how they are supposed to contemplate them. The way people walk, the silent behavior are not merely shaped by a consciousness but enforced through signage that gives instructions on how to act ("Do not touch," etc.) and as well as guidance on interpretation, framing the parameters for perception of the work. There are standards, as ~~it~~ in my commons, but they are not up for negotiation. ALTHOUGH THEY SHOULD BE, THE ISSUE OF ACCESS IS A KEY ASPECT ANY INSTITUTION SHOULD BE CONSIDERING. All institutions are capable of change, and as the idea of what a "commons" is changes, so do museums shift. However, that change - because institutions are by nature bureaucratic - is slow and difficult. If museums want to be commons, and for whom, needs to be defined and then strategized. Change is effected from both within + pressure from without.

a publicly-stewardled resource

PEOPLE + RESOURCES + RULES =

## What does it feel like to walk through a park to a museum?

Clearing your mind, making space to be quiet, to listen, to be surrounded by different sounds. And to experience your visual perception as you move through space. It is like a palette cleanser for all your senses so you can pay attention when you get to the museum, fully + in your body—

As a teenager (white, privileged) I had the experience of a certain awe walking through a grand + symmetrical, rational, landscaped park to our city's free museum. I was not policed/surveilled + was, perhaps, ideal audience for the park's planner

Watching w/ the purpose of collecting information

TECHNOLOGIES TO ENSURE THAT RULES ARE ADHERED TO

Grateful for the commons, aware + appreciative of diversity, more sensorially attuned, more aware of my body as a means of locomotion + perceptual apparatus

not private.

It feels like a transitional space that allows me to clear my mind—let go of the sensations and anxieties that might have arisen while in traffic or on public transportation, trying to get somewhere on time, etc. I appreciate the opportunity to feel physically free, to breathe, to recollect my thoughts.

I recollect my thoughts, to prepare for the museum experience. I'm tired, hungry—never a good way to enter a museum. Basically the recipe for shitty reads, for a real short attention span, for not giving the work, the artists, the time and respect that they are owed. Generally speaking.

A place for consciously evaluating objects + things — Set up the parameters for looking/experiencing

It makes a big space between the city and the art—the streetscapes, cafes, hardware stores, bodegas, places to acquire snacks and other resources for personal use and reinforcement. That's fine. It clears the mind! It's refreshing, as long as the weather is good. And yet it does amplify the way that the museum already divides the inside from the outside, the things it holds from the lives they may have been part of. It's pretty though. Relaxing. Graceful, and that experience becomes available to the public, through proper stewardship of art, space, plants, paths, things both museum and parks share. What would it mean to think of museums as parks, galleries as gardens, and vice versa?

A BUILDING THAT TAKES OBJECTS FROM THEIR CONTEXTS .

State-sanctioned resource, or the people who benefit from the resource

DESIGNATED SPACES FULL OF A MIXTURE OF USES — INFORMAL AND FORMAL — THAT ARE REGULATED AND MAINTAINED

## What techniques do people use to adapt a “universal” space to their personal or **community** needs?

PEOPLE CONSIDERED A SINGLE ENTITY BY VIRTUE OF A COMMONALITY IN SPACE/TIME/GEOGRAPHY/INTEREST

Arranging furniture, making noise, establishing physical or social boundaries, decorating, creating protocols + rules

In an art context, interventions: performance art, protests, occupations.

Projecting messages on buildings to protest or share counter-messages-

Or, funny inventions. Like turning a sculpture into a place to hang a volleyball net. Or waxing an embankment as a place to practice skateboarding.

In addition to adaptive uses + interventions, some stewards work to preserve an unobstructed, less demarcated/determined space in order to ensure groups can continue to use it in a variety of ways.



The translation of experience into a personal language to communicate a purpose of things that may not have been intended by their designers. Physical changes become more perceptible—more legible—when put into words, when the spontaneous, cobbled vocabulary of the user butts up against the official one of the expert.

How to customize, re-program, redirect, personalize?

They use the resources that are available, whether that's an individual resource or a collective resource. Sometimes it's a matter of not asking permission (nor later apologizing) for what one needs, but just moving forward.

One technique is to walk the space in entirety and count your steps. An odd number tells you one thing, an even will tell you another.

Material resources  
Giving - an act of service? / knowledge  
Natural resources & sustenance  
Sharing

SOMETHING THAT SHOULD  
BE SHARED EQUITABLY



**“What are we inherently making unknowable by making the world more measurable, familiar, and predictable?” —Ron Morrison**

Embodied knowledge. . .

Life escapes and overflows the containers designed to capture and represent it.

How do we leave room for curiosity, for surprise? The beginner’s mind isn’t empty of knowledge, it’s empty of expectations. A circumscribed world stunts the imagination.

The connection to self. Somehow, in this incessant measuring of things, we replace the need to check in, to know ourselves, because there are a few things in this world that we just can’t measure, ever. Even though we try. We try to measure how much mom loves me against how much she loves my sister. How much this job means vs. that relationship...

Measurement limits opportunities for surprise—because it reduces certain experiences or forms of knowledge from become perceptible enough to surprise. Things that are inherently immeasurable—wisdom, care love—recede from attention, lose their value.

"What are we inherently making unknowable by making the world more measurable, familiar, and predictable?" — Ron Morrison

And how do we engage more people with this question in order to resist dominant narratives around technology and progress? How do we look at the packaging of knowledge & experience

---

tacit knowledge, indigenous knowledge, performative / embodied epistemologies, the sublime, the spiritual,

I think 'familiar' is out of place in this list — measurable & predictable  $\neq$  familiar

---

Doe

INEFFABLE

UNKNOWABLE

NON-LINEAR

MYSTERIOUS

OTHER FORMS  
OF CONSCIOUSNESS?  
WAYS OF KNOWING?  
WAYS OF BEING?

# What did you think of the show?

The show is . . . flavorful? And, uh, thin.  
It's a lot of little tastes of a wide variety of  
things. . . It's not like a buffet, but like you're  
still cooking the meal. Everything's on and  
you're tasting all the different flavors to see  
what's going to make it onto the table. And  
then—there's the tablecloth so that brings  
everything together.

—Dustin

Today I saw Queens  
International by everyone  
It looks strong, enigmatic,  
personal, invigorated  
I think it is made of people  
I think the artist made it by thinking  
It makes me feel delighted,  
empowered, thoughtful

—ELG

# Fill-in-the-Blank Art Response

FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES



Today I saw the Whole World  
NAME OF ARTWORK

by ?  
NAME OF ARTIST

It looks like the world

I think it is made of Plastic and lights

I think the artist made it by looking at the park

It makes me think of When I go on airplanes.

It makes me feel positive  
I want to be a artist.



Your Name/Alias Noah Carrata

We think anyone can be an art critic.

WE WELCOME ART WRITING FROM EVERYONE, INCLUDING CHILDREN & TEENS.  
WE ARE ORGANIZING THIS PROJECT IN THE SPIRIT OF PEOPLE POWER,  
ACCESS, OPEN-MINDEDNESS, GENEROSITY & INCLUSION.

We believe that art criticism can take many forms. It doesn't have to be a description with a stamp of approval (or disapproval). It doesn't have to be a distanced contemplation. It's writing that expresses the difference that art can make in your life, and the potential for anyone to find meaning in any artwork.

**BRIAN DROITCOUR & CHRISTINE WONG YAP**

For more info or to learn how you can participate, visit:

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