NETWORKS → OF (be)longing

october 16 → december 06
october 23 → online launch

Adjacencies, dissonances, and dynamics of power circulate within networks, shifting pathways and modes of operation. Philosopher, sociologist, and anthropologist Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social* (2005) acknowledges that evolving networks constitute and even foster human relations; but rather than assuming homogeneity, he proposes a "tracing of associations," enabling heterogenous elements of sociality to be "assembled anew."[1] This speculative tracing of relationalities—the recognition of networks, their multitudinous ways of being, and their world-building capabilities—comprises the premise of this exhibition.

//WHAT IS MAINTAINED
WITHIN THEIR STRANDS
OF RELATION AND
INTERSECTION? AND WHAT
IS AT STAKE WHEN NETWORKS
NOURISH ARTISTIC WAYS OF
BEING AND LONGING–
(BE)LONGING?//

Networks of (Be)longing queries the relational traces structuring and embedded within artistic networks. The installations, publications, and video works of Canaries collective, Rami George, Tabitha Nikolai, and Mengda Zhang disclose structures of care, communality, labor-relations, and familial ties bound by tensions and desires. Acknowledging their potential to be "assembled anew," the exhibition highlights artistic research and experiences that reckon with modes of operation through a (non)-structure of four overlapping channels: re-programming, bypassing, decoding, functioning within.

Networks of (Be)longing unfolds across a series of physical and virtual sites, creating intersecting networks all its own. The exhibition includes a group show at the Center for Contemporary Art and Culture (CCAC) and new commission by Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) Artist-in-Residence, Rami George; a satellite solo presentation of Rami George's work at the Paragon Arts Gallery at Portland Community College, Cascade Campus entitled, *and one day will tell you so many stories*; and remote viewing access to the works via the PNCA Online Galleries (launching October 23). Accessible written and audio captions, labels, and the essay are available online. *Networks of (Be)longing* is accompanied by a suite of programs, including a collaboration with the M.F.A Critical Studies candidates entitled, Project Group Share, and an accompanying curatorial essay.

Adjacent to *Networks of (Be)longing* is an online exhibition, *(see also:) variable performances of a well-designed site index*, curated by CCAC Curatorial Fellow and M.F.A Critical Studies candidate, Kyle Cohlmia. The exhibition activates networks through a series of video and performance works that proliferate from the concept of the site index, in which connective links circumscribe viewers within boundaries but also retain the potential to click beyond them.

Networks of (Be)longing is presented by the Center for Contemporary Art & Culture, PNCA, in collaboration with Paragon Arts Gallery, and supported by Converge 45. The exhibition is organized by Laurel V. McLaughlin, independent curator, with support from Mack McFarland, Assistant Professor at PNCA and Director of Converge 45, and Elizabeth Bilyeu, Director of the Paragon Arts Gallery.

1   Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY
ART & CULTURE

PNCA

PARAGON
ARTS GALLERY

CON
VER
GE
ART ON THE 45TH PARALLEL

re → programming

WORLD-BUILDING FUTURISTIC NETWORKS BECAUSE OF SOCIETAL TABOOS, CENSORSHIP, DISBELIEF

Tabitha Nikolai, *Shrine Maidens of the Unseelie Court*, 2018. Interactive virtual environment for PC and Mac and installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

Shrine Maidens of the Unseelie Court is an interactive installation in the exhibition space of CCAC, online in the CCAC gallery, and on Nikolai's website as a game for download. In its physical incarnation at CCAC, Nikolai materializes the clash between an often-isolating physical reality and the fantasy of connection in digital spaces. Through an enshrined computer console, vestiges of meals, dirty laundry, and a soiled mattress, Nikolai recreates the indexes of a life lived part-time. Cast in a ruddy LED glow, Nikolai's virtual environment mirrors the environment in the gallery, gradually revealing trans-femme experiences enmeshed in reverie that reprograms orientations towards the real.

Players navigate the seemingly ludic space without a particular aim, much like any walking sim. Players observe and partake in an isolated suburban sprawl replete with quintessential cookie-cutter houses and cicada rhythms, but also filled with giant spiders. Inside the home, players find a bathtub where they are plunged into an aqueous portal. Within this pocket world, they discover the same gamer lair as in the gallery installation with a virtual terminal where they access the "Unseelie Court," a reference to dark fairies in Scottish folklore. What ensues is an ambivalent correspondence on finding community in cyberspace—reprogramming assumptions from the real world within a connective virtual space rife with potentiality and new pitfalls.

by → passing

CIRCUMVENTING SUPERSTRUCTURAL NETWORKS AS A MEANS OF REFUSAL AND SURVIVAL

Canaries, *Notes for the Waiting Room*, 2016, edited by Taraneh Fazeli and initial installation by Jesse Cohen and Carolyn Lazard. Courtesy of the collective.

From the collective:
Canaries is a network of art-adjacent women and gender non-conforming people living and working with auto-immune conditions and other chronic illnesses. The group name references the phrase "canaries in the coal mine"—shorthand for those whose sensitivities are early indicators of adverse conditions in the environment. Canaries functions as a support group with monthly meetings, a listserv of 200+ members for sharing confidential advice and support on surviving in and outside of medical institutions, and, previously, an art collective.

In late 2015, curator and Canaries member Taraneh Fazeli invited the group to contribute texts and images addressing the question: "How do you take care of yourself during a flare-up of your symptoms?" The resulting publication, *Notes for the Waiting Room* was designed to be distributed in the two institutional spaces Canaries members are most familiar with: medical and art institutions. The newspaper was produced closely with Canaries co-founders and artists Jesse Cohen and Carolyn Lazard and edited by Fazeli as part of her ongoing curatorial project "Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying." For the initial exhibition at EFA Project Space in New York, the publication was distributed in an installation reminiscent of a medical waiting room designed by Cohen and Lazard.

If you'd like to join the listserv please visit: https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/wearecanaries
---
Canaries' critical reevaluations of support demonstrate a networking strategy of "bypassing," or the circumvention of a normalized and harmful status-quo. In its design—with multiple artistic contributions, and self-evaluations—Canaries' publication imagines other forms of care beyond the dominant data-driven "remedies" imposed by a neo-liberal healthcare system and art institutions alike. Originally presented within a traveling exhibition from 2017–2019 and re-presented here within *Networks of (Be)longing*, the publication exemplifies the ways in which a strategy of bypassing prompts reorganization, recirculation, and expansion.

CCAC welcomes you to take the time you need in reading and engaging with this publication in the space, seats, and writing utensils provided here.

de→ coding

DECONSTRUCTING DOMINANT NETWORKS THAT OTHERWISE ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ADJACENT OR ALTERNATIVE NETWORKS

Mengda Zhang, *Dust-free Chatroom*, 2018. Performance, installation, videos, latex gloves filled with water, text, Foxconn uniform with the artist's period blood, and photography of Foxconn employment contract (chewed), dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Video documentation by Yucong Lu.

Mengda Zhang's installation *Dust-free Chatroom* is composed of elements that collectively decode the labor network of Foxconn's Chengdu factory in the Sichuan province of China, specifically the Apple MacBook assembly line. These elements include: a photographic index of a chewed-up employment Foxconn contract; a Foxconn worker's "bunny suit" uniform stained with the artist's menstrual blood; videos of Zhang performing meditative gestures inspired by the assembly line, alongside a personal account written in charcoal; an electric scanner with a barcode fabricated from human hair; and a table with water-filled latex gloves annotated with written fragments from Zhang's actual encounters in the factory.

Zhang's materials, actions, bodily indexes, and recollections poetically embody queer exchanges within the factory beyond the mandated labor. Desiring glances exchanged among workers between monotonous duties, the bodily interruption of menstruation upon the highly regulated bunny suit uniform, the irreverent mastication of the contract which legally binds worker to site, and the reperformance of protected intellectual property gestures, relate the decoding of a working environment designed for human labor but devoid of its nuances. By revisiting these subversions within other labor contexts—such as the academy within the space of CCAC at PNCA—Zhang's installation meditates upon the queer traces that destabilize dominant political and economic frameworks.

functioning→ within

SEEMING TO ASSIMILATE TO THE NETWORK STATUS QUO, WHILE RECKONING WITH ITS DISSONANCES AND RUPTURES, FOLLOWING SLANTS AND TANGENTS

Rami George, *Untitled (with my father)*, 2020. HD video, color, sound, 20:31 min. Courtesy of the artist.

Rami George, *Untitled (the ashram)*, 2020. HD video, color, sound, 12:30 min. Voice: Jack Marmorstein. Footage Contributions: Alex Liegel, Chris Cole, David Nokovic, Laurel V. McLaughlin, Selby Nimrod, Sergey Y. Smolin. Courtesy of the artist.

Untitled (with my father) builds upon George's earlier video essays *Untitled (Samaritan Foundation)* (2014) and *Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993)* (2015)—also shown in *Networks of (Be)longing* at the satellite site, Paragon Arts Gallery—in recalling George's childhood entanglement with the intentional community, or cult, The Samaritan Foundation. Based on a 2013 conversation between the artist and their father, the intimate exchange tethers the surreal experiences of cult practices, displacement, divorce, and mundane anecdotes to the video illumination of the artist's former neighborhood, annotated family photographs, letters between George's parents, and the artist's ever-growing archive of documents from this life-long journey.

Created through a new commission, *Untitled (the ashram)* departs from *Untitled (with my father)*, following another tangent in George's familial network: their father's affiliation with an ashram known as The Movement Center. Collected footage of the Center, family photographs, Google Street Views, and a 2020 conversation with the artist's father guides the video essay through the George family's ongoing connection with the intentional community from Somerville, Massachusetts to Portland, Oregon.

RAMI GEORGE

and one day will tell you so many stories
September 25–November 15, 2020

and one day will tell you so many stories is the first solo presentation of Rami George on the West Coast and particularly Portland, Oregon—a place the artist once knew as home. Two older video essays, *Untitled (Samaritan Foundation)*, 2014 and *Untitled (Saturday, October 16, 1993)*, 2015 are presented alongside a newly-created billboard structure, *Untitled (mapping)*, 2020 in the windows of the Paragon Arts Gallery, Portland Community College, Cascade Campus.

These works are part of an ongoing project exploring the artist's interactions with the New Age religious community, or cult, The Samaritan Foundation. The video essays address the community's headquarters—a converted jail in Guthrie, Oklahoma—as well as a newspaper article detailing a custody battle over the artist and their sister in relation to the teachings of the group. (Un)tracing the George family's movements across the United States, the billboard attempts to map encounters with The Samaritan Foundation and other intentional communities. Together, the works demonstrate the interwoven elements of an expanding and contracting series of networks that continue to proliferate through George's artistic research.

and one day will tell you so many stories is co-organized by Paragon Arts Gallery at the Portland Community College, Cascade Campus and the Center for Contemporary Art & Culture at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. The solo presentation functions as a satellite site for the group exhibition *Networks of (Be)longing*.

Paragon Arts Gallery
Portland Community College, Cascade Campus
815 N Killingsworth St.
Portland, OR 97217

PARAGON
ARTS GALLERY

NETWORKS OF (BE)LONGING PROGRAMMING:

→ Rami George "Video Playlist" Screening and Q&A
Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 6:00 PM PST
FREE and open to the public

→ Opening of *Networks of (Be)longing* with a performance from *Dust-free Chatroom,* 2018 by Mengda Zhang
Friday, October 16, 2020, 6:00 PM PST
FREE and open to the public

→ Giant Spiders, Suburbia, and Portals: A Twitch Activation and Conversation about Online Communion with Tabitha Nikolai and Emma Lugo
Friday, October 30, 2020, 5:30 PM PST
FREE and open to the public

→ Mengda Zhang, A Performance from *Dust-free Chatroom*, 2018
Friday, November 13, 2020, 6:00 PM PST
FREE and open to the public

All programming will occur over the platforms Zoom, Vimeo, and Twitch. For program descriptions, online program access, registration, and program recordings please see the CCAC Events Page or the *Networks of (Be)longing* page on the PNCA Online Galleries.

Canaries is a network of art-adjacent women and gender non-conforming people living and working with auto-immune conditions and other chronic illnesses. The group name references the phrase "canaries in the coal mine"—shorthand for those whose sensitivities are early indicators of adverse conditions in the environment. Canaries functions as a support group with monthly meetings, a listserv of 200+ members for sharing confidential advice and support on surviving in and outside of medical institutions, and, previously, an art collective.

Rami George is an interdisciplinary artist currently living and working in Philadelphia. Their work has been presented in exhibitions and screenings at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; Anthology Film Archives, New York; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow; Grand Union, Birmingham; the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; LUX, London; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; and others. George received a B.F.A from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an M.F.A from the University of Pennsylvania. They continue to be influenced and motivated by political struggles and fractured narratives.

Tabitha Nikolai is a trashgender gutter elf and low-level cybermage raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, and based in Portland, Oregon. She creates the things that would have better sustained her younger self--simulations of a more livable future, and the obstacles that intervene. These look like: fictive text, videogames, cosplay, and earnest rites of suburban occult. Currently she teaches and manages galleries for the Portland State University School of Art + Design. Her work has been shown at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, the Utah

Museum of Contemporary Art, Vox Populi in Philadelphia, Ganka Gallery in Tokyo, and has been covered by *i-D Magazine, The New York York Times,* and *Art in America*. She hopes you're doing okay.

Mengda Zhang (b. 1993, Nanjing) works in performance, installation, and video to explore her interests in labor and bodily experience. The work unpacks personal, social, and historical complexities of subjects and search for non-binary perspectives, from reality, literature, or imagination, which escapes any one-sided grand narrative. Her individual and collaborative work has been exhibited internationally at Museum of Modern Art, New York, London Design Festival (2019), Studio 10 New York, and Icebox Project Space, Philadelphia, among others. Zhang received her B.F.A degree from the School of Art Institute of Chicago in 2016 and her M.F.A degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 2019.

Laurel V. McLaughlin is a curator and art historian from Philadelphia based in Portland, OR. She holds M.A.s from The Courtauld Institute of Art and Bryn Mawr College and is currently a 2020–2021 Luce/ ACLS Dissertation Fellow and History of Art Ph.D. Candidate at Bryn Mawr College. Her dissertation explores migratory aesthetics in performance art situated in the United States, 1970s–2016. McLaughlin's writing has appeared in *Art Papers, Art Practical, Performa Magazine, Title Magazine, Performance Research*, and *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, among others, and she has curated exhibitions and performances at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Bryn Mawr College, AUTOMAT Gallery, FJORD Gallery, and Vox Populi.

TABITHA NIKOLAI

CANARIES

RAMI GEORGE

MENGDA ZHANG
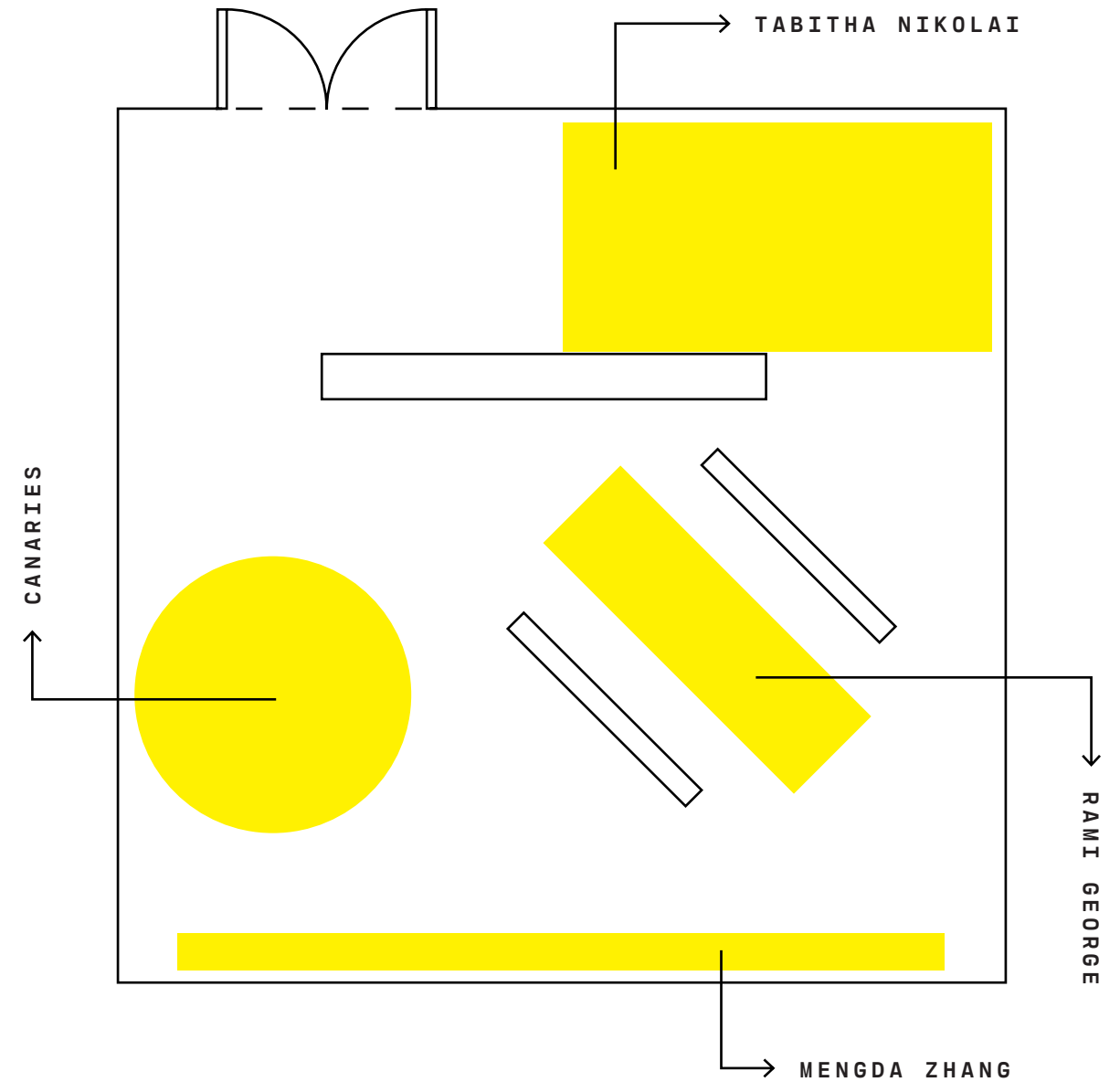
→ Land acknowledgment: CCAC is located on lands that formed the traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas,Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, Bands of the Chinook, and many other Tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River.

For access to the PNCA Online Galleries, launching October 23rd, which include accessible audio labels for this exhibition guide and online assets for remote viewing, scan this QR Code:
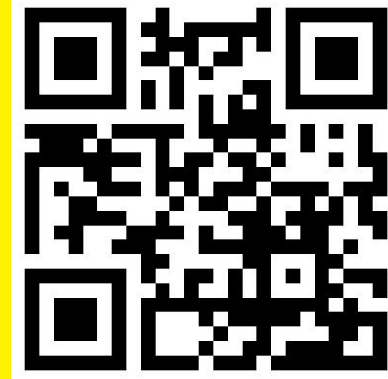
→ The curator would like to thank the contributing artists Canaries (Carolyn Lazard, Jesse Cohen, Taraneh Fazeli), Rami George, Tabitha Nikolai, and Mengda Zhang; Mack McFarland (Assistant Professor, PNCA and Director of Converge 45), Elizabeth Bilyeu (Director of the Paragon Arts Gallery) maximiliano and Mazey Moon (production, CCAC); all PNCA student gallery assistants, Julie Rasos (gallery and exhibition guide design), Shana Palmer and Aaron McKee (IT, Portland Community College, Cascade Campus). Thanks also to Sergey Y. Smolin, Kyle Cohlmia, Mechella Yezernitskaya, Nishat Hossain, and Elena Gittleman for their support.