

**The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2020: Here, Together!**  
**Virtual Exhibitions**

Co-Curated by Katya Grokhovsky, Mary Annunziata,  
Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, Allison Cannella

October 16th – December 18th, 2020

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## Introduction

Established in 2019, The Immigrant Artist Biennial seeks to facilitate a platform of support for projects by often overlooked and silenced voices. The premier edition of “The Immigrant Artist Biennial (TIAB) 2020: Here, Together!” is conceptualized around the theme of otherness and separation and exhibits immigrant artists, based in the U.S., who work in a variety of mediums. TIAB is based on the premise of equal gender and race presentation, highlighting the inequality and bias which is still prevalent in the art world today.

“The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2020: Here, Together!” virtual exhibitions website would simply not exist, were it not for the arrival of a global pandemic at the start of 2020. TIAB launched on March 7th at the Brooklyn Museum and was set to continue across various NYC venues in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, through August 2020. Altogether, eight were secured for the presentation of our inaugural edition, from nonprofit spaces to public sites to museums and commercial galleries. However, all were postponed and most cancelled, when COVID-19 locked the city down.

During the NYC Spring shutdown in March – June, TIAB partnered with Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) Project Space to present several virtual events, in order to continue the dialogue and upkeep the necessary community support, at the most fearful time in our recent world history. Life on ZOOM began, igniting difficult and engaging conversations. We stayed home, glued to our screens, surrounded by the ambulance sirens alone with our emotions. Fears manifested rapidly as we faced a highly uncertain future. As I write this in December, life of virtual openings, events, exhibitions, panels, lectures, studio visits, meetings, teaching, as well as holiday parties and birthdays has normalized and entered the everyday. Yet, I vividly recollect breaking down and crying in March, during our first public TIAB zoom discussion, in front of over eighty people. Scared, shocked, alienated.

I am still scared, but I am now philosophical about it. The fear has not dissolved but has settled at the bottom of daily reality. TIAB was originally designed with ‘emergency’ in mind, calling upon the idea of the immigrant mindset, which is typically set to fight or flight



WANG Chen. *The Sin Park*.  
2019. Video still.

## Introduction

mode at all times. For a brief moment, I almost cancelled “TIAB 2020” altogether, but I wanted to keep up the fight. So, here we are, at the finish line of the first hybrid mode TIAB and at the end of 2020. We relaunched our central and only on-site group exhibition at EFA Project space in Manhattan on September 9th – October 24th, presenting eleven NYC based immigrant artists, including early work of Ana Mendieta. We also presented two public performance events at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn in September and November. The rest of our planned exhibitions and performances went online. We built a separate website and regrouped the artists into three exhibitions, “Homeland,” “The Imminent Arrival” and our Open Call national exhibition, “Mother Tongue,” exploring themes of place, belonging and language, presenting forty seven artist projects and eight performance works, staging five virtual events, including a panel discussion.

Overall, “TIAB 2020” has both been a long arduous journey and a blink of an eye. This could not be a more difficult year to premiere a biennial, this could not be the more suitable time to stage an Immigrant Artist biennial. I thank the tireless volunteer team members, who have been with TIAB since its inception in Spring 2019, NYFA fiscal sponsorship for early belief and support of my idea, all our presenting and backing partners in 2019 and 2020, including: Radiator Gallery, Kickstarter, Assembly Room, East Village Art View, Art and Social Activism Festival, Chashama, Brooklyn Museum, EFA Project Space, Green-Wood Cemetery, LMCC, Center for Art Law, Women and Performance Journal, and of course all “TIAB 2020” participating artists for trusting us and myself, with their work. Onwards!

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*Katya Grokhovsky*

*Artist, Curator, Founding Director and  
Chief Curator of The Immigrant Artist Biennial*



Federico Cuatlacuatl. *Tiemperos Del Antropoceno*.  
2020. Photography by David Morales.

## ***The Future of Cultural Production — Panel Discussion***

Tuesday, November 10, 2020, 6:30pm—8:30pm

Panel: Carmen Hermo, Eva Mayhabal Davis, Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, Allison Cannella, Mary Annunziata, and Katherine Adams, moderated by Katya Grokhovsky

Edited by Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, Katherine Adams, and Selena Liu

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Buket Savci. *The Raft*.  
2019. Oil on canvas, 35 x 50 inches.

Just days after the U.S. Presidential Election, a historic win, as America elected Kamala Harris, the first female and first second-generation immigrant, as Vice-President Elect The Immigrant Artist Biennial hosted a panel discussion addressing the future of cultural production in a time of political upheaval and global health crisis. The panel, moderated by biennial director and chief-curator, Katya Grokhovsky, consisted of seven women, Carmen Hermo, Associate Curator at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum, and Eva Mayhabal Davis, Curator, Arts Advocate, and co-director of Transmitter joined by the TIAB curatorial advisers and co-curators of “Mother Tongue” and performances, Mary Annunziata, Allison Cannella, Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, and exhibition manager Katherine Adams. Both invited panelists have had an important role in the inaugural biennial, Hermo collaborated with TIAB to host its launch during a First Saturday event at Brooklyn Museum in March. The performance program was for many the last event they attended before COVID restrictions came into place. Mayhabal Davis has served as an important colloquy partner throughout the biennial and also interviewed Grokhovksy at a vital stage during fundraising. The following text is an abbreviated transcript from the panel held on Zoom.

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**What Should The Future Look Like?**

**Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

In this moment, do artists have political responsibilities and what is your view on the autonomy of art?

**Eva Mayhabal Davis**

Thank you again, for this invitation. Immigration has been an ongoing topic and an integral part of the socio-political structure of this country for a long time. Yes, we are post-election, but that does not mean that we are not on high alert. We need to focus on changing the structures that are in place, not only on front-facing politics. The vocabulary that's used in the media feeds into our culture and the way that we perceive specific issues ranging from immigrant, migrant, and refugee crises to generational divides. So, returning the question of political responsibilities as an artist, you are a canary of whatever social or personal issue you might be responding to. The responsibility of artists is to exist and make art. In this moment, and I would argue at any moment within a capitalist structure that stretches us thin, there is a constant pressure to both pay the bills and be creative. As a community of arts administrators, art spaces, and cultural producers, it is our responsibility to provide support to artists. Both the artists and the art ecosystem are responsible for maintaining creativity.

**Carmen Hermo**

Thank you for bringing in the historical sweep and recognizing that The Immigrant Artist Biennial is happening at a time when there are obvious crises of all kinds surrounding us and that the media and political demonization of the immigrant other is strongly felt. The current Sackler Center exhibition, "Out of Place," drawn from our collection, looks at how context shapes art history and artists; identifying whether an artist is aiming for an institution, or working in an anti-institutional way. I was surprised by the number of artists that were immigrants and have been translated through history as American artists – like Mary Baumeister and Mary Frank. It is important to remember artists can be immigrants without that being the top line theme of their. I think TIAB is getting at that, too. I would never, as a curator, want to impose on an artist, but at the same time, we all are trying to meet our times, and these are intense

times. I have seen artists whose work is not about their immigrant experience respond to the political atmosphere and support their community in other ways; working on decorating community bridges or providing artwork for online activism, for example. Artists should be able to push back and say, I'd rather not talk about that, or that is not where I am going with this.

**Anna Mikaela Ekstrand**

I co-curated "Mother Tongue" and many artists from the exhibition are here, it is nice to see you. Carmen, I would like to pick up where you left off, continuing on the topic of financially burdening artists. The economics behind immigration are rarely discussed in the art world. Many BFA and MFA programs are largely populated by foreign students who pay full tuition and are not offered financial aid. Of course, costly education is not only a financial and emotional burden reserved for immigrants. However, securing a visa is. In order to secure an O1 Visa, immigrant artists must produce and create at an accelerated rate to meet visa requirements which makes them vulnerable to financial and other forms of exploitation. So, another question to ask is what responsibilities do we have towards immigrant artists who are operating in the New York and American art scene? We have to consider ways in which we can include, instead of exclude, and provide structural care and support to these artists.

**Katherine Adams**

If there is one way to index what has happened in the past year it is perhaps that there is an effort to move the political responsibility to institutions, say, into the space of the exhibition.

**Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

Institutions are being questioned in relation to equity, especially following this summer's uprisings. Which leads me to my follow up question. How has the discourse around immigration in general, and especially in the current political climate – the Trump era – been affected by recent discourse on equity in the arts? And, how should institutions versus independent curators react, or rather, how do we move forward?

**Eva Mayhabal Davis**

Discussions around equity need to include what equity looks like within leadership and mentorship. It is not just about creating equity within your staff. It is about investing in equity for the future. When it

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comes into this question of what opportunities look like for immigrants in this country we should not only consider folks that are coming in and studying, but also those who have been here for a very long time. Eleven million young people have received DACA status. How many are walking in your institution? Undocumented folks work within alternative economies and have other ways to secure work. What are our responsibilities within cultural production being present for their communities and what are our access points to them? Does your organization have to consider all these issues, from funding for visa and legal fees, the renewal of a visa, or other paperwork?

### **Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

Are these conversations happening now?

### **Eva Mayhabal Davis**

We have a long road ahead involving a lot of very small changes. For example, applications for residencies where the first question asked is “Are you a US citizen?” should be discontinued. Why is that part of any institution’s requirements? Is it aligned with their mission? Is it a sign of the kind of accessibility that they want to provide for their audience? And if that is required of them, what is the follow-up question? Be mindful about what these barriers are for and if the institution is transparent. Instead of asking, “Are you a citizen?” Ask, “What kind of support do you need?” Let people tell you. Find out what sponsorship means in your applicant’s situation, whether it is recommendations, building up a resume, or becoming connected to other opportunities.

### **Carmen Hermo**

Eva, you just blew my mind. You pushed the question right into the positive. On this onus that Katherine was raising about institutional support and institutional backing, as much as a press release might sound like it is going to take much time to change these very colonial institutions, this is a tardiness based on their own unwillingness to change their practices. Speaking broadly, beyond the Brooklyn Museum, we do see many flashy hires, curators and directors from across the world coming to the United States, and clearly the funding and support during the O1-Visa process is there for them. Are you providing that same level of administrative HR support for everybody at your museum? The answer is usually, no.

Institutions operate on a scarcity model; who can we get in the door as quickly as possible to replace a person who leaves because of burnout, this is how we cycle forward. This is the reality of art workers, this tendency for things to circulate really quickly, for people to be drained of their intellectual, emotional, and physical labor until the next person is in. This needs to be questioned. If you bring somebody into an institution knowing that you will exhaust them, as Eva pointed out, the commitments you have to their communities will suffer. If you are not able to sustain your life with your work is it good for you to be a part of this institution? A lot of times things can become very triangulated at the leadership level, but Brooklyn Museum is more than just leadership – and there are so many people across the institution with incredible energy, spirit, vision, and kindness.

### **Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

Both burn out and immediate barriers should be central to conversations about equity.

### **Carmen Hermo**

Yes, and the discourse about immigration is not present in these conversations about equity. I urge us to consider these negative spaces, or erasure. We do not see the artists who could not make it here because of the Muslim ban, or whose family got cut out due to the suspension and cancellation of temporary protective status. We do not see them because they had to go do something else. As an institutional curator, I am frequently invited to residencies. Artists with other documentation statuses are excluded from these interinstitutional lines of connection. You need to be aware of what you are not seeing and why you are not seeing it. Who should museums be seeing that are left off of the lists due to questions of documentation statuses, and certainly, of immigration, and a tenuous connection to all of these structures?

### **Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

As an artist, if you do not get into something, you do not get into something else, and you do not get it to something else. Frankly, many are completely inaccessible opportunities if you do not have the correct status. How do we question this in the institutions? Can we revolt?

### **Anna Mikaela Ekstrand**

Another question to ask is not can we revolt but rather, at what level within the institution should advocacy happen, i.e. who should

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revolt? Katya, we have discussed instances where staff within departments at academic institutions offer jobs to Green Card holder or other legal work status applicants and everything seems fine until they reach HR who inform them that citizenship is needed in order to be hired. Many institutions will only consider non-citizens with legal work status for temporary positions, for reasons not clear. This poses a problem as these applicants who may already have difficulties financing themselves and getting healthcare and have a narrow pool of opportunities as there are limitations on the type of work they are legally able to take. These institutions should help immigrants renew their visas or to get on a path to Green Card or citizenship instead of shutting them out. Who can fight that? And, where can we create conversations to question these practices? Professors and administrators should not wait for their Deans to take action, they could advocate for these changes and conversations to happen.

### **Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

It is a Catch-22 in a lot of these situations. Now that the world is in a different place there is an opportunity to meet the need to question absolutely everything.

### **Anna Mikaela Ekstrand**

I, like many others, have labored for free in institutional settings as an unpaid intern in order to reach entry-level, and now intermediate positions, with more power. If you are a manager you can advocate for a higher payment or minimum wage for your intern or refuse to hire one at all, which is an efficient way to revolt. We need to be courageous and to stand up and advocate for colleagues in entry-level positions and across horizontals.

### **Eva Mayhabal Davis**

Responding to you Anna Mikaela, I think that we need to think about what it means to be an ally within our workplaces. And, allyship does not look like advocating for someone below us nor is it not advocating for someone just like us. It's about dismantling hierarchies to create that equity, all around you.

### **Mary Annunziata**

We are living in a time of raging war against institutions marked by a sense of distrust or mistrust, especially in government. But there is existing infrastructure that we can look to. While not without

problems, the public education system requires no proof of citizenship and no proof of parents' status. I think it's going to be within the education system that we see a tipping point for equity across industries. I read an article recently that noted that 30% of students enrolled in colleges and universities in 2018 were from immigrant families, which is up 20% from twenty years ago. It's important for us as cultural workers, as artists, to consider and work within the systems that are in place and that are already creating opportunities for people. We should focus on strengthening these institutions from within.

### **Allison Cannella**

In the beginning of the pandemic Judy Chicago wrote in a piece for the New York Times that artists sound the alarm. It is the responsibility of institutions, independent curators as well, or foundations that give grants and residency is to respond. They can either hit snooze or do what a lot of institutions are doing now to try to make up for lost time through panic hires and panic exhibitions. The challenge is how to set long-lasting inclusive structures now rather than rectifying when it is already too late.



Priscilla Dobler Dzul. *The Performance of Labor, Class, Race and Gender*. 2020. Poplar wood, cotton thread and audio.



### **How Do We Make These Changes?**

#### **Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

This crisis is an opportunity to make real changes. As we are talking specifically about immigrant artists of different statuses, what can foundations, institutions, grant-giving organizations, and residencies do to include them in their programming and outreach?

#### **Eva Mayhabal Davis**

“How do I get this specific population?” is the wrong question. Inclusivity should be incorporated into everyday communications on a local, borough, and city level. This is a particularly difficult issue for New York City as it is the cultural hub for many. But that is going to change with this digital Mount Everest that we’re on. There are so many possibilities. Yet, the digital divide is still prevalent, even within New York City. I am thinking about how difficult it was for families to get digital access, and computers in order to work and learn from home. Only using digital platforms is not the answer, outreach to specific communities should be considered very localized. Where are you? Who is around you? What is changing? And what are the issues? Not just concerning, physically but also internally. Where are your staff members coming from? Are they commuting two-three hours to get to your institution? What does that community look like? Use the resources that are already internally there for you. It’s also difficult because it takes time; it takes communication, translation, and translanguaging. It’s a specific job that sometimes institutions are not ready to recognize and pay up for.

#### **Carmen Hermo**

When I say: “I speak Spanish,” I can see everyone think: “Oh that’s great, she can translate for us too.” Which is beyond my job description. The Frida Kahlo exhibition [at the Brooklyn Museum] was an exhibition that had a large budget and we had labels in English and Spanish. We have endeavored to make changes, we do have maps in different languages but this does not extend to other wall labels. Resources dictate these initiatives. At the Met visitors are met with an array of very welcoming languages, that’s a beautiful moment. But of course, the Met makes a lot of money off

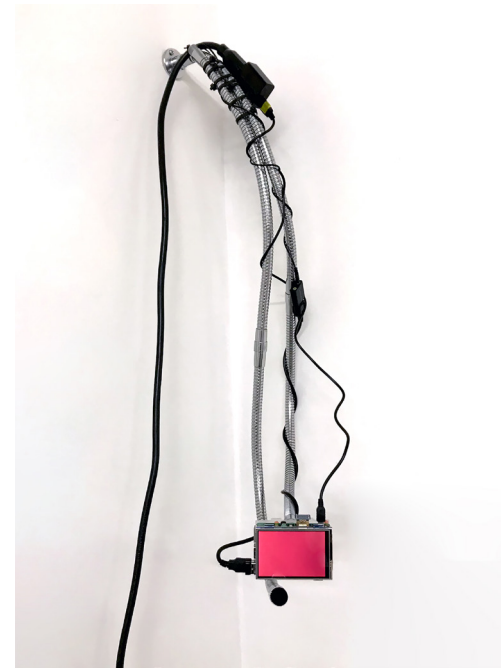
of tourists. Yet we have to recognize that there are other ways to make those connections. Education is one, working directly with students, going into schools, and welcoming classes have helped our reach. We have paid teen staffers, we have a special fellowship for emerging geniuses and an LGBTQ Teen Organizing Committee. Through these initiatives, we are bringing in folks at a young age and their families can come to see where they work. These teams are designing programs either for other departments or for our First Saturdays. There is also programming where language is not important, Katya, you mentioned the last in-person Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum in March, when we were thrilled to host Hanae Utamura and Christopher Unpezverde Núñez’s works and at both of these performances, one did not need to be fluent in English to understand the bodily movements and the activation of the space.

#### **Anna Mikaela Ekstrand**

Education departments are the unsung heroes of community outreach, development, interaction within the institutions and often participation in the community beyond the institution’s walls. We also have to be aware of the pitfalls of small nonprofit institutions that are operating in low income areas who tokenize POC and use them for outreach that they might not be specialized or have any interest in doing. I am currently working on a project with Maria Lind in Sweden. As the director of Tensta Konsthall, a largely state funded Kunsthall in an immigrant heavy low-income suburb of Stockholm, staffed by people living elsewhere, she first had her curators or education department invite the community to come see the shows to participate in programming. When locals did not come she decided to venture out into the community. She began conducting staff meetings off-site at local businesses: a restaurant, a hair salon, or at the local public schools. This allowed staff members to develop connections with the locals who soon started voicing their needs from the institution. As it turned out the space was valuable, Lind lent it to groups for organizing and communing - young mothers, a language class, and more. Of course, the education and curatorial departments then picked up on this and developed ways to work together eventually integrated art into this. But really, the core became to provide a service to the community, sometimes just simply offering them space.

**Carmen Hermo**

Impressive. This type of work also needs to be done when dealing with historical material. I tried normalizing immigrant stories in our “Out of Place: A Feminist Look at the Collection” exhibition. For example, institutions can normalize immigrant stories of artists who we do not consider as immigrants in the art historical canon, like Andy Warhol. Warhol is an artist that dominates the market but interesting parallels can be excavated in relation to setting beauty standards, language, and working class environments - representing what Warhol grew up through to add to stories of immigrant experiences. However, presenting a nuanced picture that is not fetishizing, selling an immigrant success story, or falling into the pitfalls of American cultural imperialism requires much thought. I worked on the “Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall” show in 2019, a group show showing twenty-eight emerging artists, many that come from immigrant families. Which, alongside the trans presence, are not things that we highlighted but people picked up on them. We commissioned three works; LJ Roberts, for example, usually works in textile went in a different direction in their work. They created a fourteen part glowing light box installation out of vinyl. This was possible because the institution footed the bill. When I first got into the business a decade ago, it felt like paying artists was unheard of, unless you were getting your solo show. And now, thanks to the work of so many credible activists, organizers, and artists I can set a budget for artists’ honorariums. Access to conservators, preparators, AV teams, and other resources is another way to help artists. For immigrant artists, this support is much more important because of all the precarity that we mentioned earlier. We need to start looking beyond the model of solely giving an artist the opportunity to exhibit.



Tiri Kananuruk. *DeepTalking5000*.  
2018. Raspberry pi, microphone, speaker,  
metal, custom software.

***The Digital Mount Everest: Divides and Opportunities***

**Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

How do you think the turn towards the digital and virtual is affecting artistic practice, and how might it continue to affect practice in the future? Consider access to technology, accessibility, and exclusivity. Will there be an even bigger divide?

**Katherine Adams**

One thing that is paradoxical about the art world is that it is simultaneously highly social and highly insular. As we have alluded to, certain networks can be kind of self-perpetuating so it is interesting to see how we might complicate this idea of the network as the basis for the arts. People love this metaphor, of course, thinking about the social form of the art world. How might we think beyond this model? What would be the new ways of encountering art--and maybe this is potentially both an aesthetic problem and a curatorial problem. As Anna Mikaela was mentioning, we have institutionally rooted models, a relational aesthetics orientation of

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sorts, that sometimes is a surrogate for other kinds of outreach that might be more effective that actually form bonds within a community. When we consider how digital forms have been reproduced on an interpersonal level, as networks, and how algorithms constrain our navigation of these digital spaces, the seeming openness of the internet actually proves itself as quite closed, or at least repetitive. I like to bring up these kinds of inertia, and try to think how we can break out of them.

### **Carmen Hermo**

The digital divide is already serious. Just watching what happened this year with the public school system and despite how much money went into responding to the crisis there are still students without hotspots and computers. Shifting to the positive end of things, folks have pointed out that streaming online is a way to make programming more accessible. Previously captioning was seen as an unnecessary cost, but now it is built into our programs. I am encouraged to hear folks at the museum, knock on wood, continue to bring forward digital experiences that allow for folks who have limited mobility or impaired senses their point of access. Keeping in mind, that we have not hired new specialists and that it is the same team, many who might have been averse to digital previously, and a change of priorities that have brought us into the digital realm. I want to hear from you Allison, Katherine, Katya, or Anna Mikaela about the experience of doing online exhibitions as I have not had the opportunity to curate an online exhibition yet.

### **Katherine Adams**

There is a lot of collateral context that gets built up just by exhibiting in a physical space. Once things move into a remote way of working, you cannot really provide the same support and dynamism. One thing that we noticed was that it was hard to show new work. Of course due to restricted budgets and timeframes, the pattern of online exhibitions is that they tend to be surveys or retrospectives. There is a historical force that gets imposed through the digital which was unexpected, but the truth is that online exhibitions are not all about completely novel or technological pieces. It's hard to bring artists to make new pieces if their practice is object-based and so you give them the alternative to show an already existing work. Even though it was impossible for us this

time around, I wonder what it would have been like to explore a commission model within a digital exhibition.

### **Anna Mikaela Ekstrand**

I spent four years in the curatorial department at the Bard Graduate Center where I worked on a handful of large-scale museum shows. Online exhibitions and incorporating technology in the exhibitions space was always first met with an unwillingness from the curatorial department. The main argument was that they would rather put funds into 'real' rather than virtual or technologically driven experiences. Yet, the online exhibitions and incorporation of technology – like Google Glass – that were realized, with much push from a dedicated set of skilled individuals, were mostly met with curiosity and interest from our audiences and the press. Looking at what has happened today with the proliferation of online exhibitions and programming it is clear that even factoring in the cost of designers, platforms, and hosting, institutions are understanding that virtual is less costly than in-person initiatives and are a feasible addition to how art, culture, and knowledge are disseminated. As a person active in the media sphere paired with my engagement as a curator of performance art, I see an obsession with, for the former, quantitative content production, and for the latter, documentation. I hope that more focus on developing skills in the digital sphere will shift the way these practices are carried out, perhaps allowing material to move into an environment which is art-forward, rather than marketing forward.

### **Mary Annunziata**

I want to return to Katherine's point of the simultaneity of technologies: seemingly open but very constricting and limiting. In the past several years I have erased Facebook and Instagram for mental health reasons which is liberating. In the process, I have also taken myself back a step as I am not able to do career-related outreach or to see what is going on. Collectively, we have a dependence on technologies that are limitless in ways that are often frighteningly all-consuming and forceful.

### **Eva Mahaybal Davis**

Thank you for bringing that up. To build digital protocols with these access points we need to incorporate awareness and support, look inward at our own capacities and mental health. The communication that needs to happen internally, with each other, as much as it

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happens outside and then communicating beyond our institutions and into the digital space. Protocols should also be mindful of what programming is going online, archived, and what culture is being perpetuated. Is it about numbers, and how many likes and views, or is it about content. Having worked in institutions where the receipt of a grant may be based on how many people we reach, rather than who the folks are, which there are no systems in place to gather data on, is difficult. As we build up programs and exhibitions, creativity and patience needs to come into play. For some the hesitation to take on conversations on Zoom, or non familiarity with Instagram Live is real. We must forgive the loss of connection, be patient, and embrace imperfections.



Salome Egas. *Reflejo*.  
2020. Acrylic paint, mirrors, plastic, cardboard, metallic buckets, movement, voice recordings, music. Duration: 10 mins. Photography by Walter Wlodarczyk for Exponential Festival 2020 at Parallel Performance Space.

## On Feminism, Mentoring, and Collaboration

### Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)

Priscilla Dobler, another TIAB artist that works with immigrants poses the question “How do we as communities of artists continue pushing and creating platforms for Dreamers and immigrant artists who do not have accessibility to resources, and how do we address the sensitivity of ICE against Dreamer artists?”

### Eva Mayhabal Davis

New York City is a sanctuary city. We have the New York State Dream Act to support high-schoolers and going into higher education. For mentorship, you can partner up with an international high-school to recruit recent immigrants for your high-school program, or partner up with a specific college program with the local university college or community college, in your borough. You can also follow up with the city. Think about being very specific to target internship fellows and mentorship.

### Anna Mikaela Ekstrand

Working on ways to develop mentorship, constructing supportive institutional programs and ensuring that bylaws or mission statements are inclusive, and, as independent curators seeking out immigrant artists and asking them what they need. What documents or recommendations do they need for their visa application and can you supply them? Or, is there something else that you can help them with? Some artists are looking for opportunities to further their career, while others need to show their work to secure their future in America. As curators we can take this into consideration.

### Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)

Define America is a fellowship that comes with a stipend for undocumented others. The genesis of TIAB was my participation in NYFA’s mentoring program for immigrant artists. The foundation of TIAB is my knowledge and years of working with people and being privy to issues, concerns, and providing support or just being a sounding board. We have specifically created this platform to project the voices of marginalized artists and take part in this dialogue, but there are many levels to accessibility and we can always do better. I access this project through the art world, because that is where I am getting support. Beyond that, we partnered up with the Center of Art Law for an immigration clinic.

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I initially wanted to partner with organizations past the art world. To incorporate food and drink in order to involve immigrants and other communities, but we were side-lined by COVID. I will never stop thinking about how to support immigrant artists.

**Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

Nina Ghanbarzadeh (Afkhamian), an artist from our virtual show, asks: “It is a fact that male artists are more sought after and supported than female artists. This is true in case of immigrant artists, as well, of course, how would you support female immigrant honors, in your future plans and programming?”

**Carmen Hermo**

I’ll speak up. Working in a feminist department is an incredible a privilege. We do a lot of excellent shows that get good reviews and the center itself garners attention to the Brooklyn Museum. But, we do not have an acquisitions fund. We have this incredible space to approach art through feminist methodologies but we are not granted the permission or allocated the means to update the collection, we are not functioning on the same level as other departments. Even as activists, artists, and the world moves away from a binary understanding of gender, gender division is pervasive. Maybe it goes without saying that working in a feminist center, like supporting women artists, is that much more essential, but I think, also, it can be really important to just draw out these narratives of the immigrant experience, nit just the experience itself, and in the journey, but also how frequently women are at the core of home making and world building, and passing things down through generations. Even recognizing that we are seeing more women drop out of the workforce in larger numbers than men in the COVID crisis and just recognizing what the reality of a gendered society is. But we have a woman as a VP, a woman of color smashing the glass ceiling, it is historic and something that I hope also resonates with many other places, many other industries, including the art world,

**Eva Mayhabal Davis**

We have to keep in mind that it was not until some 50 years ago that women could go to school and become full-time artists. We are only a couple generations from women being completely excluded from the market. We have a lot to catch up on. Yes, of course. We

are right now at the brink and revolution of seeing female political leaders seeing an increase in different kinds of levels of education, and a whole lot of different perspectives on feminism. But it is so fresh. It is super fresh. I do want to be a little forgiving on that aspect and push the rapid change that has and still is continuously taking place.

**Katya Grokhovsky (moderator)**

I have always curated more female and female identified artists than male artists. It is a natural inclination that has become a statement. We had this articulated in the TIAB mission before we released our list of artists. Because it is a DIY project, supporting each other has been a core premise, and we are an all female team. I am hoping to see more and more collaborative projects like this spring up.

*I do not know if there will be a next biennial. Fundraising and adapting to the pandemic has been tough. What I know with certainty is that the biennial in 2022 will not be the same. In order to bring in more perspectives I have decided to step down as chief-curator and invite curators. My role as director will remain. To be more inclusive I aim to have accessibility points in other U.S. regions, beyond New York City. As a DIY organizer, the question is always: “Can I sustain this?” In this case, alone, without non-profit status, the answer is no. The future of The Immigrant Artist Biennial will depend on if we can persuade others that the voices of immigrant artists can contribute to society and are important enough to gather and project. For 2022 it is imperative that we receive institutional support to house and produce exhibitions and grants to fund them. I believe that institutions will see the value in our mission and that we will find support.*

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Katya Grokhovsky

## Considering Immigrant Women as Vessels of Knowledge, Power, and Intergenerational Resilience

Anna Mikaela Ekstrand

Curatorial Advisor of The Immigrant Artist Biennial  
and co-curator of “Mother Tongue”

It might be preemptive to situate and ponder the legacy and future of a project, which on one hand has not yet ended, and on the other, founded on the premise and promise to return biannually, has hardly begun. It must be noted that The Immigrant Artist Biennial is skewed toward female, female identifying, and queer artists as they more often than not are under-represented within the art market and otherwise erased, or marginalized within the cultural sphere. So, drawing from the immediacy and urgency of living amidst a global health crisis and the increasing marginalization of immigrants and women in America taking a moment to discover what it takes to move people to change by locating The Immigrant Artist Biennial within a theoretical and political context is vital.

In 1984, Adrienne Rich, a feminist, lesbian scholar warns against the cold war mentality of attributing problems to exterior forces – socialism and communism, and I draw a parallel to how Trump uses socialism and the ‘foreign other’ China, Latin America, and parts of Africa to scapegoat American problems. “We are not invited to consider the butcheries of Stalinism, the terrors of the Russian counterrevolution alongside the butcheries of white supremacism and Manifest Destiny. We are not urged to create a more human society here in response to the ones we are taught to hate and dread,” Rich writes. (1987, p. 218) She criticizes the popular use of words like socialism, communism, democracy, and collectivism, arguing that, when they are stripped of their many faces of social justice and independence become reduced to an ambition to rule the world. A similar mechanism of power, the use of ideology to vilify and divide, rather than unite, has been a tactic employed by Trump since the beginning of his presidency.

The work included in “The Imminent Arrival,” “Homeland,” “Mother Tongue,” and the accompanying performance program pushes back against American cultural imperialism while suggesting that a



Bianca Falco. *Skin/Toxic/Terrae*.  
2020. 30 minutes.

Eurocentric and patriarchal view of the world is obsolete. Introspective, diverse, and queer concepts emerge rooted within political realism, visa fatigue, but also optimism, humanism, and resilience. Furen Dai’s series *Federal Census* questions census methodology by showing how power is yielded under the guise of data collection. Yikui (Coy) Gu’s bright collage and gouache work underlines and critiques orientalism in popular culture; Classic Yellow and Classic White cake mix, “Oriental Favor” seasoning, and Mr. Yuniooshi, the demeaning anti-Asian character operating on racist stereotypes in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* point to modes of discrimination held within the things around us. In *Black on Black*, Ferguson Amo has juxtaposed a group of Akan people, from Southern Ghana and the Ivory Coast, with Americans. Through a monumental pen and paper work Amo conceptualizes the non-existence of one “black” identity, instead, he posits the pluralities of “blackness” as guided by time and place marked by cultural diffusion and assimilation. These artists point out that attempts to categorize, mimic, or lump together other cultures leads to erasure, bias, alienation, and racism, but also that culture can be used as a vehicle to both question but also reinforce segregation and encourage sentiments that fuel support for anti-immigration and discriminatory policy.

During the past four years we have endured a rise in white supremacy

*Considering Immigrant Women as Vessels of Knowledge, Power, and Intergenerational Resilience*



Cinthy Santos-Briones. *Gisela Bravo*. From the *Abuelas* series. 2016. Photography.

and an embrace of conservative ideals: a reversal of women's rights, increased nationalism, and most relevant, further institutionalizing xenophobia and Islamophobia and alienating immigrants, migrants, and refugees – in both political rhetoric and policy, such as limiting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the 'Muslim-ban.' and mistreatment of those entering at the Mexican America Border. To justify narrowing requirements through Executive Stop Orders and increased regulation for work visas, the White House has stated that they are giving a "fair and level playing field, which has not happened for decades" to American workers (The White House, 2020). Thus, vilifying the role of the existing immigrant workforce rather than highlighting their position as contributing members who help build American society and foster the next generation. These opaque changes have resulted in fewer work visa applications being accepted and delays in other visa types and uncertainty and precarity for immigrants and the communities they belong to. Colloquially, Trump-era America is said to idealize 1950s American

values, but there is a more accurate comparison, the political conservatism of the 1980s and early 90s when conservative public policy was pushed forward by an increasingly conservative Supreme Court that, among other things, threatened constitutional attacks on abortion rights as anti-abortion forces gathered momentum. These years marked one of the first public accounts of sexual harassment in the work place. In October 1991, the nation followed the televised questioning of Anita Hill, the African-American law professor who had accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment, carried out by an all-white, all-male Senate Judiciary Committee. This was especially significant for women on Capitol Hill, but also in workplaces across America, as Hill bravely brought to light the demeaning behavior and mistreatment by supervisors and colleagues that many suffer in silence due to the lack of structural support systems and favoring of politics and capital over human well-being. The 1990s saw a rise in feminist art, echoing the 1960s and 70s, at the same time there were discussions of the "death of feminism" proving an unwillingness in the media to honor and pay attention to women's issues. Presenting a new wave of feminist artists using humor to engage viewers with feminist issues, the founder of the New Museum Marcia Tucker organized a two-part "Bad Girls" exhibition in 1994. Overall, immigrant women as an explicit group did not have a prominent placement within this rise of feminism. In "Bad Girls I" for example, amongst the thirty-four artists at least three were immigrants, Reneé Cox, Margaret Curtis, and Elaine Tin Nyo, this context, however, is not yet developed within the literature. When women's rights are threatened immigrant women will have an even harder time breaking through the noise.

Be reminded that immigrant women always play an important role in creating futures by building and contributing. In general, women take more responsibility than men within the household, rearing children, while also working. In addition, immigrant women are often tasked with passing down culture and language to their children – these rich stories of sacrifice, resilience, and perseverance may take generations to unfold. Many works across the three exhibitions negotiate, enliven, and honor matrilineal bonds, often observing that for immigrant communities the notion of family extends beyond the antiquated concept of the nuclear family. Cinthya Santos-Briones antiquated concept of the nuclear family. Cinthya Santos-Briones series of photographs *Abuelas* honors Mexican women who come

*Considering Immigrant Women as Vessels of Knowledge, Power, and Intergenerational Resilience*

to the United States in order to support their families. Gisela Bravo Martinez, 66, a trained seamstress has lived in New York City for more than two decades working in groceries and factories and Eugenia Cayetano, born in a Mazahua indigenous family, has been living in the city for twenty four years and is a member of the cleaning workers co-operative “Si se puede” are two women that Santos-Briones has photographed. Pride and dedication to the community is conveyed through framed photographs of grandchildren, their jewelry, and Mexican vernacular music and material culture in the portraits of powerful matriarchs. It is up to the viewer to imagine the labor, hardship, and uncertainty pertaining to precarious visa situations that these women have had to endure to build a better life for their families. As an investigation of unspoken hardships, Bianca Abdi-Boragi, a daughter, urges her mother to share her past. In Abdi-Boragi’s fictional video work, *Barbery Fig*, she presents fragments of memories from her mother’s childhood in a Kabyle tribe during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) against the French colonial empire, recounting how her mother and grandmother survived in and later left a fallen town. In her paintings, Matilda Forsberg, negotiates multiculturalism, family, and language, in anticipation of emotions that her toddler might feel as she grows up with two immigrant parents from different cultures. Salomé Egas performance work *Reflejo* reaches further back in history as she recounts the universal story of indigenous women in Latin America subdued by missionaries and colonizers, forced into the catholic faith, raped, abused, and made to feel ashamed of their bodies. In a society that continues to objectify and commoditize the female body, let it be as a vessel of knowledge and power from which narratives of intergenerational resilience can be unearthed.

In the 1990s and today, these and similar events have reignited conversations on women’s and LGBTQI rights. In September 2018, Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford, a professor of psychology at Palo Alto University, similarly to Hill, testified for the Senate Judiciary Committee following an accusation of Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her. The past precedent was further reignited during this election cycle as Hill publicly criticized Joe Biden who presided over the hearings demanding he further confront his role. With the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement



Bianca Abdi-Boragi. *Barbery Fig*. 2017. Video still.

in America, mothers and sisters are pushing back against the violent killings of their sons and brothers with support across cross-sections of society. Following years of black activism and government suppression we are in another decade of racial reckoning. Then the AIDS crisis ravaged queer communities and the art world, which participants served as activists but also in many cases victims. Now, other health crisis plague our communities: the opioid crisis, and more prominently felt at this moment, COVID-19. Women have been more affected than men by the pandemic with larger exodus from the workforce taking greater responsibilities in child and elderly care in the home. Women like Hill and Blasey-Ford, activists, and artists, immigrants and others, have taken an active part in bringing inequities and other problems to the fore moving dialogues forward; they are paving the way for social justice, or in Rich words, a human society.

Issues of immigration, marginalization, and the aftermath of colonialization beyond America’s borders are also aptly present within the virtual showcase. In the pocket of each of Stefana McClure’s *Protest Jackets*, the artist has placed a rock wrapped in a poem penned in response to The Troubles, an ethno-nationalist conflict between Ireland and Northern Ireland with its genesis in British colonialism. The work speaks to the poetics of activism. Kasia Ozga, who lives between America and France, has recreated lifeboats in a



*Considering Immigrant Women as Vessels of Knowledge, Power, and Intergenerational Resilience*

material akin to human skin; *Sauver sa peau/Save Your Skin* provides a grim commentary on the Refugee Crisis as migrants risk their lives crossing from North Africa to the Middle East. In the performance *Skin/Toxic/Terrae* Bianca Falco, a trained dancer, highlights stories of mothers who have been affected by environmental abuse. Namely dumping of toxic waste in the Campania region in Italy, that has led to sickness and death of their children. By creating a conversation between animated ancient Cuneiform writing, Mesopotamian symbols, and modern Iraqi Arabic Luma Jasim's video work *Undesired Erasure* stages a thousand year history of how, in one region, one language has erased or replaced another. These artists all explore how factions are impacted by structures of power moored within place.

Conversely, many works tackle personal experiences of becoming or existing in multiple places, through estrangement. In his video and installation work Federico Cuatlacuatl navigates transborder life during the age of the Anthropocene in *Tiemperos del Antropoceno* and in *Carnaval* existing between multiple worlds. Ceramicist works with texture and form Irja Bodén attempts to aestheticize her returning emotions around becoming in *To Dress a Ptarmigan* a series that combines wheel turned, hand-built, and slip-cast ceramics. Strengthened by the experience of emigrating, arriving, and coming to terms immigrant artists, who have lived across cultures and places, often find that working with issues anchored in their native geographies, but also others, is close at hand.

Parallel with TIAB I have researched "Culture in Action," a 1993 exhibition that situated a new genre of public art reliant on community practice for a chapter forthcoming in *Early Days of Public Art* published by Konstfack Collections and Sternberg Press. TIAB's director studied under its curator Mary Jane Jacob at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The projects share similarities in their curatorial approach: 1) a build-up to the opening comprised of public of programming and panels. These open format approaches focused on making community and giving voice to artists. 2) Artist hospitality and creating proximity between curator(s) and artists. 3) Navigating the challenges of reaching the art world and other publics with a novel politically driven exhibition concept. Working with the antagonisms of

"Culture in Action" while staging the inaugural TIAB has served as a spur to carve out a new area for immigrant artists in the art world while looking forward to the legacy and impact of TIAB in years to come.

Notes:

Adrienne Rich, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" in *Blood, bread and poetry: Selected Prose*, Virago: London, 1987.

The White House, 2020, *The Trump Administration Is Taking Action to Tighten Foreign Worker Visa Requirements and Protect American Workers*, viewed 13 December 2020, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/trump-administration-taking-action-tighten-foreign-worker-visa-requirements-protect-american-workers/>>.



Irja Bodén. *To Dress a Ptarmigan I.*  
2019-2020. Ceramics, 9.5" x 7".  
Photography by Max Yawney.

## Poems

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**Abena Motaboli**

*Artist exhibited in "The Imminent Arrival"*

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### Etre-la

Someone once told me that in the hesitation of being, we were.  
Car nous sommes ou nous sommes pas  
And as I sat - the immigrant - I thought  
Here were all the things I was ever inspired by  
The condition of the here, the now, the memory and the being  
Car nous sommes ou nous sommes pas



Abena Motaboli. *The Pieces that hang far up above - in you, in me, in I, in We, in Us.* 2019. Plastic Tarp. Dimensions variable approximate 12ft x 12ft x 12ft.

### Diaries of a sentimental eve

Africa my Africa,  
Have I forgotten you?  
My sweet hometown.  
I remember the dusts rising,  
The hot sun on our backs after school,  
Charring our skins in the summer heats in Southern Africa.  
And the winters with cold that felt so cold.  
Little did I know what real cold was until we moved to the U.S.  
  
Africa my sweet.  
Was it not Kwame Nkrumah who had dreams of a place so united.  
And w.e.b.du Bois who had Ghana as the epicenter of a United vision?  
  
Where is that Africa?  
  
The one I know in my heart and is full of resources.  
  
As I sit here today on a balcony in Accra, I am grateful.  
Grateful that I have my ancestry,  
Grateful that I get to see the relatives on the other side of my family.  
And let me not forget my first hometown, Lesotho,  
Or my current home in the states.  
  
We will all have many homes in our lifetime.  
But as I sit here watching the sunset,  
Bathing in the sweet air with the sounds of birds, children,  
plants, life, vibrancy...  
  
And the petrol station  
with its constant sounding generator.  
Oh!  
Africa, my Africa.  
My home,  
My sweet

## Transparent Particulars: Making Immigration Visible

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Katherine Adams

Exhibition Manager of The Immigrant Artist Biennial

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Most biennials operate on the basis of rootedness within a territory, or as valorizations of distinct national identities. Sometimes this is expressed in terms of a place-making function a biennial is called on to assume for its home city, or in terms of the representational nature of its roster of participants, who may be selected as representatives of a country or region. The Immigrant Artist Biennial does something that is unusual both for biennials in general and for cultural projects in the United States. It rejects the necessity of territorial rooting, and centers those often on the margins of American life, without enforcing a universalizing code that would reduce them to nationalities, ethnicities, or other cultural algorithms that are the recourse of politics. In relieving this burden of self-identification, the biennial poses the question of how it is possible to live a life that is *de facto* political—as it is by nature for all immigrants in this country—without being consumed by the dictates of a specific political code. How might one survive without universality as a protective shield? Can one preserve the complexity of one’s cultural identification and experience while still existing within the formal confines of visa constraints and bureaucratic labyrinths? The usual criticisms levied against new biennials—which tend to attack these exhibitions’ ‘hegemonic,’ discourse, or their apparently neoliberal status as a pop-ups to stimulate ‘creative cities’—are invalid here. This is linked directly to The Immigrant Artist Biennial’s willingness to confine its organizing principle to the immigrant status itself in all its complexity, rather than by way of its reduction to place of origin or other political universal.

In discourses around origin and ethnicity in the U.S., universality tends to take precedence. The historically intractable ethno-centrism of U.S. politics has meant that building political power within the American margins has required compromises at the level of self-identification. In a country with a sharply bipolar political scheme, fine

points of disambiguation regarding the social do not lend themselves to the consolidation of political power. In a country where the fallout of enslavement and segregation continues to ramify across time, the cynical appeal to a ‘post-racial’ U.S. is a typical symptom of a larger aversion to recognizing or addressing inequities. At the same time, the construction of a racial or national universal is a historically responsive strategy, not an ontological fact. Some extensions of this pragmatism, while well-motivated, come at the cost of glossing over the problem of hybridity and cultural liminality, both in terms of race and in terms of national origin. In that struggle to shape the contours of the possible that is politics, the United States tends to reify identity in a way that denies what Edouard Glissant termed the “right to opacity.” To the extent that The Immigrant Artist Biennial takes a discursive standpoint, it might be said to propose an expansion of our political and aesthetic language to accommodate those “opaque,” diasporic, often untranslatable realities that complicate strict borders of identity. It offers a lens through which to imagine political alternatives in which immigrant experiences are treated as sources of social and political knowledge, and can shed light on the subtle inner workings of social and political processes that many nationals take for granted.



Kevin Quiles Bonilla. *Presidential Alert (America, Lip-sync for your Life)*. 2018. Performance still.

## *Transparent Particulars: Making Immigration Visible*

The virtual exhibitions of The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2020 were oriented around three themes—“Home Land,” “The Imminent Arrival,” and “Mother Tongue,” which also included a series of programmed performances. In “Home Land,” artists explored physical, geographic, and metaphorical ideas of personal origin. Alicja Gaskon’s work charted the cartographic debate surrounding the center of Europe. Her research-based enamel work *Dividing Lines; The Midpoint* visualizes how determining a land’s core depends on accounting for its territorial limits. She diagrams the complex zone of contestation that is at play in attempts to distinguish East from West, interior from exterior. “The Imminent Arrival” featured artistic responses to the urgent practical issues of migration itself. In this section Minoosh Zomordinia presented *Resist*, a series of video works in which the artist faces the wind and persists in trying to array herself in garments that include a chador and emergency blankets, working against the turbulent resistance of the air. She illustrates the pressure to assimilate.

The largest exhibition “Mother Tongue” opened a space of mediation and transition, and materialized the literal and figurative crossing of borders, by exploring how the traces of distant worlds and spaces fold into embodied speech. Translation presupposes the ability to create a zone of distinction—according to which something can be said well or poorly. When we think about the limits of language in Anglo countries, the elision from grammatical incorrectness to meaninglessness can be shockingly swift given the expectation that English should function as a language of global exchange. While the Wittgensteinian truism holds that there can be no ‘private language,’ makeshift languages in “Mother Tongue” interrogated the barriers to the kind of intelligible ‘publicness’ that authorize one’s speech as politically or socially legitimate. Many of these artworks use language to encode phenomena that elude it—extreme emotional registers (Cecilia Kim’s *English Lessons on Hospitalization*), bilingual entanglements (Chong’s *FLUENCY*), mechanistic processing (Tiri Kananuruk’s *DeepTalking5000*), or population demographics (Furen Dai’s *Federal Census*). Some artists used the virtual constraints of the exhibition to present works that turned the screen into a site of dialogue or instruction. Rodrigo Moreiea’s *Vocabulary / Intensive*

*Course / Portuguese – English* acted as a language lesson for a hypothetical English traveler to Brazil. *DeepTalking5000* by Kananuruk turned the screen of the exhibition into an audio feedback system, using inbuilt imperfections of language machine learning techniques to respond to viewers’ statements with an erratic and fragmented echo of their words. Related themes were pursued by Katreen Sorokina in *Porridge in my head*, Tansy Xiao in *Domestic Language*, and Kevin Quiles Bonilla in *Presidential Alert (America, Lip-sync for your Life)*.

Biennials are often marked by their broad-based political proposals and expansive discourse, and here The Immigrant Artist Biennial is no exception. Yet it succeeds in opening horizons others may not, by proposing artistic techniques for enabling the full acceptance and experience of particularity. The diverse array of immigrant experiences in the United States offer critical perspectives that are sometimes overlooked—the Immigrant Artist Biennial’s artists bring us these insights.



Minoosh Zomordinia. *Resist, Headlands*.  
2017. Video Still.

## About the Contributors

**Katya Grokhovsky** was born in Ukraine and is based in New York City. She is an artist, independent curator, educator, Chief Curator, and Founding Director of The Immigrant Artist Biennial (TIAB). Grokhovsky holds a Master's degree in Fine Art from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from Victorian College of the Arts, and a Bachelor's degree (Honors) in Fashion from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Grokhovsky has received support through numerous awards, residencies, and fellowships including EFA Studio Subsidy Program, SVA MFA Art Practice Artist in Residence, Kickstarter Creator in Residence, Pratt Fine Arts Department Artist in Residence, MAD Museum Studios Program, Brooklyn Art Council Grant, NYFA Fiscal Sponsorship, ArtSlant Prize and many more. She has curated over 25 exhibitions and events. Her work has been exhibited extensively.

**Eva Mayhabal Davis** is an arts advocate and curator. She has collaborated on exhibitions at BronxArtSpace, En Foco, Expressiones Cultural Center, MECA International Art Fair, Photoville NYC, Queens Museum, Ray Gallery, and Smack Mellon. Based in Brooklyn, New York City, she is a Co-Director at Transmitter, a collaborative curatorial initiative. Davis was born in Mexico, raised in the United States, and studied art history at the University of Washington. She is a founding member of El Salón, a meetup for cultural producers.

**Carmen Hermo** is the Associate Curator for the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. She curated "Roots of The Dinner Party: History in the Making," formed part of the "Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall" curatorial collective, and co-organized "Half the Picture: A Feminist Look at the Collection," among other exhibitions. Previously, Hermo was Assistant Curator for Collections at the Guggenheim Museum. Carmen received her Bachelor's degree in Art History and English from the University of Richmond and her Master's degree in Art History from Hunter College. She lives in Jersey City.

**Anna Mikaela Ekstrand** is a Swedish/Guyanese independent curator and the Founding Editor-in-Chief of Cultbytes. Ekstrand has co-/curated many exhibitions and public programs in New York and Europe. Currently, she is co-writing a book on Public Art exhibitions in the 80s and 90s and under-recognized Sweden-based curators with CuratorLab, she contributed with an essay on performance art(ists) forthcoming in *Institution is Verb: PPL Lab Site 2012-2018*, and was a curatorial resident at Curator's Agenda: Vienna 2019. Ekstrand has held curatorial positions at Metropolitan Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim, Bard Graduate Center, Museum of Arts and Design and holds dual Master's degrees in Design History, Material Culture, and Decorative Arts from Bard Graduate Center and in Art History from Stockholm University. Ekstrand is one of TIAB's Curatorial Advisors.

**Katherine Adams** is based in New York, where she works with modern and contemporary art. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Yale University, where she researched critical theory. Her independent research into time-based media and 'post-media' has recently been supported by the New Centre for Research & Practice, where she is a full merit scholarship recipient, and Small Data Industries. In Fall 2020, she was selected as one of twelve participants for the 'Full Spectrum Curatorship Programme', a global curatorial training hosted by IMPAKT—Centre for Media Culture in Utrecht. She is currently Gallery Associate / Associate Researcher & Archivist at Venus Over Manhattan in New York.

**Mary Annunziata** is a Brooklyn-based independent writer and curator whose research focuses on conceptual representations of conflict, surveillance, forced migration, and diasporic identity. She holds a Master's degree in Critical & Curatorial Studies from Columbia University and has worked for institutions including the Royal Ontario Museum, the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Artist Protection Fund, a grantmaking initiative that provides fellowships for displaced and threatened artists from emergency zones worldwide. Annunziata currently serves as a Grant Writer for Access Now, a global non-profit that fights for human rights in the digital age, and is one of TIAB's Curatorial Advisors.

## About the Contributors

**Allison Cannella** was born in the South, raised in the Midwest, rooted in the Southwest, and educated on the East Coast. Allison completed the Master's degree in Modern & Contemporary Art History: Critical and Curatorial Studies program at Columbia University in 2018 with a thesis on conceptual art, perception, and the emerging field of neuroesthetics. She got her start in the gallery world three years ago at David Zwirner. At the start of TIAB Cannella was based in New York City, during the pandemic, she drove to New Mexico and continued on to Telluride, where she is now based. Cannella is one of TIAB's Curatorial Advisors.

**Abena Motaboli** is a Southern African born educator, visual artist, and writer based in Chicago. She grew up in Lesotho, a landlocked country in Southern Africa, before moving to the U.S. where she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts at Columbia College Chicago and at L'Institut Catholique de Paris in Paris, France. With a strong commitment to social justice work in the South and West sides of Chicago and being an immigrant, her artwork comments on displacement, immigration, the African diaspora, and the loss of the sense of home. In her intricate plastic installations and meditative line-work in her paintings, she uses ephemeral material such as plastic, tea, dirt, and coffee to comment on colonialism, past memories, and the culture of creating.

**Alex Sullivan** is an interdisciplinary artist, New York City native, occasional photographer, computer whisperer, and solver of small puzzles. She received an Master's degree in Art Practice from the School of Visual Arts, a Bachelor's degree in Studio Art and a BA in Women's Studies from Penn State. She helped to run the 2018 "Art in Odd Places: BODY" festival, serves as the Production Manager and as a contributor for Performance is Alive, and is the Digital Production Manager for The Immigrant Artist Biennial. Her work is an exploration of the construction of identity within the world of embodied knowledge.

**Selena Liu** is a Taiwanese-American designer and a New York native. She received a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute with a focus on exhibition design. Selena served as co-curator for "Gowanus: Open Studios" 2019 and exhibited at Frost Gallery in 2019. With eyes set outside of the U.S., she was a 2017 resident designer at North Lands Creative in Scotland and continued her studies in Copenhagen for furniture design. She partners with nonprofits such as Kids of Kathmandu and Artists for Asian American Federation, and is designing a collection whose proceeds permanently go to programs supporting BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. In her work, she explores childhood development through color and form. Selena serves at TIAB's exhibition designer.



Rodrigo Moreira. *Vocabulary / Intensive Course / Portuguese – English / Speaking / Module 1 / Illustrated Version*. 2017. 5 minutes, Voice-over: Airton Rolim and Chris Dye. Video still.

**The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2020: Here, Together!  
Virtual Exhibitions**

**October 16 – December 18, 2020**

<https://virtual2020.theimmigrantartistbiennial.com>

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The Immigrant Artist Biennial (TIAB) presents work by U.S. based immigrant artists from around the world. TIAB sets out to form an international dialogue through exhibition of ambitious projects and events with an aim to facilitate a diverse and experimental discourse as well as build a globally connected and united community in the times of extreme anti-immigrant sentiment, unrest, discrimination and exclusion.

Established and directed in 2019, by Immigrant Artist, Curator, Organizer and Educator, Katya Grokhovsky and led by a team of arts professionals, including curatorial advisers Mary Annunziata, Allison Cannella and Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, exhibition manager Katherine Adams, exhibition designer Selena Liu and digital production manager Alex Sullivan, TIAB seeks to facilitate a platform of support for projects by often overlooked and silenced voices.

The premier edition of “TIAB 2020 Virtual: Here, Together!” is conceptualized around the theme of otherness, separation and alienation presents overseas-born immigrant artists, based in U.S., who work in various mediums. TIAB 2020 launched in March 2020 at Brooklyn Museum, and resumed in September through to December 2020 at EFA Project Space, Greenwood Cemetery and virtually, exhibiting sixty artists.

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Virtual exhibitions website designed by Alex Sullivan.

Catalog edited by Katya Grokhovsky and Anna Mikaela Ekstrand.

Catalog designed by Selena Liu.

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The Immigrant Artist Biennial

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The Immigrant Artist Biennial Team:

Katya Grokhovsky, Mary Annunziata, Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, Allison Cannella, Alex Sullivan, Katherine Adams, Selena Liu.

## TIAB 2020 Here, Together! Programming

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### TIAB 2020: Here, Together! Kick Off

March 7, 2020

Curated by Katya Grokhovsky

Performances by Hanae Utamura, Christopher Unpezverde Núñez  
Brooklyn Museum

### TIAB 2020: Apart, Together! Online Roundtable Series

The Emergency Exposes Your Status and...Our Shared Vulnerability

March 25, 2020

Co-Moderated by Katya Grokhovsky and Dylan Gauthier  
ZOOM

### TIAB 2020: Apart, Together! Online Roundtable Series

The Dinner Party

April 8, 2020

ZOOM

### TIAB 2020: Apart, Together! Online Roundtable Series

Artists Respond To Anti-Asian Racism, Xenophobia, And Immigrant-Bashing In The Time Of COVID-19.

April 22, 2020

Co-moderated by Katya Grokhovsky and HC Huynh  
ZOOM

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together! Central Exhibition

September 9th – October 24th 2020,

Curated by Katya Grokhovsky

Artists: Blanka Amezkua, Esperanza Cortés, Bahareh Khoshooee, Daniela Kostova, Cole Lu, Ana Mendieta, Levan Mindiashvili, Qinza Najm, Anna Parisi, daàPò réo, Yali Romagoza  
EFA Project Space

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together!

September 26, 2020

Co-curated by Katya Grokhovsky and Harry Weil

To hold gently

Performance by Gyun Hur  
The Green-Wood Cemetery

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together!

November 1, 2020

Co-curated by Katya Grokhovsky and Harry Weil

Conscious Oblivion

Performance by Iván Sikic

The Green-Wood Cemetery

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together!

October 16 – December 18, 2020

Virtual exhibition

“Home Land”

Curated by Katya Grokhovsky

Artists: Cinthya Santos-Briones, Wang Chen, Alicja Gaskon, Anh Thuy Nguyen, Nazanin Noroozi, Ming-Jer Kuo, Victoria-Idongesit Udondian, Luisa Valderrama

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together!

October 16 – December 18, 2020

Virtual exhibition

“The Imminent Arrival”

Curated by Katya Grokhovsky

Artists: Bianca Abdi-Boragi, Shay Arick, Irja Boden, Federico Cuatlacuatl, Firoz Mahumd, Abena Motaboli, Rehab El Sadek, Buket Savci, Joo Yeon Woo, Minoosh Zomorodinia

### TIAB 2020: Here, Together!

October 16 – December 18, 2020

Virtual exhibition

“Mother Tongue”

Co-curated by Mary Annunziata, Allison Cannella, Anna Mikaela Ekstrand, Katya Grokhovsky

Artists: Ferguson Amo, Mahsa Biglow, Sera Boeno, Carolina Casusol, Cecile Chong, Furen Dai, Priyanka Dasgupta & Chad Marshall, Priscilla Dobler Dzul, Matilda Forsberg, Nina Ghanbarzadeh (Afkhamian), Yikui (Coy) Gu, Luma Jasim, Tiri Kananuruk, Cecilia Kim, Marina Kassianidou, Stefana McClure, Marina Leybishkis, Rodrigo Moreira, Renana Neuman, Sari Nordman, Kasia Ozga, Dafna Rehaviah, Tereza Swanda, Johanna Strobel, Katreen Sorokina, Hui-Ying Tsai, Tansy Xiao, Haksul Lee & Natsuki Takauji, Tao Wei

Performance projects: Kevin Quiles Bonilla, Marcela Casals, Salomé Egas, Bianca Falco, Georgia Lale, Silkworm Pupas (Jiaoyang Li & JinJin Xu), Jorge Rojas, María Verónica San Martín

<https://virtual2020.theimmigrantartistbiennial.com>



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