

PASANAKU

HUI

SUSU



Pasanaku is a collective system of managing money, where a small group or community pool their financial resources together to save, borrow or lend. Both a cultural tradition and economic strategy, its success relies on trust, respect, reciprocity and solidarity within the community.

On Dec 8, 2020, the news broke that hedge funds, farmers and public water agencies were now able to bet on the future of

water availability in California on Wall Street.

On the one hand, this gives the state's largest water consumers a financial cushion to help buoy them through the increasingly uncertain future of water supply. On the other hand, water is a human right. It's not a commodity that financial institutions and investors should be able to trade and manipulate.

The same day the news broke, the Community Board had its second meeting of 2020. Some of us hadn't heard the news yet. But we spoke about water—its importance and its preciousness, values that have been felt even more strongly this year. As we shared thoughts on centering our communities in our practices as filmmakers, we asked: in the face of lack of basic human rights, water, and death, is it justifiable to use skill sets and resources and funds, as a filmmaker, for the sake of art and profit when community members are struggling for a decent standard of living? Art, though, helps people survive, from small films about how to store water and sanitize it safely, to providing a means of essential income. It also gives us a lifeline, and offers a way to mentally and spiritually endure.

These were some of the questions we discussed as we teased out some of the values of the Community Board in a discussion to explore and articulate our ideas. Violeta said: "I've been thinking a lot about the heart. It's small and simple, but it's the hardest working muscle. It does everything - production, development, distribution." Size is not an impediment when it comes to creating and effecting change.



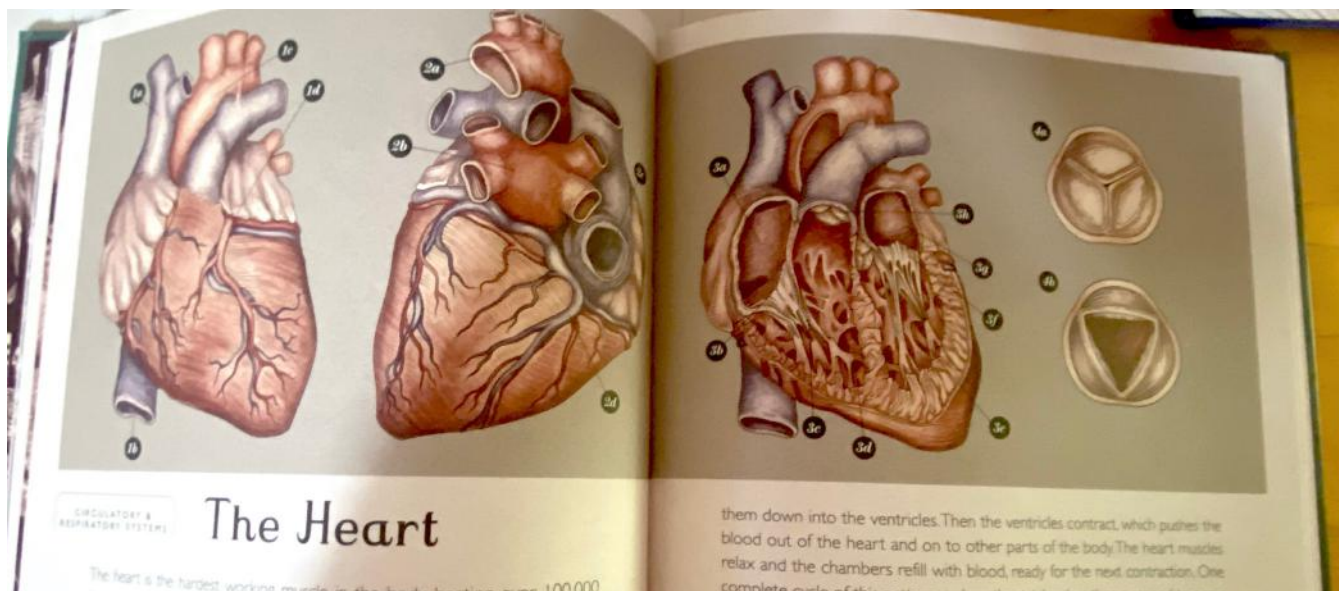
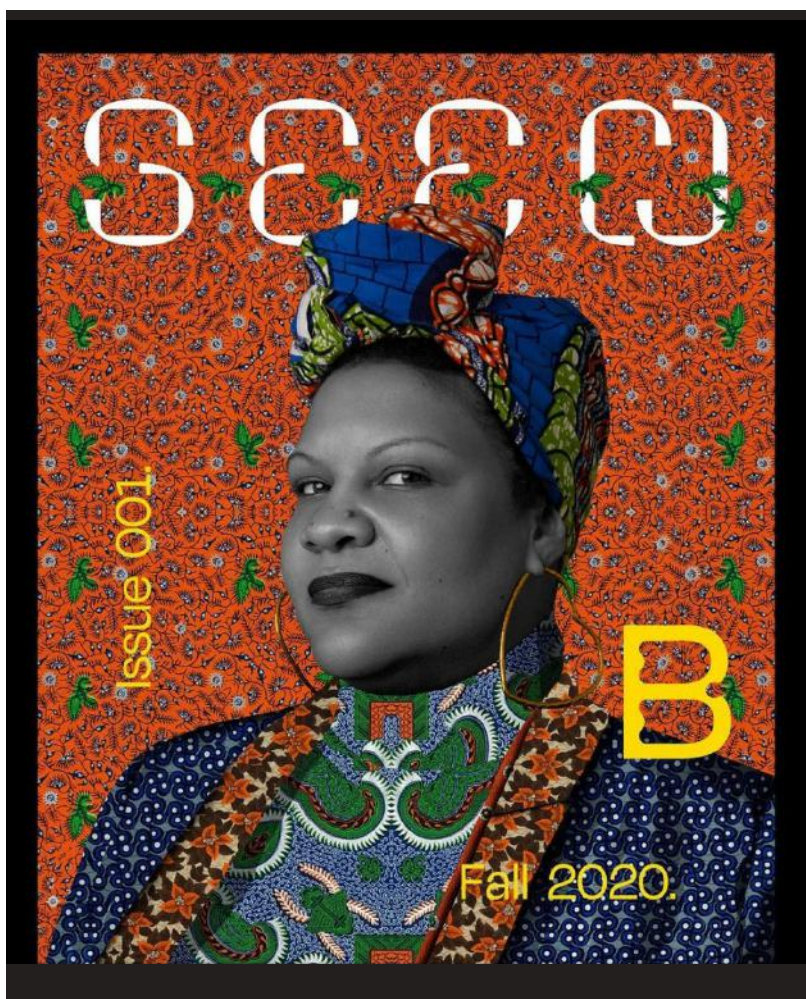


Image bottom right: The heart, taken by Violeta Ayala

Violeta shared her thoughts about distribution, and about wanting to create her own production and distribution arm, as a response to the mass-market offerings currently available via large commercial streaming platforms.

Intellectual property and owning the rights to one's own work is key for the future, she said. "When I first moved from Bolivia, it was unheard of that others would own my work since it was the source of my living," she said. "This is key for our liberation, for us to have stability by learning early on how to be self-sufficient. Like I said, it is important to think about the ways that we can get into distribution as a group."

Then, Maori spoke about the first issue of [SEEN](#) Journal, a publication of film scripts, critical essays, reviews, interviews and reflections, and how she had wanted to do a publication since high school. She shared the



Inaugural cover of Seen Journal, featuring Radha Blank. Illustration by Makeba Rainey. Cover, logo, and issue design by Jelsen Lee Innocent.

beginnings of BlackStar Film Festival, which began as a way to share her own film festival experience and engage with the film community in Philadelphia. After looking around locally for films that hadn't screened in repertory or festival settings, she had 30 films on her list, and, she said, "I realized that I essentially had a festival on my hands."

Abby shared her work with [Distribution Advocates](#) and their commitment to reclaiming power for filmmakers in distribution. Currently, there is a lack of transparency/data for filmmakers, and collective resistance to DIY self-distribution solutions—which often leads to a divide-and-conquer model that

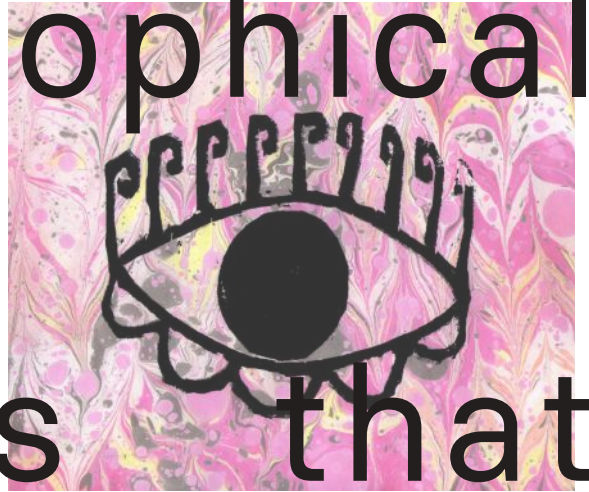


creates competition between filmmakers. Distribution Advocates' call for increased transparency, discussion and education has faced a lack of support, since many people and organisations don't believe there is any issue with the way things are. "Each of our members has written and spoken up about this problem and we will continue to spread the narrative because the lack of transparency around these practices is the very reason why there is reasoning to discard the issue," she said.

Violeta finished by saying Abby's experience showed just how critical filmmakers and cultural workers are to the distribution process.



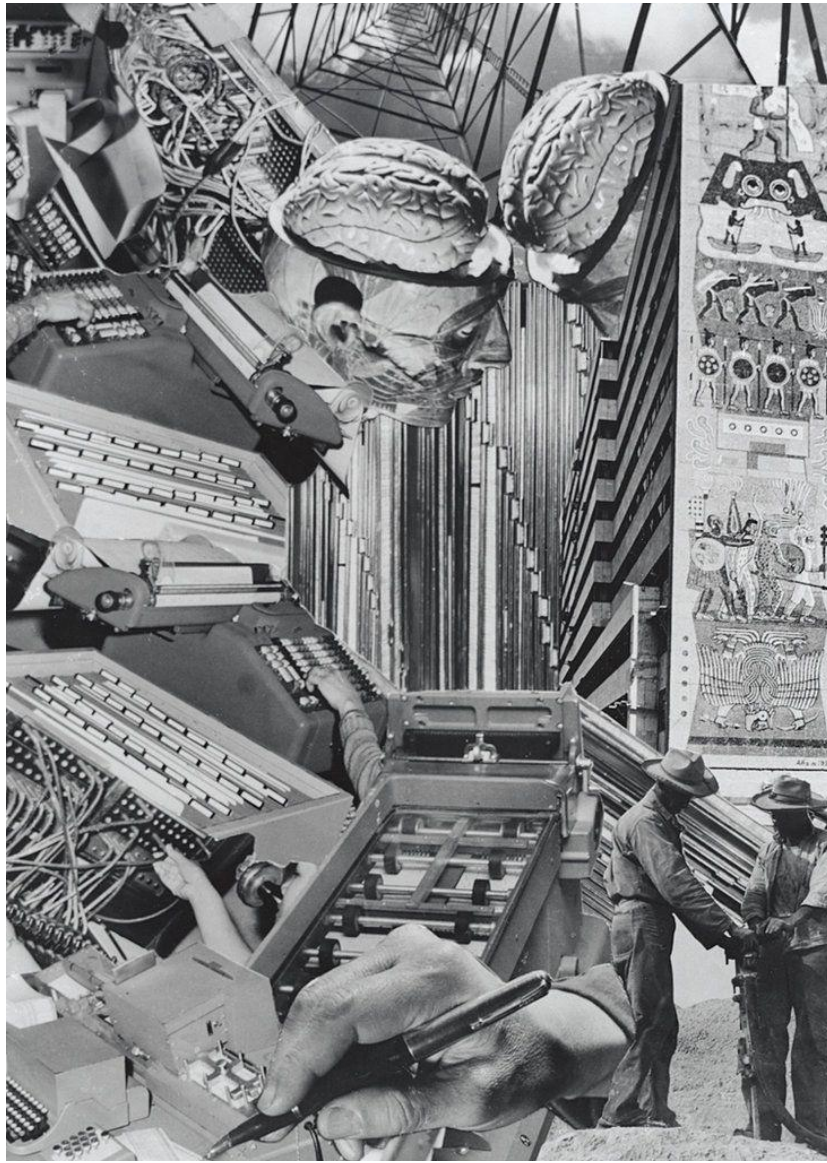
Film is a tool for the
democratisation
of animation and
a tool for ideas
and philosophical
exchange.
How does that
affect what we
think about film
development?



How do we
reclaim power
for filmmakers
from a



TECHNOAU



Images by Lola Álvarez Bravo, who created these collages during the “Mexican Miracle” period, from the 1940s-1970s. This time of economic growth is often considered the “golden age of capitalism” in Mexican history.

THORITARIAN future?

Transformation

Assia Boundaoui, Maori Karmael Holmes, Set Hernandez Rongkilyo

Set: We started off by asking the question, is it possible to do a certain kind of work in this field without repeating what already exists? Also, is there a model where we can pay artists depending on ticket sales and revenue? What are ways to collectivize income among artists directly?

I reflected on the fact that the economic model is often discussed in the political space; however, it could also be applied to the cultural landscape. In the Undocumented Filmmakers Collective, there is also a desire for access to space for undocumented filmmakers. When we think about the question, “Who is our community?” I do wonder if undocumented filmmakers are a

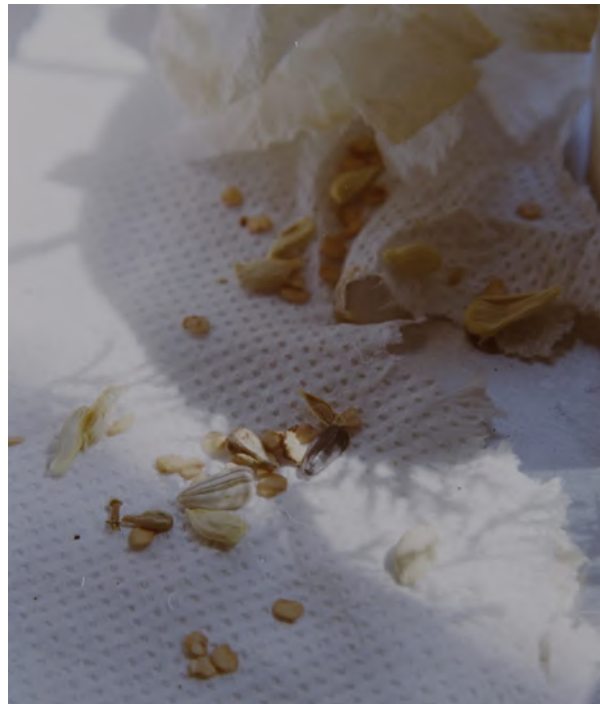
part of that group.

Assia: What does it look like not to think about it in terms of binaries? We asked a lot of questions about art being labor. What about if we adopted a thinking that we

are laborers and what we do is work? What if we join collectives to better make a living wage? I have also been thinking about practices like in immigrant circles where everybody contributes income to a pot of money and each month someone

can take the whole savings. What if we could do something like this? If it worked, it would require smaller groups and we would have to trust one another and build relationships.

(Violeta’s note: In Bolivia, this is called pasanaku.)



Collective Elevation

Ligaiya Romero, Loira Limbal, Sonya Childress

Loira: Sonya started us off by admitting that she is completely depleted. Nothing left at the end of the year...

Suggested a nap for us, but the fatigue resonated with all of us.

I am beyond exhausted.

Ligaiya said they wished that it was more common for there to be a practice of consent with obligations, or an option to back out of things

when it is too much. Capitalism demands more than we are allowed to resist. We fell into a silence; at first it was awkward and then it was comfortable and

comforting. Breathing together without it being facilitated, which was really nice.



Sonya: Ligaiya threw ideas around the land that gets me excited, and I would love to get into future conversations about that with the group.

Ligaiya: I echo, there was a moment of awkwardness for me since I have been socialized to try to fill the silence, but it ultimately felt great for us to breathe together through trust.

Authentic Relationships and Acknowledgement

Abby Sun, Sabaah Folayan, Ursula Liang

Abby: We talked about the transactional relationships in the industry that have a veneer of being authentic. People i.e. crew, collaborators, participants get buried under executive-level names upon distribution; there is unequal acknowledgement and unfair labor for independent directors for example who have to bear the brunt of maintaining relationships and the responsibility at large etc. There's a lack of acknowledgement of editors. The human element is missing in the work. We ended with strategies for ways to shepherd films by modeling the changes we want to

see.

Sabaah: The editor gets swallowed up in the hierarchical

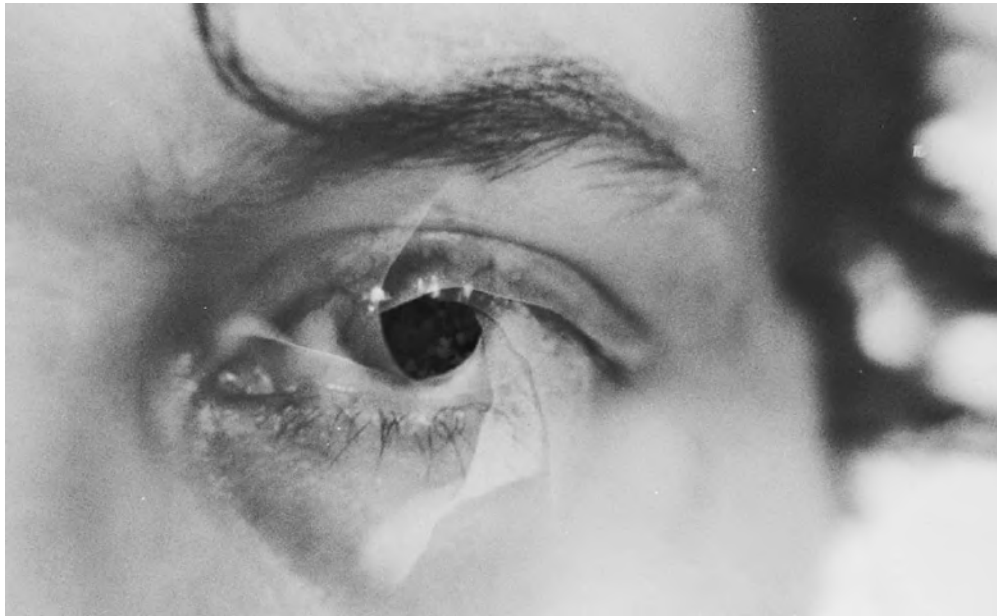


power structure of film production and distribution, where financier gets the credit and the director is the artist avatar. It has a cost because the director ends up holding unnecessary weight of work, while the editor and other collaborators do not get the opportunity

for exposure, seeking, acknowledgement, sharing and connecting. I have started donating half of my honorariums for [*Whose Streets?*](#) to a frontline movement, cause or organization and try to give audiences the

opportunity to do the same. I also will reject opportunities at high name, well-off opportunities that pay poorly, because it is dishonest that they do not have more funds. Saying no is a big part of changing the culture; every time I would nudge for more compensation, they always come back with more resources. Leveraging my presence has been one of the most lucrative aspects of making this film. I am also aware of the unfairness of that, because I am

not the one person who made this film though David and I are the ones who have had the opportunity to personally benefit financially after the release of the film. Regrettably, we do need to spend more time talking about ways to center Native/Indigenous voices and creations, because it is incredibly important. Beyond land acknowledgement, I do feel lost for ways to be at a practice of centering Indigenous people, work and stories.



Community-Centered Practice

Jason Fitzroy Jeffers, Ramona Emerson, Violeta Ayala

Violeta: Anti-racism and anti-Capitalism. If art is really for the benefit of the community, then how many points of access will be served outside of your interest? Art for survival; what is the relationship between clean water and art, or death and art? Thinking about the pandemic... In the face of lack of basic human rights, water, and death, is it justifiable to use skill sets and resources and funds, as a filmmaker, for the sake of art and profit when community members are struggling for a decent standard of living? We talked about principles and values as opposed to rules. We also talked about intellectual property in our communities as well.



Ramona: We talked about thinking outside the Capitalist function of cinema, and looking beyond to survival. We are serving, at this point, as historical documentarians, to plan the future. The things that we are doing now are going to determine the way to the future. We have to break out of Capitalist ways and refocus on community and survival by sharing stories.

Jason: So much of our industry can be arcane toward our communities, so in bringing it back to our home spaces, how does our practice honor the rules of those spaces as they existed even before film cameras were invented? How do we use those practices as the standards

rather than the standards of the industry?

The community I come from doesn't intersect with the filmmaking community. I think a lot about breaking the film space out of hallowed institutions, doing film screenings in bodegas and on street corners, taking it to where my people are. How do you break cinema out of the cinema? Where are people playing dominoes? That's where I want to be having screenings.

I think about what it means to be explicitly anti-racist—if we're thinking about racism, I also think about the structures and the power that has benefited from it. Often, our communities have not benefited from structural racism. So if we're truly serving the community, it means we have to get out of spaces that have a predominantly capitalist function. If it's something that only benefits me, then it's not community.



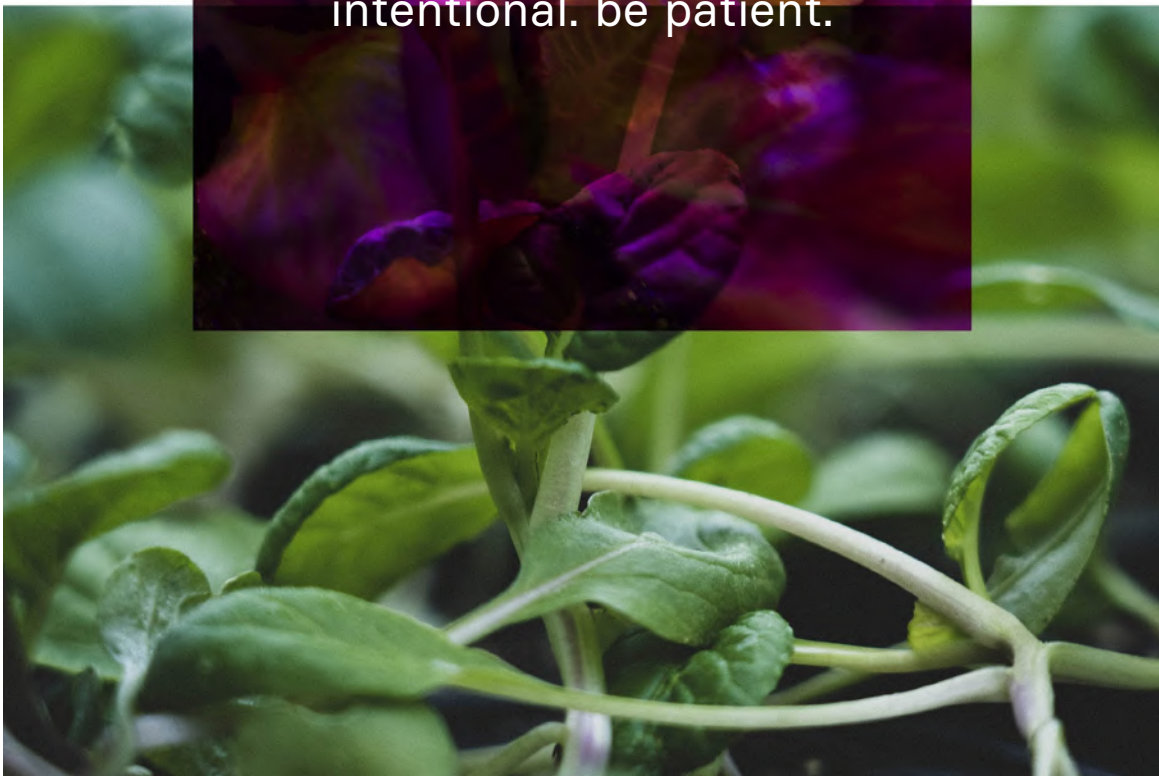
Dream. Test. Create.

Imaginations are only radical by industry standards.

Think about rituals and embodiment.

Think about who you're bringing to filmmaking, stay grounded in that, and consider how to make space for those who are less vocal.

The work is persistent. Be intentional. be patient.



S i l e n c e

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Sabaah Folayan
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