

Bringing

water



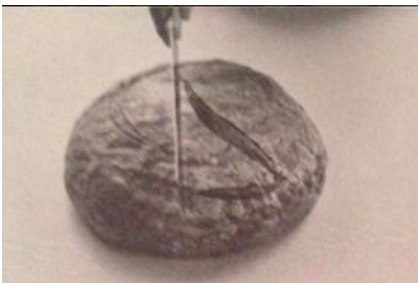
WHO IS IN PRODUCTION?

WHAT ARE YOUR CHALLENGES/PIVOTS/DELIGHTS?



Ursula

I'm having all these conversations about changing things, and I am getting frustrated because I love being in these [community] spaces, but it's such a contrast to the rest of the world operating, and I feel like I'm the only person in the world yelling.



Violeta

I'm in post-production and we just finished the beta-testing of Prison X.

The gap is growing between traditional films and 3D divides, and we're not talking about the ethical concerns, or about how we're going to own our own work.



Ramona

I'm working on four different projects right now, all for other people, and I'm not working on my own.

I have to have my book done by April, I have a huge amount of edits to do

I haven't been able to shoot in two weeks, but I've had to shoot in the Navajo reservation, where there's uncontrolled community spread, and people are ill equipped to deal with Covid.

It feels scary.



Bhawin

I've been trying to find balance and time and energy.

And just the general lack of human interaction, it's challenging.





Violeta

I feel like I'm so far away, like I'm in another reality.

Yes I can create, but I'm in a crystal box, so at what cost to my humanity?

Making Prison X and trusting my instincts gave me so much strength to believe in my own voice.

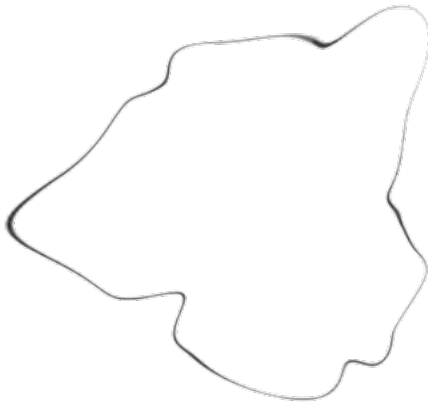
I made possible what a lot of people said wasn't possible. I feel very deep inside that I need to listen to my voice more and more.

But it's the privilege of not being in Bolivia and not seeing what's happening, not having that suffering every day. We're too deep inside, we're too busy suffering to create, that's why we're always in the back.

HOW ARE FOLKS NAVIGATING THE UNSEEN, THE SUBLIME, DIVINE, THE COINCIDENTAL, THE STRANGE IN AND AROUND YOUR WORK?

Sabaah

Are folks meditating around it? Do I even bring it into this conversation? I feel like if I do, I have to be tongue and cheek because I'm a skeptic myself and at the same time, *I want to have fun with it.*



Violeta

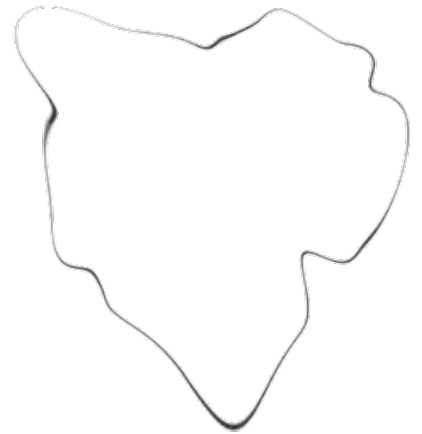
I made an entire series about it: *Prison X* is all about the unseen.

Of course, it's an animation. But, honestly, this is essential to our liberation and liberatory practice. We believe in things that we cannot see because we know that they exist.

Bring it in the way that you want to. You don't have to be tongue and cheek, you can be honest. It's part of the suppression to just have to believe in what the oppressors do. I love that things exist that we cannot see. Actually, the essential is invisible to our eyes. Magical Realism is what we believe and the eye can't see.

Sonya

We don't talk enough about how we deal *spiritually* with the materials that we are working with, and how we can protect ourselves.



Violeta

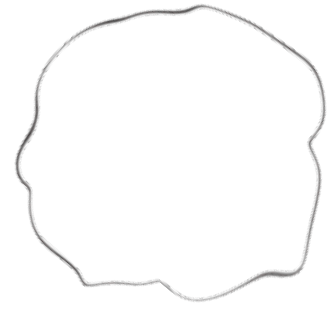
The land tells us. It's these ancestral memories that haunt us, but I believe that the same memories will haunt the colonizers in a different way.

Assia

There is no guidebook for this, but there is a cost for picking up that camera and using it in such a way.

Sometimes the stories are heavy and sometimes they are not, but there is a spiritual cost to doing this work with the camera, that has never been talked about because the origins, which are colonial, suggest that this kind of thing was normal.

These people were out extracting all types of other things. White supremacy is a way for dealing with those feelings. For the guilt, for the terror, for the trauma. The whole structure is built so they don't have to feel things, but the onus is on us to talk about those things. When we do this work, it's different. So, what does that mean? What is the after care? What is the before care? What are we doing during, to recognize these things? But also, because capitalism and colonialism don't want us to talk about this out loud or formally ever [and call it]superstition.



Sabaah

There is a thinker, Ethiopian film scholar named Teshome Gabriel who wrote a piece called “Thoughts on Nomadic Aesthetic”; he talks about a nomadic aesthetic of third cinema, in which meaning changes over time and meaning is interdependent with the context that the work is being taken in in.

I think a lot about how to create something that is not static. To move away from the intention to replicate reality altogether

What would our evolution with this technology have been if not for the confines of the norm? How would the principles that I consider to be my own, merge with what this machinery can do?

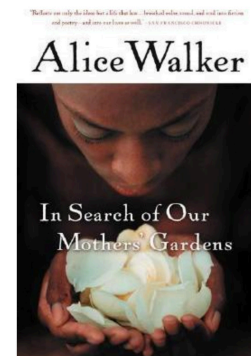
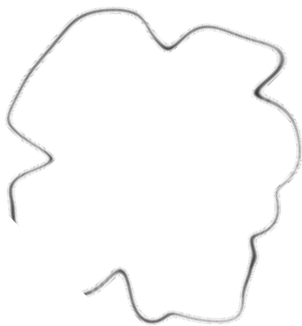
Cinema as it stands, what it means and what it's doing, has to change. Right now, it's like “put yourself in the I” and then look at how the individual moves through their space and identify with the person. It's so flat. It doesn't have nearly enough depth to carry the levels of meaning that we experience.

Ligaiya

People talk about coincidences and dreams coming to inform their creative practice. What could these spirits or ancestors be trying to tell us through the channel or medium of our practice?



Whatever plane we tap into when we are creating. I think there is something about that plane that allows us to receive things that we couldn't normally receive.

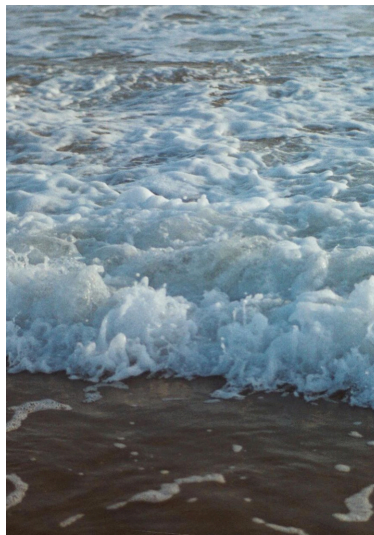


There are things that are not necessarily for the camera,

Sabaah

As a Black descendent of American slaves, the only way that I can assemble an identity is by kind of learning from other cultures in a way that sometimes feels vague and uninitiated, I guess. But, everything that has been brought to me I've trusted because it comes through spirit and it comes from the land.

These things that come from the land are here for us, to heal us, ground us.



but there's no room for the unseen.

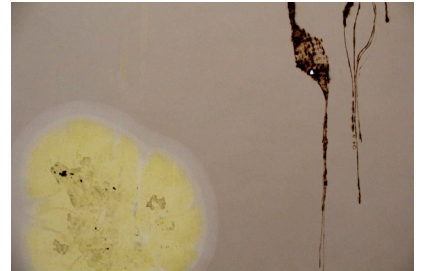
For me, the number one tool is probably the ocean,
in terms of being able to share and hold and
transmute some of that energy.
I find the ocean is useful as something that can carry
me, to be able to transmute this energy.

I'm grateful I'm able to get in the water.



Violeta

These are the cultural things that keep us alive, that we haven't explored in storytelling, and haven't explored in film. Now, is it right to explore it? Are we going to give away our power? I don't know yet.



Sabaah

I think I make most of my instinctive decisions based on rationality that has to do with the ancestors or insight that comes from within. I trust myself and I know not to second guess my internal compass, but the reasoning has so little to do with something I can explain.





Bhawin

This conversation reminds me of one of my favorite quotes by Djibril Diop Mambéty:

The word 'griot'... is the word for what I do and the role that the filmmaker has in society. The griot is a messenger of one's time, a visionary and the creator of the future.



I think a lot about how to create something that is not static. To move away from the intention to replicate reality altogether.



COMMUNITY + ANCESTORS

ANCESTORS + COMMUNITY

Set

The way that I think about spirits in the documentary work that I do, isn't so much a scary experience around spirits, but more an honoring-of-their-legacy kind of experience, where we are thinking about ancestors.

Ursula

Recently, an important member of the Asian American community passed away from Covid. He was a photographer that dedicated his life to photographic justice. He was 73 when he passed away, and was the only person who was photographing the community back in the day, at a time when no one was paying attention to certain issues.

... He was one of those people that literally showed up to every single event, both cultural and political, and so I think as he was passing, a lot of us realized what we were losing in terms of a community member. Someone who, without his work, we would literally not have any of this imagery.

Anyway, he passed away and we had this really beautiful memorial for him. The hearse drove through Chinatown and stopped at 10 different spots that meant something to him. There was a powerful moment before he passed where we all gathered for a group Zoom prayer; 200 people online with a pastor at the hospital who turned the camera to him in the coma. They said that when people are in comas they can hear well so there were like 200 people in a cacophony trying to speak to him before he transitioned. It was powerful to know that we were all together before he passed, so aware of what we were about to lose and grateful for what he accomplished in his life.

It also definitely makes you think about what you are doing with your life, and whether your contributions will be enough.



One of Corky Lee's images
 / Photo of Corky Lee Scott
 Sommerdorf / The Salt Lake
 Tribune / AP, via the [New
 Yorker](#)



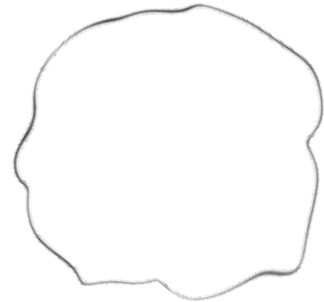
Violeta



On that note, in the past two weeks, another leader named Felipe Quispe “El Mallku” died in Bolivia. I still don’t understand Bolivia without him; he was the real deal.

I knew him personally, and he always used to say to me, “You always need to know where you fight. Nothing is static, everything is dynamic.”

For me, he is one of the leaders that I will miss the most because he never compromised or put his head down. I’m lucky I had a big interview with him and I got to know him when I was little and once I had grown up. It’s

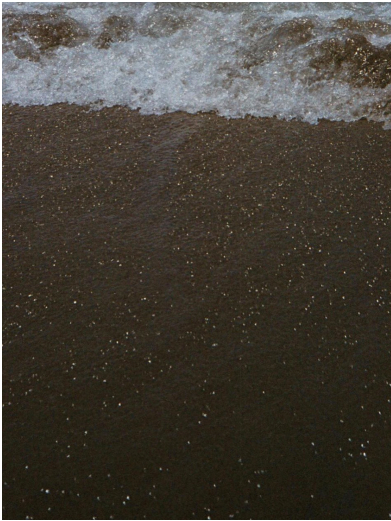


Sonya

How many people are operating or trying to pretend like we are not in a plague? Trying to function and be productive. And we are also processing death, online, and grieving online.

No funerals, no spiritual gatherings, nothing can happen in person. So, I don’t even know how this is reshaping us; how this adaptation is imprinting itself on us, spiritually, mentally, emotionally right now, and what we are going to be as we come out of it.

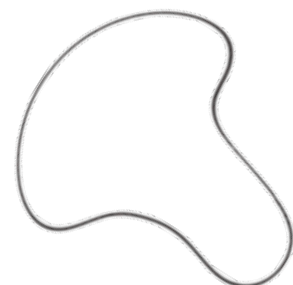


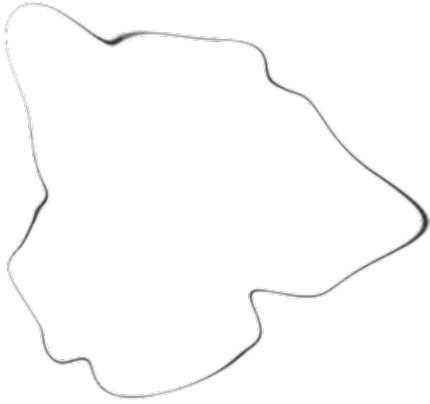


Sabaah

There's a negative and a positive.

The negative is that there are a lot of people, myself included, who are having a moment right now and resources are coming and opportunities are coming in ways that they didn't. I believe that's because we are on the frontlines. We are the people who are most in need of those opportunities, while rich, White folks are in their vacation homes and not putting their bodies on the line in this moment.





But then the other thing, the positive, going back to the question about whether White people are having nightmares about their colonial history, honestly, I think that we are winning in the emotional and spiritual intelligence department. I feel like, in the times that are to come, the Brown people of the world are ten times better equipped to respond to the challenges. The illusions are going to be more and more difficult to maintain, and the responsiveness and adaptiveness that we are reclaiming are going to prove useful. I feel like we are winning! Even though it is very bleak in a lot of material ways for us, I just get the sense that on a human level, collectively, I wouldn't want to trade places.

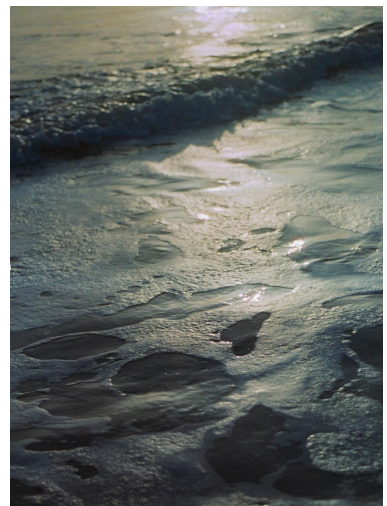
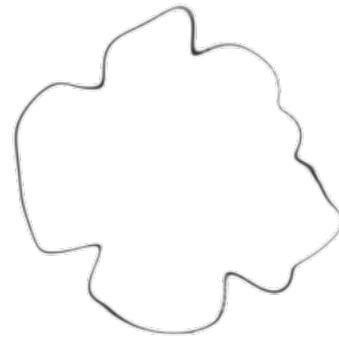


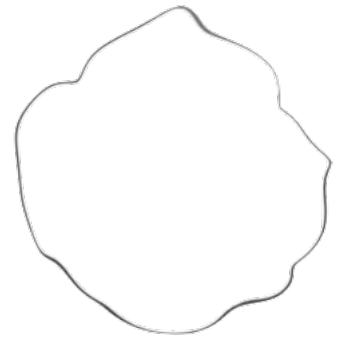
Jason

For all of the access that they have to wealth and resources etc., it's all rooted in decay. For whatever lack we have, we are anchoring in knowings and understandings that are building a world beyond that decay.



So, there is real wealth here in what we are sharing. We have real wealth and it may not be material but the material world is—you know, I think so much about the artificial world that has been created by a people who think themselves God. What happens when that collapses? That is not the real world, and we have been out under this spell to think that it is the real world, but it's not.





Sabaah

Violeta, what you brought up about violence is such a recurring theme. Why is that everytime we move, we get called violent? I think it's because, who has the say on what actions are considered violent and what actions are not? That is a big part of that spell.

Part of what our stories can do is pinpoint the location of the real root violence. The fear of violence and not understanding it is the problem. When you don't understand violence and you have this kind of pavlovian consequence happening to you, I think it's really hard to change your belief system under those conditions. I think when we break down the directionality of violence, we allow human people to see themselves in a narrative that goes bigger than the call and response.

To leave and leave people behind is something I think about, but at the same time I think about going away for where the static and threat and fear is, is not working. It's not giving up. It's more of a strategy than we've given credence to because the rhetoric says that we have to stick it out, fight it out, put on my iron shirt—which is fantastic and important. But I also feel like we need to take heed to what our bodies tell us, where we are most affected.





Closing:

Ramona

A cool thing to do to encapsulate what we did today is to think of an ancestor, and how the work and the time or stress that we are under right now is reflected in the work that they did for us and our need to keep that work going.

Just as a little encouragement toward yourself, whether you write a page or maybe a few lines, a poem, or just think about the ancestor and make a statement. What they did, why the memory of them is so important to you, and give yourself that memory or line or paragraph and think about it each day over this next month until we meet again. I always defer to ancestors who were here before us, and are still here through us. How you try that is up to you. Think about something they would say to you when you are having one of your moments and just kinda stay in that space for a little bit.

I always defer to ancestors who were here before us, and
are still here through us.

Images

Cover: Bringing water to the Navajo Nation, [Navajo Water Project/DigDeep](#)

The layout of this zine was drawn from Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña's *Precarios*, small sculptures of detritus the artist treats tenderly as scattered poems, as well as the Andean concept of k'oa or q'oa, a ritual or offerings to the Pachamama, burned as a symbol of reciprocity.

Image credits:

- Mexican artist collective Tanat create a fire during their residency at Casa Wabi, Oaxaca, source: [@l_tanat |](#)
- Bread production series: source unknown (from Pinterest)
- Felipe Quispe 'El Mallku', source: [Viceministerio de Comunicación de Bolivia](#)
- Stills from 'Sand Dollars' (2020), by [Diego Herrera](#)
- Street art, Calle García Vigil, Oaxaca. source: [Marco Martínez, @AyookMarco](#)
- Still, *Prison X*, credit: United Notions Film
- [Beach - Boca de Cielo, Karla Ximena Cerón](#)
- Protest, by [Corky Lee via the New Yorker](#)
- Hurricane, [La Jornada Veracruz](#)
- Stills from *Faya Dayi* (2021) by Jessica Beshir, via [Twitter](#)
- ['Precarios', Cecilia Vicuña, images by the artist and Lehmann Maupin via Wexner Center for the Arts](#)
- Still, [This is Not a Burial, It's a Resurrection \(2020\)](#)
- K'oa - offering, source: [El País Bolivia](#)
- 'Q'oa', [Daniela Lorini](#)
- K'oa - base, source: [El Diario](#)
- K'oa - plant, source: [University of Florida via the Intermountain Region Herbarium Network](#)
- K'oa - bundles, source: ['Entidad Andina de una planta y otros cuerpos. Una posibilidad interpretativa para ofrendas funerarias en la arqueología de Arica.'](#)
- Yarraan eucalyptus smoke stick, [MiriYinarr](#)
- Still, ocean from *matni – towards the ocean, towards the shore (2020)*, source: [Sundance Institute](#)
- Still, silhouette from *matni – towards the ocean, towards the shore (2020)*, source: [True/False Film Fest via Vox](#)
- Still, ocean at dusk from *matni – towards the ocean, towards the shore (2020)*, source: [Vimeo](#)
- Still from *Touki Bouki (1973)* by Djibril Diop Mambéty via [Film Comment at Lincoln Center](#)

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