

Empatia Empathy Empatía



**ART CUT'26
Catholic
Universities
Art Triennale
2026**

**Exercises
in Empathy**

Accompaniment

Boston



DICASTERIUM
DE CULTURA ET EDUCATIONE

ART CUT'26 Catholic Universities Art Triennale 2026

Exercises in Empathy

Accompaniment

**Bárbara Wagner &
Benjamin de Burca
Deb Todd Wheeler
Jeremy Frey
Lisa Elmaleh
Lucky Pierre
Manthia Diawara
Sidival Fila
Sister Corita Kent
Sonia Gomes**

Boston

Empathy is a resource that Catholic Universities bear within themselves

When Pope Leo XIV signed, on 15 May 2026, his first Encyclical Letter — significantly on the 135th anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* — his intention was not merely to produce a programmatic document. He sought to identify with precision the epochal crossroads at which humanity finds itself today. The advance of artificial intelligence promises to simulate precisely what technology will never be able to replace: our very humanity. For this reason, *Magnifica humanitas* is not a treatise on technology. As its subtitle indicates, it is a document on safeguarding the human person in the age of artificial intelligence. And it is precisely there, at that point of tension between simulation and experience, that the Pope places empathy as a category at risk, thus justifying the urgency of his call for an open reflection: “when words are simulated, they do not build genuine relationships, but only their appearance” (MH, n. 100). The first Triennial of Contemporary Art of Catholic Universities — bringing together one hundred artists and seven universities from three different continents — emerges from this appeal.

The Triennial as an act of empathy

If there were a word capable of representing Catholic Universities and their integral vision of the meaning of education, that word would be precisely “empathy”. Empathy is present at the origin of this university project; it perfectly defines its specific scope; and it effectively translates its mission. It is not a rhetorical ornament, but a structural principle: it is through the ability to place oneself within the experience of the other and to inhabit their point of view that the university can fulfil its deepest vocation, namely, generating communities around truth. As Saint John Paul II recalled in the Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990), Catholic universities were “born from the heart of the Church”, as a body of professors and students committed to the shared pursuit of truth and deeply open to the totality of human knowledge. It is precisely here that empathy enters the scene as a firm disposition that makes it possible to combine meticulous scientific activity with constant care for the person. Hannah Arendt, in her essay *The Crisis in Education* (1954), wrote: “Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it.” This insight finds a particular resonance in the tradition of Catholic universities: educating is not merely transmitting content; it is an act of love by those who feel responsible for the present and future of the world, finding empathetic responses to its needs.

The Triennial of Contemporary Art of Catholic Universities also aims to create a network among Catholic universities spread across different geographical regions, embracing the challenge of recognising a shared identity that strengthens the richness of relationships. Together, we constitute a system — not a federation of interests, but a living and articulated body, to which each institution contributes through its own initiative, its own language, and its own historical context. This convergence of visions and efforts constitutes, in itself, an act of institutional empathy. Pope Leo XIV encourages universities to make empathy the instrument of their daily experience. As he states incisively in *Magnifica humanitas*, empathy is fundamental in enabling knowledge to “grasp complexity” (MH, n. 137). In the same way, it is empathy that allows the university community to have a social and cultural impact, contributing to “the discernment of choices that affect people’s daily lives” (MH, n. 72). It is no coincidence that these two dimensions — the ability to inhabit complexity and the capacity to achieve ethical discernment — appear together: only a university capable of empathy can transform the fragmentation of specialised knowledge into a wisdom oriented towards the good of individuals and of concrete societies.

A word synonymous with hope

In the fragile and fragmented context of the present, marked by growing polarisation and by increasingly sophisticated forms of communication that, paradoxically, isolate more than they unite, empathy emerges as a necessary cultural act of preservation. It is an increasingly indispensable instrument for building and sharing knowledge, for weaving reciprocity, and for fostering collaborative practices, not only within the exclusive sphere of personal relationships, but also, and above all, within the broad and polyphonic fabric of collective life.

The various forms of community that make up global society — the family, the school, the university, and the spaces of civic life — have everything to gain from deepening this form of knowledge in which the human dimension is expressed in a privileged way. A family that educates in empathy forms people capable of facing difference without fear; a university that cultivates it forms professionals who do not reduce the other to data or to a function; a workplace permeated by empathy becomes a place of recognition rather than merely of productivity. As Pope Leo XIV points out, an artificial system can reproduce the external signs of compassion, but it cannot suffer with those who suffer, nor truly rejoice with those who rejoice. For this reason, at a time when many processes — informational, relational, and even emotional — are being delegated to algorithms, reaffirming the centrality of human empathy becomes an act of cultural awareness and, at the same time, an act of hope.

The humility without which empathy does not exist

The term empathy is relatively recent. It does not exist in ancient Greek or in classical Latin with the meaning we attribute to it today. It was coined at the end of the 19th century, and its most recurrent use was, interestingly, recorded in the field of aesthetics. When we contemplate an artistic object, we project onto it a dynamism that belongs to our psychic existence and that allows us to feel ourselves within what we observe. From the vocabulary proper to aesthetics, the application of the term empathy later moved into the field of interpersonal relationships, since, when we look at someone's face, we also project onto that face our own repertoire of inner states and can identify, by analogy, similar feelings that we have already experienced. This general theory of empathy, known as the "theory of inner imitation", was developed by the German philosopher Theodor Lipps and was later taken up by the school of Husserl.

It should be noted that Edmund Husserl's phenomenological circle quickly realised that Lipps' theory, by explaining the understanding of the other as a projection of the self, risked failing to reach the other in their specific otherness. If everything I recognise in another person's face is a projection of my own inner experience, then I never truly leave myself: the other ultimately remains a reflection of me, rather than an autonomous subject endowed with an inner life genuinely distinct from my own. It was precisely around this problem that Edith Stein, philosopher, saint and Doctor of the Church, one of the fundamental figures for the contemporary dialogue between faith and reason, wrote her doctoral dissertation entitled *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* — "On the Problem of Empathy".

Stein insists on a decisive point: we never experience the pain or joy of another person in the same way that the other person experiences it; we experience them as belonging to the other. It is this constitutive humility — the fact that empathy never cancels the otherness of the other, nor naively absorbs it into my own experience — that makes empathy an act of respectful knowledge, rather than a form of relativism or appropriation. The patient exercise of that closeness in which the other can truly be recognised as other constitutes an important lesson for our time, marked by new forms of cultural misunderstanding or algorithmic depersonalisation.

The Triennial as a School of Empathy

The concept of empathy offers the first Triennial of Contemporary Art of Catholic Universities a fruitful stimulus for bringing aesthetics and ethics into dialogue and, at the same time, for encouraging all fields of knowledge towards an interdisciplinary conversation, drawing us closer to one another in order to undertake together that demanding, patient yet passionate exercise which is, ultimately, mutual recognition.

Saint John Henry Newman, in *The Idea of a University* (1852), had lucidly described this same movement as the true fruit of university life: scholars, proud of their own disciplines and, precisely for this reason, in competition with one another, are led through coexistence to adjust the claims and boundaries of their respective fields of research, and thus "learn to respect, to

consult, to aid each other”. It is precisely this transition — from rivalry between specialisations to mutual respect, from disciplinary isolation to mutual assistance — that the Triennial seeks to foster, not only among fields of knowledge, but also among people, institutions, and cultures.

Affirming friendship as a cultural leaven is an urgent task that must unite us all, within our university communities and beyond them. Artistic creativity can strengthen new forms of institutional and personal empathy, inspire thought and action, and encourage listening and the flow of life. The work of art is sustained by a paradoxical structure that makes it, at the same time, a physical, visible, and tangible reality — canvas, stone, video, sound — and the vehicle of an intentionality, a wound, an interiority that exceeds it and cannot be reduced to pure materiality. It is precisely this tension between matter and meaning that makes the work of art a privileged place for the exercise of empathy: before it, we are invited to suspend immediate judgement, to pause our gaze, and to allow something else to address us before we classify it or instrumentalise it.

Likewise, in human relationships, the transformative moment occurs when we stop looking at the other according to their usefulness and become capable of recognising them in their own being, freely and without reducing them to an instrument. For this reason, the Triennial can legitimately present itself as a school of empathy, because it deepens transversally that same perceptive and affective capacity which we are called to exercise in the concrete relationships of academic and social life. The very international architecture of the project is already, in itself, an exercise in institutional empathy, an invitation to inhabit a shared listening to goodness, truth, and beauty.

Acknowledgements

A word of gratitude is due to the seven universities that have joined the project of this first edition of the Triennial and have envisioned it with empathy: to the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, represented by its Rector, Fr. Anderson Antonio Pedroso, S.J.; to the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and its Rector, Prof. Juan Carlos de la Llera; to the Pontifical Javeriana University and its Rector, Fr. Luis Fernando Múnera Congote, S.J.; to Boston College and its President, Fr. John T. “Jack” Butler, S.J.; to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and its Rector, Prof. Elena Beccalli; to the Portuguese Catholic University and its Rector, Prof. Isabel Capeloa Gil; and to the Catholic University of Angola and its Rector, Prof. Sr. Maria da Assunção.

The extraordinary creator of this Triennial is Prof. Nuno Crespo, whom the Dicastery for Culture and Education has entrusted with the general curatorship, together with his working team, in particular the assistant curator João Pedro Amorim. They have been joined by a creative board of curators representing the seven stages of this Triennial; our gratitude goes to Luiz Camillo Osorio and Cadu (Rio de Janeiro); to Alexia Tala (Santiago); to Lucía Parias and Sylvia Suárez (Bogotá); to Sheila Gallagher (Boston); to Elena di Raddo and Alessandra Squizzato (Milan); to Filipa Oliveira and Fr. João Sarmento, S.J. (Lisbon); and to Kiluanji Kia Henda, Mehak Vieira, Osvaldo Sebastião da Silva, and Suzana Sousa (Luanda). All of them have selected around one hundred artists who are true masters of empathy — leaders capable, each in their own way, of teaching us to move beyond ourselves in order to inhabit, with respect and without haste, the world of the other.

May the Triennial strengthen the international role of Catholic Universities as cultural workshops capable of contributing to the task of humanisation, activating dynamics of thought that promote peace, spiritual progress, and fraternity.

Card. José Tolentino de Mendonça

Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education

6 August 2026

Boston College and ARTCUT26: Exercises in Empathy, Accompaniment

“The World is our Home”

Shortly after José Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery on Culture and Education invited Dr. Bryan Fleming, the Executive Director of Global Engagement and me to participate in the ARTCUT26 Exercises in Empathy Triennale, we invited our colleague, Professor Sheila Gallagher, to become the Boston College curator of our own show. At our first meeting we three easily chose Accompaniment as the theme for Boston College's ARTCUT exhibition.

Boston College is one of the leading Jesuit universities in the world and its identity helps shape its mission which is to be a community of men and women for others. “Inspiration for Boston College's academic and societal mission is drawn from the University's distinctive religious and intellectual heritage. As a Jesuit, Catholic University, Boston College is rooted in a world view that calls us to learn, to search for truth, and to live in service to others. To fulfill that mission, we welcome and embrace the contributions of a diverse student body from many faith traditions.”¹

Boston College lives out its call in many formative ways. Consider two of the many ways we engage our students. First, BC's largest weekly service organization is *4Boston*, where over 500 students commit to 4 hours of service and 1 hour of reflection every week partnering with 30 local organizations in healthcare, education, and social services. Then there is our “Pulse Program” that educates our students about social injustice by putting them into direct contact with marginalized populations and social change organizations and by encouraging discussion on classic and contemporary works of philosophy and theology. Our Core curriculum and our student formation embodies the charge of being men and women for others.

Our academic and social formation is deeply rooted in the Jesuit ethos that animates our university community.

Christian Ministry as Merciful Hospitality

Every form of Christian ministry is basically rooted in merciful hospitality, the fundamental mandate of Matthew 25 where the salvific judgment is so simply defined by answering the questions “did you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless.”

Religious orders have in particular defined the expressions of merciful hospitality.

Particularly noteworthy is the Benedictine monastic tradition, founded in the 6th century in which welcoming the stranger into their home, Benedictines recognized in the guest the real presence of Christ and treated the guest as no less than Christ himself (“*Hospes venit, Christus venit*”). Their home was his home. This fundamental stance from Chapter 53 of the rule of Benedict concretizes the claim of Matthew 25: 35: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”.

Later in the innovative 13th century, the Dominicans and Franciscans were founded and followed in the Benedictine tradition of making their residences centers of service for the poor and abandoned. Just as urban areas developed across Europe, these orders received and provided hospitality to those who had no where to go.

Jesuit Hospitality on the road, in the journeying

When the Society of Jesus was founded in the 16th century, we found Christ more often on the road than in the home. By making the locus of our life's work where he was, we found our place not at home but by accompanying the variety of ways that he was on the road. Where he/they were, we went.

One of the early founders of the Society of Jesus Jerome Nadal, S.J. (1507-1580) provided the theological grounds for this missionary trajectory

In 1554 Nadal writes: "It must be noted that in the Society there are different kinds of houses or dwellings." Then Nadal provides an order that begins with neophytes in formation, moving eventually to the professed house, but then going further into the "journeyings." He writes: "These are: the house of probation, the college, the professed house, and the journey, and by this last the whole world becomes this house."

Nadal's identification of our domicile with our ministry is striking for he reverses what earlier religious founders do: ministry does not expand from Jesuit community; rather, Jesuit community occurs where Jesuit ministry is. In 1561, Nadal writes: "There are missions, which are for the whole world, which is our house. Wherever there is need or greater utility for our ministries, there is our house." We live wherever those in need are.

In Nadal's writings we find a reason why the Society writes and reflects so rarely on Jesuit communities and Jesuit houses. Eloquently he describes Jesuit identity:

The principal and most characteristic dwelling for Jesuit is not in the professed houses, but in journeyings... I declare that the characteristic and most perfect house of the Society is the journeys of the professed, by which they diligently seek to gain for Christ the sheep that are perishing.

These journeyings are why we at Boston College invite our students to go where those most in need are. We want our students to meet those on the road. By accompanying them, they learn who their neighbor is.

Our model for Jesuit hospitality is not found, then, in the Benedictine monastery, though indeed there is much we could learn from that place. Rather the model for Jesuit hospitality is the refugee camp. Jesuit Refugee Services is in many ways an icon of our hospitality. There we go, because there they are.

We live where our ministry is and inasmuch as we go out to the whole world, we are called especially to those who find no dwelling place in this world. Whether those refugees are without country or church we go to meet them and welcome them into the world where God works. Where anybody in need is, there is our mission and our hospitality. Our hospitality is not then a domestic one, but a mobile one, mobile not because our communities are mobile, but because those whom we serve are found throughout the whole world.

In 1565, Nadal wrote about the Society of Jesus, "They consider that they are in their most peaceful and pleasant house when they are constantly on the move, when they travel throughout the earth, when they have no place to call their own."

Jesuit identity is found not in its community, but in its apostolic mission. That mission is to go anywhere. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* are quite clear about this. Ignatius writes, "our vocation is to travel through the world and to live in any part of it whatsoever where there is hope of greater service to God and of help of souls." In the Preamble of Part IV we read, "The aim and end of this Society is, by traveling through the various regions of the world at the order of the supreme vicar of Christ our Lord or of the superior of the Society itself, to preach, hear confessions, and use all the other means it can with the grace of God to help souls."

Accompaniment

Much like the disciples of Emmaus who walk with the stranger, not realizing he is the risen Lord, we believe that accompanying those where they are, on the road, is where we need to guide one another to be. Becoming familiar with those on the road, by walking with them, by accompanying them, we learn what empathy is.

Accompaniment therefore defines our show. Sonia Gomes invites us to recognize in discarded garments a way of honoring the histories of those who wore them. Jeremy Frey invites us into the world of his Passamaquoddy tribe through highlighting the baskets they weave and carry. And Luck Pierre invites us to walk with those condemned to death by sharing in their last meal. These and the other artists invite us to see how others live and die. They invite us into their world on their road.

Because of that invitation, Gallagher, Fleming and I realized that we wanted to feature Accompaniment as the overarching theme of Boston College's Exercise in Empathy.

We are honored to be a part of this project and to highlight the work of artists who help us to see how like us they accompany others on the road. There in the encounter of the road we learn about the humanity we share.

James F. Keenan, S.J.

Vice Provost for Global Engagement at Boston College

Exercises in Empathy

An exhibition, 104 artists, 14 curators, 8 cities, 3 continents, that sets in motion ideas of art, empathy, education, knowledge, the university and, of course, the future. A project nourished by the conviction that artistic languages are a privileged means of establishing relationships, dialogues and affinities beyond cultural, linguistic or political barriers.

An exhibition unfolding across the world, bringing together artists who speak different languages, possess different poetics, and have very distinct artistic, cultural, social and political practices. Between them and us, who receive and experience their works, an extensive conversation takes place, a conversation envisioned by His Eminence Cardinal Tolentino de Mendonça and materialised in a vast exhibition to which he calls “a school of empathy.”

But why art to build this “school of empathy”?

Because ever since art was invented, we discovered that we are capable not only of representing reality, but also, through those representations, of communicating and expressing the world, the human and the spirit. An unprecedented mode of communication which, according to Bataille, began in the cave of Lascaux and continues to this day: unfinished, active, powerful.

A way of expressing, loving and seeking the human and the world that had (and has) as its condition the recognition of the other and the possibility of saying him in their irreducible singularity. The possibility of articulating the other grounded in our capacity to establish a sentimental, rational and collective connection between the self and the other (any other and all others).

If recognising the other and their humanity must lie at the foundation of any ethical, social and also technological project (as Pope Leo XIV identifies in his fundamental encyclical «Magnifica Humanitas»), that recognition is also the condition of art. As Walter Benjamin puts it, art always presupposes the whole of humanity as its recipient; in other words, there can be no art without relation, without alterity, without one person speaking and another listening, one showing and another seeing. That is, there is no art without empathy (as Worringer so aptly described).

Of course, when we speak of art, we are not referring simply to a set of more or less well-made objects that we may or may not like, but to things that mysteriously condense feelings and provoke emotional and spiritual experiences within us. Art, with all the mystery that surrounds it, is an emotional experience through which we say things to one another that transcend times, cultures and geographies. An essential form of speaking in times of intense and radical dissent, of impossible conversations and seemingly incompatible ways of life.

Drawing on a series of philosophical meditations on art, literature and music, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum shows how emotions provoke *upheavals of thought*. These *upheavals* not only expand the human capacity to feel ourselves, but also to feel the other.

The imaginative exercise we undertake when reading a poem, looking at a painting, watching a film or listening to a piece of music involves not only the activation of our imagination, but also the establishment of relationships between different characters, elements, perspectives, ways of seeing and ways of being. Through these different experiences, the reader, the viewer and the listener learn to appreciate the emotional lives of others.

Through art we can thus live more than one life. Not only because of the movements of sensitive imagination that carry us to distant times, unknown places and realities we could never have anticipated, but also, to again invoke Nussbaum, because through art we can inhabit the intimacy of other beings, feeling their steps, their fears, their desires, as if they were our own. Or, as the poet Rilke says, the movement through which poetry guides us allows us, for a moment, to leap into the centre of a being and see the world as if we were that being. It is not seeing through beings as mere windows onto the outside, the poet says, but seeing from within.

For both the poet and the philosopher, when we are able to live these borrowed lives that art makes available to us, it becomes more difficult to see the other as strange, repulsive or hostile, even when political forces and organisations or certain media portray particular groups and communities as threatening.

The possibility of living another life through our imagination not only broadens human emotionality but, as Martha Nussbaum reminds us in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), art teaches us to think critically, to analyse arguments and to imagine life from the point of view of someone other than ourselves.

As a *School of Empathy*, this Triennale presents itself as a moral laboratory in which a series of exercises are proposed, where each work, each exhibition and each artist leads us towards collective practices of empathy that are aesthetic, ethical, human, political and social. And they teach us, as the Brazilian artist Leonilson embroiders on one of his textile works/paintings, “the thoughts of the heart” (“os pensamentos do coração”).

The enormous ambition of our *School of Empathy* is proportional to the scale of the upheavals that human societies and cultures have undergone, to the point where they have often made the unthinkable real. It is a project that finds in works of art empathic devices that need to be activated and to which we need to pay greater attention, because within them lies the possibility of deinstalling the growing dehumanisation we see coming towards us. A dehumanisation driven by the growing dominance of digital mechanisms and by a kind of deafness that renders us incapable of dialogue: we all speak as if we had toothless mouths, to use Wittgenstein’s brutal metaphor. Art, as a school in which this greater knowledge of the other can be exercised, allows our speech acts to be heard and enables us, in response to Pope Leo XIV’s appeal, to remain human.

Nuno Crespo

Chief Curator

Art Cut 26

Catholic Universities Art Triennale

Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment

In the Company of Others

The curatorial premise of *Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment* began with a question about the relationship between healing and empathy. In conversations with people whose work brings them into intimate contact with the complexities of human suffering—doctors, artists, social workers, priests, psychoanalysts—a common response emerged in different vocabularies: healing, whether emotional, spiritual, physical, or cultural, cannot be accomplished alone. It is relational. Someone is near.

Closely related to but more physical than witness, accompaniment closes the distance between ourselves and the other and implies companionship, co-presence, and proximity: an embodied being “with” rather than “for.” Its etymological roots — Latin *ad-* (“to”) + *com-* (“with”) + *panis* (“bread”) — ground the exhibition in the ordinary intimacy of incarnate activities like eating meals, taking walks, weaving and sewing, and making poetry that have created community, sustained the flesh and preserved the human spirit for millennia.

At a moment increasingly shaped by online isolation and disembodied forms of exchange, Accompaniment turns towards the body, communion, and material engagement — the very conditions that constitute being human. Across painting, sculpture, books, basketry, film, textiles, sound, and participatory forms, the exhibition considers empathy not as identification, but as a practice of attention and attunement. Rather than proposing art as an instrument for producing empathy, *Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment* asks what the encounter with an artwork might teach us about attending to what is before us and remaining receptive to the singularity of the other.

Following Jill Bennett’s framework in *Empathic Vision* (2005), we approach these artworks as offerings of “affective engagement”¹ as opposed to occasions of spectatorship. Luckily, we do not encounter the world first as an argument. Neuroscience informs us that long before experience becomes an explanation, the body is receiving and registering color, temperature, texture, tone, location and the innumerable signals of its own interior. Much of this occurs beneath conscious awareness. Foregrounding somatic experience as the primary way we encounter

art and the world, the exhibition operates as a site of affective inquiry where we meet and receive things made, used, and transformed by other living beings.

Within the exhibition, this call to pause and engage on a sensorial level emerges as a method for the wandering viewer to attune their inner ear. We use the metaphors of musicality — adjusting one’s register or listening with one’s body — to help us both engage with the constellation of artworks and develop our capacities for empathic accompaniment. Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca’s assembly of layered voices recalibrates our perception of immigrant experiences. Lucky Pierre’s silent video of volunteers consuming the final meals of death row inmates sounds the depth of a violent and punitive carceral system. Deb Todd Wheeler’s audio walk embodies coming into resonance with one’s own grief and the suffering of others. Sister Corita Kent’s joyful Mary’s Day procession is a movement towards communion and justice, where Pop Art’s visual language and the Christian imperative to feed the hungry are brought into harmony. Lisa Elmaleh’s portraits of migrants and aid workers on the border emerge from many conversations with individuals seeking a better life, listening beneath the noise of our country’s current fearmongering around immigration.

If empathy is understood as a practice of recalibrating our perception through attentiveness, then materials, too, can become sites of receptivity to the gestures and histories that have shaped them.

Brazilian artist Sonia Gomes knits, twists, drapes, layers, scrunches and bends fabric into shapes and assemblages that seem to have undergone human experiences. Like us, they huddle, strain, droop and reach. They get knotted up. Some are put in cages. Over multiple forms including clothing, sculpture and installation, they carry the touch and texture of experiences of everybody who has worn, flaunted, discarded, lost, loved or donated them along the way.

Sidival Fila’s works reveal how attention to matter and time leads to an answering gesture. A Franciscan friar living in Rome, Fila is drawn to wood and textiles with past lives, including antique linens, bits of brocade, embroidered liturgical vestments, and cotton fragments, some dating back to the seventeenth

century. Fila's practice begins with willingness to attend to what surfaces hold. Stains, rips and tiny holes from feasting silverfish are not repaired but instead guide the dialogue with Fila's delicate acts of stitching and seaming. Psychoanalyst Mari Ruti, writing through Lacan, describes "the tear in the fabric of the symbolic caused by the real" as "the hole through which the sublime enters the domain of everyday life."² The thought has an almost literal resonance with Fila's holes and cuts. Compositions and sculptural forms emerge from everything that has acted on them, including the artist's time and sensitivity to the revelations of ordinary matter.

It often takes years of exploration and experimentation for an artist and their materials to arrive at a kind of mutual understanding. In contrast, the dramatic rise in "synthetic sympathy" from software applications that simulate human conversations creates expectations about how the world should meet us: immediately, efficiently, and predictably in forms already calibrated to our preferences. Prompts are responded to with abundant certitude, despite the limited and biased data sets on which they are based and a history of hallucinations. *Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment* is not intended as an argument against artificial intelligence. Rather, the desire is to celebrate and safeguard the full spectrum of human experience which is in danger of withering when prediction, speed, ease, and optimization become unconsciously elevated to the exclusion of other more complicated, contradictory and nuanced aspects of temporal life.

Art traffics in much of what predictive language models do badly or resist entirely: surprise, play, duration, yearning, wandering, bewilderment, indeterminacy, mourning, quirkiness, experimentation and forms of attention whose outcomes cannot be specified in advance. An artwork may refuse to explain itself; things break and spill in the studio, new processes emerge outside the artist's original intention. Against prediction's promise to reduce uncertainty, art can keep the unquantifiable in play, slowing the reflex to categorize and allowing us to become conscious of a response before deciding what it means. *Accompaniment* wagers that empathy begins somewhere in that opening, before facility and judgment settle in. It is where mystery, mistakes, treasure hunts, taking time and needing silence are not errors in the operating system of *Homo sapiens*, but part of the warp and weave of being human.

The unknown here is not something to be overcome. Édouard Glissant, the Caribbean philosopher and poet, defended a "right to opacity," asking, "Why must I absolutely understand the Other in order to live next to him and work with him?" In *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation*, Malian filmmaker and scholar Manthia Diawara takes this question seriously. The film wanders with Glissant across the Atlantic allowing seascape, memory, and silence to enter its flow. Diawara recalls Glissant's distrust of cinema's tendency toward transparency and tidy meaning; for Glissant, he writes, "what was left out of the frame was as important as what was revealed." Diawara's film leaves room for what remains outside the frame.³

The act of staying with what does not readily disclose itself is a gesture of hope and abiding. Duration is an important player throughout the exhibition, not simply because slowness offers a corrective to technological acceleration, but because time belongs intrinsically to many of these works. It is not something surrounding the work; it is one of its materials. Human life unfolds corporally and emotionally over time. Sometimes we come to understanding—or healing, or the completion of an artwork—very slowly. Grief has its own pace; walking, painting protest posters, finding forgiveness, editing a film, eating, composing songs: all take the time they take. The extraordinary speed of machine learning lies outside the biological, creative, and emotional rhythms upon which the artworks in *Accompaniment* draw.

Lisa Elmaleh's photographs emerge from years of sustained physical presence along the U.S.–Mexico border living under the same roof with asylum seekers and breaking bread with humanitarian aid workers. Working with a large format camera, Elmaleh's work is the opposite of a quick click and capture. Where digital capture demands immediacy, the analogue process resists instantaneity and requires a commitment of time. It requires a conversation between the artist and the moment, transforming image-making into a shared ritual. As photographer Sally Mann observes, "It's a slow process... It requires a kind of patience that is completely antithetical to the modern world." Elmaleh's sympathetic portraits contain not only the time it takes to develop and print silver gelatin prints by hand, but also to develop authentic relationships with her subject.

Certain forms of knowledge are transmitted transgenerationally over centuries. Frey, a seventh-generation Passamaquoddy basketmaker, goes into the Maine woods to find and harvest the black ash from which he makes baskets and flatweaves. After the tree is carried from the woods, it is pounded, split, soaked, scored, and cut into tiny strips before the weaving begins. Different measures of time are contained in the basket—the growth of the tree apparent in its rings, the long process of acquiring mastery of traditional forms and techniques, and the thousands of repeated movements of the hand to create intricate radial patterns. The emerald ash borer, an invasive insect that is decimating North America's ash forests, eventually causing the death of an estimated 8 billion trees, brings in the register of ecological time when we consider the near total loss of species which has existed for close to 50 million years.

The Book of Walks is Boston artist and songwriter Deb Todd Wheeler's poetic archive/memoir of *Radio Silence*, a guided, geolocated audio walk through a reclaimed Superfund site just a few miles from this exhibition. The project emerged in the wake of the unthinkable death of Wheeler's seventeen-year-old son, Lucas, from a virus that suddenly attacked his heart, followed soon after by the loss of her brother and collaborator, filmmaker Rob Todd. Over the course of four years, Wheeler accompanied hundreds of people, mostly one at a time, along a route she choreographed through the woods, across a meadow, and around Lost Pond, a small, ancient glacial kettle

pond not far from this exhibition. As they walked, geolocated songs, birdsong and conversation entered and receded from the environment. Wheeler's work leading grief rituals gives itself over to temporality: to walking and listening, repetition and return. Here, accompaniment becomes literal: two people moving beside one another through a landscape, sharing time.

Time accumulates differently in Lucky Pierre's *Final Meals*. Volunteers prepare and eat the final meals requested by people executed on Texas death row, each person left alone with the meal for twenty minutes—to eat or reflect or simply to “be with.” For this exhibition, recordings of 21 meals have been compiled into eight hours of video. The work performs the patience required for accompaniment and for addressing complex societal questions in community. The repetition is slow, and difficult: one meal, one interval of time, one prisoner's “final gesture towards bodily maintenance and comfort,” followed by another.⁴

Repetition is an important concept in *Exercises in Empathy*. Whether artistic, physical or spiritual, it is a practice repeated imperfectly over time. The ArtCut project similarly considers empathy not as a virtue to be obtained once and for all, but a set of capacities requiring repeated engagement: attention, receptivity, discernment and a willingness to remain responsive to what lies outside oneself.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius provide one point of reference, not as an equivalence between aesthetic experience and spiritual practice, but through the structure of Ignatian spiritual direction itself: attention, repetition, discernment, return. Ignatius asks a person to attend to their “inner movements”—places of resistance, consolations—before deciding what they mean. The Exercises are also relational. They are traditionally undertaken with a spiritual director who accompanies another person on a spiritual journey. In Annotation 15, he instructs the person guiding the Exercises to remain “in the middle, like the pointer of a balance.” It is an image of presence without possession, a motif which carries the curatorial vision of *Accompaniment*.

There is a structural affinity here with relational psychotherapy, where attention moves in two directions at once: toward another and to what stirs within us. Art asks something similar, to be aware of our own affect, as well as the assumptions and projections we bring to the viewing experience. Attunement, in this sense, is a responsiveness to difference—a safeguard against empathy's presumption that I know how you feel. Beginning instead with the humility of not fully knowing, art can help us to be affected, surprised, and perhaps changed by what we encounter.

Again, music helps us discern the dynamic between attunement and empathy. The pianist Gerald Moore, in his memoir *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist* (1962), discusses the importance of practicing, rehearsing, adjusting, and observing breath, tempo, and volume. “All accompanists must be alive to these fluctuations.” The accompanist moves alongside the soloist, listening while playing. Moore describes the balance that must be struck

between not overwhelming another musician and not “disappearing” or withdrawing so completely that there is no longer adequate support.

In *RISE* (2018), both the filmmakers Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca, and their collaborators orchestrate what it means to be attuned. It is built into their process of filmmaking where the actors and spoken-word poets take part in creating their own representations of culture and identity. The work's form and ethos are echoed in the architecture of the Toronto Subway where it was filmed; different voices inhabit a structure without becoming interchangeable.

In this exhibition bread is eaten. Music is played and heard by bodies. Cloth touches flesh. Grief is lodged in the throat and chest. A voice breaks, breathes, hesitates. Ash has grain. Reeds pass through fingers. Film takes time to watch. A photograph is developed by hand. Art itself is encountered by bodies that enter a room, adjust their eyes, look, walk, stop. The exhibition is haptic, corporeal, carnal, somatic — and relational.

An exhibition is itself a form of gathering which enacts receptivity and hospitality. At Boston College, contemporary art shares a 19th-century library lined with antique books. A spoken-word poem may be heard while looking at a stained ancient cloth. A photograph encountered might become an afterimage beside a later object. The reflections through stained glass dance over a painting.

The installation performs the willingness intrinsic to empathy to be with and affected by something outside of ourselves. One work alters the atmosphere around another without becoming its explanation. The delicate interventions of Fila's needlework share space with the repeated patterns in Frey's baskets; Deb Todd Wheeler's walks might traverse the grief of *Final Meals*; the colorful beads sewn into Sonia Gomes's garments can speak across the room to the bright handmade protest posters in Sister Corita's Mary's Day procession without making the two practices equivalent. Wagner & de Burca, and Diawara and Glissant echo the imperative not to collapse the differences which define us in our unique particularity as incarnated beings. *Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment* does not impose a common tempo. It asks for enough attentiveness to register when another work, material, or person might require a different pace.

Finally, art does not make us instantly empathetic simply by exposing us to another person's experience, nor should it be judged on its use value to create more compassionate human beings; to do so would trap it in the instrumentality of the marketplace. What an encounter with art may provide is less determinate and more expansive: sustained contact with the imagination of another, becoming aware of one's reactions to something not of one's own making and not subject to one's control.

For as the constellation of works in this library shows — the very act of embodied perception operates in the interaction between viewers and artworks gathered together in the same space. The works offer themselves to each other and to us in a

two-way gesture of giving and taking. What we might call an aesthetic hospitality of host and guest, each reciprocating the other's invitations and responses. Aesthetic empathy is an interplay of feelings and imaginings — a primordial being-with-one-another that an exhibition invites.

This brings us to the colloquial German *Einführung*—"feeling into"—and to the simple possibility that empathy may need to begin in a willingness to linger. What we come to recognize in another depends on our capacity to remain attentive: to look again, to listen. Art asks this of us through the body as much as the mind, through ordinary substances and activities—sharing food, working with our hands, bodies moving alongside one another. The great hope of Art Cut is that contemporary art can help refine these sensorial and reflective capacities, making us more receptive to what is already present but perhaps outside our apprehension.

Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment keeps us from taking another's experience as our own; it asks instead that we learn how to stay beside what remains other, allowing ourselves to be affected without possessing or forcing an outcome. *Accompaniment* is, after all, co-presence and companionship, the "being with," which allows every person's difference and singularity to be honored. Sister Corita Kent's advice to "Love the moment and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries" reflects the expansive, imaginative, and generative possibilities that being awake, alive, and attentive creates. In the final analysis, the artworks and viewers gathered together by the *Exercises in Empathy* global initiative are an act of cooperation and embodied co-creation which invites us to grow in love and willingness to remain in the presence and mystery of each other, and all that cannot fully be known.

Sheila Gallagher

Co-curator of *Exercises in Empathy: Accompaniment*

1

Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

2

Mari Ruti, *The Singularity of Being* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

3

Manthia Diawara, dir., *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation*, 50 min. See also Diawara's related essay, "One World in Relation" (2011).

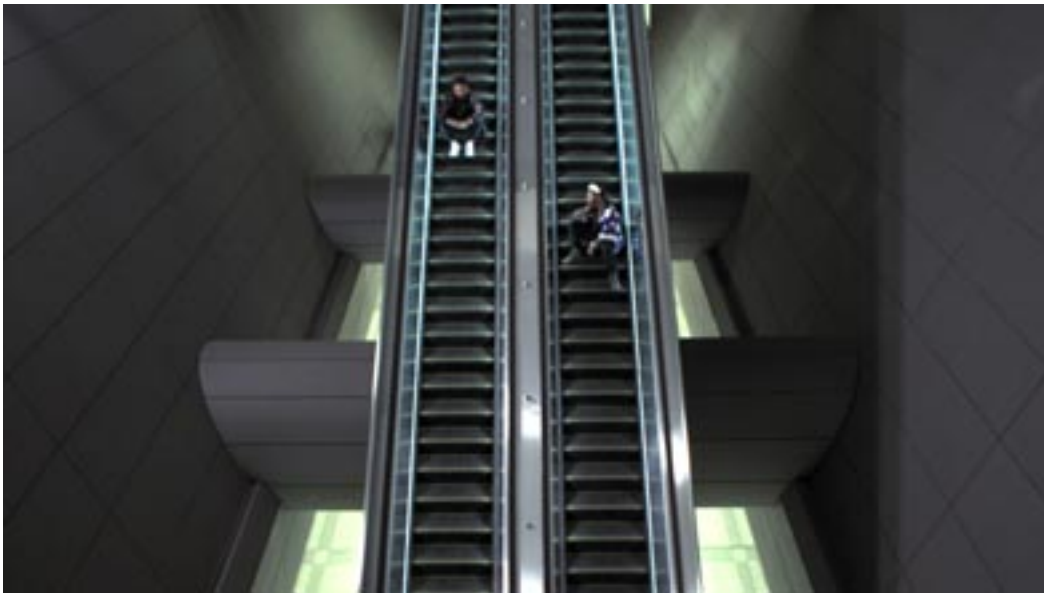
4

Michael Owen Jones, "Dining on Death Row: Last Meals and the Crutch of Ritual," *Journal of American Folklore* 127, no. 503 (2014).

Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca

R/SE (2018) was developed with members of R.I.S.E. (Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere), a Toronto-based, youth-led movement founded by spoken-word poet Randell Adjei that brings together poets, rappers, singers, and musicians through weekly open-mic gatherings. During a three-month residency, Wagner & de Burca worked closely with a group of predominantly first- and second-generation African and Caribbean Canadians, developing the film from the performers' own music and poetry. Shot along the Toronto Transit Commission's newly expanded Line 1, *R/SE* transforms the subway—the infrastructure through which many of its participants move across the city—into a stage and a connective space. Voices travel through tunnels and stations, answering, overlapping, and accompanying one another; the calls and responses and physical movements through this communal space carry one performer toward the next. By bringing distinct voices into relation while allowing each to retain its own cadence, history, and presence, the film becomes a portrait of a community and co-creativity.

Through the collaboration with communities, collectives and artistic groups, the practice of Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca is concerned with questioning established conventions of visibility and representation. Rather than approaching the participants as subjects to be filmed, the artists develop their works through sustained exchange, allowing those who appear before the camera to participate in shaping how they are represented. Their method is one of accompaniment, in which the filmmakers remain attentive to the performers and what they bring to the project, and together they co-construct highly sensory new cinematic space.



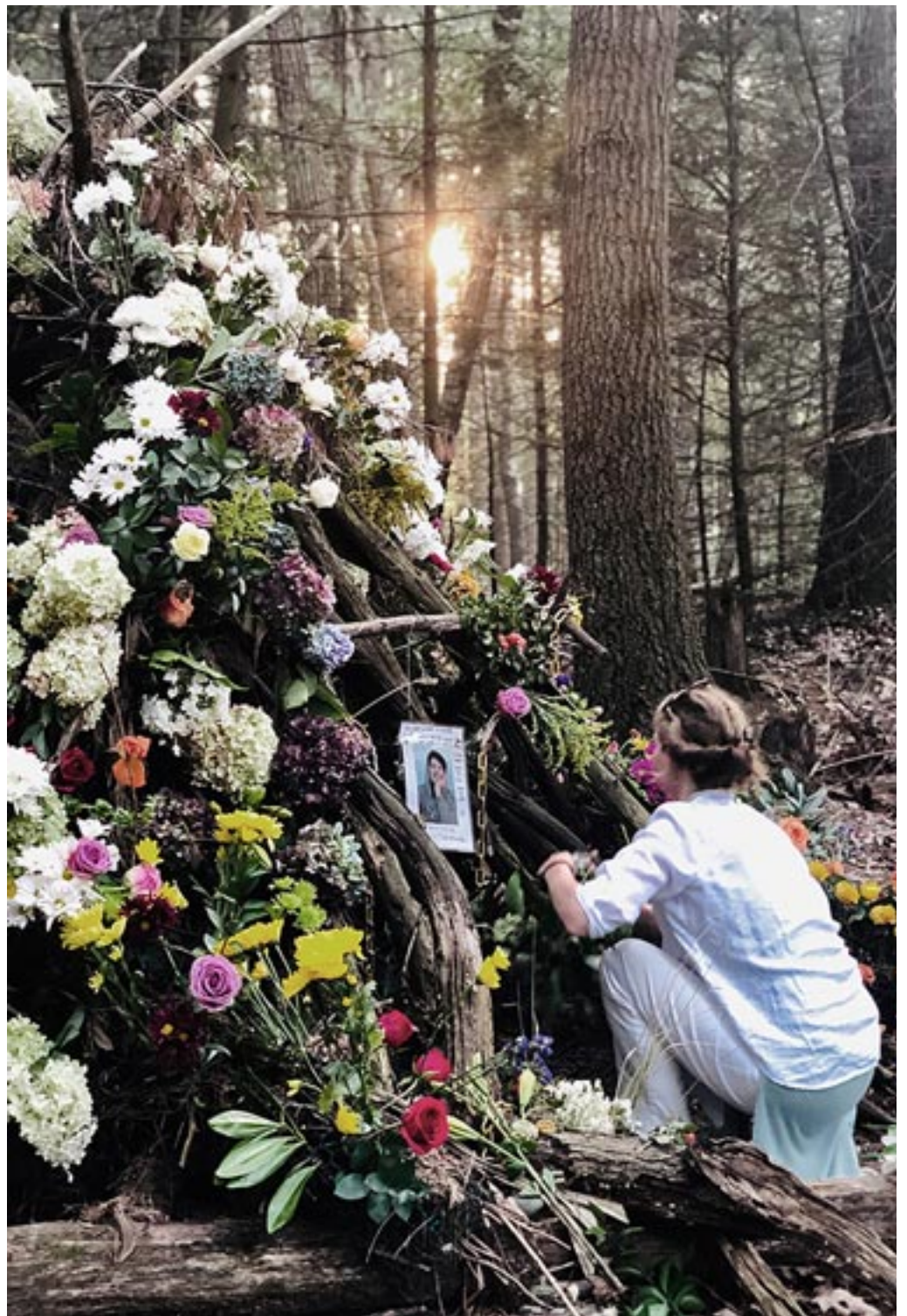
RISE, 2018
Canada, 2K, HD, colour, 5.1 sound,
20 min, loop with credits
One-channel video installation,
aspect ratio 16:9, English language
Courtesy of the artists and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel

Deb Todd Wheeler

The Book of Walks gathers traces of *Radio Silence*, Deb Todd Wheeler's four-year project of accompanying hundreds of individuals, one or two at a time, through the woods and meadows surrounding Lost Pond, a former Superfund site only a few miles from Boston College. The work grew out of the sudden death of Wheeler's seventeen-year-old son, Lucas, from a virus that attacked his heart, followed soon after by the loss of her brother and collaborator, filmmaker Rob Todd. Out of this immense grief, Wheeler choreographed a route through a recovering landscape that she considers a collaborator. A songwriter as well as a visual artist, she composed the experience through geolocated songs and sounds that surfaced at particular places, folding music into footsteps, mourning, weather, birdsong, conversation, and silence. Wheeler remains beside each participant; music accompanies their passage. Walking, attunement, and the environment become inseparable.

The Book of Walks brings these years together in a poetic archive/memoir of writing and photographs, with help from designer John Kramer. The book holds remnants of these singular encounters: a repeated path experienced differently time. Along a wooded trail, walkers encounter a shrine made by Wheeler, her family, friends' and artists that was originally constructed from the flowers at Lucas's funeral. Pictured opposite this text, the shrine has become a layered combination of decay and tending, and a quiet pilgrimage site for many.

At Burns Library, the work is presented simply: two copies of *The Book of Walks*, two chairs, and invitation to sit and read. The arrangement quietly echoes *Radio Silence* itself: one person beside another, sharing time.



Book of Walks, 2024
Interdisciplinary artist book (hand-bound accordion book,
hand-painted mapping, essay, archival photographs,
and integrated geo-located audio element)
Courtesy of the artist

Jeremy Frey

Born in 1978 on the Passamaquoddy Indian Township Reservation in Maine, Jeremy Frey descends from eight generations of Wabanaki basketmakers. He learned to weave from his mother and through an apprenticeship with the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance, working primarily with sweetgrass and locally harvested black ash.

Basketry as an art practice begins long before the weaving, and carries an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between people and the natural world. Frey is close to his material: “Ash is flexible, supple, and represents a connection to the earth. It is the traditional material, and it is a sacred tree.” A tree native to the wet forests of the Northeast and essential to Wabanaki basketmaking, the black ash is being devastated by the invisible emerald ash borer which threatens to kill nearly all 8 billion ash trees in North America. In this context, Frey’s practice of making begins to resemble a form of keeping company with something very precious whose absence is already being felt.

Frey’s practice starts in the woods where finding the right black ash requires a knowledge of the landscape acquired through returning to it over time. The extensive preparation of the materials connects Frey to his ancestors and the land; through teaching, he transmits knowledge of the art form to future generations. Frey’s experimentation with new materials, intricate weaves and radial patterns becomes the basis for increasingly complex forms in which inherited knowledge and Frey’s own artistic vision remain in responsive relation. “My whole goal is to create beauty,” Frey has said. “I want people to think about what is possible.”



Gaia, 2026
Ash and dye
 15 5/8 × 15 5/8 in. (39.69 x 39.69 cm)
 20 1/2 × 20 1/2 × 2 5/8 in.
 (52.07 × 52.07 × 6.67 cm (framed))
 Courtesy of the artist and Karma

Absence, 2025
Ash and sweetgrass
 20 1/8 × 14 3/4 × 14 3/4 in.
 (51.12 × 37.47 × 37.47 cm)
 Courtesy of the artist and Karma

Lisa Elmaleh

“The person in front of my lens is someone that I am paying homage to.”

Lisa Elmaleh is a humanitarian and artist whose photography is grounded by years of living and working alongside the communities she photographs. In 2020 she began volunteering with humanitarian aid organizations and living alongside migrants at the Kino Border Initiative and Casa de la Misericordia, two shelters in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, becoming part of the daily life of the community. Photography grew out of this experience rather than preceding it. Resisting the journalistic gaze, Elmaleh explains that only after immediate needs have been attended to does the camera come out. Images from the *Promised Land / Tierra Prometida* series exhibited here emerged in response to the reductive representations of migration circulating through American news and politics. In contrast, Elmaleh’s work insists on a much larger image of human life and the deadly realities on the borderlands, one which records the dignity and resilience of individuals who cannot be contained by the category of “migrant.” Every photograph carries a history that exceeds what we can see.

“Migration is a chapter in a person’s story,” she writes; “it is not their entire story.”

The slow and cumbersome process of using an 8×10 large-format camera -setting up, composing, focusing and loading the film under dark fabric- extends the encounter before the photograph is made. The person being photographed waits, talks, and contributes to the making of the image. The looking is reciprocal; the photographer and the sitter remain present to one another. Elmaleh describes this interval as a time of conversation, during which she hears stories of homes left behind, violence, loss, children, journeys and hopes. “The act of making the photograph has to be collaborative,” she explains. The resulting gelatin silver portraits which are developed by hand in the darkroom, come from the ordinary intimacy of shared life, rather than from the instantaneous capture of a passing subject.



Hermanas Misioneras de la Eucaristía.
March 2022, Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, 2022
Silver gelatin print
24 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Lucky Pierre

Since its founding by theater, music and visual artist Michael Thomas and activist videographer Mary Zerkel in the early 90's, Chicago-based Lucky Pierre has functioned as an open group; anyone who wants to join the collective can do so. The interplay of commitment and need at the heart of art-making draws in and activates members of the troupe and extends to audience members, creating a space for opening up the "possibility of the possible" in which participants are co-creators. For the Boston exhibition, Lucky Pierre is represented by current members Holly Abney, Mary Zerkel, Michael Thomas, and Kevin Kaempf.

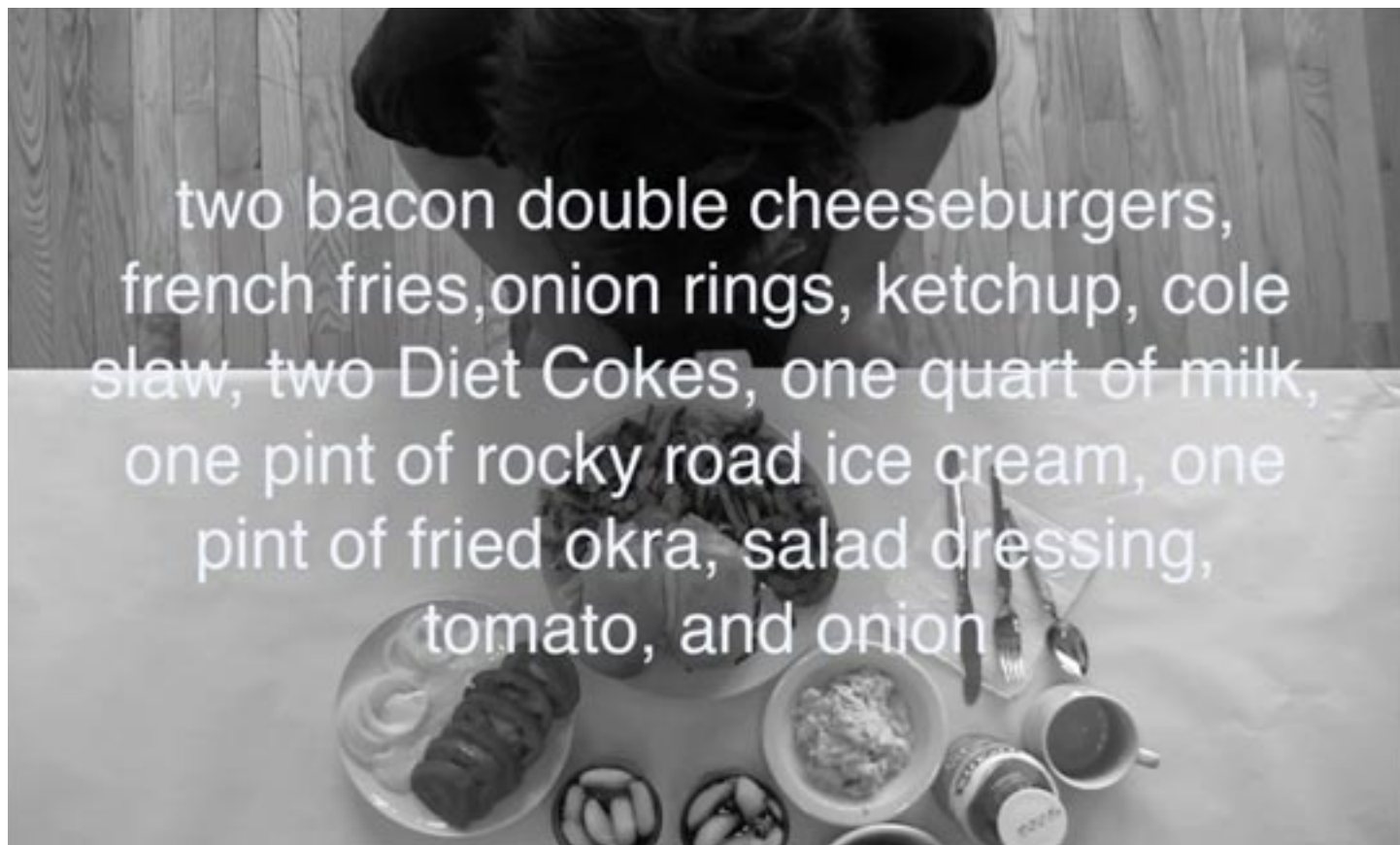
Describing *Final Meals* (2004-present), a community-based performance and video installation which explores issues of incarceration, the body and state power, Zerkel has said that "All we've ever really been doing in our work is looking for a good conversation."

Since the death penalty was reinstated in the US in 1976, Texas has executed 600 prisoners. Until 2011, the state gave inmates on death row the opportunity to request a final meal; all 310 of these requests were published by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Working from this public record, since 2004 Lucky Pierre and volunteers have recreated over 217 last meals in accordance with the wishes of the condemned. The meal requests are moving in both their ordinariness and particularity. Most are very simple. One reads:

barbecue chicken,
refried beans, brown rice,
sweet tea, bubble gum
(bubble gum not permitted)

The meal is served to a volunteer who sits alone at a table. It is quiet. An overhead camera films the volunteer, a continuous twenty-two-minute, tightly framed black-and-white shot. The volunteer is asked to remain with the meal for the duration of the recording, whether or not they eat it. The executed prisoner's name is withheld, but something of what was their uniqueness is present. "The food is the focus of the video, what is prepared, what is consumed—a final gesture towards bodily maintenance and comfort." (Lucky Pierre) For this exhibition, Lucky Pierre is sharing a compilation of 21 meals with a runtime of eight hours.

Lucky Pierre describes how the project extends beyond mere recording. "After each filming, [we] and project volunteers prepare and share a communal meal while screening videos from the growing archive. The act of eating together shifts the work from solitary encounter to collective reflection: from the body of the condemned prisoner to the body seated before the camera, to the larger social body gathered around the table. The meal is followed by conversation, organized around a question that has remained central to the project: *How do we move from a punitive culture to a restorative culture?*"



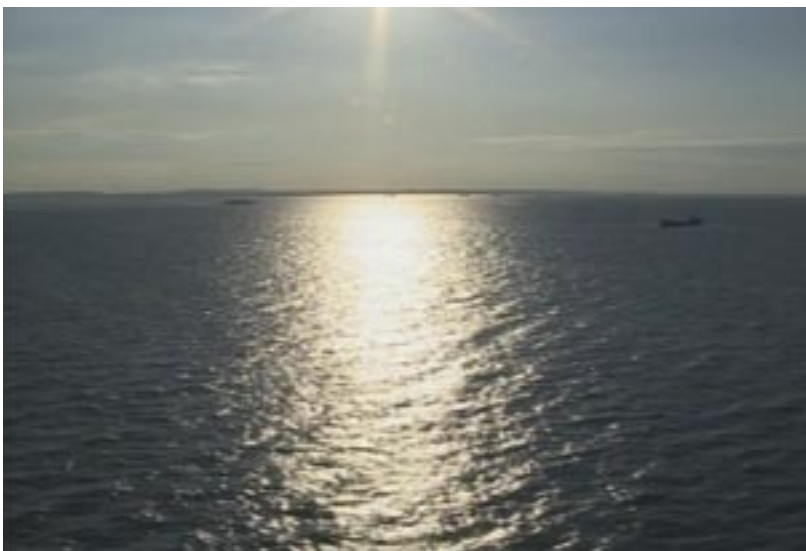
two bacon double cheeseburgers,
french fries, onion rings, ketchup, cole
slaw, two Diet Cokes, one quart of milk,
one pint of rocky road ice cream, one
pint of fried okra, salad dressing,
tomato, and onion

FINAL MEALS, 2002-ongoing
Video, 8-hour excerpted loop of 122-hour video, digital file
Community-based performance and video installation
Courtesy of the artists

Manthia Diawara

Aboard the Queen Mary 2, Édouard Glissant draws Manthia Diawara's attention to the historical irony of travelling from Southampton to New York aboard a luxury cruise ship, along a route that recalls the Atlantic crossings of slave ships. For Glissant, the Atlantic is an "abyss": both a vast cemetery of enslaved people and an abyssal line separating the enslaved from those who enslaved them. The ship thus becomes a site where the imposed desire for unity and control encounters the multiplicity of languages, cultures, beliefs and forms of life carried by the enslaved. On the other side of the journey, in Glissant's native Martinique, the film situates him beside a memorial by Laurent Valère commemorating the victims of a slave-ship wreck. The two locations establish a geography of memory connecting the violence of forced displacement to the emergence of new forms of cultural and political resistance.

Moving between these two sites, Glissant speaks with Diawara and reads passages from *Poetics of Relation* (1990). The film's restrained construction allows the spaces, gestures and words to remain in continuous relation: the camera moves through its surroundings, registers hands and bodies, and occasionally trembles rather than fixing its subjects within definitive compositions. This formal openness corresponds to Glissant's understanding of creolisation as a process of continuous transformation, and of diaspora as a movement from unity towards multiplicity. Against genetic or genealogical conceptions of cultural identity, his thought emphasizes encounters, crossings and the recomposition of memory through incomplete and sometimes erased traces. His image of the Creole garden – cultivated by enslaved people in small, illegally occupied plots and characterized by the interconnection of different species – offers a model of a rhizomatic identity: rooted, yet without a single totalizing root. Borders, accordingly, need not disappear, but can become permeable while preserving difference. The film's journey between the Atlantic and Martinique articulates this *poetics of relation* as a mode of thinking identity through connection with the Other, in which multiplicity and opacity become conditions of co-existence rather than threats to unity.



Édouard Glissant: *One World in Relation*, 2010
Digital video, color, sound, 50'
Courtesy of Manthia Diawara; exhibition
copy provided by Third World Newsreel

Sidival Fila

At Boston College, Sidival Fila presents new works from the series *Sindoni* and *Sculture in Legno*, some of them shown for the first time. The *Sindoni* series takes its name and point of departure from the tradition of the shroud, evoking the *Sindone* and its associations with burial, devotion, and the imprint of time. Composed through the precise and tensioned arrangement of noble fabrics, these works evoke the passage of time and the accumulation of events that have taken place around and through the materials. Fila works with noble and historically used fabrics, including textiles formerly employed in Catholic liturgical contexts, carefully restoring and reassembling them into new compositions. Their stains, textures, traces, and signs of wear remain visible, allowing the material to retain something of its previous life while entering into a new configuration. From a distance, the works can appear restrained and almost minimal; as the viewer approaches, however, their surfaces reveal a proliferation of details, inviting a slower and more attentive form of looking. Through this process of assembly, Fila creates compositions in which the material history of the fabrics remains visible, while being transformed into new visual and spatial relationships.

The *Sculture in Legno* series extends this practice into three dimensions. Fabrics are rearranged and affixed to wooden beams, which stand vertically in formations of two or four elements. The fabric envelops the beams almost as an embrace, while hand-painted threads connect and traverse the different surfaces. Neither fully sculpture nor simply textile, these works introduce a bodily and spatial dimension into Fila's practice. Their vertical presence suggests both support and vulnerability, while the traces embedded in the fabrics continue to connect the works to histories of use, devotion, and material transformation.



Senza Titolo 14 serie SINDONI, 2026
 Dalmatic lining, glued and sewn onto canvas,
 with plexiglass mirror fragments and sewn
 cotton and linen inserts, mounted on stretcher
 161.5 x 235 cm / 64 x 92 inches
 Courtesy Sidival Fila Philantropic Foundation

Senza Titolo Scultura in Legno 25, 2026
 Wooden beams with textiles glued onto
 the wood and hand-painted thread
 217 x 27 x 27 cm / 85.43 x 10.62 x 10.62 inches
 Courtesy Sidival Fila Philantropic Foundation

Sister Corita Kent

Sister Corita Kent (1918–1986) was an artist, educator, and member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary whose radical approach to printmaking brought the visual languages of Pop art, advertising culture, poetry, and Catholic faith into unexpected conversation. As head of the Art Department at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, she developed an influential pedagogy grounded in close looking, experimentation, and an attentiveness to the visual world of everyday life that continues to influence art educators today. The two works presented here—Baylis Glascock’s film *Mary’s Day* (1964) and the 1966 publication *DAISY WITH ALL THE PETALS YES / Two Heads Really Are Better Than One*—offer complementary views of her practice, one which highlights the celebratory and religious nature of her community activism, and the other that focuses on attention on her printmaking processes and collaborations with other artists and writers.

Baylis Glascock’s *Mary’s Day* documents the 1964 celebration at Los Angeles’s Immaculate Heart College, where Sister Corita Kent transformed the traditional May Crowning honoring Mary into a colorful, flower-filled, Pop-inflected procession dedicated to peace and ending world hunger. Nuns and students in saturated 1960s dresses move across the campus carrying handmade signs bearing phrases such as “Give something to eat, said Jesus”—visual and textual echoes of Pope John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*, which had recently affirmed food as among the fundamental rights necessary to human life.



Mary's Day, 1964
Video, 12 minutes on loop
Directed by Baylis Glascock
Private Collection

DAISY WITH ALL THE PETALS YES / Two Heads
Really Are Better Than One / Yes. Yes. Yes., 1966
Promotional Monograph
Published by Immaculate Heart College,
Los Angeles, California
Private Collection

Sonia Gomes

Sonia Gomes' practice revolves around the transformation of fabric and its characteristics. Its tension, flexibility, weight, and capacity to retain traces of its previous lives, are all at play. She works with reused, found, and gifted textiles, sewing, stretching, twisting, and arranging them into new configurations. Each piece retains its own singularity, while, once brought together, the individual elements become entangled in a larger composition: a living community of shapes, colours, and materials. The fabrics carry with them stories and material memories, which are not erased but rearranged into new structures, giving form to a constellation of silent voices.

At Boston College, Gomes presents two works predominantly made of fabric: *Camiseta* (2000), in which a series of different elements emerge from and transform a green shirt, and an *Untitled* work from the series *Relíquia* (2022). In the latter, a mantle descends from a wooden beam, its form shaped through a delicate balance of weight, tension, and suspension. The work makes visible the physical forces at play in Gomes' practice, as the fabric is stretched and gathered into a form kept together by tension.

These tensions become particularly evident in the *Cages* series. The first work dates from 2021, while the others are presented for the first time. Gomes weaves fabric and thread through rigid metal cages, enclosing a small stone within each structure. The softness and flexibility of the textile encounter the hardness of the metal, transforming the cages into unexpected, almost organic forms. The contrast between materials produces a sense of both containment and expansion, as the fabric seems to soften the rigidity of the structure while simultaneously giving it a new body. Across these works, Gomes demonstrates how the encounter between different materials can generate forms that are difficult to anticipate, allowing tension itself to become a source of transformation.

In addition to these works, Gomes presents a site-specific installation composed of a wall of fabrics, extending her exploration of accumulation, entanglement, and the transformation of individual materials into a collective form.



Untitled (from Reliquia series), 2022
Vinyl, various fabrics, gold thread, various metals,
buttons, beads, wool, cotton lace, crochet, jute and wood
157 x 118 x 10 cm / 61 3/4 x 46 1/2 x 4 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo,
Brussels, Paris, New York.
Copyright Sonia Gomes. Photo by Gui Gomes

Bárbara Wagner (b. 1980, Brasília, Brazil) & Benjamin de Burca (b. 1975, Munich, Germany) have developed a collaborative practice across cinema, visual arts, and performance for over a decade. Their videos and installations combine documentary strategies with narrative layers of fantasy and allegory, where direction, script, costume, and soundtrack are collectively conceived with participants. This horizontal methodology challenges dominant representational forms by revealing tensions between popular cultural practices and hegemonic structures of visibility, offering a critical reflection on the performative gesture and its social, aesthetic, and political reverberations.

The duo represented Brazil at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019). Solo exhibitions include Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2026); Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2025); MASP (2022); New Museum, New York (2022); De Pont Museum, Netherlands (2022); ICA Boston (2022) and Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2019). They have participated in major biennials including the 5th Skulptur Projekte Münster, Manifesta 13 and the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo. Their work is held in major public collections including MoMA, New York; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; ICA Boston; PAMM, Miami; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington; The Arts Council Collection, Dublin; MAM São Paulo/Rio; IMS São Paulo and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo.

Deb Todd Wheeler (b. 1965, New York, USA) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice encompasses installation, sculpture, photography, video, sound, and collaborative performance. Creating temporary communities through gathering, grief work, and holding commemorative space, Wheeler's projects generate intimate experiences through participatory interactive installations. Her most recent project *NO SLEEPING*, developed with artist Sue Murad, is a site-responsive, multisensory performance project staged in historic house museums throughout Massachusetts, which explores materiality, memory, loss, and preservation.

Wheeler received her MFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design and currently serves on the MFAV Graduate Faculty at Clark University. Awards include grants from the LEF Contemporary Work Fund in Inter-media, Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Artist Resource Trust, and a collaborative project grant from Artists in Context. Visual artist, musician, songwriter, and Deep Listening facilitator, Deb Todd Wheeler lives in Newton, MA and represented by the Ellen Miller Gallery in Boston, MA.

Jeremy Frey (b. 1978, Maine, USA) is a Passamaquoddy artist whose intricately woven works extend the material and formal traditions of Wabanaki basketry. Descended from generations of Indigenous weavers, Frey learned traditional Wabanaki methods from his mother, Frances "Gal" Frey, and through an apprenticeship with the Maine Indian Basketmakers Alliance. Working primarily with black ash and sweetgrass that he forages and harvests himself, Frey combines extraordinary technical precision with experi-

mentation in scale, color, form, and pattern. More recently, he has expanded his practice beyond sculptural baskets to include flat weaving, wall-based works, video, and relief prints, developing processes that both extend the possibilities of weaving and respond to the increasingly scarce black ash.

Frey's major retrospective, *Jeremy Frey: Woven*, opened at the Portland Museum of Art in 2024 and traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Bruce Museum, and the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University. His work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum of Art, Renwick Gallery, and Baltimore Museum of Art, and he is represented by Karma in New York. In 2025, Frey was named a MacArthur Fellow; he is also a recipient of the 2024 Rappaport Prize from the DeCordova Museum. His work is held in major public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Denver Art Museum, and Smithsonian institutions. Frey lives and works in Maine.

Lisa Elmaleh (b. 1984, Florida, USA) is an American photographer, artist, and humanitarian whose practice centers on large-format analog photography. Her work combines the traditions of documentary photography with a slow, collaborative approach to image-making, addressing American landscapes, communities, migration, and environmental and social histories. Her most recent body of work, "Promised Land/Tierra Prometida," challenges mainstream media immigration images and narratives through images of singular individuals. She traveled the U.S.-Mexican border to document and volunteer with humanitarian aid organizations; her borderland perspective is told through images which focus on the humanity and experiences of asylum seekers and those providing food, shelter, health care, and support.

Elmaleh received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2024 for her work on *Promised Land / Tierra Prometida* and was awarded the Arnold Newman Prize in 2022 and an Aaron Siskind Foundation grant in 2011. Her photographs have been exhibited nationally and internationally and are held in the permanent collections of the Norton Museum of Art, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, and the Wittliff Collections, among others. Her work has appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *Smithsonian*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, CNN, and NPR. Her first monograph, *Everglades* (Zatara Press, 2016), documents the effects of climate change on the South Florida landscape.

Lucky Pierre is a Chicago-based collaborative group founded in 1996, working across performance, writing, and visual art. Emphasizing duration, process, and participation, the group creates open structures for engaging diverse publics around political and social questions. Current members working on *Final Meals* include Holly Abney, Kevin Kaempf, Michael Thomas, and Mary Zerkel.

Final Meals, begun in 2003, is an ongoing community-based performance and video installation that reconstructs

final meal requests made by people executed on Texas death row. The project has been presented at CUE Art Foundation, New York; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Jane Addams Hull-House Museum and Gallery 400, Chicago; Tufts University; Kunsthaus Graz; Ludlow 38, New York; Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt; and other venues across the United States and Europe. Through meals, recordings, communal gatherings, and conversation, *Final Meals* considers mortality, state power, memory, bodily care, and collective responsibility.

Manthia Diawara (b. 1953, Bamako, Mali) is a scholar, writer and filmmaker. He is the author of *We Won't Budge*, *Black-American Cinema*, *African Cinema* and the film director of *Edouard Glissant*, *Rouch in Reverse*, *An Opera of the World*, *Negritude* among many others. Manthia received his education in France and later traveled to the United States for his graduate studies. He has taught at the University of California at Santa Barbara, University of Pennsylvania and is Professor of Comparative Literature and Cinema at New York University.

Sidival Fila (Arapongas, Brazil, 1962) is a Franciscan friar, artist, and President of the eponymous Philanthropic Foundation. He lives and works in Rome, at the Convent of San Bonaventura al Palatino. His artistic research is grounded in disused materials, particularly textiles such as linen, cotton, silk, hemp, brocades, and artisanal fabrics. His poetics lie in redeeming the object from its condition as a mere "thing," restoring to it the possibility of telling its own story. Through measured interventions—stitching, tension, and folds—fragments become living matter, carrying memory, history, and dignity, transforming the lived experience of the fabric into poetic narrative. The constant element throughout his aesthetic journey is his contact with matter, to which the artwork gives back a voice, often accumulated over centuries.

His work has been presented in solo and group shows internationally, including: *A dignidade da matéria*, Luisa Strina, São Paulo, Brazil (2026); *A Mínima*, Jean Degottex & Sidival Fila, Paris, France (2026); *ABERTO4*, Maison La Roche, Paris, France (2025); *Copistes*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, France (2025); *Dimanche sans fin*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, France (2025); *In a light breeze*, Fondazione Memmo, Rome, Italy (2024); *(RE)VERSVS*, Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City (2023); *Tessere la vita*, Fondazione Raccolta Lercaro, Bologna, Italy (2021–2022); the 58th Venice Biennale, Venice Pavilion, Italy (2019); *Sidival Fila – Prospettive Relative*, Gallerie Estensi, Sassuolo, Italy (2018).

His works are held in private and institutional collections, including the Vatican Museums, the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana (site-specific installation), and the Fondation Louis Vuitton.

Sister Corita Kent (b.1918 – d. 1986) was born Frances Elizabeth Kent in Iowa. An artist, educator, and activist, Sister Corita's work brought the visual language of Pop art into dialogue with spirituality, politics, literature and daily life. She entered the Immaculate Heart of Mary order in Los Angeles in 1936 and was an inspiring teacher in the art department at Immaculate Heart College from 1947 to 1968. Working primarily with serigraphs, Kent drew from the visual language of advertising and popular culture which she put in conversation with poetry and scripture to address faith and social justice. With a distinctively saturated formal exuberance, her work was "Pop" as it also responded to the pressing social issues of the day including the war in Vietnam, poverty, and racism. After leaving the order in 1968, she moved to Boston where she continued to work until her death in 1986. A prolific artist, over the course of her career, she produced more than 800 serigraph editions, as well as hundreds of watercolors and numerous public and commercial commissions, including US postal stamps and the iconic Boston Gas tank which continues to enliven Route 93.

Sonia Gomes (b. 1948, Caetanópolis, Brazil) lives and works in São Paulo. Born in the interior of Minas Gerais, Gomes developed her relationship with art out of a need to transform discarded and previously worn textiles into abstract forms where the language of sewing is extended into the realms of drawing and sculpture. Rooted in domestic practices of making and care, Gomes's work starts with the intimacy of the body, clothing, and home and explores how personal histories can be embedded within materials and transformed through physical acts like knotting, twisting, and stretching.

Sonia Gomes's major solo exhibitions include *Ó Abre Alas!*, Storm King Art Center, New York (2025); *Barroco, mesmo*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo (2025); *Sonia Gomes: sinfonia das cores*, Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2023); *O mais profundo é a pele (Skin is the Deepest Part)*, Pace Gallery, New York (2022); and *Ainda me levanto*, Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and Casa de Vidro, São Paulo (2018). She has participated in major international exhibitions including *With My Eyes*, Holy See Pavilion, 60th Venice Biennale (2024); the 35th Bienal de São Paulo (2023); FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art (2022); the 13th Gwangju Biennale (2021); the 11th Liverpool Biennial (2021); the 11th Bienal do Mercosul (2018); and *All the World's Futures*, 56th Venice Biennale (2015), as well as exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP). Her work is held in several museum collections including the Centre Pompidou, MoMA, National Gallery of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Tate Modern, MASP, Pinacoteca de São Paulo, and Museu Afro Brasil.

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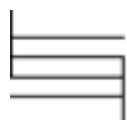
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