

# t r a n s f o r m e r

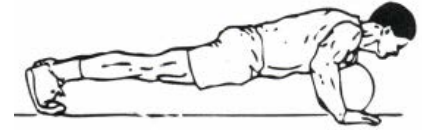
For Immediate Release  
June 28, 2022

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## *E19: Artistic Interventions*

### Transformer's 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Exercises for Emerging Artists

July 9 – September 3, 2022



Transformer is honored to announce the public component of *E19: Artistic Interventions*, the 19th year of our *Exercises for Emerging Artists* program – an annual peer critique and mentorship program for DC-based emerging artists. Centered on a different artistic discipline each year, *E19: Artistic Interventions* is supporting and promoting four artists exploring artistic interventions in their myriad forms and interpretations: **Chris Combs**, **Adele Kenworthy**, **Vonne Napper**, and **Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg**.

Launched in March 2004, Transformer's annual *Exercises for Emerging Artists* program supports DC-based emerging artists at new growth points or crossroads in their professional and creative development. Intended to both advance artists' careers and build peer support, the *Exercises* program consists of rigorous weekly peer critique and mentorship sessions spanning two months (May – June) to stimulate and encourage the participating artists as they create new work. Facilitated by Transformer staff, the participating artists receive mentorship and feedback from a series of guest mentor artists, curators, and other arts leaders.

*E19: Artistic Interventions* was led by mentor **Dawne Langford** - an award-winning editor, documentary producer, and independent curator, and was curated and coordinated by Katie Lee, Transformer's Exhibitions & Programs Manager. *E19: Artistic Interventions* artists received additional guidance and feedback from a series of guest mentors, including: **Mel Chin**, **Monica Jahan Bose**, **Philippa Hughes**, **Mark Strandquist**, and **Naoko Wowsugi**.

Throughout the mentorship sessions, the participating artists will both learn from invited peer mentors about best artistic intervention practices, as well as get insight in developing a work or series to be presented as part of a summer exhibition and presentation at Transformer and in the public sphere, with the culminating presentation taking place from July 9 – September 3, 2022.

To learn more about Transformer's *Exercises for Emerging Artists* program and previous disciplines, please visit: <https://www.transformerdc.org/exercises-1>

**Chris Combs:** *The Algorithm Will See You Now* | July 9 – July 23, 2022

**Vonne Napper:** *Choose Your Gender* | July 27 – August 6, 2022

**Adele Kenworthy:** *to carry within us an orchard* | August 10 – August 20, 2022

**Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg:** *Deeper Roots Realty (Community Led Design)* | August 24 – September 3, 2022

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## E19: Artistic Interventions Project Details + Artist Bios:



### **Chris Combs: *The Algorithm Will See You Now***

July 9 – July 23, 2022

In *The Algorithm Will See You Now*, artist Chris Combs uses interactive electronics to ask pressing questions about algorithmic injustice and surveillance capitalism.

Machine learning or "artificial intelligence (AI)" tools are popping up like mushrooms after a rain. They are trained—like a puppy—from massive datasets of human decisions, such as, *this photo depicts a cat, or, we granted parole to a person with this name and this criminal record.*

In this way, countless amounts of individual decisions made by people are then laundered into an "algorithm" that is empowered to make decisions itself. Despite being automated and performed by a machine, there is nothing that inherently makes these decisions objective. An AI's training is rarely known to the public. What are the implications of this, and what can we do about it?

**Chris Combs** is an artist based in Washington, D.C and Mount Rainier, Maryland who creates provocative technology. His *Lossiness* at VisArts featured seven artworks exploring the boundaries of human perception. *Judging Me Judging You* at the DC Arts Center explored themes of surveillance and control, and his installation *Maelstrom* at Rhizome DC featured 35 machines spreading rumors about its visitors. *Madness Method*, a public art collaboration with David Greenfieldboyce, was part of Georgetown GLOW.

Chris is a two-time recipient of the DCCAH Arts and Humanities Fellowship program and was shortlisted for the 2021 *Aesthetica Art Prize*. He is a graduate of the Corcoran College of Art + Design and was a photo editor for National Geographic. He joined the Otis Street Arts Project in May, 2021.

### **Adele Kenworthy: *to carry within us an orchard***

August 10 – August 20, 2022

what is the first taste you can remember?

*to carry within us an orchard*, a line from Li Young Lee's *From Blossoms*, is a poem that celebrates community at every point of connection. As a first generation American with immigrant parents – in all the language and cultural divides that separated us – this exhibition explores the embodied gestures and rituals of care that fill the silences between us. In this space of transnational cultural memory, as a femme presenting Asian American, Kenworthy brings cut fruit to Transformer as an intervention in this country's landscape of care as a commodity.



**Adele Kenworthy** (she/they) is a socially engaged artist organizer who creates botanical interventions in public spaces. They explore how flowers have dyed, draped, and nourished social movements and daily reimagine what it means for socially engaged art to exist as an embodied practice of care.

They were selected to be among *WomenPhotograph's* first BIPOC visual storytellers open call in 2021. They have recently exhibited work for *The Fearless Artist* Popup Gallery at *Art Basel Miami* (2021), *TREEHOUSE* at Brentwood Arts Exchange (2022), and their solo thesis show *Lacuna Blossoms* at Gallery 102 of George Washington University (2022).

They are currently the artist-organizer in residence at the Washington Project for the Arts and are participating in their 41st annual benefit auction. They recently earned their MFA in Social Practice Art from the Corcoran School of Art and Design. This

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summer they will be supporting *Monument Lab* and their newly launched *Re:Generation* program – a nationwide participatory public art and history project.

Her art practice and community is located on the traditional lands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank (Anacostan) people, also referred to as Washington, D.C.



## Vonne Napper: *Choose Your Gender*

July 27 – August 6, 2022

Have you ever wondered what life would've been like had you been given the opportunity to choose your gender? Not in the sense of simply stating how you identify, but being supported, uplifted, acknowledged, believed, and seen while you navigated this journey called life as the person you know yourself to be. In essence, and in regards to society, the practice of choosing your gender is uncannily synonymous with choosing your battle. Do I continue to live a life performing trauma-inflicting behaviors stemming from the gender and the role that was placed on me? Or, do I make my gender expansiveness more visible at the possibility of facing more discrimination, oppression, and microaggressions, but also experiencing more love, self-worth, and community?

The power of choice, in general, is a privilege not all people are afforded, or something that everyone is aware that they may have. Before being born, a child's inherent power to choose how they feel inside or whether they're a girl or boy, both, or neither, is stripped from them, and from that point on their self-expression has the potential to feel staged.

*Choose Your Gender* is a testament to living a life out loud after silencing myself for years based on others' expectations of my body. It is a charge to take control of your own narrative when you feel it's time. It is the opportunity to expand your mind and critique your perception of gender and sexuality in the scope of social justice. And it is the demand to dismantle gender-based roles and discriminatory policies that are set up to oppress nonbinary and trans people.

**Vonne Napper** is a Black queer interdisciplinary artist born and raised in Washington, D.C. As a child they displayed great interest in learning new things, often floating from one interest to the next. Consequently, their art practice spans various mediums including printmaking, graphic design, videography, painting, writing, and fibers. Deriving influence from artists Jeffrey Gibson, James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, their practice centers social justice, new age healing, and preserving the black queer experience. As a Black person that identifies as nonbinary and trans-masculine, Vonne pulls from their lived experience to highlight the challenges of existing at a particularly targeted intersection and employs their spirituality along with metaphysics to establish connections between the communities to which they belong. Vonne's artistic philosophy suggests that our reality is an interrelated one and the more we choose to accept our natural diversity and respective needs, the greater the outcome for collective transformation and social change. With their powerful ability to adapt to numerous environments and situations paired with their spirited curiosity, Vonne considers the way they approach their art practice synonymous with how they approach life - cultivating relationships with several mediums as they do with individual people in order to discover something within themselves. They navigate the art world and society with genuine intent and the unwavering belief that art can evoke introspection and healing, especially when practiced in collaboration with others.

## Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg: *Deeper Roots Realty (Community Led Design)*

August 24 – September 3, 2022

*Deeper Roots Realty* is a community led design company seeking to collaborate with DC community members through collective storytelling and re-mapping of our city. We wonder: What if community members designed the neighborhood? What if economic displacement wasn't the cornerstone of "growth"? How can local communities reinvest in our gentrification-strewn city? What does gentrification even mean? To start off, *Deeper Roots* is opening the doors at Transformer Gallery for open storytelling sessions



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from August 24 - September 6th, from 12 to 6 pm. Come through to participate in community map making and story sessions. Tell us, what should people know about the neighborhood that is often overlooked?

**Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg** is a multi-disciplinary artist focused on creating spaces for community dialogue. Born and raised in the DC area, art and social movements have always been intertwined for Rubenstein-Edberg. They are a social practice visual artist and documentary filmmaker who works alongside policy makers and community organizers to create social change. Because they collaborate with people and work in community spaces, the creative process is just as important as the artwork created.

Growing up in a youth art program at the Atlas Performing Arts Center, they saw the power of storytelling to shift perceptions, build relationships, and create unity from fragmentation. Following in this path, they have co-created visual art pieces with undocumented artists living in deportation centers in New York, families seeking asylum in Berlin, artists in the New York City incarceration system, and middle school students in the South Bronx, among others. In 2017, Rubenstein-Edberg received the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, an annual research grant awarded to 40 people across the U.S. During this time, they collaborated with a variety of indigenous storytellers in Central and South America, as well as India, who taught them how visual storytellers can uphold histories that are systematically oppressed.

As a recent MFA Social Practice graduate from the Corcoran School of Art and Design at the George Washington University, Rubenstein-Edberg created the multimedia project *(Un)Natural Divides* which explores the different conceptions of safety and belonging in Washington D.C as well as *The Body Spectrum*, a documentary exploring how the gender spectrum opens the door for people of many experiences and body types to be seen, heard, and loved. As part of my thesis project, they are releasing *The Joyful Scar*, a photography book documenting my own and others experiences receiving double mastectomies for breast cancer prevention. Following their time at the Corcoran School of Art and Design, they are excited to create with their own production company, UnderstoryDocs.

## E19: Artistic Interventions Lead and Guest Mentor Bios:

**Dawne Langford** is a documentary producer and cultural producer. After years of working in public media as a broadcast television editor, she transitioned to producing. In 2013, Dawne was accepted to the PBS Producers Academy and began working on independent documentaries, including; *Check It*, *Kandahar Journals*, and *Finding Joseph I*. Recently, Dawne worked in New York City as a story producer with Lee Hirsch and is currently producing Untitled Baltimore Documentary Project, chronicling the election and first year of Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott. In addition to documentary work, Dawne Langford is interested in artist movements that are firmly rooted in the power of the collective. Recent projects include collaborating with artist Mel Chin collective G.O.N.G. (Gathering Of Noetic Generation) on the project *WAVE*, a poetic expression of gratitude in collaboration with Times Sq Arts Alliance/For Freedoms, a special SPRING/BREAK presentation of *Vanishing Points*, with artist Rachel Schmidt, presented work with artist Alejandro Pintado for the Smithsonian and curated works from Rafael Lozano-Hemmer to be in displayed in Athens, Greece in June 2022.

**Monica Jahan Bose** is a Bangladeshi-American artist and climate activist whose work spans painting, printmaking, film, performance, and public art. Her socially engaged work highlights the intersection of climate, racial, gender, and economic injustice through co-created workshops, art actions, and temporary installations and performances. Bose uses the sari — a precolonial 18-foot-long unstitched garment that is always recycled and never discarded — to represent women's lives and the cycle of life on our planet. She has exhibited her work extensively in the US and internationally (20 solo shows, numerous group exhibitions, and more than 25 performances) including solo exhibitions at the Bangladesh National Museum and MACRO Museum of Contemporary Art Rome. Her ongoing collaborative project *STORYTELLING WITH SARIS* with women farmers from her ancestral island village has travelled to 10 states and five countries and engaged thousands of people. She has a BA in the Practice of Art (Painting) from Wesleyan University, a post-graduate Diploma in Art from Santiniketan, India, and a JD from Columbia Law School.

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**Mel Chin** was born in Houston, Texas and is known for the broad range of approaches in his art, including works that require multi-disciplinary, collaborative teamwork and works that enlist science as an aesthetic component to developing complex ideas. He created and implemented *Revival Field* (1990), a project that was a pioneer in the field of “green remediation,” the use of plants to remove toxic, heavy metals from the soil. From 1995-1998 he formed the collective the GALA Committee that produced *In the Name of the Place* a public art project conducted on American prime-time television. Chin is one of the artists featured in the first year of the ongoing PBS Series *Art of the 21st Century*. His proposal for a New World Trade Center was part of the American representation at the 2002 Venice Biennale of Architecture. In 2017 his film, *9-11/9-11*, won the Pedro Sienna Award for Animation in Chile. His ongoing *Fundred Project* addresses childhood lead-poisoning through art-making. In 2018 he presented *Unmoored* and *Wake* in Times Square, New York City, creating a visual portal into a future of rising waters and concurrently he had a 40-year-survey exhibition at the Queens Museum, NYC, that *Hyperallergic*, the online arts magazine, named the best art exhibition of 2018. He is the recipient of many awards, grants, and honorary degrees, including the MacArthur Fellowship, 2019, and election to the The American Academy of Arts and Letters, 2021.

**Philippa P.B. Hughes** is a Social Sculptor and Creative Strategist who designs relational spaces for honest and transformative conversations across political, social, and cultural differences. She has produced hundreds of creative activations since 2007 for people who might not normally meet to engage with one another in unconventional and meaningful ways. These relational experiences build social capital, social cohesion, and social discourse. Her practice encompasses a multi-disciplinary approach informed by sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, history, community organizing, design thinking, creative placemaking, art, and humanities. Philippa has spoken at TEDxAmericanUniversity, University of Michigan's Penny Stamps Speaker Series, Fort Worth Women's Policy Forum. Her work has been featured by CNN, PBS Newshour, CityLab, The Washington Post, among other media outlets. Philippa's mission: to create a society in which all humans flourish.

**Mark Strandquist** (he/him) has spent over a decade using art to amplify, celebrate, and power social justice movements. The immersive exhibitions and multimedia projects he directs have helped advocates close a youth prison, pass laws, train police officers, and connect the dreams and demands of communities impacted by the criminal justice system with tens of thousands of people. His work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, and universities, as well as through parades, church-basement legal clinics, and illegal wheatpaste installations. He has received multiple awards, fellowships, national residencies, and reached wide audiences through the NY Times, the Guardian, NPR, the Washington Post, PBS, VICE, and many others. He founded, and currently co-directs the Performing Statistics project in Richmond, VA, and, through fellowships from A Blade of Grass and Open Societies, co-directs the People's Paper Co-op and Reentry Think Tank with his partner Courtney Bowles.

**Naoko Wowsugi** is an artist of Korean-Japanese descent, based in Washington, D.C. Using combined practices of visual art, local research, and community participation, Wowsugi's projects highlight and fortify everyday communal and interpersonal identities.

Image credits: Chris Combs, Ariana Arenius, Vonne Napper, and Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg.

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**t r a n s f o r m e r** is a Washington, DC based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered, non-profit visual arts organization. Founded in June 2002 by artists & arts organizers, Transformer provides a consistent, supportive, and professional platform for emerging artists to explore and present experimental artistic concepts, build audiences for their work, and advance their careers. A catalyst and advocate for contemporary artists and emergent expression in the visual arts, Transformer connects and promotes emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts through innovative exhibition and programs partnerships with a broad & diverse range of individual and organizational partners.

**t r a n s f o r m e r's** 2022/23 Exhibition Series and programs are supported by: Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Corcoran Women's Committee, The CrossCurrents Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, The Robert Lehman Foundation, The Sachiko Kuno Foundation, The National Endowment for the Visual Arts, Truist Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Transformer's Board and Advisory Council, and The Visionary Leaders Circle— a growing group of individual donors & corporate sponsors.

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