The New York Times

Paint Fades, but Murals Remember People Killed by Police

June 5, 2020

By Zachary Small

Their faces are painted on the walls so that people will not forget.

In Baton Rouge, La., grocery shoppers at the Triple S Food Mart walk by an image of Alton Sterling near the spot where the 37-year-old black man was fatally shot by two police officers in 2016.

In the Bronx, a portrait of Amadou Diallo adorns a building on Wheeler Avenue close to where he was killed in a hail of 41 police bullets in 1999.

But the murals that memorialize people killed in deadly encounters with the police do not always survive as legacies of loss.

So it is with the mural that was painted on a Staten Island storefront in 2018 to mark the death of Eric Garner, who suffocated in a police officer's chokehold in 2014. This week, when protesters decrying the death of George Floyd in Minnesota marched on Staten Island, they passed the spot on Bay Street where Mr. Garner had died, but the mural has been painted over.

In Minneapolis last week, Cadex Herrera, Greta McLain and Xena Goldman created a mural of Mr. Floyd near the site of his fatal encounter with the police. Now Mr. Herrera and Ms. Goldman are working on another one down the block.

"I hope that no one desecrates it," Mr. Herrera said. "If they do, we will paint again."

The portrait features Mr. Floyd's likeness crowned by a flaming sunflower that contains the names of others who have died in custody or in encounters with the police. The mural, and more significantly the outrage associated with Mr. Floyd's death at the hands of a police officer now charged with murder, have inspired similar images of him everywhere from Little Rock, Ark., to Idlib, Syria.

“We needed to see his face,” Mr. Herrera said. “We needed to show that he was a human being.”

When they are first painted, murals can act as ad hoc altars for public mourning. But their existence is often fleeting. A mural of Philando Castile, who was killed in 2016 during a traffic stop by a Minnesota police officer, was destroyed when the building was demolished later that year. The officer was acquitted of manslaughter at trial in 2017.

In making his 2001 mural of Mr. Diallo in the Bronx, Hulbert Waldroup dressed the officers who shot Mr. Diallo in the white hoods of the Ku Klux Klan, a depiction that upset police officials. The mural was later vandalized with black paint, but the image was restored by Mr. Waldroup.

The mural was ultimately repainted by Hawa Diallo, no relation, in 2017 with Mr. Waldroup’s permission after years of deterioration. The new version, requested by the community, eliminated some of the painting’s controversial elements. The police officers, who were criminally charged in Mr. Diallo’s death but acquitted, are no longer shown. The current version emphasizes Mr. Diallo’s West African roots.

“Everyone may not have my views,” Mr. Waldroup said in an interview. “When you put something on a wall, you know it’s temporary. I’m now OK with the mural changing.”

Mr. Diallo’s mother, Kadiatou Diallo, was present at the unveiling of the redone mural in 2017. “Time passes by, but for those who love, time will never pass,” she told reporters. “We will never forget what happened that night.”

In Trenton, N.J., a 2014 mural marking the death of Michael Brown, the 18-year-old student who was fatally shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Mo., was removed soon after it was created.

The mural on a vacant storefront gate was sandblasted after some police officials said they worried it could damage community relations. The artist, Will Condry, protested the city’s decision and eventually met with the mayor and chief of police alongside representatives from the N.A.A.C.P. and A.C.L.U., who joined in arguing that his portrait of Mr. Brown, dressed in his high school graduation cap, should be restored.

“I had a seat at the table and I thought progress was being made, but once the attention died down they pushed me out,” said Mr. Condry. “I was disappointed.”

Federal and state officials in Missouri declined to prosecute the officer who shot Mr. Brown and the officer later resigned from the force.

“Artists have a responsibility to promote the truth,” Mr. Condry said. “When you see an image of someone who was murdered by police, that’s going to speak to you.”

There had been tension, too, in Louisiana, where Jo Hines created the mural of Alton Sterling in 2016. A federal investigation declined to bring charges against the officers, one of whom was later fired for having violated the Baton Rouge Police Department’s use-of-force policies during the incident.

The Sterling mural has evolved over the years, gathering messages of prayer from people. Some have added images of balloons and teddy bears, small updates that allow the mural to function as a living memorial.

But Mr. Hines also remembers how tense things were when he first made the mural. “Depending on what I painted, the attitudes of people would change. If I painted something angry, there could have been violence,” he recalled. “But I saw women and children walking by and decided that I would do something for Alton’s family.”

“It’s about honoring Alton,” Mr. Hines said. “We know what happened to him, but allowing that person who was done wrong to live forever through a mural is a more powerful message.”

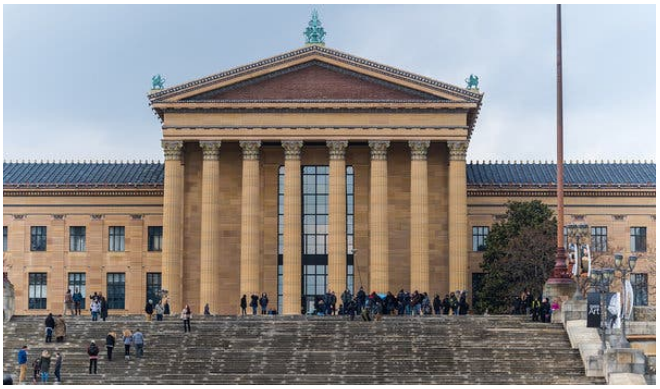
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/arts/design/murals-remember-people-killed-by-police.html

The New York Times

He Left a Museum After Women Complained; His Next Job Was Bigger

January 10, 2020

By Zachary Small and Robin Pogrebin



Gina Ciralli, an employee at the Philadelphia Museum of Art who dated Joshua Helmer, a young manager, said that he had made her feel as if he had the power to make or break her career — telling her she "wasn't smart enough to work at a museum" but that he could help her have "a great trajectory."

Another woman, Alicia Parks, said he took her for drinks on her second day of work and told her that if she wanted to succeed she should "get to know him."

"I worked in the N.F.L. for five years," said Ms. Parks, a former Philadelphia Eagles cheerleader, "and no one spoke to me in a way that made me feel that uncomfortable."

Neither of those women worked directly for Mr. Helmer, but they were his subordinates in rank, and three employees who were familiar with their accounts said they reported their concerns to museum managers, starting as early as 2016.

They were never quite sure what happened to their complaints, but in early 2018, Mr. Helmer resigned for reasons that have not been disclosed.

Just a few months later, though, he resurfaced, this time with an even bigger job, as the director of the Erie Art Museum in Erie, Pa., making him one of the youngest museum chiefs in America.

Shortly after, Mr. Helmer texted a college student working at the Erie museum, suggesting she come to his house. "Coffee my place I have a cool back deck," it said, according to a screenshot the woman, Asla Alkhafaji, provided to The New York Times. After she told him she could only meet in public, Ms. Alkhafaji said, he began ignoring her at work and one day told her, "You're the most useless intern we have."

It is not clear what, if anything, the Erie museum knew about Mr. Helmer's work history when it hired him. The museum said it investigated a complaint by Ms. Alkhafaji and found no reason to discipline Mr. Helmer, who still runs the museum today.

Mr. Helmer, 31, declined to discuss accounts of his treatment of women or his relationships with them, though he said he always followed museum policy.

He also said he had left Philadelphia of his own accord. "It was just my time," he said. "I was looking for new opportunities."

The accounts about his tenure at Philadelphia are a parable of the problems faced by institutions, from big corporations to small nonprofits, when employees are accused of objectionable behavior.

A spokesman for the Philadelphia Museum, Norman Keyes, said Mr. Helmer "was separated" from the museum in February 2018 and that the museum could not discuss his exit because conditions of departures were confidential.

In a statement, it said that it strives for a workplace "free from harassment or inappropriate behavior of any kind," and that it investigates complaints "swiftly and thoroughly."

"In the spirit of ongoing improvement," the statement continued, "we are reviewing our programs and policies and will continue to do all that we can to make the museum a workplace we can all be proud of."

Late last year, the museum barred Mr. Helmer from entering the building, according to an email it sent to staff members.

The Times spoke with nine women who said that Mr. Helmer made advances toward them in the workplace, and with other employees who were aware of this behavior. Four of the women acknowledged they entered consensual relationships with Mr. Helmer. Mr. Helmer dated two women who directly reported to him, an apparent violation of museum policy, and warned them not to report it, they said.

The women who dated him described a pattern of behavior in which he came to exert power as a boss over them in those relationships, even when he was not their direct supervisor, telling them he would be running the museum someday and had the ability to fire, hire, or promote whomever he pleased.

"He always said he was my indirect supervisor," said Ms. Ciralli, who at 22 dated Mr. Helmer while working as a project coordinator on a two-year grant. "He used that as one of the reasons we had to keep our relationship under wraps: 'If you want to stay at the museum we should probably keep it quiet.'"

New Job, Familiar Complaint

The 143-year-old Philadelphia Museum of Art is known for an important collection that includes works by Marcel Duchamp, Constantin Brancusi and Auguste Rodin. As a tourist attraction, it is best known for its cinematic front steps, which Sylvester Stallone ran up in his Oscar-winning movie “Rocky.”

Widely considered a charismatic wunderkind, Mr. Helmer, who has a master’s degree in art history from Syracuse University, was made assistant director for interpretation at the Philadelphia Museum in 2014, just four months after arriving.

Last October, after Mr. Helmer started leading the Erie Museum, ARTNews named him one of the country’s museum directors under 40 who were shaping their institutions.

Women who dated Mr. Helmer said they were attracted to him at first because they found him warm, affectionate and confident. “He was as he is now,” Mekala Krishnan said, “sure of himself, and very convinced that there were a ton of things wrong with the museum world, and that he would be the one to fix them.”

After Rachel Nicholson began dating Mr. Helmer, he promoted her and repeatedly told her, she said, “You only got this job because we’re dating.”

“He made clear to me from the beginning he thought it was his job to break me and then train me,” Ms. Nicholson said. “He would say, ‘I should fire you, but I love you.’”

Both women said Mr. Helmer would berate them at work, sometimes in view of other employees who could see them crying through his glass-walled office. Ms. Krishnan described vomiting from the stress.

Despite the treatment, both women, along with Ms. Ciralli, remained on good terms with Mr. Helmer for a time. Ms. Krishnan said she agreed to Mr. Helmer’s plea for a phone reference when he needed one for the Erie Art Museum. “He told me he was the scapegoat for things that weren’t going well” at the Philadelphia Museum, Ms. Krishnan said. “I felt bad for him.” Ms. Nicholson moved to Erie with him, though she later left.

“When someone calls you stupid and weak and makes you doubt yourself, that seeps in,” she said. “I had come to believe that I needed him to understand who I was and how I could be better.”

At least three employees said they had reported to managers or the museum’s human resources department their concerns about Mr. Helmer’s conduct with women while he was employed there.

Some women whom Mr. Helmer dated or made advances toward said they had been fearful of speaking out while he was there, because he had represented himself to them as being close to the museum director, Timothy Rub. They told the Philadelphia Museum about their experiences after Mr. Helmer left.

In a statement, Mr. Rub said he aimed for "an environment in which all of our employees feel valued and respected, and where they are comfortable sharing any concerns they may have about the workplace."

"It is deeply upsetting that any staff members would feel that their voices are not heard," he continued. "We will continue to work tirelessly to address any such issues."

Mr. Helmer declined to discuss his relationships. "That's personal information," he said. "You keep your personal life private."

He also suggested the allegations against him were just typical office politics. "You make enemies," he said.

In Erie, Ms. Alkhafaji, the intern, met with the board president and another trustee to discuss the way she said Mr. Helmer had been treating her after she turned down his request to come to his house.

Ms. Alkhafaji said the board members told her she could not get the apology she sought. Ms. Alkhafaji left the museum. "I felt really unsafe," she said. "He retaliated against me because I declined his advances."

Stephen Porter, the board president at the time, said in an email: "Upon receiving a communication from a staff member, the Erie Art Museum board of directors took immediate, direct action to investigate and fully address a personnel matter. It was determined that no disciplinary action was required. The matter was dealt with in accordance with museum policies and procedures."

Andona Zacks-Jordan, the current board president, said in an email that no other allegations have been brought to the board's attention.

At the Philadelphia Museum, education department employees were called to a meeting in November after a reporter raised questions about Mr. Helmer's tenure. At the meeting, employees said, they were told the museum could not share information about Mr. Helmer's departure.

Ms. Parks asked why Mr. Helmer was still allowed to come and go from the museum. (The Philadelphia Museum has a working relationship with the Erie Museum through a program in which it lends work to smaller Pennsylvania institutions.)

Later that day, Marla Shoemaker, a senior curator, wrote in an email to the staff that the museum's security director "will put notices up for all security officers at all P.M.A. buildings that Josh Helmer is not to be allowed in."

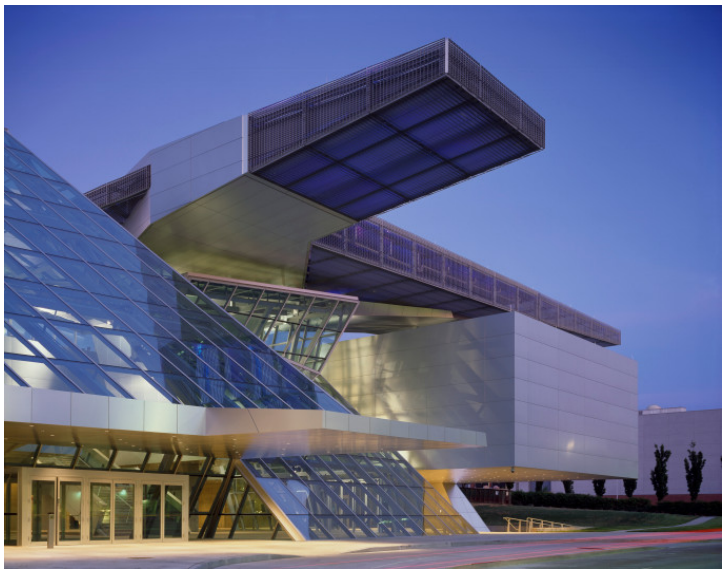
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/arts/design/joshua-helmer-philadelphia-museum-art-erie-art-museum.html

ARTnews

Coronavirus Pandemic Dredges Up Allegations of Racism, Sexism, and Bullying from Akron Art Museum Workers

April 30, 2020

By Zachary Small



Alison Caplan loved the Akron Art Museum in Ohio, where she worked for almost 15 years. But after raising repeated concerns about the museum's lack of implicit bias training, she was fired last year from her position as the director of education, she said, and asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

After Jen Alverson complained in a letter to management about the unfair treatment of women art handlers, she saw her hours reduced and was cut almost entirely out of exhibition installs. Around the same time, she claims, another manager trapped her at the security desk, asking about her workout routine and calling her "baby." She complained twice to an administrator and says she was told not to speak about her experience with other employees.

And when executives announced layoffs last month due to the coronavirus pandemic, the museum's collections manager and exhibitions registrar, Chrissy Marquardt, resigned after she was transitioned to part-time work and barred from completing most of her regular tasks. She also believed that the measures had unfairly targeted staff who had written a 2019 letter calling for the removal of the museum's director and chief executive officer, Mark Masuoka.

Twenty-seven employees—roughly a third of all staff members—anonymously wrote the letter of complaint, which was addressed to the Akron Art Museum's board of directors. Only one

remains employed by the Ohio institution, now on a part-time basis; the others have either resigned, been fired, or were laid off by the museum during the Covid-19 shutdown.

“What we are seeing is severe mismanagement by leaders who are using the pandemic as a scapegoat,” said Alverson. “I’ve watched countless coworkers leave or be pushed out because of a lack of professional leadership.”

Overtures of solidarity and self-sacrifice have increasingly rung hollow for workers at some of America’s largest museums as executives are forced to reckon with cutbacks that overwhelmingly impact staff. And decisions about who stays and who goes during the economic shutdown have caused many employees to revisit past controversies as examples of what they view as poor leadership that may have exacerbated the stress of coronavirus on the museum world.

At the Akron Art Museum, tensions boiled over after the museum started confronting the harsh realities of a $933,000 shortfall due to Covid-19. On March 30, Akron Art Museum executives told the press that some of its 35-member full-time staff would be furloughed while others would see their hours cut back to part-time; workers would receive full wages until the beginning of May. That same day, however, several employees received an emailed letter from the human resources department with different details: they were being laid off and their last paychecks would come on April 17. The laid-off employees now say they have yet to receive their checks, or have been underpaid for their time owed.

“Your position is now classified as ‘laid off’ because we don’t have any available hours for you to work at this time,” reads the letter, which was reviewed by *ARTnews*. “It is too soon to say who and when will be called back to work, and if so, what type of work schedule will be available at that time.”

Responding to a request for comment, the museum denied having strayed from its planned approach to managing its shutdown, but the apparent contrast between the Akron Art Museum’s public and private messages concerning the fate of its staff has reignited allegations of mismanagement.

When workers wrote their letter of complaint, it was to outline claims of racial discrimination, sexual harassment, intimidation, and conflict of interest. Reacting to the letter’s allegations, Akron’s board of directors hired the law firm Kastner Westman & Wilkins, which investigated the claims and found the majority of them to have merit, according to current and former employees who were interviewed by the firm. *ARTnews* spoke to more than a dozen current and former employees who corroborated accounts of both the allegations and the investigation.

“As always, our long-term mission and top priority is to maintain the integrity of one of Akron’s most important cultural assets,” a museum spokesperson told *ARTnews*, saying the organization does not publicly comment on personnel matters. “That investigation was completed shortly thereafter and, where appropriate, actions were taken to address any substantiated concerns.”

Several complaints in the letter concerned the museum's former chief of staff and director of special projects, Jennifer Shipman, who also served as a human resources administrator before Akron hired its own devoted human resources representative. According to four former employees, Shipman had dismissed requests by staff for implicit bias training after the museum's facilities manager allegedly made several racist comments to his direct reports. (The manager later resigned from his post.) Another employee asked for such training after the front desk allegedly refused entry for a school tour of black children; again, Shipman denied the request, calling the teacher who complained "defensive" in an email and questioning if the children had a "bias on their end." In another conflict, Shipman defended an employee in the social media department who was caught photographing young women in the cafeteria without their consent; she described the female visitors as "little bitches," according to three employees.

Shipman ultimately left in August after the museum found that she was using the institution's facilities without permission to store artworks made by Mark Mothersbaugh, lead singer of the new wave band Devo, which rose to fame with its 1980 hit "Whip It." (Mothersbaugh's work had been the subject of a solo show at the museum in 2016.) On Mothersbaugh's website, Shipman is now listed as the musician's studio director.

Shipman told *ARTnews* that she and the museum mutually agreed to separate after she learned that one of her parents had Stage 4 cancer. "I wish nothing but continued success for the museum as it is a valuable community resource," she said.

"When you tried to do something right, you were made to feel like a snitch," said Amanda Crowe, an educator who was recently laid off by the museum after working there for almost 7 years. "It's hard to express just how chaotic, disorganized, and unstable it's been."

"Not only did I have to claw my way into a job at the museum, but I knew that I was being paid at the bottom of the barrel," said Jessica Fijalkovich, who was recently laid off from her position as Akron's library and archives manager. "I love the museum, but I was better off when I worked three part-time jobs."

"We were treated differently," said Alverson. When her male peers were tasked with unloading trucks filled with artworks, she says she was instructed to scrub the floors with other female colleagues. She even watched as a team of men were hired to install Viola Frey's *The World and the Woman* (1992) sculpture while women capable of the job were sidelined. After getting input from her female coworkers, Alverson sent a letter of complaint with her yearly review, which happened to fall on August 26: Women's Equality Day.

But when women at the museum complained about gender discrimination, administrators often failed to act, employees said. The perceived lack of repercussions for men who behaved badly at the museum impacted how women saw their career trajectories in Akron. And six months ago, Alverson resigned from the museum. "I feel for all the wonderful people I left behind who are trapped under that management," she said.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the Akron Art Museum was already facing significant challenges. Membership had been down, longtime donors were suspending their gifts, and

departmental budgets were being cut, according to three former managers. The board's investigation further damaged the relationship between trustees and the museum's executive staff. Nevertheless, the board kept Mark Masuoka on as the museum's director and chief executive officer.

The board's decision rankled staff who believed that the director was at the root of the museum's alleged problems. Employees said that their decision to pen a letter of complaint was prompted by Masuoka's firing of Caplan, the museum's former education director, who had pushed for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion while at the institution. Three employees also told *ARTnews* that Masuoka used derogatory language in a meeting to describe the city's black population, calling them "Summit Lake people," a reference to a poor Akron neighborhood with a large African American community. According to the employees, Masuoka said that black visitors from Akron wouldn't be able to access the mobile applications the museum developed because they used "throwaway gangster phones."

Through a spokesperson, Masuoka declined to comment on the allegations.

Upset with management, workers had begun to organize a union last year. Inspired by the successful organizing campaigns of staff at the Guggenheim Museum and the New Museum, employees in Akron held several meetings to discuss the costs and benefits of collectivizing; they were just two signatures shy of cementing their bargaining unit before key organizers started leaving the museum in droves.

"I had better diversity and sexual harassment training in the military than what you would expect from an art museum," Christopher Harvey, a black army veteran who worked at Akron as a security guard and building services associate until he was laid off in March, told *ARTnews*. Harvey said there were several instances where he felt discriminated against by his manager, who he says would often mention the color of his skin within earshot of visitors. During his time at the museum, the facilities crew (one of the most racially diverse departments in the museum) was, as outlined in the staff letter of complaint, also banned from entering the staff break room and told by a manager to take their breaks in the boiler room after another employee complained about waiting in line to make coffee.

Recalling his time at the institution, Harvey said, "I loved the museum, but not the current leadership."

https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/akron-art-museum-racism-sexism-allegations-1202685387/

The New York Times

Protesting U.S. Immigration Policies, Artists Aim for the Sky

July 3, 2020

By Zachary Small

The Thunderbirds and Blue Angels that President Trump plans to send flying over the National Mall this Fourth of July will have some stiff competition from a group of 70 artists looking to spread their own messages across the nation's skies.

Two fleets of five skytyping planes each are set for takeoff across the country this Independence Day weekend armed with calls for the abolition of the immigrant detention in the United States as part of the project "In Plain Sight." (Developed from older skywriting technology, skytyping planes inject oil into their exhaust systems to produce a white smoke that is released into the sky by a computer-controlled system to produce precise letter-writing.) Phrases like "Care Not Cages," "Unseen Mothers" and "Nosotras Te Vemos (We See You)" will momentarily hover above 80 locations — including detention facilities, immigration courts, prisons, borders and historic sites like Ellis Island — before dissipating into the atmosphere. And some of the messages will be skytyped in nearly 20 languages, including Hindi, Kurdish, Lakota and Punjabi.

The project started a year ago when the artists Cassils and rafa esparza teamed up with a goal of forming a coalition of artists and activists determined to address the ills of mass detention. The initiative's members include the lawyer Chase Strangio; a founder of Black Lives Matter, Patrisse Cullors; and the artist Hank Willis Thomas — alongside 10 partner organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, Raices and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center.

"As a lawyer, I am often constrained by the structural and discursive limits of the law," said Strangio, who's using his corner of the sky to memorialize Lorena Borjas, a transgender immigrant activist

who died of Covid-19 in March. “I believe that art and artistic disruption are essential components of movements for social transformation.”

For the artist Alok Vaid-Menon — whose message “God Brown America” will be skytyped above the Montgomery Processing Center close to Vaid-Menon’s hometown, College Park, Texas — the project represents a commitment to elevating the stories of migrants and gender-nonconforming people. “As a descendant of refugees, it’s really important for me to help with this cause,” Vaid-Menon said. “I want to make sure people of color and immigrants in Texas feel like they belong.”

But the challenge of putting art into the sky has also required the legwork of a medium-sized production team led by Cristy Michel, who is also Cassils’ life partner. They found one company that does skytyping, she said, referring to Skytypers, which does the vast majority of the business in the United States. “And this is not something the pilots have done before,” she said. “Usually what they write looks like ‘Geico, Geico, Geico.’”

“When I sense the skytypers getting nervous,” Michel added, “we get into a discussion about how art helps the mind expand and think about future possibilities.”

Speaking by phone last week, Cassils and esparza described the artistic impulses behind “In Plain Sight.”

These are edited excerpts from that conversation.

In recent years, artists have spread their political messages on billboards, filled museums with agitprop and even started their own activist groups. How did you decide to bring your project into the clouds?

CASSILS About a year ago, rafa started a conversation with a bunch of artists in Los Angeles about issues surrounding migrant detention. We were trying to counter feelings of hopelessness and wondered what we, as artists, could do to visualize the issue on a massive scale. I’m a performance artist who is often given a pretty modest budget; there are often limitations to what’s possible. But what if artists like us could plan something bigger? What if artists had the same budget as a shoe company does for its brand promotions, but rather than selling objects, we would be promoting a constructive dialogue? Then, we thought about the air shows that typically happen on Independence Day. Was it possible to usurp this traditional display of patriotism and retool it to bring attention to harmful migration policies? There’s no censorship in the sky. It would be a perfect platform for mass engagement.

ESPARZA There were simple questions: How do you let incarcerated people know that you care? From there, our approach broadened by working with a cohort of artists and an advocacy impact team. We also have a film director working on a documentary about the project.

How has the project changed since the coronavirus pandemic? Has the outbreak forced you to alter your approach?

CASSILS The urgency of “In Plain Sight” has become paramount as people began to die from Covid-19 in detention camps. We had initially planned for this project to occur without any press, but when the pandemic hit, we launched our Instagram page that features short interviews with our artists

and calls to action. It's been a great opportunity to take action. In recent months, I've had 11 exhibitions canceled or paused. Almost every artist I know has, too.
There is a rich history of artists looking toward the sky for inspiration. Yves Klein used it as inspiration for his conceptual blue paintings. Recently, the artist Jammie Holmes flew George Floyd's final words above five cities across the country. What other works have inspired your skytyping project?

ESPARZA "Repellent Fence" (2015) by the art collective Postcommodity was particularly important for us. They created a metaphorical suture along the migration path between the United States and Mexico with tethered balloons to speak about land art in relation to permanence and shifting landscapes. In the same way that they used the land to talk about the divisive power of colonial structures, we are hoping to index the sky as a symbol of inspiration and hope. And the sky is able to migrate messages across borders. When our message is skytyped above San Diego, the words will likely drift into Tijuana. And when our words are written above Los Angeles, they will have a shared orbital path, allowing phrases like "Abolition Now" and "Stop Crimigration Now" to coalesce into a circular message.

CASSILS We are also thinking of artists who have used the language of advertisement to get their points across. Artists like Lynda Benglis and Barbara Hammer. The AIDS Memorial Quilt was another important reference because it demonstrates how people can come together through a patchwork of activism.

Many artists involved with the project are also queer, which may or may not be a coincidence. We are thinking about the words of José Esteban Muñoz, who wrote in 2009 that "queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future." We see a liberation for queer, migrant and Black communities as deeply bound together because they are all rooted in the issues of white supremacy and colonization. Our jobs as queer artists is to imagine the future.

ESPARZA And we are putting the proposal of care, which is central to many queer communities, at the forefront of this project. We want to imagine what care looks like for people who are impacted by migrant detention and Covid-19.

CASSILS Bringing the skytypers into the fold has also been a unique experience. And with some messages being written in Cree, Farsi and Urdu, this will likely be the first time many people will see their own languages in the sky. There has also been a challenge to imagine how to write languages in the sky that don't use the Roman alphabet. Skytypers usually work in fleets of five planes each, so any image or letter must exist along a five-point matrix. For artists on the project, that means experimenting with the grid and drawing out words like "freedom" in Farsi or Urdu. It's interesting to note the challenges of what we can put into the sky, and how we might overcome those barriers.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/03/arts/design/july-4-skytyping-skywriting-immigration.html