

Koffler Gallery

History in Remaking Panel Discussion

Wednesday, November 11, 2020

Camila Salcedo: Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight. My name is Camila Salcedo, and I'm the public engagement and education assistant at Koffler Gallery. I'm super excited to bring a wonderful group of artists here tonight for our History and Remaking Panel featuring Rosalie Favell, Ivana Dizdar, Anique Jordan, and our moderator, Madelyne Beckles. I want to start by acknowledging that both myself and Koffler Gallery are located in Toronto, the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples and as an urban center also now home to many First Nations, Intuit, and Metis peoples. Since we're currently virtually gathering on Zoom, I'd also like to acknowledge that the Zoom headquarters are located on Muwekma Ohlone territory, also known as Silicon Valley. In order to be responsible treaty people, I believe that we must learn about the ways that modern day nation states continue to perpetuate colonial violence, so for this reason I call on everyone here tonight to research ways that you can help the many indigenous communities fighting systemic racism across the country. To pivot from that a bit, I would like to thank our funders and partners who make events like tonight's possible, so I would like to thank the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, CIBC Wood Gundy, and the Koffler Family Foundation. This program tonight is presented in conjunction with our current exhibition, the Natalie Brettschneider Archive by artist Carol Sawyer, and is presented in partnership with Scotiabank Contact Photography Festival. The exhibition will be closing this Sunday, November 15, so you still have a few days to check it out. Without further ado, I'd like to introduce our moderator for this evening, Madelyne Beckles. She's a multidisciplinary artist from Toronto with a BFA in art history and women's studies and she is also the cohost of High T podcast. Her artwork explores the themes of femininity and the body through abject aesthetics and camp humor. She has shown at the MoMA, the AGO, and Miami Art Basel. She is also currently the curatorial assistant of youth and engagement at the AGO, so I would now like to invite Madelyne to introduce our panelists and begin the conversation. Thank you.

Madelyne Beckles: Hi. Hi, everybody. Rosalie and Anique, would you like to join us on screen. Awesome. Nice to see your faces. Thank you, Camila. As Camila mentioned, my name is Madelyne, and I'm really looking forward to speaking with these three amazing artists about revisiting and reclaiming and interrogating history through their respective practices, so I'm going to introduce each artist, and then I've asked them to also do a little introduction about their broader practice and some specific works that I've identified to kind of center our conversation around.

So, Ivana Dizdar is an artist whose work brings into focus forgotten figures and hidden details, real and imagined. Developed through research and observation, her performance personas double as embodied archetypes. Her video Ava Zarr plays on the tropes of documentary to recovery moments in history that could have been.

Rosalie Favell is a photo-based artist, born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Drawing inspiration from

her family history and Metis heritage, she uses a variety of sources, from family albums to popular culture to present a complex self-portrait of her experiences as a contemporary aboriginal woman. To date, Rosalie's work has explored the relation of photography to issues of identity. Over the course of her long career, she has won prestigious awards such as the Paul DeHuek/Norman Walford Career Achievement Award and the Karsh Award. Numerous institutions have acquired her artwork including the Indigenous Art Centre (Gatineau), the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC.

Anique Jordan is an artist, writer, and curator who looks to answer the question of possibility in everything she creates. As an artist, Jordan works in photography, sculpture, and performance, often employing the theory of hauntology to challenge historical or dominant narratives and creating, what she calls, impossible images.

So, I'm going to hand it off to Ivana to give us a little bit more about her practice.

Ivana Dizdar: Thanks so much, Madelyne. So, I'd like to begin by bringing in a couple works by other artists before I talk about my own practice. I'll start with 1804 and this panoramic wallpaper designed by the French artist, Jean-Gabriel Charvet. Its title, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, is one that the Auckland Art Gallery in New Zealand translates as the native peoples of the Pacific Ocean, euphemistic translation since *les sauvages* means the savages, and that's important because scholars like Metis scholar Olive Dickason have argued that one of the ways French settlers justified colonial pursuits is precisely by creating a dichotomy between civilized and savage. This kind of wallpaper had become really popular in the early 19th century for consumers who wanted a vicarious travel experience. It was meant to be both educational and entertaining, and entertaining it certainly was. The wallpaper showed specific people engaging in a range of activities from hunting to sailing to dancing and pretty much just all getting along and having a great time, as you can see, with the exception of strip XIII, which depicts the death of Captain Cook. Cross cultural encounters were represented not as violent but as happy exchanges. To create the piece, Charvet took his inspiration from textual and visual records of the voyages Captain Cook and other explorers took across the Pacific, including journal entries and official reports drawing this painting and so on, but of course Charvet's is not exactly an accurate portrayal of the way things had been. He uses biased, often imagined accounts as source material to create a visual mishmash of sorts. He mixes different time periods, so these range from the 16th century to the late 18th century, into the same composition, and he also mixes indigenous peoples as well as animals and plants from disparate places, including Hawaii, Tahiti, and Tonga. Next image, please.

Several years ago, I encountered Maori artist Lisa Reihana's digital wallpaper contemporary response to Charvet. It was also at the AGO a couple of years ago, so what she does here is she reactivates and restages the original wallpaper's imagery, incorporating her own critical additions and presenting the events from an indigenous perspective. So, in response to an artwork that mixes fact and fiction, she also mixes fact and fiction, which I think raises really interesting questions about various ends and effects to which fiction is used in art, because obviously it can be, on the one hand, misleading and dangerous, but on the other hand very generative and empowering, and this is a tension I explore in my work. Next, please.

So, I'm endlessly inspired by a French 19th century panoramic wallpaper myself. This one is called *Les Vues d'Amerique du Nord*, Views of North America, which also uses a great deal of fiction. In fact, it was designed by an artist who probably never ever, ever set foot in North America. It shows and romanticizes, even arguably glorifies, the arrival of European settlers, their interactions with indigenous peoples and the transatlantic slave trade. This wallpaper was a staple of the graduate residence where I lived for a few years in New York City, so I spent a ton of time with it, looking at it, studying it. It's really remarkable. It's very intricate and detailed, and it's panoramic, so when you're in the room you're surrounded by it, completely enveloped, in this imagery. I started thinking a lot about what it meant that this imagery adorned the walls of the place where I lived. Eventually, it struck me as the perfect metaphor. I was surrounded by, enveloped in, a still very colonial world. Next, please.

My foremost performance persona embodies the idea that we're not in a genuinely postcolonial moment, as we like to think. Here she is with the wallpaper. She shares my name, except instead of Ivana Dizdar she pronounces it Ivana Dizdar, and I recently decided that she lives on Old Colony Road at New York Mills. She's this neoliberal director and CEO of Ivana Dizdar Projects, a multimillion dollar commercial gallery franchise and this perpetual process expanding through the so-called global south. In the video, *IDB Africa*, for instance, Ivana Dizdar secretly announces her plans to build a new gallery franchise location in the fictional country of Uguambia alongside a hotel, an all-inclusive resort, beach, waterpark, shopping mall, zoo, airport, you name it, and this is not to mention the eventual Dizdarbianala and the ivory hunting excursions she is planning for her VIP guests. This ongoing performance project has a threefold function. I consider it a form of research, a critical archive, and a freeing device that examines, collects, and draws attention to the colonial practices and rhetoric that are still very much embedded in the art world and in art history, so her language, this really corporate, ethnologically inflected language, is sourced directly from speeches and conversations heard and overheard in the spheres of art business and politics, and she mimics the tokenism and lingering fixation on tradition, authenticity, and belatedness in African art scholarship, especially. She plays on these unproductive but ubiquitous dichotomies, you know, east, west, developing, developed, third world, first world, and, much like the wallpaper, *Les Sauvages de la Mar Pacifique*, tribal and civilized. Satire here, like in my work generally, is central, also like in our moderator, Madelyne's, work. What's important for me is to be really super cringy. It's my way of in a sense alienating the audience, not in the Brechtian sense but by being so cringy that I initiate a nonidentification with my character and instead provoke disgust and a critical response. The work, I would say, remains disturbingly timely, also, because it's a performance about performativity. It addresses the way that institutions tend to substitute real change with performative politics essentially, so, in her case, she doesn't practice what she preaches in terms of diversity. She may have a diverse roster of artists, but this doesn't reflect what goes on behind the scenes with the make up of her board and her staff. In her Uguambia location, she's hiring curators from the West but no curators from Africa, and she's exactly the kind of person who would post a statement of solidarity with black lives matter but make no fundamental structural changes to her organization whatsoever. So, in this sense, I would say she's fictional but she's also very, very real. Next, please.

Here she is with a depiction of Niagara Falls in the wallpaper, celebrating Canada 150. Next, please.

My first serious foray into playing a fictional persona and the one most closely aligned with Carol Sawyer's work is the video Ava Zarr. This is when I became interested in questions like what is it to pretend to be someone else, to enact a sort of aesthetic of deception? Ava Zarr is a photodocumentary about a fictional female artist from the 1960s, her collaborations with a black male artist, and their prolific but severely underrecognized artistic outlet. It exemplifies a preoccupation I share with, for instance, Anique, to bring to light forgotten figures in history, whether real or imagined, and, like in Rosalie's work, I combine found images and footage with photos and footage of performances that I stage myself. Next, please.

The video is a play with tropes of the documentary form. I interview real academics, critics, curators, and artists. It's amazing to look at the facility with which these trusted authorities can intellectualize her work and fit a fictional character into the preexisting framework of 1960s performance art, even claiming that she's an influential precursor, so, accordingly, the video is a play with chronology. What I did was rearrange the chronology of developments in the history of performance and filmmaking. Within the fiction that I create, Ava Zarr was a key influence on artists that came up in the 70s and 80s. Real artists like Lisa Steele. In fact, Lisa Steele is one of the people I interviewed, and she attested to Ava's influence, which was funny because I had made a less sophisticated version of her iconic birthday suit with scars and defects, and I made it seem like she had been inspired by me or my character when, of course, the opposite was true. This was my way of mocking my obsession we have with questions of genealogy and influence in art history. Who did it first, who's the original, and who's the copy? Another thing I play with in this video is the mysticism and lionization of the artist archetype, you know, the madness of the artist. Ava Zarr believes that she's the reincarnation of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, a German artist who was labeled degenerate by the Nazis and committed suicide in 1938, the year I was born. In 1968, she goes to his retrospective at what was then called the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the AGO, and suddenly drops dead, perhaps, who knows, a last and final work of art. Reincarnation here becomes a metaphor for iteration and reiteration in performance art, and it also for me, to end on perhaps a poetic note, opens questions about the parallels between performance as an inherently ephemeral artform and the transience of life itself. Thank you.

Madelyne Beckles: Thanks, Ivana. I think next up we have Rosalie.

Rosalie Favell: Hi. Well, I've always loved photographs, and I was very fortunate that my parents were able to take a lot of pictures, or, well, I don't know about a lot, but back in the day when you'd put a roll of film in the camera and take for special events like the Christmas scene you see here or birthday. I started looking at these photos years later and trying to make sense of my identity, and I was very comfortable with photography and being a photographer, but it was really important for me to talk about, you know, actually, this is a good starting point. All I knew about my Indian blood was what I saw on television, you know. It wasn't something that was talked about in our family. You could go to the next slide, please.

That's a big jump, but, so, when, I grew up knowing that I had Indian blood. My mother told me when I was very small that I had Indian blood and I looked like my father and my grandmother and, but, it wasn't talked about a whole lot. Being Metis, that was sort of what was happening in the 60s where you didn't talk about the color of your skin or that it was connected to being indigenous at all. In this series here, I was studying in New Mexico in

Santa Fe and there was an exhibition by this painter called Georgia O'Keefe, and the exhibition was called Longing and Belonging, and I thought, hmmm, that would be nice. I always felt like I didn't belong and I wasn't sure, you know, where I belonged, so I did a series of pulling photographs from my archive and looking at popular culture, and I loved Xena, Warrior Princess, and I loved my sister, and I started to put these together, and I think I have another one if you wanna go to the next, so I made these triptychs that became stories connecting, you know, myself sitting there with, again, you'll see this image repeated a few times, but me with my headdress and on it it says brave, and, you know, I just reflect on owning and claiming my identity. If I did it in the 60s I would have been very brave. I didn't come to it until later, but my niece who is wearing a tiara there, you know, struggling with childhood and all the, you know, expectation and identity issues. We can go to the next one.

I knew I looked like my father and his mother, and I adored my grandmother and my father and so for me putting these pictures together, you know, they're from different albums. I again was very fortunate that my grandmother kept numerous photo albums. She was taking pictures in the 20s of her and her friends and had them collected in albums, and I kind of, she took those, like, those were some of the very few possessions she took with her to the senior home, you know, so she always, you know, she loved her family, her friends, and to be able to flip through those albums is something that I'm afraid may be becoming lost in our virtual digital world that we're in, but this claiming my family roots, again, I keep returning to that because my family is the well, the source of life and my creative being. We can go to the next image.

So, in the end, you know, even though it's, you know, this one I love. A lot of these are Polaroids of the 70s and the older ones are original gelatin silver, but that circular fashion of, you know, we're, we all travel in these circles, and my grandmother lived her life and hoped for the future of her children and grandchildren, and I do the same with playing out my identity and challenging and searching in hopes that the future generations can draw inspiration or knowledge from them. You know, in the indigenous community, you always talk about that what you do now affects 7 generations from now, you know, and so where I came from is very important and very, I have been very impacted by my family history. We can go to the next one.

Anywhere, somewhere along the line I decided instead of looking outside at the rest of the world I definitely noted Xena, Warrior Princess, and, yeah, I dreamed of being a warrior. I started this series I called Plains Warrior Artist, so I'm just a plain old artist or a plains from the prairies warrior, and I really, I did dream of all of the things that Xena did. I was just so enthralled with her, and I had been looking for a hero within the indigenous world as I knew it, and at that point I didn't know, you know, I didn't know a lot of other indigenous artists to look to, there certainly wasn't an indigenous woman on TV in those times, and so I lived vicariously through Xena. We can go to the next slide, please.

So this one I have written across that my sister and I traveled between worlds navigating by our grandmothers, so that's my paternal grandmother on one side and my maternal grandmother and my mother in her arms, and I'm there with my big sister that I mentioned I adored earlier, so, yeah, just pulling in this universe, this landscape that goes beyond the material, the reality that photography can capture but that it goes further into the mind and the spirit. We can go to the next one, please.

This one I was so fortunate to find this image. It didn't come until later. One of my relatives had it. I really, I hadn't heard the story of my grandmother's sister who had died from domestic violence, and in the very bottom corner is my Xena, I dreamed of being a warrior image, in the flowers, but I just was grieving over that and thinking if only I had known, you know, reflecting on my grandmother but also women and myself, you know, who've lived in situations that other people were unaware of and what I could have done if I had known. The first line, for my beloved sister, is actually from an album that Julia Margaret Cameron, a photographer in the 1800s in England, she did a lot of staging, you know, she, you know, had the old big camera on a tripod and did a lot of plays, and she made an album for her sister, Mia, so it was called for my best beloved sister, Mia, and so I wanted this to be about my grandmothers for her sister but also for myself and my sisters. We can try the next one.

Oh, so of course I did the first image of me as Xena. I just popped my head onto her body, which, at that time, in the late 90s I wasn't aware you could do with the computer until a friend, another photographer, said, hey, you can do this neat thing, so before that it was cut and paste, so, but I wanted my own warrior outfit, and I had, I searched out these women who made my gauntlets and my arm bands and I'm holding a paper doll because I'm trying on different identities and I thought, well, maybe I'm a plains native child, you know, so I put my kindergarten picture in there, and then I just, I wanted something in the back and I found this picture of me holding a native doll and my uncle actually holding a camera in the back, and so, yeah, again, just searching, searching. We can go to the next one, please.

Later when I was studying about indigenous people in museums, I came across this image by Charles Wilson Peale. It was a, he made a painting, early American collector, he made a painting in 1822 where he's standing in this position and he is welcoming you into his museum, and his was a natural history museum, but I wanted to invite you into my museum, and there's my family, my parents' photo album on the walls there, but, you know, this is my building awareness of the movement of indigenous people, artists, curators, cultural workers, challenging, and communities challenging the structure, the colonial structure, of museums and galleries and wanting to take the, to be more, yeah, take the reins and be in charge of showing their own images, their own culture rather than being put on display by others and being othered, so this was me in a moment of taking back and asserting my presence and showing my own work in my own space. We can go to the next.

I wanted to do a work about my dad and his brother. They were two years apart, and they passed away within the same week, and being the trooper that I was, I had an artist talk that I thought, a week later, that I thought I could do this and got on the plane and realized I can't do this, and so I was taking a lot of pictures of the clouds and so I felt I was closer to heaven when I was up there in the clouds and wanted to honor them and so it's a small series of, well, 10 images, of them. If we go to the next one, and prior to that I had made a small series of, again, snapshots of my grandmother from her albums, and I put her images on top of my photographs, so in this one I, actually, that's very appropriate, put these poppies as remembrance of her and the spitfire that she was, you know, and we'll go again, please. Yeah, she, like I said there, I have photos or my family has photos from the 20s and she passed away in 1976, but a good 50 years of a lot of portraits of her family but also images like this, portraits of her, and, we'll try another, oops, I'm done, so, yeah, I've spent, most of my

practice has been working with my, well, my issues of my identity but trying to make visible Metis identity, which isn't necessarily easy to put your finger on, you know, like who are we, you know, what do we look like, what does Metis even mean, so I'm trying to contribute to that dialogue and perhaps present some views, some views of my life, yeah. Okay. Thank you.

Madelyne Beckles: Thank you, Rosalie. Anique?

Anique Jordan: Hi, everyone, though I can't see you. So, really, regrettably I should have submitted an image from the archives that just showed you a newspaper clipping from Toronto in the late 1800s to help set the stage of this story, but I'll just sort of share with you some of the background on these two pieces of, these two works that I'm gonna show you, and then, yeah, just talk through how I kind of came to learning of this story and where I've taken it. So, this work called Evidence, which was done in 2019, was produced during a residency at Osgoode. So, a few years before that, before I was even in residence at Osgoode, I was doing a lot of work in sort of looking through the archives in Toronto, the archives of Ontario, and trying to find images that, images and stories, that talked about black people in Canada, black people in Ontario, black people within the city, and I'm always kind of looking into the archives, particularly the Toronto archives, because it's so localized and the stories are so immediate to my own reality, and oftentimes when you're doing that, that digging through the archives, you have to put in a lot of like derogatory words, or at least in the earlier days when I had been, when I first started out doing this, you know, you have to put a lot of words that we wouldn't call ourselves, we wouldn't identify with, in order to find tidbits of ourselves as black people scattered somewhere in the archives, and so I was sort of just doing that as I normally am, looking for anything that's recently been digitalized or any stories from the newspapers that might now start to be populated through new search words or whatever, and so I can across this really short paragraph about this woman named Clara Ford. So, she was a black woman who grew up in downtown Toronto in the late 1800s, and the little paragraph that I read said this is, said the story about Clara Ford as a black woman who wore men's clothing, walked around with a loaded revolver, and was accused of murdering a young man from a wealthy white family named Frank Westwood. This was, he lived in Parkdale and she lived in an out of the Ward, St. John's Ward, which was downtown Toronto in and around what is now Chinatown, and so I was just fascinated by this story because it's not a story that we hear about within legal, Canadian legal history, it's not a story that we hear about within, you know, just thinking about the history of Toronto, and so I started to dig a little bit further to try to understand who this woman was, and so it turns out in all of the research that I was doing and just looking at what the dailies of the time were saying, the old Toronto Star was saying the story of Clara Ford was like this massive story that spanned months in the front page of many different newspapers talking about this black woman, and so a lot of what they were sort of debating in the newspapers was whether or not she was capable of murder, what the reasons could have been behind it, can a woman, much less a black woman, commit a crime that required this level of power, of authority, of like repossession of the like, of the sovereignty that the state has assumed onto itself, and so I was fascinated by who she was and the potential of whether or not this, you know, she committed this crime, if she did, if she didn't, is it a crime, what, you know, what is the, what are the layers behind it, and so as I start getting deeper into the research I learned that she, when she spoke to one of the detectives at one point and he asked her why, you know, why do people even think that you did this, and she said because he, him and his friends had interfered with her, which, I'm Caribbean and for me the act of

interference or that sort of coded language of interference said from a woman is oftentimes code for sexual assault or assault in certain, in many different ways, and so she said he, him and his friends interfered with me and they were constantly calling her racial slurs, and she, he said, the detective said to her, well, why didn't you raise that, why didn't you offer that as something that had happened to you, and she said I am a poor colored woman, who would believe me, and this was in 1895, or between 1895 and 1897, and during the earlier years of the trial, Toronto, this was the one and only murder that had happened in Toronto, so it was really a huge deal. She was tried by a jury of all white men. She was ultimately found not guilty. The way it's sort of spoken about in a lot of the legal texts now is that they say that, you know, at the time, because to be convicted of murder in Toronto in the late 1800s you would have been hung, but they had never hung a woman and they couldn't imagine that a woman, much less a black woman, could possibly be able to commit such a, such a, like an injustice or such a crime, so she was found not guilty, but during the time of her life, you know, she wore, as the, as a lot of dailies and the newspapers would said, they'd really comment on her appearance. She'd always be dressed to the nines, one because she worked as a tailor and she was always trying to learn new crafts that allowed her to sort of bypass a lot of what would be, what she'd be experiencing as a poor black woman during those times, so she'd learn and she would create, you know, she'd have all these skills to be able to make her own clothing, to move through the world in certain ways, and, on top of that, she also, a lot of the spaces that she frequented, were spaces that she would only have been able to enter if she was a man, so, for example, she was part of an all boy's or all men's choir at one point, she moved in and out of the states doing business, working as a, as like a, like some type of driver, I can't remember the exact language around it, so she did, she had a lot of these economic opportunities that many women at the time wouldn't have had, and perhaps with the language that we use today we may speak about her as being a trans person, as a queer person, but we don't know how she identified or how she spoke about herself, so I speak to her or about her within the guise of like, you know, saying that she's this woman who moved through the world by being able to adopt identities that allowed her to sort of get through and do the things that she needs to do. So, this set of images that I'll show you are from a series called Evidence, and so this was a performance that we did that reenacted the legal history of her life, and one of the reasons why I was interested in doing it within the School of Osgoode, because I'm really thinking about the ways that we can inject legal histories of black people through the voices of black people through the ways in which we are able to find, perhaps, right, because we don't know if she did or did not do it or whatever, but find our own sense of justice in systems that don't offer justice to us, and so what we did as a group is sat down around, so before this performance we sat down together and we talked about her story, we brought it to this sort of like this contemporary analysis and, you know, like talked about whether or not it was possible, could she have done it, did she not do it, what does it matter to us, what do we think about her, should she be thought about as somebody who should be studied, like how do we make sense of her life, and so during the performance we sit as though we are a jury of her peers and as though we are perhaps her peers within her choir ensemble and we read out the actual texts that talk about her life, so through the archives, through looking at the newspaper dailies, and through looking at the ways that she was quoted and the quotes that come out from 1800s Toronto, and we read it out, and as we read it out there's gaps within the reciting of these factual bits that we have that we've pulled from the archive, and overhead, over the top, like our voices, between the spaces of us speaking through these facts you hear us talking through in a more relaxed and contemporary as sort of offering an analysis the ways that we

think about the case now, so you hear like the recording of us like talking it through mixed in with us reading out these facts, and as we continue to read out the facts we starts to, it starts to get distorted and they start to be sung and looped and spoken over and it becomes this cacophony of voice, and so I was also really thinking through where the space is that black women's voices get to be taken and believed. So, you can go to the next slide. I think it's just more images of this.

Right. So, then in front of us, we worked with two tailors that had, that created out the sample, the pattern, yes, that's the word I'm looking for, so the pattern of what a suit would have been, would have looked like in the 1800s, so we sort of tried to make this, this like, reimagined what she might have wanted to be actually wearing during her trial and what she felt more powerful, most comfortable in, which was like men's clothing or these men's suits, and so we created for her as sort of an homage to her this suit, and so around, you see all the tailors working, there are two tailors working, on cutting through the pattern of the suit and around it as they pull out different pieces of it they write down some of the facts and some of the words that she said and some of the ways we interpreted it and they put it into like a mesh of new ways of understanding because they're all put together into these pieces of what she might have worn. Next slide.

Yeah, so there's just more images of them working. You can go to the next slide. So, this was actually done before that performance, and this is a series called, or, I guess it's not a series, but of work called arming by clara, and so when I first learned about Clara Ford's story, I'd say around 2015, and I, you know, was doing a lot of research and really thinking about her, I myself was trying to go through my own process of trying to figure out how I can move through the world without constantly being, feeling as though I'm at war or feeling as though I have to protect myself in every space that I move through and, you know, trying to think through the ways that I can disarm, like take off armor and be able to have a space of being soft and gentle and happy and all these things that are afforded to bodies who don't have to exist in a world as though they are constantly fighting for their own lives, and so I thought a lot about Clara and I really like sort of meditated on her life and spoke with a lot of other young women, some of the women that I mentor, and talked to them about what she might mean for them, and a lot of the conversation sort of centered around the fact that she, you know, offers a certain type of power and makes you feel as though, you know, she's like protecting, she's protecting her own body, she's protecting us, she's like, she's giving something that maybe we wouldn't have had access to if her story didn't exist and if we didn't do the work of excavating these stories from the past of Toronto, so I created this piece that's called arming by clara, and it is 12 sculptures, exactly double my height, of my own body, so these are self portraits that were photographed and then cut out on zinc, corrugated zinc, which is a material that I grew up around a lot in Trinidad where a lot of houses and rooftops are made out of, and so I was really thinking about what protects us, what keeps us safe, how do we, where are spaces that we can disarm and what are ancestral figures that allow us, that sort of hold that armor for us so that we can free up ourselves a little bit and exist in a different way, so arming by clara, so she became, she became that for me. If you can show the next slide.

Yeah, and then, oh, and then so I had also been thinking a lot about codes and things that are, must remain secret and things that are, sort of become these strategies of survival that are embedded within like code, secret languages that, that more, like the broad populous wouldn't

have access to, and so I was thinking about color in relationship to that and how I can create something that's encoded within her own story, within her own body, which is also my body, that not everyone can have access to, and so I worked with color and thinking about those ideas of codes, and then you can show the last slide.

Finally, this is my mother and my two aunts who are standing in front of her, and so the idea of this piece was always that it had to be completed with someone physically who is living, standing at the helm of it, because behind it it sort of fans out into this triangular form, which, for me, I imagine as like an endless wing of ancestors supporting you, guiding you, giving you a sense of assurity, and so with my mom and my aunts standing in the front, for me that sort of completed this idea of protection, of armor, of like right to life, like, all these different pieces that were really important to me and, you know, particularly in this year have resurfaced as really urgent, urgent ideas and things that we need to be really spending time with, so, yeah, and I then I think that's the last slide.

Madelyne Beckles: Thank you. Thanks, all of you. There's so much like rich material to work through, so thank you for all of that rigor in, you know, talking about those works. The first thing that kinda comes to mind and that I think you all have in common is how you pull from existing archives or create your own, and I inherently think it's a political act as a way to act against erasure, like prove that we were here or that something happened, to center like omitted narratives and explore identity, and I'm just wondering what you all think about those two kind of concepts, like documentation and the archive and how they inform your practices.

Anique Jordan: I can start. I can speak to that a little bit, if that's helpful. I think that I was sort of brought to the idea of a type of like fictionalizing history or like injecting fiction into the archives through the work of Toni Morrison and through the stories of slave narratives and, you know, thinking through the ways in which many slave narratives are written so that they are devoid of emotion or are so factual that they cannot be denied, and I always thought how painful it is that you must talk about something that is so harmful to your own personhood and that you can't offer emotion to it because it might not be taken up as truth, and Toni Morrison she rejects that and she takes up a lot of the stories that we have of these slave narratives and she makes them into ways that we understand the interiority of the people so that their personhood is reinscribed onto them, and I think that when I started to learn more about her work and about that particular idea it gave me a type of permission to say that it's okay to put in what you need to put into these stories, not that it removes the truth from it but that it allows us to have a different type of truth that we were not allowed, that the subjectivity of the archives and the historical narratives and the way power operates doesn't allow for us to be put into it, so I think it's a type of offering permission and to say that the way you live and the way you remember must be valid, especially when you are a person that is refused from archives and from historical dominant narratives.

Madelyne Beckles: Totally. It's almost like a reparative practice.

Rosalie Favell: I started with looking for heroes, heroines, or whatever, women, strong women, and I saw that in the television or in the movies and it, part of my gravitating toward those women was that it freed me up to then maybe look at my own, my own particulars and situations, and I always knew that I had these strong women in my life, but I sort of had to go

outside of the personal history and archive and sort of get my gear together and then back into the personal history, not just personal for my family, but the history of Metis people, indigenous, and then Metis and sort of dovetailing back and forth between mainstream culture and trying to explore for myself but also embellish and make visible for others to see some of the concerns and the struggles that we're dealing with and perhaps everyone else is dealing with, you know, not so much to talk about differences or that we're all the same, either, but that this is my experience and I'm not the spokesperson for my family, but I certainly have put my family out there and with myself, so we stand arm in arm together, but those histories, those personal histories, took a while for me to own and to celebrate, you know, and that sense of pride that comes from knowing, discovering, and knowing and being your own hero, your own identity, your own self.

Ivana Dizdar: Madelyne, you mentioned documentation, and Anique mentioned secrecy, and it got me thinking a lot about the fact that secrecy has this kind of weird duality and so does documentation where on the one hand we resist, a lot of us resist, this idea of constantly being tracked because it infringes upon our privacy and our human rights and on the other hand people empower often used secrecy and privacy and lack of documentation in order to maintain their power, and so, yeah, infringing on that right to documentation or kind of going against, going against the desire to be documented, can be both oppressive and really radical, if that make sense, so, I don't know, that's just something that I started thinking about.

Madelyne Beckles: Totally, and that also kind of brings me to something else where the three of you often use your body in your work, and I'm wondering how, like what that entry point is like for you as a way to kind of like complicate the cannon and explore trauma and nostalgia and identity. Yeah, I'd love for you to talk about your decisions to use your bodies.

Rosalie Favell: Well, I'll go back to Xena. I literally put my head on her body and that's all kind of play, you know, kind of being possessed by the spirit of Xena, but I played the role of how I saw her acting, and then I became more comfortable and I used my body and so I, then I could speak from my truth, you know. I wasn't speaking from Xena's, I mean, we know that's a fiction, but I could speak from my truth and then I could go back into my family photos and I started playing with images of me as a little girl, and, you know, what the heck was I thinking in my little crinoline dress, you know, so trying to situate where was I or, you know, you mentioned documentation so there's this documentation of a life lived and how does that jive with the life you're living now, and for me it's kind of I play it out in the work, but, yeah.

Madelyne Beckles: Anyone else?

Anique Jordan: What was the question again, Madelyne?

Madelyne Beckles: Totally fair. I was just talking about your choices to use your bodies in your work to kind of articulate these narratives.

Anique Jordan: Yeah, for me I have almost exclusively I would say used self-portrait. I think it's oftentimes I'm dealing with things that are difficult for me to even enter and so, for the most part, it, well, not for the most part, maybe a part of it comes from not wanting to ask somebody else to enter something that I myself already find so difficult, so I'd be the one that's in it, and

then I think that, you know, similar to Ivana's work, like, the person that is in the image isn't necessarily myself, like, I think it's a stand in for a lot of things, for many things, even a stand in for an idea, so I never really see it as me I see it as like this character that's in this work at that time, yeah, so.

Ivana Dizdar: Yeah, I concur for sure that, especially in Ivana Dizdar projects, I definitely don't see myself that way. Just a quick note, I find that I kind of consider this project an embodied archive and for me that means that I observe people and I listen to what they're saying and I work through it by kind of repeating it, but it's not only their rhetoric it's also their body language, which often seems to go hand in hand with these kinds of personas, and I find that quite, repeating it with my own body in a sort of choreography is really generative.

Rosalie Favell: What I must say about my body is that I much prefer using my 20 years younger body than the one now, so I used to do a lot of self portraits and I actually revisited some of the Xena images and I painted them, but I painted the young version of me, not the current version, but, so it's interesting for me. It brings up issues around aging, you know, and all the implications of the broader world that we live in and I guess for me, having always used myself as the stand in or dealing with my own person, I've more recently started photographing other people, or, yeah, not myself.

Madelyne Beckles: Yeah, I feel like for me at least it's been a way to work through my identity, like, you know, I feel akin to your work, Rosalie, but also bring forward works and people similar to works, Anique and Ivana, yeah, it's such a valuable tool, our bodies. I also wanted to talk about the use of parody and satire and humor in your work, specifically with IDC and Ava Zarr, with you Ivana. Could you talk about your use of parody and humor?

Ivana Dizdar: Yeah, absolutely. There's so much to say about parody, and, I mean, your work speaks to that. I love your work. That's one of many reasons. I think parody, I've always thought parody was a really useful tool. The most obvious reason is that it draws the audience in, and it's kind of trickery in a way because something's funny on the surface but beneath it there can be so much truth and, you know, there can be something terrible or something even poignant beneath that, and I've, I've been really inspired by the legacy of artists that use humor, and I think that laughing at something like an institution can be really empowering for the people who laugh and really disempowering for the institution. That's not always the case, obviously, but I think it can work really well. In the case of IDP, I use it in order to really emphasize the sort of absurd nature and the vulgarity of the art world, and in the case of Ava Zarr, I'm making fun of the cannon and the absurd exclusions and to the really highly academized way of talking about art that can be really inaccessible and like, frankly, quite bullshit, so that's just a few things.

Rosalie Favell: I like to, well, humor has carried me through most of my life, and I like to poke fun at myself, but, you know, poke a little bit at others, and I agree with that you that if, you know, humor is welcoming to people, you know, and it gets them to enter into the space that you're creating, and then you peel back many layers and as you keep going deeper and deeper I think with any artwork as you go further into it you get a broader, a deeper understanding, but I think humor attracts more than not humor, you know, that it's a positive, and I like to help bring a smile to people, you know. I like to touch them in kind of a positive

uplifting, so, for me it's more a kind of a gentle kind of space that I like.

Madelyne Beckles: I'm gonna jump around a little bit because as you're all speaking I'm getting other things I wanna talk about. Back to documentation, I wanted to ask, I thought you brought up a really interesting point, Rosalie, about how the archive as we know it as changing in the digital space, and I'm just wondering how you all feel about that and how, like, with working with the archive are you trying to resist against the digital, are you trying, like, do you have any feelings about it, how do you see your work in relation to what's going on now.

Rosalie Favell: I sort of long for the darkroom and the actual physicality of the paper, and, yeah, you can put a piece of paper into a printer and it pops out, but I'm aware that, you know, my nieces and nephews, they don't print things out. It's all on the screen, you know, and I recently, as part of the project I'm working on now, I scanned over 300 negatives and slides of my grandparents, and I thought well, I could make a digital book, but, no, I printed them all and made albums and, you know, there's still, I feel like it's old fashioned and maybe I'm aging myself, but there's still something about the tangibility of, you know, holding something, you know, that in this project I'm doing I've been going through the library and archives of Canada and I'm, I've requested the Metis script that my great grandparents signed that land over, and to have that tangible, I won't get to touch it, it, but, we're borrowing it for the exhibition, and to be able to see that and to know that they actually held that paper at some point, I think it's to, you know, we talk about virtual hugs these days, well, it's to, you know, there's something that you can get that tangible hug that is, can't be replaced by the virtual, even though I can do this, I can live virtual, but I virtually prefer the hard copy, yeah.

Anique Jordan: I think for me I would love to be like holding on to a digital archive, like, I would love to be like, you know, looking and like sort of like having that, but it's just so much work like, I think it just feels so taxing. I mean, there are things that I do because I think that in a way I'm a bit of like an information hoarder or like a, like I want to be able to see literally what a moment looked like, so, like, like I've been collecting newspapers from the Times and the Star for the entire year. Every paper that comes out people just kind of donate to me because I want to have that, I want that documentation and I wanna go through and I want to mark the moments that shifted the year once more like again and again, and I wish I had that sort of desire or the patience to do that online, but I think maybe I just find it too like overwhelming or something, I don't know, but I don't really do it.

Madelyne Beckles: Yeah, it's an interesting shift, and I feel like a lot of the work that we've talked about tonight kind of, it does dig from that tactile place, and I just wonder like how preserving these narratives will work in the future when there isn't this physical record. I wanted to speak with you both, Anique and Rosalie, about, and Ivana, in relation to a fictional lineage, but about lineage and family and how that informs your work. Anique, I know you use your mother and aunts in your work, and I'm wondering if you could speak on that first.

Anique Jordan: I guess it's something that's very, like, it changes the relationships, or like impacts your relationships, when your family is, like when I have to and ask my mom to be in something or my aunt to be in something because they're like what, what is this, so you have to spend time explaining and like spend time talking it through and, you know, do they care, is it important to them, why do they think it's important to me, and it kind of opens space for a

conversation that makes the work have an even deeper and more personal value, I think, and, you know, for me, like, my mom only has a single photo of herself as a child, and we had to like search for it, and so I partly also have this obsession with like documenting and like having my family in these images because they also, aside from being like an artwork, they are family portraits, and each one of the portraits reminds me of conversations that we've had that allowed us to get there, and then at the same time it also, when they are like roped into participating in something like that, they also see me in a different way, you know, like they take up the work of an artist in a different way and like now I see my mom doing so many creative things and she's like I'm an artist, and I'm like yeah, and so like, you know, it has very real and like lived shifts within our own relationships that I just really appreciate, and I just, you know, like, and I know, also, that in using photography as a tool we're in a sense using like this archivable tool so wherever that image lives it becomes part of some type of archive and that's also kind of this like really special thing for me, you know, like knowing that my family is now put into something. Yeah, there's a lot of bits for it.

Rosalie Favell: Well, I'm not sure what my grandmother would think of her image being, many images of her, existing in the world for the public to see, you know. She was very much a family-oriented person, but my parents experienced being, showing up on gallery walls in my work and certainly were open enough that they allowed their images to be used. My mother used to joke and say where's my royalties from these images, you know, and, yeah, I don't know, who knows whether one of my distant nieces or nephews will dip into my archive and use that, so I don't know what will happen, you know, when I'm no longer virtual. I think the strength of who we are comes from where we come from, our family, and my work has been made for my family but also for a larger world, and, yeah, I can't imagine, or I don't know what I would be doing in my art practice if I didn't have that connection to my family, so, yeah.

Ivana Dizdar: I use photos from my family albums, as well, so even though Ava Zarr isn't autobiographical by any means, reaching into those family archives influenced me to make certain decisions. So, for instance, my family immigrated during a war. Ava Zarr's immigrated during two world wars, and, you know, I ended up, I was born in South Africa a year before apartheid formally ended and so that, you know, I've thought about African politics my whole life for that reason even though I didn't grow up there and so that infiltrated itself into my work, as well.

Madelyne Beckles: Thanks for sharing. My last question before we throw it out to the audience, I wanted to ask you all what you think the relationships between truth and fiction really is. I think all of your work kind of works to recontextualize the past or complicate or uncover or remix even, so I'm wondering what you think about revealing these paths in a different way works to serve the future and/or the present.

Rosalie Favell: Heavy. Well, weighty. I don't know how aware I was that there was a difference between truth and fiction, so I think I'm always kind of teetering back and forth. I like to think I'm aware of it now, but I guess, well, it would come back to whose truth and whose fiction, you know. This is my truth, my, and my fiction, but I'm not separate from my family, my community, my world, the bigger world, so I think there's a lot of woven threads of truth and fiction in all work but in my work. How's that?

Madelyne Beckles: That's awesome.

Anique Jordan: I think, well, since, you know, we've been convening this panel I've been thinking a little bit more about it, particularly in relationship to fake news and alternate facts and all that stuff, and I don't think I have fully thought out response, just as a, whatever, precursor, but, you know, I was thinking a little bit more about it because I'm like well, we are asking for the truth or for a truth or whatever and at the same time I'm interested in how we conflate truth and fiction, so like what is that? What is that? Like why? So, I think that maybe perhaps, perhaps it has something to do with power, perhaps it has something to do with the type of information that we require facts, like as facts, perhaps it's about the fact that there, you know, in telling the story of the history it's filled with stories and so we'll never have a factual version of it, so you know, there's like, I think there's so many different ways to enter it, and I'm still, I, because of what's happening now and because of those ideas of fake news and alternative acts, I'm really starting to think even more through what it is that like that I'm doing and the type of approach that I really hold on to and really think is important, but what that might mean, so, I don't know. I, I don't know. I'm thinking through it now, to be honest.

Ivana Dizdar: I completely agree. I think it's such a complicated question because we know that mixing truth and fiction can be, you know, to put it simply, it can be good and it can be bad, and, as artists doing this truth/fiction thing, we're constantly negotiating and renegotiating with which side of that we're on. Just when you were talking I thought of the example of this collective the Yes Men, who, in 2004, they pretended to be spokesmen of, what was it called, I just wrote it down, Dow Chemical, and they went on BBC Live and apologized for the Bhopal disaster that had happened a couple decades earlier, and they said that they would, you know, pay all the families that had been traumatized by it, like physically, mentally, and the stocks of Dow Chemical went down and it was like this whole thing, and it seemed like a really radical project and certainly it was a very interesting idea and it was very critical but on the other hand I can imagine that these families were really excited by that and when they found out it wasn't real that was a problem, too, so I think about that a lot.

Madelyne Beckles: Thanks, you three. I think that's a good place to leave everybody with a bit to ponder. We have a question from the audience, specifically to Rosalie and Anique. You both demonstrate an interest in female warrior like figures and identities as empowering. Could you discuss that some more?

Rosalie Favell: Yeah, I've said a couple of times that I wanted, I wanted role models, I wanted somebody to put up there on the pedestal and to admire, you know, and to be everything that I was afraid to be myself, and, you know, at a certain point, I stepped over that line and tried to become that for myself, you know, and, I don't know, I've just always been very drawn to like historical figures and would seek out women, stories about women, women warriors, women adventurers, you know, so I think that that's always been important to me. You know, when I was young it was hard to find. I remember reading about baseball players. They were all men, you know, but I liked the idea of finding out the histories about people, you know. I guess I've always been a people person, so, as I grew, I wanted these women, I wanted to find them and to be around them and be a part of their circle.

Anique Jordan: I think for me I don't think it was a conscious choice to be thinking about

women specifically. In fact, for me growing up, my biggest role models were, as much as I like have aunts, my brother, my older brother was my biggest role model and like young men in my community were like also my biggest role models, so like they were the ones that sort of spent the time with me to share knowledge and to like give me alternative ways of understanding the world and make me critical. They like pushed a criticality, I would say, so they were more so my heroes than anything, and I think because a lot of like younger girls were not allowed outside, so we didn't have that kind of experience in that way, but I think I accidentally stumbled into thinking about heroes and saints because of the work of Basquiat and because of his commitment to creating heroes and saints out of everyday people and that was my first sort of way of thinking about my family history and my aunts and my mom and like what do they, how do they look like if they were looking like heroes, if they were shown and held up as like heroes or as saints, and so I think it kind of came from that and then everything else was less of a choice I'd say and more of like a what sort of just, I just fell into.

Madelyne Beckles: Thank you. I think that's all the questions we have. I want to thank the three of you for this conversation. It was such a treat to kind of spend time with all of your practices and your work and meet you virtually. I want to thank Mona and Camila and the Koffler for having us, and thanks everyone for joining. I hope you all have a good night.