

A Blade of Grass and the New Museum Announce New Discussion Series Exploring Governance and Creative Practice

Governance Reimagined: Three Conversations between Artists, Activists, and the Public Will Kick Off on May 28, 2020

New York, NY – May 19, 2020 – A Blade of Grass, the nonprofit dedicated to fostering socially engaged art nationwide, and the New Museum announced today a new three-part online discussion series that will explore the work and visions of artists and activities engaged in creating more equitable, empathetic, and humane systems of governance. The series, titled *Governance Reimagined*, will kick off on Thursday, May 28, with a conversation between artist **Jonas Staal** and **Laura Raicovich**, Interim Director of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. The second discussion on June 4, moderated by **Andrew An Westover**, Keith Haring Director of Education and Public Programs at the New Museum, will feature filmmakers and organizers **Astra Taylor** and **Laura Hanna** of Debt Collective and artist **Constantina Zavitsanos**. The third conversation on June 11, moderated by **Prerana Reddy**, Director of Programs at A Blade of Grass, will feature **Jorge Díaz Ortiz**, a Puerto Rican artist and member of collectives Papel Machete and AgitArte, and **Jose Romero** and **Harmony Phoenix**, members of Southerners on New Ground (SONG). The weekly conversations will be hosted on the New Museum’s Zoom platform at 2:00 PM EDT, and **each conversation will require advance registration at newmuseum.org/calendar**. Registration is now open.

The creation of the series coincides with the completion and release of issue four of *A Blade of Grass Magazine*, which was guest edited by Raicovich and themed around democratic issues and collective, artist-led interpretations of governance. Many of the speakers have contributed articles to the magazine and the topics of each conversation are loosely framed around their writings. To help viewers immerse themselves in the ideas and perspectives that will be explored, A Blade of Grass will release relevant articles to participants following registration. The talks series will culminate with the release of the full magazine following the last talk on June 11. The magazine will be free and available on the A Blade of Grass website, with limited print circulation.

As communities around the world grapple with state failures during the pandemic, this series highlights the work of individuals who are enacting and advocating for collective social change, international self-governance, and the expansion of democratic movements. The discussions will focus on new models to deal with longstanding and seemingly intractable challenges and injustices within our social, political, and economic frameworks, centering creative practice as essential to their development. **More information regarding each upcoming discussion follows below.**

“We began work on this issue of the magazine knowing that it needed to present alternative stories about how governance could function at a moment marked by a profound sense of political and governmental betrayal. In the wake of this pandemic and the way it has exposed both our reliance on government and

our government's inability to care for its people, the content of this issue feels more relevant than ever, and we are truly excited to partner with the New Museum and hold these conversations that are fundamentally imagining how we could create social structures that enable us to care for one another better," said Deborah Fisher, Executive Director of A Blade of Grass.

"At the New Museum, our long-standing commitment to risk taking and critical discourse compels us to advance these vital artist-led conversations. As we planned this series, we grounded our work in a shared commitment to attend to society's urgent needs and look to artists to help us understand how these needs manifest and what new forms of governance can offer. We are particularly glad to co-present this series with A Blade of Grass, a strong partner in supporting artists as they reimagine our world with more justice and generosity," said Andrew An Westover, Keith Haring Director of Education and Public Engagement at the New Museum.

May 28, 2020 | 2PM

Deep Future: Building Lateral Institutions

Featuring artist Jonas Staal and Laura Raicovich, Interim Director of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art Register to participate at the New Museum events calendar, [here](#).

In this conversation artist **Jonas Staal**, whose magazine contribution offers a rationale for artists' role in creating new models for radical democracy, will speak with **Laura Raicovich**, Interim Director of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. Staal's reasoning underlies his [New World Summit](#) (2012-ongoing) and [New World Academy](#) (2013-16) projects, both of which are multi-year and multi-location events that allowed stateless/blacklisted groups to assemble publicly via an artwork-as-parliament. Out of this came long-term collaborations with the Rojava Revolution, in which Staal was invited to design [one of their physical parliaments](#). The conversation will conclude with explorations of current projects, such as [Training for the Future](#) (2018-ongoing) and a legal campaign titled [Collectivize Facebook](#) (2020-ongoing). Rather than a return to normal, how might our current situation compel the creation of more inclusive institutions?

June 4, 2020 | 2PM

Give/Take: Languages of Debt and Care

Featuring filmmakers and organizers Astra Taylor and Laura Hanna of Debt Collective and artist Constantina Zavitsanos; moderated by Andrew An Westover, Keith Haring Director of Education and Public Engagement at the New Museum Register to participate at the New Museum events calendar, [here](#).

How can relations of care transform debt? To reconceptualize debt, this conversation will feature: filmmakers and organizers **Astra Taylor** and **Laura Hanna** of Debt Collective who are featured in the magazine; artist **Constantina Zavitsanos**, whose multi-media work investigates the material re/production of debt, dependency, and means beyond measure; and moderator **Andrew An Westover**, Keith Haring Director of Education and Public Engagement at the New Museum. After each panelist introduces their work, the speakers will explore the nature of debt and its forms in the U.S. and will consider how care can reframe what debt is and how it functions. The panelists will especially attend to the ways creative practices are currently expanding transactional frameworks to elevate policies that value

greater safety and care for the most vulnerable, an especially urgent question before and during the current pandemic and economic crisis.

June 11, 2020 | 2PM

Frontline Solidarity: AgitArte, Papel Machete, SONG

Featuring Jorge Díaz Ortiz, a Puerto Rican artist and member of collectives Papel Machete and AgitArte and Jose Romero and Harmony Phoenix, members of Southerners on New Ground (SONG); moderated by Prerana Reddy, Director of Programs at A Blade of Grass
Register to participate at the New Museum events calendar, [here](#).

Prerana Reddy, Director of Programs at A Blade of Grass, will moderate a conversation on mutual aid networks as alternatives when state response is insufficient. **Jorge Díaz Ortiz**, a Puerto Rican artist and member of collectives Papel Machete and AgitArte, will lift up peoples' responses to Hurricane Maria and recent earthquakes, as well as how self-organized groups are activating during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Jose Romero** and **Harmony Phoenix**, members of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), will describe how they build and maintain a Southern LGBTQ infrastructure for organizers in the face of rural isolation, right-wing religio-political infrastructure, racism, environmental degradation, hyperincarceration, and economic oppression. The panelists will also discuss how cultural organizing methodologies are central to their work with communities who live under multiple axes of oppression and the advancement of campaigns that center around ending money bail and pre-trial detention and melting ICE in the South. They will also share a new theatrical collaboration between Papel Machete and SONG that envisions a bold abolitionist future.

ABOUT A BLADE OF GRASS

A Blade of Grass is a national arts non-profit established in 2011 that nurtures socially engaged art through direct financial support to artists, advocating for artists working in the field, and creating digital and print media, documentary films, public programs, and research. For more information, please visit www.abladeofgrass.org.

Instagram: [@abladeofgrassorg](#)

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ABOUT NEW MUSEUM

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the

inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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