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WE GATHER HOW CAN NOW?

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Symposium at Eaton DC
March 31–April 2, 2023

(January 31, 2023) **Washington Project for the Arts (WPA)** presents *How can we gather now?*, an experimental symposium directed by Asad Raza and Prem Krishnamurthy.

In a historical moment marked by many forms of fragmentation, political division, and social isolation, exacerbated by a global pandemic, this symposium attempts to explore questions of community. Gathering is a crucial practice in which people come to know one another, whether or not they share an ideological, cultural, religious, or professional identity. WPA's symposium considers why intentional gathering is necessary for the well-being of living beings, and shares diverse models for joining together today.

The symposium is the culmination of two years of research and collaboration. It convenes artists, theorists, and organizers from all over the world as well as artworks and films. Participants include **adrienne maree brown, Ambrose Nzams, Ayana Zaire Cotton, Black Techno Matters, Centre for Land Affairs, Cynthia Connolly, Ed Halter, Emily Verla Bovino, Fabiola Ching, Farrah Skeiky, Hope Ginsburg, Imka, Jonathan Yu, Leigh Ledare, Lenka Clayton & Phillip Andrew Lewis, Mayah Lovell, Mēlani N. Douglass, Michael Carter, Mindy Seu, Mojdeh Rezaeipour, Naoco Wowsugi, Neta Bomani, Nzinga Tull, Philippe Parreno, Renée Green, Richard D. Bartlett & Natalia Lombardo, Rob Rubba, Sarah Morris, Shawna Murray-Brown, Shiraz Abdullahi Gallab, Smoke & Tea, Stefanie Hessler, Suzie Flores, Tara Aura, Tiffany Sia, Tony Cokes, Valerie Wiseman, William Reid, and Yuma “Docta Yew” Bellomee.**

How can we gather now? is also itself a gathering and will be a shared collective experience. It collects a rich variety of experiential modes, from conversations to cinema to shared food to a "drum circle" of synthetic techno rhythms. Following WPA's inquiry-based program model, the artistic directors have offered this urgent question to invited contributors as a prompt for artworks, conversations, performances, workshops, and gustatory experiences.

The Symposium will take place at **Eaton DC** in downtown Washington, DC from **Friday, March 31 through Sunday, April 2**.

For full event information, please visit: symposium.wpadc.org

TICKETS

Tickets are available at a sliding scale starting at \$75. Tickets include access to all programs, three meals (breakfast & lunch on Saturday and brunch on Sunday), and a publication that will be produced after the symposium. Tickets can be purchased [here](#).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Keynote Conversation: adrienne maree brown & Prem Krishnamurthy

Co-director Prem Krishnamurthy will be in conversation with adrienne maree brown to kick off this three day-symposium centered around the question "How can we gather now?" This will be a hybrid conversation, adrienne will join by Zoom and Prem will be in-person.

"K is for Karaoke" organized by Prem Krishnamurthy

As a format, karaoke can generate mild to serious discomfort in people, piggyback upon existing artistic excellence, and demonstrate the possible range of vocal virtuosity (or its complete lack thereof)—while also creating community through shared vulnerability and mutual support. Whether you like to belt it out or just cheer on others, please join us for a special event to kick off the symposium and answer the question: "What song would you like to hear sung tonight?"

"Punk Solutions" with Cynthia Connolly, Ambrose Nzams, and Farrah Skeiky

An intimate, intergenerational conversation with photographer and curator Cynthia Connolly, music writer and zine maker Ambrose Nzams, and photographer and writer Farrah Skeiky about the ways that punk and DIY culture offers solutions to gathering, and how that culture shows up in other parts of our lives.

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"Conjuring for kitchens, dancefloors, and the cosmos" organized by Mēlani N. Douglass

In setting its eyes on the stars, The Apothecary celebrates the celestial power of Nzinga Tull and Mēlani N. Douglass as they join together to explore ancestral technology¹ through the works of anthropology, archeology, alchemy and more. From dancefloors to outer space, these two creative sages of adept knowledge search for answers in light of filling our own cup. Whether it be through kitchen magic or quantum physics, the conversation will work to manifest ancestral ingredients that are essential for unlocking the essence of new rituals, theories, and practices to support soul work of the eternal now². Join this enlightening dialogue as we gather to create collective perspectives on how to activate our individual powers and build the society that fills us all.

1 Ancestral technology, a term coined by Melani N. Douglass to describe the wisdom we intrinsically seek, know and understand from our ancestors

2 A term Mēlani N. uses to describe the past, present and future and the way time folds into itself.

"Umami Taste Development Center in DC" with Naoco Wowsugi, Rob Rubba, Suzie Flores, Yuma "Docta Yew" Bellomee, William Reid, and Tara Aura

At "The Umami Taste Development Center in DC", we will collectively practice observing the different tastes of locally sourced umami broths. Like the synergistic effect of umami, we will stimulate our sensitivities to create epiphanic connections around food justice, security, and sustainability through the tastes and shared stories presented by various food and wellness advocates. This communal experience is developed through collaboration between artist Naoco Wowsugi, chef Rob Rubba of Oyster Oyster, and umami gurus: Suzie Flores, Yuma "Docta Yew" Bellomee, William Reid, and Tara Aura.

"Apparitional Experiments – Even the Demons are Censored with The Centre for Land Affairs" organized by Tiffany Sia

The Centre for Land Affairs is a research group based in Hong Kong that investigates land dispossession by property developers, governments, and other hegemonic entities. The heterogeneous group invites researchers and creative workers to compost (with and around) dispossession, art/greenwashing, extraction, and colonial-thinking. For this symposium, The Centre of Land Affairs will re-create a virtual space of an exhibition, which was censored in Hong Kong and 80% of the works were taken down. Facing criticism and pressure on their show, they were told by a Town Planning Board civil servant and a senior Leighton employee, "You can't show this. You can't demonize the developers!" Inspired by this prompt of having "demonized" the developers, The Centre of Land Affairs will show this lost exhibition, summoning ghosts that could only appear in a virtual space. They will talk with Tiffany Sia using concealed identities, allowing an opportunity for others to be ventriloquists for this anonymous group. This program is a part of Apparitional Experiments, organized by Tiffany Sia and Speculative Place.

"Apparitional Experiments – Mad Masters / Other Countdowns with Emily Verla Bovino" organized by Tiffany Sia

Emily Verla Bovino will talk with Tiffany Sia about encounters with the syncretic practices known as ‘Cantonese shamanism’ and ‘mediumship’ as they are practiced in Hong Kong, and their transformation into intangible cultural heritage promoted by the tourism industry. What if instead of thinking about these practices as captivating local culture—that carries with it the vestiges of peasant life under feudalism—they are understood as articulating both a sophisticated theory of the ‘apparitional’, and as a philosophy that has always been threatening to inter-imperial rule over Hong Kong’s fugitive territories of refuge and escape? The conversation will be introduced with the chronotope of the ‘countdown’ in Hong Kong historiography and the entropic spatio-temporal repetitions and returns, openings and closings that it produces, speculating on its relationship to shamanistic notions of time and space. Participants will be invited to contribute imagined diagrams of ‘other countdowns’ to a collaborative document. This program is a part of Apparitional Experiments, organized by Tiffany Sia and Speculative Place.

“Apparitional Experiments — On Independent Spaces with Ed Halter” organized by Tiffany Sia

Tiffany Sia and Ed Halter will be in conversation to discuss what it really means to run an independent space, discussing Light Industry and Speculative Place.

Tony Cokes: "Black Celebration"

In “Black Celebration,” (1988), Tony Cokes pairs footage from the 1965 riots in Watts, Boston, Detroit, and Newark with text by The Situationist International, Barbara Kruger, Morrissey, and Depeche Mode’s Martin L. Gore, along with music by the industrial band Skinny Puppy. The video was shown at WPA in 1989 as part of “The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism” exhibition, curated by Richard J. Powell.

“Memory Museum: A Tea Meditation” organized by Mēlani N. Douglass

Tapping into our senses can unlock ancient memories and remind us that we are not only grounded in our own life stories. Integrative psychotherapist Shawna Murray-Browne, LCSW-C joins Mēlani N. Douglass in The Apothecary as they use the power of smell to bridge cultures and experiences while tracing the intersections of aromas through the tapestry of emotion connecting us all. Through guided meditations and slow sips you’re invited to explore sensations around food as you connect to your deepest memories, experiences and emotions. From there, you’ll be able to share stories from yourself or from others in a meaningful way as you recognize our shared journey through healing, connection, loss and joy rather than viewing them as separate entities. Let’s harness the power of scent to open the doors wide for insightful conversations that can help ground us in the essence of who we truly are—diverse yet deeply connected through our commonalities.

"Deep Listening: Horticultural Sound Bath by Very Sad Lab with Smoke& Tea + Imka” organized by Naoco Wowsugi

Very Sad Lab is a houseplant rehabilitation and research-based community-engaged art project developed by artists Valerie Wiseman and Naoco Wowsugi. For this gathering, DC-based sound artists Smoke & Tea and Imka will collaborate with VSL and create a space for an interspecies healing between plants and humans alike through ambient music and plant care tutorial.

“Future Drum Circle” organized by Black Techno Matters

Black Techno Matters, a collective on a mission to reclaim techno as a manifestation of black expression, brings together five DMV musicians for FUTUR3 DRUM C1RCL3, a two-hour jam session and dance party. Think of a drum circle, but with electronic drum machines, played by B_X_R_N_X_R_D, Diyanna Monet, Asha Santee, Stukes, and Blinkhorn. The quintet of forward thinking electronic musicians will gather to create rhythmic 100ps to move our spirits and recalibrate our consciousness to reveal the untapped potential within us to actualize our own futures when we gather around sonic vibration technology. Join us for this exploration of the unifying energy of techno! This event will be lit by black light, so dress to glow.

“Microsolidarity in Practice” organized by Richard D. Barlett and Natalia Lombardo

Richard D. Bartlett and Natalia Lombardo have contributed a series of games and activities which will be offered throughout the symposium to inspire gathering at different scales and spur deeper connections between participants. Richard and Natalia are co-founders of The Hum, which helps decentralized organizations thrive. Richard is the author of the community practice called Microsolidarity.

“The Making of Fertile Ground” organized by Mēlani N. Douglass

11th generation farmer and founder of Africulture, Michael Carter, visits The Apothecary for an exploration of soil and its healing properties. Bring your mug and be led through a slow sip as we work collectively to uncover the hidden lessons in creating and caring for soil. Journey with us beyond a scientific observation of replenishing land and scientific analysis of this often overlooked yet vitally important alchemical process. Come with your heart open to receive sacred messages from Mother Earth as we sip slowly on offerings of the land and take a closer look at this miraculous process which holds the instructions for rejuvenating the land and our spirits. Through Michael’s ancestral and familial journey, we are reminded through the process of replenishing soil, that trauma can be transmuted into triumph and community can be born amongst great diversity. Embracing this wisdom brings us to an abundant realization that no matter what adversity we have endured, with each season, we have the opportunity for regrowth and powerful transformation. Commit with us to living and working diligently to make our internal and external part of the existence fertile ground.

Film Screenings

Featuring: Hope Ginsburg: Land Dive Team: Bay of Fundy; Leigh Ledare: The Task; Lenka Clayton + Phillip Andrew Lewis: Five Hundred Twenty-Four; Mojdeh Rezaei-pour: Formations of a Diasporic Body; Phillipe Parreno: The Crowd; Renée Green: Wavelinks: Activism + Sound; Sarah Morris: Sakura

“To Document a Gathering” organized by Mindy Seu

In questing how ephemeral events might be documented, Mindy Seu has invited Ayana Zaire Cotton, Fabiola Ching, Mayah Lovell, Neta Bomani, and Shiraz Abdullahi Gallab to participate in the symposium as “Keynote Listeners.” They will participate in programs throughout the weekend

and create an archive that will be shared on Are.na. They will archive their interpretations of what has occurred through sketches, poetry, body language interpretation, and other mediums and present their findings at the end of the symposium.

“SEEDED, An affirmation practice” organized by Mēlani N. Douglass

Seeded paper artfully crafted by Melani and Michael has given us all a chance to reconnect with the Earth through our reaffirmations and dream visions. This opportunity is not only a means of sending our good will into the world, but it allows each of us to tap into our power as conscious creators. As we take this moment to bid farewell until next time, writing and planting affirmations is sure to lend its support for our journey ahead in life, love and light!

To participate, post your affirmation IG, tag [@familyartsmuseum](#) and [@melanindouglass](#) or email melani your affirmation at melanin@melanindouglass.com by midnight 3/20. Paper will be made during the new moon cycle starting 3/21 leading up to the gathering. We are asking that people plant the paper before the Full Pink Moon on April 6th, 2023.

QUESTIONS?

For any questions or to request additional information about accommodations, travel, and group tickets, please email gathering@wpadc.org.

ABOUT THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Asad Raza creates dialogues and rejects disciplinary boundaries in his work, which conceives of art as a metabolic, active experience. Using actions and processes such as soil-making, tennis, and horticulture, his projects create encounters within and beyond the exhibition setting. They have been realized by institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney; Gropius Bau, Berlin; the Serpentine Galleries, London; Kunsthalle Portikus; Metro Pictures, New York; Urbane Kunst Ruhr, Essen; the Lahore Biennale; and his one-bedroom apartment.

Prem Krishnamurthy is a designer, writer, and teacher. He received the Cooper Hewitt National Design Award for Communications Design in 2015 and KW Institute for Contemporary Art’s “A Year With...” residency fellowship in 2018. His professional papers were acquired by Bard College’s Center for Curatorial Studies in 2019. In 2022, Domain Books published his book-length epistolary essay, *On Letters*. He currently directs Wkshps, a multidisciplinary design consultancy and organizes Department of Transformation, an emergent, itinerant workshop that practices collaborative tools for social change. He has directed and curated large-scale exhibitions including “Oh, Gods of Dust and Rainbows”, the 2022 edition of FRONT International, Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art; “Our Silver City, 2094” at Nottingham Contemporary; and “Ministry of Graphic Design” in Sharjah, UAE. Previously, Prem founded the design studio Project Projects and the exhibition space P! in New York.

ABOUT THE HOST

Eaton Workshop is a global mission-driven hospitality company. Eaton is global in outlook, yet local in community engagement. Eaton DC opened in downtown Washington, D.C. in September 2018, closely followed by Eaton HK in the Jordan neighborhood of Hong Kong in November 2018. Both Eaton DC (1202 K St NW) and Eaton HK (380 Nathan Road) are top to bottom renovations of existing hotels.

Eaton DC is Eaton Workshop's flagship location in downtown Washington DC. It is inspired by the historic movements that made the world a better place, from the suffragettes to the Women's March, from civil rights to today's climate change movement. Our design, which references the history of the building as a bus terminal and printing press, evokes the nostalgia of an analog era while presenting a green and culture-filled sanctuary on K Street. A custom-designed sculpture acknowledges the indigenous land Eaton DC is built on, while the naming of its rooms honors Black histories of DC. Eaton DC offers a cinema, radio station, library, holistic wellness center, members' workspace, music venue, rooftop bar, literary bar, exhibition space, a creator's room, event spaces, restaurant, and coffee shop. Eaton DC is the ultimate cultural hub for kindred spirits, locals, and travelers alike, to convene, collaborate, and create.

www.EatonWorkshop.com | Instagram: [@EatonWorkshop](https://www.instagram.com/EatonWorkshop)

ABOUT WASHINGTON PROJECT FOR THE ARTS

Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) is a platform for collaborative and experimental artist-organized projects, dialogue, and advocacy. Artists curate and organize all of our programming—as an extension of their own intellectual research. Their projects can take many forms, from conversational dinners, exhibitions, field trips, film screenings, grass-roots organizing meetings, and installations, to lectures, performances, podcasts, publications, symposia, workshops, and more.

wpadc.org | [@wpadc](https://www.instagram.com/wpadc)

SUPPORTERS

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