



3 Memory in Three Acts
Danielle A. Jackson

14 la piscina, la yegua, la cancha
Las Nietas de Nonó

20 Form Per Form
Rebecca Teich

Sound & Lyrics:



Las Nietas de Nonó,
*Ilustraciones de la
Mecánica*, 2016–18,
Performances & Mixed
media Installation at the
10th Berlin Biennale,
Volksbühne Pavilion,
Berlin, Germany. Photo:
Tim Ohler



MEMORY IN THREE ACTS

The following is a collection of memories, feelings, sensations, and emotions extending from Berlin to Los Angeles to New York. It is a journal of encounters that has accumulated in my mind over the years leading up to Las Nietas de Nonó: Posibles Escenarios, Vol. 1 LNN, the artists first solo exhibition. And it is a testament to my admiration for the urgency and importance of their healing and self-reflective work. This is not a critical essay, at least not in the traditional way, nor is it trying to be. Las Nietas' work, for me, is best captured in the poetics of memory and unknowing. It is indelibly present and also ancestral. It is pure spirit—and many other, even less definable things.

I. Memory One

Imagine drifting aimlessly, as if on a *dérive*, through the streets of Mitte on a day where night-darkness almost courageously refuses to make itself visible. The day's duration is long and vibrant. The sky is a clear blue, and the luminous clouds have an absolute stillness that can only foreshadow my preoccupation with a transcendent practice ripe with phantoms.

After roaming through the streets for an unknown, unfixed time, I approach the back of a glass construction on a plot of land near Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz. My legs are tired from my journey, but I'd felt compelled to keep moving. I discover that this is the Volksbühne Pavilion, once a box office and bookshop for the famed "people's theater." Inside, the glass cube is filled with the aroma of kombucha and the sound of running water, while four hand-stitched strips of scoby, the fermentation discs that develop during the production of kombucha tea, hang from the ceiling. The massive, fleshlike pieces of vegetable leather read like tapestries, bearing

markings that recall the navigational knowledge of African quilting. Knowledges are hidden but clearly present.

There is a feeling of ritual, of a space that has been blessed and prepared for healing. But also a space that is open to other life forms, and to the idea of unknowing.

While many encountered this space by following the exhibition guide of the 10th Berlin Biennale, I want to mention that this space found me. I was on another kind of journey. It was intensely sensory and immersive. It was communal. I recall vividly the smell of food cooking, although perhaps the sizzling vibration coming from a silver pot on a griddle conjured this scent in my mind. This is a memory, so there are gaps. Food buckets turned upside down served as display cases for artworks—the beginning of a visceral artistic language.

Laboratory test tubes lined counters positioned at the rear of the space next to old radiators that buzzed uncontrollably. The test tubes, all irregular shapes and sizes, held organic liquids and solids whose hues ranged from red to brown to orange. The running water, so unmistakable to my ear, was a recording of a stream that flows near the land of Las Nietas de Nonó in Barrio San Antón, Carolina, Puerto Rico. (At the time, Las Nietas was running a community center and performance space there called Patio Taller.)

The water sound was locked in, like a track on repeat as consistent as the dial tone on a rotary telephone. It evoked process, human abandonment, abundance, and so much more—a loaded metaphor, as they say. The pavilion’s walls were full of holes, and the tables looked like medical readymades. The test tubes and the alchemy they evoked made the space clinical yet messy. This obscure installation was also the stage for *Ilustraciones de la Mecánica* (2016–18), a work that brought the feelings of the barrio to Berlin and referenced the interventions made to Black women’s bodies through clinical experimentation carried out by the pharmaceutical industry and the Puerto Rican government.

II. Memory Two

In December 2021, I traveled to the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles to see the performance and installation *No More Tears*, created by Las Nietas de Nonó on the occasion of *No Humans Involved*, a group exhibition curated by Erin Christovale featuring artists whose work challenges and disrupts Western notions of humanism. I arrived early to experience the installation before the performance.

A black-box theater had been built within the gallery and filled with circular strips of scoby, sewn together to create a patterned lightbox that spanned the dimensions of the room. The vinegary odor of kombucha was omnipresent. Stereos playing atmospheric sounds by the LA-based interdisciplinary artist BAE BAE were strategically placed on the ground. Ceramic elephants—a symbol of ancestral protection—were settled at the edges of the installation. Beads that doubled as sound instruments draped from the corners. I thought to myself: this is a stage that is made to be moved, altered, and disrupted by bodies. The elements were thoughtfully placed, but it was clear that those places were not final or optimal. The beads were to be played, the lighting was to be dimmed, the elephant was an element of a future action, and so on.

A few hours later, a cluster of people gathered in the museum lobby. Our group of curators, scholars, dancers, and performers was taken up a flight of stairs and met by an authoritative figure in a red dress suit, performed by mulowayi nonó. The red was vibrant, almost blinding, in its magisterial power, and mulowayi intoned: “Liquid activates you, you can be yourself.” Agua de Jamaica—an agua fresca made from dried hibiscus flowers, water, and sugar—was served to each visitor before they were allowed to enter—a kind of communal ritual. (On the previous performance days, kombucha had been served.)

Las Nietas de Nonó,
No More Tears, 2021.
Performance at Hammer
Museum, Los Angeles.
Photo: Emanuela Bocse



Las Nietas de Nonó:
Posibles Escenarios Vol.
/LNN. Installation view,
Artists Space, 2022.



As we entered the gallery, we were ushered toward the installation just outside the black box. mapenzi nonó, the other half of Las Nietas, began the performance from underneath a leopard-skin blanket. Their movements suggested hypnosis or a state of possession—slow and often in response to mulowayi in the room outside, suggesting simultaneously a transformation and an oppression. mulowayi walked in and out of the room, the sound of her heels tracking her proximity and gait. During each reentry, she brought with her plastic bags full of items such as hammers, elephants, and red-velvet cake, and showed them clearly to the audience before laying them down or delivering an action.

Eventually, mapenzi's character made it onto the darkened stage floor, and taped out precise triangles and squares (boxes of sorts) in which to place objects, sometimes engaging in movements that likewise adhered to these perimeters. Snaps administered by mulowayi's authoritative character triggered movements and rapid changes of pace from mapenzi's. All communication was nonverbal, and the movements fluctuated between endurance exercises and everyday gestures. As the actions progressed, the once-dimmed lighting brightened and the monitors in the installations came on to show 3D animations of Las Nietas' cousins, the Salgado brothers, who inspired this work and who were recently released after serving several years in federal prison.

No More Tears is a meditation on the emotional and mental paradigms one grapples with during incarceration, and specifically how loss of physical and spatial freedom heightens interiority, memory, and survival. This was reiterated through the dynamics of mapenzi and mulowayi's characters—one operating within the confines of taped zones and other tightly defined spaces, and the other having the capacity to come and go at will.

But that is putting it too simply. There was a delicate complexity beyond what the eyes saw. The piece also functioned as a restorative space for healing and closure, marking the end of the Salgado brothers' incarceration. In one of the final scenes,

the ceramic elephant was destroyed, a hammer shattering it into pieces and thereby disruptively announcing the culmination of something. Both characters wore African tribal masks, signaling a kind of ancestral ritual. The soundscape was amplified, the tone as palpable as the rhythms of drums building in a cipher or a thumping heartbeat after a long-distance run.

Beyond the sensory environments that Las Nietas create, I am also drawn to the fresh and inventive ways in which they transform organic material into sculpture. In the years that I have followed their work, they continue to push and exhaust the capacities of their materials. Their performance practice is equally experimental; I like to think of it not only as a counterpart to the sculptural environments, but also as a kind of living theater where there is little or no separation between actors and witnesses. The latter become participants, and thus part of a community. Las Nietas' contribution to the practice of performance is unique in all the ways that it leans on the autobiographical, on nonlinear form, and on fragmentation as tools to lure the visitor into a sacred and healing and communal space.

III. Memory Three (Afterword)

el flow oculto de agua/the hidden flow of water (2022) is described by Las Nietas as an emotional tool for daily use—a type of meditation device to aid those working through feelings that have been haunting them. It is a daily element of their activist practice as well as their personal lives. Using it, they check in with their emotions before beginning their day and work. It is a threshold where their semi-private practice becomes public.

The instructions: "Choose a theme or situation that lives within you that you would like to delve into at this time. The situation may be oriented towards joy, pleasure, disappointment, distress, or discomfort." The day after the opening of *Posibles Escenarios Vol. 1 LNN*, I sat in a near-empty and quiet gallery at the small,

Las Nietas de Nonó,
el flow oculto de agua/
the hidden flow of water
(detail), 2022.



Las Nietas de Nonó,
el flow oculto de agua/
the hidden flow of water
(detail), 2022.



intimate desk reserved for this task. The night before, visitors had lined up to engage with the tool—several crying, or discreetly ripping out the journal page before them because, I imagined, their emotions were too personal to share. An opening event was too high-stakes for me to attempt this task, but the quietude of that Saturday morning felt more gracious and generative.

I chose a theme that caused me both distress and discomfort—a circumstance that was weighing on my heart, perhaps preventing me from celebrating a victory. I cleared my mind and breathed, preparing to be one with my emotions. I said a prayer to allow myself to approach this task with humility and honesty.

“Ask yourself: How do I feel in relation to that situation?” I sifted through the mood cards in group two (the space of discomfort, or unsavory yet productive emotions). Separating the moods one by one and breathing as my eyes filled with tears, I took time with each, pausing and asking myself if that mood truly characterized what I was feeling. This process of holding and feeling took around thirty minutes and was freighted with many stops and starts. The weight of the emotions was too much.

“Frustrated”

“Unhappy”

“Furious”

“Uneasy” *not quite*

“Impatient” *not applicable*

“Hurt” *whew, there it was!*

I paused. Yes, it was the most accurate depiction of my feelings. It was disarming and cutting. A particularly painful bee sting. I needed to sit with the vulnerability of this process. Being able to name the emotion was deeply clarifying. Perhaps my emotions were heightened because I was surrounded by other elements and environments

designed by Las Nietas, for instance a ceremonial, sacred space filled with scoby—sourced from Los Angeles, New York, and Connecticut—that looked like stained glass in a chapel, and an emotionally charged space lined with tanker desks and security monitors (symbols of power and surveillance).

Handmade clay stones meditated on changes in landscapes and displacement, particularly implosions of public housing projects in Puerto Rico. The affective lighting merged blues and oranges and shone on me, becoming the cloudscape to my emotions. Rap songs, a continuous soundtrack alongside selected natural sounds, from cave recordings to springs, populated the environment with sombering lyrics: “You have sold our lands / You have profited from all spheres /... destroying sandbanks / defending environmental crimes.” I couldn’t help entering into a reflective state regarding autobiographical, expropriating, and colonial violence, ruined ecologies, and silenced histories of diaspora.

The next steps were to name unmet needs and make a recipe for myself. I’ll leave you with one recipe-action of the many I created that morning:

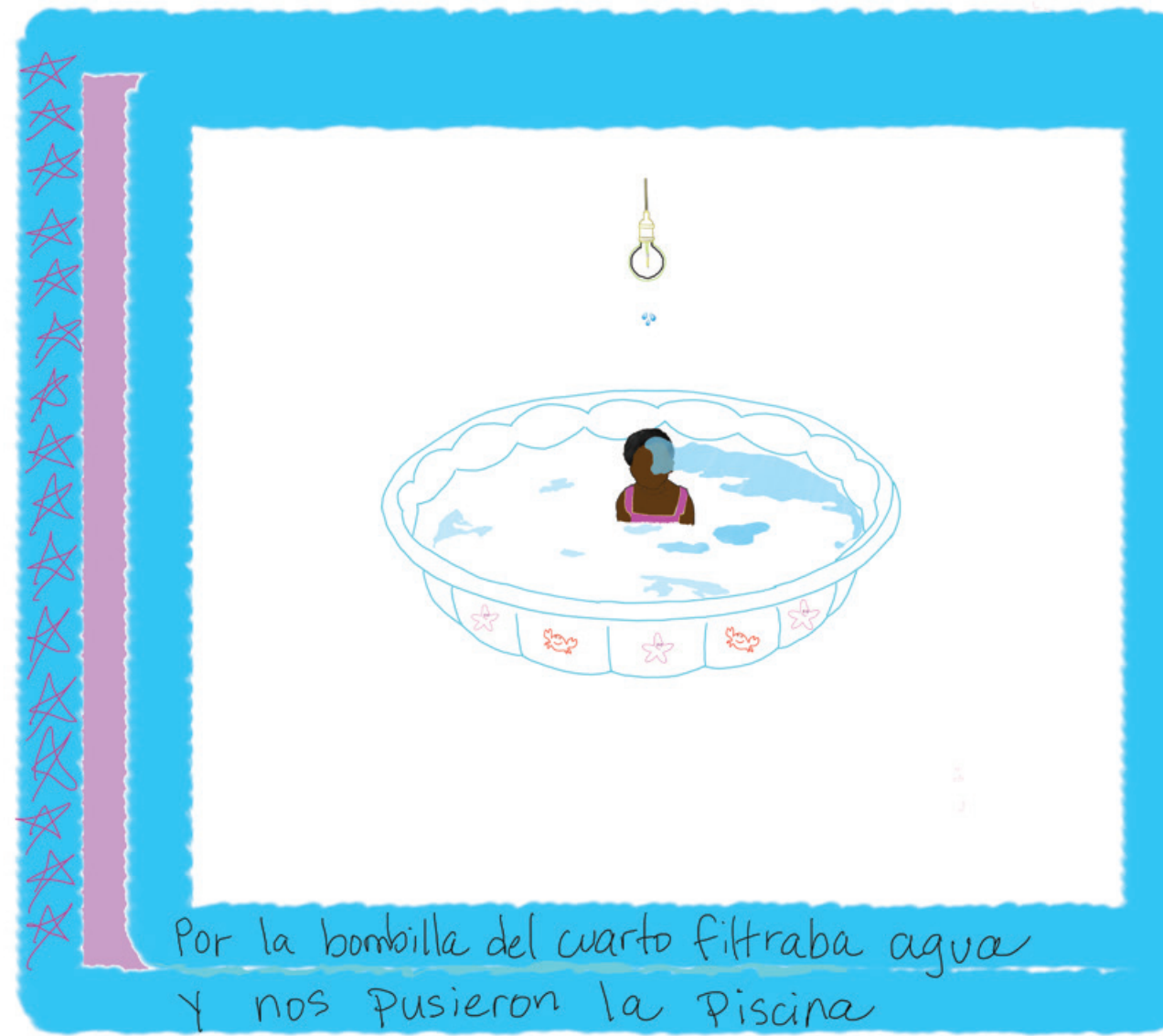
Support: plan a self-care space that allows me to articulate my needs and the ways that I want to be supported, without fear or judgment.

Who are Las Nietas de Nonó? A duo of Afro-diasporic sibling healers, activists, and divine beings who create spaces for us to feel.

Danielle A. Jackson

la piscina

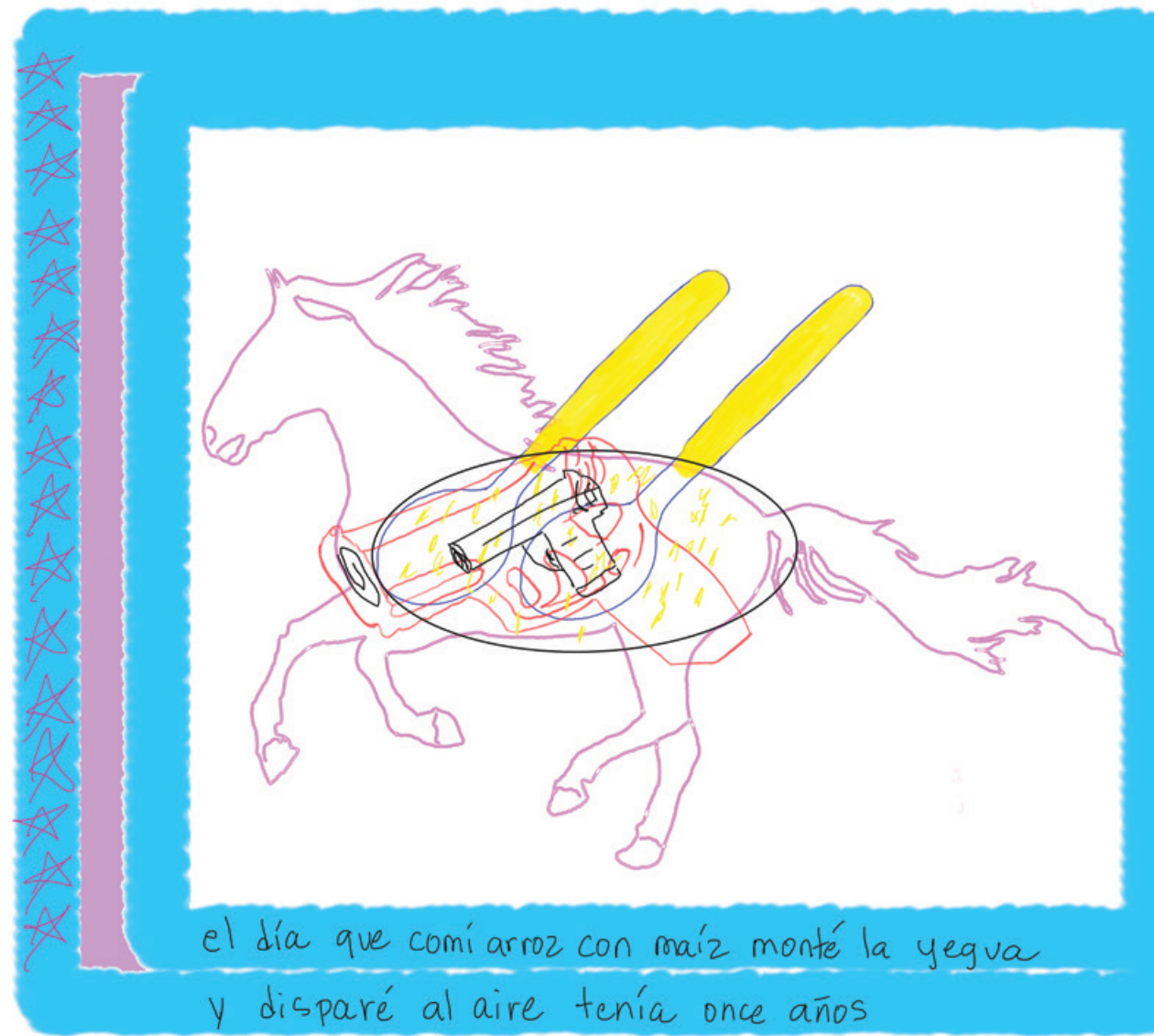
(the pool)



Por la bombilla del cuarto filtraba agua
Y nos pusieron la Piscina

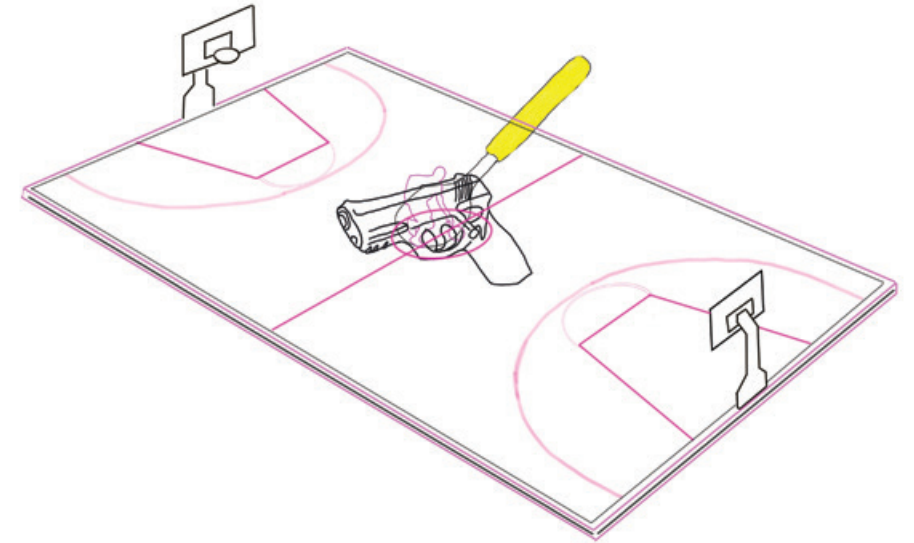
la yegua

(the mare)



el día que comí arroz con maíz monté la yegua
y disparé al aire tenía once años

la cancha
(the basketball court)



Cuando gritaron agua salimos corriendo, la bola se quedó en la cancha ... mami había cocinado arroz con pollo

Las Nietas de Nonó,
*Ilustraciones de la
Mecánica*, 2016–19.
Performed at the Whitney
Museum of American Art.
Photo: Paula Court



FORM PER FORM

I.

What constitutes the found. Formative per formative ‘making’ that signals out in sound of flow, rubs adjacent to craft, production, produce, produce, art object, sustenance, installation, cultivation, round it out. Convergent beyond distinction of taste lays thickly on the tongue when regarding so palpably sensation arrives through look alone. The viscera of surface—anticipate texture but through cling & grasp—these elbows are joints & everything is or can be an extension of a hand. Every hand can be another. Often acronymized beyond the fold lies Symbiotic Culture Of Biocomposition and Yielders. Of Bequeath and Yearnings. Of Beatitude and Yattering. I mean I mean I mean.

II.

FERMENTATION THEATRICALITY

III.

Forge forage the PREsentation of path & the PREsentation of form, insofar as already happened just in the same instance it is currently happening, termed ‘starter’ & stays that way til? Til. To say ‘routes of arrival’ as if we won’t just go back & do it again tomorrow. To do is to be & to be is to be with. Environment set setting, locate by relative proximity, locate in relation to oneself & what one can use, an ellipses of what is not a metaphor. Peltish foray lays out drapery of biofilm. Take in consume. Delicate eye motion holds the line, the serrated edge of gummy nonflesh (or, if it is alive then is it flesh). An ecopoetics of shared life through & against intrepid terrain of ongoing displacement. Insipid theft, saporous taking. Weaving with metal, fabricating in bacteria. Parking lot territory goes something like

periphery periphery perimeter, what with the panning frame. Tall, far, ready, THERE.

IV.

RE ENTRENCH METAPHORICS IN MATERIALS

V.

Like this? There is no something like this there is only this—there is gap there is grip there is how does one get from here to there there is excavation there is commingling there is ingestion there is digestion there is regurgitation there is the illusion of divided worlds there is an unscalable chainlink fence there is holdover there is here & there is there & there is here & there there is herethere there is herethere in the frame there is come hither there is touch on a screen that regards here cannot touch that there there is knowledge through time splayed across space there is place there is plate there is displacement there is plating there is across there is presence there is serrated edge there is varieties of meat or rather there are things that appear like varieties of meat there is the meat of a palm there is muscle there is coat & house there is elicitation of memory's depth there is acculturation there is symbiotic there is hold my hand let's go.

VI.

LIVE CULTURES. WITH ABANDON. AGAINST TRAFFIC. ENCASING. BOTTLE UP.

VII.

Industry pretends to be a map. Matte abundance meets metallic clamp down—to reach the highest fruit to survey barbed wire backdrop. Drop back the camera to hold another frame. Again. See the silenced. Extradiegetic soundscape. Sweat lush & sweat touch. Pivot around. Again. Necessary & sufficient conditions within which

the internal climate can more than thrive. "Play." "Play with." "Your food." Respond to abundance in plating.

VIII.

A DRESS IS A GLOVE ADDRESS IS A LOVE.

IX.

Meticulous, make, shift. Twist & meet. Face focus in traction of fruition, of beauty. Metabolic expanse insofar as the literalness of within reach. The edges grow outwards & in the midst there are holes which too can be made, trod, healed back. Over & over. Where to start? & again. When to arrive? Over & over. Mix into surface & follow the light.

Las Nietas de Nonó: *Posibles Escenarios*, Vol. 1 *LNN* is on view at Artists Space from September 16 – December 3, 2022.

Exhibition support is provided by Marieluise Hessel.

Additional program support for Artists Space is provided by The Friends of Artists Space, Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation, The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature

Staff of Artists Space

Jay Sanders
Miriam Katzeff
Danielle A. Jackson
Stella Cilman
Rezarta Seferi
Kate Temple
Witts
Ben Lipkin
Nusheen Ghaemi

Design
Eric Wrenn Office

Board of Directors

Cindy Sherman
Honorary Lifetime Member

Eleanor Cayre
President
Steven Schindler
President
Andy Stillpass
Treasurer
Liam Gillick
Secretary

Shane Akeroyd
Negar Azimi
Jonathan Caplan
Stephen Cheng
Martin Cox
Claire Distenfeld Olshan
Darby English
LaToya Ruby Frazier
Barbara Gladstone
Carol Greene
Rachel Harrison
Ebony L. Haynes

Joan Jonas
Philippa Polskin
Seth Price
Eleanor Heyman Propp
Allan Schwartzman
Amanda Sharp
Rirkrit Tiravanija

11 Cortlandt Alley Founders

Visionary

Eleanor Cayre
Barbara Gladstone
Eleanor Heyman Propp
Allan Schwartzman

Leader

Shane Akeroyd
Stephen Cheng
Claire Distenfeld Olshan
Lonti Ebers
Lucy Freeman Sandler in
Memory of Irving Sandler
Carol Greene
Alex Logsdail
Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Maja Oeri
Anonymous

Founder

Murray A. Abramson
Julie Ault
Candy Barasch
Daniel Buchholz &
Christopher Müller
James Cahn & Jeremiah Collatz
Martin Cox
Horace W. Goldsmith
Foundation
Stephanie LaCava
Mónica Manzutto & José Kuri
Friedrich Petzel
Steven Schindler
Mari & Peter Shaw
David Simkins
Marsha Soffer
Andy Stillpass
Diana Wege
Thea Westreich & Ethan Wagner
Helene Winer
David Zwirner

Founding Artists

Yuji Agematsu
Richard Aldrich
Harold Ancart
Ed Atkins

Darren Bader
Trisha Baga
Barbara Bloom
Cecily Brown
Nicolas Ceccaldi
Moyra Davey
Trisha Donnelly
Jana Euler
Tomoo Gokita
Rachel Harrison
Charline von Heyl
Alex Hubbard
Jacqueline Humphries
Aaron Flint Jamison
Rashid Johnson
Sanya Kantarovsky
Jutta Koether
Jeff Koons
Michael Krebber
Louise Lawler
Margaret Lee
Sam Lewitt
Mathieu Malouf
Nick Mauss
Lucy McKenzie
Albert Oehlen
Laura Owens
Charlemagne Palestine
Adrian Piper
Pope.L
Seth Price
Walter Price
Josephine Pryde
Sam Pulitzer
RH Quaytman
Carissa Rodriguez
David Salle
Richard Serra
Amy Sillman
Josh Smith
Haim Steinbach
Hito Steyerl
Cheyney Thompson
Rirkrit Tiravanija
Tom of Finland
Stewart Uoo
Peter Wächtler
Kara Walker
Kelley Walker
Jeff Way

Core Contributors

The Cowles Charitable Trust
The Cy Twombly Foundation
The David Teiger Foundation
The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation
The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
The New York Community Trust
Imperfect Family Foundation

Robert Rauschenberg
Foundation
The Stavros Niarchos Foundation
The Willem de Kooning Foundation
The Fox Aarons Foundation
Herman Goldman Foundation
The Destina Foundation
The Luce Foundation
May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation
The Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation
Arison Arts Foundation
NYU Community Fund
The David Rockefeller Fund
The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation
The Jill and Peter Kraus Foundation
The Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation

Super Friends

Shane Akeroyd
Eleanor Cayre
Sadie Coles
Lonti Ebers
Gladstone Gallery
Eleanor Heyman Propp
David Joselit &
Steven Incontro
Lisson Gallery
Maja Oeri
Allan Schwartzman
Diana Wege
David Zwirner

Daniel Buchholz &
Christopher Müller
Jonathan Caplan &
Angus Cook
Brendan Dugan
Galerie Gisela Capitain
Greene Naftali
Maja Hoffmann
Dominique Levy
Matthew Marks &
Jack Bankowsky
Laura Owens
Ronnie Sassoon &
James Crump
Steven Schindler
Amanda Sharp
Josh Smith
Jerry Speyer
Andy Stillpass
Alice Weiner
Thea Westreich Wagner &
Ethan Wagner
Dirk & Natasha Ziff

Friends

Cecily Brown
Eileen & Michael Cohen
Paula Cooper Gallery
Wade Guyton
Jeanne Hardy
Hauser & Wirth
Marieluise Hessel
Paul Judelson
David Kordansky
kurimanzuto
Joshua Mack
Jose Martos &
Servane Mary
Sara Meltzer
Fernando Mesta &
José Rojas
Modica Carr Art Advisory, LLC
Sophie Morner
Barbara & Howard Morse
Pace Gallery
Mato Perić
Penny Pritzker
Cindy & Howard Rachofsky
Andrea Rosen
Stephanie Stevens
Jean-Edouard van Praet &
Tappan Heher
Christopher Wool

Marianne Boesky
Spencer Brownstone
Christine Burgin &
William Wegman
James Cahn &
Jeremiah Collatz
Marty & Rebecca Eisenberg
Hal Foster & Sandy Tait
Daniel Giddings
Benjamin Godsill
Jane Hait & Justin Beal
Heather Harmon
Lis Ivers
Michael Krebber
Catriona Jeffries
Jacob King
Glenn Ligon
Lily Lyons
Marian Goodman Gallery
Robert McKenzie
Valeria Napoleone
Steve Pulimood
Alexander S.C. Rower & Elan Gentry
Stephanie Snyder
Emily Sundblad
Rob Teeters &
Bruce Sherman
Toby Webster

The ambiguously talented air

Pulp Sown Cellulite

Mother Sown Culture

Glued to a Soft and hard burning

While the mail brown moon
Ferments

so Nasty

Its fly
And I love it
The disgusting us
Perfect

Reigny
Painy
Goopy
Uuupy
Snotty
Smokey)

Basie Allen





Las Nietas de Nonó: *Posibles Escenarios Vol. I* LNN

ARTISTS SPACE

A tender gross

So us

It glistens

With Ew praise

Against the praise-iest yuk

Yum

The way smiles remind us

The Tea

In Tech

Has always been

Us

Under the awning

And offing

Of fall

Red— marintes the air

Blue

Until color slip

thru the porous night of light

and there is no more rain

just

shade

bows

Limp

in a pre-nasty

Funk

So gorgeous

Flesh

Is foul in perfection

A form awful

Awesome

Pre rave

Age in the oven

(Smuuushy

Ouushy

Belly

Brownny

Smelly

Pulpy

Phlegmy

Cloudy

Gummy

Filmy

Floaty

Reigny

Painy

Gooopy

Uuupy

Snoty

Smokey)

The ambiguously
talented air

Pulp Sown Cellulite

Mother Sown Culture

Glued to a Soft and hard burning

While the mail brown moon

Ferments

so Nasty

Its fly

And I love it

The disgusting us

Perfect