



Image: Still from performance action by Katie Kehoe, with her "Life Ring", made from salvage.

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## ***(dirty~clean) Cleaners, Laure Drogoul***

One of the least clean ways of cleaning, ironically, is called dry cleaning. With a mixture of toxic chemicals and an abundance of clear plastic, dry cleaning is the ultimate un-clean. Like the living dead, it creates a dead zone in the natural world, lingering long past its time. With support from F.E.A.S.T. Drogoul would install and perform *(dirty~clean) Cleaners* in a VisArts Gallery or other appropriate site. The project will be an installation with on-going performances that takes the form of a surreal dry-cleaning shop. Drogoul would use collected clear plastic to fabricate an immersive organic cave like environment along with sound, video and multiple performances. The work reflects on the ubiquitous cleaners of our urban landscape, and draws on the history of the dry-cleaning industry. This project relates to survival as it emphasizes the growing environmental concern of LDPE plastic #4 and the use of perchloroethylene, a known toxin used to clean wearables and other domestics connected to everyday living.

Another aspect of the installation is to create a repository for the plastic that packages the “cleaned” garments of dry cleaning. This plastic is no longer being accepted by China, there is growing concern as to what will happen to this type of plastic waste. There are few collecting places that actually process this plastic in the US. During the exhibition, I propose being one of these locations to raise awareness and offer an alternative to dumping plastic #4 in the landfill where it will last for an eternity.

**Laure Drogoul** is an interdisciplinary artist, olfactory spelunker, and cobbler of situations who lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Laure works with a wide range of media including projects in which she creates sculpture, performances, and events that invite the viewer to be an active participant. She has exhibited and performed internationally and nationally, including The International House of Japan in Tokyo, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington Project for the Arts, Baltimore Museum of Art, PS122 and The Center for Architecture in New York as well as many street corners, vacant lots, alleys, and underutilized urban spaces. She has received Maryland State Artist Awards and a Franklin Furnace Award for performance art and has been a recipient of a US/Japan Creative Artist Fellowship. In 2006 Ms. Drogoul was honored with The Janet and Walter Sondheim Prize.

Laure Drogoul directs The 14Karat Cabaret, a performance project located at Maryland Art Place and is a co-organizer and curator of the Transmodern Festival, which is a festival of provocative works by cultural experimenters from Baltimore and beyond.

[www.lauredrogoul.com](http://www.lauredrogoul.com)



## ***Sari Block Printing with Recent Immigrants from Amnesty International: Reliving our Cultural Traditions, Trisha Gupta***

Trisha comes from a family of immigrants. But as a first generation American, Gupta never expected that immigrants would be stigmatized to a point that they would be feeling like second class citizens and vulnerable to abuse and even physical attack. Gupta believes the current climate promotes a homogenized culture that turns on its head the historic idea that we are a country that has been formed from immigrant cultural traditions. Amnesty International's Longer Table Initiative is complementary to F.E.A.S.T. in that recent immigrants are welcomed into the community with a large potluck dinner. In her work, Gupta teaches teach Indian sari woodblock printing designed to preserve cultural traditions. This small scale effort resists cheap "fast fashion" products - created unsustainably and in environmentally detrimental ways - which have forced textile traditions like this to no longer be carried down from family to family. Gupta will invite the families from the Longer Table Initiative to write their family name in their native language on a block. The blocks will be carved at the event using simplified techniques. Gupta has taught this form of carving extensively and have safe and easy ways for community members to do this quickly. We will print the name blocks on a dyed indigo sari and other traditional Indian clothing with white ink using foam rollers and water-based inks. The funds will cover materials and the cost of an art assistant. Reenacting this textile tradition reminds us of how communal communities worked together for their mutual survival. This piece will be on display at the Gandhi Center as a part of an installation on peace.

**Trisha Gupta** is an interdisciplinary artist and educator. She received her Bachelors in Fine Arts from Washington University in St. Louis, where she specialized in printmaking and drawing. She is proficient in bookbinding, drawing, painting, relief, collagraph, and etching. She was a print shop monitor at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts; trained at the Art Students League of New York in technical printmaking; assisted master printer Kathleen Carraccio and worked with the artist Michael Pellettieri and master printer Tomomi Ono in stone lithography and etching.

In 2018, she opened her own teaching studio in Bethesda, Maryland. After being trained in the Western tradition of woodblock printing, she returned to her home in Rajasthan to learn about Indian Woodblock carving. She loves teaching Asian printmaking processes like Indian woodblock printing, Japanese woodblock, and viscosity. She is committed to preserving traditional folk art and fine Indian printmaking. In particular she has learned about Indian sari block printing with natural plant based dyes.

She believes in art as a platform for social change. In the past she was Pyramid Atlantic's art education associate. And in residencies she has participated in education initiatives that were funded by the National Endowment for the arts. As an Occupational Therapy candidate at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, she has taught art to diverse populations in schools, homeless shelters, and off Rikers Island.

Her work is listed in the New York Public Library collection, the Art students League and in collections internationally and domestically. [www.trishaart.com](http://www.trishaart.com)



## ***I Will Survive, Estefaní Mercedes***

Houry Kandoyan, an Armenian weight-lifting instructor, has been seeking political asylum in the United States for being gay since 2016. Houry came to the US to escape homophobia, but the asylum process has lasted for more than three years instead of six months. Houry's experience is not isolated and reflects a system that, instead of creating a safe haven for queer people, perpetuates the violence they have experienced. The proposed performance and video diptych reflect on the burden gay asylee seekers like Houry carry in the United States and how despite all odds these seekers 'will survive.'

This first video in this diptych video will feature Mercedes helping Houry melt down bullet-casings to make weight lifting plates that will go on either sides of her bar. In the second video, Houry will use the weightlifting bar and plates made out of bullet casings as if she were teaching a weight lifting class. While doing overhead presses, squats, etc. Houry will sing along to survival-themed songs such as "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor.

The weights made out of melted weapons, that are lifted by Houry are a metaphor for the process of asylum, which adds a 'weight' to the asylee seeker. Like a weight lifter, the asylee seeker pushes through and will survive despite that burden.

Through radical justice, investigating copyright law, and film photography, **Stephanie Mercedes** hopes to restore missing violent histories, turning the archive into legend. Mercedes has a research-based practice that intersects law and social justice. Her recent work is in connection to the history of the Argentine dictatorship (1976 – 1983). By building publicly accessible photographic archives, Mercedes hopes to restore silenced voices. Mercedes' work questions the purity of the documentary image, the singularity of memory, and the purpose of the archive. Mercedes is an Argentinian/American Artist whose practice moves between Performance, Social Practice and Social Sculpture. In 2017 Mercedes won the Light Work Grant and the Open Society Grant for documentary images. She has exhibited at the Bronx Museum of Art, Flux Factory, Paco das Artes and many institutions across the Americas. She was the VisArts Studio Fellow from January – June 2018 where she used her studio as a platform for investigations into the ethics of violent images, art and law, and Latina performance. Mercedes is always looking for individuals who want to share their connections to the histories she excavates.

[ornamental.activism.contact@gmail.com](mailto:ornamental.activism.contact@gmail.com)



## **Broken Light Walk, MJ Neuberger**

This work engages viewers in a haptic, interactive, kinetic experience that suggests the disproportionate human impact on the survival of the world surrounding us.

Viewers encounter shards of pottery on a wooden surface, lit by unseen sources in a darkened space. Touching, stepping or rolling onto it, the viewer senses this platform is moving and attempts balance, realizing that their own movement causes the orbs of light on the walls, reflected from small amounts of water in the shards, to quiver and ripple.

The funds will be used to create/source materials that will produce a safe but “springy” platform (foam, springs, or combination; high quality, thin plywood sheets, lighting equipment, etc.) and to provide public access to this work.

Neuberger would present this work at VisArts, other spaces in Rockville Town Centre and beyond, with the goal of encouraging community-based interaction that extends as far as is feasible. This work is aimed at communities that are vulnerable, whether economically, culturally, or emotionally and Neuberger would consider outreach to specific groups that she has engaged in the past, including women survivors of sexual violence through the DC Rape Crisis Center.

The work interrupts the trance of replaying and rehearsing for the past and future by calling the viewer physically into the present and connects them with the geometric impact of the smallest human action on the survival of non-human life, our earthly environment and, ultimately, each other. It suggests the impermanence and volatility of “survival” in a capitalist system.

**MJ Neuberger** has presented work at Art Resources Transfer, Gathering of the Tribes and the Nuyorican Poets Café in New York and at exhibitions in Maryland, North Carolina and Indiana. She teaches art at Towson University, works with underserved youth as a makerspace coordinator and organizes community-based art/performance events. Her writing and criticism have appeared in SPIN, The Nation and the Village Voice.

[www.mjneuberger.wordpress.com](http://www.mjneuberger.wordpress.com)



## ***Microbial Fuel Cell Microbit Music Concert, Paulina Sierra***

Dystopic scenarios of survival have been explored widely and the signals just keep on growing: Seed Banks, Entertainment Shows, Global Survival Suits, Preppers and the rising Emergency Food websites. This project would like to explore Survival and Utopia as ways of understanding other narratives of holistic, adaptive, communal survival rather than apocalyptic visions of survivalism (*Soylent Green, Hunger Games, Contamination*).

A mutualistic relationship is when two organisms of different species “work together,” each benefiting from the relationship. Under this premise, the F.E.A.S.T. funds will be used to develop a musical composition by three musicians prototyping three commercial microcontrollers. Working together: the MudWatt (used as power source generated by microbial energy), the :KLEF Piano, and the BBC microbit guarantee digital means of expression needed for survival, reorganization and flourishing, with these tools possible aesthetics of interruption can happen and stimulate a place where possible, multispecies reimagining can occur.

Born in eclectic, sublime and contradictory Mexico, Paulina Sierra obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Graphic Design at Universidad Iberoamericana (CDMX). Usually involved with the interactive media art/music scene, she started to experiment with software that allowed her to break away from static content. Several projects later and the creation of her interactive media and design atelier with two partners, she decided to experiment with objects, space and the multiplicity of the media where she graduated with honors from the M.F.A. in Digital+Media department at Rhode Island School of Design.

As a former resident of New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.A. (under an O1 Visa), today you can find her back in Mexico City, teaching several areas of design, freelancing and developing her artistic projects nationally and abroad.

[www.paulinasierra.com](http://www.paulinasierra.com)