On behalf of the Rethinking Residencies working group, composed of thirteen New York-based residency programs, Recess, Shandaken Projects, and Flux Factory will explore organizational partnership with other entities: municipal, civic, judicial, and even individual. Concrete examples to be discussed include Assembly, a program by Recess and partners in the justice system that serves as an alternative to incarceration while empowering young people to take charge of their own life story and imagine a positive future; Flux Factory’s partnership seeking sustainability in their space; and Shandaken Projects’ partnerships with larger institutions that establish new program areas while creating economies of scale. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural and administrative shifts required within our organizations to develop and sustain these partnerships.

NOTES:

Nat Roe: We're speaking on behalf of Rethinking Residencies. We're a consortium of thirteen different New York-based artist residencies. We meet frequently together to share resources, share ideas and we put on public programs as well; sometimes we give talks. Nicolas is going to kick off with talking a little bit about that group. Then we're going to talk about our own organizations and partnerships.

Rethinking Residencies Introduction

Nicholas Weist: Thank you. I’m Nick Weist from Shandaken Projects. We began this sort of working group in March 2014 with the hope that each of the member organizations could share knowledge and resources and also cultivate critical thinking and discourse about the field of residencies because there really is no extant body of knowledge or scholarship that exists about the field. We were invited to speak about partnerships, and this was the foundational partnership that got all of our organizations in the mood for the work we did elsewhere.

Since 2014 we’ve been coming together to talk about what we do and shared problems we encounter and try to collaborate instead of compete, which I think is a really key idea for this afternoon’s discussion. One of the things that we identified early on as a challenge facing our sector of the industry is—there are curatorial studies programs, terminal programs in nonprofit administration, generally museum studies—but there’s actually no scholarly discourse about residency administration and praxis.

One of the first goals we articulated for the group was that we would cultivate discourse about the field of residency administration—we have more or less annual presentations. These are
opportunities that we create for our peers, colleagues, and artists to hear about what we do and to produce new thinking about residency experiences. In spring 2020 with the very probable support of the New York State Council of the Arts, we'll be producing a conference at the Brooklyn Museum about residencies. This is like a third of what we do—the discourse focused programs—the second third being quarterly meetings where each organization shares resources in an effort to cultivate an understanding of best practices, which also doesn't exist for our specific part of the industry. We do things like:

- Share internal documents like exit interviews or orientation materials to see where we can learn from each other and fill in some of the gaps.
- A wide range of organizations can cross pollinate.
  - Larger organizations can learn from small ones, like how to make an one-on-one connection; smaller organizations can look at materials from, for example, the Queens Museum and see what their teams of highly qualified professionals have brought to their materials.

**Nat Roe:** As we've been meeting over the last few years, we've really discovered that all these residencies have such different missions and practices and just work in completely different ways. We haven't really found a general theory or rigorous academic study around this field so that's one of the reasons that we plan to do this symposium, with a subsequent publication coming up in spring of 2020. We do plan to have a open call for essayists and speakers.

In addition to these resource-sharing meetings, we put on some public programs, including the Andrea Fraser talk, do annual panels, and lectures. We'll do these residency mixers where all of the artists-in-residence and the staff from these groups do field trips. It really has been remarkable how different all these different residencies are; I don't even know I can define what a residency is after seeing how diverse it is.

With that said, that's our group. We going to each talk about our own projects and partnerships, then have a Q&A.

**Nicholas Weist, Shandaken Projects: Growth of Scale and Potential Through Partnerships:** We thought it would be really useful to describe some of the partnerships each of our organizations have created as case studies and talk about the shifts within our administrative practices that needed to happen in order to keep those partnerships in good health.

I'm Nick Weist, Founding Director of the Shandaken Projects, which began exclusively as one artist residency in the central Catskills. The siding was falling off the house, the grounds were terribly unkempt, but I was able to rent a 250 acre parcel within about 1000 acres of wild land owned by New York State. It was a key moment because I was struggling to articulate how to create an organization that was both by and for artists and art workers. This was all happening in the wake of Occupy, and the cultural community was coming to terms with the fall from the
financial crises. Support for artists who are adjacent to the marketplace or whose work didn't fit in really evaporated, and my interest lay in finding opportunities for those folks who I felt were doing important work safeguarding the public imagination. In the first year we held a capital campaign to build some artists studios. The first year's annual operating budget was seventeen thousand dollars, and we had an additional sixteen thousand dollars in capital funding. I developed a series of membership incentives including limited edition artworks and it really incentivized people to give at this low level and deeply support the organization

**Case Study: Storm King Residency Partnership**

As part of an exploratory journey on the part of Storm King Art Center, a historic sculpture park about 16 miles north of New York City, I was contacted by their curator in 2012. She began a dialogue with me about how to begin a residency program; where I could have done better; what I had learned throughout the process. Storm King had identified a live-in residency as an organizational goal. As we were talking, it became clear that we had strongly aligned goals, and also, the lease on my rented mansion was coming to an end. In 2015, I picked up all the infrastructure from that rented estate and moved it to the grounds of Storm King Art Center, which is a beautiful piece of property in the lower Hudson Valley, that's adjacent to a public sculpture park. We housed three artists there at a time who stayed for up to 6 weeks each in these beautiful studies that's modeled on the designs of our original. That's the first example of how a partnership can strongly support the constituents of an organization; Shandaken would never had the resources to build studios like this.

As part of this journey I had to take and organization of an annual budget of $30,000 and really grow into something that could support a partnership with a legitimate historic institution like Storm King.

The first thing I had to do was quit my second job, which basically supported the organization through the first two or three years, so I could answer emails throughout the day. The next phase of development was to properly insure the organization, that it was incorporated in the right ways. The best advice I've ever gave anyone is to initiate a 1023 and incorporate as nonprofits. It's only $400 bucks, it happens in a month or two. The budget went from about $30,000 to about $80,000 pretty much overnight.

We started a pattern with Storm King of making use of disused infrastructure from other organizations creates a benefit for both organizations. Storm King had 75 acres they basically weren't using, and through the partnership with Shandaken they were able to activate that space. In bureaucratic language, this is an opportunity cost; they had these 75 acres that was a hayfield and now it's a site of cultural production. One of the things we discovered as we began to work together was that Shandaken, which has artist-centric sensibility and a grassroots vibe, is really able to say yes to things that Storm King would never even think to investigate, and also has the relationships with artists to bring work to the Storm King campus.

[slide: #1 Hit, by Denniston Mikalson]
So here is a work called #1 Hit where two of our artists Ander Mikalson and Carey Denniston. They brought a volunteer marching band called the Big Apple Lesbian and Gay Corps to process through Storm King. This is group of queers standing in front of this Mark DiSuvero sculpture. It was a really fun production and something Storm King never would have been able to do without the relationships the Shandaken brought.

[slide: Musings and Meanderings with Sally Hemings by Marisa Williamson]

This is an artist named Marisa Williamson, this is a tram tour of Storm Kin that you can just hop on hop off that goes through the grounds. Marissa replaced the recorded audio that told you what sculpture you're looking at with this live narration who performed in the persona Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson's slave and mistress. So we’re able to insert these queer and minoritarian perspectives into this larger organization. Although they are actively working on shifting their culture, we were able to put some rocket fuel into that process.

This is a strategy that I learned while working at Creative Time. Creative Time was described as this kind of parasitic organization: had a office but no location, so we would partner with these different institutions to make these enormous projects happen. With that in mind, Shandaken had this partnership with Storm King, and I was thinking of next steps for the organization, was really committed to keeping it an intentionally small scale. In 2017, I attended a Convening and was appalled to discover that although I had the smallest budget, I had the highest cost per resident per week of any of the organizations represented.

**Case Study: Paint School, Universities, and FLAG Art Foundation**

My new goal became how to create an economy of scale while keeping the organization at a size I felt comfortable with. The question is how do we widen and deepen the services that we offer artists while preserving a human scale to the organization. And so, I had been working on this program called Paint School, which opened the following year. Basically I had managed to secure funding for a free educational program where master painters, luminaries of contemporary painting would mentor artists in an environment that was similar to a postgraduate fellowship. Again, it was really close to the bone, very small budgets. I tried to find a way to turn this challenge into an opportunity, and the program now is produced partnership with different universities all across New York City. This year we worked with Cooper Union, NYU [New York University], New School, and I had this semi-public approach to the program where the lecturers offer public lectures for the students and other constituents of the schools, then there's a private discussion period for the folks that we identify as fellows for the program.

This was a lesson I learned from Creative Time; the motto there was, “The more everyone wins, the more everyone wins.” My guiding principles are how do you open these programs so that more people can participate and enrich the conversation and grow beyond what the organization might be able to deliver wholly on its own. This is another example of partnership: the exhibition for that program was with the FLAG Art Foundation. They filled up a programming
hole, cleared out their installation material, offered us this gallery for week and a half, and got us some nice press and a great audience.

Case Study: The Trust for Governor’s Island
Throughout the term here of managed growth, we also organizationally wanted to create a home base in New York City. Many of our alumni and other constituents are looking for ways to connect on our home turf and a couple of years ago, a colleague who works for the Trust on Governor’s Island had become of my aware of my work with Storm King. The trust at that time was exploring the idea of year around partnerships and through my work with Storm King, identified Shandaken as a possible partner for this area of strategic growth. So we created these studios for artists who apply exclusively from New York City and critically, it's free for participants.

The trust identified Shandekan as a place that had history of inter-organizational partnerships, site-sensitivity, of working with a public park audiences. I like to point to this as example of how a partnership with Storm King really paved the way for an additional partnership with the Trust for Governor's Island and opened up new areas of discovery and ability for my organization and for theirs. In this case, there was this disused office space, a former Coast Guard office, and they couldn't make good use of it—or well, I'm sure they could have, but they chose… me. [laughter]

So ugly carpeting is not typically what you think of for an art studio, but we were able to identify artists, filmmakers, people who work in research capacity to make excellent use of these studios and again, activate this underutilized resource. And that's all I got!

Stephanye Watts, Recess Assembly: Community Engagement and Youth Rehabilitation:
Hey everybody. My name is Stephanye Watts, and I’m the Program Coordinator at Recess Assembly. I’m originally from Philadelphia, left here at 17 and took my talents to Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta Georgia where I was a business major. I then moved to New York and was working in fashion when a fairy godmother said, “You should get a job at a Museum;” I didn’t know that arts was something you could do full-time. So I was at Weeksville, which is a site of one of America’s first free Black communities, for three years, left there and landed in Recess.

So what is Recess? Some folks see is as a gallery, some folks see it as a residency, but I see it as a mix of both. At Recess, an artist is there for two months [Session], and instead of visitors coming in and seeing the work already on the wall or installed, the artist is building out their show over those two months; when you visit our space, you get to engage with the artist directly. It demystifies the art-making process and also allows us regular lay folks to spend an ample amount of time with an artist. The conversations that you have with the artist is also built into their project. The artist opening is really the final day of their project, and if you're someone that's visited during those two months of the residency, you get to see yourself in their project.
Case Study: Recess Assembly, Brooklyn Justice Initiative Partnership

Our Executive Founder and Director Allison Weisburg thought that we needed a more social justice arm to the arts. The term that we use at Recess is “inclusive public,” making everything inclusive for folks that come in, and what's a real way we can do that outside of hoping folks walk into our space? That was to create Assembly, an artist led alternative to incarceration that empowers young people to take charge of their own life story.

Through the tiered year-long program, young people are:

- Engaged in visual storytelling workshops
- Receive training in a variety of art-making techniques and careers in the arts
- Placed in internships at cultural spaces around the city as a pathway to a career in the arts
- Every two months a guest artist joins each new cohort of the youth program and collaborates on a project in our public storefront gallery.

So what does that mean? Assembly’s a three-tiered program; through our partnership with the Brooklyn Justice Initiative, young people who have misdemeanors and low-level felonies are mandated to our space. Instead of sending folks directly to prison, they will mandate them to a program. A lot of these programs are kind of silly in my opinion, like AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] for a 14-year old that got arrested for shoplifting; AA has nothing to do with their case. These are the kind of programs they are funneling our young people into, and none are restorative in any way.

First Tier: Through Assembly, every two months we have young people come into our space for two hours every Thursday for four weeks and do these workshops with the idea that you’re able to create your own narrative outside of your story that's attached to the justice system. If these young folks decide that they really are interested in the arts, want to be artists, and learn more about art spaces, they can become peer leaders at the end of this 8-hour mandated session. For those that decide not to, their cases are sealed and they can go on without this on this record.

Second Tier: For our peer leaders, we have a 10-month program:

- Our young people are learning how to screen print.
- We just started our art handling program, with is a 10-week program with Powerhouse that's housed in Brooklyn, New York. At the end of it our young people will be certified to be art handlers.
  - They are paid $15/hour, which is really important because you can't tell a kid to do different things, stop selling drugs, stop doing all of this if you’re not giving them a way out, a way to make money and be stable.
- We also go on field trips, have artist visits, career chats; these are all things I've added to make the program a little more robust.
Third Tier: At the end of this ten-month program, if they decide to really have a career in the arts, we place them in a field work placement and they'll be in a art space somewhere in New York City with the hope of that once they complete that time, they will either be hired by the organization or will go on to be hired somewhere else in the arts. We talk a lot about this School to Prison Pipeline and the desire for Assembly is that we're creating a Prison-to-Arts Career Pipeline:

- Mandated Sessions
- Join Peer Leader Program
- Screen printing/Art Handling
- Field Work Placements
- Success

This was really appealing to me mainly because I didn’t come to arts world in a traditional way. Assembly is interested in how we can now staff all these art spaces with folks who came from historically Black colleges, are from the inner city, do not have an arts background in practice or in their major in school, or are coming from a different career that's not necessarily the arts; because there are things that all of us non-traditional arts workers bring to the space that someone with a more traditional track might not be able to see or do. For me that’s what real diversity looks like—diversity of thought and experience.

One of our young people, Matt, completed the full mandated 10 months and the 2-month internship and he's now in the art handling department at Brooklyn Museum. Another did his two month internship at an architecture firm and is now there salaried at 19.

Right now, the artist that we’re working with in Assembly is American Artist. His project is called Blue are the Feelings that Live Inside of Me, and he's been talking a lot about our country being a police state. For our project that he has in our storefront space at Recess, he has photos of books written by police officers that are some wild police propaganda, and our young people are literally screen printing their own book covers in response. Those will be up on the wall May 4th, and we’ll be discussing an essay called “Blue Life.” In about two weeks we'll flip over and we'll be having Ash Arder. She's creating this record store and all the records will be referencing gardens; she’s thinking about Black folks in green spaces. You will also be able to take these records and learn how to mix and do all these really cool things. It’s a very interactive and inclusive space, not just a tagline or a hashtag.

Recess is really invested in inviting folks who weren't borrowed away from the arts world, who never felt comfortable in the arts world. I’ve been in New York for 12 years now and one thing I’ve noticed very early is that folks from New York didn't feel comfortable doing things in their own city. They thought it wasn't for them, too fancy for them, it might cost too much money, so the mission of Recess is that we're being as inclusive as possible.

Nat Roe, Flux Factory: Displacement and Partnerships for Sustainability: I’m Nat Roe, the Executive Director of Flux Factory. We were founded in 1994, so this is our 25th anniversary
this year. We currently host an artist-in-residency, so we have 16 different studio spaces for multidisciplinary artists. We also have shared work spaces like a woodworking shop, a print shop; we actually have a kitchen where people bulk food-buy together as a method of bringing down the cost of living, and we all cook together. So really it's a community space. There's no formal requirement—you don't even actually have to put on a public exhibition at the end of it. We really try to find people who want to just explore this open-ended program with an open mind and we get together a really diverse group of people. We learn from these different creative practices, people of different ages, people who are local, who are international.

We produce about 40 distinct public exhibitions, programs, workshops, talks, concerts, this and that every year. A lot of these are produced as part of the residency, so it's resource sharing, where we split the gallery up: you do a residency, you get a certain share of days in the gallery depending on the length of your residency. We also commission new works through a group exhibition program, the next one of which is opening May 9th, Talk Back. We do open calls twice a year for artists-in-residence, and these group exhibitions where the artworks are selected through an open call, we do four of those every year. If you're curious to get involved, those are the two main ways: through open calls through the residency program and open calls for the exhibition program.

We're located in Long Island City in Queens currently. We're actually on our third building; we've been renters for 25 years. We were founded on Kent Ave in 1994 on the Williamsburg Waterfront back when people were burning cars on the street; eventually we were priced out of our original building. We then moved to Sunnyside, Queens in 2001. Actually we got eminent domain-ed on and so had to leave—took the little buyout that the MTA gave us, which was nice I suppose, and found our current location on 29th Street, Long Island City.

This is a fabulous book I recommend called Mixed Use, Manhattan. We were founded by 7 artists who found a post-industrial space and split rent: this has been a strategy in many urban spaces. This book focuses on 1960s, 1970s SoHo and Tribeca. A lot of these blocks were abandoned, so these artists went into these buildings and a lot of them were built out DIY. It was an artist-led strategy. It was very affordable; we didn't really talk about affordability so much at that time because it was not as difficult to achieve. For me, I think that these mixed use buildings and the way that artists are able to lead them, the ways that artists have a lot of freedom and the way they occupy them, is a key part of cultural production and new works and ideas coming out. It's a key way for young artists who don't have a full-time job to make a lot of new work and spend time to develop this work. This has become increasingly difficult in New York City; gentrification has gone to the outer boroughs to the point that Brooklyn and Queens are very unaffordable. The amount of post-industrial spaces that are out there, period, are diminishing.

I think artists have become very aware of this cycle of gentrification. 25 years ago when Flux Factory was founded, it wasn't as intuitive to people that artists are not just displaced themselves, but also play a role in displacement. Artists and artist spaces have come to realize
they have an a responsibility to neighborhoods—not just to signal the winds of change and next comes the coffee shop, but how artists organizations can anchor and bring communities together. It doesn't just mean that communities are going to change and get displaced. How do we find sustainability in space in a responsible way with respect to all New Yorkers and New Yorkers in our immediate neighborhood? That’s really been the challenge we’ve been looking at. There are new solutions needed for how arts organizations can be sustainable.

It used to be possible for artists to lead their own spaces. If you were a painter and you didn't have a grant writing background or a real estate background, it used to not be incredibly difficult to start your own space. You pay the rent, maybe ask your friend who knows how to put up drywall to help out; that isn’t feasible now in New York City. Moreover we're at this point now where even the organizations themselves that have the grant writers and a board of directors, where even the arts administrators who are there to serve and stabilize the artists are themselves on shaky grounds.

**Case Study: Real Estate Investment Cooperative**

This is the first meeting of a group called the Real Estate Investment Cooperative (REIC). Often Caroline Woolard, who is a social practice artist, is credited as coming up with this idea, but I'm sure the founding committee would also want credit because there are a lot of amazing lawyers and people with backgrounds in finance or urban studies. It was founded in 2016, and hopefully the first project will be emerging later this year. The general concept is we can pool our money to invest in buildings and land for local, cultural, and cooperative uses. Caroline Woolard pointed out that her and her friends who have been renting over the course of the decade had actually paid a downpayment's worth of money over their period of rentership. How do you get out of this displacement cycle? Owning a property is one of those ways.

This is achieved through what you call a community land trust. A trust is a kind of bank. It's an artist led, artist founded cultural financial institution; the land is the asset that the bank sits on. There are investments that come in and investments that go out. On the investment side:

- People are able to divest from an index fund or bonds.
- The return is something like three to five percent over the course of five to fifteen years. It's aimed to compete with these kind of slow growth, low-risk investments that people make in the general stock market.
- It's really a way of taking some of the ideas of Occupy Wall Street and creating a scalable and safe model for investors to divest.
  - What do these investments go towards? In the case of REIC, they’re predominantly looking at cultural institutions but also any commercial property. It's meant to incubate and stabilize public serving neighborhood projects and small businesses. The land underneath the property is held by the community land trust, and they make sure that the small business is able to stay in place long term. The investments allow people to divest instead of investing in all these unethical things.
It was started in 2016, and they got 1.6 million in pledges, which they were unable to collect, but at this point they have an entity which can accept investments. One of the things I do want to point out about this: there are other community land trusts (CLTs), but there aren't major cultural CLTs. The cultural sector has so much to do and intersects in so many different ways with the sustainability of neighborhoods and viability of local businesses.

**Case Study: Municipal Entities and Developers**

Another model of partnership is working with the city. The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) in New York City, their annual grants for arts programs is about $200 million. In addition, a city is able to make capital investments. In 2018, as compared to that $200 million in funding for programs, $360 million was invested in just cultural infrastructure projects. There are a few recent examples where the city of New York has actually been purchasing buildings for small non-profits. Chocolate Factory were granted $3.8 million dollars to purchase a building. Cultural Affairs, their general strategic plan has been to focus on small organizations in the outer boroughs and in my opinion, it may be the case that we will see more small organizations that aren't sustainable receiving these capital funds.

Boy, I'm not even going to talk so much about working with developers. This opportunity is presented by developers to small non-profits; it's a little bit of a minefield of partnership. Oftentimes in order for developers to either receive tax breaks, or maybe they're mandated to do this, they'll make certain public services available, whether affordable housing, schools, green space, or cultural use spaces. Some of the ways which cultural institutions participate in partnerships like this can sometimes be simply art-washing, making a large new development look more salable to the general public, but then also, sometimes with new developments there are a lot of public resources available.

**Case Study: Neighborhood Projects**

The last thing I wanted to touch on: [Windmill Community Garden](#)

So this a little crater located across the street from Flux Factory. This is a [GreenThumb](#) garden, so it's owned by the city. Flux Factory co-manages this along with an elementary school across the street with the [Dutch Kills Civic Association](#). This is permanent; it's owned by the city, it's not going anywhere. Three neighborhood organizations help manage this space, and Flux Factory’s role is to put on public events. We did an exhibition there last year: this was a piece called [Planetarium Tea Garden](#). It was made of humongous steel pieces—those are all actually tea. That's the artists Kristyna and Marek Milde sitting there; these were all teas that were foraged from upstate and are indigenous to New York State. It's a sustainable arts project in a sustainable community space.

Anyways, that my piece and we're going to open it up for questions and answers.
SW: Before we start Q&A, we just have some family rules. We ask that your question is a question and that you do not ask about organizations outside of the ones that we work at or we work with. Do we have any other ones?

NW: No, but all of us will be around for the weekend so if you have individual stories or questions that only pertain to you, we're happy to talk about it then.

AM1: I've never heard of this idea of a young person being mandated to an arts program and just how that partnership started, what the relationship with the court system is like, and anything you can offer for people that might be interested in exploring that.

SW: I actually met some folks from the Art for Justice convening a few months ago from Mural Arts Philly and they do something very similar. Working with the city and the courts is a really stressful and tenuous relationship. It take a lot of meetings and finessing, begging, asking, threatening, but I think one thing that the Brooklyn Justice Initiative has been able to see is that it's not just some kids coming and painting. It's the kids literally changing their lives and finding other ways to do other things so they're not back down at the Brooklyn County. It takes a long time. There's an organization in LA that does something very similar to us with diversion through the arts, and it took them 10 years to get the LAPD to have a session with them. This isn't a easy thing to make happen, it's not going to happen overnight. You just have to be really committed and stick to your guns and not accept no.

AM2, Clayton Campbell: I'm Clayton Campbell, I'm with the Little Tokyo Service Center in Los Angeles. In terms of research that doesn't exist, I think it's sort of scattershot. I think a lot of people do it individually, but it's hard to disseminate it. I’m curious because of the residencies I’ve been involved in, have you had a chance to evaluate or do research with your artists after your residencies? What happens to their practices as a result of having been with you, one year out, two years out? Are you able to get back to that and develop any kind of research into their work or metric on a development level?

NW: I think all of us probably have recording mechanisms and we're definitely going to share a lot of ideas about that in the conference and we're happy to talk about all of that stuff with you separately.

NR: Well, I can speak a little bit to that. Flux Factory originally was not as much of a rigorous, competitive residency, it was originally more of a collective, so we took it for granted that the community had this long-term stakeholdership; it's been an issue that we've been working on for a while. Once people leave, how do we make sure it's a genuine community? Some of the things that we do, which is not a complete solution to the problem, are we allow people to come back. You're allowed to extend your residency or go elsewhere and then come back up to year, and then there's another program where you can extend further. We got a Listserv so people are constantly sharing information and jobs. We also continue to allow residents to be eligible for certain projects. We're doing a project abroad in August and September in Aarhus at the
ARoS Museum this year—all residents from the last ten years were eligible to sign up to come for that. So the public programs were really been a key way to keep past residents involved and then allowing to extend and renew their residencies.

AM3: First of all, thank you all so much for presenting and sharing and for the work that you're doing. My question is around alignment of organizational values in partnering. In particular, I find that a lot of artist-run culture often center risk-taking and a lot of the partners you're mentioning across either municipalities or court systems or even large arts institutions like museums might have different values, which can, even if you have the same strategic objective with your project, can create a lot of barriers. I wonder if you have any strategies or suggestions to cross that.

NW: Such a good question.

SW: I think what I’ve gotten in my four months in this position is that New York City is looking for ways to create more effective diversion programs. So even when there’s a ‘no’ or a ‘wait,’ it's a soft ‘no’ or ‘wait.’ I haven't really experienced a lot of absolute, hard ‘no’s. Also, the city doesn’t want to look shitty, right, so they're going to after a while say, ‘Okay, we have to do something that shows we kind of care about the young people in our city.’ It's kind of just knowing how to position your ask, that will get what you want out of the situation.

NR: It’s really partner-specific, right? How do you bear with the eccentricities of each of these things? With the case of a community garden, we’ve had a series of flags that we were trying to put up in the garden. Some of the themes I think were a little too adult, and we didn't even realize it. Our flag got taken down by some of the school people because it was not for third graders. So we run into these odd interpersonal issues, and you don’t necessarily have a policy with these neighborhood groups because they are highly eccentric individuals themselves. On the case of the city, Tom Finkelpearl [Commissioner of DCLA] compared the DCLA to cruise ship that can turn only slowly. Small organizations like us are like speed boats where you can kind of zig around. Despite the fact that a lot of time working with them there’s maddening levels of bureaucracy that can sometimes make partnerships not feasible, on the other hand, you're doing work that they can't. You're the agile one, so they look to these small organizations. This is part of why I think they're trying to fund more, they're looking away from Manhattan towards small organizations in the outer boroughs: we're able to do the work that the city can't.

NW: When I was working with Creative Time we had another motto, which was: “Partnership is a great way to make enemies,” And it's totally true—some of those values sometimes don't align. Tom Finkelpearl’s importance in the New York cultural community cannot be understated: he controls all of the purse strings. Basically what he said to us was, “I need the ammunition to do my job from you directly.” At certain point you just have to do the work and whatever the outcome, the outcome starts to build its own momentum. My personal politics are more, “Say it with paving stones; burning it all down,” but my administrative politics are really that you can get more done interfacing with institutions and the ringing endorsement. My organization still
operates at $125,000 a year, and we have three extremely impactful programs that could never be produced for that amount of money, and now my per resident cost is really low. Aligning with Storm King, an arts institution; Trust for Governor's Island, a civic and municipal institution; and then the educational institutions have allowed us to grow in programmatic areas where we find common ground. In many cases Storm King and the Trust can say yes to us where they maybe couldn't say yes directly to an artist because we can bring the logistical, infrastructural, and organizational capacity that an artist's studio might not have.

AM4: Kind of building upon that idea: project based partnerships, sustainability—if they are project based, how do you think about creating sustainability? What are some ideas in order to keep partners consistently engaged?

NW: Long term letters of agreement. It's a nerdy answer but it's so true. If you do that work up front of this is how everything will be credited, these are the terms under which both organizations understand their roles and responsibilities, it is so important. Every quarter essentially I sit down with one of my clients and I say, "How is what we're doing together connect to your mission statement?" "How is it central to your institution?" "If it's not there, how do we get it there?" It's important to refresh that conversation because it changes and shifts constantly.

SW: Just from my time at Weeksville, it's making sure that these relationships you're building aren't shallow. For example, I worked at a school called Launch. I don't even work at Weeksville anymore, and Launch is like, can you do this because I worked with them for two years and I built out this meant-to-be long-term relationship with myself and the school. Even when I'm no longer with that institution, I'm still in some ways connected and indebted to that organization. I think it's being mindful of who you are partnering with and making sure that whatever you're offering them is something they can offer you and long-term.

I think we have time for one more...?

AM5: My question is for Recess. You spoke a bit about how there's a low-quality standard for other organizations that are partnering with the Department of Criminal Justice System in New York. Do you see a part of the work as raising the bar that other organizations can glean from or to try to shift the culture of how diversion works in a larger scale? Do you think that these other possibilities might be strengthened throughout the system?

SW: I don't think it's necessarily that we're raising the bar. You use the word 'possibility': we're showing what's possible. A lot of adults, us grown-ups, don't think that kids can do certain things. "Oh, this kid is from the projects, he ain't going to be able to do," dot dot dot. I think a lot of these organizations want to be helpful but don't necessarily know what's possible. More than anything, Recess is just showing what we can make happen. It's the same thing with our participants. A lot of our young people are, "I never thought I would be able to screen print," or "I
never thought I’d be able to get a full time corporate job.” More than anything we’re just showing what's possible, not being this gold standard.

We’re still learning too; Assembly is only two years old. I've only had two cycles of participants, and we changed from the 1st cycle because the young people that are in the program have different needs. I can’t say I’m a beacon of light when, shit, I'm still figuring it out. When we start a new cohort of young people in two weeks, it might be a completely different process. If anything we're just willing to try and not be embarrassed if we mess up and showing organizations they can do the same thing.

Thank you all so much.