

DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

PUBLIC ASSISTANTS

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Public Assistants functions as an enclave of interdisciplinary artists and community members in response to the immediate needs of its hyper-local community. Embedded in Crown Heights, Brooklyn since June 6th, 2020, Public Assistants has produced artworks across mediums of painting, sculpture, performance, video, installation, with an emphasis on creating materials for QTBIPOC liberation, resistance, and joy. The collective operates out of a commercial lot encircled by a vacant laundromat, medical clinic, and pawn shop. It has covered the walls with murals, renovated rooms to be functional and viable workspaces, and transformed the lot into a community garden with an accompanying fridge. The programming extends to Public Assistants Radio: The Wash and the Public Assistants Bike Initiative, for which the group repairs and refurbishes bikes to distribute to disenfranchised persons cross-borough.

Banners and signs produced by Public Assistants and its collaborators have featured prominently in numerous protests and demonstrations, and its murals have appeared in a variety of public settings. In September 2020, the group created a guest editorial spread for [Interview](#).

Necessity is the mother of invention, and Public Assistants is its daughter.

Born from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Assistants is built to grow within its community, and we understand that we cannot thrive if we do not first understand.

Programming must respond to the needs of those around us. Envisioned as a space for those that need it most, Public Assistants is a space for artists.

For too long BIPOC creatives, artists, makers, and doers have found themselves unwelcome and sidelined.

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Public Assistants will be a space for them with programming designed by them, led by them and built by them.

—Public Assistants

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LIST OF WORKS TO DATE

- 2020
- The Black Pages*, guest editorial spread, Interview Magazine, September 2020
 - Kinetic Connection*, strength training series, September 2020
 - Public Assistants Bike Initiative*, August 2020
 - Evaporate into Happiness*, mural by Public Assistants Summer Youth Residency, August 2020
 - Her Cup Runneth Over*, mural by M.Dot Season x P.A. members, August 2020
 - A Timeline of Slavery banner*, July 2020
 - 1776*, flags for Justice Ride 5, July 2020
 - Abolish The Police PSA*, in collaboration with MPD 150, July 2020
 - Defund, Decriminalize, Destigmatize, Decarcerate banner*, July 2020
 - Savvy*, mural by Vince Ballentine, July 2020
 - No Justice No Peace*, mural by Hugo Gyrl, July 2020
 - Black Womxn Die in Hospitals 2 banner*, Justice for Sha-Asia Washington protest, July 2020
 - Defund the NYPD Piggy Bank Banner and protest set*, March on Councilman Corey Johnson's House, June 2020
 - Black Trans Period and Black Trans Lives Matter banner and protest set*, A March for Black Trans Lives, June 2020
 - Who Protects Black Womxn, Your Liberation is Bound in My Liberation*, The Atlantic Ocean, and protest set with eight portraits and twenty hand held signs, Uprising: A March for Black Womxn, June 2020
 - The Voyager*, mural by Victor A. Saint-Hilaire, June 2020
 - Manifest Destiny*, mural by DonChristian, June 2020

ARTFORUM

WHERE WE'RE AT Bulletins from around the globe

IN EARLY JUNE, as heat turned up around the uprisings in defense of Black lives, I saw an Instagram story by the wildly talented artist and musician DonChristian Jones. He had been entrusted with a disused facility in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, which he was transforming into an inclusive DIY community center foregrounding the creativity of BIPOC. Things needed to be done, and it was all hands on deck.

Soon I was spotting brilliant banners at demonstrations around the city—at the Brooklyn Liberation Action for Black Trans Lives, the Queer Liberation March for Black Lives, and the Times Square Black Sex Worker Liberation March and Vigil. I found that the signs I was noticing most were those made by Jones and friends like graffiti artist Hugo Gyrl and Mercy Kelly at the space, which now had a name—Public Assistants—and a website and mission statement: "Necessity is the mother of invention, and Public Assistants is its daughter." The whole thing gave me hope.

I don't take hope for granted today. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed how many of us physically engage with art; at the same time, global uprisings are reshaping what matters in art. I wondered if other people in other places were seeing local projects and initiatives like Public Assistants that gave them hope, too.

With that in mind, we asked an international group of artists, writers, and curators to respond to a simple question: "What art activity on the ground is giving you energy right now?"

These are some of their answers.
—David Velasco

ANJALIKA SAGAR LONDON

I LIVE BY A CEMETERY called Abney Park, a Victorian resting place for non-conformists and their families. Among those buried there are Joanna Vassa (1795–1857), the daughter of the renowned abolitionist Olaudah Equiano



and an Englishwoman named Susannah Cullen, and Thomas Canry Caulker (1846–1859)—the son of Richard Canreba Caulker, the chief of Bumpo who worked to end the slave trade in what is now Sierra Leone—who died in Islington at age thirteen. Abney Park is also an unmanicured arboretum, the first in Europe integrated with a cemetery. Within its overgrown arches of vines and bending trees, I walked and videoed during the lockdown in order to commune with the motley crew of dissenters and freethinkers metabolized by the tentacles of twenty-five hundred varieties of trees and plants. Recording and listening to the piercing birdsong helped me cope with reports of those suffocated by the coronavirus or fatally choked for living while being Black.

We imagine the earth losing its bearings as a breathable planet; we absorb the collective sorrow and anguish caused by escalating loss. What has become ever more evident is the extent to which the eugenic calculations of the UK's Tory government have disproportionately harmed the country's Black and Asian working classes. Meanwhile, the transnational protests against a racist, militarized police state build on

the organizing of the Movement for Black Lives over the past decade, challenging the disregard endured by those forced to live under the racial calculus of what Saidiya Hartman calls the afterlives of slavery.

I take courage, at this time, from the nonconformists who produce science fictions of the accelerated now. From all those discontented with the capture of futurity. From the diasporic practices that seek to make sensible the inter-scalar poetics of the present. From Jota Mombaça, whose work addresses the end of the world as we know it and the possibilities that such figuration allows. From Ayo Akingbade, whose films envision British Blackness in all its fluid, aesthetic sociality. From Kader Attia's *La Colonie*, which, I hope and trust, will reemerge in a Paris bereft without it. From Bonaventure Ndikung's SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin. From sister platforms that demonstrate the necessity to gather, to think out loud. That reveal the power that we share: a power stronger, as George E. Lewis suggested, than itself—greater than any one of us.

ANJALIKA SAGAR IS AN ARTIST AND CURATOR WHO IN 2002 FOUNDED THE OTOLITH GROUP WITH KODWO ESHUN.



Left: Corn growing in the parking lot of El Caporal Mexican restaurant, Altadena, CA, 2020. Photo: Regenerative Collective. Above: Organic-produce-box donation prepared by Summaeverything Community Center, July 17, 2020. Photo: Lauren Halsey Studio.

GUADALUPE ROSALES LOS ANGELES

A FEW DAYS AGO, I was listening on YouTube to a 1963 James Baldwin speech called "The Moral Responsibility of the Artist." He said many things that resonated, but one idea comes to mind now: An artist "is simply somebody who helps you to see reality again." I want to live by those words. Art is a ritual that is both spiritual and grounding. It is easy to forget this, and I am using this time to unlearn and relearn many things—to ground myself again.

I don't watch TV and haven't seen art at a show in person in months. But what artist Lauren Halsey's Summaeverything Community Center (@summaeverything) is doing is really great, so a shout-out to her. Lauren has been raising money (and using all her resources) to buy local organic produce and deliver free boxes of it directly to the community in Watts and South Central LA. And there is another group I would love to mention: Regenerative Collective (@regenerativecollective), a direct-action project to decolonize LA by growing native plants all over the



The Black Pages: A September Issue Portfolio Guest Edited by DonChristian

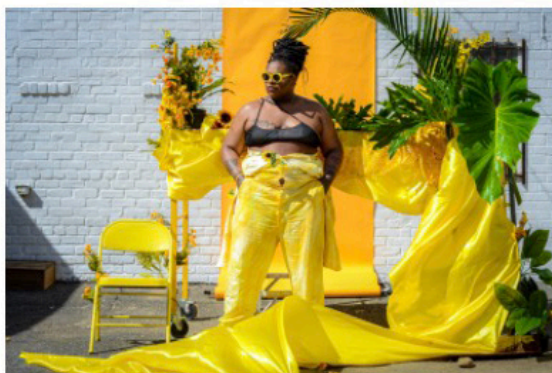
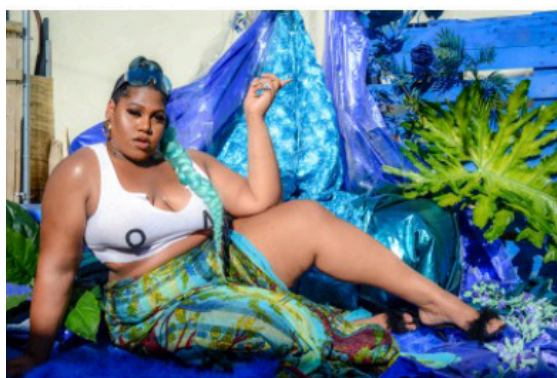
We interrupt your regularly scheduled Salad Pages to bring you The Black Pages, as conceived by DonChristian. The New York-based rapper, producer, and visual artist has included interviews, photography, poetry, artwork, a mission statement, and an ad. Think of it as a magazine within a magazine.

PUBLIC ASSISTANTS

“On June 6, 2020, through a series of serendipitous events, I inherited the keys to a vacant commercial lot in Crown Heights. With the help of friends, neighborhood folk, and artists alike, what was once a methadone clinic, laundromat, and pawn shop has since taken on a new and less tangible shape. We’ve covered the walls in murals, coaxed garden out of gravel, and found an oasis. There, for 85 days, we’ve researched, designed, and fabricated together, across various personal and collective projects, all in the spirit of resistance and radical joy. As I watched this living, breathing entity turn into itself and back out into the world, I remembered the name of my then-defunct finsta... Public Assistants, an abolitionist space, an LGBTQIA+ brave space, a pro-trans space, an anti-racist space. I thought I was going to ground this introduction in the subject of genocide, because that’s all that’s ever on my mind. This was going to be about my disdain for Manifest Destiny as an enacted concept and equivalency to white supremacy. This was going to be about John Gast’s allegorical painting ‘American Progress,’ as it appears across our middle school textbooks: revered in its depiction of white settlers chasing indigenous peoples west and out of the picture. I meant to touch on global, historical colorism and patriarchy as the foundations for all systems of oppression and disenfranchisement, like that André 3000 jumpsuit that reads, ‘across cultures, darker people suffer most. why?’ I wanted to really slice into the inextricable and intersectional layers of our collective and global depravity. That said, as my thoughts began to jumble, I had a series of personal realizations and I started making phone calls, the results of which you’ll see in the following pages.”

CRUSH ON THEE

Members of Public Assistants reimagine the set from Lil’ Kim’s 1997 video for “Crush on You,” which itself took inspiration from The Wiz. Photographed by Mojo Disco.



JAZMINE HAYES "ON SOFTNESS"



Jazmine and Mopelola photographed by Jake Robbins.

When Jaz and I met in 2013, we were both 23. Though her painting practice has exploded into performance and ritual space, she never stopped painting murals with the hood. When I asked Jaz how I may love and protect her better as her brother, she replied with the following:

remember,
You are the table. when they sit at your feet, what do they bring & what do they take, what do you give.
stay in spaces that feed your Softness,
for they equate to your safest Self.
the Self that dances in the rain,
cries, twerks & holds hands. the walls in which you can paint of numerous colors as it bleeds into the floor. stained. stay here. be here.
Exist.

"Black women, you are the table. The times of disputing hierarchies of suffering and debating with the general 'bereft,' as Mother Toni so benevolently put it, are over. Let me not stoke those embers further. My existence and that of my tribe, pillared by Black women and Black trans women—my mothers, sisters, and daughters—is radical enough to inspire this war against us. I invest in the creative, entrepreneurial, and healing endeavors of these women. Nourish Black women. Protect Black women. Support Black women."



LOCAL CRYPTID

There's a piece of me in New Orleans. There are pieces of all of us descendants of the diaspora and the Great Migration scattered up the Mississippi and along the Atlantic Coast. I met Phlegm in NOLA, and as I can't visit them now, they gifted this original airbrush tee as a reminder of the marks left wherever we may find ourselves.



On Instagram @mynameisphlegm.

"I won't argue the psychological violence of gentrification, cultural appropriation, or respectability politics anymore. I won't tell you to look up 'social death' as it pertains to genocide, or go so far as to evoke 'the trope of the criminal' flippantly. When I really go in, it'll be for the people who deserve it most. Remember when W.E.B. Du Bois coined 'the veil' of white sensibility? I felt that then, and now I'm done sifting through to see it. Mother Toni said she first felt free once her work turned away from the white gaze. And so, we turn away. This is for us. In the words of the great K. Michelle, 'Bitch is shakin' the table.' Yes, ma'am. We would like to see it."

"I have but one priority going forward: the protection, preservation, and nourishment of my hyper-local community of family and friends. I have no more emotional labor to provide outsiders policing in. They don't hold me when I fall. They don't reciprocate or quench my creative spirit. They do not sustain me the way the people who embody these Black Pages do. They don't negate, criminalize, or steal from my lived experience. Rather, my tribe embraces and honors it."

A POEM BY WOLFGANG TILLMANS



Why is it so hard to accept the crimes of our forefathers?
Who is to lose?

We never knew the great-grandfather
All we know is that by today's standards and knowledge and moral
understanding
All Men Are Born Equal
Crimes were committed

They cannot be undone
They can be acknowledged
Who is to lose?

Knowing that
Why is it so hard for people to acknowledge the crimes of their forefathers live on today?
No clear cuts and accounts can be drawn up
The stain and the pain live on, it can't be denied we must acknowledge this

Why not liberate ourselves?
Find our responsibility with empathy
Yes! For something we did not do ourselves
For when I'm weak I'm strong—I heard the Shaker, Sister Ruth say in 1996
That stuck with me ever since

If the beneficiaries of the genocides—there are no winners,
there are only losers—
There are many.
If the beneficiaries of the genocides cannot acknowledge that they are beneficiaries, then no peace can come
No peace of soul
No peace of economics
Then violence remains amongst us

'Don't Break Under Pressure' read the Tag Heuer wristwatch ad in the airport
Never say sorry Never give in
Be on the inside, comply and be part of the system
You're under pressure
Pressure and much worse was forced upon other people

Why don't we see, we were blind
Blinded by some unspoken generational contract and insidious nationalist fiction
To Hold Still
To Remain Silent

Who's to lose?

How to move forward from here?
No clear cuts and accounts can be drawn up
Reparations, as insufficient as they are, are a way forward
It's time to open up
Over 400 years of violence and denial, avoidance of the R-word can't last
2020 is the time to embrace, the time has come,
what shape and construct is the challenge we face

On both sides of the Atlantic
Reparations

PUBLIC ASSISTANT'S MISSION

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There are Public Assistants in the future.

(AD)

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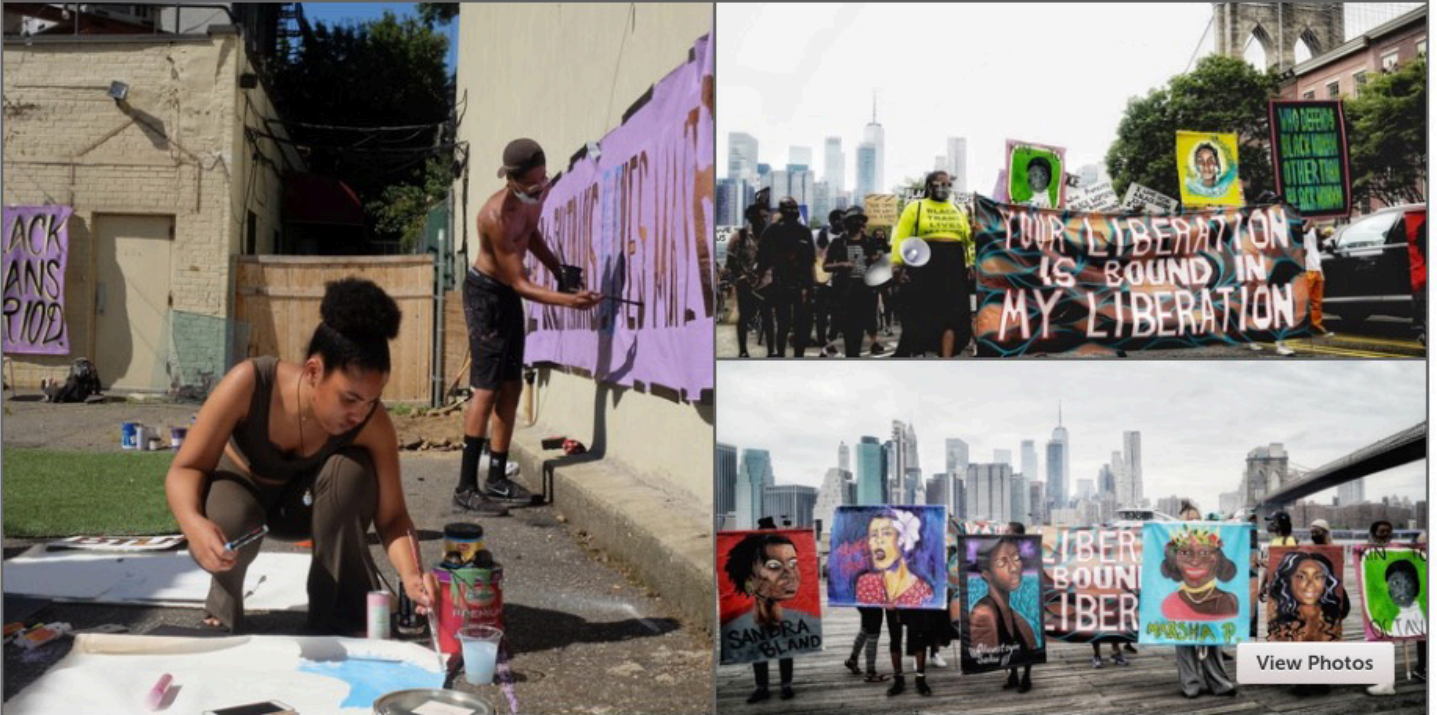
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Public Assistants

New York City, NY project created by DonChristian Jones



AwesomeNYC is excited to support muralist DonChristian Jones and his Public Assistants project, a new community art space in Crown Heights, launched in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic to serve as a space built by, and for, traditionally marginalized BIPOC creatives, artists, makers, and doers.

Operating out of an inherited industrial lot, laundromat, and abandoned medical center, PA has become a hub of resistance and mutual aid here in Crown Heights. For twenty consecutive days, we as a hyper-local community of friends, family, and neighbors, have turned this vacant space into an oasis for peace, connectivity, and nourishment amidst daily protest.

In twenty days, we have sowed and planted a community garden, installed and manage a community fridge, painted four murals, hosted community meals, and made resistance material (signage, banners, etc.) for nearly every major action/march since June 8th.

Our infamous tape-produced banner font has since been turned into a free and public downloadable font by Genderfail Publishing. Our work has been featured in The New York Times, GQ, CNN, to name a few, and this is only the beginning.

Each day, I am able to feed upwards of twenty people. The neighborhood parents send us their kids to help organize, brainstorm, and paint. We are skill-building, soft and hard skill sharing each day, all while maintaining adequate COVID-19 procedure.

In addition Public Assistants is launching the following programs:

P.A. Radio: The Wash

Bike Repair Workshop (starting week of July 20th)

Three week Youth Mural Residency Program (starting July 29th) - Black Women's Defense Training (August 1st)

Public Assistants Publishing will soon publish independent written works, zines, art books, etc. (date of first release TBD)

Our grant will help Public Assistants continue to grow and thrive as a space and resource in their community.

them.

12 Awe-Inspiring Photos From This Weekend's March for Black Trans Lives

An estimated 15,000 people came to the Brooklyn rally Sunday, dressed in white and ready to support Black trans lives.



An estimated 15,000 people gathered at the Brooklyn Museum on Sunday afternoon to rally and march for Black trans lives at an action called Brooklyn Liberation. The attendees all wore white, as a nod to a 1917 NAACP protest against anti-Black violence where thousands of people gathered wearing all white. It marks what is thought to be the largest trans-based protest in history, according to one of the action's organizers, Fran Tirado.

Brooklyn Liberation was organized by a core team of Tirado; drag artist West Dakota; NYC Anti-Violence Project's Director of Communications and activist Eliel Cruz; and writer, activist, and *them.* contributor Raquel Willis. Other key members of the organizing team include *Instyle's* Special Projects Editor Peyton Dix, artist and Papi Juice founding member Mohammed Fayez, fashion brand Willie Norris, Across Frontlines co-founder Kalaya'an Mendoza, Okra Project founder Ianne Fields Stewart, and Nicholas Valit Andersen. Over 150 total organizers and volunteers came together to make sure the action ran smoothly.

The rally was organized in the midst of the ongoing nationwide uprising for Black lives and racial justice, and was held a few days after two Black trans women — Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells and Riah Milton — were reported murdered. Their deaths are a continuation of the epidemic of violence against trans people in the U.S., which disproportionately affects Black trans women.

Kim, Michelle, "12 Awe-Inspiring Photos From This Weekend's March for Black Trans Lives," *Them.Uz*, June 15, 2020

The event began with speeches from speakers including Raquel Willis; Gays and Lesbians Living in Transgender Society (G.L.I.T.S.) founder Ceyenne Doroshow; Ianne Fields Stewart; National Organizer of the Marsha P. Johnson Institute Kei Williams. Drag artist Junior Mintt and artist, activist, and writer Joshua Obawole served as hosts. Among the addresses was one from Melania Brown, a sister of Layleen Cubilette-Polanco, the 27-year-old Afro-Latinx trans woman who was found dead in solitary confinement at Rikers last June. Her death was recently found to have "no criminality" according to the Bronx DA (who dead named Polanco in a press release about the ruling), sparking outrage among activists who are demanding for the decriminalization of sex work, as well as the end of solitary confinement and cash bail. A new video released by her family showed the negligence and failure of the prison guards to check on Polanco as she died. Other trans advocacy organizations involved in the action were For the Gworlds, and the Black Trans Femmes in the Arts Collective.

After the addresses at Brooklyn Museum, the large mass of people marched through Brooklyn to Fort Greene Park. See stunning photos of the rally and march throughout this post.







