

Cultural Equity

Trends and Suggestions for the Arts Sector

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A collaborative zine exploring the intersections between arts, capital, and equity from the perspective of access to cultural spaces, decolonizing art spaces, and Afrofuturist teaching in the art classroom.

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Image: Charlena Wynn, *Untitled* (2018), paint, historical records, and candle wax on wood, 2018.

meet the artists



Conni McKenzie

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST & PRODUCER

Is a Black and Afro-Latinx interdisciplinary artist whose work lives at the intersection of movement, nature, and community, using immersive, site-responsive performance to ignite dialogue around social and environmental justice. Rooted in ecosomatics, her practice invites collective reflection and reimagining—centering the body as a site of knowledge, resilience, and transformation.



Eduardo Nasi

CULTURAL JOURNALIST

Is a Brazilian cultural journalist living in Oakland until the end of July. His research combines the Brazilian Colonial Arts & Its Deep Intersection with Afrodiasporic and Indigenous Art with the More-Than-Human World.



Charlena M. Wynn

ARTIST, EDUCATOR, HISTORIAN, AND CO-CONSPIRATOR

Is a Black, queer Southern visual artist and nonprofit professional who is deeply commitment the cultural practices of African Dispora artmaking and dismantling the carceral practices of the US Education system. They have dedicated many years to youth and transitional age youth development as a classroom teacher, teaching artist, and program manager in several cities across the county.



Jacob Adams

RAPPER, MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR, WRITER

Is a is an Emcee and multidisciplinary Creative from Oakland, California. His current work seeks to interrogate the relationship between the American Minstrel tradition and the contemporary Hip-Hop Entertainment Industry.

Presence as Power: Reclaiming Art & Space

-- Conni McKenzie

Who Is Beauty For?

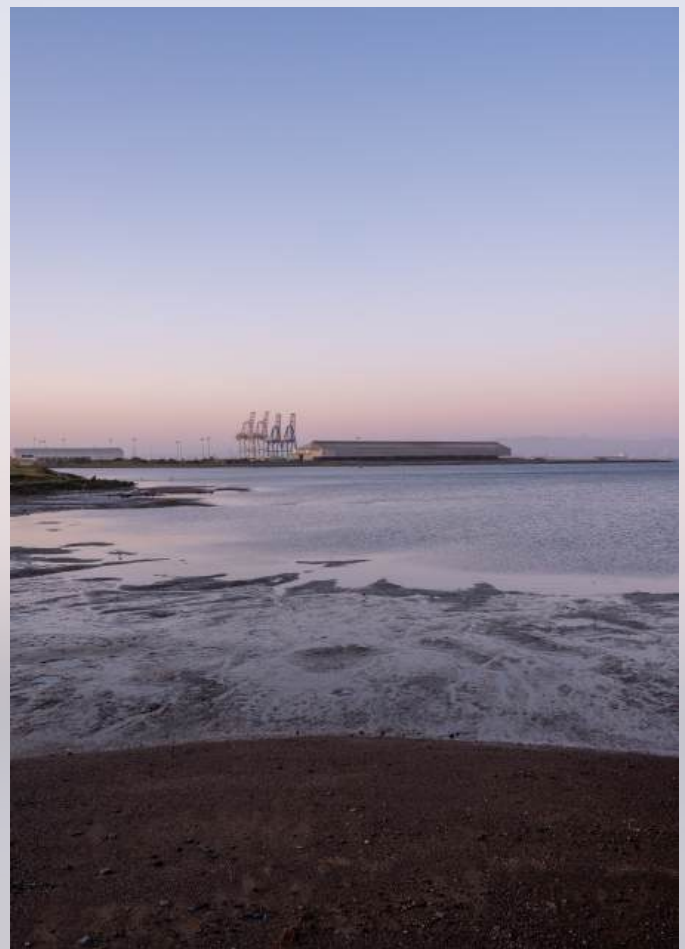
The colonization of beauty in the Western world stems from a historical and ongoing exclusion of Black people from art and natural spaces. The psychological implications of this exclusion have taught our culture that Black people don't belong in beautiful spaces.

The issue runs so deep that even when efforts are made to make these spaces "accessible," the problem persists. This is due in part to the presence of anti-Blackness in both white and non-Black POC communities.

As a race, we've internalized messages of unworthiness due to this ongoing colonization.

A clear example is the India Basin Waterfront Park. After over 40 years, the waterfront was reopened to the public. Yet, despite being open for more than six months, the presence of Black and local communities remains minimal. Many residents who live within a mile of the park have never visited.

Even more troubling, plans are underway for a new development near the park that may further alienate and displace local residents, deepening the sense that they do not belong



*Photograph by Conni McKenzie, part of the
Forbidden Marina series*

*Beautification often coincides with displacement—
not with meaningful community investment.*

Why Creative and Spatial Equity Matter

We’ve long understood that access to nature provides tangible physical and psychological benefits, including increased serotonin levels, vitamin D exposure, and reduced stress and anxiety. Getting outdoors also supports healthier lifestyles, promoting people to incorporate more movement, fresher food, and deepening breathing patterns in their day-to day-lives. Creative practice brings similar benefits. Art allows us to expand our worldview, digest the world in a way that feels palatable and empowering, and express our experiences and desires to others.

For marginalized Black residents in Bayview-Hunters Point, these benefits are not just nice-to-haves, but essentials for radicalized justice in San Francisco. They represent the first steps in a powerful internal shift: the realization that our existence and our voices matter, and that we belong in this world simply as we are.

The Power of Culturally Rooted Programming

What do we know about how people begin to feel like they belong? First and foremost, culturally relevant programming is key to welcoming people into unfamiliar spaces.

People generally avoid spaces they perceive as unsafe. But what if the danger is n't the environment itself, but the reception people receive? What if danger looks like a Black mom bringing her kids to a park and facing racism from other visitors? Or teens having the police called on them for playing music at a reasonable time of day?

We rarely examine how the “typical” behavior of regular park-goers threatens the safety of marginalized communities, and often before those communities even get the chance to experience the benefits of public space.

*Exclusion runs deep.
Reparations must
run deeper.*

Gatherings that involve leadership or facilitation from local residents are a strong starting point. Any organization and stakeholder of a public space must both fiscally and structurally support and trust local wisdom, allowing the community to shape experiences rooted in their lived realities.

These engagements must also be consistent, not one-off events. People need time to build familiarity with a place and its people before they feel safe attending independently or inviting others.

