
A BLADE OF GRASS

**A Blade of Grass Announces *Curriculum for the Future*,
A Series of Programmatic Initiatives Launching in March**

**And Collaborations with Artists Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine, Stephanie Dinkins,
LaJuné McMillian, and Cassie Thornton**

New York, NY—February 17, 2021—A Blade of Grass, an arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement, announced today a series of programmatic initiatives, under the umbrella title *Curriculum for the Future*. Kicking off in March 2021, *Curriculum for the Future* features three panel discussions, four multi-part, artist-led workshops, and three artist-developed participatory projects. The initiatives are being created in collaboration with four artists and artist collectives, including Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine, Stephanie Dinkins, LaJuné McMillian, and Cassie Thornton. The programs and projects within the *Curriculum* are envisioned as additive and responsive, building on each other to explore important questions about social structures, systems of care, the dynamics of power, and the ongoing impact of this pandemic moment on all aspects of contemporary life. The overarching program centers artists as essential to developing solutions to the challenges being faced by our communities.

“A Blade of Grass has always supported and amplified the work of artists who engage directly with communities to enact social change, and that’s what we are continuing to do. In this time of epic change, in which the ongoing pandemic and concurrent social and political unrest continue to remake our world, we believe even more strongly that artists play a crucial role, both as visionaries and as creators of a more just, equitable, and loving society. *Curriculum for the Future* creates opportunities to learn from and engage with artists, even as we are still quite isolated, and contextualizes the big, important questions they are asking about how we can shape our future, care for one another, and actively address the ways white supremacy and other forms of systemic oppression keep us stuck,” said Deborah Fisher, Executive Director of A Blade of Grass. “I’m excited about the way this programming initiative enables us to engage our audiences and respond to this moment.”

The Panels

A Blade of Grass has developed three panel discussions to explore big picture questions about how forecasters imagine and predict the future; care-based alternatives to capitalism; and responding to this particularly divisive moment in our social and political lives. The panels are created to set a framework for themes further explored within the artist-led workshops. All of the events will be held virtually and will include Q&A portions for participants. The panels are free to the public. [Biographies for all of the panelists are available here.](#)

March 4, 2021, 6:00 PM

***Making Change: Contextualizing Cancel Culture, Hyper-Partisanship, and the Politics of Progress
Featuring Activists and Historians Scot Nakagawa and Loretta Ross in conversation***

[Register at eventbrite](#)

Featuring Scot Nakagawa, a community organizer, activist, cultural worker, and political writer, and Loretta Ross, an award-winning, nationally recognized expert on racism and racial justice, women's rights, and human rights, this panel discussion will explore the power of the media landscape, from partisan news reports to social media activity to the proliferation of algorithm-driven online environments. The conversation will focus in particular on the ways this media landscape accelerates

divisions, stifling meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding, as well as the opportunities and threats it poses to progressive social change. Among the key questions posed are: In what ways is the media landscape changing how we learn about our world and form beliefs? Is this landscape creating cultural shifts or simply amplifying existing narratives and power structures? How are people across the political divides changing because we create and consume media differently?

March 17, 2021, 6:00 PM

Practicing the Future, with Ari Meleciano, Samuel F. Reynolds, and Colin Rusch, moderated by Roderick Schrock

[Register at eventbrite](#)

What is the future and how do you predict it? This simple question has taken on new and profound meaning in our contemporary moment, bringing both anxiety and hope. Join three practitioners of the future—artist and founder of [Afrotectopia](#) Ari Melenciano, predictive astrologer and former skeptic Samuel F. Reynolds, and Oppenheim Senior Market Analyst Colin Rusch—for a conversation about how they view time, conduct research into the past, consider the unknown, and imagine and predict the future. Bringing distinct and dynamic perspectives to the conversation, the panelists provide insights into how we might shape our own futures.

March 23, 2021, 6:00 PM

Parallel Fields: Radical Care with Miki Kashtan and Cassie Thornton, moderated by Kaira Jewel Lingo

[Register at eventbrite](#)

In our capitalist society, people try to meet their needs by earning enough money to take care of themselves. This system puts us out of relationship with one another and creates real scarcity, allowing people who have power and resources to more actively meet their needs. What if we imagined a different future—one that would allow us to live in a state of abundance and connection? What if we chose to believe that everybody's needs are powerful and valid and are intended to be met through relationships with others, rather than through money or other forms of exchange? This kind of shift could create a world that is healthier, more connected, and equitable. Join Miki Kashtan, author and founder of Bay Area Nonviolent Communication, and artist Cassie Thornton, whose project Hologram creates sustainable caregiving relationships, for a conversation about how we can change our thinking and social structures to center care for our greater mutual benefit.

Artist-Led Workshops and Projects

From March through June, A Blade of Grass will work with artists LaJuné McMillian, Cassie Thornton, Stephanie Dinkins, and Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine (comprised of Mildred Beltré and Oasa DuVerney) to develop digital, multi-part workshops as extensions of their artistic practices and as a means of engaging audiences in collaborative artmaking, radical pedagogies, and new skills and practices. These workshops are expressions of an artist or collective's larger project, body of work, or community-based practice, and will each offer a direct, participatory experience that deepens understanding of their work and visions. Several of the workshops will also culminate in a public performance or installation.

The first workshop, titled *Understanding, Transforming, and Preserving Movement in Digital Spaces*, will be led by LaJuné McMillian, a new media artist, maker, and creative technologist based in New York. Held on Zoom, the six-part workshop will kick-off on March 24, 2021, from 5:00 - 8:00 PM EST, with additional sessions taking place across the following five consecutive Wednesdays at the same time.

It is free of charge to the public and doesn't require any prior knowledge or technological skills. Participants do not need to commit to all six sessions in order to engage in the workshop. To register, individuals can email info@abladeofgrass.org.

Through the workshop, participants will learn about extended reality(XR) tools and their relationship to race, gender, and culture. It will explore issues of cultural representation, erasure, and exploitation through readings and discussions as well as provide an introduction to motion capture, avatars, rigging, and 3D environments. Core elements of the class will integrate performance, virtual reality, and physical computing to question access, control, and representation inherent in these technologies. Together, McMillian and workshop participants will also use various free software to co-create a live performance that will be produced this summer by A Blade of Grass. Additionally, the group will build and continue the development of an online archive of ethically digitized Black movement for the *Black Movement Library*.

Throughout their career, McMillian has created works that integrate performance, virtual reality, and physical computing to question our current use of technology and forms of communication. Within their research, they have focused on developing technology and media that are inherently intersectional, creating space for communities that have been previously ignored to be recognized, loved, and accepted. Their work has been presented widely, including at Lincoln Center, MakerFaire, National Sawdust, Liberty Science Center, Chelsea Film Festival, Creative Tech Week and Weird Reality. They are also the Lead Character Animator for NeuroSpeculative Afrofeminism, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival.

Workshops led by Cassie Thornton, Stephanie Dinkins, and Brooklyn Hi-Art Machine are slated to begin throughout April and further details will be announced in March.

About A Blade of Grass

A Blade of Grass is a New York-based arts nonprofit dedicated to social engagement. The organization is guided by the core beliefs that artists have essential roles to play in fostering critical conversations on social change and creating new systems and structures that benefit our communities and our lives. A Blade of Grass collaborates actively with artists to realize their visions for specific socially engaged projects or programs, offering a variety of tools that amplify artists' work and build their audiences. It produces public programs, workshops, performances, installations, and other community actions that raise the visibility of artists who are creating change in communities through art.

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