

**A Timeline**  
**Professor Lori Miles**

**1.0 Some of our students go to grad school to get their MFA**

Even though I'm in the business of academia, I don't believe an MFA is the only (or maybe even the best way) to a successful artistic life. But I do think getting an MFA is like a quote I once read from a 10-year old on raising chickens: "It's no big deal but it will change your life".

**2.0 I get invited to do a sabbatical show about my work**

And send the following (slightly edited) message to all of my former sculpture grads that have gone on to complete their MFA:

*Hello Artists,*

*Well well. Look at you all ( and I just did, on your websites, which are way better than mine).*

*I have a sabbatical show coming up next fall. I would like to invite you all back to join me in an exhibition.*

*Here's the deal: I'm super bored of showing my work here. It's like laying brick to me. So I thought I'd see if we could all come up with something better, together.*

*Here's my train of thought: I got interested in this phrase "dogs of doubtful origin", which is actually an error. I found it in a self-published book on werewolves, and the author says that werewolves are descendants of Amphicyonidae, which he defines as "dogs of doubtful origin". In fact, that's not the correct definition. Several other pseudo-scientist guys cite him, however, in their own work and use the same (incorrect) definition. I like that cycle of inaccuracy that is self-perpetuating. Kind of like teaching art. Also, dogs are loved but the word dog means something less, something useless.*

*My idea? Have you all come for a few days, give some talks and do a panel on grad school, and scavenge/construct/build/steal some huge installation that belongs to all of us. Doubtful Origin.*

*I invite you back because I trust you all inherently and I know that you know what it means when I say "don't make it shitty".*

*Of course, there has to be a leader, and that's me. The dynamics of the teacher/student relationship will always be present in some way. That said, what I'm offering you as you think about ideas/solutions is this: a list of my current obsessions. While I don't want them to control the output, I'd like them to serve as inspiration as we gather.*

*Current obsessions:*

*Fake things that know themselves to be fake*

*Martha Stewart's color palette*

*Mobile housing*

*Pseudo science*

*White elephants and escaped circus elephants*

*Tesla*

*1980's TV shows*

*Famous manmade disasters*

*Research stubs*

*Now tell me you'll come back and make some art.*

*Lori*

## **2.1 Response from Matt Kalasky**

IT SHALL BE.

M.

## **2.2 I get a text from Mike Treffeht**

what was your

favorite song in

1985? Don't think

just respond

*I have an old phone so the message is deleted, but this is the gist*

## **2.3 I reply**

take on me

## **2.4 Google chat is instigated, with technology issues on my part. Ryan Blackwell is blocked from the chat for some reason (because he's a ceramicist I think) so we can only hear him but not see him.**

*Hello Artists,*

*It was fun seeing everyone last night but Ryan and hearing from all of you.*

*Here's where I'm at so far: I'm going to send you each a package in the mail of items to read, work off of, or just consider for inclusion; a sort of top secret file of information. I'm going to send you a video prompt that essentially introduces the "project" to you. We are sticking with "Take On Me" as a sort of soundtrack or audio inspiration- I'm mostly interested in the dual meaning of the title: a confrontational challenge (as in "you're not strong enough to take me on") or a request for support (as in "I hope you'll consider taking me on for this position"). In a sense, I'm setting up a scenario with this show that asks precisely both those things of you. I'm*

*also going to design a physical format, a spatial platform of sorts for us to begin. That's it: a conceptual platform, a physical groundwork, a secret package of goods. All forthcoming.*

*As always, I'm asking you to take a leap of faith with me. Trust that the framework I set up will provide room for each of you to bring your own voice into the conversation.*

*Thanks,  
Lori*

**2.5 I request artist bios from each participating artist and receive the following** (some of which were edited to fit into the academic institution of fundraising):

**Travis LaMothe** received his B.A. in Studio Art at DePauw University in 2010, where he was awarded a fifth-year Arts Internship. While completing his M.F.A. at Southern Methodist University, he participated in group and two-person shows in Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and Philadelphia. LaMothe's focus in sculptural work that confronts the ways taste is created in our domestic space helped land him a student award from ISC's Sculpture Magazine in 2012, followed by a post-graduate fellowship from Juvenal Reis Studios in New York, where he will be working in the Fall. In Dallas, LaMothe is represented by RE Gallery and currently works as an art handler.

**Matt Kalasky** is an artist, writer, and critic with a medium build living in Philadelphia. He is currently the director at The St.Claire—an online arts publication and project based organization. His creative art criticism and innovative approach to the St. Claire recently garnered the attention of a leading international arts blog, ArtFCity. He received his B.A. in Studio Art at DePauw University in 2008. After completing a fifth-year Arts Internship, he went on to receive his MFA from Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. His work has been featured in galleries in Philadelphia, Washington DC, Minneapolis, and Indiana. He makes his money teaching preschool children the difference between right and wrong; oranges and bananas.

**Dan Solberg**, a studio artist and freelance writer, graduated from DePauw University in 2006 with a Studio Art and Communications double major and Film Studies minor. In 2009, he earned his MFA in Studio

Arts from the Sam Fox School of Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. After graduation, he worked at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC as a Program Coordinator, where he helped establish the ARTLAB+ digital learning center for teens and led workshops on contemporary art and new media. Dan has shown in Berlin, Los Angeles, across the Midwest, and most recently in New York City in *Doing and Undergoing*, a group show of site-specific installations at the Teachers College at Columbia University. In addition to his studio practice, Dan also writes cultural criticism about the intersection of art and video games on his blog *Low Cutoff* and has been published on sites such as *Kill Screen*, *Unwinnable*, *PopMatters*, and *Medium Difficulty*. Dan currently resides in Brooklyn, NY.

**Mike Treffeht** is an artist living and working in Philadelphia. After graduating from DePauw University with majors in Studio Art and Art History, he was selected as the first Fifth-Year Intern in the art department. He completed his MFA in Sculpture at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. He is a contributing editor at the St. Claire, an online arts Magazine and project organization. His work has recently been exhibited in Philadelphia, Alabama, and Indiana.

**Ryan Blackwell** received a BA in Studio Art from DePauw University in 2009, and an MFA from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in 2013. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. As a day job Ryan works as a fitter for Pranayama Art Inc—framing modern and contemporary artwork for galleries, museums, and private collections. Ryan uses his Bed-Stuy apartment and the frame shop as studio space. In the past few years he has shown work in Houston, TX, New York, NY, Brooklyn, NY, Boston, MA, Billings, MT, Indianapolis, IN, Leigh on Sea England, Amherst, MA, Tampa, FL, Miami, FL, Norton, MA and Greencastle, IN.

**Jacob Stanley** is a sculptor who focuses on temporary site-responsive installations. He earned his master of fine arts (MFA) from the University of Tennessee in 2010 and a Bachelor of Arts from DePauw University in 2005. Over the course of his career Professor Stanley has received numerous awards and participated in several group and solo shows. In the summer of 2008

and 2009 he was an artist in residence at *Art Channel*, in Beijing China and Franconia Sculpture Park in Minnesota, respectively. Recently he finished a large-scale commission for the city of New Albany, IN to help commemorate their Bicentennial. His work is in a variety of venues and galleries including: Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, TN, InLight Richmond, VA and the Lexington Arts League, KY. Stanley's work is generated from informed intuition and designed with a focus on workmanship. His aim is to create artwork that stays in a state of dynamic stasis—between collapse and construction, tension and balance, refinement and rawness.

## **2.6 The date nears with no promised packet or video prompt or payment from me.**

*Hey Lori,*

*Should I be expecting something in the mail? Also, do you know when we should look for airplane ticket money or will that be a reimbursement?*

*Best,  
Dan*

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*Dear Artists,*

*Some of you may be wondering “what are the details of the show” or “what exactly should I be doing” or something. My main criteria is that the piece/installation/performance be collaborative in a way that creates a whole without the need for anyone to take ownership of the parts.*

*Your packets, checks, and videos should be in the mail soon.*

*Thanks,  
Lori*

## **2.7 I send a slightly premature email promising packets.**

*Hello Artists,*

*Your packets are going in the mail tomorrow morning.*

*The conceptual framework for our show is this: someone caught in time. with only the one song to listen to (take on me). but with debris that accumulates from any event after 1985. and the floor is made of lava.*

*For now, an assignment of sorts:*

- 1. Each of you should be ready to build an island.*
- 2. Each of you should be ready to make a wall piece that may be altered.*

*Thanks,  
Lori*

**3.0 Artist Packets and travel checks arrive in the mail** *(a slightly burned packet of the materials I sent to each artist is on view in the vitrine in the gallery)*

Select responses:

“So I’m by myself and I’ve been inundated with a song that tells me to live without regret. Sooner or later I’ll be gone. I have the acculamation of detritus since I’ve been alive- one year before my birth to be exact.

I’ve turned my attention to this detritus.

I’m tired of looking at myself and assessing my own identity. There is no one around to project this perception of identity to anyway. These materials, the way they exist—they constitute everything.

And they’re beautiful. Even the kitschy cheap shit.

I feel nostalgia for the present.”

“The compiler of these materials has cut themselves off; they are complacent with what they have and nostalgic for what they see as the “golden age” of material. However, time, no matter how they wish to prevent it from passing continues on, and they’re running out of it.

Not much longer now.”

**3.1 Artists arrive and any nervousness I feel about having to deal with human beings other than my kids for more than a day disappears.**

*I am stunned at the dogged openness they each bring. Working with artists of this caliber who were all willing to compromise and expand was one of the most striking experiences of my artistic life. It was like the perfected Marxist ideal: from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. But we’re in a moment where the show still looks like a traditional group show with some common aesthetics and themes. This is not what I want and we’re all feeling the same thing. Something has to be done to pull this back together.*

**3.2 I struggle to figure out how to send a text to more than one recipient and manage to send the following:**

Meet in sculpture lab  
At 945. I have an  
idea to pull this  
together. Continue  
your sections but  
get some rest too.

**3.3 Something unforeseen has occurred to me.**

Dear audience,

Sometimes the artist is the last to know.

“Take on me” has one other meaning that now seems like the only one that matters. In every case, the artists were making their *take on me*. Their solutions-- their artistic contributions--were variations on the theme of my work through their own conceptual or aesthetic style.

They were making a statement. I wanted a chance at a rebuttal.

So it was decided that for each artist’s object or creation or contribution, I would be allowed an artistic response; something like an intervention. When the artists first arrived, I told them “if all that exists for the exhibition is a circle of seven chairs in the middle of the gallery with all of us sitting around having a conversation, I will be pleased”. In an artistic manner, that’s what happened. What you are now encountering is an artistic conversation. They made a gesture, I responded, they responded back.

Everything in the exhibition has at least two authors. Everything in the exhibition was made in 72 hours in Peeler, using local materials and resources, with the help of anyone and everyone who walked by. Everything in the exhibition was created publically, with the gallery open and cameras rolling. Everything in the exhibition is as it appears- if it’s on the floor you can walk on it, if it has steps you can climb it, if you want to touch it, you can.

We welcome you.

And thanks for coming,

Lori

**4.0 Everything in the exhibition will be  
donated to the art auction in support of  
Low Road Gallery.**

*ashes*