

International Women's Day at La Trobe Art Institute

Exhibiting artist Alex Martinis Roe in conversation with international collaborators Katerina Teaiwa (FJ/KI/US/AU), Alexandra Juhasz (US) and Andrea Ortega (MX).

This conversation took place at La Trobe Art Institute on March 8 2025, International Women's Day. Introduced by Senior Curator Amelia Wallin, the discussion includes artists Alex Martinis Roe in conversation with Katerina Teaiwa (in person), Alexandra Juhasz (remote) and Andrea Ortega (remote). It has been edited for length and clarity.

Amelia Wallin: It is a real pleasure to share this exhibition by Alex Martinis Roe, called *Storytelling Liberation*. This exhibition has been in development for many years and involves a host of talented collaborators from different continents. Some of them are with us in the room today to share the context that they work from and their experience and expertise.

We're joined not only by Alex Martinis Roe, but in person we have Katerina Teaiwa, who is next to me, who has travelled from Canberra to be with us today. We have Alexandra Juhasz who is there on the screen as well, joining from New York, and we have Andrea Ortega, who is joining us from Mexico City.

I can give a little bit more introduction into our speakers today. Katerina is a Professor of Pacific Studies in Gender Media and Cultural Studies program, and she works at the Australian National University, holding a PhD in Anthropology, a Master's in Pacific Island studies, as well as a Bachelor of Science. Katerina also has a background in contemporary Pacific dance and was co-founder of Oceanic Dance Theatre at the University of South Pacific in Fiji. Katerina writes and speaks regularly on pacific regionalism, the arts, issues of historical and environmental justice, climate change, cultural policy, Indigeneity, diaspora, displacement, colonial resistance, and the representations of Pacifica people.

Alexandra Juhasz is Distinguished Professor of Film at Brooklyn College, CUNY. She teaches, makes, studies committed media practices that contribute to political change at individual and community growth. She has a PhD in Cinema Studies from NYU and is the author of *Aids TV*, *Women of Vision: 18 Histories of Feminist Film and Video*, and a whole host of other books, some of which actually are on view in the temporary library here accompanying the exhibition.

Then we also have Andre Ortega, who is based in Mexico and inhabits feminist territories. She studied Psychology and has a Master's degree in Women's and Gender studies and is currently a PhD Candidate. Since 2011, Andre has worked as an expert narrative practitioner, which is a place from which she works with individuals, groups, communities, and territories. As a narrative practitioner, Andre has developed diverse ways of doing group work that go beyond therapy, generating creative approaches to collaboration with community and activist contexts. So, we have an incredible lineup of speakers, so much to learn and share.

Alex Martinis Roe: I'm Alex Martinis Roe. This is an exhibition I've organized and made, along with my collaborators, and I wanted to start today's conversation with a structured input of a

text that I've written, that puts forward a proposition about storytelling. So, I'd like to read that, and then we can discuss a few questions that relate to what I'm going to say.

The proposition that I have attempted to make and test out with this project, and that I would like for us to discuss today, which is the 8th of March and the 50th anniversary of International Women's Day, is that: storytelling could become a new formation at the intersection of socially engaged contemporary art, ethnographic film, visual anthropology, experimental historiography, oral history, First Nations, anti-colonial and women's storytelling cultures. An anti-discipline of feminist and anti-colonial methods, storytelling could once again become a gathering place for ways of learning about and telling stories from diverse contexts and cultures.

The exhibition *Storytelling Liberation* aims to offer a model for how an international alliance might be created through studying the methods and practices of those with whom we share purpose. The project focuses on storytelling methods with a specific purpose, telling stories about liberation politics. It asks which of these methods could be shared with others? Why storytelling?

I came to the idea of gathering around storytelling through my long engagement with its central place in the practice of consciousness raising, and other relational feminist practices, which are, I believe, the most fundamental and universal practices upon which all other social action and transformation depends.

In recent years I've learned from a practice of 'walking with' about the important place of storytelling in First Nations cultures. And I believe that this proposition could go some way to making academia and the arts structurally more supportive of cultures that highly value the intergenerational transmission of collective knowledge through storytelling.

And actually, I would say that the project did kind of birth in my mind through those lunches that we had together at ANU (directed to Katerina Teaiwa). It was a lunchtime group that I organized, called Experimental Storytelling, and I brought together people from different disciplines around ANU campus, and we would have lunch together and talk about how we were doing this in our different practices, and how we were uncomfortable in our various fields as well. But we'll say more about that...

So, I've been thinking towards this proposition. I've also more recently been thinking, together with Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt about how storytelling creates collective memory and what Arendt calls "a common world" through the transmission of experience which is essential for political plurality and generating collective responsibility for how we inherit the past and create the future.

At the moment, fake stories are hot commodities and big tech market their products, like Instagram stories, as bringing us closer to each other, while in reality the effect is individualizing and alienating. The common world that is created by storytelling is not something that can be bought and sold. It's a tradition, a way of being together which is about carrying on knowledge, creating it and sharing it. And that's why I'm keen to defend the name

of storytelling, as real storytelling, and it needs to be protected and nurtured, and affirmatively keeping its name to counter its increasing commodification should be part of that politics.

So, I just want to say a few things now about the process of making the project. The process has been to form five collaborations with activists, scholars, and artists from different disciplinary and geographic contexts, and to get involved with what they've been working on in a way that contributes to it, while filming their working process and interviewing them about it.

The aim has been to theorize a key practical storytelling research method developed or used by each collaborator, and to make a film together that helps that method become transversal, something that can be learned by others in different contexts. In four out of the five collaborations, we also co-taught workshops with students together, which was an important way to learn about how the research methods could be transmitted. Situating the methods in their genealogy, the place, culture, and activist histories that they come from is essential for that.

Collaboration is a form of organising. It's a way of creating networks and connecting different efforts together. It creates the opportunity to use the resources or power in one place, in order to make change in another. Considering the global scale of the threats our world is facing, we, on the feminist anti-colonial left must be international. How can we relate to one another and share tools with each other where the starting point is difference and not sameness?

And now I want to say something about my home discipline of art. Speaking from that context, as an artist who also works in universities, I want to say first, that the introduction of art as a discipline in the neoliberal university has fundamentally threatened the openness of practice that was protected in the art academies. However, the introduction of art within the domain of knowledge can also be the potential ally of anti-colonial and transdisciplinary projects.

Artistic research, which is a kind of catch phrase that people discuss a lot which is art being knowledge, opens the space in the university for forms of knowledge that were not included in the modern frame, such as Indigenous, feminist, anti-colonial knowledges. Indigenous knowledges are included in Australian universities, but to what extent? The frame of anthropology remains very strong in the formats of academic publishing. Typically, knowledge about culture as an object of study, has a higher value in the hierarchy of disciplines than cultural practices which remain subordinate forms of knowledge.

As Katerina has written of her experience studying Pacific Island studies at the University of Hawaii:

“Pedagogically and methodologically, interdisciplinarity was well woven through history, culture, politics, and Indigenous knowledges. But even as we were being told to decolonize our minds and decolonize our knowledges and decolonize our approaches, I, (Katerina) kept asking, then why are we doing all this in text? Through reading and writing? I found it difficult to reconcile being told to decolonize everything without the form being decolonised as well.”

So, when I think about the climate crisis and its interconnection with colonialism, extractive capitalism, and indeed in the rise of new types of feudalism, I believe that one of the major changes necessary in our field of art is to question the art object and its commodity status, and to move structurally towards a value for the process of art, using the concept of intangible cultural heritage.

Ariela Azoulay examines the colonial construction of art as a transcendental universal category in modernity, and its persistence in the format of the exchangeable art object. The detachment of the art object from the communities and relationships that produced and mediated, enables extractivism to persist in Western culture. It's necessary that we depart from the mainstay structures of the art world: the solo author in the isolated studio, and detachment of the art object from contexts of production, and those who encounter it.

The disciplines and industries of Western knowledge and culture are products of modernity, capitalism, and colonialism. As a species, we are facing existential threat from a host of super wicked problems, and we must do things differently if we are to survive and to live in justice. We cannot continue to operate on the basis that isolated radical pieces of research and teaching will make enough of a difference in time. We need new formations of knowledge and culture, so that we can collectively address the issues now.

So many activists, academics and cultural workers would agree that we have thoroughly done the theoretical work of deconstructing the modern disciplines. Now it is time to reorganize the public resources in the university and cultural sector, so that we can do knowledge and culture differently. This project on show here is an attempt to answer the question of: how?

The repurposing of public resources could be organised with the same strategies as the social justice movements of the '60s and '70s, and their long march through the institutions to form in the university women's studies cultural studies, science studies, disability studies, Black studies, and recently, First nations led indigenous studies and trans studies, among others, which were all set up by grassroots movements. The inclusion of these fields of knowledge has presented a challenge to how institutions and industries of cultural production relate to minorities and has been an important modality of change.

Under the pressure of the neoliberal university and culture sector systems, however, many of these fields have disconnected from their grassroots origins. While there is resistance within each of these fields, there is no mass organised movement to change the fundamental structure of the faculties, schools, disciplines, and sub-disciplines, and so binary habits of thought and their damage continue.

What we need is an international movement across both academic and cultural sectors that doesn't ask for adaptations to the given system but demands a total repurposing of public resources away from market forces and does so with a clear proposal for what would replace the current structures. We need to debate and arrive at a replacement for the structural separation of the arts, the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, and its maintenance of the current modern world order.

So that's a big statement, but I do really believe that as cultural workers and as academics, we do have to organize, and I feel like people complain about their disciplines all the time and talk about the need for a change, but we need to discuss what designs we might be interested in. And so, this is why *Storytelling Liberation* is a proposal. It's a proposition open to debate. Is storytelling an interesting formation? How useful could it be? And so, I thought it would be wonderful to bring together three of my collaborators. I would have invited all of them, it's 3AM their time in Europe, so I just thought I won't ask that of **Gladys Kalichini** or the ASKI archives . But I wanted to bring Alex, Katerina and Andre together to ask them some questions, because we haven't actually had a chance to really debate the proposition that these collaborations are forming for me in my mind, and what I'm trying to put out there.

I thought we could start off by grounding it in experience and asking perhaps each of you, or maybe Andre we could start with you, if you could tell us about your experience of being part of this project and our collaboration, and if there's anything that you might like to share about the process? Or having seen the films now made with the other collaborators that you're meeting today for the first time, perhaps you have some reflections on how our collaboration fits within the whole project?

Andre Ortega: Thank you, Alex, and thank you all of you that are listening. Hello, to all of the collaborators of this project. Well, about my experience in *Storytelling Liberation*... I think it was more than a year ago that I received an email from a Mexican friend that lives in the Netherlands, and she was introducing me to Alex, and Alex was really interested in collaborating with women around the world that were working with storytelling and using storytelling in order to nurture activist and social movements. So, I was very interested in this general description, and we started speaking, like now, by Zoom – it's the only way in which we have met. And she was really interested in knowing about me.

I told Alex how I am a narrative practitioner, and how I use narrative practices in activist, as well as in social and community settings, as a way of facilitating conversations with people in order for them to narrate or re-narrate their own stories in ways that nurture their preferred ways of living. I shared with her as well, how as narrative practitioners, we sometimes create political-poetic documents that honour people's stories in their own words. Alex was asking me more, and it was really interesting how she was very fond of me sharing the details about what we do.

I shared with her a project that I did with Diana Betanzos, also from Mexico, from the peripheral areas of Mexico City. With Alex we basically developed a way of sharing how Diana and I use narrative practices in Cruz Rosa. Cruz Rosa is an audio-visual documentary work, regarding the femicides that women face in Mexico every day, in which we integrate narrative practices as ways of collaborating and speaking together with other women, that enables re-telling our stories from a place of dignity.

Listening to all of you today and taking in account the other women, artists, activists, and academics that are part of this exhibition, I was taking some notes about some words that I think that resonate with the ethics and politics of narrative practices that are as well very close to the interests of *Storytelling liberation*. I'll read these words in a format of a political-poetic document:

Storytelling Liberation:

Liberation politics...

collaborating with those with whom we share purpose

collaboration as a form of organizing

storytelling:

telling our stories from a place of dignity

resist through collective biographies

being able to look slowly

female freedom fighters

creating together with friends

creating together with long-life collaborators

celebrating interpersonal relationships...

these, are our liberation politics:

storytelling as our form of organizing

I think with this political-poetic document, I can share a lot about how I resonate with the work of Katerina and how I resonate with the work of Alex Juhasz as well. For me it's really, really lovely how we can now practice speaking together with other women from very different contexts, in order to share our experience and then also strengthen our possibilities.

Alex Martinis Roe: Thank you so much, Andre, always the words that you have selected, I see that as a kind of poetry. Or it's "a document," a practice that you have, a form of listening, that's also demonstrated in the film that we made together. That's a real gift for me. Thank you so much.

So, Katerina, Alex, do you want to say something in response to that question about your experience of being part of this project?

Alexandra Juhasz: I'd be happy to. First of all, thanks for inviting me. I think the most - there's two most exciting and stimulating parts—and one of those was watching the other films and learning from the other women who you collaborated with, but then understanding the project as a whole, which you always did but I only ever saw my part.

I'm really thrilled to get to be in dialogue with these women that I've seen through your films and understanding that although each of us are really different practitioners, actually, and we work in different forms, we've been trained in different ways, we work in different countries, there are these very clear and important through lines which I think really are about method, as much as anything, and many of the words Andrea has already expressed, but for me: collaboration, dialogue, collectivity, groundedness, and artistic research practice that's community based and purpose driven. I saw that in all your collaborators, Alex, and so I think that meeting them through the films was one thing, and then the process of working with you on mine was really fun.

I make documentary, I have for most of my adult life, and I don't know that I've ever had one pointed towards me or started from somebody else's vision and then looking at me. I think that because we have had many conversations before about other things, I trusted that we would figure things out together about making this piece, and that we came from a similar place, and that was true. But you know, the conversation that we recorded was one thing, but the film that you made from it in conversation with me where you were leading, was something else, and it was really beautiful to watch you listen to me and look at my work and pull some strands that are all quite true to me, but through your brain and through your vision. So those are the parts of the project that I would want to reflect back to you as being important to me and that we're doing it right now as well, obviously: continuing the conversation internationally with this group of people who are linked by you, but also by how we all work as feminists.

Alex Martinis Roe: Thank you, Alex. Katerina, what I wanted to ask you was, specifically, what is your perspective on or your experience of modern disciplinary frames in the arts and academia? So, if I go back to that quote of yours that I included in my talk about how you questioned why we're not decolonizing the forms as well? Could you reflect on your academic training, and how your experiences of the modern frames it?

Katerina Teaiwa: I think one of the things that's quite challenging for me always is to start with concepts, methods, and abstractions before the story and before the people and the place and the history. And so, what's been amazing and interesting is almost watching you watching us, to me that's a method that the academy teaches us for everything, regardless of the discipline. And what we've been doing in the Pacific, forever, is actually starting with the story and what happened. So, we start with places, peoples, events, histories, dramas, politics, something that happened. And then this idea of abstraction, observation, documentation, and an articulation of methodology is a thing that I find really, really difficult because methodologically, what we're doing in most Indigenous cultures, and definitely in the Pacific, is an automatic and instant distillation, analysis and reflection in the telling of the story.

Storytelling is everything, it is the whole thing and in fact there's no separation between content and method and frame and approach. So, it's the taking apart of things in order to see what's going on, which is quite challenging for me.

It's been super interesting and enlightening to me to watch and follow the process of abstraction, so that Alex would say, 'what are you doing?' And I'm like, 'I don't know what I'm doing. I'm just doing some things, because I don't think about what I'm doing, because we are doing'. But the doing and the being, and the thinking, and the reflection and the theory are all one. So storytelling is a theoretical practice. It doesn't require abstraction and conceptualization and unpacking to be a thing.

It's been really good and really challenging for me to recognize that I've been in the academy, and I've become a Professor at the Australian National University by doing things the opposite of how we're trained. So, whenever people would try to train me like in Anthropology or History, or Cultural Studies, I had no idea what was going on, because it's very foreign and strange to me to start with concepts or colours or palettes. Because I'm used to being grounded in places and peoples and relationships and dramas and grief and happiness and joy,

and all of those things that we are told are something different from formal proper knowledge production.

So, stories are everything, and you can tell stories through words, but you can tell stories through dance, you can definitely tell stories through song, and I don't see borders and barriers and boundaries between all the genres, because that's how we were raised. Now, it wasn't like some special romantic raising to be a special way, it just was. You move seamlessly between school and ghost stories. I came here with some amazing Kiribati women who live in Victoria, and we were telling ghost stories the whole entire way to this panel. Because that is what we do. It is not a special package or bundle of things that's given to you like in a storybook, which is then what we learn in school, but instead, it's an everyday kind of thing. What I loved about this [project] is it helped me articulate better what we're doing on an everyday basis, and how there are these other ways of being in the world that don't rely on that objectification, the commodification, and the extraction and abstraction of something that is actually a very holistic, integrated way of being in the world, which gives you all those observational skills that you need because you are paying attention to multiple realms simultaneously. And that is what it is like to be a Pacific person and to be Indigenous. It's like you have 8 eyes, and those 8 eyes are taking in all kinds of information, and that's across time and space and place. AI is trying to do that for us, and I keep telling my students don't use the AI to do that, develop it yourself. That is a human way of being in the world.

I really appreciated being part of this project, and kind of seeing and thinking and learning from all of you and from others, because I don't have a lot of consciousness about my method or about how I do things. Somebody's got to drag that kicking and screaming out of me because I don't know how to be that way, and yet I can make it all the way through the academy and be completely fine. You know what I mean? It seems risky, if you're an academic, to kind of push all of those boundaries and say forget about it, I'm not going to follow that genealogy of thought. But if you know who you are, you know how you're grounded, and I'm grounded in very particular places in the Pacific, then you can way-find through all of that. That's what I'm trying to teach my students and my daughters and my family, because these are life skills. Storytelling skills give you life skills.

Alex Martinis Roe: What you reflected on in terms of the process that I initiated, is this idea of studying someone else's way of working in order to find something that could become transversal and then be learned by other people. In a workshop I held with Katerina, the students really learned from this practice of looking slowly, and they were able to, as you say, learn to have 8 eyes through that process. But I felt like it was easier for some people to learn from the method and ground it in the story. While the students couldn't go out and then start telling the story themselves, because it's not their story to tell, they could start using the methods.

And I guess I'm curious to hear from Alex, you were happy to speak to this question, what do you think of this proposition to find new disciplinary formations through this process that I tested out with this project, by studying the methods of those with whom we share purpose? And the other part of that question is, what do you think of the method that I've been using in this project or that process? What do you think is vital to encouraging greater collective reimagining of the structure of arts and academia? So, Alex, I might ask you to answer that.

Alexandra Juhasz: But that was a whole bunch of questions, Alex!

Alex Martinis Roe: Okay. Okay. Well, maybe just if you could reflect on the process of studying someone's methodology, studying someone else's particular working methods, to find in it what's transversal as a process of reimagining how academia and the arts could be organized?

Alex Juhasz: Well... I'm deeply considering what Katerina said, which is the opposite! But then again, I feel like when you hear something is the opposite, you understand that it's a mirror, and that it's altogether really perhaps one thing. And I was very moved by Katerina's depiction of a holistic way of being in the world and making worlds, and that you don't distil out the threads. I'm a community-based practitioner who does my work inside of a place with a community, typically with political goal or a social or cultural goal. I'm supposed to be a "regular academic," but I break outside of disciplinary boundaries to do my kind of community work.

I have a PhD in Cinema Studies, but I make film in community, which again is like another sort of breakout, and I always have, but I also am always interested in thinking about method. So, to me *that* is holistic. When I am working in a particular setting with a group of people around a problem, something that we want to know more about or articulate or work on together, I'm very eager to think about how that comes to be a method with that group of people around that particular goal that we want to transform. So, I've always thought about that. And I don't know that it's an abstraction, either.

You said, Katerina, that it's an abstraction and a distillation and you used all these really wonderful words. I'm always quite eager to make sense of how we're doing it and what we're doing, as much as why we're doing it and what it's about. So again, I think I agree with you that that's holistic, when you make community-based art, when you make activist media, which is what I make. You know, you've all come together with a purpose, and you're hoping that something will come from it. Alex and I talk a lot about that: what I hope comes from it is just from doing it, being together and doing it and being activated enough to want to do things together.

So, this question of method, and then Alex, pulling out these methods and then saying, you know, if I name 5 methods, I could take these 5 methods and see what they look like someplace, else, I think, that is the project. It's very captivating to me, because the methods that I heard from all of the other women in Alex's films are not things exactly those that I do, but when I listen to others talk about their practice, I understand why that's a method that works for them. So, for instance, Gladys Kalichini's somatic expressions. I understand her talking about being in a community, watching people very closely, understanding that how they use their bodies, carry histories and memories that continue to show, and that she can use that as a language of continuity and connection to women before her. So again, I don't know that I would do that method because I'm not a performer, but I do understand, sitting closely, watching, listening, turning what I see and hear, working with people into something we all can inhabit together.

So, in any case, I'm provoked and interested by Katerina's perspective. I guess the only other thing I'd say to you, Alex, is that the project is beautiful. It carries its feelings with it, and all the portraits produce a kind of comfort and honesty, and hope, and images of people who are working quite hard in their communities with people they love. We love that. But could we transform all of the academy into that? You have these very grandiose conclusions for something that is very small and intimate. And you know, I think you're asking about that too. Should we hope that what we could do is rewrite all of academia so that it looks like the making of small videos across the world? Sure. But what would that actually look like?

In conclusion, when I think of methods that I believe in, Katerina, I believe that it's very important to do things that are small and local, and that are of their place and of their time and of their people. And so I'm not sure I'm interested in grandiose claims about things that can transform *everything*. I'm much more interested in small traces of how we save ourselves when all the rest of that bigness is bullshit, and so I don't know that I aspire to bigness, but I would like the work that we do to saturate deeper into places where it could be of use, for sure.

Alex Martinis Roe: When I think of the use of the term anti-discipline, I think it takes a lot of effort to think about what an anti-discipline would be. I appreciate your disinterest in the grandiose claims. I think, though, that an emphasis on process could be something that would be really useful overall. I got the idea of gathering around a term from the House of World Cultures (Haus der Kulturen der Welt) in Berlin, and the way that they had multi-year thematics, and for example, they gathered around the Anthropocene, I think, in 2007. I was influenced by the way that they created a concentrated large community of intellectuals and artists from all different disciplines, debating and questioning that discourse and inventing new discourse and spreading it around and making it public. And by the end everyone was like, oh, we're not using the term Anthropocene anymore. This reflects the idea that we have to be thinking about the shape of it collectively, of the space that we're inhabiting, and I understand that it might be difficult to get all the scientists in the room with us, but maybe the scientists could actually have those conversations too. And to find these ways of making the structures able to change without too much administration.

Alexandra Juhasz: Very quickly. I think that I want to hear what Andre has to say, but I think that what it raises for me, like we're living in late-stage capitalism, and it's destroying everything, and its logics are everywhere. It's very hard to be human beings who live and breathe for a moment outside of its logics, especially like where I live in the United States.. It's very hard for me to imagine how we could have the power to convince everybody to think outside of capitalism. So again, I'm thinking we really have to do this in very small ways, because the domination of capitalism is so extraordinary in every realm of culture, and to our environment. And so, I'm really going to double down on finding our allies and hoping to bring more people in. We live in a world where everything is about exchange value. And this is what your point about storytelling is, and about capital, and about bullshit plastic and tweets. Your films model that process, and I think we want to make small things that model it for each other as well.

Alex Martinis Roe: Andre, do you want to respond to any of the questions that are out there? Or maybe more directly, this proposition around gathering around storytelling as a kind of collectivizing tool? As a potential formation of feminist and anti-colonial methods?

Andre Ortega: Sure. I think we have all spoken about the importance of storytelling, and how this is a very ancestral human practice. Ancestral and contemporary, let's say. I was thinking if telling stories is the only thing that we need to do in order to change the dominant practices that Alexandra was just now mentioning. At the same time, I was thinking about 3 questions that I like to place whenever I think about stories: What is a story telling? Who is telling this story? And How is this story being told? I don't think we need to continue listening to some of the Dominant stories that are being told nowadays, and of course we know which ones I am talking about.

Alexandra was referring to an important word: allies. When you say feminist and anti-colonial methods, these imply a political perspective, of course. If we keep in mind this political perspective while storytelling, we can pay attention to the effects a story has. For example, in cinema, a lot of things have been recently portrayed in terms of Mexico, and Mexican culture. Our nowadays context has been portrayed from a French-male-white perspective, a French filmmaker, that contributes to negative stereotypes of Mexican culture, right? The effects that this story has in the actual lives of people are huge. So, yes, I think storytelling is important, but storytelling that takes in account these 3 former questions. Doing that, yeah, we can gather together with allies in order to talk about our bodies, our lives, our dramas, as Katerina said, our needs, but also about our hopes, our tools, our dreams. It is very important to tell stories that contribute to hope, in moments such as the ones we are facing. This is what I can add.

Katerina Teaiwa: Thank you. I'm so moved by what you both said, and it's just, just brilliant, because I feel like I can weave this back also to where we started, and your question to me about the forms of decolonization, because while you were both talking, and you know, there was this emphasis on methods. Because I don't conceptualize, or extract abstract enough, I don't think about methods and theory.

However, an idea that was coming to me as you were both talking was this idea of literacies, which I tried to meditate on many years ago because I was trying to figure out why me, as someone with a background in dance and the visual arts, would sit in an anthropology class, a sociology class, a philosophy class and be completely lost, and have no idea what was going on and why it was going on. And then once I went through Uni and became trained in these other ways of knowing and being and doing, I come out the other end into Pacific Island studies with a very large basket of what I view as literacies.

In fact, my linguistic literacy is of the lowest level. I can't speak multiple languages, and I come from a family with people who can speak multiple languages, but it's a little bit like my ears for language are switched off. What I could do that was different, though, and which is what would put me in a state of confusion with my lecturers, was that I could read bodies, and I could feel things in my body, and relate to things on an embodied level that was very particular and different from what I thought other people around me were doing. It was a choreographic and an embodied and a visual literacy that I was told only works if you go to the art part of the

university. Like you've got to be in the art school, you've got to be in dance, and now we shall put a nice box and boundary and barrier around that, and you shall do art. And I was like, no. I want to do this in politics. I want to do this in business, or whatever other crap classes you're making us take, economics, all of that.

Because I had this other tool basket of literacies, I had a way of decoding and understanding the world around me: place, people, movement. I kept thinking, why can't I harness this to do political analysis? Why can't I harness this to read a book? Text overwhelms me, and text makes me very tired if I have to follow these little squiggles on a page, and my students know this about me too. I look at a page from afar before I zoom into what's on the page, because I'm looking at the layout of the page and the spaces and all kinds of things. So, literacies for me works as a way of thinking about other ways of doing things. So that you have different, better outcomes. Because I feel like we're limited in the ways in which we're allowed to take in information. And so, what's useful about stories and storytelling is you don't just tell stories through your mouth with your words. You can tell stories through your hands, objects tell stories, architecture tells stories, canoes tell stories.

If you expand your literacy of reading the world to understand that those stories are coming, not just from humans, they're coming from mountains, they're coming from rivers, they're coming from rocks, they're coming from buildings, nice fancy buildings, old dilapidated buildings. If you can read that world and take in that information, you come to a more hopefully empathetic, compassionate, humane—humans are literally the least humane species on the planet, so, I don't know if that's the right word. Stories are not just by the great storyteller, stories are not just by that author who sold 50 million books.. But stories are everywhere. Stories are in this bag, stories are in your gorgeous haircut, stories are outside, and that's the way I'm in the world. That's always been the way I've been in the world, and so I couldn't understand what they were teaching me in these classrooms, because it didn't match that far more diverse, inclusive way of taking in everything.

Alex Martinis Roe: One of the reasons that I thought about doing this project was because of the experience of teaching students who were having that experience.

Katerina Teaiwa: Yes, neurodiverse, they call it!

Alex Martinis Roe: And also, First Nations art students who are practicing politics, law, medicine.. The modern frame around art serves to kind of control and corral that work and stop it from having the kind of social transformative impact that it might have. Because it's "the Arts," it's just a story, it's not politics. That was one of the main motivations for me, seeing people having that experience and thinking we have to change this frame.

Katerina Teaiwa: One of the ways I do this, is as an academic. Although what I teach, what I research, my outreach, my administration, my policy work, my pedagogy, and my role in life as a mother, a sister, a daughter, there is no difference between them. I don't put on a different hat to go and do some special research, I don't put on a different hat to teach. I don't change that hat. So, the process, the method, the way, is fully integrated through all those spaces. But when I watch my colleagues, they are completely different in a meeting, surrounded by people that they believe are very important, and if the Vice Chancellor is there they change. If the Vice

Chancellor is there, I'm the exact same person, and Vice Chancellors don't like it because they're like, clearly this person's not going to kiss my butt, so I can't bring them into the fold of executive leadership. And I'm like whatever, right? So, you don't change your fundamental values and ways of being in the world for some different context. And sometimes it is the diplomatic thing to do, but I'm not very diplomatic.

Alexandra Juhasz: I was hoping to say one more thing, which was connected to what you said again, Katerina. I think that the way that so much of what we say, these literacies that you imagine are the expression of stories. I also actually believe that that is true of the expression of theory, and I think it is human to theorize, and that is part of storytelling. But we have tended to understand theory as a set of disciplinary or academic or higher practices, and only some people are qualified. But a lot of what I do as an activist, educator, art maker is work with people to tell stories of their own experience, but also analysis of the world, that is rooted in their own experience, but is more abstract, and starts to name systems that they come from. I think that a lot of what I am interested in doing is crystallizing connections, themes, structures from discrete and real experience of people that I work with. And that's what I understand theorizing to be, and you don't have to have studied it in college or anywhere, to be theorizing the nature of your own existence and your problems, and who's to blame and how you could improve that. And I think that's all theory.

Alex Martinis Roe: Andre, I'm sure you have something to say on that.

Andre Ortega: I was thinking that maybe the problem is that we have called “theory” the ability of meaning making or constructing sense about our own lives. The West has created a world in which theory is done in academic contexts. When Alex was just now speaking, I remembered Paolo Freire, and his liberation pedagogy proposal. The liberation pedagogy did not take place inside a school, nor inside academia. The liberation pedagogy was a way of teaching people in rural contexts in Brazil how to read and write, and in that process being political about their own contexts and lives. I think all of this is very related to what you are questioning Alex, about the disciplines that art has created, or academia has created, or science has created.

And I think, What Katerina has shared with us today and given to this conversation, is the fact that these abilities to do, feel and think are human. Conversations as a practice that constructs a sense of the world, a sense about who we are, are ancient human practices. Contemporary Neoliberal-Colonial-White, contexts, such as Academia and Art, written with capital letters, have basically dispossessed people, (in Spanish we say *despojar*), from the opportunity of constructing “own meanings” about the world. We have as well been dispossessed from the feeling that we are capable of creating in general: songs, movements with our bodies, meaning making... we have been cut from all of these possibilities. I think this proposition of breaking the disciplines is a way of decolonialization. It entails remembering who we are, remembering that we are beings that are part of earth, that are part of each other, that are part of life. We just need to remember.

Katerina Teaiwa: Perfect.

Alex Martinis Roe: Thank you. Andrea, that's beautiful. That was a very beautiful end to what I really hoped we could talk about. When I was thinking of using the word storytelling, it was partly a kind of Derridean or deconstructionist strategy. The idea of occupying the subordinate term. But I really do believe that stories are a form of theory and the feminist knowledges and anti-colonial knowledges that I hold in the highest regard have all come from experience. They've all come from articulating experience first, which is like that method of the pedagogy of the oppressed. A strategy that I think could be useful is to occupy "story" rather than "theory," and to rename that in a broader sphere.

Alex Martinis Roe: is there a question that anyone wanted to ask?

Alicia Frankovich (audience member): you know there are stories that we should be turning off, there are different stories for different people. We all know what it's like to turn off news or not to read something. But the fact is that everyone has the choice to watch whichever media that suits them and they can be caught in this "on demand" algorithmic, selective way of viewing. So, every person in every different demographic is watching another story. How can that shift, or how can you kind of attempt to tackle both problems? When you were speaking, Katerina, or more like you were performing your story and your work and you do this everywhere in a navigational, activated way - here everybody has access to it, even if it is momentary, it's not just like, through this binocular kind of vision, a singular notion of experience.

Katerina Teaiwa: Could you [Alexandra and Andre] hear any of that? Should we summarise it? There's all these stories now out there, and there's stories on demand. There's pick and choose your own story. The algorithm will deliver a story to you of whatever flavour you'd like, which is problematic, actually. And I think for me, it goes back to this issue of literacies and utilising literacies in a way for the better good and for well-being, because there are toxic and poisonous stories out there. But so then, what Alicia [Audience member] was saying was that performing this and making it accessible in different contexts and spaces and places, kind of puts that into practice. So that moves away, I think, from that commodification of story in service of ideology. Or whatever ways stories are actually being harnessed now for politics, and it's super dodgy, with very real consequences.

And this is where I think it's important to decolonize the form and develop a basket of literacy so that you can figure out what exactly you're looking at the moment. So, we're being told, power looks like this. And these are the kinds of people who need to be in power. Those are stories that are told right. And that's because people don't have a diverse basket of literacies to decode that and to understand power. And that's why just doing it in text or just trusting a news source or just a newspaper. To be able to do this is now not enough. We need to be doing the 8 eyes thing, on a daily basis, without the overwhelm, without being lost in the abyss of all the toxicity either, which I think, is a longer conversation.

Alexandra Juhasz: In a world of overabundant stories being sold to you in every form, and you can have as many as you want and indulge in them all the time, that's a consumption model. What we're talking about here is process-based co-production of stories as forms of knowledge and transformation. Now, what's interesting about social media is that you're also so-called "producing media". That's how social media understands itself. It's a lie. You are

producing things, but you're producing them for capital, and it goes into the belly of the beast. It uses you to sell yourself, and to sell yourself to the highest bidder. That is not process-based in the way that we're talking about. Given that we can choose every story on the world, the point is to choose one or two, or three and do them together. It's the process of making the stories that matter, not the consumption of them, and not even spewing them out into the wild. It's spewing them locally with people who will learn from it and grow from it, and be delighted in that exchange. That's what's happening here on the screen and in the room that you're in.

Alex Martinis Roe: Beautiful. Thank you, Alex.

Amelia Wallin: I think this is such a vital conversation and such an incredible proposition that we've all heard today. And I just want to extend deep thanks and gratitude to Alex, Alex, Katerina and Andre, it's a privilege to hear these four people whose work sits in parallel but are meeting for the first time, and to just hear the flows between your practices, your methods, your different contexts, and how in sync you are. Thank you, Alex, for bringing everyone together and bringing today together, there's so much to keep thinking about.