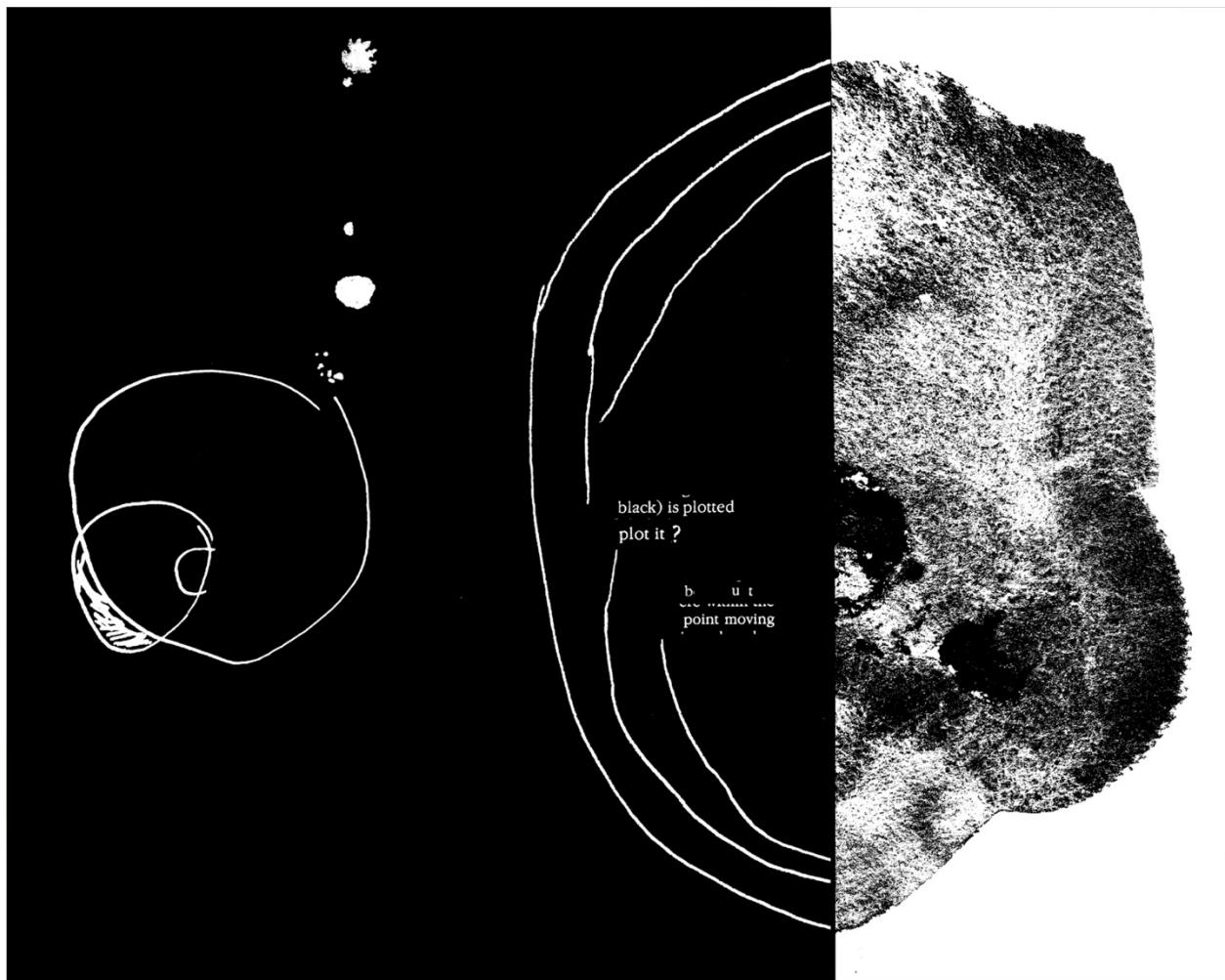


THE POWER OF POLITICS IN ART

FINAL REPORT

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2023-2024 CTL Fellow



Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Plot It/Point Moving, 2020. Matte print (Black ink on paper). 40 x 50 in.

*HOW DO OUR STUDENTS VIEW
THEIR POLITICAL POWER?*

*HOW DO STUDENTS VIEW THEIR
ABILITY TO SPARK POLITICAL
CONVERSATION THROUGH ART?*

Initial Project Goals

My question at the start of this project was the following: how do students view their political power? As my work went on, this single question extended to the following questions:

1. Are students interested in engaging with social/political movements?
2. If so, do students feel their desire to center their art within the larger socio-political landscape of the world is supported in their classes at Pratt?
3. Are our classes sparking new conversations, exposing students to social and political movements of the past and present, and teaching them where their art—and by extension, their beings—fit into our world?
4. Perhaps, most of all, are we as professors inspiring them to create a new, better, world?

Research Questions

1. How do students view their political power?
2. How do students view their ability to spark political conversation through art?

Data and Analysis

In the Spring of 2024, I accomplished the drafting and planning portion of my project. By the end of that semester, my goal was to have a draft of a survey that would include questions asking students to think deeply about their artistic goals, their desires/goals to situate their art in the broader socio-political context of the world, and how these goals have been supported at Pratt. Beyond a consensus about this support, I sought out to create a survey that would detail specific pedagogy that has been beneficial and encouraged political/social engagement.

I designed a survey of ten questions (short answer and open-ended) to gather more information about how students view their work as it exists inside Pratt and in the greater socio-political landscape of the world.

Evaluation Data

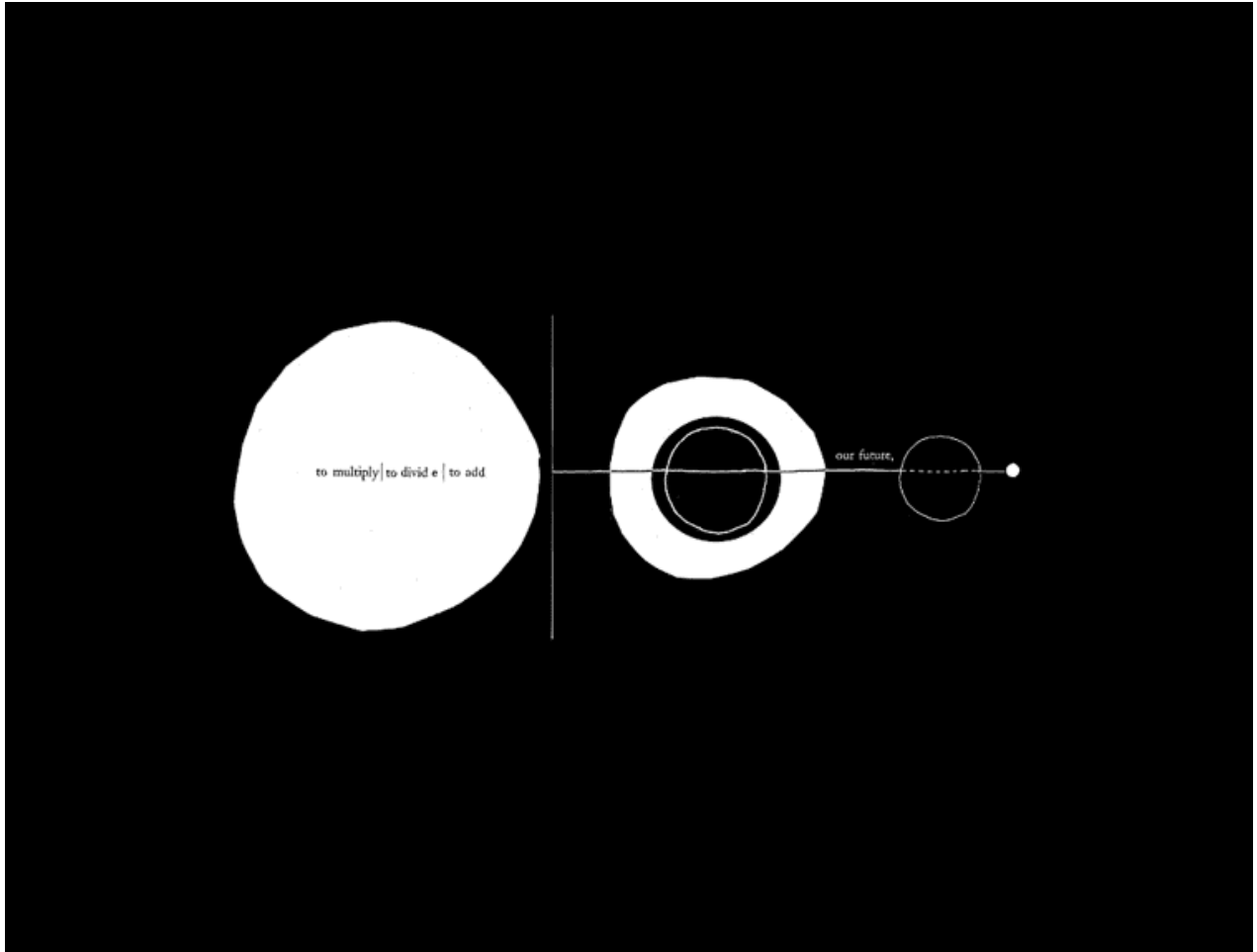
Mid-year Evaluation Data (Anticipated)

- **Number of students your project reached (if applicable)** 25-35 student participants anticipated
- **Number of interviews, number of meetings, events, resources (if applicable)** TBD
interviews planned for Fall

Survey Evaluation Data (Results)

- **Number of students your project reached (if applicable)** 20 student responses
- **Number of interviews, number of meetings, events, resources (if applicable)** 3 interviews in-progress

CTL Project Survey: <https://forms.gle/HfoTh4iqpbRkxJDL6>



Kameelah Janan Rasheed, FUTURE, 2019. Archival Inkjet Print, 40 X 50 Inches

Participant Responses (Anonymous, Summary)

In one or two sentences, please describe your creative practice and aesthetic/theoretical concerns. For example: "I am a visual artist who works in graphic design. I am interested in how our relationship to social media affects the way we view the body"

"I am a visual artist who works in 3d animation production. I am interested in how women are portrayed in the animation industry and how our relationship with film affects the way we view women."

"I am a fashion designer, visual artist, and poet fascinated with the dichotomy of compulsion and revulsion. My practice is rooted in research and my lived experience as a gay man."

"My major encourages working in groups, and a lot of concept design and planning goes into the decisions we make. I enjoy making things that can tell a powerful story that gets people to think about their inner selves."

"I am a filmmaker and artist specializing in sonic and acoustic arts. I am interested in culturally relevant archival sound work that affects and de-biases perceptions of culture. "

"I am a Level Artist specializing in Unreal Engine 5 (UE5), focused on delivering captivating game environments through meticulous design and efficient workflows, ensuring a seamless player experience."

"I am an artist-scholar working at the intersection of media, sociological theory, and experimental practice. My work examines how social media disconnects us from ourselves, forcing us to market curated versions of our identities. I explore the complexities of maintaining these personas to influence how we are perceived."

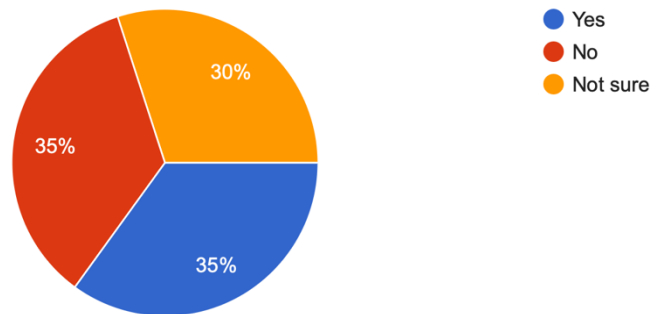
"I am a game developer that wants to explore how games can portray mental health and other personal stories."

"I am a graphic designer and visual artist. I am interested in the intersection of the feminine body and how trauma presents itself outside of the mind."

"I am a mixed media artist who likes to focus majorly on philosophical concepts through my experimental animations, often tackling themes related to existentialism, phenomenology and metaphysics."

Does your art engage with any social/political movements?

20 responses



If you said yes to the above, what social/political movements do you feel your art engages with or belongs to? If you said no, please write N/A.

“As a women animator, I feel a responsibility to challenge outdated gender roles, misrepresentation, and the lack of diversity in storytelling.”

“Queer Liberation.”

“I strongly believe in humanistic and culturally relevant and sustained pedagogies when considering my archival and information science work.”

“Digital activism, feminism/body politics, queer theory, posthumanism, anti-capitalism.”

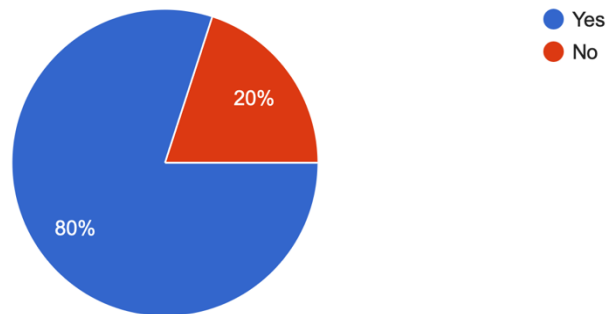
“My art doesn't engage with social/political movements, but I am interested in shedding light on social commentaries that would make people rethink our cultural/societal norms and issues in my future work.”

“Feminism, prioritizing mental health, Black activism, Latinx activism”

“Demystification of LGBTQ identities, normalizing primarily queer underrepresented voices, navigating circumstances and situations from my queerness, and trauma that comes from it.”

Have any classes you've had at Pratt advanced your knowledge of social/political movements?

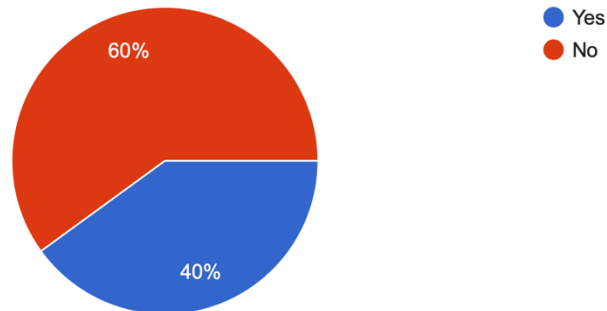
20 responses



- Visual Analysis
- Ethics of Research
- The Digital Body
- Theories of Gender
- Medialogies I
- Media Encounters
- Art History/School of Art Foundation Year
- Since the Sixties
- Lines in the Sand
- Sociology Music/Sound/Noise
- LCD in Foundation Department
- Contemporary Theories of Gender
- Literary & Critical Studies II.
- Visualization & Representation
- Light Color & Design
- Global Civilization
- Animation History
- History of Documentary Film
- Animation Narrative
- Character Design for Games
- Themes in Art and Culture

Have any of these classes encouraged engagement beyond the classroom or inspired you to engage with your community?

20 responses



In what ways could courses at Pratt do more to help you understand how your art exists in the larger socio-political context of the world?

“I think we should explore a deep understanding of socio-political contexts including gender, race, class, and politics. It can be diverse guest speakers from different cultural backgrounds.”

“Encourage us to situate our work in more non-academic contexts. Provide opportunities for our work to be received/experienced and evaluated by non-academic audiences.”

“Pratt needs to re-evaluate what making art means in today's world. It's inherently political whether we like it or not. Pratt's stature is inherently political too and as strongly as it might like to disassociate with political movements, its position as private art school and corporation makes it involved. These teachings need to be part and parcel of the education or at least acknowledge it.”

“The interdisciplinary nature of the course at Pratt are beneficial, so continuing to emphasize this would be valuable. I would love if Pratt courses offered more guest lectures and collaborations, such as inviting artists, activists, and scholars who are deeply engaged with sociopolitical movements to speak to or work with students.”

“It would also be amazing if Pratt continued to offer and offered more critical theory seminars on topics such as queer theory or posthumanism, etc. to help students explore how art can subvert or disrupt dominant ideologies. Furthermore, there should be a greater emphasis on public art and community engagement projects, so students are encouraged to address local social issues via art, grounding their practice in real-world political and social contexts. Along this same idea, Pratt students would benefit from more workshops on art as protest or social commentary, with these workshops being specifically focused on art as a tool for social change, which would help students create projects that engage with current issues like digital surveillance or climate change.”

What kind of events or invited guests would you like to see at Pratt whose creative work sparks social/political conversation?

“I really want to see women animators, or filmmakers who focus on gender equality.”

“Maybe an event that can talk about how social/political conversation happens in modern games OR a speaker who is developing a game with those themes in mind. I'm sure there's many games like that out there.”

“Historian and Information Workers who are artists.”

“Film Festival”

“Filmmakers who engage with social issues experimentally, writers and poets, performance artists, curators or critics focused on sociopolitical art, multimedia artists working in experimental media with cutting edge social issues like digital surveillance, more workshops on intersectional issues within art, social media and digital activism”

“I would be interested in guests that incorporate social/political conversation within their storytelling and animation.”

“More Black/Latinx artists to talk about their struggles breaking into art/their industry. Bring more women and minority artists.”

“I would like Pratt to host events or invite artists whose work addresses environmental issues, sustainability, or social justice, as their creativity can spark meaningful social and political discussions.”

“I would personally be interested in listening to someone from the animation industry come and talk to us about the working conditions of the animation industry and what the strike is like and how it is impacting artists now.”

“Telling Our Stories Series: Professional Development Series”

“I'd love to see events with game designers and artists who talk about social justice issues, like mental health or identity. It would be great to invite activists who use art and games to make a difference, too. Panels with people from different backgrounds in the gaming world could give us fresh perspectives. Plus, workshops that mix art, activism, and technology would be awesome for sparking new ideas and getting us to think about our own work in a bigger way.”

Project Accomplishments/Reflection

My biggest accomplishment with this project has been learning more about how students feel their work exists within the broader socio-political context of the world. Pratt students care deeply about the social and political landscape of the world and are aware of their responsibility as artists once they leave college. In their various departments, they have found ways to connect their developing ideologies/worldviews to social/historical movements; they know how their work is situated alongside artists they admire and have been influenced by. While most students feel that art itself is inherently political—and have felt empowered in some way to actively engage with politics in their work—many are looking for a greater foundation at Pratt. They have wonderful suggestions and ideas about how to make that happen and I believe their input will be deeply influential in advancing our curriculum and the culture of the Institute over the years.

I'm glad to have started a dialogue amidst a representative group of students and hope in my next years at Pratt to be able to reach a broader group of students, advocate for their suggestions, incorporate their ideas into future programming both inside and outside of HMS, and overall: help create an environment where students feel empowered, confident, and like their art is, importantly, already a part of the larger conversations they will encounter once they leave the institution.

Next Steps

The project is finished but not complete; I consider it an opening for future conversations amongst faculty, students, and the institution overall. Next, I will continue to conduct formal and informal interviews, reach out to students to complete the now on-going survey, and apply suggestions for programming, courses, and pedagogy.