

Evidence is a group exhibition featuring projects by artists Brian Belott, Petrit Halilaj, Ulrike Müller, Oscar Murillo, and Alanis Obomsawin. The exhibition is curated by Amy Zion.

Christmas at Moose Factory by Alanis Obomsawin is made available courtesy the National Film Board of Canada.



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Mercer Union, a centre for contemporary art

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Brian Belott is an artist, curator, performer, and publisher based in Brooklyn, New York. His work playfully situates dissimilar objects, ideas, and found oddities alongside one another in order to see what they might create. Belott's work has been exhibited at institutions in New York including the Whitney Museum of American Art (2019); and The Jewish Museum (2015); as well as elsewhere and internationally at COBRA Museum, Amstelveen (2018); Yuz Museum, Shanghai (2018); The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield (2018); and MoCAD, Detroit (2017). He is the lead archivist of the Rhoda Kellogg International Child Art Collection, and a lifelong collector of child art.

Frequencies is an ongoing collaboration with students aged primarily 10–16, conceived by artist **Oscar Murillo**. Since its beginning in 2013, the project has visited more than 350 schools in over 34 countries and affixed canvas to classroom desks, inviting students to freely mark, draw, and write on their surfaces. Today the sedimented record consists of over 40,000 collected canvases. Frequencies Institute is a space for encounter, exchange, and a catalyst for social-geographical engagement as well as the home of the archive. Institute brings together friends, develops networks through social exchange, education, exhibitions, gatherings, research, and support in the many geographies where the project took place, and beyond. *Frequencies* has been exhibited at venues including Artangel, London (2021); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2021); the Swiss Institute, New York (2021); Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (2017); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2017); PinchukArtCentre, Kiev (2017); 3rd Aichi Triennial (2016); Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art (2016); and 56th Venice Biennale (2015).

Petrit Halilaj's work is deeply connected with the recent history of his home country of Kosovo, and the consequences of political and cultural tensions in the region. Originating from personal experience while confronting collective memory, his work often takes shape through an intimate processing of a shared moment with someone he loves. In 2013, Halilaj represented Kosovo for the country's inaugural pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, and received Special Mention for his work at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017). Recent solo exhibitions have been presented at Tate St. Ives (2021); Palacio de Cristal, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2020); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018); Runik, Kosovo (2018); New Museum, New York (2017); and Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan (2016). Halilaj currently teaches at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts de Paris, France.

Ulrike Müller mobilizes vocabularies of colour and shape that are politically and emotionally charged and encourage figurative readings. Her work moves between different contexts and publics, inviting collaborations that expand processes of exploration and exchange. Alongside small-scale paintings in vitreous enamel, Müller also produces expansive wall paintings, publications, prints, and textiles. Her work has been presented in recent exhibitions at Queens Museum, New York (2020); 58th Venice Biennale (2019); Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen (Düsseldorf, 2018); 57th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2018); and the 78th Whitney Biennial, New York (2017). Müller is co-editor of the queer feminist journal *LTR*, and from 2009–2012 organized the collaborative project *Herstory Inventory. 100 Feminist Drawings by 100 Artists*.

Alanis Obomsawin is a member of the Abenaki Nation and one of Canada's most distinguished filmmakers. Since 1967, she has been a director and producer at the National Film Board of Canada where her practice has been devoted to chronicling the lives and concerns of First Nations people and exploring issues of importance to all. Her decades of artistic activism were the subject of a 2022 retrospective titled *The Children Have to Hear Another Story - Alanis Obomsawin* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Obomsawin has received many awards in her 55-year career, recently including the Jeff Skoll Award in Impact Media presented by the Toronto International Film Festival (2021); the Iris Homage at Gala Québec Cinéma (2020); Rogers-DOC Luminary Award (2020); and the Glenn Gould Prize (2020).



SPACE: Shellie Zhang | *A day passes like a year: Ode to Summer*
21 June – 17 September 2022

Mercer Union's SPACE billboard commission has invited artist Shellie Zhang for its 2021-22 season for a yearlong series titled, *A day passes like a year*. Known for her highly composed still life works that assemble objects of pop iconography, cultural construction, and diasporic memory, Zhang's photographs offer vibrant gestures of reclamation, humor, and dissidence. In a quadriptych portrait of the year ahead and a reflection on the year that has passed, *A day passes like a year* looks to the Chinese four seasons painting traditions and the immediate locale of Mercer Union to glean a format for telling time in its place through change, personal connection, and collective association.

Read the artist's note on the fourth and final edition: *Ode to Summer*, and an accompanying text written by Leticia Cosbert Miller at mercerunion.org

Shellie Zhang is a multidisciplinary artist based in Tkaronto/Toronto. She creates images, objects, and projects that explore how ideas of integration, diversity, and assimilation are implemented, negotiated, and manifested in relation to lived experiences. Zhang is interested in how culture is learned and sustained, and how cultural objects and iconographies are remembered and preserved. She is a recipient of the 2021 Toronto Friends of the Visual Arts Artist Award, and in 2017, was an Artist-in-Residence at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Recent and upcoming projects include exhibitions at AKA, Saskatoon (2021); the plumb, Toronto (2021); and the Anchorage Museum (2020).

SPACE invites one artist to produce a yearlong series of images for a public-facing billboard located on the east façade of Mercer Union.

Evidence:

Brian Belott
Petrit Halilaj
Ulrike Müller
Oscar Murillo
Alanis Obomsawin

Curated by Amy Zion

24 June – 20 August 2022
Opening Thursday 23 June 2022, 7PM



Evidence:

Brian Belott, Petrit Halilaj, Ulrike Müller, Oscar Murillo, and Alanis Obomsawin

Curated by Amy Zion

Evidence is a group exhibition featuring contemporary artists who highlight the unique and alternative perspectives of the world that can be found in art by children. The projects in *Evidence* by Brian Belott, Petrit Halilaj, Ulrike Müller, Oscar Murillo, and Alanis Obomsawin, draw art by children into the framework of contemporary art, from which such cultural production has been historically excluded.

In spite of its invisibility, art by children has played a major role in the history of modern art since 1900. Between and after the World Wars, it was used by artists to help make sense of a world turned upside down. From Picasso to Dubuffet, countless artists were drawn to children's distinct and unbridled modes of expression, amassing vast collections of art by children. Like their modernist forebears, the artists in *Evidence* recognize that children possess an embodied relationship to space that is lost or transformed in adulthood. By contrast, these artists foreground the work of children itself, such that it maintains its integrity within the framework of the adult artists' respective practices.

Evidence is anchored by Alanis Obomsawin's seminal work *Christmas at Moose Factory* (1971). A distinguished Abenaki filmmaker, the artist has worked closely with children throughout her decades-long career. *Christmas at Moose Factory* was filmed at a residential school in northern Ontario and is composed entirely of the stories and illustrations of young Cree children living on Moose Factory Island in James Bay's lowlands. From this work onwards, Obomsawin has used documentary film as a medium that allows people, specifically members of Indigenous communities, to speak for themselves.

Ulrike Müller's interest in drawings by children comes as a natural extension of her artistic and curatorial work around under recognized artists and subject matter. Her large-scale murals of interlocking animal-like shapes become backdrops to children's drawings sourced from collections and historical archives.



For the past fifteen years, Brian Belott has copied drawings and paintings by children, and refers to his own efforts as "failures" and "forgeries." Upon discovering the work of child psychologist and educator Rhoda Kellogg, and her collection of over two million drawings by children from thirty countries, Belott began emulating and exhibiting selections from Kellogg's collections alongside his own works in room-sized installations.

Since 2013, Petrit Halilaj has been recreating drawings he found etched onto the desks of the elementary school in his home village of Runik, Kosovo, as a series of large-scale iron sculptures. In *ABETARE* (2013–ongoing), the recovered etchings document a range of subjects and imagery, including sketches of everyday objects and references to everything from European soccer clubs to the war in Kosovo (1998–99).

During the same period, *Frequencies*, an ongoing project by contemporary painter Oscar Murillo in collaboration with political scientist Clara Dublanc, has partnered with schools around the globe to document desktop drawings by adolescents in a cross-section of class and cultural backgrounds. Canvas is sent to each school to cover desks in a classroom, which is then drawn upon freely by students and sent back to Murillo's studio. To date, *Frequencies* has collected roughly 40,000 canvases from 34 countries. As part of this exhibition, *Frequencies* will begin collaborating with schools in Canada.

Evidence takes its title from Allan Sekula's definition of the term, as that which is presented to the eye and made evident in the image or trace,¹ to characterize a range of artists' projects that present art by children as worthy of recognition within larger stories of contemporary art and cultural history. *Evidence* is the second exhibition curated by Amy Zion that examines the role of art by children within the framework of contemporary art. The first exhibition took place at the Queens Museum, New York in 2020, in conjunction with a project by Müller.

—Amy Zion

¹ This paraphrasing comes from Thomas Keenan in: Keenan, Thomas. "Counter-forensics and Photography," *Grey Room 55* (Spring 2014), 58–77.

Interior images L-R:

Alanis Obomsawin, still from *Christmas at Moose Factory*, 1971. Courtesy the Artist and the National Film Board of Canada

Ulrike Müller, Installation view: *The Conference of the Animals*, 2020. Queens Museum, New York. Photo: Shark Senesac

Petrit Halilaj, *ABETARE*. Installation view: Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2018. Courtesy the artist; ChertLüdde, Berlin; and kamel mennour, London/Paris. Photo: Aurelién Mole

Cover image: *Mike Bailey*, 1952. Courtesy the Rhoda Kellogg Collection of Children's Art.

Back image: Shellie Zhang, detail from *A day passes like a year: Ode to Summer*, 2022. Courtesy the artist

CURATOR BIOGRAPHY

Amy Zion is a curator and writer living in Paris. Previously based in New York, she was the organizer of the *Talks Program* (2018–21) at Frieze NY; and held a teaching position at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (2016–21); prior to which she was an Associate Editor with the Vancouver-based publishing organization *Fillip* (2007–15). Her writing has appeared in *frieze*, *Art-agenda Features*, *Art in America*, *Flash Art*, and other publications. Recent exhibitions and curatorial projects include *Petrit Halilaj: Very Volcanic Over This Green Feather (Papagall)*, galerie kamel mennour, Paris (2022); *Closer to Life*, Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, New York (2021, co-curated with Tom Eccles); and *The Conference of the Animals*, Queens Museum, New York (2020, in conjunction with a project by Ulrike Müller).

Amy Zion would like to thank the exhibiting artists, the team at Mercer Union as well as Helga Christoffersen, Donna Cowan, Jennifer Digioia, Barbara Fischer, Clara Halpern, Daniel Hoffman, Evie Horton, Alhena Katsos, Thomas Keenan, Jack Lawler, Joshua and Selam Lyons, Ferdinand Pechmann, Serena Rota, Michael Shu, Sean Smith, Jacob Wamberg, Jil Weinstock, Xiaoyu Weng, Jayne Wilkinson, Esi and Samuel Zion. This exhibition is dedicated to Naomi Lyons.



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