



# Table of Contents



NAMARA   <i>projects</i> Conclusion	6
Analia Saban	8
Farm Meme	9
Notes on Iris Häussler's practice	10
Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm	14
Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm	15
Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm	16
Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm	17
Notes on Shannon Garden-Smith's practice	18
Photos from Shannon Garden-Smith & Laila Fox Walk	21
Photos from Shannon Garden-Smith & Laila Fox Walk	22
Photos from Shannon Garden-Smith & Laila Fox Walk	23
Photos from Shannon Garden-Smith & Laila Fox Walk	24
Notes on Art Run/Walk	25
Photos from Art Run/Walk	27
Photos from Art Run/Walk	28
Photos from Art Run/Walk	29
Notes on Art as Experience by John Dewey	30
Reconsidering John Dewey's Art as	

Experience	32
Snap from the AGO	34
NAMARA   <i>projects</i> —1:1 Walks	35
Notes on Decolonize Museums by Shimrit Lee	37
Decolonize Museums	40
Meme	42
British Museum Memes	43
Reactions of glee to the Louvre	44
Louvre Meme Example—2	46
Louvre Meme Example—1	48
Joy & Museums	50
Bande a Part & The Dreamers	52
How do we move through museums?	53



8—

I'm not suggesting that, through this residency, I did anything as ambitious as Shimrit Lee calls for in a re-imagining of a museum structure. What I think we collectively did, through the participants, artists, and team at NAMARA | *projects*, was imagine another art world. One that isn't necessitated by institutions or the stark walls of a gallery, but can happen in everyday life through attention and intention. By practicing looking carefully and slowly, and by being in conversation with each other and the world around us, our ability to look at art grew. Everything we looked at became art.

During my NAMARA | *projects* Residency, we experienced art through: running, climbing, drawing, gossiping, stretching, shopping, meditating, looking, eating, making pressings, getting lost, and petting animals. It was

all art, and it was often full of joy.

# 8     Analia Saban

## GROUND/WORK

Ground/work is free and open to the public, night and day. No tickets are required.



EXHIBITION

ABOUT THE PROJECTS

- KELLY AKASHI
- NAIRY BAGHRAMIAN
- JENNIE C. JONES
- EVA LEWITT
- ANALIA SABAN
- HAEGUE YANG
- LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
- TRAIL MAP
- VISIT THE EXHIBITION
- PLAN YOUR VISIT
- PRESS RELEASE

ANALIA SABAN



Analia Sabanb. Buenos Aires, 1980; lives and works in Los Angeles

Source: [Analia Saban](#)

5:05

5G+ 60

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Note

...



Bad Spit

22h

Subscribe

Pigcasso the painting pig was rescued from an industrialized hog farm and has taken to painting.

This record breaking pig recently earnt over \$25,000 for this painting.











189 likes · 20 replies · 19 restacks



Add a reply...











Iris Häussler's work combines fiction, material research, and embodied experience. Her immersive, narrative-driven environments blur the boundary between art and lived space, between fact and fiction. Sometimes, when speaking with Häussler, I can't help but wonder: is this the true Iris I'm speaking to, or a character part of the world she has created?

Across her installations and world-building, Häussler positions attention as a central character in her practice. Her installations require viewers to move slowly, interpret clues, and inhabit the ambiguities she constructs.

The farm-based work extends this attention to relationships with animals, asking what forms of responsibility accompany acts of looking. It demands



that we not center ourselves in the city, but also the animals who live alongside us.

Iris Häussler's program, part of my NAMARA | *projects* residency, took place at Riverdale Farm. Her walk, How Do We Look At Animals?, asked participants to observe an animal for at least five minutes. The invitation posed the guiding questions: "When and how does an image come to life—in this case, an animal that reveals itself as an individual living being? Has your understanding of the animal changed during your time with it? What experiences, memories, and emotions shape your personal relationship with different animal species?"

Häussler's interest in non-human life is informed by living part-time on a farm and by formative experiences accompanying her father, a veterinarian, across environments "from the farm to the slaughterhouse and finally to the

plate.”

The walk created space to consider our proximity to animals, not as symbols or decorative presences or something to EAT but as beings with lives that proceed independently of ours. The purpose of the event was to “allow us the time and space to consider non-human life and engage with Häussler’s deep and meaningful art practice/process.”

Häussler’s own words, sent to participants post-walk, capture the intention: “Somehow it feels nurturing just to be amongst or close to sentient creatures that are just living their lives. A privilege to witness. I try not to look away. To rather extend my gaze beyond what I see into the bigger picture: our world and our impact on it.”

Häussler’s approach aligns with Dewey’s understanding of aesthetic

experience as grounded in ordinary encounters. Her work shows how art can emerge not from objects or institutions, but from sustained attention and ethical awareness.

## 14 Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm





16 Iris Häussler Walk at Riverdale Farm







## 18 Notes on Shannon Garden-Smith's practice

8—

Shannon Garden-Smith's practice that I was most drawn to for this curatorial residency was her marbled sand art, meticulously placed on the floor of a gallery or museum, only to have visitors walk through. These installations hinge on active viewer participation. As she notes, "I invite viewers into a kind of collective erasure... Their engagement becomes visible in the living, changing work as an index of movement." Traces of footprints become central to the artwork—records of human presence comparable to modern fossils.

For this curatorial residency, Garden-Smith invited collaborator Laila Fox to create a program that built on her interest in how we interact with our lived environment. They described it as a "gradual, collective 'walk' or 'movement'"



through the city.”

We met at the Philosophers' Walk at U of T. The city was loud and warm that day: sirens blaring, people protesting, and the general hum of traffic. But as Garden-Smith and Fox guided the group into the depths of the U of T campus, it was as if time stilled. We had a chance to slow down and meditate on chance encounters.

The artists referred to these encounters as: “public un-monuments in the form of prints in urban surfaces (for example, sidewalk concrete and road paint).” These subtle impressions—left by human bodies, animals, plants, machines, or the weather—became proof of life before us. As Garden-Smith and Fox wrote, these traces “offer a minor disruption, a tender depression that might allow us to hold something other than the progress narratives and settler colonial logics of our paved-over

urban and suburban worlds.”

We paused for rubbings, tracings, and clay impressions. This act of referencing and recording allowed us to slow our perception and become active participants. If at the beginning of the walk I felt overwhelmed by sensory overload, I left it with a distinct calm. I had slowed down enough to enjoy the overlooked surfaces that shape the urban world we live in. I considered the pigeons, trees, and construction I co-inhabit the city with, and came to understand the city's history a bit more through the act of noticing.



22   Photos from Shannon Garden-  
Smith & Laila Fox Walk







24   Photos from Shannon Garden-  
Smith & Laila Fox Walk



7—

The second program of my NAMARA | projects Residency was an Art Run/Walk throughout downtown Toronto, visiting distinct places where 1:1 walks took place: Grange Park, Graffiti Alley, The Well, and the Music Garden at the Harbourfront. We split into two groups where we moved through the city at different paces, stopping to discover art as Dewey suggested: through experiencing it fully.

I was struck by all the distinct art rules we were breaking. There I was, surrounded by colleagues, in running tights, my face red, and sweating. This is the opposite of the sanitized and composed version of bodies that the art world wants! These qualities, in the context of a museum or white cube gallery, are frowned upon for potentially impeding on the safety of the artwork. In

this context, we were free to roam, touch, and question the city we lived in, realizing it was full of art at every turn. It also allowed participants not as familiar with art to enter into a new conversation, their familiarity rooted in the act of running or walking.

The program concluded with a movement exercise led by artist sarah koekkoek.





## 28 Photos from Art Run/Walk





## 30 Notes on Art as Experience by John Dewey

6—

Art as Experience by John Dewey is a dense book with a simple premise. Dewey proposes that art is not separate from life. Instead, it emerges from the same moments, habits, and observations that shape daily experience.

He pushes back against the idea that art only lives in museums or in objects treated as rare. Art is everywhere. An artist works with raw materials (attention, emotion, memory, and rhythm) and shapes them into something that others can feel and understand. The finished work is not just a product, but a record of experience and the possibility for new experience.

The viewer has to be open and attuned to the experience for an artwork to be

meaningful. Since art relies on active engagement, according to Dewey, then it can appear in everyday contexts: in a meal, a walk, a chance arrangement of light, or a simple act of noticing. These moments take on an aesthetic dimension when we meet with focus, attention, and openness.

Dewey reminds us that aesthetic experience involves the whole body. It depends on a rhythm of doing and experiencing within our bodies—acting, sensing, moving, adjusting—rather than detached observation. To not experience fully within the body, the work risks becoming static and unmoving, a common symptom in museums.

# 32    Reconsidering John Dewey's Art as Experience

BOOKS

## Reconsidering John Dewey's Art as Experience

It's hard to tell how many young Americans know the name John Dewey today. Those who attended New York City's New School might know of him as a co-founder and one of the minds behind the progressive agenda that formed the intellectual and social foundation of the school's early years. Others might r



**Alexis Clements**  
March 25, 2013 — 13 min read



John Dewey (from the New York Public Library Digital Gallery)

It's hard to tell how many young Americans know the name John Dewey today. Those who attended New York City's New School might know of him as a co-founder and one of the minds behind the progressive agenda that formed the intellectual and



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Source: [Reconsidering John Dewey's Art as Experience](#)

# ART AS EXPERIENCE

BY JOHN  
DEWEY



**A WIDEVIEW/PERIGEE BOOK**

Source:

<https://ia902908.us.archive.org/28/items/deweyjohnartasanexperience/DEWEY%20John,%20Art%20as%20an%20Experience%22.pdf>



34 Snap from the AGO





5—

To begin my NAMARA | *projects* Residency, I invited the public to book a thirty-minute walk with me. These walks included computer programmers, artists, writers, and gallery directors, each interested in speaking with me about their relationship to the art world.

One of the walks I did was with Sarah, an artist who also spent ten years working as a security guard at the AGO. I went into the walk with an assumption about the power structure in museums, ones that has a top-down authority structure where security guards dictate visitors movements. The reality, according to Sarah, was much more complex.

Sarah explained how visitors would treat her like she was uneducated, and she felt the need to assert that she was studying art and wasn't just "the help". She told me about a moment when she asked someone to stop touching an artwork; he ignored her and rolled her eyes, continuing to touch the art. In her next semester at OCAD, she discovered that he was her professor (he didn't remember her).

Her stories revealed a side of the museum that, as only a visitor, I hadn't experienced or noticed. It made me realize that the structure isn't as cut-and-dry as I previously believed, but instead there's a constant power struggle happening.

These walks introduced not only a new way of seeing but also a new way of thinking.

4—

## Decolonize Museums by Shimrit Lee

In the book *Decolonize Museums*, published in 2022, Lee challenges the idea of the “museum” as a neutral, benevolent institution and instead argues that modern Western-style museums — such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, or the American Museum of Natural History — are deeply rooted in colonialism. This claim, of course, isn’t new to us in Canada, a country constantly confronting our colonial pasts within institutions.

Lee writes that many museums continue —consciously or not— to continue the narratives that legitimize colonial violence. In the museum, what is often framed as “conservation,” “care,” or “cultural exchange” is historically

grounded in plunder, appropriation, and the extraction of artifacts from colonized lands.

Reading Lee's words, I began to think of the repatriation of objects to Indigenous peoples as a publicity strategy. The act of repatriation, or the language of decolonization within a museum, serves as a short-term way to demonstrate goodwill, without making any concrete structural changes to the institution. Many of the objects that are repatriated have been treated with chemicals like formaldehyde so that they would be "archival. This means that, when returned, the objects are dangerous to touch or use in their intended meaning. The layers of harm that the museum caused continue.

For this reason, Lee calls for radical rethinking—including dismantling—of museums as institutions. She invites us to imagine what could replace them, or

how we might radically transform how we collect, display, and engage with culture.



SHARE X ?

Part of the *Decolonize That!* Bundle

# Decolonize Museums

By Shimrit Lee, Series edited by Bhakti Shringarpure

PAPERBACK

**\$24.95**

296 pages ISBN 9781771136327 Published January 2023

This format can only be shipped to Canada.

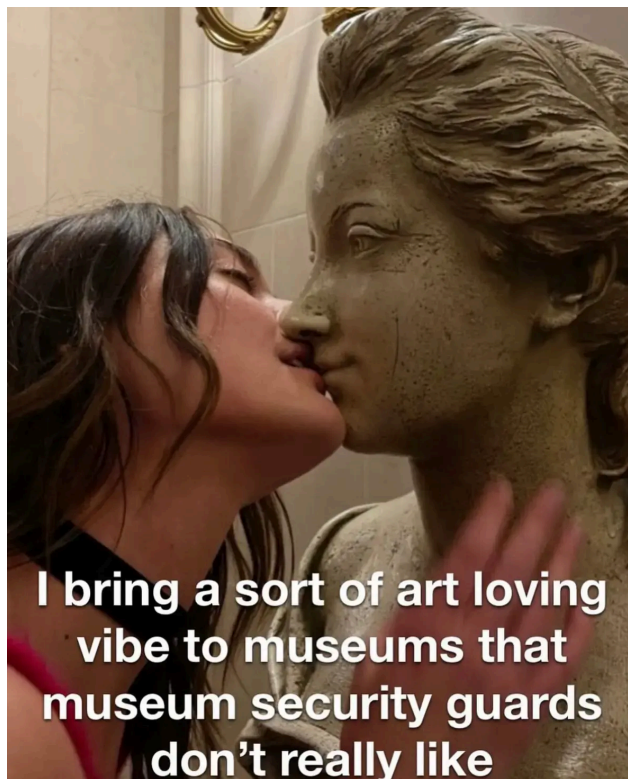
ADD TO CART

SHOP LOCAL

The idealized Western museum, as typified by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, and the Museum of Natural History, has remained much the same for over a century: a uniquely rarified public space of cool stone, providing an experience of leisure and education for the general public while carefully tending fragile artifacts from distant lands. As questions about representation and ethics have increasingly arisen, these institutions have proclaimed their interest in diversity and responsible conservation, asserting both their adaptability and their immovably essential role in a flourishing and culturally rich society.

With *Decolonize Museums*, Shimrit Lee punctures this fantasy, tracing the essentially colonial origins of the concept of the museum. White Europeans' atrocities were reimagined through narratives of benign curiosity and abundant respect for the occupied or annihilated culture, and these racist narratives, Lee argues, remain integral to the authority exercised by museums today. Citing pop culture references from Indiana Jones to Black Panther, and highlighting crucial activist campaigns and legal action to redress the harms perpetrated by museums and their proxies, *Decolonize Museums* argues that we must face a dismantling of these seemingly eternal edifices, and consider what, if anything, might take their place.

The idealized Western museum, as typified by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, and the Museum of Natural History, has remained much the same for over a century: a uniquely rarified public space of cool stone, providing an experience of leisure and education for the general public while carefully tending fragile artifacts from distant lands. As questions about representation and ethics have increasingly arisen, these institutions have proclaimed their interest in diversity and responsible conservation, asserting both their adaptability and their immovably essential role in a flourishing and culturally rich society.



**I bring a sort of art loving  
vibe to museums that  
museum security guards  
don't really like**





## 44 Reactions of glee to the Louvre

3—

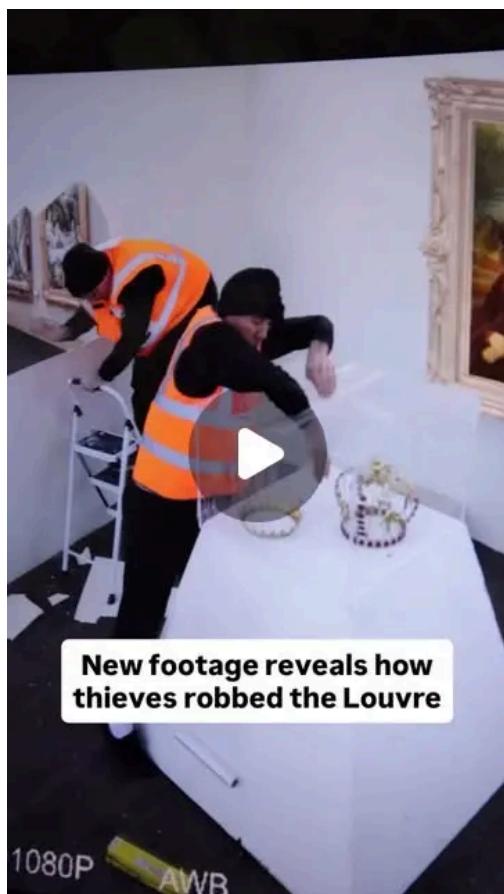
Reactions to the recent robbery at the Louvre—of glee and parody, rather than concern—demonstrate that people might not feel connected to the artifacts museums deem important.

While stealing from a museum is a clear example of breaking a rule, people are more aware of museums' roots in colonialism, which dulls their concern for them as spaces. The general consensus seems to be one of irony towards theft in museums. One TikTok shows a blonde woman talking to herself. In one frame, she is speaking as the British Museum, stating they were stolen from, in the next, which she has labelled 'The rest of the world,' she asks, "I wonder how that feels?"

As Shimrit Lee writes, "the museum as crime scene," which is perhaps why people didn't feel too bad when the

Louvre was robbed. The museum was the original thief.

## 46 Louvre Meme Example—2



**New footage reveals how  
thieves robbed the Louvre**

270K likes, 1,906 comments - zachking on October 30, 2025:  
"New footage of inside the Louvre Museum as two thieves robbed it of priceless jewels."

Source: [Zach King \(@zachking\) • Instagram reel](#)

## 48 Louvre Meme Example—1



Join @angelckim as she navigates the Louvre Museum, sharing her love for art and history. This engaging video showcases the museum's impressive collection, highlighting some of the most famous paintings and artwork. With her infectious enthusiasm and insider knowledge, @angelckim makes art appreciation accessible and fun for everyone.

Source: [Chrissy Allen \(@csapunch\) • Instagram reel](#)

2—

How do we express joy in museums?  
I'm afraid we don't.

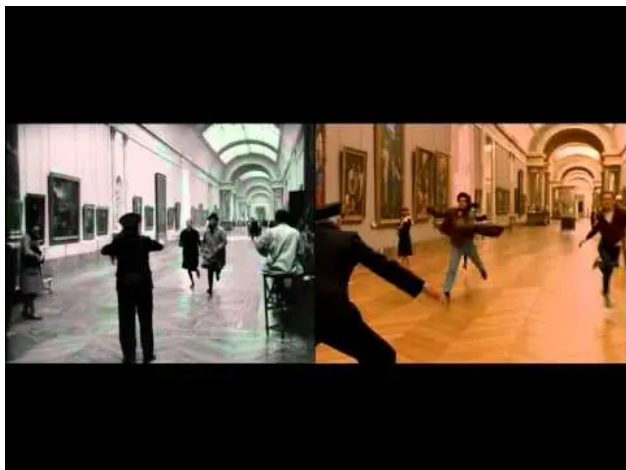
Childlike expressions of joy: a shout, jumping, talking loudly, touching, are deemed improper in the context of a museum, muting the way we experience art as a viewer with a body. We are left to look only with our eyes and experience the pleasure of art on an intellectual level. The museum is pristine and sacred, and the art is sanitary.

The museum insists that it is separate from the body and the fluidity they bring. This containment has roots in the creation of the Western museum as an 18th and 19th-century civic institution meant to uphold Enlightenment ideals. These spaces adopted the codes of conduct of libraries and observatories. In other words, silence, stillness, and restraint were de rigueur markers of



proper spectators. Not much has changed.

## 52 Bande a Part & The Dreamers



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4MV1NLejQ0>

1—

Being entrenched in the art world, it can be hard to remember what it feels like outside of it. And then someone asks me something like: Am I allowed to go into an art gallery, or do I have to pay? Or tells me a story of being ignored when entering a gallery. Then, I remember.

The art world is full of hidden cues, secret rules, and an unspoken hierarchy. For that reason, words like “accessible” and “democratize” have become de rigueur as a way for art world players to signal that they’re different from the structure that they exist within. But what does it really mean to be accessible in the art world? Is it simply a word that exists like a band-aid?

What I’m trying to do here is demystify: Take all that I’ve learned about the art

world and its rules, and talk about them openly.

The art world is invested in stillness: the quiet of an art gallery, the slow walk through a museum, sitting in front of a favourite piece of art. I'm interested in movement in the art world.

One of my favourite movie scenes is from *Bande à part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964), where Franz, Arthur, and Odile run through the Louvre, beating the previous record by a few seconds. This scene was re-enacted in *The Dreamers* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003)—another great French film. Running through the Louvre is very obviously breaking an unspoken rule of a gallery. It's loud and disruptive, and negates the idea of how we should act in a gallery: pensively looking at priceless art.

That's why I love it so much. Who says we can't run in a museum? There's

certainly no sign that says No Running (it's not a public pool!). It's implied, along with other rules like: no speaking loudly, no flash photography, no big bags. If you break these unspoken rules, you're bound to be shushed or reprimanded by a security guard.

The only way to learn about a rule is to break it. Perhaps real art world accessibility could be achieved by loosening some of these archaic rules that exist within the walls of a white cube, which exist to protect art as a commodity. Why can't we dance, sing, run, host a rave, or have a picnic within an art gallery?

It might just make the art world a bit more fun, opening it up to more people.

