

# carla

Issue 18



# Letter From the Editor

When we speak about art, we often verbally partition off our field: we say art *world*, art *scene*, art *community*. Each of these words carry different meanings and connotations. *World* implies an independent entity that functions according to its own ecosystem. *Scene* conjures *Artforum's* "Scene and Herd"—defining our cohort via parties, shoes, or hairstyles. The latter distinction though, *community*, has a more robust association, conjuring collective motivation and cooperation.

Many of us may have had early experiences of finding like-minded creative weirdos in college—finding solace in art departments, open mics, or writing clubs. As someone who is deeply embedded in the arts—as an artist, critic, and publisher—I too often think of this field as a kind of cultural safe haven. Still, the word *community* may have a richer meaning that simply a group of like-minded people. Writer M. Scott Peck defines community as individuals “who have learned how to communicate honestly and openly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed significant commitment to...‘make other’s conditions our own.’”<sup>1</sup>

Can we say the same about our art community? Do we communicate openly and honestly, or do our “masks of composure” stilt our communal connections? After all, composure is good for business. As long as it is tied to commerce, I wonder whether the arts can ever fully embrace Peck’s definition of community. Though,

even Peck himself posits plainly, “what is the true definition of community?,” as if unsure if he has hit the nail on the head. Community, it seems, is a moving target.

Across this issue, community is explored in its various guises—communes, utopias, cults, genres. Travis Diehl writes about artist Nayland Blake’s category-bending practice that breaks down some of the most entrenched distinctions. Anna Elise Johnson considers social media and the type of connections that it fosters—or fails to provide. Jamillah James talks about how her earliest communities gave her a sense of confidence in her work and identity as a curator. Catherine Fairbanks, one of our “Working Artists” featured in this issue, insists that *collective* might be a more apt a word, arguing that the word community collapses “the differences between us.” Catherine Wagley’s essay on the Feminist Photography Ovulars points to communication and documentation as a vital piece in sustaining separatist utopias.

Indeed, in her book, *All About Love*, bell hooks agrees that communication plays a vital role, saying that “talking together is one way to make community.”<sup>2</sup> Whatever words we use to describe it—world, scene, collective, utopia, cohort—we’re all in it together, so why not get a little messy, and drop the composure? I wonder how we might, within our L.A. art community, work together to strive towards more familial conversations and interactions in order to better offer communal support to one another.

Lindsay Preston Zappas  
Founder & Editor-in-Chief

1. M. Scott Peck. *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*. (New York: Touchstone, 1987), 59.

2. bell hooks. *All About Love: New Visions*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018), 133.