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LISTEN

Cincinnati-based organizations Wave Pool and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati invited Caroline Woolard to create a socially engaged project in 2017. The artist decided to create a set of “listening objects” for four grassroots organizations—MORTAR, Cincy Stories, the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative, and the Welcome Project—each made in direct response to the existing [facilitation practices](#) of these organizations. [Facilitation](#), the skillful guiding of the meeting process, is a [key](#) part of running these four organizations because they are [horizontal organizations](#) that share [power](#) and require that members attend [meetings](#) in order to make decisions together.

The finished pieces continue to live with these organizations as well as in a common space where the public can interact with them and use them as well as learn more about the project and the four organizations involved. The project debuted at the Cincinnati Neighborhood Summit in March 2018 with a presentation by Woolard, and the works were also exhibited at the Contemporary Arts Center. This project reflects Woolard’s current approach to [socially engaged art](#), explained at length in the wall text in the adjacent Wilson Gallery.

The process utilized by Woolard to make *LISTEN* suggests that artists can bring studio-based sculptural techniques to artmaking that emphasizes participation and dialogue. With attention to material, form, and scale, Woolard recognizes daily, ongoing organizing for progressive community-building and political change.

Institutional
Invitation

As someone often attempting to bring artists into communities for positive social change, I often find myself having to navigate the territory of engaging visiting artists with communities that are not their own. I really appreciated Caroline being upfront about her schedule as well as her knowledge and background that would all play a role in how she could best connect with and understand certain communities within our city as a visiting artist.

—Cal Cullen, 2017

LISTEN

Reflect

Idea in Public

Experiment

Timeframe

Inquiry

Commitment

Study

Experience

2016-2017
 Cincinnati
 gentrification in Over the Rhine
 interpersonal dramas in large
 scale group work
 learning how to be together is
 the work itself
 Trump 2017-2020?

collective metabolism
 individual vs collective
 we are each stuck in our own
 minds
 the time it takes for the group
 to change its mind, together
 listening
 not listening
 emergent
 forms with endless movement
 mathematical knots
 everyday water clocks

I will make playful objects
 for groups that work toward
 economic justice.

Study

I will be clear about what I can
 offer to non-arts groups, as
 an artist, and I will compensate
 non-arts partner organizations
 for their time.

Commitment

Experience

Why are sticky notes and
 Zoom calls so boring?

Inquiry

centering
 grounding
 facilitation
 beholding
 group rest
 collectivity
 daily practices
 being together
 group work

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local groups in Cincinnati
 oral histories
 MC Reitz
 Over the Rhine
 CincyStories
 CUCI
 Heartfelt Tidbits
 MORTAR
 swing house
 can contextual, local collective
 practices be shared?
 disability justice
 conflict transformation
 Generative Somatics
 Study Center for Group Work
 Judith Leemann and
 Kenneth Bailey
 UltraRed
 Center for Artistic Activism
 Process Work Institute

playing cards
 tea
 cups
 cup : water clock
 mathematical knots
 card game
 events
 key



This is a one year project
 at the invitation of two
 organizations.

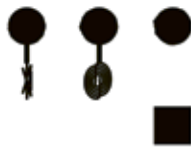
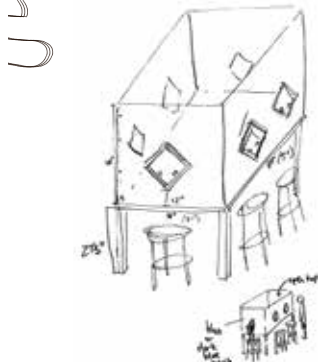
Timeframe

Objects for group that live at
 those organizations.

Idea in Public

Reflect

Experiment



objects for meetings a
 available at local orgs
 hidden objects
 stairs
 like Clue
 ritual
 the artist with the candle
 in the ballroom
 continuous study
 facilitation : sculpture
 local facilitators using
 objects I make
 booth

LISTEN

Catalyst and Foil

Steven Matijcio is the Director and Chief Curator of the Blaffer Art Museum. He won a 2010 Emily Hall Tremain Exhibition Award for the project "paperless" and in 2012 he was the curator of the fourth Narracje Festival in Gdansk, Poland. Matijcio was also commissioned by the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation in 2003 to curate one of their first online exhibitions.

**Steven Matijcio, Director and Chief Curator,
Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, 2020**

LISTEN was as much about an artist [listen-
ing](#) to local organizations, and those organizations to their constituencies, as it was about arts organizations—Wave Pool and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati (CAC)—[listening](#) to a community, an artist, and ourselves. From the outset, Woolard asked Cal Cullen, Director of Wave Pool, and myself, curator at the CAC at the time: Why do we seek to initiate a social [practice](#) project with someone who does not live in Cincinnati? Who benefits and how? What form does [compensation](#) take, and what is the [legacy](#) of such work? Woolard's artistry is everywhere and nowhere in this process, functioning as both catalyst and foil as she orchestrates situations that prompt each party to recalibrate how they conceive and speak themselves.

Woolard infuses each aspect of her working process with a gentle but pervasive approach to transparency and honest communication, sculpting words, objects, and scenarios that continue to circulate long after their initiation. As a case in point, the artist developed a set of objects that are used as prompts for [story-
telling](#), in dialogue with an economic justice organization that wanted to work with her. The organization wanted to move beyond the index cards they were using for [storytelling](#), and Woolard's kit supported an oral history project in the area. After a series of conversations and [events](#), Woolard created objects that come in a *Fluxkit*-like structure, a wooden box with two sets of [stairs](#) on either side, miniature objects half-hidden in soil. Participants are asked to select an object, pull it from the soil, and see if it prompts a story.

Study

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One participant selected a golden mathematical knot that emerges from a meteoroid-like shape. This knot-object speaks aptly to a cooperative process as a sinuous nexus where [authorship](#) is shared and direction is non-linear. The organization that Woolard worked with, MORTAR, provides resources to historically marginalized people to start and run successful local businesses. Woolard 3D-printed each of the golden [knots](#) in this project to ensure that they are affordable, accessible, and reproducible. This networked way of producing sculptural objects—in any maker space—feels especially relevant in a time when we must work together, from a distance, during [COVID](#). Like the [knots](#) extracted from soil in the respective wooden box, pulled like root vegetables from the earth, the objects of *LISTEN* collectively continue on as enduring icons of actions that are both rooted and mobile, planted without ever being fixed.

sculpting words, objects,
and scenarios that
continue to circulate long
after their initiation

To work with and alongside Caroline Woolard is to inhabit a reflexive arena where one is simultaneously immersed in an interaction with an object and experiencing a project holistically, mindfully analyzing each step and the motivation for every move. In the arts we so often work in shorthand, relying on conventions and upholding what we believe to be enlightened [practices](#)—even as the demands of timelines, budgets and the expectations for tangible outcomes erode a priori [integrity](#).

LISTEN opened up the sightlines of that which is obscured in second thoughts, and allowed us to hear, and to heighten.

to inhabit a reflexive
arena where one is
simultaneously
immersed in an interac-
tion with an object
and experiencing a proj-
ect holistically, mindfully
analyzing each step
and the motivation for
every move

LISTEN

Idea in Public

IMAGINE A GROUP GATHERING

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IMAGINE A GROUP GATHERING

LISTEN



Institutional Invitation

Ephemera

In the pages that follow, you will find ephemera, including correspondence, budgets, readings, and writing made in the process of developing *LISTEN*, as well as excerpts from the [reflection](#) document “*LISTEN: A Case Study in Socially Engaged Art*” that the artist asked the partner organizations to contribute to.

Woolard has selected ephemera to serve as visual reference points for *LISTEN*.



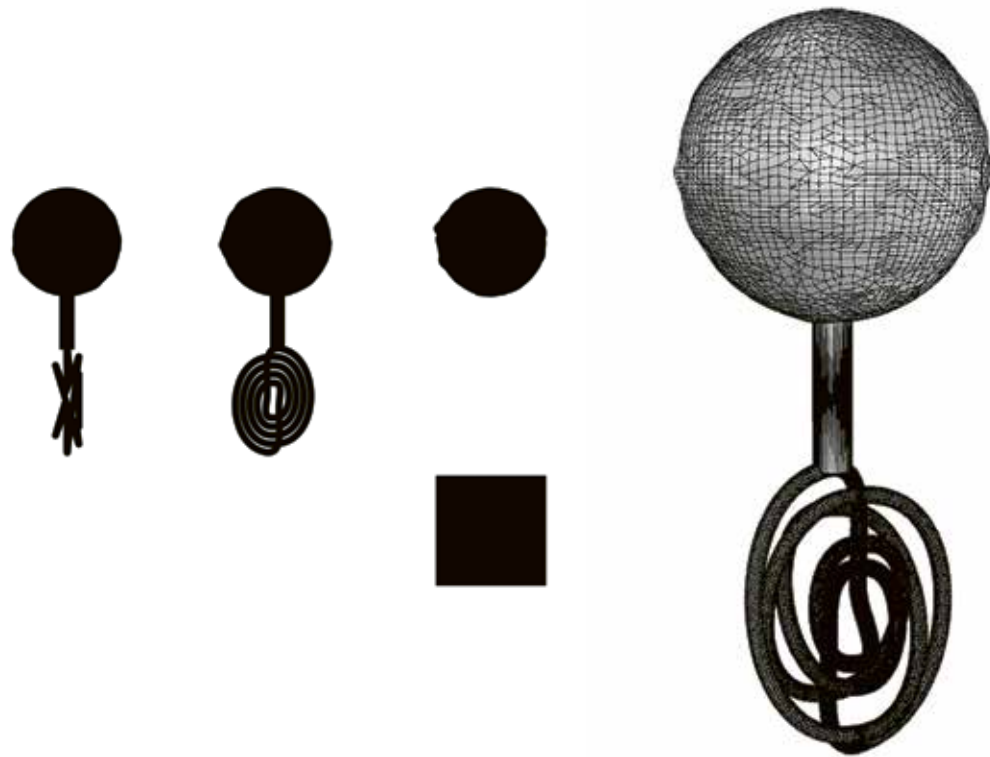
fig. 6-1
Chris Ashwell and Shawn Braley
of CincyStories using the
[listening](#) object that Caroline
Woolard created.

LISTEN

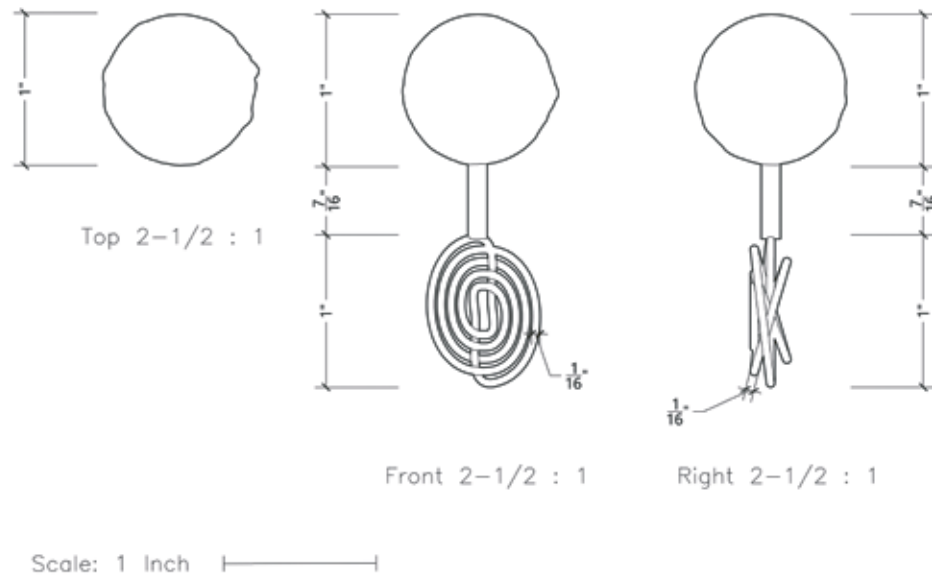
fig. 6-2

A rendering, technical drawing, and research imagery of mathematical **knots**, used to inform the creation of **listening** objects. Little, C. N., "Non-Alternate \pm **Knots**," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 39, no. 3 (1900): 771-78.

Experiment



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Trans. Roy. Soc. Edin.

Vol. XXXIX.

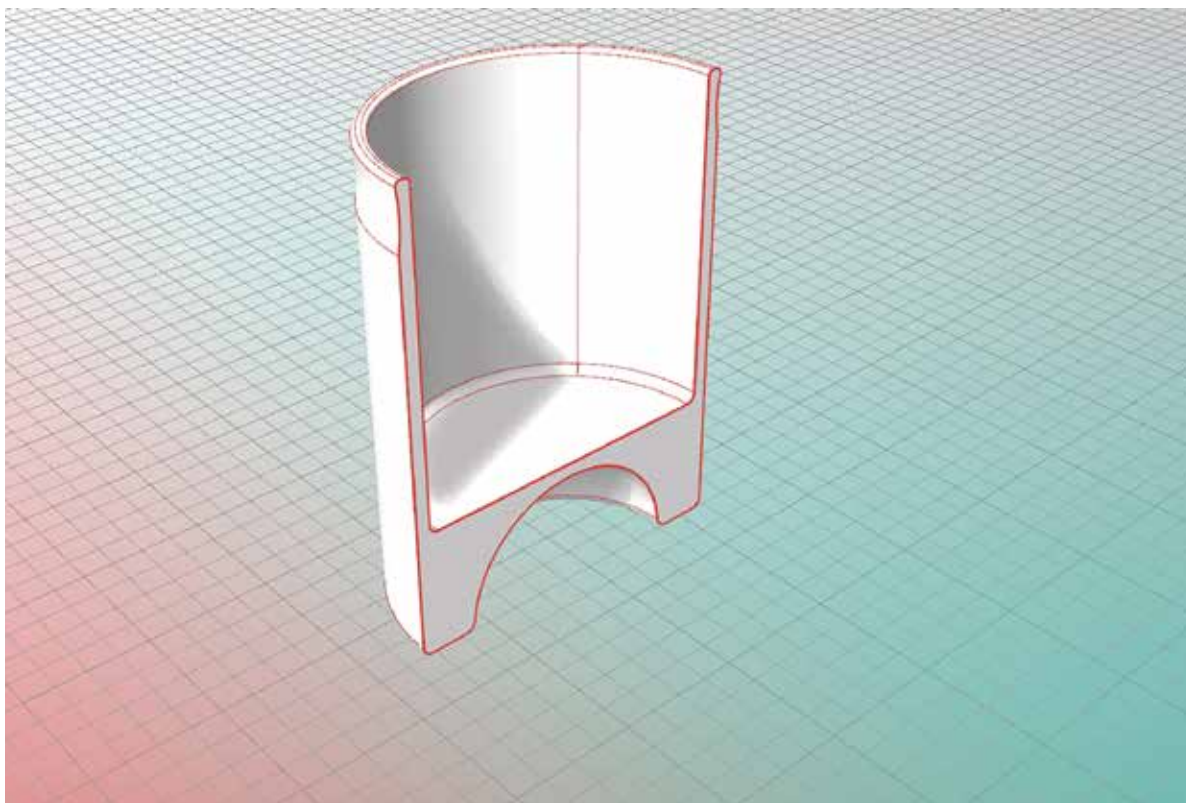
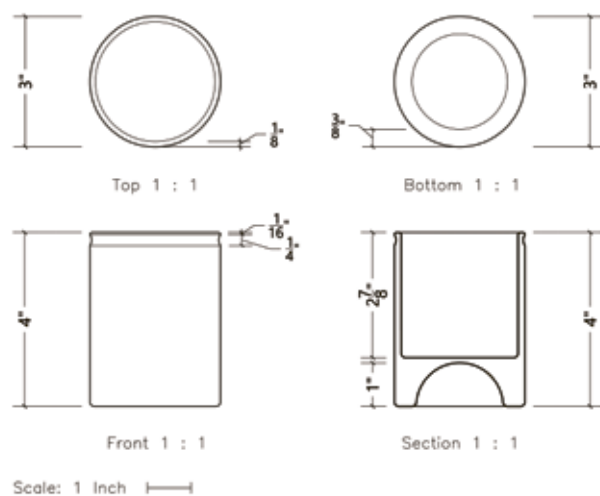
PROF. LITTLE: NON-ALTERNATE \pm KNOTS.
PLATE I.



LISTEN

fig. 6-3
A technical drawing and
renderings of the cups created
for *LISTEN*.

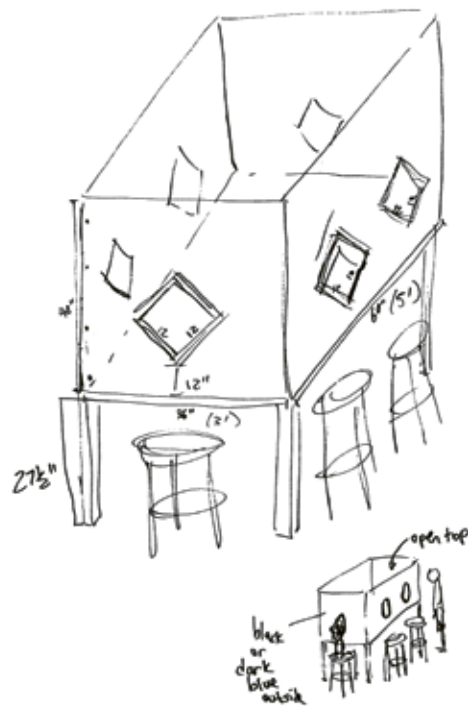
Experiment



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Invitation



fig. 6-4
A rendering and a sketch
of the viewing station created
for *LISTEN*.



LISTEN

Making

Adapted from “*LISTEN: A Case Study in Socially Engaged Art*”

In January 2017, Cal Cullen from Wave Pool and Steven Matijcio invited me to create a work of [socially engaged art](#) in Cincinnati.

Dear Caroline Woolard,

The Contemporary Arts Center and Wave Pool Arts Center are working in partnership to pilot a new [Socially Engaged Arts](#) program this year for and with the city of Cincinnati, Ohio entitled ‘Shouting Distance.’ This program will bring a prominent artist to Cincinnati to respond to community needs, facilitated in deep partnership with an organization and a specific neighborhood or community.

We’re very interested in your work and were wondering if this might be of interest to you?

A few guidelines to note:

- This project can begin at any time but must be completed by November 1st, 2018.
- Depending on your proposed project, we will work with you to find a compatible community partner and assist in building this connection.
- The final project must have a strong visual presence.
- We have accommodations at Wave Pool for you (or can set up alternative housing if that location doesn’t make sense), but are willing to work with you to figure out how much time you would actually be in Cincinnati for this project.
- At least one artist talk or public performance would be expected.
- We have an honorarium to offer the pilot ‘Shouting Distance’ artist as well as funds for supplies, travel and hospitality, and production/[facilitation](#) assistance.

Experience

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Invitation

fig. 6-5
Testing the old and new versions of the *Principles of Cooperation Card Game* (one of three [listening](#) objects from *LISTEN* by Caroline Woolard) at the Neighborhood Summit in March 2018. Photo by Maureen France.



If you are still reading this and are interested, we'd love to invite you to send us any thoughts or ideas you have. We'd be interested in hearing what concepts you're [looking](#) to expand on or if you have something that you'd love to try for which this might be a good fit. By understanding a little bit about the direction you're interested in heading with your work, we'll be able to think more deeply about opportunities, histories, and groups here that might be relevant and worth exploring. We're hoping that we can make this project as constructive and productive for you as it will be for us and the city of Cincinnati.

Thank you so much and we look forward to your reply,

Cal Cullen
Executive Director
Wave Pool: A Contemporary Art
Fulfillment Center
www.wavepoolgallery.org

LISTEN

In March 2017, after three or four phone calls with Steven Matijcio from the CAC and Cal Cullen from Wave Pool, I proposed that the group adapt the Center for Urban Pedagogy's approach to bringing graphic designers and organizations together to support the organization's graphic design needs. Adapting this approach to [socially engaged art](#) means asking local organizations what they want, rather than assuming they want to implement a visiting artist's ideas. It took us a few months to come to consensus on this approach, and to shift the budget to match it. We hired MC Reitz, a local artist who was excited to facilitate daily engagement with the groups throughout the process, as I am based in New York City. MC's background in community organizing and ongoing work at a local level gave her the ability to engage with people in ways that would be impossible without her support.

asking local organizations what they want, rather than assuming they want to implement a visiting artist's ideas

In May 2017, I proposed four ideas to local groups aligned with her efforts around economic justice: The Welcome Project, MORTAR, CincyStories, and the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative. The Welcome Project's mission is "to engage, integrate, and empower marginalized and at risk refugees and immigrants by providing community connections, employment, education and [skills](#) training." MORTAR "exists to ensure that all entrepreneurs and small businesses, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, or background, have an opportunity to participate in the rejuvenation of our city." Cincy Stories exists "to build community through story. We do this by hosting live [storytelling events](#), creating people based documentaries and working in neighborhoods to engage communities using the [tools](#) of story." The Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative (CUCI) is a non-profit that "partners with individuals and organizations to create worker- owned businesses that sustain families and help create an economy that works for all."

I spoke with each group on the phone, first introducing myself and discussing possibilities and requirements for the project, which was commissioned by arts organizations who needed to demonstrate the project's impact to funders through an arts-based framework. A commissioning organization may support an invisible or less visible process, but always needs a public event, and often physical objects, to photograph and document that the funds were well spent. This project would have to fulfill the requirement for a "strong visual presence," even though the medium of social engagement is often about building relationships, a process that is not in itself visually compelling.

I then gave the groups a series of options to choose from, based on projects and platforms I had already developed, including a set of [tools for listening](#), a peer learning space, a sculptural installation based on conceptions of time, and a wild card idea that would be developed together, from scratch, and made sure each group knew that they would be paid for their time. The groups then had time to determine which projects, if any, were of interest to them.⁴⁶

A commissioning organization
may support an invisible or less
visible process, but always needs
a public event, and often physical
objects, to photograph and
document that the funds were
well spent.

Here is the email I wrote to the partner organizations, to let them decide if we could work together, given the context, my [skills](#), the schedule, and the budget.

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A longer version of this idea is here: <http://artmakingchange.org/voices/the-minute-hand-of-social-engagement/>

LISTEN

April 30, 2017

Dear Sheryl, MC, Derrick, Bonnie, Mary, Katy,
Lela, and Kristen,

I am so grateful for your time and support in speaking to me over the past few weeks. As you know, I am trying to do something that moves between art and social change in Cincinnati, and I would love to hear your feelings about my ideas in progress, if you have time. If you're too busy, that's ok!

I am very sensitive to the fact that many of you are overworked and under-resourced in a time of urgent social emergency, so I am offering 3 PROPOSALS for you each to weigh in on, over the next month, from now until June 1.

Please let me know what you think by June 1st, so I can begin to incorporate your feedback to make one project that most people here feel is relevant.

I appreciate any and all feedback by email: carolinewoolard@gmail.com or phone by June 1. Before I share 3 proposals with you, I want to reiterate the background, my **skills**, the schedule, and the budget, below.

If you don't have time, that is totally fine too. I want to hear from you if you have a strong feeling that one of these ideas is best.

Thanks so much!
Caroline

PS: I've pasted the proposals below and also attached this writing as a PDF, for easy printing.

Study

Of course, because social **practice** art is, well, social, Caroline didn't just come into town and make art on her own. She partnered with four community groups. The challenges brought by the fact that she doesn't live here were **mitigated** by having me serve as bridge between her and the groups. My deep roots here helped ground Caroline's work. That was **key**. It didn't have to be me, but it did need to be someone, and hats off to the CAC, Wave Pool, and Caroline for seeing the value in that and putting resources to it.

—MC Reitz, 2017

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Invitation

BACKGROUND

As you know from our conversations, I have been invited by Wave Pool and the Contemporary Arts Center to do a “socially engaged” art project in Cincinnati. The project should relate to the social issues facing residents today and must have a visual arts component. After I hear from you, I use your feedback to determine which project I feel will be of mutual growth for residents of the area, for each of you, and for the arts organizations. I will try to combine the feedback into one project. That project must be approved by Wave Pool and CAC. The project must also be documented for the funders of this project.

MY SKILLS

I am a [facilitator](#), educator, visual artist, graphic designer, and [producer](#) of large-scale, public, participatory art [events](#). As an educator, I’ve been teaching undergraduate and graduate sculpture and design classes at the School of Visual Arts and the New School in New York City since 2010. As a visual artist, my projects range from a café performance space run at MoMA in New York City (<http://carolinewoolard.com/project/exchange-cafe/>) to coins I created to circulate as an alternative currency (<http://carolinewoolard.com/project/believing-stars/>).

In my work as a convener and creative director of [solidarity economy](#) and cooperative groups, I have helped to gather groups together in projects like <http://SolidarityNYC.org>, <http://nycreic.com>, <http://tradeschool.coop>, and <http://landscapesofprofit.com>. I also make sculptures like [tables](#) for gathering (<http://carolinewoolard.com/project/capitoline-wolves/>) and card games for thinking about the [commons](#) (<http://bfamfaphd.com/cards>).

SCHEDULE

I will visit for a week between August 13-21st, to begin work on a project with some of you, based on the proposal I determine is best from your feedback. I will then return for a few days in the fall (anytime Sept 3-Dec 3) to present the project with a public event. The date of my return will ideally be tied to an existing event you are already organizing, or an event that you want attention drawn to.

BUDGET

I have \$2000 to pay partner organizations, and imagine that I could pay each group \$500-800 (depending on the number of groups involved), or I could pay one group \$2000.

PROPOSAL 1:

[BARTER](#)-BASED LEARNING SPACE

I facilitate the opening of a learning space that runs on [barter](#),

LISTEN

training the trainers to run the school using open source software and community organizing **skills**.

TradeSchool.coop is a non-traditional learning community that runs on **barter**. We celebrate local wisdom, mutual respect, and the social nature of exchange. It works like this:

- 1) People offer to teach a class about something they know.
- 2) They decide on a list of **barter** items they're interested in receiving. **Barter** items can be in the form of goods or services, both tangible and intangible. For example: jars, music tips, clothes, vegetables, or help with something like finding an apartment.
- 3) Students sign up for their class by agreeing to bring something from their list.

You can see the online platform I developed at work here, and the sign up system: <http://tradeschool.coop/> (we also have a robust backend system where teachers propose classes and organizers approve them, as well as an email system to remind students).

You can watch a video about it here: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/OurGoods/trade-school-learning-spaces-that-run-on-barter>

PROPOSAL 2: OBJECT FOR COMMUNICATION/**LISTENING**/GROUP WORK
Through a series of workshops with members, I create a functional and **beautiful** set of objects that reflect a **listening**/collaboration process. Maybe it is a kind of rug, a talking stick, a bowl, or another object that members of a group use to set the space for a contemplative **practice** or a kind of dialogue or group work.

People could learn the **skills** of **listening**, attention, and collaboration that are essential to any family, business, school, or team. Whether patrons are working on a new project, an entrepreneurial endeavor, or a community-based initiative, patrons will benefit from **practice** spaces for approaches to collaboration. Who can build something that they have not yet imagined, drawn, debated, revised, and yet still desired? To communicate dreams—to create discursive spaces for imagination—the arts are essential. Great facilitation tools allow people to communicate across differences of opinion, experience, and expertise.

More information about the Center I have created in New York about this kind of group work: <https://vimeo.com/198242353/34f85d904a>

PROPOSAL 3:

INSTALLATION FOR REFLECTION

I create a space for reflection and dialogue about hope for the future of Cincinnati, working with members and local residents to create a large-scale conversation about a shared topic of interest and an installation of kinetic/moving objects with water in a field.

It might feel like this:

On a Saturday afternoon, I found myself gathering with a large group of Cincinnati residents in a park (exact location TBD). Upon entering the park, I was given a small bowl with a tiny hole in the bottom. I walked over to the area where everyone was standing. I saw that they were gathered around an installation of many many oval-shaped objects on the ground.

Resting in the grass everyone was holding their bowl while looking at one hundred larger bowls, oval-shaped, like two hands cupped together, holding water. The stillness of the water in the bowls reflected the clouds in the sky overhead. After a moment of silence, we were asked to take the small bowls we were holding, sit for a moment with them, and make a wish for the future of our country. When

we were done with our wish, we were instructed to walk into the grass of the installation and to place our small bowl in one of the oval-shaped larger bowls that made up the installation in the grass.

You can see a version of this sculpture in progress here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKRRe1sjmrd/?hl=en>

PROPOSAL 4:

YOU DECIDE!

What would be most helpful for you?

You tell me.

LISTEN

The groups were most interested in the proposal about communication and [listening](#) (in their membership, in their organizations, and between members, organizations, and the public).

This became the actual timeline for our work together.

January-May: Designing the Process of Working Together

- Conversations with all partners and proposal creation
- 5 hours of MC's work/20 hours of Caroline's work

May-June: Design Questions

- "Do you want an artist to create an object for [listening](#) (or contemplation) in your organization?"
- To work with: Heartfelt Tidbits (Sheryl), CUCI (Kristen), MORTAR (Derrick)
- 5 hours of MC's work/5 hours of Caroline's work

June-July: Interviews—Specific Questions

- When you hit obstacles, what is missing in communication? What is your desire for communication?
- To work with: Welcome Project/Heartfelt Tidbits (Sheryl), CUCI (Kristen), MORTAR (Derrick)
- MC emphasizes in-person Aug 13-20 [meetings](#) and confirms their availability then. \$100 per group × 3 groups = \$300/5 hours of MC's work

July-August: Synthesis of Interviews

- "What is wanted?" Resonant quotation
- 5 hours of MC's work/3 hours of Caroline's work

August-August: Week-long Visit

- "Would this object speak to your desire for, or obstacle to, communication?"
- Prototyping/dialogue all week in gatherings with partners
- \$100 per group × 3 groups = \$300
- 5 hours of MC's work/40 hours of Caroline's work

Timeframe

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September-November: First Round of Designs
from Caroline

- 80 hours of Caroline's work

November-December: First round of Feedback
from Partners

- \$100 per group × 3 groups = \$300
- 5 hours of MC's work/5 hours of Caroline's work

December-March: Production of Final Objects

- 5 hours of MC's work/80 hours of
Caroline's work
- \$100 per group × 3 groups = \$300

March: Final Presentation/Celebration
(In Person, with Caroline)

- 40 hours of Caroline's work/10 hours of MC's work
- \$100 per group × 3 groups = \$300

April: [Reflection](#) Document

- 20 hours of Caroline's work/10 hours of Cal,
Steven, and MC's work

MC started by conducting in-person interviews using questions about [listening practices](#) that we designed together.

LISTEN –

Interviews for Community-Engaged
Design of Objects for **Listening**

Your group's experience
with **listening**

Was there a moment when people in
your group were able to listen to
one another deeply enough to change
their minds?

If so, what allowed that to happen?
Did it have anything to do with a
process or a **facilitator**?

Was there a moment when your group
was listened to (by the board/out-
side group/important figure) deeply
enough to change their mind? How did
this happen?

If so, what allowed it to happen?
Did it have anything to do with a
process or a **facilitator**?

Inquiry re: objects as **tools** for
listening/communication

Artist Caroline Woolard wants to
create, in dialogue with each of you,
objects that facilitate **listening**.

The object is not going to do more
than the people can. These objects
exist to celebrate and build on the
successes groups and individuals
have had with communication and **lis-
tening**, moments when your mind was
changed AND moments when you changed

the mind of other people. Think of
it as a "trophy" to **listening** that
you actually use, a tool imbued
with **power** of what has worked in the
past. A few **tools** will be made, and
all of them will stay in the area.

What is an object for **listening**? An
object for **listening** could be an
object that reminds people how much
they are speaking, it could be a
timekeeping device, it could be an
object for meditation or moments of
silence, or it could be a rug that
encourages people to step on the
area that they are speaking from
(a yellow area if they are propos-
ing a new idea, a red area if they
are responding to an idea, or a blue
area if they are mediating between
a new idea and a response). It could
be a way to make a collective
wish together.

Caroline Woolard will visit in
person from August 14-18 and work
with you from then until late
January to make objects that
reflect the kinds of **listening** you
want to experience.

Have you ever used a talking piece
or talking stick in your org? If so,
how did it feel?

Have you ever taken a **moment of
silence** in your group/organization,
or started a meeting or event with a
centering **practice** or other **practice**

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of being present in your body and mind? See chapter 1

Are there spiritual/religious/
[listening/facilitation practices](#)
that you bring into your
group/organization?

Do you know of any spiritual/religious/contemplative/[facilitation practices](#) that members [practice](#) at home and might be interested in bringing into the organization?

Do any of your existing [practices](#) around [a moment of silence](#) or spirit/religion in your group/organization include objects? If so, what are they?

Have you ever had an experience in which an object or ritual supported or improved communication? If so, was it effective? How did it work?

What do you think about the idea of an object as a tool that celebrates and builds on prior success in communication?

What possibilities do you see?

What skepticism do you feel?

Do you want Caroline Woolard to work with you to create an object for [listening](#) or communication in your group/organization?

Is there someone in your community that Caroline Woolard could work with to create an object together for your group or organization (and be paid), so that the object better reflects local [skills](#) and wisdom?

Last thoughts?

Logistics

Are you available to meet with Caroline between Aug 14-18? This is the only time she can be here in person between now and the final presentation, so she really hopes you can meet!

What days/times might be good?

Do any of your members/staff create objects/[crafts](#)/art? If so, what [skills](#) do they have and what kinds of objects do they create? Do you think they'd want to work with Caroline to create an object?

Do you think any of your members/staff would be interested in making objects for [listening](#)?

Possibilities

Workshops: making things with Caroline from Aug 14-18!

Paid contract work: Caroline working with members/staff to make things from December-February.

Thank you!!!

LISTEN

MC wrote up [key](#) anecdotes from the interviews to assist me when I visited for the first time, in-person, in August. After a week-long visit in August, when the groups brainstormed with me and then confirmed what ideas for [tools](#) for [listening](#) were most interesting to them, I began to prototype sculptural [tools](#), and to refine these objects in dialogue with the partner organizations in the fall and winter.

Each object is a response to an organization's unique way of [listening](#): a [storytelling](#) game using small bronze objects for MORTAR and Cincy Stories, sets of ceramic cups for Welcome Editions, and a card game about cooperation for the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative. The final objects were presented first at the Contemporary Art Center, at a private, intimate event with the participating organizations and people who teach, fund, or participate in [socially engaged art](#) in Cincinnati, and again at the Cincinnati Neighborhood Summit, an annual civic engagement event with 400+ attendees.

Each object is a response to an organization's unique way of [listening](#)

The final objects live with the groups, and come with [facilitation](#) guides.

PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION CARD GAME (draft)

Purpose: This teaching tool helps people learn about the ten principles of cooperation.

Timing: 30+ minutes, depending on the group

Participants: 2+

Listening tool: cards

How it works:

- (1) The **facilitator** gathers people and places all ten cards on the table, showing the ten principles of cooperation. Each card has one principle of cooperation on the back of the card, and the definition of that principle on the other side.
- (2) The **facilitator** asks a participant to mix up the cards and pick one.
- (3) The participant will read the card they have picked aloud to the group, and talk about what that principle means to them.
- (4) The group can talk about how they sense or don't sense that principle of cooperation in their group, and how they might emphasize that principle in their group, even more.
- (5) Another participant picks a card, reads it aloud, and talks about what it means to them.
- (6) Repeat.

Organization:

Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative (CUCI) is a non-profit that partners with individuals and organizations to create worker-owned businesses that sustain families and help create an economy that works for all. Cincinnatiunioncoop.org

Process:

LISTEN exhibits objects made by artist Caroline Woolard in dialog with four Cincinnati-based organizations. Each object is a response to an organization's unique way of **listening**: a **storytelling** game with small bronze objects for MORTAR and Cincy Stories, cups for the Welcome Project, and a card game about cooperatives for CUCI. www.wavepoolgallery.org/listen-with-caroline-woolard/

Caroline Woolard worked with Kristen Barker, Olivia Nava Meinerding, and Maria Dienger to add illustrations and design to improve CUCI's existing game.

Materials:

Each card is 3.5" x 4.5" and the test cards are printed by Micah Hornung. Future iterations of these cards will be available online as freely downloadable PDFs and for purchase through CUCI and Wave Pool.

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MORTAR AND CINCYSTORIES

Purpose: This is a **game** that helps participants get to know one another.

Timing: 30+ minutes, depending on the group

Participants: 2+

How it works:

- (1) The **facilitator** asks the participants to close their **eyes** as the **facilitator** buries the objects in the box so that only the **spheres** are showing.
- (2) One participant selects an object and picks it up.
- (3) This person tells a story based upon the object they are holding.
- (4) Another participant selects an object and tells a story based upon that object.
- (5) Repeat.

Organizations:

MORTAR exists to ensure that all entrepreneurs and small businesses, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, race, or background, have an opportunity to participate in the rejuvenation of our city. weare-mortar.com *Cincy Stories* exists to build community through story. We do this by hosting live **storytelling events**, creating people based documentaries and working in neighborhoods to engage communities using the **tools** of story. cincystories.org

Process:

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www.wavepoolgallery.org/listen-with-caroline-woolard/

Caroline Woolard worked with Allen Woods, Derrick Braziel, Chris Ashwell, William Thomas, and Shawn Braley to imagine and implement this **game**, which is loosely based upon an event that they held together, where friends and neighbors brought in objects that are significant to them. The objects were designed by Caroline Woolard and sit in poplar boxes handmade by Scott Bellissem.

Materials:

Each object is roughly 1" x 2" x 1" and is cast in stainless steel infused with bronze, with a final composition of approximately 60% steel and 40% bronze. The objects went through an electroplating process that deposits a 0.1 micron layer of gold on the outside of the objects. Due to the electroplating process, the gold may wear off with friction, over time.

Institutional
Invitation

WELCOME PROJECT CUPS

How it works:

Drink tea with an open heart. Notice that the cups have two sides. When turned over, the underside of the cup becomes a vessel for a flower, a candle, or a [water](#)-clock.

Organization:

The Welcome Project's mission is to engage, integrate, and empower marginalized and at risk refugees and immigrants by providing community connections, employment, education and [skills](#) training.

Process:

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www.wavepoolgallery.org/listen-with-caroline-woolard/

This limited edition of ceramic vessels was designed by Caroline Woolard over the course of a year in dialogue with Welcome Project members Zoila Martinez, Lourdes Martinez, NarMaya Rai, Bibi Rai, Binta Rai, Sarmila Rai, Purni Rai, Mariam Al-Zoubi, Fabiola

Rodriguez, Krishna Ghimire, and Angele Mputu. These ceramics continue Caroline Woolard's study of functional objects for contemplation and collaboration. The cups were wheel thrown by ceramicist Josephine Heilpern and are sold in sets of four in poplar boxes handmade by Scott Bellissemo. The dividers in the boxes were made by members of the Welcome Project. This is a limited edition of thirty boxes, with four cups per box, for sale at Wave Pool. All profits go to Welcome Editions and feed back into the growth of the Welcome Project, a collaboration between the non-profit organizations Wave Pool and Heartfelt Tidbits.

Materials:

Each vessel is a wheel thrown cup in speckled clay. The interior and exterior is glazed in high gloss green with black speckles. The bottom is a high gloss black with a blue lotus flower. The exterior is decorated with bright blue and green shapes. The size is approximately 4.25 inches tall × 3.25 wide diameter. Each item is handmade and has slight [variations](#) in size and finish and color. Food safe and made for everyday use. Hand washing is recommended. Sold in a set of four in a handmade poplar box.

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Mediating

I saw at least three major areas of danger for socially engaged projects made by visiting artists like me, who are invited by arts institutions to work in a neighborhood or professional community other than those that the artist is regularly in contact with, and which the arts institutions do not have regular contact with. When anyone claims to “do good” and begins to work with a group or in a neighborhood that they do not intend to return to, it is far more likely that the group or neighborhood is helping that person than the other way around (the visitor helping). I know that the person who spends the most time on the project will be transformed, and that person is likely me.

I asked myself, “How long will I really be involved in this area? Would I be involved if I were not invited to go there? If not, is there a way that I can connect an issue that I am working on locally to a group in the visiting location?”

In this project, I tried to be upfront about the limits of my engagement with partner organizations, to pay them for their time, and to make sure I met their goals for the project as well as my own goals, and the art institutions’ goals. For example, with CUCI, I decided to act as a graphic designer of sorts, making an illustration/design project with cards, as that was most appealing to them, and I know we can use it in the co-op movement in NYC.

I initiated a [reflection](#) document about *LISTEN* with feedback and commentary from project partners that I published. “*LISTEN: A Case Study in Socially Engaged Art*” compiles a summary of *LISTEN*’s process, a project timeline, notes on the approach, commentary by [collaborators](#), and worksheets developed for *LISTEN*. We hope that it will serve as a case study to think through the possible forms of engagement when a visiting artist is invited by an arts institution to work in a geographic or professional community that the visiting artist does not regularly interact with.

Study

Institutional
Invitation

"Caroline did an amazing job of getting this group of women, who struggle to find their voice, to feel comfortable enough to share their thoughts and ideas. What was interesting was the bond that they felt with her in that they were willing to share very honest opinions of prototypes and drawings that she shared ... I think it would've been nice to have Caroline on site while she was building some of the prototypes or in person for the discussions because they were so rich. I've given multiple examples related to what worked the best and that was the empowerment it gave to the women who participated. It would've been great to have a bit more time on the end so that Caroline could have shown the women her final product herself. Overall it was a fantastic experience and I know the women really enjoyed their time with her and felt that she respected them and truly wanted and valued their viewpoints. This hasn't been the case with all of the artists they have worked with so I feel it's a very sincere comment from them. Thanks for this and making our world a brighter place through the sharing of your [gifts](#) and talents!"

—Sheryl Rajbhandari, Welcome Project

"We were brought in, by MORTAR, to be a part of this. But ultimately, I think it would have been better for us to have been separate. A big

reason being us no longer sharing a space—which we didn't expect to happen when we started this project, but also because our organizations likely had different needs for this and the compromises we needed to make to fit both of our needs made the outcome less useful than it could have been with two distinctly separate ideas. This isn't to say that Caroline didn't do a wonderful job of synthesizing the collaborative ideas we had, it is just to say that we could have been free to think directly of the work we do (same for MORTAR) and build from there."

—Shawn Braley, CincyStories

"Sometimes an outsider is exactly what's called for. Caroline Woolard has deep, on-the-ground, hands-on experience with community and artistic engagement in her own home city of New York and beyond, around issues from equitable development, to [barter](#) economies, to shared spaces and objects for learning, presence, and [listening](#). Cincinnati has a few active social [practice](#) artists, but for most Cincinnatians the idea of "social [practice](#) art" is likely to elicit puzzled looks. Most haven't heard of it, don't know what it is. It helps to have a known and respected institution (the Contemporary Arts Center), and a known and respected community-based arts center (Wave Pool) say to Cincinnati, in essence, "Social

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Practice Art is a vibrant and valuable genre within fine art. Here's an example of an artist and project in that field being done right here. We think this is important, and could offer something good to our city." It helps to have someone who is cultivating significant experience and mastery in the field to come and show us how it can be done.

Of course, because social **practice** art is, well, social, Caroline didn't just come into town and make art on her own. She partnered with four community groups. The challenges brought by the fact that she doesn't live here were **mitigated** by having me serve as bridge between her and the groups. My deep roots here helped ground Caroline's work. That was **key**. It didn't have to be me, but it did need to be someone, and hats off to the CAC, Wave Pool, and Caroline for seeing the value in that and putting resources to it.

This project brought social **practice** art to Cincinnati in a bigger more visible way than it has existed to date. So our city benefited, but I gained something important too. I had a lot of quality time with Caroline. Because of who she is and how she works—down to earth, generous, open and transparent, a teacher by nature—I had access to how she was thinking about the project, and at points got to think and talk

through how to solve problems with her. And now I have a relationship with her. This brings value not only to me as a social **practice** artist, but to Cincinnati; now our city has in me an active social **practice** artist with a relationship to a leader in our field. All of us who worked with Caroline on *LISTEN* have this. We have what we learned, we have more connected relationships with each other, and we have our friendship with Caroline."

—MC, local artist liaison

"As someone often attempting to bring artists into communities for positive social change, I often find myself having to navigate the territory of engaging visiting artists with communities that are not their own. I really appreciated Caroline being upfront about her schedule as well as her knowledge and background that would all play a role in how she could best connect with and understand certain communities within our city as a visiting artist."

—Cal, Wave Pool

"The CAC formed a Community Engagement Council in the spring of 2017 to help establish a dialogical model when working with various communities on art-inspired projects. Rather than "impose" an artist and/or project upon a community, we aimed to listen to community wants

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and needs; determine which of those an arts organization could realistically address; and connect these aims with an artist/s who could engage them through the lens of art. Caroline was sensitive to these circumstances and thoughtful about how best to organize a project that would not be weighed down with politics before it began in full.”
—Steven, Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center

I made these worksheets for people to consider, when doing similar projects:

Idea in Public

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TIME/SCALE/MONEY AGREEMENTS
WORKSHEET 1
(for Visiting Artist, Local Artist,
Inviting Arts Organizations, and
Partner Organizations)

What do you hope to accomplish with this project?

What do you need from the other parties in order to accomplish this goal?

How will you balance time, scale, and money in order to accomplish this goal?

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TIME/SCALE/MONEY AGREEMENTS
WORKSHEET 2
(for Visiting Artist, Local Artist,
Inviting Arts Organizations, and
Partner Organizations)

Looking at Worksheet 1 from the Institution and the
Partner Organizations, what overlapping hopes do you see?
What potential conflicts do you see?

How might you alter your goal for this project, in order
to navigate these overlapping hopes and conflicts?

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In the arts we so often work in shorthand, relying on conventions and upholding what we believe to be enlightened **practices**—even as the demands of timelines, budgets and the expectations for tangible outcomes erode a priori **integrity**. *LISTEN* opened up the sightlines of that which is obscured in second thoughts, and allowed us to hear, and to heighten.

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