Session One Update from Djerassi!

Residencies, Renewal, and Reconnection

The first artists of 2022 have come to Djerassi and, like the new grass blanketing the mountain, residencies are back in living color!

After a nearly two-year disruption of the core on-site residency program, last month we welcomed a group of five artists to our 583-acre ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains. To prepare, we instituted new COVID safety protocols, including mandated vaccines, regular testing, and smaller artist cohorts; made critical upgrades to our facilities and grounds, including a major fire mitigation and preparedness effort; and launched a long-term process to make our operation more equitable and inclusive. We were thrilled to grow our team with our new Residency Manager, Jewel, Ranch Assistant, Valerie, and Chef Sue.

These past weeks, the artists’ studios have crackled with energy.

Some examples of artist feedback provide a sense of the impact of a Djerassi...
"Spending a month at Djerassi was absolutely crucial to reinvigorating my artistic practice... I’ve gone through periods over the past four years in which I thought I might actually stop making art on the professional level, but my time at Djerassi has me re-engaged in my artistic practice and truly excited for the work I have yet to make."

_Brenna K. Murphy, Visual Artist, Session 1, 2022_

"I wrote a third and final draft of my play. After that I went through the script and planned out structural rewrites. In the final days of my time I finished those rewrites. This would usually take me about one year to do."

_James Simmons III, Playwright, Session 1, 2022_

"My residency gave me the gift of long, uninterrupted stretches of time so I could dive into creating full drafts, a luxury I often don’t get with the pressures of my day job and routine life. The residency gave me the chance to experiment a lot in my practice, to assess which ways of composing and revising feel more fruitful over others. I became more deeply aware of my work, its themes and connections between projects. These threads will go a long way in setting me up for my next few endeavors."

_Preeti Vangani, Writer, Session 1, 2022_

We’re thrilled to introduce this first cohort of 2022 residents whose artistic practices span writing, composing, fiber and dramatic arts:

Brooklyn-based theater artist and writer _James Simmons’_ work has been seen at LaMaMa, Dixon Place and St. Ann’s Warehouse. He is currently working on a play about his great-grandfather, Milledgeville Georgia’s first black physician, and his great-grandmother, the family matriarch.

Indian poet, writer and educator, _Preeti Vangani’s_ work has been published in Threepenny Review and her first book, _Mother Tongue Apologize_ won the RL India Poetry Prize.

Ethiopian writer _Heran Abate’s_ practice is deeply
rooted in archives and oral testimonies that reveal stories often at the fringes of history and literature. Her writing appears in *Africa Is A Country, New Short Fiction from Africa and Redemption Song & Other Stories*.

**David Coll** is a composer of concert music, installation art, and interdisciplinary projects that engage physical presence with technology to create dramatic and introspective works, often to playful effect. His work has been recognized through commissions, prizes, and awards, and featured at festivals including MATA, Gaudeamus, and MusicAcoustica.

Fiber-based visual artist and lifelong nomad, **Brenna K. Murphy** explores loss and grief and their relationship to the body, emotional labor, and physical labor using techniques such as weaving, embroidery, and lace-making. Brenna has exhibited throughout the U.S. and internationally in community art centers, commercial galleries, and corporate venues.

For our entire community, reigniting Djerassi’s core mission of providing time, space and resources for artists to create has reaffirmed the critical importance of our work. We are committed to serving every artist whose residency was postponed due to COVID. This year, we are putting new applications on hold while we host artist residents who were originally accepted in 2019 and 2020.

Stay tuned for updates regarding the next round of applications as well as opportunities for supporters and the general public to visit Djerassi, engage in guided hikes, and experience unique site-specific performances and installations!

As we continue to bring our residency program back to life and welcome our second cohort of 2022 artists this month, we look forward to sharing our experiences with you.

On behalf of our artists, staff, and board: Thank you! Your past and ongoing support makes these transcendent experiences possible.

(P.S. Please consider making a [donation by clicking here](#). Your support for our mission of supporting artists and preserving the natural beauty of these 583 acres is greatly appreciated!)

Images: Top left - Brenna K. Murphy | Top Right - Session 1 Cohort | Middle left - James Simmons III | Middle right - Preeti Vangani | Middle left - Heran Abate | Bottom right - David Coll | Bottom left - Brenna K. Murphy
Session Two Update from Djerassi!

From left to right: Session 2 Artists, Sara Shelton Mann, Victor Yañez-Lazcano, Jacqueline Rush Lee, Danny Thanh Nguyen, Preeti Kaur Rajpal, Tori Lawrence

Residencies, Renewal, and Reconnection

Our second session of artists-in-residence have come and made Djerassi their own. The experience of meeting such remarkable individuals and witnessing them share their artistic visions with each other is electric.

Some examples of artist feedback provide a sense of the potential power residencies can have:

“...This time, space and communion with artists from different backgrounds and disciplines felt like artist rehab. The distance between my ideas and actualizing them had, prior to Djerassi, become too great. While here applications were completed, healthy habits restored, and the distance between generation of idea and creating the object were brought back...”
“The ranch is beautiful and I enjoyed working outside and challenging myself to work on a larger scale with a medium that I do not normally work with. I have learned a great deal by pushing myself to work with a new medium at a larger scale and it has given me new ideas in how I can move forward with other outside projects in the future, not only in wood but in other media--so for me that experience has been invaluable... I worked really hard here and feel a great sense of accomplishment and gratitude that I was able to create a site-specific work and have it sited on such a special property.”

Jacqueline Rush Lee, Visual Artist, Session 2, 2022

“I worked on a training manual of my teaching - Moving Alchemy. I prepped for this residency by working the last year on editing - the time here was used to do the introduction, extra poetic writing and going through photos. [...] My hope is that it will be used in universities for teachers. [I will remember] love, love, love - trails, changes that happen over time, beauty, the mountain lion, fabulous people and food. Acceptance. I felt received and valued.”

Sara Shelton Mann, Choreographer, Session 2, 2022

It is a pleasure to introduce our second session of artists-in-residence this year:

Since 2009, Victor Yañez-Lazcano has been dedicated to creating an interdisciplinary body of work that chronicles his family’s history in the U.S. as it transitions from immigrants to first-, second-, and third-generation Mexican Americans. His photography and other work has been exhibited at numerous spaces nationwide. Victor has been an adjunct instructor and visiting lecturer at Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design and Stanford University, respectively.
Tori Lawrence is a New England-based choreographer who creates site-specific multimedia performances and digital/analog dance films. Her environmentally-based work inspires an imaginative and sustainable way of looking at, thinking about, and using space. She is currently collaborating with fellow artist-resident Sara Shelton Mann on her book Moving Alchemy. Tori is an alumna of Djerassi as well as many other artist residencies.

Sara Shelton Mann has been a choreographer, performer, and teacher since 1967. She was a protégé of Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis in New York City before moving to Canada where she met Andrew Harwood and fell in love with Contact Improvisation. In 1979 she moved to San Francisco to work with Mangrove, now Mixed Bag Productions, for which she serves as artistic director. Her Moving Alchemy training is an ongoing teaching project and is influenced by certifications and studies in the metaphysical and healing traditions.

Danny Thanh Nguyen’s short stories and personal essays have most recently appeared in The Offing, Entropy, The Journal, Foglifter, and elsewhere. His awards include fellowships and grants from Ragdale Foundation, Lambda Literary, Kundiman, San Francisco Arts Commission, and Indiana University. He writes a column on BDSM/kink and leather culture for Recon.

Preeti Kaur Rajpal is a poet and nonfiction writer. Her poems can be found at Tupelo Quarterly, Lantern Review, and Spook Mag, among other publications. Her debut poetry manuscript ‘membery’ has been accepted for publication by Tupelo Press who commented that Preeti’s work “forges a complex, multifaceted poetics of social justice.” Membery’s release is anticipated late next year.
Jacqueline Rush Lee is a mixed-media Artist who is recognized for her work with the book form. As an artist she is interested in creating conceptual objects and sites that question and re-contextualize materials, narrative and history.

New Site Specific Installations

We are also thrilled to announce new site-inspired installations by Victor Yañez-Lazcano and Jacqueline Rush Lee.

Victor's piece, *we decide when*, consists of a sign post filled with affirmations, thoughts, and questions pointing in every direction. This piece symbolizes that any move forward is a move in the right direction and offers a moment to reflect and begin anew.

Jacqueline's installation *Villa Equus - In Pasture* is based loosely on the former working ranch horses on the land. One could even picture this horse as Pamela Djerassi’s Amakua (protective spirit horse) in her next life that resides peacefully “in pasture” on and within the land. Jacqueline’s second installation, *Djerassi Whorl*, can be found nestled in one of the Redwood tree crevices. This piece utilizes books donated through the program to create a sculpture that will be transformed by time and the environment and can later be exhumed to create a visual document related to the authors of the books.
Jacqueline displays the Djerassi Whorl before installation.

(P.S. Please consider making a donation by clicking here. Your support for our mission of supporting artists and preserving the natural beauty of these 583 acres is greatly appreciated!)

Images: Top left - Session 2 Cohort at Pamela's house | Top Right - Session 2 Cohort | Middle left - Victor Yañez-Lazcano | Middle right - Tori Lawrence & Sara Shelton Mann | Middle left - Sara Shelton Mann & Tori Lawrence | Middle left - Danny Thanh Nguyen | Bottom right- Preeti Kaur Rajpal | Bottom left - Jacqueline Rush Lee

Support artists today!

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Session Three Update from Djerassi!

From left to right: Session 3 Artists, Amber Bemak, Sara Shelton Mann, Kiyra Traber, Brad Erickson, Helen Georgas

Residencies, Renewal, and Reconnection

The artists-in-residence of session three brought an impressive and wonderful mix of personality and artistic practice to the mountain, drawing on their natural camaraderie as well as the signature “care and feeding” provided by Djerassi staff.

Some examples of artist feedback provide a sense of the potential power residencies can have:

“My time at Djerassi was invaluable to the development of my novel. The setting, both the natural world and the artistic works among it, gave me such imaginative fuel, and the month away from my professional life gave me a freedom I've seldom had to dive into craft, and make new discoveries about my process itself.”

Kiyra Traber, Playwright, Session 3, 2022
"I cannot stress enough how essential this is to art making! Feeling incredibly supported by the staff here was also very useful. There's so little support for artists and art-making out there in the real world! It was good to be here and feel honored as an artist... Having a month to focus completely on my manuscript was essential. While I was here, I worked through revisions of three stories in the collection. I hope to finish the manuscript this year and Djerassi was instrumental in helping me move forward towards that goal."

Hellen Georgas, Writer, Session 3, 2022

"It was a great support for my work. It really gave me the space to concentrate, and the landscape inspired and energized me. The time alone and the quiet was nourishing... [I will remember] the prepared meals so I didn't have to think about cooking. The enthusiasm about supporting artists which shone from all staff and board members. The space (Middlebrook Studio) was incredibly conducive and comfortable."

Amber Bemak, Film Maker, Session 3, 2022

Introducing our third session of artists-in-residence this year:

Amber Bemak is a filmmaker, artist, and educator whose work is based in experimental and documentary film. For the past two decades, she has been engaged in a multi-layered exploration of performance and film which uses the body as a site for socio-political inquiry, engages with text, language, and translation to open up discourse around deeply embedded colonization narratives, and commits to linking the intimate and personal with larger institutional structures.

Brad Erickson is an award-winning playwright and arts administrator
recently relocated from California to Summerville, SC, where he and his husband are establishing an artists residency. From 2003-2022, Brad served as executive director of Theatre Bay Area, one of the nation’s largest regional performing arts service organizations.

**Helen Georgas** is a Greek Canadian writer, librarian, and editor based in Brooklyn, New York. Since 2009, she has been an editor of the digital arts platform *Underwater New York* and served as literary co-editor of the anthology *Silent Beaches, Untold Stories: New York City’s Forgotten Waterfront* (Damiani, 2016).

**Kirya Traber** is a nationally awarded writer, performer, and cultural worker. Originally from Northern California, she now resides in New York City. She is Curator-in-Residence with Hi-ARTS, and a collaborating artist with Ping Chong + Company, and an artistic Consultant with the New Victory Theater in NYC. Throughout her ambitious performance and writing career, Kirya has continuously utilized her art for social change as a cultural organizer.

**Sara Shelton Mann** has been a choreographer, performer, and teacher since 1967. She was a protégé of Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis in New York City before moving to Canada where she met Andrew Harwood and fell in love with Contact Improvisation. In 1979 she moved to San Francisco to work with Mangrove, now Mixed Bag Productions, for which she serves as artistic director. Her Moving Alchemy training is an ongoing teaching project and is influenced by certifications and studies in the metaphysical and healing traditions.

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Winter Residency Announcement for Alumni & Session Four Update from Djerassi!

Session 4 artists from left to right: Christoph N. Fuhrer, Paul Heller, Lisa Truttman, Gregory Ramos, Alex Nichols,

Residencies, Renewal, and Reconnection

The artists-in-residence of Session Four – having dubbed themselves “The Sassy Badgers” – took their collective show on the road to all corners of the Djerassi Resident Artists Program last month. They managed to accomplish periods of deep focus and productivity alongside raucous good humor and not a small number of dance parties.

Alumni Announcement: Djerassi will again offer Winter Residencies for alumni in January and February 2023. The application process is now open. The link for alumni to apply is here. Please address questions to Jewel Carter (jcarter@djerassi.org).

Summer Performance Announcement: Tickets are on sale here for the NETWORK project interactive performance and hike July 2 and 3. Join us!

Some examples of Session 4 Artists’ feedback give you a sense of their experience:
“Here at Djerassi, for the first time in my life since I was child, I had the opportunity to be a child again. I played, hiked in the woods, hunted and gathered or collected. I drew and mixed it all up into kind of an installation called: “The american dream / hunters and collectors / see us. Thank you all so much for this amazing experience!”

Christoph N. Fuhrer, Visual Artists, Session 4, 2022

"...just giving 5 adults unencumbered time to do what we need is such an obvious gift. At the same time, it's not obvious - some opportunities come with obligations to teach, publish, or produce. The Djerassi model is genius. We each create our own structure of walking, making art, and socializing. It's spectacular".

Paul Heller, Playwright, Session 4, 2022

“[What I found most useful:] Conversations and sharing with other artists over meals. Making meals on weekends with other artists. The installations that were created by other artists. The care and support provided by staff, management and board members... The residency gave me an opportunity to advance my work, not only by having the time to write in a beautiful location, but by sharing ideas and concepts with other artists. I feel the time I've had with my writing has positioned me well for a professional production of the play that I worked on while I was here. It was incredibly productive to be able to share the work and get feedback from my fellow artists.”

Gregory Ramos, Playwright, Session 4, 2022

Introducing our fourth session of artists-in-residence this year:

Christoph N. Fuhrer is a visual artist based in Regensburg, Germany whose work can be seen in numerous publications, short graphic novels, and performances as a live drawing artist. He has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout Germany and Switzerland and created a special on-site exhibition while in residence featuring new watercolors, objects, and an outdoor installation.
Paul Heller is an award-winning playwright and two time artist in residence at the Djerassi Program. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and has taught acting and directed dozens of plays and musicals in the Bay Area as well as internationally. Paul currently serves as dramaturge for Indra’s Net, a theater company devoted to work about science and mathematics.

Alex Nichols is a San Francisco-based conceptual artist who combines writing, performance, video, photography, and installation. She has exhibited and performed locally and internationally, working with renowned institutions and is the founder of the artist collective THINK MAKE TANK. Alex is also known as ALEXANDMUSHI: a collaboration between Alex Nichols and Mushi Woosong James examining relationships.

Gregory Ramos is an actor, director, playwright, and theatre educator originally from Los Angeles, California. He has directed plays and musicals at numerous professional theatres and universities and performed National and European Tours among many other theatrical credits. A proud member of The Lincoln Center Director’s Lab and Actor’s Equity Association, he is Professor and Chair at the University of Redlands Department of Theatre Arts in Southern California.

Lisa Truttman is an artist and filmmaker based in Vienna, Austria. In her practice she ties documentary elements into staged settings and rhythmic compositions, tracing the structures of social, architectural and ecological landscapes, which she displayed first-hand at the Program creating a web between redwood trunks in a collaborative project with staff and artists. Lisa’s moving images and installations have been shown in exhibitions and film festivals and she has been teaching in Vienna since 2017.
(P.S. We couldn’t do this without your help. Please consider making a donation by clicking here. Your support for our mission of supporting artists and preserving the natural beauty of these 583 acres is greatly appreciated!)
Session Five Update from Djerassi!

Session 5 artists from left to right: Yosvany Terry, Lisa Rosenberg, Krista DeNio, Chloe Crotzer, Jenifer Wightman

Residencies, Renewal, and Reconnection

Last month, Djerassi hosted the first of two “Leonardo@Djerassi” residency cohorts, including category-breakers: scientists engaged in artistic and cultural production as well as artists incorporating scientific techniques into their practices.

Some highlights from Session 5 Artists’ experiences:

"The opportunity to get my work out —on the studio walls—to where I could see and hear my thinking has been transformative. What often takes years was able to arrive in weeks... Working primarily as a poet and writer, my art is mostly invisible. The larger category of work is Applied Systems, and having (for the first time in decades) a studio of my own
“The residency was a unique opportunity to pace myself and go deeper in my creative process.”

Yosvany Terry, Musician, 2022

“Based on experiential research in the environs of the Djerassi land and trees our team of performers, scientists, land stewards and designers create[d] a multi-media, audience-interactive, site-specific, experience-working with the trees, land, and site; dance, theater and installation design.”

Collaborators Chloe Crotzer, Biologist and Dancer and Krista DeNio, Choreographer, 2022

Introducing our fifth session of artists-in-residence this year:

With a background in biology, neuroscience, dance, and philosophy, Chloe Crotzer’s research and work transcend genre, including investigation of the effects ecosystems have on the human body and how this understanding can illuminate models of sustainability and stewardship.

Krista DeNio is the Artistic Director of KD>>>MovingGround and an interdisciplinary choreographer, director, performer, writer and educator based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her work bridges performance, education and activism; integrating embodied experience, civic engagement and critical inquiry to create transformative new works.
Lisa Rosenberg is the author of A Different Physics (Red Mountain Press). She holds degrees in physics and creative writing, and worked as a research engineer in the development and production of photovoltaics for satellites and the International Space Station. In 2017 and 2018, Lisa served as the Poet Laureate of San Mateo County, California.

Grammy-nominated and award-winning saxophonist, composer, educator and cultural bearer of the Afro-Cuban musical traditions, Yosvany Terry moved from Cuba to the United States in 1999. He is active as a musician and educator. Yosvany’s music has been presented at international Festivals in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, South America and the United States.

Formally trained in Environmental Toxicology, Jenifer Wightman has dedicated the last 20 years researching ways to quantify and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, forestry, energy, and waste systems. Her art practice engages microbial systems living and biosynthetically painting in small vessels. Jenifer is interested in the biotic and abiotic exchange that drives the co-evolution of life and landscape.

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(P.S. We couldn’t do this without your help. Please consider making a donation by clicking here. Your support for our mission of supporting artists and preserving the natural beauty of these 583 acres is greatly appreciated.)

Images by Jeff Carter. Top right - Session 5 Cohort | Top left - Krista DeNio, Jenefer Wightman, Chloe Crotzer, & Lisa Rosenberg | Middle left - Chloe Crotzer, | Middle right - Krista DeNio | Middle left - Lisa Rosenberg | Bottom right - Yosvany Terry | Bottom left - Jenefer Wightman

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