



# 2019 GIA Conference Cultural Intersections

Denver | Oct 13-16

## Code Switching

### The making of home with immigrant artists

**Sunday, October 13, 9am-4:30pm**

**RedLine Contemporary Art Center**

The notion of home is unequivocally situational. Constant and transitory, its meaning is tethered to the ebb and flow of political policy, social practice, technological advancements, global economies, geographic boundaries, and human rights. How do we, as an arts and culture workforce, co-create conditions that are supportive of artists whose 'political home status' is perceived as transitory, illegal, migratory, or temporary? How do we support artists who experience home as an immigrant, a refugee, or a dreamer? How do we, as funders and policy influencers, tease out misinformation so we can confidently and humanely address issues affecting our immigrant artists and their families? We do this together, and we ask a lot of questions.

In this preconference, we will explore the idea of code switching. However, not entirely in the traditional sense of the term code-switching, where an individual must forgo language or dialect in order to assimilate into a dominant culture, but also "switching the code" or dialogue funders have about immigrant artists. Join us as we learn about the innate diversity of immigrant experiences while bridging gateways for reciprocity and support systems. Grantmakers will connect with artists, organizers, and various stakeholders working across real and imagined borders. They will facilitate a dialogue on how to support artists and guide us through a day of code switching to address the needs of immigrant arts communities, and how funders can be more competent allies, responsible collaborators, and agents of change.

## Keynote Speaker

Toluwanimi Oluwafunmilayo Obiwole, artist, educator, organizer

## Facilitation and Grounding

Abou Farman, anthropologist, writer, artist, assistant professor of Anthropology, The New School

## Morning Panel

Jamie Hand, director of Research Strategies, ArtPlace America; John C. Arroyo, assistant professor in Engaging Diverse Communities, University of Oregon; Susan Downs-Karkos, senior director of External Affairs, Welcoming America; Christina Houle, co-founder and co-director, Las Imaginistas

## Afternoon Panel

Alicia Ehni, program officer, New York Foundation for the Arts; Jose Balli, mentee, NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program; Sophia Chizuco, mentor and former mentee, NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program; Luis Valderas, mentor, NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program

## Small Group Discussions

Toluwanimi Obiwole, Denver-based poet, artist, activist, Nigerian immigrant; Jonathan Gardenhire, program coordinator, Artadia; Kirsten Wilson, founder and artistic director, Motus Theater; Juanita Monsalve, director of Creative and Digital, United We Dream

## Closing Activity and Reflection

Sherylynn Sealy, program manager, Grantmakers in the Arts; Abou Farman, anthropologist, writer and artist, assistant professor of Anthropology, The New School

## Agenda

**8:30 am**

**Networking breakfast by COMAL Heritage Food Incubator**

Community Room

**9:00 am**

**Opening Keynote by Toluwanimi Oluwafunmilayo Obiwole**

Community Room

**9:15 am**

**Grounding: Artspace Sanctuary and Knowing Your Rights**

Community Room

*Facilitated by Abou Farman.*

Today immigration is the flashpoint for some of the most important social and political problems facing the country and the globe, bringing to light the bankruptcy of today's sociopolitical arrangements: from nationalist policies based on racial hatred to selective border controls to corporatist

states and oligarchic economies to war and mass incarceration to extractive activities and fossil fuel emissions. Policies favoring financial and corporate oligarchies - the concentration of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands - have created the conditions for on-going cycles of dispossession, displacement, and detention. Large financial companies, like Blackrock and Vanguard, make profit from every segment of the cycle. Their CEOs are on the board of many large art institutions. What is the responsibility of cultural institutions in a critical situation such as ours? What are the duties of cultural institutions, private or public, as civic organizations? Sanctuary as a political concept and social practice provides a good platform and guide for approaching these questions. Indeed, thinking about sanctuary activism in New York City, the everyday life of migrants, and the art world, I want to propose that we make sanctuary not art.

**10:15 am**

**Panel 1: ArtPlace America's Arts and Immigration Field Scan**

Community Room

*Moderated by Jamie Hand. Presented by John C. Arroyo, Susan Downs-Karkos, and Christina Houle.*

Drawing on new research commissioned by ArtPlace America and Welcoming America, panelists will showcase how artists and arts and cultural strategies support cohesive communities where all residents – including immigrants and refugees – can thrive and belong. Participants will be invited to reflect on the role that both the arts and informal cultural traditions can play in establishing more welcoming communities across the U.S., and how such cross-sector work is being resourced and scaled in communities facing rapid demographic change.

**11:45 am**

**Mid-day Recap**

**12:00 pm**

**Lunch by Africana Cafe**

**1:00 pm**

**Panel 2: New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program**

Community Room

*Moderated by Alicia Ehni. Presented by Jose Balli, Sophia Chizuco, and Luis Valderas.*

Established in 2007, New York Foundation for the Arts Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program provides career advice and support to immigrant artists. This panel will highlight stories from our alumni, Jose Balli and his mentor Luis Valderas (San Antonio, '18) and Sophia Chizuco, (NYC '09) previous mentee, now mentor.

2:00 pm

## **Small Group Discussions**

### **Exhibition Hall *led by Toluwanimi Oluwafunmilayo Obiwole***

Our session will explore the intersections of country of origin and cultural identity in connection with the individual artists' approach to the grantmaking world. We will use conversation and creative expression to dive into the ways immigrant artists create home and the funder's positionality in supporting them as they bring new social currency to the patchwork of American communities.

### **Library Room *led by Jonathan Gardenhire***

Join Jonathan in a discussion around the Artadia Houston Artist Fellowship and the impact of the work Artadia is doing.

### **Project Space *led by Kirsten Wilson***

The Immigrant Arts Avant-Garde (etymologically speaking): The role of the arts in interrupting the escalation of dehumanizing narratives being used to justify aggressive policies against immigrant families. We are at a historical crisis regarding the human rights of immigrants, and through that, the value of every individual in this country. How can strategic support of immigrant arts programs be pivotal during this crisis, and what shift in funding paradigms are necessary to support immigrant artists?

### **Community Room *led by Juanita Monsalve***

Join Juanita in discussion about United We Dream and how the youth-led organization is making an impact in communities across the nation.

3:00 pm

## **Break**

3:15 pm

## **Workshop Discussion**

Community Room  
*Facilitated by Sherylynn Sealy*

Attendees participate in group activity to consider strengths, challenges, and aspirations in their work.

4:15 pm

## **Reflection Activity and Closing led by GIA Support for Individual Artists Committee Co-chairs, Adriana Gallego and Eleanor Savage**

## Presenter Biographies

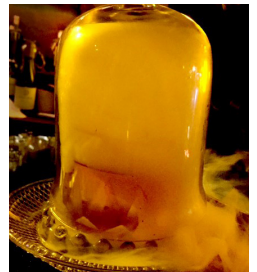
### Toluwanimi Oluwafunmilayo Obiwole

Toluwanimi Oluwafunmilayo Obiwole is a Nigerian-born, Colorado-raised multidisciplinary artist, educator, and organizer. She was Denver's first Youth Poet Laureate in 2015-2016. Since then, she has completed her Bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies and toured/performed nationally. In 2016 she co-wrote and co-starred in a play called *How I Got Over* which was featured at the Denver Center for Performing Arts. In 2017 she was announced as one of The Root's 25 Young Futurists. She was a member of SlamNUBA from 2015-2017, and was co-director of the organization until 2019. In 2017 she was awarded the Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award by the University of Colorado Boulder as well as the Black Excellence Award by the University's Black Student Alliance. She has been a board member for the city of Denver's Commission on Cultural Affairs since 2017. She is a two-time TEDx Mile High speaker and is the author of two chapbooks: *OMI EBI MI* and *How to Become a Lightning Storm*. She creates, hoping to cultivate her own black girl magic while creating space and a platform for people who have yet to realize that their voices are necessary.



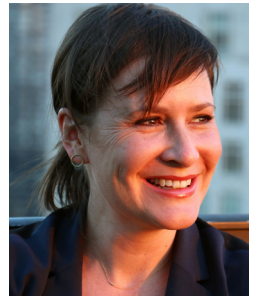
### Abou Farman

An anthropologist, writer and artist, Abou Farman is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at The New School for Social Research and founder of Art Space Sanctuary as well as the Shipibo Conibo Center of New York.



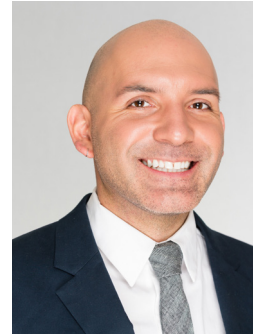
### Jamie Hand

As director of Research Strategies, Jamie Hand designs and leads cross-sector knowledge and network building for ArtPlace America. Hand's background in landscape architecture, program design, and federal grantmaking affords her a unique approach to research, where on-the-ground applicability of learnings and large-scale systems change are equally prioritized. Prior to ArtPlace, Hand worked at the National Endowment for the Arts, where she managed the Our Town grant program, the Mayors' Institute on City Design, and the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design. She also advised the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force on the development of Rebuild by Design, after leading multiple regional-scale design competitions as program director at the Van Alen Institute. Hand co-edited *Gateway: Visions for an Urban National Park*, and began her career in the Bay Area as a construction manager for public artist Topher Delaney. She is chair of the board of ioby (in our back yards) and holds degrees from Princeton University's School of Architecture and the Harvard Graduate School of Design.



## John C. Arroyo

John C. Arroyo, PhD is an assistant professor in Engaging Diverse Communities at the University of Oregon's College of Design. As a scholar and practitioner of urban planning and design, migration studies, and community cultural development, Arroyo's applied research and teaching agendas focus on inclusive urbanism. He is particularly interested in the social, political, and cultural dimensions of immigrant-centered built environments and neighborhood change in underrepresented communities. He received a doctorate in Urban Planning, Policy, and Design as well as a Master's in City Planning and a Certificate in Urban Design from MIT. He has 20 years of experience working in public sector and not-for-profit contexts, both domestically and internationally. He is the author of the forthcoming *Arts and Immigration Field Scan* for ArtPlace America.



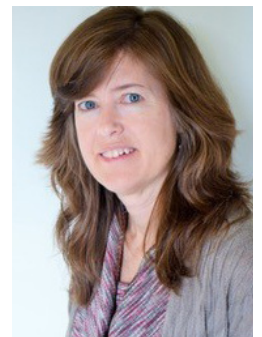
## Christina Patino Houle

Christina Patino Houle lives along the US/ Mexico border in Brownsville, Texas and is director of Strategy and co-founder for the art collective Las Imaginistas. In 2018 the group was named Blade of Grass Fellows and grantees of the ArtPlace America National Creative Placemaking Award. She has performed at Movement Research (NY) and the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics (NY); is a recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Community Engagement Grant and the Andy Warhol Foundation/ Diverse Works, Idea Fund Grant. She has worked with Creative Time (NY) and the Center for Urban Pedagogy (NY) and holds an MFA from Columbia University (NY) and an EdM from Harvard (MA). In addition to being an artist, Houle is also a coalition leader (Network Weaver) for the Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network, a group of nonprofits advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.



## Susan Downs-Karkos

Susan Downs-Karkos is senior director of External Affairs at Welcoming America, a national network of local governments and nonprofits working to promote inclusive, economically vibrant communities. Downs-Karkos addresses new and emerging needs in the field related to immigrant inclusion and long-term, receiving community engagement by developing new partnerships, tools, and training. Her work includes collaborating with other organizations to expand communications and outreach, leverage expertise, and maximize resources in order to create more welcoming communities. Prior to Welcoming America, Downs-Karkos served as director of Integration Strategies at Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, where she managed programs for foreign trained health professionals and health literacy. She also served for more than a decade at The Colorado Trust, where as a senior program officer she designed and managed the Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Families Initiative, an \$18 million effort to engage immigrants and members of receiving communities in local immigrant integration efforts. She is a former national board co-chair of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees and serves on the boards of both Focus Points Family Resource Center in Denver and Jannus in Boise, which both work to meet the needs of diverse families. Downs-Karkos holds a B.A. from Bates College.



## Juanita Monsalve

Juanita Monsalve, Creative and Digital director of United We Dream (UWD), ensures that the voices and leadership of UWD members are seen and heard in online spaces. Her work has catapulted the digital presence of UWD – doubling UWD’s online membership. Monsalve manages UWD’s team of social justice innovators and creatives, and has built vibrant online communities, raised millions of dollars, and created iconic designs which have motivated people to action on everything from t-shirts to a Times Square billboard.



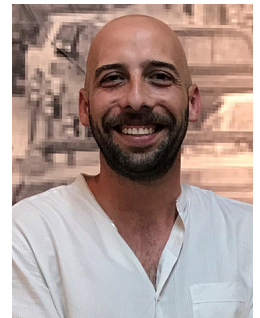
## Alicia Ehni

Alicia Ehni is a multidisciplinary artist and program officer at the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), she works on professional development programs for artists of all disciplines and implements programs in Spanish. She is also the editor of the NYFA Con Edison Immigrant Artist Newsletter, former New York chair of Membership for ArtTable 2016-2019, and serves on Grantmakers in the Arts Support for Individual Artists Committee. In her previous role as gallery director of Frederico Seve Gallery/ Latincollector, Ehni had the opportunity to work with artist Carmen Herrera, Fanny Sanin, and with artists estates, such as Fundacion Gego and Fundacion Emilio Sanchez. Ehni is also Peru-born multidisciplinary artist based in New York who uses pure geometry and Pre-Columbian iconography to address territory concerns in shifting landscapes. She studied Fine Arts at Universidad Católica, Perú and Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY and Arts Administration at NYU. Ehni is a 2018 fellow of NALAC Leadership Institute, was selected as Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts 2018-19 SHIFT Resident Artist, received a 2019 Puffin Foundation Grant, and was awarded a residency at MASS MoCA Summer 2019.



## Jose Balli

Jose Balli was born in McAllen, Texas and raised across the border in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Like many on the border, he commuted back and forth from Tamaulipas into Texas for the better part of his life. His artistic practice looks to explore issues related to family separation at the border, the entanglement of foreign economic relations, immigration policy and the visual narrative of the border landscape on the international bridge. He is the recipient of the 2017 and 2019 Best of San Antonio Cultural Art Month People’s Choice Award and NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program: San Antonio in 2017.



## Luis Valderas

Luis Valderas received a BFA in Art Education from the University of Texas-Pan American in 1995. In 2005 Valderas co-founded and produced Project: MASA I, II, and III – a national group exhibit featuring Latino artist and focusing in Chicano identities. He also co-founded A3 – Agents of Change LLC, a large-scale printmaking community engagement collaborative. Valderas is currently a mentor for the New York Foundation for the Artist-Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program. He has exhibited at the Medellin Museum of Art, Colombia, the Queens Museum, NYC, and the URC Arts Block, Riverside CA. His work is featured in books such as *Altermundos-Latin@ Speculative Literature, Film and Popular Culture*; *Mundos Alternos-Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*; *Chicano Art for Our Millennium*; and *Triumph in Our Communities: Four Decades of Mexican*



*American Art*. His work is in the permanent collections of UTSA, Arizona St. University, Art Museum of South Texas, and the San Antonio Museum of Art.

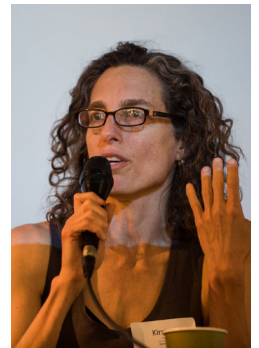
### **Sophia Chizuco**

Sophia Chizuco is a multidisciplinary artist based in Brooklyn, New York and born in Japan. She earned her B.A. in, Art and Education from Tokyo Gakugei University. In 2000 she moved to New York to study abstract paintings at the Art Students League of New York and earned a certificate in painting for her studies. Since 2013, Chizuco has been a part of the Immigrant Artist Program, acting as a mentor at the New York Foundation for the Arts. She held origami and paint workshops and curated shows for groups including: Immigrants at Museum of Jewish Heritage; Ellis Island Immigration Museum; National Yiddish Theatre; and I am an Immigrant. She has received awards including: the grand prize from ArtNetwork; the Director's Recognition Award from Period Gallery; and a merit scholarship from the Students League of New York. Chizuco has exhibited at the Chelsea Museum (New York), the Staten Island Museum (New York), New York Hall of Science (New York), Lincoln Center (New York), the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (Japan), Makati Shangri-La Hotel, and Raddison Blu Cebu (Philippines). Currently, she is a leader for the hospital-based Community Murals Project at NYC Health+Hospitals' Arts in Medicine program, New York.



### **Kirsten Wilson**

Kirsten Wilson is the artistic director, founder, and visionary of Motus Theater. Wilson is a narrative artist, editor, and master teacher in the field of autobiographical monologue work. She has created several award-winning multi-media performances exploring history through the lens of race and class. She has recently delved into creating two companion UndocuAmerica series podcasts: Motus Theater's Shoebox Stories podcast and Motus Monologues podcast. She excels in supporting individuals in writing compelling narratives aimed at opening hearts and minds. She has been collaborating with undocumented leaders since 2013 and is known for creating safe places of courageous empathy and civic hospitality where the stories of Motus Theater's undocumented writers are paired with law enforcement, national artists, and Colorado State House Representatives who read their stories aloud. She recently began collaborating with formerly incarcerated leaders to share their stories of the criminality and injustice of the criminal justice system. She has won multiple regional awards for leadership and for her artistic works. She has received funds and commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts for numerous projects. Her work has been featured in media as diverse as *Theater Magazine*, NPR, *FAST Company*, *Ms.*, and *USA Today*.



### **Jonathan Gardenhire**

Jonathan Gardenhire is an artist and cultural producer whose work explores representations of race and sexuality, most often with an emphasis on black masculinity. His practice critically examines how constructions of power, value, knowledge and social change are produced and shared in the cultural sector. Gardenhire received a BFA in photography from Parsons The New School of Design in 2014 under artist and academic Bill Gaskins and the late photographer George Pitts. He has also taken photography coursework at School of Visual Arts and International Center of Photography. His work has been exhibited at The Kitchen (NY), Slought Foundation (Philadelphia), International Center of Photography (NY), Milk Gallery (NY), The New School, and Bronx Art Space. In 2017, Gardenhire was the subject of a solo exhibition, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God and Other Pictures," at the Brooklyn





apartment gallery Medium Tings. Using traditional methods of photography, such as studio portraiture, and more contemporary methods, such as appropriation, Gardenhire's work traces a "mis-history" in an attempt to redefine and reclaim black identity through a variety of imagery to reshape perceptions of black humanity at large.

## **Sherylynn Sealy**

Sherylynn Sealy is a strategist, yoga instructor, performing artist, and educator with a varied background. Prior to her program manager role with Grantmakers in the Arts, Sherylynn was a Philanthropy Fellow with the New York Community Trust where she engaged with arts and culture funders and organizations across New York City. She previously served as a consultant for the Mayor's Office and Superintendent's Office on their implementation of the City-wide Youth Stat Initiative in New Haven, CT. Managing over 200 student-cases, she served as the point of contact for schools and local partners. A Teach for America alumna, she received her MPA in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy from New York University, and her BS in Education and Psychology from Northeastern University. She also served on the Dance/NYC Junior Committee. She is the Producing Artistic Director at Greater Glory Nazarene Ministries in Brooklyn, NY. She continues to explore her passion for performing arts, traveling, and spreading a message of hope.



## **Planning Committee**

**Adriana Gallego**, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures

**Eleanor Savage**, The Jerome Foundation

**Lillian Osei-Boateng**, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

**Brian McGuigan**, Artist Trust

**Sharon LaRue**, Kentucky Foundation for Women

**Alicia Ehni**, New York Foundation for the Arts

**Reuben Roqueñi**, Native Arts and Cultures

**Nadia Elokdah**, Grantmakers in the Arts

**Sherylynn Sealy**, Grantmakers in the Arts

*Special thanks to **Alicia Ehni** of New York Foundation for the Arts whose conference session anchors the 2019 Individual Artist Preconference.*

### **RedLine Contemporary Art Center**

RedLine fosters education & engagement between artists and communities to create positive social change.

### **COMAL Heritage Food Incubator**

Comal is a lunch restaurant and training program started by Focus Points Family Resource Center. The Comal program provides skills in culinary arts and business as a platform for economic development to immigrants and refugees—who originate from countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Syria, Iraq, and Ethiopia. The program gives participants a venue to celebrate their culinary traditions while learning about entrepreneurship and professional food services.

### **Africana Restaurant and Café**

Experience authentic Ethiopian home-style food and drinks served with a side of “Old World’ charm. In the true spirit of a family-owned restaurant, they are directly involved in ensuring the satisfaction of their customers.

### **Reem’s California**

Reem’s offers the warmth of Arab hospitality through the discovery of flavors, aromas, and techniques of the modern Arab street corner bakery. They create the experience of home through fresh baked bread, using traditional Arab flavors and local ingredients, all prepared with California love.



**Grantmakers in the Arts**  
Supporting a Creative America