

**Public Doors and
Windows in Conversation
with James Clifford**

James Clifford is Emeritus Professor in UC Santa Cruz's History of Consciousness Department, an interdisciplinary Ph.D. program, and was also founding director of the UCSC Center for Cultural Studies. He is best known for his historical and literary critiques of anthropological representation, travel writing, and museum practices. Because of Clifford's influential scholarship on museums as spaces of cultural encounters, for instance, the seminal 1997 essay "Museums as Contact Zones," and his deep knowledge of the UC Santa Cruz campus, Molly Sherman, Harrell Fletcher and Nolan Calisch, the artists of *Public Doors and Windows*, invited him to have a conversation about *Collective Museum*. John Weber and Rachel Nelson of UCSC's Institute of the Arts and Sciences also participated.

James Clifford: The work I've been doing around museums tends to focus on "ethnographic" museums, what are now increasingly called "World Arts and Culture" museums. In the last twenty years, those spaces have become much more crowded and mobile. Within the walls, the basements, and the storage areas, there are more comings and goings of objects and ideas and people—people who are not formally curators. Resurgent indigenous communities and tribes are repatriating their traditions that are held in museums, not just in the literal way of getting things back physically, but also visiting and interacting with objects collected in the nineteenth century and kept in storage. These objects are now being made new by tribal elders and artists coming into museums and holding them, dancing them, and unlocking the stories secreted in them, whether the clan stories, the tribal stories, or new stories, because, of course, any time you are talking about memory you are also talking about invention. The museum is opening out. Some former ethnographic museums are functioning a bit like lending libraries. Pieces are visited and loaned out for ceremonies, and I have been thinking about that mobility.

While it's not your project, there's some overlap with the ways you question the spatiality of museums—making the museum more social and collaborative. Bringing non-museum people into the curatorial process, and activating stories rather than gathering objects—all your attempts to multiply participants and redress the space of a museum rhymes with what I have been studying inside the four walls of conventional museums, how the circulation of people and things opens out those walls.

I'm interested, then, in hearing from you about the spatialization of what you're calling a *Collective Museum*. Your project is happening on a campus, a specific kind

of institutional space with its own traditions and expectations. And, of course, this is an unusual place. Why make a campus into a "museum?" What does the metaphor mean for you? After all, you really aren't making a museum here—it is something hybrid, something in-between.

Nolan Calisch: This project responds to a question we often have as artists. How do we, as outsiders, come to a place and begin to understand it and create a relationship to it? And also, how can we use our agency as artists to open up the potential for connection? We did come to campus as relative outsiders. Harrell had some previous experience on the campus, and Molly and I had visited. So, the first part of the process was creating a system to get to know and understand the campus. This was interesting because the campus is set up already as a container, a spatial and social container. Then we developed the museum aspect as a system to allow other people to visit the university and start to understand the space and form a relationship to it that isn't otherwise readily available.

Harrell Fletcher: To think about how the museum works as a metaphor, a museum provides a concentrated way of seeing, reading, and learning about a topic. You then can go out and see the world differently. This happens at regional museums and in larger contexts like science museums or encyclopedic museums. You have an intensive experience that clues you in to what is going on out there, beyond immediate perception. We are trying to tap into that here. When you come to this campus, you know it is beautiful, you know there are academic things happening, but you don't have any specifics, any particulars, or any of the idiosyncratic elements that compose the life of the campus. You can feel confused or alienated. With the *Collective Museum*, we make connections and concentrate information about the history, the idiosyncratic elements, the natural history of the campus, and some of the research under way, to give people an access point, even a sense of belonging. People can then have enough knowledge to navigate the campus differently, or more readily than if they had to go through the same improvisational process that we went through. We are researching and processing the long version and creating the concentrated, aestheticized form for other people to experience. While that is not that different from a regular museum, here it is happening campus-wide and not contained within a building. It is totally site-specific. It intensifies some aspects of what goes on, as does a regular museum, through its location, and it also broadens



Orin Martin at the Chadwick Garden

it out. You might not experience it all in one session, like a normal museum. Instead it could take place over days, months, or years.

Molly Sherman: And, of course, this project is completely site-specific because it is a direct response to the fact that the Institute of the Arts and Sciences does not have a building. The Institute invited us to create a project based on their interest in generating communication both among different members of the campus community, who are often siloed in their own departments and fields, and also with the public. This desire to cultivate cross-disciplinary exchange, paired with the absence of a physical space on campus, sparked our idea to reframe the entire campus as a “museum.” While I think some version of what we created could be applied to other institutions or universities, we conceived *Collective Museum* in response to a very specific time on the UCSC campus and in our collaborative relationship with the Institute.

NC: We attempt to provide access to information that might be otherwise invisible. But we also reject some aspects of the museum as metaphor. *Collective Museum* is composed entirely of first-person accounts of sites on campus. This means the voice of this museum is a shared voice, although dispersed, a collective voice instead of an authoritative voice. Through the project, you hear stories from people who have lived relationships with the university, so that is fundamentally different from most traditional museums.

John Weber: As Molly said, this project responds in some sense to the idea that the university wants an institute on campus that functions as some kind of museum, but there is no museum yet. What has been so crucial

to me about *Collective Museum* is that Molly, Nolan, and Harrell listened carefully to the goals of the IAS and, in a creative way, recognized that the aim isn't just to make a building to house objects. The impulse behind the Institute is to help the university talk to itself more effectively, and communicate in new ways to the world outside as well. The Institute is about inquiry and exploration via objects or exhibitions or events or encounters or conversations, not simply about objects in and of themselves, like treasures in a treasure box.

JC: While *Collective Museum* is less object-centered and more story-centered, what I hear is that in the concept of a museum you are partly harnessing an expectation. People enter a museum expecting that it will gather valuable things and experiences that we are expected to slow down and attend to. The idea of stopping and looking—and in this case listening, which is less usual—is built into the idea of a museum. Having an encounter, satisfying a curiosity, allowing time for the curiosity to grow and connections to be made is, at least in theory, what a museum is good for. You are harnessing that expectation for this place, and while it is not an object-based museum, particular sites and the stories attached to them, whether a bridge, a building, or a sinkhole, are the things that are supposed to make people pause.

When Nolan said, “We are outsiders coming into a place,” I flashed on the idea of the ethnographer and a problematic idea with some real truth to it: that an outsider can see things that insiders might not, that insiders have stopped noticing. It has taken me a long time to develop a critical interest in this place. I know people who have been here for twenty years and still say things like, “I have never made it up to Merrill College.” We all have our ruts, the paths on which we move, and we stop seeing the place. It takes something different—the perspective of an outsider, or just noticing new angles of light, or the changing seasons—to shake us out of everydayness. Everything becomes routine, even at this place that is so spectacular in many ways. The view over the bay can become like wallpaper.... Except every now and then when you're driving down after a hard day's work, you stop and notice the light beaming across, the water glistening, the blue mountains of Big Sur floating in the distance, and you remember this is real, you're truly here.

But moments like that are rare. So how do you make a place visible, present? How do you defamiliarize and actualize a place? I just gave an aesthetic or phenomenological example, and your project partakes of that. But, from what you've said, it also has a social and



Thimann Greenhouse



Kenneth Norris Center for Natural History, UC Santa Cruz

political agenda that comes from activating different voices and perspectives. I'd like to hear more about your sense of collaboration and what you call social practice. In a broad sense of the term, what do you think are the possible political outcomes of the project?

HF: In this case, because we are here at the invitation of an institution still in its infancy, still in development, we had an opportunity to create our own institution, or to augment an institution still in formation.

That's one answer to your question. But, also, let me think about this in relation to what you said about us making something new visible. In photography, for instance, when you walk around with a camera, you begin to look at a place in a new way. That device helps you to both formalize what you are seeing and find significance in what you are seeing.

This project gives people that experience without a camera. The different intersection points people will have with the *Collective Museum*, whether a sign, an exhibition wall, the catalogue, or the website, will

facilitate that mindset. The project is designed to let people look at things for their significance, for a story, a history, and for relationships. The hope, then, is that people realize that everything is significant, and they can start seeing and decoding the relationships around them outside of the information we provide. Having the museum spread across the campus and having all these different points of entry and contact attunes people to looking and thinking, "Things have value here." Each site, each story, each person, each view and geological feature of the campus is of value. And we are trying to open people's eyes to the whole process of assigning value that we normally take for granted.

That already gets toward your question of the political, in the broad sense, but I would like to add another important aspect. While in some ways we are the curators of this project (we did create the structure within which the project happens), we also deliberately gave agency to a whole bunch of different people. That includes John and Rachel, the staff of the Institute, of course, but all fifty participants who selected sites



Great Meadow, Collective Museum Campus Walk, April 2014



UC Santa Cruz Trailer Park, Collective Museum Campus Walk, April 2014

for *Collective Museum* also function as curators. They had the power to decide what can and cannot be seen in this museum. They have creative agency within the project. We asked them to choose the stories and sites that they think have value, and we don't then alter the site and story for our purposes. We intentionally credit the participants and allow them to interpret their contribution. That decision has a political dimension. We aren't, after all, studying Roman antiquities; we are saying that although that is a worthwhile study, there is also value in paying attention to everyday places and stories in an everyday environment.

I would also note, although we haven't had an agenda in picking sites and include a pretty wide multiplicity of perspectives, we have found that lots of specific sites and stories in some way reflect the deep social and political history of the campus. Making those stories visible and acknowledging the sometimes conflicted political history of the campus has also become part of the project. This is why we call it a "collective museum"; it is about giving people the opportunity to tell their stories.

JC: Site specificity is something we haven't yet dwelled on. The notion of a campus exists in the United States but not particularly in Europe. It is a specific kind of spatial technology that delivers a kind of template. It is typically an enclosed space within or outside a city that often has a pastoral element. I have become very interested in how this campus template has been applied, or better yet, *translated* on the very rugged landscape of UCSC. This interest led me to work with former campus architect Frank Zwart and emeriti professors Michael Cowan and Virginia Jansen to create an exhibition in spring 2015 called *An Uncommon Place*, which tracked the decisive first fifteen-to-twenty years of growth, the development

of this land into a university. That exhibit looked at the changing site—first a place of indigenous cultivation, then a logged-over landscape, a ranching site, and in its latest transformation, a university. The early planners had the standard campus template in their mind; they thought of the university as an inward-looking place, with certain kinds or clusterings of buildings, esplanades, and what they called a "vertical architectural element" like a clock tower, which was pretty funny when you imagine that we would need such a thing among all these redwood trees. Luckily the early planners discarded the plan and built from the ground up, under the influence of visionaries like the landscape architect Thomas Church. The result is a work of ecological art.

Thinking about this history, I realized that I also arrived at UC Santa Cruz with an idea of a campus that presumed a kind of map. Maps are flat, and so the maps of UC Santa Cruz show nothing of its three-dimensional aspects—the deep ravines, the ways the paths twist up and downhill, how nothing is straight and there is no flat space. This distorted simplification echoes how our minds work. As we domesticate and routinize a site, there's a flattening aspect. For me, becoming site-specific here has required the physical act of walking. If we go on foot from one side of campus to another, we know in our muscles that it is anything but flat and is actually an extremely variegated landscape. Only in walking does this flat site become three-dimensional. The specificities of the campus, and our embodied ways of knowing them, make the place less smooth, more "striated," to use Deleuzian language. Walking here, you orientate yourself using point-to-point navigation rather than cartographic overview. That's something I've tried to think about phenomenologically, but also with a political aspect. This kind of de-flattening, or roughing, multiplies the perspectives possible within the institutionalized

campus structure. At UC Santa Cruz, there is no overview. You are always in the midst of things. To me, that's the real, complex and uneven. Ideology is about flattening, creating managed perspectives.

I know that walking is fundamental to your museum as well. So thinking about walking on campus is a good way to talk about what the project is doing in this specific space, on this specific piece of land.

MS: Jim, I want to address what you said early on about how the idea of a campus is overlaid onto this site. This happens physically, as you point out, with the layout of buildings, but also mentally. We all know what a campus is and what expectations we have of one. We are very consciously overlaying a museum on the campus form, to make it apparent that these institutional forms have been placed here. The "museum" points out exactly the template you were talking about by adding another layer to the landscape and buildings that are already here. The signs we are using to mark the fifty sites emulate the street signs already in use around the campus. We are not designing new custom forms of signage; we are activating the visual language and physical spaces already on campus. We are looking at each platform of the museum in this way.

HF: As Molly is saying, we are layering over this idea of a university campus. But this layer is not a grid. It is a soft form that can adapt to both the campus and what the campus is formed on. Physically, not only does the campus go up and down, through ravines and over rough terrain, but so does the museum, because it is integrated into the landscape. It can't contain every perspective we encounter when walking the campus, but it does aim for a wide set of perspectives through the formalized points where the museum coalesces. It's really important to us that this museum conforms to the existing shape of the campus.

NC: In the same way that the original landscape architect here was sensitive to the landscape, *Collective Museum* is site-specific. By acknowledging the existing circumstances and conditions—the people, the stories and sites—and by including multiple perspectives, the project attempts to be sensitive to the landscape in much the same way that Church was in the very beginning. It's interesting to think about this correspondence between our project and the original tenet that the university was born with.

Rachel Nelson: And walking is really how this project came about. When we invited Molly, Harrell, and Nolan



Rick Flores, UC Santa Cruz Arboretum

to do a project for the Institute, John and I introduced them to the campus through many long walks. These walks have become a large component of *Collective Museum*. Over the process of constructing the museum, the artists had participants coordinate walks throughout the campus with stops at the museum sites. For the launch of the project, we will be walking to all fifty sites, and as many of the fifty participant as are able will tell the stories behind their site choices. This is going to be a long walk, what we call "durational" so it doesn't sound crazy to go on a twelve-hour walk. It should leave no one thinking the campus is flat.

JC: It's interesting to relate your project and this kind of topological or topographic thinking to the notion of ecology. In the modern sense, ecology is historicized, not about some kind of pre-given natural environment, but about the way that different populations, animal, vegetable, coexist in a changing site full of invasions, parasitic relationships of dependency, etc. What Gregory Bateson, who had his Santa Cruz moment in the mid-seventies, might call an "ecology of mind": thinking relationally about humans, animals, plants, geologies....

To put this in relation to the campus: it was designed to be an experimental place, radically interdisciplinary. Through the college system, people who don't usually talk to each other in the university division of labor would be working alongside each other. It was to be a place with no grades, where hierarchical relationships were called into question, where the massive research university could be subverted and colleges could have educational autonomy. The experiment didn't last, of course. But I can't help feeling that something of this radical vision is preserved in our extraordinary campus.

So, your project makes me wonder what it would take to knit together a history of this place that

would activate its past in new ways. Since the project is commissioned by the Institute of the Arts and Sciences, a new interdisciplinary (and maybe even utopian) site, how do you see your relationship with the Institute functioning as an agent of continuity and change? And looking ahead, if the Institute constructs an impressive building, how will that inflect decentered projects like yours that conceive of the whole campus as a museum?

HF: The fact that the Institute is supporting a project like this indicates that even with a physical building with a central point, there might be some de-authorized, interdisciplinary approach to what unfolds in that space, and also out of it. We are creating, in some ways, a project history for the Institute, which includes doing offsite works throughout the campus, and that will be part of its institutional memory. Therefore it is important that in this project we are including not only illustrious professors like you, but also students and staff, trying not to adhere to a hierarchical vision. Although the ethnographer metaphor is a good one, we are also documentarians. We can think about this as an inclusive approach to documentary. Though it doesn't take the final form of a film, but instead this strange conceptual museum, ongoing and freely accessible, we can see that within even its form, it is promoting an ideology that has as its agenda the challenging of a status quo ideology.

NC: It reflects the interests we all have in creating and magnifying a people's history, which is an interesting stepping off point for the Institute.

JW: I've watched the project grow and at times thought that this was the most challenging thing we could have done as the Institute's first project, maybe even too challenging, because it is so unusual. But I've decided it's good that we are doing *Collective Museum* as a first project because it does model goals that the Institute has. These goals are not necessarily obvious, but they are crucial. One of the most crucial things is that the Institute responds to the site: the history and intellectual complexity of UC Santa Cruz. I mean this educationally, spatially, and in regard to our moment in time and history.

A lot of people here are also interested in the Institute because they see it as an opportunity to take on UC Santa Cruz's history of experimental thinking and work, teaching and research, and re-create a different kind of place for that experimental tradition within the new structure of the university today. In *Collective Museum*, what you've done is to take up that



Molly Sherman with Kirstin Yogg at the UC Santa Cruz Farm

experimental gauntlet by fashioning such an expansive "collective museum" and including big "important" moments in the university's history but also things that are much more personal and idiosyncratic. I think that's important—a way of both honoring and echoing that experimental legacy.

My sense of how people will experience the piece is that it will be revealing, and not what people expect. *Collective Museum* will take people all around campus, looking at some very obvious things and some very unobvious things, and hearing in a very intimate way from people here, including some who have been here for thirty-five years and some who have already left. I hope it will be a revelation, maybe a minor one, but a revelation all the same. If people accept the wager to do the piece, I believe it has the potential to be a profound experience. And that makes me hopeful.

The form the piece is taking intrigues me. What it says about the Institute project is important. After all, this "collective museum" does what a traditional museum on a traditional campus does: it provides a way to visit,

a sense of what is special about the place, and offers a look at some of its treasures. But in this case, we have radically revised the kind of treasure presented. Here it becomes a sinkhole, the Chadwick Garden, or the history of sequencing the human genome. The treasures *Collective Museum* unearths on campus are unusual and quite distinct to this place. That's another important goal of the Institute—to focus on what is distinct about this place, and to address its needs and concerns, whether environmental, social, educational, or whatever. These things may or may not be of interest to the rest of the world, but they are specifically important here, now, and need to be thought about and argued about.

And finally, what interests me about this project in relation to the Institute is its complex relationship to representation. In some way, it represents the campus, and I have agonized over what has been left out of this project. And obviously we are leaving things out of this museum—there is no way not to leave things out. But, by framing fifty people and fifty sites, we hope the question immediately arises for all participants about what and who have been left out of the frame. We hope that people will think of more stories, more people, and more places that could be, and should be, part of *Collective Museum*. That's part of the point, to show the complexities of this campus, and to generate productive dialogue about it. And that's an important consideration for the Institute as well.

HF: It's interesting that John and Rachel, as the Institute, would have this be the first commissioned project, because it is unorthodox. When you think about the relationship among exhibition, organization, and artists, usually art is made in a studio with the intention of showing it in a gallery. Not only does this project not conform to that convention, but it also involves a group of people designing a project responsive to the site and to the situation of the Institute. None of those things conform to the normal concept of how artists work.

Collective Museum is, of course, a mediated experience. Actually, not only is it mediated, it is also kind of a fake. It is a project of the Institute, which is a real institute, but what we have made is not really a museum. We are doing something here that is both real and not real at the same time. While it fulfills some of the desires and goals of the Institute, it is also an artist project that reflects interests we have, we being Public Doors and Windows. It may not actually do what the Institute wants it to do at all. It walks this strange line, both official and tenuous in its relationship to the university. The fact that it is not actually a building but a bunch of signs, walks, an unofficial tour of the campus, an online book,



PDW and Rachel Nelson scouting the campus with James Clifford

and a mobile website, gives it a very light and home-made quality, even as it claims to be a serious museum. It is clearly not. And that is an interesting and important aspect of the project. This conversation is part of that. We are using Jim's authority as a noted cultural scholar to validate what we are doing. But in reality we are just making it up, and using only the authority of artists, which might not be any authority at all. We are faking it in the way that artists fake things like landscapes, and portraits, and we've made a project that can be misread in multiple ways: as a project of the university, or of the Institute, that imbues it with an authority it really doesn't have.

So, this is definitely an interesting first project for a new institute. You were talking about the history of UC Santa Cruz as an experimental campus. Obviously the Institute is also, through this project, enacting experimentalism. It is my hope and feeling that the Institute will continue experimenting and supporting work that goes beyond convention, work that helps to establish new ways for artists to function in society.

**Cultivating a
Collective Museum**
John Weber
& Rachel Nelson

Museums and farms do not seem to have much in common. Yet the origin of *Collective Museum*, the sprawling 2016 project the art group Public Doors and Windows (PDW) undertook at UC Santa Cruz, can be found unambiguously in the organic farming movement that emerged on the West Coast over the past decades. In 1996, unsure whether he wanted to continue his work as an artist or switch careers and raise food for a living, Harrell Fletcher undertook a Farm and Garden Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture at the University of California, Santa Cruz's Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, known through the organic agriculture world as the UCSC Farm. His experience there did not propel him into the life of a farmer, but it changed his approach to art significantly. And the overlap between agriculture and *Collective Museum* goes deeper than Fletcher's history alone. His two PDW collaborators, Nolan Calisch and Molly Sherman, also have deep roots in the contemporary farming community. Before their shared commitment to an art based in social practice led them to collaborate with Fletcher, Calisch and Sherman ran Farm School, an educational program based at Wealth Underground Farm, Calisch's farm in Portland, Oregon, PDW's home. As Calisch says, their shared interest in farming has provided the collaborators "a conceptual model to think about socially engaged art making that is cooperative and engages with issues of social justice."¹

Before a consideration of PDW's collaborative practice, it is worth pausing for a moment to think about the "conceptual model" of farming PDW members link to their creative work. This mode of farming emphasizes ecological sustainability and social justice in the food and agriculture system.² In the face of climate change and continued political and social inequality, the movement works with the conviction that current modes of food production are neither desirable nor sustainable. As asserted by the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (where Fletcher completed his farm apprenticeship), "today's agriculture and food systems are extraordinarily productive, but they have created tremendous pressure on natural resources and surrounding natural habitats, as well as compromising the economic health of rural communities, the food security of economically disadvantaged citizens, and the well-being of many of those who grow and harvest our food."³ The Center understands environmental and social concerns as part of the same ecological system and aims to produce farming systems that can sustain human communities and their environments.

The farming movement with which the artists of PDW align themselves, then, has as its aim both



Farm School, Portland, Oregon

environmental *and* social justice. The health of the land *and* the health of the community are ultimately of equal and intertwined concern. Organic farmers of this orientation—including Fletcher's fellow apprentices Nancy Vail and Jered Lawson, founders of Pie Ranch and participants in *Collective Museum*—undertake localized projects to redress troubled ecological relationships in their communities, work to develop environmentally sound methods for growing food, and seek to improve the labor conditions of farming. Through community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs) and the creation of farmers' markets in underserved neighborhoods, alternative farming communities also address issues of "distributive justice"—the building of organic food distribution channels to economically and racially diverse communities.

In the "conceptual farm model" that PDW references, people work on the local level for more sustainable environmental and equitable social relations that encompass both people and the land. Even when realized on a small scale, they have as their goal the substantive revision of economic, social, and political structures that have proven inhospitable for people and nature alike. These are lofty goals at any scale, which raise questions about how PDW applies this "conceptual model" in their art work. How do the artists imagine localizing *art* to produce more equitable relationships? How do they promote ecological thinking in their art practice? Finally, how do they suggest this farm model might have further applications in institutional practice, particularly in the *Collective Museum* project undertaken across the UC Santa Cruz campus?

From Farms to Museums

One of PDW's first collaborations, *To a Lifetime of Meaningful Encounters (La vie est faite de belles*



Matisse Museum Signage, Le Cateau-Cambresis, France, 2014

rencontres), took place 2013–14 at the Musée Matisse in Le Cateau-Cambresis, France. This town of 7200 in rural northern France is the birthplace of Henri Matisse, although, as the artists point out, he actually resided in Le Cateau only briefly. Nevertheless, the museum stands today as an homage to the painter’s life and art, firmly tying him to the town. It exhibits not only Matisse paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculptures, but also 187 objects the painter personally owned. The museum combines objects—from his birth certificate, to a hat he wore, to the violin he played—with the artworks to imbue both paintings and everyday minutiae with meaning and value. Even a rather undistinguished coat Matisse wore becomes culturally significant in this museum, part of the legacy of the man and the town he inhabited for such a short period of time.

When PDW was invited to undertake a project at the Musée Matisse, the artists had to contend with a structure dramatically at odds their farm-centric model for art.⁴ The museum’s commitment is to mark Le Cateau as the “Birthplace of Henri Matisse” through

an elaborate apparatus of glass vitrines filled with paint palettes, personal objects, and letters, framed paintings hung on walls; sculptures on pedestals, and more; and it wishes to do so even if one man’s life and work, however great, trumps the many other lives that actually reflect the life of the town and more legitimately belong to it. Such a celebration of Matisse is a far cry from the community-focused emphasis of the farming movement. Instead of collaboration and social justice, the museum promotes the idea of individual artistic genius and its inherent social and economic value. Even the name Musée Matisse contradicts PDW’s socially-based art practice at a fundamental level; the artists insist, for instance, on working collaboratively under the name Public Doors and Windows in order to opt out of the system that finds genius in individuals. Applying the farm model to a museum with such very different ideals, then, offered a fascinating challenge.

At Le Cateau, Fletcher, Sherman, and Calisch devised a project carefully engineered to complement, if not actually undermine, the fundamental premises of the Musée Matisse. Over one year, the artists met with town inhabitants who were, like Matisse, born in Le Cateau, but, as Fletcher says, “didn’t have museums made for them.”⁵ From a restaurant owner to the president of the local Pigeon Association, from a midwife to a kindergartner, they pursued a distinct sampling of the people who compose the town. Within the Musée Matisse, they constructed twenty other “museums,” each archiving the life and interests of these individuals, comprising a broad spectrum of lifetime Catesiennes. The artists employed the full apparatus of museum display used to valorize Matisse’s possessions to similarly exhibit objects that belonged to each participant. They also replicated the museum signage to announce each individual museum. Within the new Musée Matisse, visitors would then encounter the Musée Vicart, with its installation of jerseys, soccer balls, and team photographs conjuring the life of a local soccer-loving youth, or the Musée Seydoux, with its display of travel writings, a backpack, and other memorabilia commemorating the life of an elder resident with a passion for travel. A panoply of museums, bright and lively, proliferated in PDW’s reengineered Musée Matisse, drawing out and revealing the complex social life of the small town.

In Fletcher’s view, the Musée Matisse as originally constituted celebrated “individual advancement that relies on the success of one person over others—a very capitalist notion.”⁶ A glance at Matisse’s worn jacket might make Fletcher’s apprehensions about this “capitalist notion” seem politically overzealous or beside



Installation view, *To a Lifetime of Meaningful Encounters*, Le Cateau-Cambresis, France, 2014

the point. But in an era that has witnessed skyrocketing auction prices⁷ and the international financial class's widespread use of art as a favored investment vehicle, his observation rings true. Furthermore, the connection Fletcher makes between capitalism, the valorization of an artist's coat, and the promotion of individual genius by the Musée Matisse is deeply relevant to PDW's art practice. PDW's implicitly anti-capitalist methods, ethos, and politics, in fact, distinctly imply an anti-market stance. To date, they have worked exclusively in site-specific and socially-specific contexts, operating collectively and in a cooperative mode. Their work generally avoids the creation of discrete, commodifiable art objects designed to be absorbed and marketed by the gallery system, although they have encouraged community participants to create objects meaningful to themselves. Their projects evolve over time and in dialogue with sponsoring institutions and the communities those institutions supposedly represent, or seek to, and the results reflect but also challenge those institutions. *To a Lifetime of Meaningful Encounters* exemplifies their commitment both to collaboration and also to institutional and what we might term economic critique. It offers a model of how art can function as something other than a capital-intensive commodity for sale and resale, and seeks to broaden the social register of who participates in art and museums.

Echoing the group's ethos, Fletcher says he finds in farming "an emphasis on collaboration and sharing that is not normally in art. Farming does not rely on notions of originality."⁸ In their Musée Matisse project, the group deliberately transformed an institution devoted to individual originality into a shared site for community collaboration. And to further democratize and diversify its impact, PDW structured this collaboration to permeate well beyond the walls of the museum. Learning from



Installation view, *He came into the world in Le Cateau. Like me*, Le Cateau-Cambresis, France, 2014

the organic farming community and the CSA movement it spawned has led PDW to build into their practice escape hatches from these demographic cul-de-sacs. In Le Cateau-Cambresis, for instance, PDW projected a video documenting stories of the births of the townspeople outside of the museum. Titled *He came into the world in Le Cateau. Like me*, it featured stories people told of their births and lives, extending the democratizing impulse of PDW's gallery exhibition beyond the Musée, while still employing its capacity to value the lives of town citizens from all walks of life.

Instead of defining the town by one individual, the relational economy of the Musée Matisse subtly shifted during the time of PDW's *To a Lifetime of Meaningful Encounters*. One could, even when just strolling by the museum, "encounter" glimpses of stories from the lives of the many kinds of people with diverse interests who truly comprise the "Birthplace of Henri Matisse." In this way, PDW's multiplying museums archived the other rich social relations that exist today in Le Cateau-Cambresis.

Farming a University

The Institute of the Arts and Sciences (IAS) at UC Santa Cruz invited PDW to undertake a project at a pivotal moment in the institute's young life. In early 2014, when it first approached the artist group, the IAS was a nascent organization in the first stages of creating a public presence and program on the Santa Cruz campus. But the IAS did not yet have a building, galleries, or even a staff infrastructure, and its programming imperative was outlined in broad strokes. It planned to serve the university campus via main three efforts: to foster interdisciplinary collaborations and communication addressing big questions and critical environmental, scientific, and social issues; to inspire learning and teaching in all its forms; and to showcase the

university and its research concerns, reaching across campus and out to the larger public.⁹ The institute was envisioned as an exhibition venue, a public academic events center, and a site for residencies that would enhance both. As an experimental museum, it would operate in a range of traditional and non-traditional, yet to-be-determined ways.

The IAS's invitation to PDW to become the first artists-in-residence and create its first site-specific exhibition uniquely provoked Calisch, Fletcher, and Sherman. It offered an opportunity to integrate their conceptual farm model of art into the emerging structure of the institute, setting a precedent for kinds of projects and social relations that might continue even after the IAS moved to a permanent home. After some deliberation and research, they responded with a simple, elegant proposal, essentially a conceptual sleight-of-hand: "You want to have a museum but you don't have a museum. What if the whole university is your museum!?"

As Fletcher puts it, one thing he learned from farming is that "there are things that are specific to a place. For instance, you can grow avocados here, and not in Portland. If we apply that to art, we begin to see that we need to think about a place and the local context to decide what to make for it. That way, we make something that is appropriate to a place and that has an audience and can inspire participation and community building in the way a CSA inspires members to come and weed. Once that happens, collaboration becomes natural."¹⁰ So when PDW began thinking of the campus itself as a museum—already filled with collections, places, people, and things that together constitute the archive of the university—they embedded in museum form their particular brand of collaborative thinking. Within the collections, places, people, and environmental features of the university, they sought the relationships and systems of value that already make UC Santa Cruz a unique political and social ecology. And to transform the university into a museum, PDW proposed to employ the usual means of museum display, including museum signage, a collections catalogue, gallery walls with framed pictures, an actual temporary exhibition in one of the campus galleries, and a GPS-linked audio/visual/textual tour to knit it all together.

The artists researched the university's history and interviewed members of the community to select fifty sites around campus, marking each with an illustrated sign. The students, staff, faculty, and campus visitors who make up simultaneously the university community and the museum audience might stumble across these signs while walking to class or work, thus inadvertently becoming "museum visitors." They might also stop



Meeting with Alisa Klaus, Senior Environmental Planner, UC Santa Cruz

at a sign on one of the curatorial walks PDW has arranged for their "museum," or they might search for individual "exhibits"—any of the 50 sites—after seeing one of the five gallery walls installed at selected locations across the university.

In each case, museumgoers will find a surprisingly intimate window into fifty lives, places, and related experiences that reflect the identity of UC Santa Cruz. For instance, at the Crown College Clock Tower a *Collective Museum* sign introduces visitors to the conference room where Professor Harry Noller joined other scientists in 1985 to first discuss decoding the human genome and mapping human DNA to improve understanding of biological mechanisms and human evolution. As Noller retells the story of this international gathering of illustrious minds on the *Collective Museum* mobile website, an innocuous conference room comes to historical life. At the Quarry Plaza, another sign marks the former site of the Whole Earth Restaurant, where Linda Wilshusen met her future life partner and learned to make soup while a student in the early 1970s. Another sign indicates the office shared by Ph.D. candidate Erin Gray and scholar-activist Angela Davis. Gray's narrative on the mobile website makes clear that Davis's legacy and Gray's sojourn amid the shelves of books in Davis's personal library have profoundly shaped Gray's dissertation research on lynching culture in the United States. Or at Humanities II, a sign archives a small part of the long history of student protests on campus; here Haley Bott, an undergraduate student, rallied in 2014 with other students to protest increases in tuition and bring attention to the racial and class divides such increases create.

These stories and many others, gleaned over more than a year of interviews, reveal some of the rich experiences of both faculty and students at a research

university. Still other stories reflect people's relationships with the dramatic physical and natural landscape of the UC Santa Cruz campus itself. As Sherman explains, the emphasis on "place-based learning" that PDW has borrowed from the farm model has taught them to look not only for what the people of a place have to teach, but also the knowledge bestowed by the place itself.¹¹ Dean Fitch, campus landscape architect, offers up the puzzling mima mounds that pepper the Great Meadow for his contribution to the *Collective Museum*. These circular mounds of sediment, between three and four feet tall and five-to-fifteen feet wide, are distinct ecological phenomena on the campus. They host a variety of grasses and vegetation, with different species growing atop and between them, providing a suitable habitat for native insects like the beautiful Ohlone tiger beetle. Addressing the campus's natural history, senior environmental planner and geologist Alisa Klaus points out one of the closed depressions beneath the campus. This sinkhole, one of many here, is one feature of the karst topography that has resulted from dissolution of the marble that rests under much of UC Santa Cruz.

When these environmental sites join with people's experiences to construct PDW's *Collective Museum*, a distinct ecology emerges. The blend of stories, idiosyncratically informative and uniquely wide-ranging, forms a collaborative voice that weaves academic and student life on campus together with the natural environment. Each component of this collective project relies on the others to create a whole. Social relations and environmental concerns intertwine, emphasizing the importance of thinking holistically and collaboratively—and not only between people, but also with the landscapes that sustains us.

A last note about methodology: the role PDW adopted throughout this project was sure-handed, but anti-autocratic. The three artists established the framework of fifty sites identified by fifty participants. Each participant gave an audio or text interview about the site's importance. The participants also chose objects or images that pertained to the sites and their stories, to be photographed for the museum. But this framework also permitted great flexibility. The list of participants accumulated incrementally through conversations and campus walks. The artists returned to campus regularly over a year-and-a-half to continue their research, conduct public programs, and learn. In some cases, based on their own discoveries, they sought out participants; in others, someone they met would suggest another person or site to include. Slowly a network of participants developed and shaped the museum's final content. As Fletcher

explains, "All of the fifty participants that selected sites for *Collective Museum* also function as curators. They are the people who had the power to decide what can and cannot be seen in this museum. They have the creative agency within the project. We ask them to choose the stories and sites that they think have value."¹²

Throughout this work, Public Doors and Window's conceptual model and its debt to the artists' history in the organic farm movement are clear: art functions as a social ecology that is always linked to place, and any voice may have something valuable to contribute. Everything is connected. In *Collective Museum*, as cultural scholar Jason Grove writes, "You are able to witness an institutional identity taking shape. At the same time, it is difficult to develop any unified vision of the institute, or even the university."¹³ And that is the point. The basic framework of *Collective Museum* allows the institute to learn from the proliferation of voices and visions that already make the university.

1. A Talk with Public Doors and Windows. University of California, Santa Cruz, October 2014.

2. For instance, the mission of the Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems "is to research, develop, and advance sustainable food and agricultural systems that are environmentally sound, economically viable, socially responsible, nonexploitative, and that serve as a foundation for future generations" (<http://casfs.ucsc.edu/about/index.html>).

3. <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/about>

4. To think with scholars like Michel Foucault, James Clifford, and Ann Stoler, it is important to remember that museums are where art and artifacts are "ordered" and "archived" to create a representational understanding of the world. Through such ordering, museums produce relationships among places, peoples, and cultures, while also underwriting their own cultural authority and rendering the world (or worlds) knowable in the process. This means that museums are "not sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production" that simultaneously mirror how people historically and currently relate to each other and the world around them. See: Ann

Laura Stoler. "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, no. 1-2 (2002): 87. James Clifford. *The Predicament of Culture*. Boston: Harvard UP, 1988. Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 2002.

5. A Talk with Public Doors and Windows

6. A Talk with Public Doors and Windows

7. For example, in November, 2015, a painting by Matisse's contemporary, Amadeo Modigliani, was sold for \$170 million. *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 2015.

8 A Talk with Public Doors and Windows

9. <http://ias.ucsc.edu/about>

10. Talk with Public Doors and Windows

11. Talk with Public Doors and Windows

12. "Public Doors and Windows in Conversation with James Clifford."

13. <http://openhumanitiespress.org/feedback/newecologies/1504>