

Maria: Welcome to the Alice Paul Center Podcast Series bringing you the latest in gender sexuality and queer scholarship and practice. I am Maria Murphy, interim associate director of the Alice Paul Center. Today, I'm joined by the first **Abrams** Artist-in-Residence here at APC Ricardo Bracho. Artist-in-Residence are outstanding visual artists, musicians, writers and other creative practitioners who work with students and faculty and I am thrilled to speak about some of Ricardo's outstanding creative practices today. Ricardo is a writer, editor and teacher who has worked in community and university, theater and video and film, politics and aesthetics for the past 29 years. He has held other academic appointments, including at the theater school at DePaul University in Chicago, an artist scholar in residence at the Center for Chicano Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara. His award-winning plays, which include *The Sweetest Hangover*, *Sissy*, *Puto* and *Mexican Psychotic* have been produced in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco, as well as workshop and staged nationwide. His focus in community has been on social justice, public health and the arts with queer and trans youth of color, Latina and Latino high risk populations, queer men of color, and incarcerated men. In addition to his residence here at the Alice Paul Center, Ricardo is affiliated faculty in the Latin American and Latino Studies Program. This spring on April 2nd, at the slot foundation here in Philly, he will be presenting a staged reading of his new work *Circa*, a work that ruminates on urban intentional communities as part of attempts to live in solidarity, in alignment with shared principles and resources. Joining me in interviewing Ricardo today is Lucas de Lima. Lucas is the author of *Wet Land* (Action Books) and the chapbook *Terraputa* (Birds of Lace). His writing has appeared in PEN Poetry, Poetry Foundation, Boundary2, Apogee, and Brooklyn Rail. He is a doctoral candidate here at Penn and the recipient of fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation. His most recent manuscript is *Tropical Sacrifice*, a dream-like prophetic narrative based on the spiritual journey of a chicken, an animal typically used for sacrificial rituals in Africa-Brazilian religion. A re-enchantment of his mixed race ancestry, the chicken becomes a point of access to genocidal and ecocidal histories, opening an ancestral portal to indigenous **afro diasporic** and non-human world. I'm thrilled to speak with both of you today and think through how performance and creative writing are part of cultivating community, and perhaps the way I like to think of things as, you know, the performatively acting, the better worlds that we are imagining. So, thank you both so much for meeting with me today. Maybe, I'll start with the question that I constantly think about Ricardo when I am thinking about your work, which is basically why performance? Why is performance one of your main, you know, a medium of choice? What is it afford you, or your ideas, or your audiences, or the communities that you're imagining, engaging with your work?

Ricardo: Well, for me, it's been mainly theater sort of in, and community-based theater as opposed to. I mean, I had a play off Broadway but whatever. But mostly, it's been in queer feminist Latino and sort of local community-based theater companies. I think really it's two things in its arrogance in politics, like that part of being a writer, who puts things in the world, is that you believe that what you have to say is worthy of other people, subjecting other people to. And that I wanted to have public discussions of ideas I had, and things I thought people should be thinking about, or should think like I think. That to be flat about that.

Maria: Sure.

Ricardo: That is why. So it hasn't been performance as theorized performance studies. It's been pedantic and literal. But maybe I'm moving away from that, because I no longer write plays as such. So, Circa is the last sort of looking like a play on the page play that I will write. Even though, I'm going to make things that have characters in it, they're also not going to have much plot and they're going to be interrupted by other forms of performance which aren't narrative. So, like, film and dancers, fun, naked body.

Lucas: Yeah. I was wondering what this, what the seed is for you when you start writing? As you know, what kind of sparks you to begin on a project and how it comes about? I think for me I feel excited about just like how voracious your work is, and all the references and I was wondering what your process is, and you know in terms of like where you're pulling from, and how that shapes the form as well. Maybe, you could speak to how this transition that you're making from writing plays to other work.

Ricardo: Sort of even in the places I've written, I think they about a dozen full length and maybe like five short ones. I know, I never wanted to write the same play twice, which is the wrong attitude to have in American theater, because you're always supposed to write it well made play two acts, so it can be... Although, they prefer tragedies to comedies, and you know, it's usually, if it's going to be a lot to play, it's going to be a family with secrets. You know, in that kind of telenovela berroco explosion of them on stage is a little tiring. Although I love reality television. So, I like it that form better, I guess. But not in sort of subscriber-based seizure model. So, I never want to write the play in the same way and I tend to work on two plays at once. Because not every idea goes into one place. I think that happened early on, like my first play, like every single thing I thought is in that one play. Because I thought like, "Oh! This is good. This is my one shot." In that one, I had written like the grant, the creative work fun, which I applied for you had to submit ten pages of a play in progress, but really all I had was ten pages. So, I was like, "Oh, now I have to write a play", and then that was sort of like suturing poems and scenes I had written over a long time into sort of semi coherent narrative based in, like San Francisco's underground house world of the 90s. And then, you know, kind of, you get better at it, but I've never gotten... You know, I checked a lot of **casa de Sri moraga**, I've taken some positives with the late **Irene for nez**, and somewhat ready that switch, and critically I guess for this sort of leap out. I'd had a residency with marble mines where I was a silent play which is projected text and silent film action. And so each one I want to be different. So, Circa, I wanted the scenes to be... The scenes are... It's my first sort of naturalistic or expressions. It's sort of like happens in real time and the scenes are like the acts are all one scene. So it's really these long, extended. You know, the pace is like breathing. All the music, cues happen with the people on stage behind them and that was written at the same time, or begun with Puto and those and their scenes in Puto. They're like half a page long. They're very clipped, they're very short, very cinematic. Because there's it's about somebody on the run and it's like someone in the panic, and navigating

through a dystopic police state, and instead of you know this sort of like communal, sort of relaxed life that Circa tries to approximate and it's circus.

Maria: Can you talk a little...Can you sort of set the scene what Circa about in a little more detail?

Ricardo: Circa about approximate sometime in the past East Hollywood Thai town little Armenia rent stabilization where the hood meets the hills. An urban intentional community or commune, an attempt to live in solidarity in alignment with shared principles and resources to break bread and conventions mandated by family state in capital. Circa a new play by me, Ricardo Bracho, set in the rent stabilized apartments become urban, intentional community in the recent past in East Hollywood. Now I know that you all children don't know who Josephine Baker is, but you ask Grandma and Grandpa and they will tell you. You know what they will say? Why she was a devil and he knows something why they are right. I was, too. I was a devil in other countries and I was a little devil in America, too. Josephine Baker, the March on Washington Speech in 1963: "Yes, I believe that there's a multiple people, a people of mutants, people of potentialities that appears and disappears. I don't know, perhaps, I'm raving. But I think we're in a period of productivity, proliferation, creation, utterly fabulous revolutions from the viewpoint of this emergence of a people. (8:39)... what it is, as quoted by swell dear ol Nick preface to the seventh Brazilian edition of their Molecular Evolution in Brazil. "It is better to make new mistakes than repeat the old ones to the point of unconsciousness." (8:50) yeah curse donkey epigraph Katrina Verna Faust, benders castle marker, a foreigner, especially someone from the south who was supposed to enjoy great sexual policy, fast finish definition of a castle marker as reported by Tony Raines. So those are sort of the text I was drawing on to go back to your question about sort of how things come together and what I was very much engaged with Freud sort of one political essay which is called *In A Time Of Love And War*, and it's his right on the eve of World War one which he opposed. I mean it was very unpopular to oppose that war and he did. That next to the Red Army Faction, statement on the theorization of the urban Guerrilla and they were a terrorist organization in West Germany, then referred to as the bottom half, for the bottom and half game. Because (9:47)... Hafiz I think about everyday. She was probably the pen if andreas Baader was the sort of mouth of that piece. I mean, it's just about the urban Guerilla concept about has Puto is very much about that. So there's always text I'm engaging. I'm always, like you know, throwing my hand in to like some argument. I guess, in Circa, I'm fighting against both sort of the ease of ethnic particularity when confronted with a state that totalized racing when it interpolates you. And I'm doing a critique of a sort of how the discourse of the commons has currently come up in academia, but it's been declared from its Marxist roots. I'm a Marxist in the first and last instance. So, I'm always gonna be like, "Well, hey, he wasn't making a metaphor. It was something about something people actually did in, you know, feudal England.

Lucas: That brings up so many of the questions that I wanted to touch on. But, maybe the one that I'm really really interested in, given you know how your work really proceeded so much of the Clara moment but also the think challenges it, and I'm thinking of the first play that I read

from the 1997 is that when it was produced *Sweetest Hangover* and I am thinking about. I think it's in Circa or (11:10) Soda who says "no, I don't hate all white people. I did in the 90s but I'm over that. It's just..." I have so many of my own ideas about your work does challenge the current moment and the current discourse. Perhaps among, you know, what's being circulating now in the culture and what is being taken up and celebrated as representation and inclusion and diversity. But maybe you could speak to how you're responding to the moment, how you see your own trajectory fit or not fit into...

Ricardo: Yeah. I know that I fit. I know that I've sort of, I don't know. I know I broke up with the American theater or it maybe he broke up with me. I know, we know, we're no longer on speaking terms. Although I'm excited to make theater in Pennsylvania, in Philly that isn't like that. Yes, you know. And isn't this sort of constant sort of recourse to like inclusion, I really cared about...I was talking to Aaron Wilkerson who was a dancer in collaborating with and who's going to play in Circa's readings. He's going to dance the spirit of a shark who has come here on the middle passage, but is now riding a bus that passes by the apartment building, which sort of interrupts the linear narrative of the plane doesn't dance is beautiful and goes away. And I was saying that he was talking about like in relationship, like writing these rants and dealing with, you know, nonprofit theater organizations, like talking about himself and the work he does is marginal. And I was like, "oh! You're the center wherever you are" and I firmly believe that. So, I don't feel marginal to anything. I don't want... I've included where I am. So, I don't and I mean that just sort of facticity of it. So, I don't really care for the other thing.

Maria: Well, this is something else that Lucas and I were. We're both... Something we both really appreciate your about your work is that there's some discussions that you...It's not even that you're swerving away from, like you're just not even going there. So, like these sort of questions of, you know, some of the politics of representation that get a lot of airtime in our currentm political climate. You know, you don't even go there, like we were talking about the question of respective politics, which you also seem to just you don't engage some of these more superficial...What's the word I'm looking for?

Lucas: I guess like renderings of identity or, you know.

Ricardo: I'm not very run trend also cuz I'm old. So, I also, and I'm not on Twitter. So, I hope, I mean, so those two things, I think, I mean, and also I'm having maybe like, you know, I'm having you know as a historical materials. I'm having conversations with a sort of wider a wider sense and deeper a sense of history than sort of the up to the minute, that being in the 21st century allows. One of my students were trying to convince me that the past was 2010. I was, I was like absolutely not the past. To me, the past is the late 19th century. I mean, that's when I sort of...

Maria: The earliest past we can identify.

Ricardo: Yeah. That's where I go to like. Because I've been researching like California mission system. So like that. So, that's where, you know, I can endeavor into, you know, into the archive. I mean, I know people who do, you know, much earlier and looking at codices and you know 17th and 18th century races tracked. But I mean, where I go is like the late 19th into the 20th. I'm from the 20th century I can't help but I'm 50 years old. What are you gonna do?

Lucas: But at the same time, I don't know, I want to argue with you about that, because you do puncture, like that the discourse and these certain ways. Like also in Circa, when there's like, the two characters are asking: "you want to go to target later?" "Sure." "Which one? Black target?" "Not too far." "Gay target?" "not too gay." It's a very brief, but they're moments I really appreciated where, you know, there's a kind of a nod and a wink to like what's happening, but just kind of undoing it as well unravel.

Ricardo: Yes. But also that you know, lays a very racially and economically segregated place. And there is, you know, the black target is off of Crenshaw. The gay target is in WeHo and the Filipino target is an eagle rock, like a sort of middle-class Filipino neighborhood. So, like those are and they live sort of, you know, in driving distance between all three. So, that's just like maybe you shouldn't say that those things are those things, and that is the kind of respectability things. Yeah, I don't really like. I don't ever cared to be shocking, like if I mean to be. I just think that for one, that's how people talk.

Lucas: Yes. Speaking to lives reality as well as just like.

Ricardo: Yeah and I don't choose to be self-conscious about that, and also that is sort of. You know, California is a very racial state. I mean that capital R and capital S. So, that's very much on everyone's mind. In the city has had. You know, the world's largest county jail population. So that hovers, and that eventually, you know, matters in the plan we won't give away.

Lucas: The other strand I think of your work and kind of figuration. I guess, figure that I also see continuity with the moment now and now again. Maybe this continuity it's just like, clubbing, recreational drug use. These things that are suddenly like really big in, you know, particularly I guess like gay the gay world, queer world.

Ricardo: I mean world it never gone away.

Lucas: But, it's definitely like flourishing more now that has I think in the past few years.

Maria: On different ways of talking, talking about the role of sort of recreational drugs, and the way, you know, you're on Grindr, talking about chem sex or whatever, like...

Lucas: I mean it's just the ranges of X. The shrooms like, I would say anyway basically anecdotal experience it, like it's way more common. And also, it's just club, being like the

amount of club units happening in New York right now. And I go believe really, the kind of like, queer parties that are happening,

Ricardo: And everyone is in mourning about the place in Berlin.

Lucas: Oh yeah. Yeah. Cocktail. It's true. Great party I think it's one of the best actually, maybe, the U.S.. Even though Berlin is obvious an entirely different world from the world of your, of your work. But could you say a little bit how, you know, clubbing and anything else like that? I mean formed your well.

Ricardo: You know. I don't and I haven't dipped into it yet in Philly. Although I hear there's a party called Dust Bunnies?

Lucas: Oh.

Ricardo: That's in North Philly that's like this really great underground club, and my niece Bianca, who goes monikers Bianca Oblivion, has like hooked me up on Instagram course with a local DJ. She's a DJ who has a couple residences in LA and goes to Europe fairly regularly. So it's now generational in my family which is awesome. You know, and I was like a child, club kid in...Not in that sort of New York, Stacked Heel, Michael Alig, kind of way. But just like they were underground parties, and you could go to them because they were underground. You didn't need an ID. And there was a sort of heyday of that, and also punk in that. Everyone thinks that like, punk hated disco, disco hated punk. But the thing that connected them both were like, gay boys and fashionable girls. You know, dating the same boys with like, you know, who always had 40 ounces of beer and dirty black fingernail polish. It was fun. So, like that, was something that I had in high school and after high school in LA, and then went to the Bay Area and that was the time of raves, and raised for this incredibly like, useful, global explosion of like, you know, like pleasure without nihilism in a moment, that was, you know, the AIDS crisis in full swing. Also, you know, a real, that was also the time when, you know, only queers were taking care of our own in terms of lesbians, you know. Solidarity and just pure care-taking of gameing in that time period. But then, you know, raving with everybody. I was, you know, and it was also like in the enzyme, just go it was. You know, Japanese, and South African, and Irish, and French, like everybody in the going to go up. Because there's like a big rave scene and go up, and then that got me into sort of working in house clubs that a very famous one, at the end of the the tales of the city. They go into the end up. It's this gay bar in South of Market that's still there. I worked the door for a couple of years at the party called Frank Fridays that happened on Friday night. My friends-David Peterson, (20:14) **House Amy Nettles** ran for many years there, and then I also bought Sundays for a shorter time, which is their ongoing Tea Party. That's like, you see like, Grace Jones would show up that just had this long history like in the art world, in leather worlds, and in house world. And just that music, you know, is also is my beat, you know, is my pulse. So, it's not like other people, you know, famously, August Wilson, you know, the Jazz Riff. It's sort of how his monologues are structured. But give me like a four to the floor or disco or house beat. You know, because also I love the way the beat and its propulsion is often in, like a sort of

critical and dialectical tension, with these lyrics that are always about longing, that are always very sort of conceptual and emotional at the same time. And that, you know, don't seem like they would be a necessarily. If you put them on the page as a poem, they don't sound like a good time. But then, you know, with hundreds of nearly naked people, it's great.

Maria: Well, there's I mean, part of the the clubbing culture, the you know, the mention of popper, how long the length of the kisses and your works, or you'll describe someone's tattoo or you know the mention of the pornographic sounds, or what in Circa, or maybe I'm giving too much weight. You know, you think it's a pornographic sound, but it's actually just, you know, people who are hooking up. But, you have this way of like just tantalizingly describing the sensorial in sort of every aspect of the world, and it is really remarkable to me to take a piece of writing, because I have not had the opportunity to see one of your shows live. Another reason I'm looking forward to April. But you do the the text does leap off the page, and I think you do really capture this sort of materia, sensorial, bodily, you know, experiences that you're articulating. It's just such affective writing. So, I'm just wondering like you know how is it that your writing makes my skin tingle? Am I projecting is it as I'm trying to make sense about me? I mean, this is what I... Can you talk about like that style, that approach, or you know I don't know that this is something you could ever teach to another creative writer, but it to me, I do feel like it. There's something very unique about or unique about the way that you articulate these things.

Ricardo: Well, I am teaching creative writing right now and I did try to do this exact exercise. It is about I asked them to do a themselves character, because I always sort of give yourself the cover of character, even if you're using your own name, and feel free to lie. I don't think, you know, memoirs are accurate in any way and that the chart a journey even whether from, like their bedroom to the classroom, but using only one sense. So, everything you see, everything you touch, everything you smell, everything you taste, everything you hear. So, that is I think in like intentional and somewhat mechanical. Then, I think once you sort of do that with any kind of discipline irregularity, then it becomes sort of intrinsic to the writing. So, I don't necessarily like stake out to the view that. I know that in Circa, because it happens in the courtyard and it happens in the time period where there was drought in California. So, everyone is outside, people don't wear a lot of clothes in that time of year. It's right next to Griffith Park, so like if you're going on a hike, you're not gonna be wearing pants. So, like there's an exposure, there that you can see someone's tattoo. Everyone's bellybutton is like something that is seen. Also, because they're living you know and sort of that enclosed courtyard, you know, the descriptions of like, "oh! ". Because you just see a lot of body. So, I think that that is sort of organic to its contacts. But the other thing is intentional that I want. I want it to be a bodily experience, but not sort of the way in which we have been talking in a (24:40)Khadeem of late about the body, as this sort of separate category of analysis. Because I think the body is also where the theory happens, and where the politics are happening and where they're struggling with like truth and sexuality. I mean, it's always never who you think it is going to be. You know.

Locus: I was thinking maybe of a lot about the questions that were circling around in terms of just like...I was thinking a personhood in your plays and your work, and how that plays out, and

I thought about the word permeability, and maybe it also speaks to the process that you wrote about you just described in terms of pulling from all these different texts and different genres and disciplines.

Ricardo: Yes. I like it. I believe in being entertaining, like I am a populist in that way, and I think that people could enter on very many levels, so I can have a... Even though I'm like saying I'm having a conversation with Hegel, which is something I do normally. But, like I do think that his tripartite before me sure that was subjectivity, is valid for a character construction. That's say a subject for itself, a subject in itself and a subject for others. It's how I make a character, because that's, you know.

Lucas: That's amazing.

Ricardo: And I learned that in a lecture, from a feminist theorists (26:00) normal accordin. I was giving like, "oh! That would work in the play", and so that's how I know to do it. But, I lost my thread.

Maria: You are engaged with Hegel.

Ricardo: Oh. So, I want the theory to be embedded in it, so that I wanted this idea of the commons. So, that's why I was like "oh, a commons have to feed everyone". So, I have to talk, well if you have to do that you have to have a party. Yeah, talk about the food. So, then there has to be a chef, and I didn't want it to be the Latina mom. You know, I was like, I knew I was not gonna do that. So, I just the person who's in the play that is her son, who's this like, you know, shape well who doesn't enjoy being there, but does enjoy cooking.

Maria: Yeah, can we talk more about the commons, about sort of the space that you created in Circa, somewhat you know, shared living conditions, different expressions of precarity, but like politics of solidarity are built into this the scene that you set, the commons?

Ricardo: Yeah. Well, one thing it wouldn't happen if you didn't have rent stabilization, and I guess the sort of autobiographical. I have a friend who lives, the Augie Robles, who did the photographs in the video, lives basically, he lives where exactly the hood meets the hills, like his front yard is the back of the gated mansions in the community in Los Feliz, which is like the first sort of Hollywood, like Mary Pickford's mansion was there, Angelina Jolie now lives in that area with all her children. And he lives in a rent stabilized apartments that he's had lived in since in grad school at the American Film Institute for 20 years. It's, you know, because it's three bedrooms and it's under \$2,000. So, like what those can what rent stabilization, particularly I've never lived all of my adult life every single place I've ever lived, and including my childhood, neighborhood have all been gentrified into basically non-existence, so like San Francisco, Brooklyn. We were discussing, probably what's only intact is like the neighborhood I lived in in

Chicago for a year, but that was already kind of a mixed class neighborhood. So that East Hollywood has and also it is, it has rent stabilization. So, that allows for generations of people, so they're Armenian families that, like the grandma, the grandson are there. Because it is the hub of Soviet Armenian or post-soviet rather Armenians. They land there and the name of the Glendale and son Dale has more meaning in Armenia. Because they're all coming from all forms of the Diaspora, like they're coming from Iran, they're coming from Lebanon, they're coming from Fresno. Because that was like in the 19th and early 20th century, they were armies referred to as Fresno Indians, and that's why we have grape cultivation the way we do. It's Armenian and that's what first there was the raisin capital of the world, just a little interesting fact. So, all of that sort of pulls into like that you don't have a commons. Because I was tiring of the way people were talking about the commons like, it was some metaphorical, utopia. All that is some bias to me. I mean, I like a lot of it. I want it to be. I want to try it.

Maria: Right.

Ricardo: I like a lot of it. But we have to try, and also this is... Maybe, this ties to the fact that like I was a child. You know, in a Marxist Leninist ultra-left sectarian organization, and I did believe like everyone often starts conversations with when the revolution comes, and I thoroughly believed as a child that that was going to happen, and then dot, dot, dot, thought whatever we thought would happen. So, I think it is all practicable. So, let's try it. So, they try it and they try it with who with the people who are there, and then like you know sort of any kind of myth the poetics. A stranger comes, and that is you know both the Armenian Iranian grad student and the new undocumented boy, the aunjanue of the text.

Locus: It seems like what you're describing to everybody say try, it makes me think of the way your work is like working through so much. I also sort of struggling through these questions and these ways of, you know, the embodiment, but also thinking about theorizing these embodiments. One of the themes that for me came up allah was what I see is like a sort of ongoing tension in Latin American and politics, political discussions, in terms of like, you know, what is now even there like somewhere, like Brazil is called identity politics versus Marxist traditions, and leftist politics. It seems like that's a tension that you...It's almost like. I mean, it's not a tension in your work I see.

Ricardo: No, I am on Marxist side. Absolutely.

Locus: Exactly and I feel like this is actually something. Everyone should be reading your work if, you know, but that's one of the reasons why. because it's just already doing this.

Ricardo: But, there is a sort of proliferation of identities.

Locus: Right.

Ricardo: Sort of the opening scene which is very long before, like until Hadassah's arrival, is pretty much the first draft. That is as I wrote it, and that was sort of writing without any kind of self-consciousness, other than I wanted to see how many characters I could handle, without having to break a scene. Because, you know. Because I didn't study in an MFA, I like to teach myself things. So, my plate was always about arc. So that the whole thing is a very traceable arc, and it's actually like the trajectory of a bullet. Because they demonstrate. They're always sort of bent and also which is the head of an uncut penis. But that's neither here nor there for this discussion.

Maria: We can get to that shortly.

Locus: Sure.

Ricardo: And there I wanted to play with this long drawn-out scene, and all these, like very, vary ethnic particularity. Because Puto deals with the mass class of of brown people in LA which is mostly Mexican and Central American. But this, I wanted to deal with, like the rest of, sort of immigrant third-world LA, which is people. You know, even like the white boy from Providence is an immigrant of sorts in it. This like working-class guy who doesn't fit, and so what I knew (32:33) **karaage win** which is you know a negligible-sized community in LA, but used to have its hub in San Francisco. But, there's a whole transit of people who, you know, undergrads who move there and stay on, and that's where she arises. Or like someone who like them all who has total East LA politic, but doesn't live their lives in Hollywood. So, all of these that they aren't the right sort of tropic form of the LA, you know, immigrant populations, and sort of everyone is one in the not quite right way, and then this Argentine trans woman. I really wanted her both to speak. Because, at the time, professors **xxx**(33.18) **Leon**, who's here was getting a Master in our history at UCLA, and we know each other from when she was a undergrad at Harvard. I mean, she organized this massive international conference that took place in LA, San Diego, Tijuana and brought all these Brazilian and Argentinian and Chilean artists, and scholars, and political organizers. There's also this brilliant documentary that she and I went to this really strange, very old gay bar in Orange County in Garden Grove called the Frat House, which is really close to Knott's Berry Farm. It's now become mostly a Mexican in Vietnamese trans bar, and my friend Dino Dinko, the photographer, was working became the Monday-night bar tender there. Because we've just been there Monday night, I started showing films, and he showed this documentary about these sex workers who all had taken over like one apartment building, and they were fighting the city. Because the city wanted to move there sort of where they street walked into, like much more secluded, much more dangerous part of town, and they still wanted to be where they were. But also, the internal strife, of like discipline. The woman, who runs the sort of leader of it, is very sort of Stalinist in her, like "you will not do this", "you will not do that". But they also very much confront, and they have this great line, which sort of encapsulated **delphine or FINA**(34:54). As she's referred to the play that, she's like, 'I'm not your fascist neighbor'. Because you know, one can have a fascist neighbor in contemporary was is like. So, I was like "oh, that's a really like interesting formation", and particular I wanted to have a trans character who wasn't formed by the contemporary discourse of trans identity, that she's distinct in tha, but

then, still subject to, you know, transphobia and transhatred, all in sort of, result in things that happen in the text. Okay, I'll read from this short play called Nee Madre, which is a three character play, and it's a sort of historical fantasy, and it's about Malinche who is the sort of originally Indian woman of New Spain, who translated between Maya and Nahuatl when Cortes arrived. She visits California, specifically Los Angeles, specifically the Biltmore Hotel, and it was a commission for the Latino theatre initiative, the Mark Taper Forum of the centrist theater group of Los Angeles, and it is between Malinche, which I spelled with an X instead of the CH, and her the slave girl. She brings with her girl, and then the slave woman who works at the hotel who is Nana, and this is the scene where Nana and the girl are going to sleep on the floor, the tiled floor of the motel.

Girl: Tell me a story.

Nana: Better yet. I'll tell you a secret.

Girl: it's about Donnie Malinche. I knew all those. She's uh. She's as highborn as they come, a VIP, a Veracruz Indian princess. After her Cacique daddy died, her mother married another Cacique, and she was either stolen by traveling merchants, or sold to them by her step Cacique, or her mother and brother. No one knows for sure and she's not telling. She was sold twice into slavery before being one of 19 girls, gifted to Cortes and to his men upon their arrival. When she was just about my age.

Nana: She was christened Mariana on the spot and given to one of the ships captains. Her knowledge of Nawa and Maya are useful to the war ferrying strangers, and she translated as they pummeled and dismantled the Triple Alliance, our temples. But never our systems and networks of gossip and vile gam-anon but it's an evil girl.

Girl: And then she headquarters a **son el Bastardo** (37:34).

Nana: That's unkind.

Girl: Yes, but not untrue. Then she married a lawn and lives in wealth and luxury in this in the seat of the Viceroy royalty, Diocese of the Catholic Church, the Holy Office of the Inquisition Mexico City, New Spain.

Nana: **TeoTihuacan(37:52)** is far too old to be called new, no matter what the visitors say.”

Girl: Enough history. what about the secret? I have to wake up soon before the sun does. I have to bring her food and sponge her in the morning, help her dress, and then clean the room. Then, go to catechism.

Nona: I can time-travel. Then, after I have to return and see to her needs which are many you can...

Girl: What?

Nana: Travel in and through time, mostly backward, but some forward. You could do it to one day, if you concentrate. I can even make time disappear.

Girl: Can you disappear, too?

Nana: If I could, I wouldn't be here.

Girl: I don't believe you. I mean, soon it will be time to get up, and time to feed her, and time to fix her bed, and clean up her mess in the room, and time to help her dress, and time to steal sort of her copal perfume, and leftover back berries while she naps. How can you time-travel when you can't even tell a good story?

Nana: You're a very rude girl.

Girl: I know. **When I need a mother** (38:59).

Nana: Good night, bad girl.

Girl: Good night, worst woman.

(They both go to sleep, smiling)

Maria: Thanks for sharing that. This does bring me to another question I had for you about how you articulate different formations of kinship. In your work, you have a lot of setups, maybe lack of a better word families, but families do not fit. You know a nuclear family mode. Not even just chosen families, but a whole other way of situating kinship.

Ricardo: Yes. So, some of these that's referred to family when they have the revolution as any group people who lived in solidarity under one roof . So, Circa is a sort of play like, they live under a sort of multiple roofs, or have multiple doors, but one roof. How do you live in solidarity and how do you have kinship? And also like how do you survive things, because you know one survives anything alone. I know, like a lot of people who are single mothers of color, who are not singular in that that sort of, and I've been involved in sort of. I mean, I've been a nanny and it also helped raise. I enjoy babies very much. So, I think I'd like grow older. There's much more emphasis on young children in each of my play. So, I think in Circa, sort of character at the matrix of it all is the girl Belly in some ways. Even though nobody has like a lion's share of lions in that play, and in this one I really wanted to play between the sort of different kind of the Indian girl, the Indian woman and the Indian crown figures. Because they're so constant in Mexican iconography, so flat in some ways. So, I wanted to shape them, and also then put all power relations between women which for good and bad. Because then later that **Molly J orders(40:50)**, the Nana to blip the girl. And she does because those are how slave economies work. So, Yes. So, I mean, I like to attend to people that way. I like and also to not deny connectivity, but also not to sort of flatten it into a sort of mythic family, or the kind of protected bushwa nuclear family. That was the gay marriage drive.

Maria: Yes, know for sure. Maybe I'm taking us off course which I'm happy to get back on. But, I have recently become obsessed with the term that you introduced me to, which is “red diaper baby”. So, I never knew that there was like this magical term that captured if you grew up you know with communist parents, this you know is the term that, and you do sort of lovingly refer to yourself that way. It's so interesting to me because now of course people to judge has just dropped out and today's Tuesday. So, I think this is why I can't help myself but ask this question, but, you know, last night I was watching people to judge who drops out of the Democratic primary in order to endorse Biden followed by Klobuchar, and better or work also just endorsing ridin. It made me think about how the right. There was various right-wing publications that were really zeroing in on well. Maybe people did sounds like a nice good old centrist, but actually he's a leftist, he was a diaper baby or a red diaper baby. So, I didn't know that his dad was this like you know, a Notre Dame professor, who had translated all of these gramm she works and even edited collection about the transformational power of education in this Grampian context, and

apparently also was on that editorial collective for boundary, too. So, all of these things really rocked in my world, and because people's judge, you know, of of course, in my opinion, is not a leftist at all, and talks about, you know, what he believed as I think obviously in response to Bernie Sanders, a democratic capitalism. So, he constantly was really.. While, he was on the campaign trail and perhaps why it should surprise no one that he has since endorsed Biden, is he countered that narrative about his familial upbringing, about any kind of context that, you know, he did grow up with. Even if it is an academic sense of leftist politics, which are sometimes, you know, academic politics can be very politically impotent for sure. But, I just wanted to ask you without pigeonholing you that you know the personal always informs the artistic. And obviously, there's a much broader intellectual project there. But, can you talk a little bit about about how that designation of red diaper baby, or basically your upbringing informs, you know, this really sharp understanding of how you want to express solidarity?

Ricardo: Sure. Well, my one sort of play that I call an autobiography which is about my birthday is July 18th. But, I structured since this boy's birthday and I make it on July 19th, which was also the 70s revolution. So that his birthday party gets eclipsed by this Latin American Revolution, and I grew up in the 70s in Los Angeles. And my father had we were. It was academic. He came to the US, because my father had a postdoc at UCLA. He was a neurophysiologist. So, it was a while he was studying in her ear equilibrium of my puppies. It was pretty cool. We have them as pets. They bark their beans that bark. So, you know my backyard was used for like training to fight Nazis in the streets, which is you know something has come a lot in the come up a lot in the anti-file era. But, at the time California has the largest membership of the American Nazi Party and a lot of that got displaced, you know, got run out literally by the left. That's sort of an repopulated in the Pacific Northwest, which you see like in those, sort of like the militia that took over that had that encampment. So, like my father was alumnist, I remain one. I don't have. Although I don't think the organization that they eventually were in and that, to my siblings, stayed in as they as we grew up, was interesting, it was silly actually and very poorly led. I still believe in revolution and it's the only thing I'm earnest about. All of the people always want me think I'm joking, or thinking that I really think that gender and sexual. I heard a friend of mine was giving a talk on my work and was saying that, someone had countered and saying "oh, he really thinks the revolution is in gender sexuality" and she was like, "no, he doesn't". No, I don't. I just give it a talk about. I don't. I'm pretty formal in 20th century and my thinking of how the capital Arab revolution should come and is to come. So, I don't. I'm feel a breakage with that. I feel like that's my lineage, as much as, you know. I would say that like as a child, like I got told to go back to Mexico, as much as I got told to go back to Russia. So, it's very interesting to see all the anti-russian, which is you know profoundly or the sort of the you know, the anti communism level that Bernie Sanders who's not a communist. So, that you know. It's interesting.

Maria: But, there's still so much red-baiting.

Ricardo: There's so much fundraising, but there's also a return discourse, like you know sort of after the occuppies, and sort of the rebirth of the DSA, whom I have a very strong critique of, a Democratic Socialist Party, basically for what they did. I'm still matter what they did in the 70s,

because I feel like they were, you know. They were the fun of how the Democratic Party infiltrated took the left to the center and the right. But, you know that. But now, that's part of discourse, like socialism, communism and even just in memes. That's like very interesting and odd to me. Exciting and I just... But, I hope, it's just not all sort of metaphor and ephemeral. We'll see. It's not, you know, everywhere else in the world. It's not yes. Also, you know things are going down in Brazil. Things are really hot right now. You know, the Bolivia things are, you know, they come from what I knew, that there was no election fraud. More obvious is should be the president of Bolivia, and you know he's hiding out in Buenos Aires.

Locus: Partly thanks to the US.

Maria: Yes, right.

Locus: Another question I had circling around. I think, we were saying about your father being an academic, and sort of how you index academia often in the work, which I really appreciated.

Maria: Thank you.

Locus: But also how you see, like just grad students as part of this the worlds that you create. It's really interesting to me how invincible the grad students.

Ricardo: I think I'm working on operation space maids has a character who's now a Penn grad student.

Locus: Oh, interesting.

Ricardo: He's writing about, like in space. You know what's that tagline in alien, like in space, no one can hear you scream. But, in space can anyone hear you black. It's this question. Because, like do you take the sort of if you go to a place that does not have a history of enslavement, what does your blackness become? It's sort of my anti-Afro pessimist project in the play. But, go ahead. I'm sorry.

Locus: Oh, no. I mean, I think I'm more of a jumping-off question. Again, like how do you see your relationship to academia at this point?

Ricardo: I don't know if I see it as a relationship to academia. You know, because before I was a writer. I thought it myself was an intellectual. Because I was sort of raised to be the one, like I was...My father did not find anything that was, you know, given to children in capitalist culture. It interests, like Disney films. You know, you're going to took us weekly to see a boon-well film, a possibly nee film.

Maira: And Laurie Anderson concerts, right?

Ricardo: And Laurie Anderson concerts and punk.

Locus: See land without bread? That point well foam words?

Ricardo: Yes.

Locus: Oh my god.

Ricardo: The possibly new film that my mother took me out of there was Arabian Nights. At the beheading, I was like, that's the thing that I'd rather see.

Maria: Really? What about other Pasolini films?

Ricardo: No, that was only one. That's the thing that bothered you all this time. I mean, I saw most of all motor wash films with both of them as a child, it's interesting.

Locus: I watch on what the right movie with my mom. Yeah. Cuz it's for them, do you?

Ricardo: Yeah. He's smartly knows. He's also having a conversation on multiple levels. So, I think it's intellectuals. Then, some way, like I often include an artist character. That's really not because I think artists are special people, that a lot of people think we're magical. Of course I don't. I think that's a way to be self-critical. Because I think we kind of suck and we need to look at our excesses and our complicities, particularly sort of ones we're really attached. You know, at the vein and mouth to the art market. In intellectuals life, because I think part of these sort of the anti-communism is, and this is definitely a product of the Red Scare. It is the way the sort of set down of intellectual discourse. You know. So, we don't have, like Noam Chomsky's, not on our television sets often. In the way that, like in European, African and Latin American. They know who their local and national, international intellectuals are.

Locus: Even right wings now. Right wing ones.

Maria: That's right.

Ricardo: Yes. But, you know even Glenn Greenwald, who's based in Brazil, he's a factor in Brazilian. So, you know, he is getting threatened and fistfights on which, and I guess maybe I long for that. Because we have some, you know. Because it's not that I to be super nervous about it. You know producing original work is a point of production and it's an important one. And part of breaking its elitism and it's provincialism. You know, its lack of utility in the world, is nothing else, like have our saying. I think study is important. I'm always, you know, trying to convince my writing class that half of the writing is reading. Then, read things, like Sally Gearhart lesbian utopic sci-fi novel, The Wanderground, where she has this, you know, all

women telepathic parts of the genic community, that they're go between with them and straight society are the gentles, which is how she figures gaming. This is came out in 1970, very important. It's classic. So, I just like the sort of, the way in which sort of academics, either accept their provincialism, and ivory tower, and don't make breaks into the culture at large.

Maria: Well, one part of that I have to refer to an earlier conversation we had about one of many reasons that the grad student union efforts failed. For example, the lack of solidarity among students and faculty in this kind of thing. Ricardo said something which you said, it was very simply how you put it. But, it kind of rocked my world. You just said, you know, for faculty to be in alignment with us, they would have to recognize themselves as laborers, as workers. I feel like there is a pretty concrete, like distinction, or hole, or gap, or whatever, between intellectual, political class, and not recognizing where their class politics fall, which I don't know that is the same elsewhere taht I think it is something kind of unique to the US, even more so than like Canada, for example.

Ricardo: Also because intellectuality in other places is not limited to that perforce orient.

Maria: Right.

Ricardo: You know, you get on a subway in any third world capital, and someone some unionist is talking politics in in theoretical ways. They can quote coded paragraphs of Marx, or knows therefore none. Maybe, it's academic. But, it's not all academic and that is very closed off we don't have. Chicago has a feel of that kind of working-class intellectual culture still, like there's, I mean their teacher strike. That was impressive. There are all the various sort of leftist, feminist sectarian things going on.

Locus: That might be good maybe tell us what's exciting you're inspiring now. You know, in terms of like anything the culture, what you're reading, or watching.

Ricardo: I really and I didn't expect to. Because, I'm like a naysayer on both Posed and Vita. I know Vita, like rich Las Vegas who wrote the short story. It's based on as a friend and there's a homie represent. But, I find them... In vita, I find it frightfully neoliberal. And Pose, I just find it so revisionist of, like we're not all dead, you could ask us what it was like. It wasn't like that.

Maria: Just that it's what so watered down.

Ricardo: That was sort of , it was a poverty.

Maria: Right.

Ricardo: Like houses were very poor. They were stealing things because they did not have, and it seems like the... You know, I didn't get far in the first season. The only thing I write was indochine and like that moment we're like...

Locus: Oh, that restaurant.

Ricardo: Yeah that restaurant that has a DJ, was like one of the first restaurant had a DJ, that like mix like club. People with society people.

Locus: And have to hire it like a black trans woman.

Ricardo: That made sense. That's right. But some of the other things and they could just ask, like a bunch of those, you know. It's clearly modeled on extravaganzas. Just ask them. They're all there, or they live in LA. You know, the DJ is an Alvin Ailey dancer and the member of Kansas. So, I think that. But, I really love on Netflix, the two shows. It's this family, with they're trying to save their taqueria and gentrification. But, I like all the heroes and all the villains who are brown. So, Wilmer Valderrama plays the Latino realtor and there's a very butch femme lesbian couple that I'm about. It just, it's funny and it's actually funny. I think it's great and then another one is called On My Block. It's another Netflix show that's much more like young adult, and it's also set in LA. But, it's in a very like in... It reminds me of the way I grew up on. It is both working in middle class that is brown and black, that like has intergenerational pot use, a healthy discussion of like where does one masturbate in a house with as many people. There has like, you know, gay members and kids and AP classes. I think those are like useful representations.

Maria: Perhaps, we could close off with one more reading?

Ricardo: This little manifesto I read, it was that the American Studies Association when they had it at the Biltmore Hotel, which my last play was set in. One of my day out of the Regas, that's my homegirl, and she asked me to write. It was manifestos. They wanted manifestos. So, this is a proclamation of by and on negation.

One:

I am not an intersectionlist. I prefer Stewart Hall in hazel Kirby's leaning on Alfa's air and Gramsci, and there's he structured in dominance, and hortense filters from a formulation of the invocation. Implicating like what Spanish tiles on roofs do to each other, in the perma clonal architecture of my LA. For me, intersectionality feels like essentialism by other means, as position social and cultural critics, as traffic cops.

Two:

I never want to be any kind of cop. But I do love cop porn.

Three:

I am not a queer theorist that most of my best friends are. I'm still fucking around with gay liberation in LA. [Rubin hocanjam native\(58:00\)](#).

Four:

I'm not a post colonialist and find each and every day a reason to return to anti colonialists' thought.

Five:

I am in LA Mexican who is tired of Chicano grammars of struggle. Decolonization is a noun. It is the colonized seizing the state, usually violently. Bringing your own wellas tablecloth to your college campus does not mean that you have decolonized that space. I know, that makes me status, but I don't care. Stop trying to make the gerund that decolonizing a thing, like fetch. It's not going to happen.

Six:

I am an LA Mexican who was a Caribbeanist and Europeanist by reading and training. That makes me neither want to be black, or want to be white.

Seven:

I hate monogamy capitalism institutional whiteness Empire and being called a cultural worker. Because when somebody calls me that they always want my labor for free.

Eight:

I don't hate on heterosexuality and find it far less normative than the phrase heteronormativity allows. I believe the hundreds of straight men I've staff with was her. Well, at least a hundred.

Nine:

I'm not queer, though I do use the term to describe the grouping of perverse us. Queer for me is, as my friend Andy, spilled in her said back, then like a leather jacket I tried on during the act-up era and aesthetics that just didn't fit. I am old gay. Language in the black and brown gay club, dive bar, dragged in drug den rave and underground house scene, which meant then bushes and femmes and switches of varying hues and genitalia and trans deform the term was in use. As a child in the life, all I ever wanted to be was a legendary child of the life, and now as a grown-ass man, that life is gone. It's okay I loathe sentimentality and nostalgia, and though AIDS misogyny trans-hate, prisons, gentrification, homophobia, racism, capitalism and technology, are thoroughly and totalizing lead to blame. Theories that just find new ways to assign such blame bore me. My fellow urban race sexuality criminality theorists don't ever fucking bore me.

Ten:

I'm an internationalist and a localist, not a trans nationalist. An anti-imperialist and a Marxist in the first and last instance.

Locus: Wonderful.

Maria: Yeah! I think that has to be how we end.

Locus: Thank you so much.

Maria: Ricardo, thank you. Thank you, Lucas.

Locus: Thank You, Maria.