

ASKING QUESTIONS TO AN ARTWORK

What are the elements of a helpful question? The question particularly tugs at the heart of the hologram critique form, which a group of twelve undergraduate students charted through in the fall of 2020. Here are some of the students' sage questions to their peers' artworks. Take them as a guide into the exploration of inquiry based forms learning and care:

- Has anyone else's experiences resonated with you enough to inspire this work?

-What connections did you have with your specific objects/maker?

-How was the experience of making this work for you?

- What emotional and memory based translations did you implement in the work? Would you bill them as proper materials?

- How can emotions be a material/ how can an intangible piece feel bodily?

- Do you feel it is okay to make art for the sake of making it?

- Can the realities and positions you embark upon create numerous results in what your whole audience can experience?

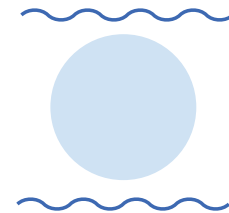
-How would you share this piece with others, and could you make this something to distribute?

-Is it meant to be shared with anyone who wishes to see it?

VIRAL ECOLOGIES

c/o Maggie Wong

www. <https://viralecologies.us/>



To:

HOLO CRIT

MAILER No. 1

Winter 2021

WELCOME TO THE HOLOGRAM CRITIQUE

DEAR READER,

The last time we spoke face to face, we stood outside of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. I told you about my new studio art students, and you gave me the advice to continue to take play seriously yet hold firm boundaries. Essentially you encouraged me to create a social container from which the class could spill interpersonal goo onto the pedagogical table. I made the container and kept finding tools to reshape it. One of these tools is called The Hologram.

Artist Cassie Thornton hatched the Hologram out of the need for collectivized care that repairs health-care chasms in capitalist economies. When public health systems were dismantled in Greece through the IMF and European Commission bailouts starting in 2010, activists and health care workers created volunteer-run solidarity clinics. Essentially Cassie's framework for the Hologram riffs off the solidarity clinics model. The patient is seen as the expert of their health and called an "incomer." A set of three doctors ask the incomer about qualities of their life to find patterns and connect to further resources. In the Hologram, the incomer role is called "the hologram," which brings an issue to three non-experts known as "the triangle." The triangle's responsibility is to ask questions to the hologram. The Hologram framework places a person or experience at the center of care and allows knowledge and expertise to grow out of this particular center. This basic framework is built out of a sense of collective resilience during overlapping crises.

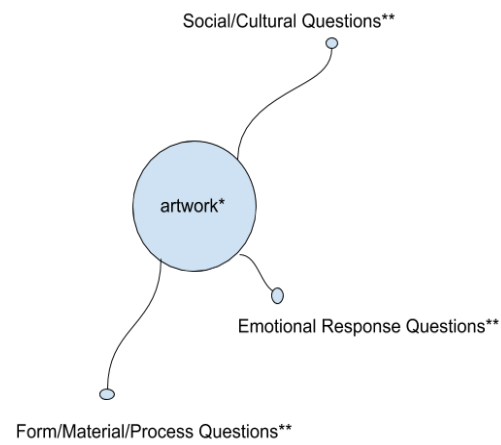
Students now are anxious nubs, worn down from worrying not only about their health but about their diverse and vexed involvement in the systems of oppression, such as learning on unceded land. Learning and teaching have been a performance of resilience in front of the national backdrop of vivid racial oppression, health precarity, crumbling institutions, and student debt crisis. I recently read on [educationaldata.com](https://www.educationaldata.com) that during 2020 the US student loan debt balance hit \$1.7 trillion, a balance growing six times faster than the nation's economy. I

feel my role as an artist and educator is now clearly about honing tools for mutual survival at the very least and flourishing at the very best. Working from The Hologram ethos has allowed my class to reach understandings of our work and the conditions under which we make that work through a process of asking and listening.

I morphed the Hologram structure into a system for art interpretation and critique. A hologram crit combines a notion that critique is the practice of listening to artwork with the anti-capitalist feminist ethos of distributed power. The goal is to bring some power back to the students by fostering careful observation and inquiry-based interpretation. The method starts with a review of the Hologram then moves to workshop neutral questions, wishes, and provocations for their art practices. After initial discussions, the students go into Zoom breakout rooms of four students per room. They rotate through hologram and triangle roles so that each person's project has time to be the center of attention. During the crits the young artists' share intimate witnessing and curiosity of each other's material-economic, social-cultural, or emotional struggles, as well as triumphs. Such as when a young mixed-race student's painting voiced to others the need for Black student body representation in art and campus culture. Students generate self-awareness when asking questions and create collective knowledge from their budding artistic community.

Making art under the vestige of capitalist power often comes with monetary and spiritual debt. Yet, discursive spaces are where one can find affinity. How do we truly flourish across our experiences of daily survival, creative paths, and peer-to-peer knowledge formation? The hologram critique is a way of acting out this question. The crit form is a way of sharing knowledge across students and mentors, in opposition to a top-down transmissive pedagogy that takes students as empty vessels to fill up with preordained lessons.

I will leave you with this full mailer that serves as a toolkit for others to facilitate Hologram Critiques. If nothing else, this mailer is an acknowledgment of being



a student in the middle of an ever-extending genealogy of mentorship, one that circulates issues of support within capitalist-produced precarity.

I owe a great deal to Cassie, Magda Jadwiga Hårtelova, and all the people involved in the Hologram. They have been incredibly encouraging in expanding the Hologram into a pedagogical tool, which can also morph as other artists and educators take it up.

Yours,
Maggie

COMPONENTS OF A HOLO CRIT

Hologram

This is the artwork that is up for inquiry. The artist acts as a custodian for the work by naming the issue involved with the work and guiding the triangle in asking helpful questions.

Triangle Member

One person of three people who ask questions of the artwork through the artist, helping to find patterns in its form, process, and context and uncovering a deeper understanding of its issue.

Triangle Roles

Social and Cultural inquiry-based responses

Emotional inquiry-based responses

Form/Material/Process inquiry-based responses

This trifecta of responses is not exclusively an art-historical or critical tack. Simply put, the triangle member's angles are supposed to be living records of the artwork, not critics nor curators. They are to choose a role from which to look to the artwork as a teacher. These roles are messy categories and operate more as a Venn-diagram to learn from each other about the practice of asking sage questions.

Marking the Task

At the start of the crit session, the artist names the work's issue. For example, the artist can identify a place of doubt, a material issue, something that feels stuck in the process, or questions about the work's future.

Trust

The Hologram entails having trust in oneself and communities rather than trusting the bad faith support options capitalism provides. For the crit form, it means having confidence in your observations and senses. Trust is also a tether between artwork and artist to the triangle members. It is a relationship that forms through the very activity of patient critique.

Wishes

Wishes are a key tenant in The Hologram in that they allow you to uncover your real needs. During a critique of an artwork, a wish is not for the work to be something else, not to be bigger, not "I wish the artist had done x." A wish is about looking through the world the art presents and desiring to know what is possible in that world.

Time

Time operates in the critique form as a perspective of thinking past a particular human lifespan. We look at the artwork's materials lifespan, or even the ideas lifespan, and its implications for future generations during a critique. How will they have to care for this art? One way to think about this is through art historian George Kubler's idea that artwork exists through time while humans or environments that encounter it come and go.

Patterns

In the hologram, critique patterns can be evident as decorative patterns or patterns in style and process. However, this is just one formal angle of how the triangle can support the artwork and ask it questions. The hologram and triangle group might meet regularly, and thus the patterns observed can string through multiple sessions.

CONCLUSION - ARCHIVING AND ITERATIONS

It is up to the hologram and the triangle to discern how to archive the critique, if at all. Similarly, the group can decide when and how to meet after the initial critique. This experimental form is contingent on mutability. Future iterations of the hologram critiques can and should bend to the work's needs, including embodied and in-person critiques when the time is right. However, you iterate; remember we exchange trust, wishes, time, and patterns instead of cultural capital or debt. Further, we are of artwork and discourse; we live in them as caretakers of their site. And while we are there, we take care of each other.

* FACILITATION STEPS *

45-∞
MIN

1: CHOOSE TRIANGLE ROLES.

2: THE ARTIST PRESENTS THE WORK & MARKS THE TASK.

3: TRIANGLE ASKS QUESTIONS.

4: TRIANGLE MEMBERS GIVE A WISH, PROVOCATION, OR PATTERN IN AND FOR THE ART. THIS IS A GREAT TIME

FOR GIVING REFERENCES.

5: ARTIST GIVES FEEDBACK ON THE FEEDBACK.

6: SCHEDULE FOLLOW UPS AND ESTABLISH ARCHIVING METHODS.