

Alaura Seidl

### **Project Description**

On one afternoon in spring, artists and youth participants will fan out over the city, drawing self-portraits on mirrors in public and semi-public bathrooms using dry-erase markers. LGBT youth, youth of color, trans\* youth, and young women will be encouraged to participate in this project. Participation from young artists who have experienced housing insecurity will be prioritized. Dozens of portraits will pop up at locations across the city within a few hours.

### **Conceptual Approach**

Who do we see among our neighbors and when do we avert our gaze?

How often do we offer young people (including LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and young women who are at disproportionate odds for experiencing food and housing insecurity, violence and other trauma) the autonomy to control their own narrative and present it to an attentive, un-interrupting audience?

Individuals experiencing homelessness are pushed to invisibility in public spaces throughout Madison while searching for moments of privacy in plain sight. Chronic social displacement makes public bathrooms particularly politically charged sites for both housing secure and housing insecure individuals in Madison.

These reflective self-portraits will implicate onlookers in the stories of participating artists. Passersby will be thrust into a sense of time and community in a location that may otherwise go disregarded as meaningful and will present individuals of the general public with an immediately intimate confrontation. Participating artists will control their self-depiction, be given space to contemplate self-love, and will be warmly welcomed to leave traces of their existence—even if it is only for a small audience and for the duration of a dry-erase drawing's life.

While this project deals with issues related to homelessness, it primarily negotiates autonomy of narrative and regards all community members as valuable.

### **Proposed Sites**

Restroom mirrors in public libraries, as well as restrooms with mirrors at public parks and any/as many city building restrooms as possible. We anticipate these sites taking the most effort for permission to install, maintain, and erase. Semi-public restrooms, such as at coffee shops, thrift stores, and social service agencies have also been requested sites by early adopter teens interested in participating in the project and will require significantly fewer permissions. Including semi-public or private sites in the project will help to cultivate the significant, performative “moment” across Madison during which many portraits will be drawn simultaneously; inclusion of a variety of sites all around the city may bring greater awareness to the scale of the project on the whole. Priority for public building sites will be placed on libraries. Duration of drawing display will be negotiated with shop owners and building managers.

Alaura Seidl

**Proposed Budget:**

150 Dry Erase Markers	\$75.00
37 Bus Passes	\$74.00
General Liability Insurance (estimated)	\$350
Labels for mirror drawings	<i>unspecified cost printed and donated in-kind</i>
Chaperone advocates for youth under 18	<i>variable cost for time as needed donated in-kind</i>
Lead Artist Fee	\$1000
	<hr/>
	<b>\$1499</b>
 <i>MAC funding request</i>	 <i>\$1499</i>

**Proposed Timeline:**

February and March 2015: Gather interest and buy-in from social service agencies, public buildings, and storefronts for participation in project. Seek relevant permissions for public buildings.

March 2015: Artist recruits and confirms youth/artist participants.

Late March 2015: Youth/artist participants practice mirror drawings with lead artist during special workshops.

April 2015: On one weekend afternoon, youth will fan out across the city to draw their self-portraits on mirrors in bathrooms of buildings with permissions; youth under 18 will be accompanied by their advocates in groups. Labels with the youth artist's first name, the date, and materials description will be taped to a corner of the mirror. Youth will be asked to document their drawing with the help of their advocate. Lead artist will coordinate travel and logistics for all chaperone advocates.

Duration of drawing display will be negotiated with shop owners or building managers.

**References:**

Julie Ganser  
Art Department, UW-Madison  
[ganser@education.wisc.edu](mailto:ganser@education.wisc.edu)  
608-262-8831

Gail Simpson  
Art Department, UW-Madison  
[gsimpson@education.wisc.edu](mailto:gsimpson@education.wisc.edu)  
608-217-9599

Molly Leimontas  
Briarpatch Youth Services  
[Molly.Leimontas@briarpatch.org](mailto:Molly.Leimontas@briarpatch.org)  
608-772-3466

Alaura Seidl

**Work Samples (on disc)**

The following work samples are from or inspired by my self-portrait mirror series. The proposed BLINK project will translate my process for youth and young artists interested in considering the politics inherent in making their lived experience publically accessible through self-determined aesthetics.

**1. *Untitled Portrait in Motion I***

Found object and performative drawing, 2014

Materials: my mother's favorite mirror, blue permanent ink, black permanent ink

This was the first performative mirror portrait completed for my ongoing self-portrait mirror series. I held myself in both casual and precarious positions and documented my fidgeting through a trace drawing that was iterative; I gave myself multiple opportunities to explore the line of a shoulder, bulge in the torso or fussing hair line. I explored how self-editing could tell a story about gender or sexual identity and considered the process one of self-love, wherein contemplating my reflection was not an act of narcissism but of necessity. Use of the mirror did allow for self-contemplation; it also implicates onlookers in my story.

I am the founder and lead artist of The ArtWrite Collective, an emerging community arts organization cultivating intentionally inclusive art-making spaces for queer youth, youth of color, and young womyn who do or have experienced housing insecurity, violence, and other trauma. "People don't understand what it's really like," one young adult living in the Briarpatch transitional living cooperative told me, "because they don't want to understand. To some people, we are invisible. Look, sometimes, we experience homelessness. We have hard times. We are here. You should be doing something about it."

The urgency to control their narrative and increase visibility in the broader Madison community is obvious. Translating a project like this—which would allow youth to be a part of a planned, safe, resiliency-nourishing project that *feels* like a guerilla-style intervention on mirrors in public spaces—could give the kids, teens, and young adults that I collaborate with an opportunity to literally reflect on where they've come from and tell the community where they are going. Youth will control their image and inject it in the daily routines of individuals navigating public buildings.

**2. *Untitled Portrait in Motion I (detail)***

Found object and performative drawing, 2014

Materials: my mother's favorite mirror, blue permanent ink, black permanent ink

**3. *Untitled Portrait in Motion II***

Found object and performative drawing, 2014

Materials: a St. Vincent de Paul mirror, fuschia permanent ink, black permanent ink

**4. *Feminist Mantra I***

Screen print, 2015

Materials: ink, paper, stencil

This screen print is one of a few that were inspired by the mirror portrait series. By interrogating the aesthetic developed through the mirror drawings, I emphasize and demonstrate to the youth I work with that visual products are not an end but one outcome in a lifelong process of telling, reworking, and retelling our stories. Even if the dry-erase portraits that they "plaster" all over the city's bathrooms are erased immediately, there are ways to reframe our stories to new audiences and through fresh media.

**5. *Feminist Mantra II***

Screen print, 2015

Materials: ink, paper, stencil



Prompts for participants:

What do we choose to draw?

When do we self-edit?

Are we static or are we in motion?

What is your story?

—Portrait Sample—

# A Laura Seidl

## Artist-Activist-Educator

126 East Wilson Street #N, Madison, WI 53703

### Education

- 2014 M.S. Educational Leadership and Policy, Portland State University, Portland, OR
- 2014 Certificate: Community-Based Learning, Portland State University, Portland, OR
- 2012 B.S. Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI
- 2012 Certificate: Gender and Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI

### Experience

- Founded and leads *The ArtWrite Collective*, an emerging community initiative cultivating resiliency-nourishing arts programming for queer youth, youth of color, and young womyn
- Proposed, co-developed, and currently teaches *Service-Learning in Art*, the first community-based art course in the Art Department at UW-Madison
- Proposed and co-developed *Freshman Inquiry*, a community-based curriculum for all incoming students at Roosevelt High School in Portland, OR
- Proposed, designed and will teach *Art+Social Justice* as an expansion of the UW-Madison community arts program for 2015-2016
- Hiked 1,019 miles of the Appalachian Trail from March 2014-August 2014 as a gesture of reflection
- **Lecturer** [September 2014 - Present]  
Art Department at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Research Associate** [September 2014 - Present]  
Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Assessment Coordinator** [September 2014 - Present]  
Morgridge Center for Public Service at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Community-Based Learning Lead Graduate Fellow** [August 2013 - April 2014]  
Morgridge Center for Public Service at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Outreach Specialist for Arts Initiatives** [August 2013 - April 2014]  
Art Department at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **AmeriCorps\*VISTA College & Career Readiness Initiative Coordinator** [Aug 2012 - Aug 2013]  
Roosevelt High School and Concordia University in Portland, OR
- **Undergraduate Teaching Assistant** [August 2011- June 2012]  
Art Department at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Service-Learning Fellow** [August 2010 - June 2012]  
Morgridge Center for Public Service at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Gallery Attendant** [August 2010- June 2012]  
James Watrous Gallery, Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters
- **Career Peer** [August 2010- June 2012]  
Exploration Center for Majors and Careers at University of Wisconsin-Madison
- **Day Camp Counselor and Residential Art Instructor** [Summer 2009 and 2011]  
Lake Valley Camp in Milwaukee, WI and Boscobel, WI
- **Residential Camp Counselor** [Summer 2010]  
PEOPLE (Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity for Learning Excellence) at University of Wisconsin-Madison

## Professional and Civic Practice

- Speaker at Arts Institute Weekly Community Conversations - Overture Center [January 2015]
- OPEN (Out Professional and Executive Network) Member [October 2014]
- Lead Artist and Founder of The ArtWrite Collective [September 2014]
- Search Committee Member for Wisconsin Campus Compact Executive Director [September 2014]
- PEOPLE (Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity for Learning Excellence) program: panelist for Lifting as You Climb [November 2013]
- UW-Madison Diversity Forum: sponsored participant [October 2013]
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Assessment Institute: Morgridge Center sponsored participant [October 2013]
- The Studio UW Creative Residential Community Steering Committee Member [beginning September 2013]
- Founder of Green Lake County Young Professionals Network through non-profit Town Square, Green Lake, WI [September 2013]
- Orientations to Service-Learning: presenter in OR Campus Compact professional development conference call [May 2013]
- Cultural Engagement and Understanding in India: selected participant in international service-learning program [February 2013]
- Oregon College Access Network Annual Conference: OR Campus Compact sponsored participant [October 2012]
- Reflections on Service-Learning: Guest speaker at Annual Presidents and Chancellors Meeting for Wisconsin Campus Compact [February 2012]
- The Wisconsin Experience: profile featured in UW-Madison first-year orientation video for civic engagement [Spring 2012]
- Volunteer LGBTQ Mentor through LGBT Campus Center [Spring 2012]
- Filling the Gap in Service-Learning: profile featured on Morgridge Center for Public Service Website [November 2011]
- Filling the Gap in Service-Learning: profile featured in Art Department Alumni Magazine [2011 edition]
- The BIG Learning Event: Arts Institute sponsored participant [June 2011]
- Coordinator for Princeton Public Art Show and Kiln Fundraiser [April 2011]
- ArtSpeak Art Therapy Intern [Spring 2010]
- Art Reviewer for Illumination: Undergrad Journal for Humanities [Fall 2008-Spring 2010]
- Badger Volunteer with Mentoring Positives of Dane County [Fall 2008-Spring 2010]
- Photographer for Street Pulse, Madison's Homeless Cooperative Newspaper [Fall 2008-Spring 2009]

## Exhibits and Published Art

### Intimate Performances:

*New Home*

February 27, 2012

South Park Street, Madison, WI

A story, an old sewing table, some q-tips

*Ascension*

May 22, 2012

6th Floor Humanities Installation, UW-Madison

Installation, 90 second video loop projected on wall

### Piece Exhibitions:

Queer Pressure

January 10-11, 2015 at Bright Red Studios, Madison, WI

*Homo Sweet Homo, I Swear This is My Femme-iest, Home is Where My Queers Are*

Embroidered and knit intarsia wall hangings

FLEXUOUS: a negotiation in real time and space

April 9-13, 2012 at Commonwealth Gallery, Madison, WI

*Untitled Collaborative Performances and Found Object Installations*

Everything is Happening [Right Now]: Performance, Video, Installation+

November 5-11, 2010 at UW Madison Art Lofts

*"Do you have a mouth?"*

Installation, 2 minute video loop projected in briefcase

Piping Hot: A Glassworking Exhibition

October 22-29, 2010 at UW Madison Art Lofts

*Multiple glass pieces*

Foundations Exhibition

6th Floor Humanities Installation, UW-Madison

*Tassle Swag: a self portrait*

Post-it notes, cardboard and ink

### Piece Publication:

Emmie Magazine, Fall 2011

*Stones Project*

9"x12" micron and pencil drawing

## Works in Progress

*index: the cache ephemera*

March 2012 - present

A relational piece consisting of Polaroids, conversations and typewritten documentations:  
will culminate in a book cataloguing 50 intimate conversations

*Performative Mirror Self-Portraits*

December 2014 - present

Intimate and gendered performances documented on mirrors; will exhibit at 100state  
beginning May 2015