

**“Our people don’t  
know PICA.  
People call it PEEKA.  
People who have  
lived in Portland  
their entire lives  
do not know what  
PICA is.”**

# PICA FOR THE PEOPLE

Researching possibilities  
for engaging youth of color  
in Portland



PHOTO BY MEGHANN GILLIGAN



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PHOTO: ROYA AMIRSOLEYMANI

**The logic behind  
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# Introduction

## The Rationale

*PICA for the PEOPLE* reports on the activities funded by the Doris Duke Foundation's 'Building Demand For the Arts' program undertaken by the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art in collaboration with artist Darren O'Donnell to examine the question of building demand for PICA's programming. Doris Duke's 'Building Demand for the Arts' is designed to "support organizations and artists in joint efforts to develop audience demand for jazz, theater and/or contemporary dance." The program "is predicated on the belief that artists and organizations can work together in imaginative ways to create and pilot methods of reaching the public and developing interest in and access to the performing arts. (The) program encourages creative thinking about how to increase this demand and to engage communities in new ways—which may include but are not necessarily limited to the traditional artist-audience dynamic."

The logic behind PICA's Building Demand initiative was that, in order to expand the demand for PICA's work, the organisation needed to expand who is involved in *creating* and *selecting* that work. This insight was combined with the observation that those involved in arts and culture remain predominantly and frustratingly white, a phenomenon noted in the US<sup>1</sup>, Canada<sup>2</sup>, the UK<sup>3</sup>, Europe and Australia<sup>4</sup>. This is a social justice issue, an issue of societal health, social sustainability as well as one of relevance and audience development as arts organizations from across disciplines struggle with maintaining an increasingly diverse public's interest in their activities, this often translating into decreasing audience numbers.

PICA chose to focus on the question of building demand within populations of colour, with the understanding that meaningful demand from diverse populations will only rise if what is on offer is initiated, created and led by people of colour. This led to the question of developing practitioners and curators of colour from a very early age, focusing on a long term engagement with young people in their teens as a way to initiate the sharing of cultural and social capital through a deeper sort of mentorship, with young people being immersed in PICA both from an early age and for a long time.

These questions were designed to address the specific paradox presented by the problem of youth access to and interest in contemporary art and performance, genres typically focused on exploring subjects that are challenging, provocative and difficult. During the Building

Demand's Final Learning Community sessions with other organizations in the same cohort of grant recipients, the idea of the importance of 'universality' was often raised. This poses a challenge for an organization like PICA, which has a mission that is very much opposed to universality:

"PICA's programming supports the experiments of the most vital and provocative artists of our time."

It's safe to assume that PICA is intent on provoking thought, discussion and, perhaps even action. Provocation, by definition is seeking a reaction and since no reaction is specified, it can be assumed that PICA is okay with a variety of reactions: critical, positive, negative, thoughtful, angry, hurt, etc. Another important directive in PICA's mission that is at odds with universality is collaborating with artists at the

"increasingly blurry boundaries between forms and at the edge of new ideas."

Again, like provocation, new ideas are also often met with a range of different reactions, some positive some negative, and universal appeal is not only difficult to achieve but, ultimately, undesirable.

Organizations like PICA, therefore, are often supporting practices that are on the edge and may represent a threat to the way some people think. It's safe to say that PICA is not interested in becoming what would ordinarily be considered "youth-friendly."

A second challenge to youth participation is the conceptual difficulties of contemporary art. Contemporary art very much has its own language with references that often point to other difficult works of art, complex

theoretical arguments, or confusing world events or situations. Additionally, it's a world that is often characterised by obfuscation, with value being generated by work that is difficult or challenging even for most adults. Contemporary art is a very specialised practice, with a very specialised discourse, and, for many, it is not easy to penetrate.

While often the subject of the 'my child could paint that' critique, contemporary work and the words used to describe it have been recently subjected to some withering, if hilarious criticism within the art world itself. VICE's Glenn Coco's *I Don't Get Art*<sup>5</sup> series focused on his admission that, though

he himself went to art school, he still doesn't get it. David Levine and Alix Rule ignited a controversy when they analysed thirteen years of e-flux press releases and declared in *Triple Canopy* that there exists a new language within the art world, one that is "emphatically not English," which they dub "International Artspeak." Defending the art world on the Blouin Art website<sup>6</sup>, Ben Davis pointed out that the e-flux

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press releases are not a representative sampling of trends within the art world, but that “the vast majority of what e-flux sends out hail from non-profits and biennials, institutions with quite specific reasons for maintaining a veneer of academic seriousness in a way that, say, an art fair does not.” So, while defending a slice of the art world, Davis points directly at the terrain that PICA inhabits.

This, in turn, points to an important factor in youth engagement: the need for there to exist the will within the youth to be engaged with contemporary art, as confusing as it all might be and, if that will is not strong, a whole other type of incentive is required. That will can be found amongst certain young people, but this is generally a narrow cross section of young people who have had a good deal of exposure to challenging work, often through osmosis from parents who introduced them—intentionally or not—to the form, or through peers who have, in turn, had parental support or other mentors. What this means is that those with the will to throw themselves into the confusing world of contemporary art are generally less likely to include those who are low-income, marginalised, or whose parents or families have recently immigrated to the country and have not been able to afford the sort of time or education that is required to get up to speed with the challenging discourse.

Significantly, The PICA staff notes the challenge of the work and the potential inappropriateness for other people’s kids, describing it as “not kid friendly.” However, Executive Director, Victoria Frey and Performing Arts Programming Director, Erin Boberg Doughton, both stated that they’ve been bringing their children to experience PICA’s work since the kids were very young, with no detrimental effects. What this points to, more specifically, is not the inappropriateness of the work for the young people, but its inappropriateness for the gatekeepers who control access to young people: schools and parents. In UNESCO’s 2010 report *Arts Education for All: What Experts in Germany are Saying*, Winfried Kneip, the Director of the Centre for Education at the Mercator Foundation, reports on a series of three yearly congresses organized by the Yehuda Menuhin Foundation. Each year of the congress focused on three different players: educators, artists, and children. With respect to the children, they found that “there are very few topics and few artistic processes which are not accessible to children.” It’s the gatekeepers who pose

the biggest problem, with schools needing to consider the lowest common denominator—the most sensitive parent—when making decisions about appropriateness for an entire group of children.

The combination of art insiders easily exposing their children to the work and the various barriers marginalised communities face accounts for a lot of why the sector remains so white. There’s a clear self-perpetuating dynamic here, with those in the know producing children in the know who then, in turn, populate the industry. To change this requires an intervention at an early age.

**To be positioned at the “edge of new ideas” is to make efforts to belong to a milieu that believes, thinks, or understands, things that are not widely believed, thought or understood.**

A third challenge is the necessary elitism of contemporary art. Elitism is necessarily inherent in a mission like PICA's and is not a bad thing. To be positioned at the "edge of new ideas" is to make efforts to belong to a milieu that believes, thinks, or understands, things that are not widely believed, thought or understood. It's one of the important roles that contemporary art plays. But, when confronted with the challenge of accessibility, there is a bit of a paradox. How can something that positions itself at the edge be accessible? It can't. It shouldn't. Not that inaccessibility is the purpose, but that rareness and newness of thought is the priority, and rareness and newness of thought simply cannot and should not be widely accessible, by definition.

**it can be said that youth of color are, themselves, not only on the edge of new ideas, they are the edge; they are the embodiment of this edge, as such, and if engaged with are an obvious ally for contemporary arts organizations like PICA, in their efforts toward a more equitable world, an idea that remains stubbornly provocative.**

However one area of overlap does exist, which provides a clear rationale for engaging of youth of colour within a contemporary art context. Given their marginalization within the wider society, the mere presence of many youth of color can be provocative, particularly within the more mainstream contemporary art circles that, if they engage with youth of color at all, tend to only engage in the margins of the institutions. In short, that youth of color are, themselves, not only on the edge of new ideas, they are the edge; they are the embodiment of this edge and if engaged with are an obvious ally for contemporary arts organizations like PICA, in their efforts toward a more equitable world, an idea that remains stubbornly provocative.

PICA's Building Demand focused on engaging youth of colour toward mentorship and eventual creative collaboration, with the understanding that the long-term goal is a broadening of both who is producing, presenting and showing work under the PICA umbrella and, in turn, who is attending this work. The entire course of the Building Demand research, then, was focused on studying the possibility of engaging youth of colour, and what kind of youth engagement model might be best suited to PICA's needs, as well as be of benefit to involved youth. We wanted to learn how best to:

1. Cultivate interest and engagement among younger, more diverse audiences now, that would inform audience composition in the future
2. Seed direct participation beyond passive audienceship (e.g., activated audiences, or future artists/curators/producers)
3. Cultivate and support young people's openness to new and experimental forms, cultural perspectives, and contemporary theatre

Our criteria for success of the research included:

- Determining whether or not a dedicated youth engagement strategy is right for PICA, and if so, what that should look like.

- Promoting openness of PICA staff to intergenerational and cultural diversity, particularly youth, and a) align this with other strategic plans, b) encouraging candid, ongoing conversations on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion, and c) providing a clear roadmap for future demand-building
- including internal/external stakeholders in conversations and local advisors to help us thoroughly investigate a youth perspective
- collecting more, and more useful, data on current audiences and participation
- taking a risk with a test/prototype that allows for both success and productive failure
- generating a plan for evaluating exploration activity so as to inform future implementation

There were three critical questions that were posed:

1. Should we narrow target group further (age, cultural, economic, geography) to meet PICA goals, Portland's needs and, if so, do we program or site work in different neighborhoods or via new methods?
2. What does youth participation look like: long-term? Multi-year? Should youth be involved in design, curation or production? How much agency?
3. Is a youth initiative right for PICA's aesthetic and the type of theatre we present?

The course of research was divided into three research phases, the final occurring during the 2016 TBA Festival.

**“My high school has a phenomenal performing arts program and they won a grammy but they don’t do any black work”**

**“Most of the kids in band and choir are not black. You don’t see black kids carrying instruments around. Maybe a few asian kids; very few hispanics.”**



# Phase One: Portland's Youth Arts Landscape and PICA's Orientation to Youth

## Youth Arts in Portland

The first research phase occurred over the last two weeks of February 2016 and featured meetings with a number of the organisations working with young people that PICA has recently engaged with or were interested in, including the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Caldera Arts, Catlin Gabel's Place program, Grant High School's AP program, the Hollywood Theatre, Know Your City, Native American Youth and Family Centre (NAYA), King School Museum of Contemporary Art, p:ear, Portland State University, Sexual Minority Youth Resource Centre (SMYRC), Young Audiences of Oregon and S.W. Washington (YAO) and Andre Middleton, from RAAC, who spoke of his efforts to create an all-ages music venue.

These meetings revealed three broadly held goals of the organizations:

1. Academic support, with activities focused on acquiring basic academic skills, which included Caldera Arts, Place, King School, NAYA, and YAO.
2. Professionally oriented training included the fairly clear-cut case of Hollywood Theatre, and Grant High School although Caldera Arts and YAO do have some professional orientation. Though it's worth noting that Caldera states on their website that they "never saw Caldera as a place that creates artists. It is a place that creates community," and YAO's tagline is "learning through the arts" with the priority being on generic learning.
3. Social justice, with social justice being divided into
  - a. Organizations that are more oriented toward training in the field, which includes activities like lobbying and forms of civic engagement. This category includes APANO, Place and Know Your City,
  - b. Organizations that I will provisionally call social emergency room—front line organizations that attend to those who are having a hard time managing to take care of their basic physical and material needs. This category includes NAYA, p:ear and SMYRC with their targeted demographic of young people who are having a hard time with school (NAYA) or who, for a number of reasons, are unable to maintain secure housing (p:ear and SMYRC).

If contrasted with PICA's goals for working with youth—cultivating engagement among younger diverse audiences, seeding participation, and cultivating openness to new and experimental forms—there is some overlap but not a direct fit. Academic support and social justice are not a good match for PICA and, while professional development is the most accurate fit, only the approach of Hollywood Theatre seems to be inline with PICA's thinking therefore, they are the most obvious partner for future initiatives if it's decided that partnerships are the way to go.

With respect to schools, a number of the PICA staff registered frustration with the quality of the school system and the difficult challenges with working in schools. Administrators and teachers with buy-in tend to be rare and past attempts have not yielded stable ongoing relationships but, rather, one-offs. It's usually a single teacher within a school who provides access to the arts, very specifically targeted at a single form of interest—choir being the example provided. A member of the TBA focus group—described in detail later in this document—took these concerns further, stating that those schools that do have a performing arts program,

“are completely eurocentric. My high school has a phenomenal performing arts program and they won a grammy but they don't do any black work. It's completely negligent to do music, acting and theatre, and to not have anything from black and brown culture... that's why people think its boring and whack”

(TBA Focus Group Member, early twenties.)

While a younger member in their teens stated,

“Most of the kids in band and choir are not black. You don't see black kids carrying instruments around. Maybe a few asian kids; very few hispanics.”

(TBA Focus Group Member, teen.)

The older focus group member added to this, explaining a possible reason for the lack of youth of color in the music programs at school:

“They don't reach out to people who have not being doing this their whole life; they don't want behaviour problems. When the black kids sign up for those classes, within three months they get kicked out for random stuff—just being a person who wants to have fun.”

(TBA Focus Group Member, teen.)

While partnerships are favoured by funders, the lack of fit with the various organisations with whom PICA has recently engaged seems to suggest that either new organisations must be found or, to a certain extent, PICA needs to go it alone. However, throughout the course of the research a third way presented itself in the form of nascent communities and initiatives that had not yet evolved an organisational form, but which were founded and driven by young people of colour

operating independently on the margins of the formal arts sector. These initiatives are addressed below in the section DIY in Portland.

### **PICA staff and Youth Engagement**

Interviews<sup>7</sup> and discussions were held with a number of PICA staff including Executive Director Victoria Frey; Artistic Director, Angela Mattox; Visual Art Curator, Kristin Kennedy; Performing Arts Program Director, Erin Boberg Doughton; Director of Community Engagement, Roya Amirsoleymani and Director of Communications, Kirsten Saladow as well as Ethan Seltzer, PICA Board Chair.

The PICA staff is very much interested in and open to youth engagement and mentorship, with a number having had past experience both under the auspices of PICA and elsewhere. This interest has a number of motivations in addition to the specific motivation focused on the development of diverse collaborators and, in turn, a diverse audience. These included the belief that the traditional model of engaging young people in the arts—described by ED Victoria Frey as “busing them in to see the Symphony or Art Museum”—is not working. “That’s just a drop off babysitter.” There was also the recognition that PICA’s traditional audience were now, more and more, having children of their own and that the organisation needed to respond to this development and figure out a way to accommodate younger people. Director of Community

Engagement, Roya Amirsoleymani expressed a strong disinterest in PICA’s previous and current approach to youth engagement with partnerships with other organisations “once or twice a year or once every couple of years because there’s some arbitrary affinity.”

The question of what exactly would the youth who were engaged actually do was central to all of the conversations with some conflicting opinions about their potential role in programming, both with respect to curating the work as well as creating it. This is no surprise as youth engagement is often fraught with challenges surrounding the quality of the youth’s engagement with the organisation, with typical youth councils having very little impact on the functioning

of the organisation proper. This is clearly demonstrated in *Room to Rise: The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums*, a comprehensive 2015 study of the impact of four of America’s most notable youth engagement programs: the Whitney Museum’s Youth Insights, New York; the Walker Centre’s Teen Arts Council, Minneapolis; the Contemporary Arts Museum’s Teen Council, Houston; and the Museum of Contemporary Art’s MOCA Mentors, Los Angeles. The study’s framework is focused almost exclusively on the impacts that these programs have had on the lives of the young participants. The organisations themselves are only discussed in terms of experiencing changes of attitudes toward audience development, with the common take-away that teens are “a natural audience for contemporary art” and that the youth influenced the way the museum sought and welcomed diverse audiences, managing to, not surprisingly, attract other teens. What was missing was any sense of the youth having any

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effect on the organisations' programming, as inclusion of the youth within the curatorial remit is extremely challenging. As it stands PICA, like most organizations with a mandate to present international work find showcasing local talent to be, in the words of Victoria Frey, "complicated." However, for Roya Amirsoleymani "the long term smaller, intimate cohort... having artistic or curatorial producing roles is really critical" going on to describe this as "nonnegotiable." For Roya there was a reluctance to reproduce both what PICA had already done or reproduce the typical model deployed by many similar organizations, as exemplified by the programs describe in the *Room to Rise* report.

While it is unclear to what extent the engaged youth could be involved in meaningful activities like curation or creation, there is agreement across the entire staff that mentorship of some sort is desirable, with little clarity or agreement on what that could look like. As mentioned,

Roya advocated strongly for involving the youth in real decisions that were featured, in some way, as part of PICA's programming. Victoria saw possibilities in mentorship particularly around the technical and production elements, an aspect that presents a staff challenge for the organization when the TBA Festival rolls around.

It should be noted that more than one staff mentioned with respectful humour that "it was no secret" that Artistic Director Angela Mattox is not such a huge fan of young people which is an entirely commonplace attitude amongst those tasked with programming substantial international performing arts festivals, a job that is challenging enough without the added responsibility of ticking youth engagement boxes. This reality produces the near ubiquitous tendency across the sector to assign youth engagement to a department variously termed 'community engagement,' 'audience development,' 'education,' or 'participation.'

**However youth mentorship might look in the future, an area of universal agreement was that PICA's current capacity would not be able to sustain any youth engagement of any significant value.**

However youth mentorship might look in the future, an area of universal agreement was that PICA's current capacity would not be able to sustain any youth engagement of any significant value. Everyone agreed that people's plates are as full as they could possibly be and new staffing is absolutely necessary to undertake any implementation of youth engagement.

Something raised by a number of staff members was the health of the DIY and independent scene in Portland, with its abundance of emerging and mid career artists. With respect to young artists of colour in particular, three were mentioned: Deep Underground (DUG), Holding Space and Young Gifted and Brown (YGB). These events featured artists and audience of color that were not typically reflected in PICA programming or, for that matter, found within the booming micro-brewed areas of Portland that have solidified the city's hipster reputation. This was a demographic that appeared to not have much affiliation with the recent spike in local entrepreneurship that has recently overtaken the city. There was a strong and sincere energy at these events. This

appeared to be exactly the demographic that could form a mutually beneficial relationship with PICA.

The questions formulated at the end of the first research phase were focused on the events of DUG, Holding Space, and YGB: who were the organisers, what were their goals, what were their needs, who was their community, what additional networks did their communities plug-into? These questions formed the basis of my second visit.



PHOTO BY DARREN O'DONNELL



PHOTO BY DARREN O'DONNELL

## Phase Two: DIY In Portland And NAYA

The second phase of the Building Demand research occurred over ten days in May 2016 and was focused on two groups of questions:

1. What are the Portland-born young people of colour up to? What kind of work are they making? What are their priorities? What are their needs? What do they want from PICA?
2. What is it like to work with NAYA's Art and Social Change students? What is it like to work with teacher Clay River? What do the students think of the work of the social practice community as experienced through the Portland State University's Assembly conference? What kind of experience will we have together?

The NAYA activities felt somewhat productive, but I failed to gel with some of the youth and my social media blitz during the focus group got on their nerves. I believe that this problem is, ultimately, a symptom

of the larger challenges with working with the young people at NAYA, where trust is, understandably, a bit thin and an in-your-face irreverent style not particularly appreciated. Additionally, it's not so clear that an immersion in contemporary art creation is necessarily what the NAYA youth are interested in or, for that matter, would be of particular benefit to them. The youth are at NAYA because they've exhausted all other avenues for education and my time with them was tough; they were very difficult to engage, particularly the males. Once engaged, they had things to say, but that engagement was fleeting and it seemed that they did not view PICA as an exciting resource that they could potentially tap, unlike the teens and young adults involved in the focus group during the third phase, who were very clear that PICA was a resource they were interesting in. With NAYA, the low perception of PICA's worth was a very difficult place to start; worth needs to be perceived quickly in a youth arts program as retention, even amongst those who do value the opportunities, can be very challenging. Young people have a lot on their plate and many demands on their attention and time.

tion, even amongst those who do value the opportunities, can be very challenging. Young people have a lot on their plate and many demands on their attention and time.

In contrast, meetings with the women of YGB, DUG and Holding Space were all very productive and answered two questions: do these people have any need for PICA's resources and does their creative practice include the idea of mentoring younger people? Not only were both of

**an entire DUG open mic discussion was dedicated to the subject of mentoring youth, in a room inhabited by both adults and a few children. It's rare to see an intergenerational open mic night dedicated to the question of mentorship, let alone one with children in the house.**

**Mia and Madenna, in particular had a very strong vision of what they wanted to create, which was, essentially, a community centre that included live-in studios, juice bar, and commercial space for artists to sell their work.**

these questions answered in the affirmative, but on the second question, an entire DUG open mic discussion was dedicated to the subject of mentoring youth, in a room inhabited by both adults and a few children. It's rare to see an intergenerational open mic night dedicated to the question of mentorship, let alone one with children in the house. It seemed that the organisers of DUG could be important allies in PICA's youth engagement strategy.

DUG and YGB's Mia O'Conner, Madenna Ibrahim, Natalie Figuero, and Akela Jaffi all expressed a strong desire for space to create and host events and felt that was the most valuable thing PICA could offer. Mia and Madenna, in particular had a very strong vision of what they wanted to create, which was, essentially, a community centre that included live-in studios, juice bar, and commercial space for artists to sell their work. They also have aspirations to collaborate with the school system to offer alternative forms of pedagogy directed toward Afrocentric healing. The consistent desire I heard from these women was for a stable and reliable space to make and present work, as well as build an artistic community that, at this point, they identify as very strong but very small. They feel they are pioneers in something they are certain has exciting momentum, a claim robustly supported by the high attendance and strong response to their own events and the event they curated at the Works during TBA 2016.

The interest that these women demonstrated toward PICA, in particular the access to space, in addition to their dedication to mentoring young people was very strong.



**We agreed that  
a good way to describe  
the problem is that  
the festival tends to  
lack *celebration* and  
what celebration  
it has tends to be  
confined to the late  
night activities at  
The Works...**

**...every night should  
be a dance party.**



TDA

THE WORKS

PICA

PHOTO BY WAYNE BUND

## **Phase Three: The Focus Group vs. TBA**

The third phase was focused on an assessment of PICA and TBA from the perspective of a focus group comprised of two cohorts: the young producers from YGB and DUG, who I had met during my previous visit and a group of teens who they invited. The adults were comprised of Mia O’Conner, Bette Daniel, Janessa Narcisso, Natalie Figuera, Anthony Byrant, Madenna Ibrihim, and Akela Jaffi. The youth came from a number of different sources: a couple of them, Pedro and Manny, were from a school where Natalie taught, two of them were Sam and Edom Daniel, the younger siblings of Bette from DUG, and one—Zavie Wilson—was the daughter of a woman who ran a Dominican food truck at 15th and Alberta, which some of the women frequent. Janessa’s six-year-old son, Kai, joined us for a bit of one of our meetings and spent some time with us at the volunteer party. Manny was an interesting and familiar case in that he was by far the most enthusiastic, expressed a strong interest in exposing himself to the many artistic forms and artists at PICA, and was constantly expressing gratitude for the opportunity. However, due to typical challenges in his personal life, he was unable to attend the rest of the events. This sort of high desire combined with challenges seeing this desire through is commonplace with young people and is not evidence of lack of interest or commitment.

A series of questions were identified, most of which were answered during the course of the focus group and subsequent follow up interviews.

### **Questions related to the young people**

What kind of art work/activities do the young people connect with and why?

What kind of art work/activities do the young people dislike and why?

What is the nature of their dislike?

Who do the young people gravitate to within the PICA team?

Who amongst the PICA team was particularly welcoming to the young people?

Were there any PICA people who were not so nice to them?

What kinds of situations do they feel most comfortable in and why?

What kinds of situations do they feel uncomfortable in and why?

What do the young people think of PICA; what is their understanding of PICA vs. TBA? Are they clear on the difference?

What is their understanding of the different roles in PICA? In TBA?

What is their understanding of the resources that PICA has?

What resources does PICA have that they are interested in?

What are their career aspirations?

What is their interest in a longer term association with PICA?

What might they be interested in doing within the context of a long term association with PICA?

Where do they live?

How do they travel in the city?

How much of the city do they know and feel comfortable in?

What is their view of PICA's new neighborhood?

What kinds of time and effort are involved in city-wide travel?

What kind of demands do they have on their time? School? Sports? Specific extracurricular activities?

What do they love to do with their time?

What kinds of barriers do they face to longer-term participation with PICA?

### **Questions related to PICA**

What efforts did PICA make to accommodate and welcome the young people?

Which PICA staff members seem to gravitate to the youth?

Did any PICA staff go 'above and beyond' in their interactions with the youth?

How sustainable are those efforts into the future?

What challenges were there in accommodating and welcoming the young people?

What aspects of the young people's presence did PICA staff particularly enjoy?

What aspects of the young people's presence did PICA staff dislike?

Did the staff experience any surprises when working with the youth?

Over the course of TBA, we saw eight events and attended the Gala dinner. Participation in the group waxed and waned, with the lowest turnout being two: Madenna and Zavier, and the highest being at the gala, when we were all there, and Mohammed El Khatib's *Finir en beauté* when everyone but Akela showed up.

**“At first it was kind of weird. I’m half the age of most of these people but after a while, they’re humans. They’re a person, you’re a person.”**

The group spirit was strong, everyone all had a lot to say and, over the course of the festival, we developed a strong cohesion and bond. The first wave of comments focused on the enjoyment of being together over the course of the festival. There was a clear team spirit by the end, and the palpable excitement at the idea of future possibilities with PICA. This group spirit, particularly the intergenerational aspect, was cited as one of the experience's most exciting features. One of the younger teens stated that they found the situation interesting,

“especially going to DUG and random places. There are so many randomly different people with randomly different ages. The fact that we were all there meant that we had something in common. It made it normal. At first it was kind of weird. I’m half the age of most of these people but after a while, they’re humans. They’re a person, you’re a person.”

(Focus Group Member, Younger Teen)

An older member reflected on the effect of the intergenerational structure on the quality of conversations,

“It’s good to be asked the same questions as you would ask older people. That was what was really tight about this group. Having conversations with each other and taking each other seriously; that’s how you can influence young people. It’s different when you’re mixed up and you are being analytical with these people.”

(Focus Group Member, Early 20s.)

This view supports the idea that an effective way to create cultural capital is through ambient osmosis, in the same way that the children of senior PICA staff have and currently are soaking up all the activities and insights that are circulating around the organisation, without having to sit down and actually study the topic.

**“everyone at PICA is  
fucking awesome,  
so open, so awesome,  
and so good to us...  
Every single person.”**



PHOTO BY WAYNE BUND

## Findings and Analysis

**when the horrors and injustices are a part person's daily experience, as they tend to be for people of colour, the idea that they are anomalous and rare can be very off-putting and alienating.**

It's no secret that people of colour endure a whole range of racist treatment, from the constant barrage of bullets from the nation's police officers to the systemic barriers to accessing any number of services, education and other opportunities; to the various assumptions they face about their abilities; to the yearly ritual of racist Halloween costumes: Native Princesses, Mexican Day of the Death Skulls, or just some idiot throwing on an afro wig. Even participating in Pokémon Go can be a radically different experience for African Americans, who need to be very careful about where they are walking and when, always at risk of being misperceived as a threat and quick to catch a bullet.

The list of challenges and injustices is endless and the experience is constant. This has now taken an ominous turn with the recent election of Trump and the tide of racist incidents that have followed. It's not an exaggeration to say that people of colour and white people live in very different worlds and must navigate these worlds with very different approaches, a claim further bolstered by the way different demographics recently voted.

It shouldn't be surprising to find that there is also significant difference when it comes to choices about which cultural and artistic activities are of relevance. Beyond the obvious fact that people need to see their own experience addressed and reflected in the culture they consume, there are the more subtle differences

in artistic and cultural preferences that make it difficult for organisations with a predominantly white leadership to easily and effortlessly address and excite populations of colour.

Because white people are—by and large—able to simply exist without concern for the treatment they receive because of the colour of their skin, they live a life that, by many standards, is a little—or a lot—easier. They do not have to prove themselves to the same degree as others, their stories and lived experience are constantly told and told as if the experience was universal.

When life is easy people—particularly the sort of critical thinkers that populate the audience of organisations like PICA—turn to art that is difficult and that tends to present the horrors and injustices of the world as if they were rare and noteworthy anomalies. However, when the horrors and injustices are a part of a person's daily experience, as they tend to be for people of colour, the idea that they are

**Celebration, dancing, and having a good time is very much an act of resistance to—what one of the group members described as—a world that would prefer that they were dead.**

**“EDM (electronic dance music) for white folks; you could just do some beeps and they’re cool with that.”**

anomalous and rare can be off-putting and alienating. Beyond this misalignment around how injustice is perceived and dealt with in cultural practices, there is a further misalignment around even less controversial aesthetic choices, with festivals like TBA tending to favour an intellectualism that, at the risk of simplistic generalisation and relying on a metaphor that is not at all precise, lacks heart.

I struggled to define this over the course of the festival but in consultation with the focus group we agreed that a good way to describe the problem is that the festival tends to lack *celebration* and what celebration it has tends to be confined to the late night activities at The Works. An African American individual affiliated with PICA and with strong ties to the focus group voiced the opinion that every night should be a dance party. The focus group agreed with this sentiment. Again, this desire can be understood through the lens of a desire for celebration and, in this case, bodily celebration. Celebration, dancing, and having a good time is very much an act of resistance to—what one of the group members described as—a world that would prefer that they were dead. Celebration in the face of oppression is a strong act of defiance, evidence being police scrutiny that dance and music venues that cater to a non-white audiences tend to attract. Luckily, of all of the festivals that I frequent in my professional travels, PICA is probably the only one that could pull off a lot of dance nights.

But it’s important to keep in mind the earlier observation that we’re broadly dealing with two audiences, with two aesthetic tendencies. This fact was summed up nicely by the group’s discussion of their Works night and the challenges facing the DJ.

“Lamar (the DJ for the DUG/YGB event) said that was the hardest thing to put together because he is so used to just playing for his brown friends so had to keep in mind that the crowd was not brown. EDM (electronic dance music) for white folks; you could just do some beeps and they’re cool with that.”

For most, their familiarity with PICA was very low with one focus group member in their early twenties confusing the organisation with PNCA. They emphasised that, in their communities, PICA and TBA were completely unknown and not a subject of any discussion or interest:

“A lot of us have never heard of it; like I did not know TBA existed and I’m born and raised in Portland and I have no idea because I live so far out.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“People don’t know PICA, haven’t been to PICA events. If you don’t know who PICA is, you’re not going to a PICA event. People call it PEEKA. People who have lived in Portland their entire lives do not know what PICA is.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

### **Treatment by PICA**

The group was very happy with the way they were treated by PICA, feeling that “everyone at PICA is fucking awesome, so open, so awesome, and so good to us.... Every single person.” (Focus Group Member, early 30s) They further specified some criteria for awesomeness: “to be so flexible with everything, I cannot be more thankful for that; it’s huge.” This comment followed a statement that others have reached out to work with them but had bad follow-through, the issue being “they don’t take interest in our lives; Roya is fantastic.” (Focus Group Member, early 30s) This excitement with PICA’s—and particularly Roya’s interest in their lives is a both a strong testimony to the work done and, hopefully, an incentive to foster further interest and investment in their lives.

“If you’re approached by such an institution you can sometimes end up feeling consumed but we didn’t feel consumed... I felt like we are creating a good night. It definitely felt like a two way street.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“I was so blown away by how nice everyone was. When we put on our event—just how hands on and helpful the staff was, no issues: rainbows. Amazing compared to another contemporary art centre. Others have treated like we were just some fucking black kids. Like what we’re doing is not important. PICA was phenomenal. I was blown away.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

### **Inclusion of Those Under 21**

On the question of inclusion of people under 21, they were quite unhappy. A younger teen member of the focus group stated,

“One minute you’re included and you’re being treated the same as anyone else around you—I’m amongst someone who is double my age and it doesn’t make a difference. And then you’re separating us off and we don’t want to be there anymore. And we’re asked: why aren’t you guys here anymore? Why aren’t young people coming to our events? It’s not interesting; it obviously was not made for us. We’re not interested because it doesn’t feel like it’s made for us. Once you show people this is how old you are, it gets really boring.”  
(Focus Group Member, early teens)

While PICA is as much a victim of the US’s unusually restrictive liquor laws, this insight reveals how exclusion in one realm easily spills over and affects perception in another—the programming doesn’t “feel like it’s made” for them.

The focus group felt like small things were missed that could make a big difference, like starting earlier:

“Something really basic like starting a late night program at 9:00 instead of 10:30. This is too late for younger and older people. I get that it’s late night, but late night can be 9:00—in Portland especially. Anywhere else, maybe not, but in Portland late night is 9:00. With an extra hour, I think a lot more youth could’ve shown up. It’s hard to ask your parents to go out at 10:30. If you go out at 9:00 you can kick it to 11:00.”

(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

They were concerned about the way the young people were off to the side, feeling that the rope dividers could have been pulled out more and that what was available on that side of the venue was limited.

“There was nothing for them to eat, nothing for them to buy, nothing for them to do, nothing for them to engage with.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

Because accessibility and access form a core interest in their lives, things that create divides are challenging,

“All of us are really into accessibility because our community is broke and spread out. All these little things of space and comfort and divisions are really problematic for us in our events, anything that divides people—so that rope or anything that separates people – security, anything. That’s a really big focus for us and we worked really hard to be as accessible as possible.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

**“PICA needs to pay attention. Alcohol leads to violence, and leads to problems, it’s bad for your health. It’s not something that we believe in. If they want us to work with them again, that’s a really big issue.”**

The group reported that because alcohol has caused a good deal of damage in their communities, its ubiquitous presence and centrality to the activities at The Works was of concern. This concern also dovetailed with the issue of the presence of those under the age of twenty-one and the limitations that needed to be imposed on their presence. Their recommendation was for some sort of beer garden, a delimited area in which alcohol was sold and consumed, but that

the majority of the space, particularly where the performances occur, would be alcohol free and accessible to everyone.

The group identified an interest in working with PICA to improve the accessibility of PICA’s events for their communities. This is a very high priority for them and was particularly challenging during the YGB and DUG event that a number of focus group members organized.

“DUG is very obsessed with inclusiveness and the space being perfect. We felt so guilty that that space was closed

off like that. That killed us. Especially if it's for the sake of alcohol. PICA needs to pay attention. Alcohol leads to violence, and leads to problems, it's bad for your health. It's not something that we believe in. If they want us to work with them again, that's a really big issue."  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

The question of alcohol is a significant one and provides a good lens for understanding the challenges, but also the opportunities with respect to expanding PICA's audience. It's no exaggeration to say that alcohol is the key social enabler in the contemporary art world and nor is it much of an exaggeration to say that there are many organizations out there whose business model requires the sale of alcohol. Another insight not so easy to exaggerate is that alcohol easily elides into a crutch, if not further into something entirely destructive. The first response to the proposition of an alcohol-free TBA is likely incredulity, if not downright hostility. We like our martinis and we like 'em dry. But the inclusion of and collaboration with communities for whom alcohol might not be so appealing provides a way to start to understand the positive effects that this change could have. While advocating teetotaling may smack of an imposed morality, the first task would simply to be to consider the implications, consider the function that alcohol currently plays and an honest assessment of the contemporary art world's various addictions.

**“All these little things of space and comfort and divisions are really problematic for us in our events, anything that divides people—so that rope or anything that separates people—security, anything**

Finally, with respect to the inclusion of those under twenty-one, the youngest member of the focus group provided a small, surprising insight worth paying close attention to: “I really enjoyed the closing (volunteer appreciation) party.”

This small observation is significant because, according to most standards to evaluate a party, it was a pretty underwhelming event. There was hardly anyone there, the food was pizza in boxes strewn around the space, and the entertainment was the off-key efforts of each other: karaoke. But what it lacked in hipster flare, culinary excellence and rigorous curating of music, it made up for in comfort, familiarity (with the root word ‘family’ in full operation) and playful fun. Young people still require and appreciate the comfort and safety of the family and the family-like and tend to enjoy low-fi events, where social pressures are minimal. This is great news, as it suggests that young people will derive great satisfaction from simply being part of the PICA family at its most intimate and unpretentious.

**“The food was  
so uppity.  
All my friends  
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PHOTO BY WAYNE BUND

## The Opening Gala

The response to the opening gala was varied and complex, and points to the wider issue of cultural capital, comfort and the fact that, broadly speaking, the PICA community tends to be insular. From the perspective of the focus group there was the need for the gala

“to start the frequencies higher, so it’s more about show and more about fun.”

(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

“It felt pretentious. For sure. But super casual at the same time. It was a weird in-between space and I’ve never been to anything like that in my life. There’s nothing I can compare that event to. It was my first gala dinner. What kind of food is? This weird class and culture. That’s all I was thinking during that opening-day.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

**“It felt pretentious. For sure. But super casual at the same time. It was a weird in-between space and I’ve never been to anything like that in my life.”**

The ease of this observation is a strong affirmation of PICA’s ability to create a welcoming environment. It wasn’t long before the group was feeling and behaving like they belonged there, because they were clearly being treated as if they did. PICA’s only oversight was not having a formal welcome of the group beforehand by Angela, Vicky and Roya, who could have identified their role within the organization.

The group suggested that the entertainment could have been distributed throughout the course of the evening, and that there was potential to showcase some of the festival’s performers or Portland based artists who were not performing in the festival. An obvious addition would be a DJ providing music for the diners. This lack of music was pretty much pounced on by all.

“We are in the centre of contemporary art in Portland and there is no music? It was a great opportunity to set the tone with people performing, (it would have) set the frequency for the whole event.”

(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

This attention to the frequency, tone or level and the feeling that the frequencies weren’t high enough extended to the festival in general.

“Opening nights are important so you can really set the level for the entire event and I felt like there was a level set and I think most of the festival went on that level. I’m talking in terms of vibrancy. Just like not very colourful. It wasn’t memorable. It was nothing you could touch. You just shove the bunch of people in the room. It wasn’t impactful.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

The food was the subject of a lot of discussion, which is a good indicator of the sort of cultural gap or level of alienation that even small things that are typically taken for granted can cause, like the

smattering of starting snacks that were scattered around the space, or the emphasis on vegetables.

“The food was so uppity. All my friends liked the hor d’oeuvres; I’ve never had hor d’oeuvres before.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“There were unique flavours—lot of vegetables—the way they mixed them. I just don’t eat vegetables. I ate them because they tasted great. I don’t eat for taste but to fill myself up. You’re not going to get full but here’s something to taste.”  
(Focus Group Member, late teens)

“All of us thought this is the first time they’ve had black people here. I’ve never been to anything like that.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

As another example of a difference in what is perceived as an enjoyable dining experience the fact of being served was contrasted with the more fun option of lining up for food:

“A fun way to eat with people is to get in lines and put your food together.”  
(Focus Group Member, teen)

This reflection is a very clear signal that youth engagement and mentorship—particularly across racial, cultural and economic differences—needs an honest recognition that we are, in fact, dealing with differences and that one person’s quality dining is another person’s experience of uppityness. What one person might equate with a cafeteria-like experience is understood by another as fun. Comprehensively including young people of color will need to be a two-way street to be effective. Both parties will be best served if everyone is taking some steps out of their comfort zone and doing things a bit differently.

Members of the group attributed the problems on opening night to the use of the space and had a simple but effective suggestion for making the dinner more vibrant and communal:

“Round tables. Round tables are important; you get to see everyone’s face better.”  
(Focus Group Member, late teens)

This concern for the use of space extended across the rest of The Works programming.

“I don’t think anyone was paying much attention to the art and live performances (at The Works). The way the space was activated was not strong; I was not impressed by the late night. There’s so much space and they didn’t do anything about it. I look for how the space is utilized. The performers were great, but the space wasn’t good. Walk-

ing into the same space every night, talking to the same people. To do a 10-day festival, it has to be fresh.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“Utilise the community; get an artist to curate the space. What has made DUG super successful (is that) everything is intentional; there’s always ways to incorporate artists. Have an artist curate the space: tables, table cloth, candles. So there’s energy in everything. You’re experiencing art, and you’re not just at this assigned table with this exclusive group. You can incorporate people and it will feel way better and way more like home.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

The focus group voiced the same concern expressed by Artistic Director Angela Mattox and others that the opening act went a bit rogue. It was described by the focus group as “torture.” The performer, speaking a phrase commonly used by Mexicans, triggered concerns. This concern was so strong that some members of the group examined the performer’s mother and girlfriend to assess their cultural heritage, and found them lacking any evidence of Mexicanness.

This is an important reminder that people of colour have a tough time finding any space where there aren’t regular reminders of systemic, block-headed and ambient racism. A single appropriated or offensive phrase can be a strong buzz kill, and clearly care must be taken when programming. The most obvious solution to this problem is to simply keep the programming of people of color very high, since people of color are much less likely to make these sorts of blunders.

### **The Security Guards at The Works**

The focus group was very satisfied with the PICA staff, but had some reservations about the security at the events, particularly with respect to how the people under twenty-one were treated.

“People came to me with a few problems about the security. There was confusion—there was some miscommunication. They really got to get that under twenty-one thing under control. Either do it well or don’t do it all.”  
(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

They reported that at their event there was a black security guard who they suspected had been hired for their event specifically and who they felt lacked training to deal with young people. One of the group, when trying to explain her role to a security person was told that she didn’t “look like she curated anything; I haven’t seen you around here.” They also reported that Roya had a similar issue with the same security staff, who insisted on checking her bag.

**“That was an emotional roller coaster. You saw me, like fifteen minutes in and I looked at my watch and wondered, when the fuck is this going to end.”**



PHOTO BY JONAH LEVINE

## The Performances

There were a number of areas where the work or the experience was significant for the focus group both in terms of their reaction to the work and their reaction the TBA milieu or context.

Alessandro Sciarroni's *Untitled, I will be there when you die* provided some interesting insights. The appreciation of work that is conceptually difficult or that stretches conceptual boundaries is not something that tends to occur naturally. It's a skill or an aptitude that is learned. *Untitled, I will be there when you die* started off slowly and by 15 minutes there was a good deal of restlessness and impatience with the whole crew, including myself.

"That was an emotional roller coaster. You saw me, like fifteen minutes in and I looked at my watch and wondered, when the fuck is this going to end."

(Focus Group Member, early 30s)

Here were these five guys doing the most unremarkable thing with a single bowling pin and doing it over and over again. However, by the end, the group was convinced. In discussion afterward we talked about the approach required to appreciate work that deliberately attempts to try the audience's patience and coax them into different levels of perception. It wasn't easy accessible juggling, it was juggling for performance nerds who love to tinker with and gaze obsessively at a form's components. This requires a different sort of appreciation than what an audience might normally bring to a juggling show.

People who do not regularly consume contemporary cultural expression tend to be burdened with an approach to engaging with the work steeped in the linear halls of formal education with the idea that there is something to "get" and that a very rational and clearly articulated statement of what the work was "about" is equated with understanding. In its most straightforward manifestation the work is scoured for a "message." While a seemingly small and insignificant detail, the problem is when a work confounds reduction to a straightforward explanation of intended message—it can leave the viewer feeling like they did not get it. In reality, there may not have been anything to get or the things available to be gotten are various, maybe even contradictory and well outside the grasp or control of even the artist. Those with a lot of experience consuming and digesting cultural product, particularly those who work within the industry itself—a category that largely overlaps with the consumers of the work—tend to not bother with what a given work is about and

understand that descriptions that spell out a given project's meaning tend to foreclose other interpretations and limit the experience and enjoyment of the work. Within the field itself, discerning a "message" is understood to be an impediment to deeper understandings and regarded as naive.

**"I will never forget that; it was just insane.... Some of the audiences laugh at stuff that I just don't understand. They're cracking up and I was thinking this is not nice."**

The feeling of being excluded from understanding something that many other people are not only appearing to understand but also enjoying can be alienating. But this is a skill that is based on a few simple principles and it can be developed. Later, in recommendations, I will suggest that, as part of the set of expertise that Angela can share with possible program participants in the future, some attention devoted to the question of how exactly she views work, how she deals with the challenging predicament of ‘understanding’ or ‘getting it.’

Related to the confusion of how an audience watched and accessed the work was the fairly consistent experience reported by the group of not understanding why a given audience was experiencing the show in a particular way. Laughter often puzzled the group, particularly laughter at the mention of uncomfortable or even horrific things. For example, the audience’s reaction to Mohammed El Khatib’s *Finir en beauté* triggered some discomfort and confusion amongst the focus group. Khatib, who presented an intimate, autobiographical account of his mother’s death, read out a condolence email from a colleague. The colleague concluded the email with a PS requesting a professional favour completely unrelated to the death of the mother, a request that would not be too hard to understand as a little rude, given the circumstances. This generated a lot of laughter from the audience, leaving a couple of the focus group confused.

“I will never forget that; it was just insane.... Some of the audiences laugh at stuff that I just don’t understand. They’re cracking up and I was thinking this is not nice. The audience are laughing at stuff and I was like ‘where am I?’ That’s weird to me that they were laughing at the awkwardness of his painful situation. I had no desire to laugh about it.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

Beyond the fact that we’re all not going to agree on what we find funny, this incident speaks to, again, the fact that we’re talking about two general types of people: those for whom the irony of the rudeness is a laughing matter, and those for whom it’s not. Irony is, in itself, very sensitive to cultural or social variation, and the ‘ironic disposition,’ a particular way of being in the world that is often favoured by individuals within the contemporary art sector, appears not to be widely appreciated.

Perhaps the most surprising response to the work was that of one of the youngest focus group members was very much taken with Khatib’s piece, not a work that immediately springs to mind as something that would appeal to a younger teenager.

“I really enjoyed it. He kept track of so many parts of the story: notes, letters, emails. He told the story in such detailed description; you know exactly what he was talking about. It was interesting to hear things in a different language. I really enjoyed it.”

(Focus Group Member, mid-teen)

The teen's reaction to Khatib's piece is a great reminder that to predict what young people will like is as impossible as predicting what an adult will like: you really do never know, with a serious, foreign language, monologue about a mother's death easily capturing a young person's imagination and providing inspiration.

The group really enjoyed Dynasty Handbag, the performance artist at Pioneer Square as part of the Portland Museum of Modern Art programming. Her performance was just the right kind of subversive for the crew and they talked about the performance for days. Ms. Handbag might make an interesting external mentor artist to younger artists and curators, working with PICA in the future, either in an official capacity by delivering workshops or less formally, through invitation to PICA's events with younger people.

Keijaun Thomas' *Distance is Not Separation* was strongly appreciated by the group and was described as

“magnificent and magical; everything about it. It was the intention. From how we moved into the space—there wasn't really any direction about sitting or standing. There were these directions that weren't written or told and you have to figure it out. It was an interactive piece and whom she chose to interact with and who chose to interact with her and wash her body—it was super super psychological and really traumatic. I've never seen work at that caliber. I've ever seen anyone doing a performance about the female black experience. I've seen different performances, but not like that.”

(Focus Group Member, Early 20s)

Though a hit with the group, the experience was, at times, not so easy, as some watched the performance with an additional layer of concerns:

“I saw these white folks laughing at this moment where she is brushing on the ground—this couple that I've been looking at the whole time because I feel really protective of Keijaun: I feel so bonded. So I see this white couple and they're laughing... I'm not often in spaces with people who wear velvet hats, so all of that makes me be, like, that I have to remember people laugh when they are uncomfortable. But my first emotion was like, are you mocking this person or do you just really not understand what's happening so you think this is funny?”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

Another group member had a similar experience:

“When Keijaun turned themselves into the tool for which to clean up whiteness— we serve you all the mother fucking time—and I'm turning myself into a fucking broom for you. That just hit me so deep in the heart. I'm looking at these white folks and I'm thinking you don't see it like

that, which is also the point. Keijuan represented so many roles—she represented a lot of Black women’s roles in life.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

The same group member enjoyed that the long monologue of black cultural references toward the end of the performance was likely lost on many white members of the audience. “It made me feel so good. I know what you’re talking about.”

Audience composition was identified as an issue, and they felt that more, targeted outreach to the black queer community was needed.

“My black queer friends who couldn’t come to that would’ve fucking loved it, but they didn’t know it was happening, and I didn’t really know what that was going to be either.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“I’m really interested in helping them with community outreach in that community in those twenty blocks. I’ve lived and worked there for ten years. I’m very connected to the community; our house being a block away. I’d like to help PICA do something within that space to help bring people in. Nobody knows who or what PICA is.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

The group was very enthusiastic about the Field Guide, facilitated by Lisa Jarrett.

“It added to the experience because if I hadn’t been a part of that I would have had a different perspective going into the show. Having been given the list of items requested and discussing the word to describe our body and then seeing Keijuan’s body and the way they used their body was very helpful.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“It offered a bit of context for the performance, it gave you something to base your thoughts on, keep in the back of your mind during the performance.”

(Focus Group Member, late teens)

Most exciting was the reaction of one of the younger teens who stated emphatically,

“I really like Lisa Jarret. Honestly, I want to be her.”

The younger teen went on to describe Lisa’s field guide in detail,

“that discussion was one of my favourite parts. I really liked that. I really enjoyed it. You come into a room with all strangers and you figure out if you relate to these people.

I really like when people try to relate to you in a different way, a random way that you weren't expecting. You felt like you know these people, everything about them. I really enjoyed that part."  
(Focus Group Member, early teens)

Again, this is great evidence that teenagers should not be underestimated, that they not only have the capacity to engage in high level conceptual discussions but, beyond the content of the discussion, the social experience was even more valued. This points back to the value of generating ambient cultural capital through an immersive experience by allowing young people to simply be present in contexts that are in no way designed specifically for young people.

An older teen expressed similar ideas:

"The activity with the random people was also fun. I was nervous. I don't like dealing with strangers in that sort of environment. When I was forced to talk to them, I looked at some of the people and felt like I don't want to talk to them. But then I talked to them and enjoyed it. Everyone was open to it. We were all there for the same thing."  
(Focus Group Member, late teens)

This speaks to the gradual and cumulative effect of exposing young people—any people, for that matter—to the contemporary art landscape, as barriers to ideas and individuals begin to erode and the "PICA freaks" are revealed to be just a bunch of people "there for the same thing." It's safe to say that the learning goes both ways, with the PICA stalwarts experiencing similar revelations with respect to the youth in the focus group. The assumption that young people are not drawn to the serious, erudite, and analytical is a tough one to abandon, surrounded as we are by the constant barrage of what masquerades as youth culture in the form of an entertainment of lowest common denominator. Young people are so much smarter than they're typically treated.

The group registered disappointment with Kelly Pratt's *No Soliciting* performance that followed Keijaun, stating that,

"you need to let that kind of energy hold space. If you are vulnerable enough to do that you should let that hold space for that whole night. It felt strange watching the white dude afterwards asking for suggestions from the audience. I was like wow there's so much whiteness around it felt like fantasy paradise—everything is safe where you're playing music."  
(Focus Group, early 30s)

Overall, the group reacted to the shows positively and were very grateful to have had the opportunity to check them out. Using the most extreme shorthand, the general reaction to the various shows within the festival was: hm. This is exactly the reaction we could hope for. The work in the festival was not old hat to the crew, but nor was it neces-

sarily mind-blowing and revelatory, mostly sat in the realm of ‘hm’ and ‘well, that’s interesting.’ There was an openness in the group and a willingness to try everything but also a healthy amount of reserve and thoughtful criticality. The group seemed intrigued by the festival and this attitude of critical curiosity would likely be an asset to PICA in any efforts to shape the program to attract a more diverse audience.

**“That was rare to do.  
I’m rarely if ever  
in those kinds of  
settings; just to get  
to talk and think and  
play around.”**



PHOTO BY BOB FORTNER

## Portland's Next Wave, The Panel Discussion

A number of the group's members participated in the panel 'Portland's Next Wave, Emerging Women Artists-Curators-Producers of Color,' and reported that they would like "more time to do those kinds of things" and that "having that conversation is great."

Another stated,

"When we did that panel everyone was, like, that needed to go on much longer. That was the quickest hour in my life. That has to happen more often and we need to have this continuing conversation. Usually when there's a discussion like that there's a white moderator and it was great that there was a black moderator; it really changes the discussions."  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

A couple members of the group reported that this was a unique experience for them, "That was rare to do. I'm rarely if ever in those kinds of settings; just to get to talk and think and play around."

"That was my first time being part of a panel. Other than our discussion-based open mic... it's valuable because those things are not discussed often—none of those things—especially in Portland. Even with all the work we're doing. There's so much community outreach and production going on. Some of the producers are not young but they didn't get that recognition when they were. I thought it was really impactful and important. It was nice just to be given that space to speak and to hear the women speak about that rather than just casually."  
(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

It was also recommended that PICA consider going even younger than emerging and that one of the younger teens from the focus group would be a good candidate for leading a panel discussion.

"(The younger member) could facilitate a conversation with a group of young people her age. They want to do what Lisa did."

The teen, herself, had this to say about the importance of including youth of color in the discourse surrounding contemporary art:

“I really liked the idea of talking about the performance before it started and what we were given to work with. That would be interesting to young people. Finding random ways to understand; slowly and surely we can find ways to get people into it—kids who are bored of school. If you explain and make ways to relate and talk to people of colour and young people of color— there are ways you can related to this; things you might like about it—you can become a part of it. You don’t have to go to school every-day and talk about the same stuff. Art is so important. I’d definitely want to be part of getting more kids of color out and knowing about this stuff. It would be really helpful if PICA found a way to bring youth out and talk to them about art and find some type of interest in it.”

(Focus Group Member, teens)

While it’s not immediately obvious how teen-led discussions could play out or where to draw an audience interested in a teen-led discussion of contemporary art, it’s a very interesting idea that would not draw too heavily on PICA resources. Amongst PICA’s adult audience, the view would need to be cultivated that young people have interesting and relevant insights, which would require some “training,” as this sort of appreciation requires adopting new frameworks. Perhaps a first approach could include the sort of “intergenerationality” that informed the focus group itself.

What is very clear from the focus group’s reaction to both the panel and the Field Guide is that discussion is valued very highly and facilitating more would be an easy win for PICA with an impact that far outweighs the demand on resources. The size and demographic of the crowd at Portland’s Next Wave should be convincing enough evidence.

**“Dancing all night  
as people of colour  
is resisting what  
society tells us we’re  
supposed to be doing.  
Which is pretty  
much dying.”**



PHOTO BY JONAH LEVINE

# Options for the Future

What follows is a brainstorm for a model that could be rolled out in the future, an example of how one type of engagement could unfold. It is one of many possible options, with aspects easily detached and used within a different sort of program.

The model uses the idea of multiple cohorts working together intergenerationally. The idea of ‘intergenerationality’ is something that is becoming a more prevalent approach within the performing arts. Intergenerationality is already very visible in the UK and European performance landscape, the Ghent-based Campo leading the way with an on-going series of commissions with artists who worked with young people, along with individual practitioners like Sibylle Peters and her upcoming festival of work for an intergenerational audience at Hamburg’s Kampnagel. This movement is largely due to the growing recognition that young people’s insights can be as relevant and trenchant as the contribution of adults, as well as the understanding that the mere presence of young people, whose status as not quite legitimate people, adds a challenging wrinkle to social and creative dynamics—marginalized youth, even more so.

In April 2016, when the UK’s performance community gathered at the Tate Modern for the Live Art Development Agency’s symposia surrounding Sybille Peter’s performance art game for families, *Playing Up*, the crowd of practitioners, raised on a diet of edgy work that pushed boundaries around gender, sexuality, and the body, agreed that these sort of transgressive performances of yesteryear look downright quaint. There was a consensus that those wanting to take artistic risk these days need look no further than the kids, whose very bodies are sites of pitched and bloody ideological battles, and lightening rods for moral panic. Intergenerationality offers a way to approach mentorship in a more complex manner, specifically with respect to youth of color, who will benefit from both mentors from their specific community as well as those who are more representative of the dominant communities.

A three-year program is probably the most feasible in terms of keeping it within a realistic fundable time frame. The intention is to mentor and spin off creative collaborators who will work with and for PICA, their involvement deepening over the course of the three years, with the conclusion leaving the organisation in a state of transition, with a whole new slew of potential collaborators. The participants enter the program understanding that they are being engaged for the

whole duration and that it is training for the teens and professional development for the older participants—some still within the rubric ‘youth’ and emerging, while others more established.

The program would be double, if not triple-cohorted, with two or three sets of participants: teens of colour who are curious about the cultural sector as a place of learning and employment, a group of young producers of color whose practice is just emerging and includes the idea of mentorship, and an older group of producers of colour who are interested in sharing their skills and co-mentor the teens. All three cohorts would consider PICA a resource and want to learn more about—and hopefully become—PICA’s extended family of international creators.

### **Staffing**

As was made clear by a number of PICA senior staff, everyone’s plate is currently maxed, therefore any additional programming, particularly something as intensive as a youth engagement program must have an additional and dedicated staff member, who would function as the program lead, manager or director. This person would be responsible for the budget, planning, and logistics and would be the key liaison working with Roya and the curatorial staff.

The best person for this sort of responsibility tends to be someone who has reached a point in their career where proving themselves is not so much of an issue. Younger, less established leaders of youth initiatives can sometimes get into a competitive relationship with the youth, or attempt to assert their own agenda. Someone like Natalie Figueroa—who has since moved to Chicago—would be ideal for this gig. In fact, she and Anthony Bryant, who has a design job with Nike, are trying to put together some kind of youth mentorship program, so there’s evidence she has some longer-term commitment to Portland. If this is the case, PICA could possibly partner with them and provide resources and activities that they could incorporate into their program. Or, in fact, this could be their entire program.

**Mentors.** There is a whole slew of young people in their twenties who are working independently to create their own work including Mia O’Conner, Madenna Ibrahim, Beti Daniels, Janessa Narciso and others who are affiliated with this core. This could be a fairly fluid group, expanding and contracting from activity to activity. Their remuneration would be through honoraria and opportunity, which PICA would work hard to provide.

**Teens.** The teen group could be somewhat layered, with a targeted and committed initial core of, say, ten who could be counted on to attend most of the activities, though the entire group would number between twenty and thirty. In some of the activities there might need to be contracts with a select and targeted few who have demonstrated higher commitment.

If these numbers sound low it’s important to understand that some of the activities that the program participants would be involved with are designed to engage other youth in much larger numbers, therefore

while direct participation in the program might be modest, the multiplier effects are likely to be large. This is especially so since the older cohort are already active cultural leaders within their communities, whose primary focus is mentorship, inclusion and community building and development.

For now, the focus group has expressed an interest in the question of celebration and how it can be brought into the festival both throughout the performances themselves and The Works programming. This concern also stretches to ancillary events like the music at the gala dinner, where the idea of celebration is flexible enough to permit it to cover the idea of mood, in general. DUG is interested in becoming expert in creating environments and their involvement in PICA could be seen as an exercise in this, with their particular responsibility to focus on the theme of celebration, an idea that the sorts of organisations within PICA's orbit do not often promote, except in very circumscribed ways. The remit would be to examine how celebration can be incorporated into the sorts of inquiries that PICA's programmers are interested in, with the youth and their mentors being the sounding board and guide. This targeting of the theme of celebration—or whatever relevant theme is agreed upon—allows for the participation of the youth and their mentors in a way that, hopefully, minimises stepping on toes. Within this model, the expertise of DUG and YGB is applied to gaps within PICA and a chunk of responsibilities are carved off and, as much as possible, assigned to the young people and mentors. Over the years, opportunities would be sought to expand the participation of the engagement program into other areas of programming including some curatorial and creation responsibilities, as the idea of celebration becomes one that leaks out of The Works and into other aspects of TBA and other aspects of PICA's programming.

An additional area of participation identified by both PICA and the focus group is technical support for the TBA festival, which has a chronic issue with staffing. An older teen within the focus group expressed an interest in learning lighting and sound and mentorship in this area would, again, not be likely to step on anyone's toes, while eventually providing a resource that PICA needs.

### **Hypothetical Activities**

The following are different potential programme activities as well as an idea of how this could potentially evolve over the course of the three years.

#### **1. Twice-yearly large DUG/YGB events at Hancock, one during TBA and the other in March or April.**

This could possibly dovetail with the fundraising PICA does at the time. This could be two different events, with the DUG/YGB raising more awareness than funds, or it could be combined into one. As outlined in the introduction to this section, at this point there are two distinct populations, therefore things must be considered in terms of two audiences with different programming for both. In any case, when thinking about these events, it's important to keep in mind the focus group's ultimate intentions, which are ambitious and political:

“It’s way more than having a space to party and drink in. We would love for that to be all the time, the way we set things up in the space, just having a place for people to walk in, be free, love, create, lay down, take off their clothes and feel like the God or Goddess all the time. That stuff is so doable—most of that work we put in on Friday (at YGB and DUG’s TBA event) was done Friday. It’s really easy to set that up because all of those materials are just from the community. There are so many people’s things and that energy attracts. I think how many people’s spirits are in all those items. It attracts a lot of people in our community as part of our magic.”

(Focus Group Member, early twenties)

“It would be cool to be involved throughout the year making space so that we could just exist; our biggest way of resisting is existing. Dancing all night as people of colour is resisting what society tells us we’re supposed to be doing. Which is pretty much dying. But we were living that night so I think that’s one really practical way for continuous exposure that’s pretty much a community centre.”

(Focus Group Member, early twenties)

“We all really value the cycle of life, we get the after party, we get all the different levels of vibrations that you need and I really think that’s something we could really do; we know how to bounce, we know how to make it chill and we don’t have to have sections where alcohol is vital.”

(Focus Group Member, early twenties)

## **2. Angela’s Brilliant Brain.**

This would be a monthly event that would happen at Hancock. It should involve food and could be a potluck, with PICA providing a basic level of nourishment. Angela would discuss her current thinking on programming and, in particular, provide detailed descriptions of the work she had seen recently, as well as screen any video of work that she thought might be of interest. The purpose of Angela’s Brilliant Brain would be four fold:

- i. The program participants would get a quick exposure to a wide range of aesthetics and approaches.
- ii. The program participants would begin to understand Angela’s approach to curation, getting a ringside seat to her process.
- iii. Angela would have access to the program participants’ opinions on the various projects and would be able to use their insights in focus group fashion, helping her make programming choices that would appeal to the program participant’s constituents. This would be a learning opportunity for all, as they collectively mull over what’s going on in Angela’s world. Perhaps Kristan Kennedy could also participate in this. The particular question posed to the program participants could be to stay on the look out for programming that has elements of celebration—both to satisfy the need

for more celebration across all of the TBA offerings, but also as a modest curatorial task/focus for the participants.

iv. Help Angela find love for young people.

### **3. The Works.**

In 2016, DUG/YGB programmed an evening at The Works, which they would do again, as part of their twice-yearly large DUG/YGB event at Hancock. Additionally, over the course of the three years of this proposed program, they could gradually assume more and more responsibility for the programming during The Works. Year one (2017) could feature their event plus two or three other nights that they would curate, facilitating others in their community. Year two would step that up to taking responsibility for, say, six of the nights, to, finally, in year three, with The Works being a series of events at Hancock designed entirely by the program participants with members of DUG/YGB taking leadership responsibilities.

It would be understood that they would be programming The Works with the guidance and tutelage of the core PICA staff and not as a distinctly separate entity and that, further, anyone on the PICA core could bring ideas for programming to the program participants. As both a practical necessity but also as a pedagogical exercise, they would be asked to consider “both” of PICA’s audiences, again making the same relatively broad, but convenient generalisations about the difference between what an audience of color and what a white audience wants from their cultural consumption.

The rationale behind this idea is that the DUG/YGB teams already have an interest in night life activities and celebration as, at this point, their central practice. Therefore PICA should pitch to their strength and begin to share resources with them in this realm. This is an area where PICA can really push itself and take some risks. However the risks would probably be minimal and the benefits large both in terms of artistic but also financial considering that the bar at DUG/YGB produced the second highest revenue, second only to Critical Mascara.

### **4. Roaming with Roya.**

Roya could lead a once or twice monthly excursion to any number of cultural events happening across the city. This would be ad hoc and could include a hospitality budget so that there was opportunity to debrief over a drink and some food.

### **5. Light it up with Lisa.**

Monthly hangouts at Lisa Jarrett’s home or it could roam to the homes of different members of the program participants. The evening would be first a meeting to discuss and digest the program experience itself, then focus on creating at least one panel/Field Guide event for the coming TBA. This could expand over the three years of the program, with the participants taking responsibility for more events, as in the graduated approach to the programming of The Works.

## **6. Making work for the festival or other events around the city.**

This would be a carefully graduated component that would feature the production of small-scale performances in response to, inspired by, or completely ignoring the work in TBA. This might have to constitute a distinct core group among the program participants.

There are two streams of activity:

1. Discussion and development of relevant artistic content.
2. Regular presentations of *any form* in order to begin to develop a form. So, for example, as the program members discuss and develop content for an artistic presentation, PICA would look for any opportunity to present what they have and this could include panel discussions, open mic nights, a public intervention at Pioneer Square under the auspices of the Portland Museum of Modern Art or whatever. The program participants then grapple with fluidity of form, finding what works best in various circumstances, toward building a presentation at the festival. Over the course of the three years of the program the work would become more complex, demanding more support and resources, with the final goal being a full scale presentation of the work in the final year.

While seemingly excessive, a three-year development period from conception to final presentation is not unusual in the realm of some of the world's better resourced arts organisations, some of which show work at TBA. Time to create—as a finite and scarce resource—is something that this approach facilitates as all presentations are geared toward a final output, even as each individual presentation demands the development of their own set of skills, even if it's just the smooth operation of PowerPoint. Skills and ideas will accumulate and place demands on resources, which will then determine scale. If at the end of three years the logical venue for what the programme participants have created is Lincoln Hall, then so be it. If it's at the Works, then that works, too.

## **7. Field Trips: PuSh, On the Boards.**

Over the course of the program there could be yearly or twice yearly field trips to nearby cultural events like the PuSh Festival in Vancouver or On the Boards in Seattle. Perhaps there's a partnership with PuSh, with the PICA crew being understood as delegates, and could participate in some panels or give a talk about what they're doing in exchange for tickets to shows.

## **8. The Numbers.**

Toward the end of the focus group The Numbers was mentioned as a place of particularly high deprivation, disaffection and conflict, as was the idea of doing some sort of outreach there. This could be conceived and lead by the program participants.

Something repeatedly mentioned was that the members of the focus group and their friends don't have a lot of money. This was emphasised repeatedly within the context of PICA and TBA, but also while discussing unrelated matters. This is a fairly simple piece that PICA continu-

ously grapples with due to the presence and support of a good many artists who are part of the contemporary art community, a population not known for its wealth. I expect that the cost of tickets is something that PICA keeps low to the best of its ability, but perhaps there can be some very targeted festival passes given to youth selected by the program participants. Inquiries into schools in The Numbers could yield a short-list of young people who are invited to events a few times throughout the year, as a way of keeping a steady hum of recruitment.

### **A note on hospitality and food**

One of the first things that the focus group talked about during the debrief session was the joy of doing things together as an intergenerational group, particularly the meals. These were valuable moments where deep connections were made both within the group and between the group and the work seen. It helped to build trust so that discussion could happen openly.

“Breaking bread with people is a beautiful thing. That’s where our ideas come from, from sharing bread with each other. Breaking bread with people keeps us going, keeps us passionate. That was a big part of why (the focus group) was successful.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

Because so much knowledge transfer in the cultural sector occurs during non-instructional or non-working times—times of socialising and casual networking—these are built into the model, with a healthy budget line required.

### **Sharing Opportunities**

There’s the popular understanding that in order for equity to prevail those with more have to give up some of what they have. While there are a number of realms and circumstances where this logic holds, there are a number where it does not, including participation in the cultural sector under conditions of growth. With its new building, PICA is growing and will probably be playing a bit of catch up over the next years, as the operations of the building are absorbed into the day-to-day function of the organisation. In this context of growth, adding new players to the team is a must and senior members have the opportunity to begin to apply their talents to other levels of programming and management, hopefully creating new opportunities for everyone. It’s difficult to predict what this could yield but with this proposal, as PICA slowly starts to edge responsibility for some of the programming to the program participants, opportunities for the evolution and growth of responsibilities of all of the core staff members will present themselves.

### **Involving the PICA staff**

Many of the activities mentioned above could also include PICA staff as participants, reinforcing the collective nature of the efforts. Most importantly, the PICA staff would need to understand the program participants not as ‘youth’ but as an unusual set of colleagues, but very much as colleagues. Even someone like Zavie, who is twelve-years-old, should be understood as a colleague involved in the very

serious business of building demand and connecting PICA to much broader communities, and increasing its social and cultural relevance. The mentorship should be understood as reciprocal, with all parties understood to be learning from the others.

## **Conclusion: The Findings and How they Relate to the Original Set of Questions and Concerns**

The question of whether or not a dedicated youth engagement is right for PICA has been more or less answered in the affirmative. This conclusion was drawn primarily from observing the various populations: the PICA staff, the young people we encountered during the research, and the youth and young producers involved with the TBA focus group.

The openness of PICA staff to intergenerational and cultural diversity was examined through interviews and the two focus group interventions at Assembly—with NAYA—and TBA. In all cases there was a clear openness, which was supported by the observations of the focus group, who felt very positive about their treatment by PICA. Additionally, great conversations were on-going with Andre Middleton and Lisa Jarrett, and are likely to continue, as they've both recently joined the PICA board and will be a continued resource for any youth engagement.

With respect to collecting more, and more useful, data on current audiences and participation, this was approached more through the back than the front. Rather than a close look at the makeup of the current audience there was, instead, a reliance on the observations and experiences of the TBA focus group. They noted—sometimes with discomfort—how certain works were differently received by the TBA audience, providing very visceral data from their very specific perspective.

There were two tests with two groups of young people to examine their reaction to PSU's Assembly and PICA's TBA. The failure box was ticked nicely with my alienation of the NAYA youth, where eagerness to document the NAYA intervention through social media got on some of the youth's nerves. Needless to say, I kept my Instagramming to a minimum with the TBA focus group, which was a success, yet left little documentation of our experiences. The second focus group was noted for the high quality of time we spent together and the enjoyment of the festival itself.

Evaluating our activity was an ongoing process as each visit yielded refining and narrowing the focus for subsequent visits, while still trained on the goals and questions established at the outset. There were three critical questions posed:

**1. Should we narrow target group further (age, cultural, economic, geography) to meet PICA goals, Portland needs? If so, do we program or site work in different neighborhoods or via new methods?**

Over the course of the research an idea emerged to examine the needs and interests of an additional target group resulting in the inclusion of young producers of colour in Portland who were already well into defining their own artistic practices and interests. This expansion of the scope of our inquiry was primarily in response to the question of Portland's needs and in collaboration with those already looking at the question of diversifying the cultural industries as a natural extension of their own participation as people of colour. The question of whether or not program participants should be exclusively young people of color was posed to members of the focus group and there were conflicting answers based on the desired outcome.

“If it’s about decompressing and healing, it’s annoying to have a mixed crowd. Even if there’s just one white person in the room, it’s going to filter what we say. If you’re trying to have a conversation to come to understanding —it depends event-to-event and program to program. YBG prioritises a black and brown crowd. DUG is not like that. DUG is about having a white person on the guitar and a black person rapping over it.”

(Focus Group Member, early 20s)

“People of color and white people need to understand each other at this point. I think it could go either way. You do need to first get the interest amongst people of colour. Once that is completed then we can successfully mix people.”

(Focus Group Member, early teens)

“It has to be mixed. Otherwise it’s the same thing but the other way around. There are events that could be one way, or catering specifically to this group because they don’t get any attention, but you can’t make it exclusive.”

(Focus Group Member, late teens)

## **2. What does youth participation look like: long-term? Multi-year? Should youth be involved in design, curation or production? How much agency?**

At this point, there is an agreement that long-term, multi-year initiatives are of interest and that all areas of the organization are possible sites for involvement including outreach, curation, production, and participating in framing the discourse around the work. The answer to the question of how much agency is ‘as much as possible,’ with those possibilities still needing much more definition. That said, it should be noted that defining the shape, intensity and duration of any engagement needs to be something that is a result of the engagement itself as it unfolds over the course of time.

## **3. Is a youth initiative right for PICA’s aesthetic and the type of theatre we present?**

The question of whether a youth initiative is right for PICA’s aesthetic presented some interesting answers and the significant finding that

PICA's aesthetic could use expansion in order to have a higher likelihood of being of interest to people of color. Additionally, the TBA focus group identified that it would be beneficial to distribute more celebratory events across the breadth of the festival, rather than its currently, fairly circumscribed position in The Works, as is currently the case. To be as succinct as possible, the focus group's key exhortation to PICA is: LET'S PARTY!

## Endnotes

1. <http://www.artsjournal.com/engage/2013/02/considering-whiteness/>  
  
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-diversity-arts-study-devos-black-latino-groups-funding-20151009-story.html>  
  
<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/latinos-speak-out-about-lack-diversity-nyc-arts-cultural-groups-n507451>
2. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/06/10/toronto-arts-boards-in-dire-need-of-diversity.html>, <http://canadianart.ca/features/canadas-galleries-fall-short-the-not-so-great-white-north/>
3. <https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/final-report/>
4. <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/research/arts-nation-technical-appendix-56382834062ea.pdf>  
  
[http://www.uws.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/156956/Ang\\_ThePredicamentOfDiversity\\_CCRCopyFinal.pdf](http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/156956/Ang_ThePredicamentOfDiversity_CCRCopyFinal.pdf)
5. [http://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/im-sick-of-pretending-i-dont-get-art](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/im-sick-of-pretending-i-dont-get-art)
6. <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/911210/international-art-english-the-joke-that-forgot-it-was-funny>
8. Unfortunately a hard drive crash during the first phase of research obliterated a number of the interview including ones with Angela Mattox, Kirsten Saladow, and Sean Shumacher.

**“I really like Lisa  
Jarret. Honestly,  
I want to be her.”**