

## A BLADE OF GRASS ASSEMBLY SPRING 2019 HOST SITES

### ABOUT MAGNUM FOUNDATION

**Magnum Foundation** was founded in 2007, in the midst of the collapse of the media system that had traditionally supported photographic reporting. Founded by the photographers of the Magnum Photos collective, including board president Susan Meiselas, the organization was conceived as an initiative to support independent, long-form visual storytelling on social issues. As the new landscape for photography projects became a permanent reality, Magnum Foundation has been at the forefront of creating experimental new models for projects that pave the way for an expansive, diverse, and creative future for documentary photography. Our programming has benefitted more than 500 photographers worldwide through grantmaking, training, mentorship, and strategic collaborations.

### FACILITATORS

**Cintha Santos Briones** is a documentary photographer based between New York and Mexico, where she was born and raised. She studied anthropology and ethnohistory in Mexico and has worked as a researcher at various institutions such as the National Institute of Anthropology and History, The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, as well as HBO. Her work as a documentary photographer has focused on indigenous migrant communities, gender issues, and the struggle for human rights. Cintha is a recent graduate of the Visual Journalism and Documentary Practice program at the International Center of Photography in New York.

Briones' fellowship series explores the lives of undocumented Mexican immigrant women who came to live in NYC when they were young and, over time, came to be *abuelas*. Some have lived in the US for two or three decades and yet remain invisible and undocumented. The project consists of environmental portraits taken in the homes of these migrant women, focusing on intimate places and their relationship to space and appropriation of their environment. The process is participatory—Briones asks the women: How would you like to see yourself and represent yourself in the picture within the *abuelas* project? They choose how and where they want to be shown in their homes, and what outfits and accessories reflect their personality, identity and tastes.

<http://www.cintha-santosbriones.com/>

**Mengwen Cao** is a photographer, videographer and multimedia producer based in New York. Using mixed media, her recent work investigates the in-between space of race, gender, and cultural identity. Her projects

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have been featured on The New York Times, NPR, Mashable, BUST, The Guardian, etc. She has participated in international exhibitions like Photoville, Jimei Arles International Photography Festival, and Lianzhou Foto Festival. She is a board member of Authority Collective. She graduated from the New Media Narratives and Documentary Practice program at the International Center of Photography in 2017, and received her BA in English from Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics and her MA in Instructional Technology from UT Austin.

During her Magnum Foundation fellowship, Cao worked on a project exploring the mundane beauty of QTPOC (queer trans people of color) joy. The project highlights the liminal space and challenges the extreme media representations of QTPOC. In mainstream media, marginalized communities like QTPOC are often seen at the peak or the lowest moments of their lives. As part of this community, Cao is seeking spaces where the nuanced narrative of these lived experiences can manifest itself in vibrant colors and dreamy textures by threading quiet portraits with authentic Instax photos.

<http://www.mengwencao.com/>

**Groana Melendez** is a lens-based artist whose work explores hybrid identities through self-representation. She holds an MFA in Advanced Photographic Studies from the International Center of Photography-Bard Program. Groana has participated in group exhibitions, most recently at the Leslie Lohman Museum for Gay and Lesbian Art. She's also had solo shows at the New York Public Library, CUNY, and ICP-Bard's studio in Queens. Groana is currently a teaching artist at the Bronx Documentary Center.

As a fellow, Melendez worked on a project that captures the aural and visual experiences of youth navigating daily sexual objectification in New York City. The project sheds light on the way young people are catcalled, perceived as objects, and publicly addressed by strangers on a daily basis. It's a collaborative project that combines ambient sound recordings with interviews and reenactments of the experiences of teens. The final piece is an audio walk that's experienced with headphones during a commute. Overall, the project plays back onto ourselves and the messages we as a culture give youth.

<http://www.groanamelendez.com/>

**Noelle Flores Théard** is a New York based educator and arts administrator with a BA in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin, an MA in African Diaspora Studies from Florida International University, and an MFA in Photography from Parsons. She is the Programs Manager at the Magnum Foundation. Noelle is also part-time faculty in the Parsons BFA Photography program. She is a cofounder of FotoKonbit, a non-profit that teaches photography in Haiti.

**Simone Salvo** leads communications and events at the Magnum Foundation. She is interested in public engagement and merging art practices with other disciplines to further the reach and impact of a story. Simone has produced interactive activations and public-facing exhibitions in Paris, San Francisco, and New York with #Dysturb, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and For Freedoms, amongst others. Simone received her BA in Photography and Human Rights from Bard College, and serves on the advisory board of the Bard Globalization and International Affairs program in New York City.

**See more about the Spring 2019 Assembly [here](#)**

Nurturing Socially  
Engaged Art

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