Summer 2024 Exhibitions Opening Conversation

Conversation with Jonas N.T. Becker, Gina Osterloh, and Judith Transue in the Wexner Center for the Arts' Film/Video Theater as part of the Summer 2024 Exhibitions Opening Celebration.

This transcription is provided as a record of the live conversation, for educational use. Read more about the Wexner Center for the Arts' Mission, Vision, and Values.

Transcript

Gaëtane Verna (00:07):

Welcome, everyone. I invite you now to join me in respectfully acknowledging the past and present traditional owners of this territory and their unique role in the life of this region. The Wexner Center for the Arts is committed to honoring Indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship to the land and waters and their rich contribution to our society. We pay our respect to their elders past, present, and emerging. We ask that you respect the land and traditions of those who walked upon it for millennia before us.

(00:50):

Our center occupies the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe, and many other Indigenous peoples. The university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the forced removal of nations through the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

(01:20):

As an institution, we want to honor the resiliency of these nations and recognize the historical contexts that continue to affect the Indigenous peoples of this vast land. I hope that you will join me in acknowledging the history, culture, and stewardship of the land. We seek to live in respect, peace, and right relations as we live and work on their ancestral territory.

(01:53):

Welcome to our summer 2024 exhibitions opening programs. I speak on behalf of everyone at the Wexner Center for the Arts, from our Board of Trustees of the Wexner Center Foundation to our entire team in Exhibitions, Learning & Public Practice, Performing Arts, Film/Video, Communications and Marketing, Administration and Finance when I say thank you for joining us. It's so wonderful to welcome you on this glorious day.

(02:27):

We invite you to explore the galleries and experience the work of Jonas N.T. Becker and Tanya Lukin Linklater, both Wexner Center Artist Residency Award recipients. These exhibitions represent the largest presentation of each artist's work to date. As such,

these new exhibitions reflect our mission to be a catalyst for creation for the artists that we serve. In doing this work and sharing it with us, I want to acknowledge Kelly Kivland, the curator of these incredibly thought-provoking exhibitions. She has long championed the work of Jonas and Tanya and was steadfast in her commitment to their work. Thank you, Kelly, on behalf of all of us at the Wex.

(03:11):

By joining us tonight, you are the very first members of the public to see their residency projects, which consist of scenes from a new short film projected by Jonas, exploring the generational passing of political beliefs; mixed-media works; and performances from Tanya informed in part by her visit to Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Newark, Ohio.

(03:37):

To Jonas and Tanya, thank you for accepting our invitation, for your dedication to your practice, and for sharing your lyrical, challenging, and complex work. We thank you both for trusting us to present your work and help steward it to the public. These efforts have involved members of all areas of our institution.

(04:00):

Lastly, I would like to thank your respective families for joining us tonight, for their unwavering support during these many weeks, months of installation and preparation. Claire, Ocean, Judith, together with Dwayne and Mina, thank you.

(04:20):

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and organizations that have made this season of exhibitions and programming possible. Heartfelt thanks to our season sponsors, Bill and Sheila Lambert, Carol and Dave Aronowitz, the Crane Family Foundation, and Mike and Paige Crane.

(04:41):

Tonight's opening celebration is supported by Ohio Humanities. Support was also provided by the Canadian Consulate in Detroit, and we're honored to have Canada's Honorary Consul, Daniel Ujczo, in attendance with us tonight.

(04:57):

Jonas Becker is a recipient of the Ohio State Global Arts and Humanities Discovery Theme External Fellowship, which helps support their artistic research and the production of some of the new works featured in our galleries. Tanya Lukin Linklater's exhibition is presented with support from Teiger Foundation and the Canada Council for the Arts. Thanks to the assistance from the American Electric Power Foundation, Mary and Robert Kidder, Bill and Sheila Lambert, and additional support from Adam Flatto, CoverMyMeds, and the PNC Foundation, we can offer free admission to our galleries to reduce barriers and promote access to all of our programs.

(05:41):

I'm grateful to all of our donors and sponsors for their curiosity, openness to new ideas, and support of the Wexner Center as a place that eliminates challenges and inspires. If you're not already a member of the Wex, I hope you'll consider joining us. Members not only receive special benefits, but they also help provide broader access to the art experiences we present and also support the work that we do with artists continuously in all areas of our institution. Now, I would like to introduce Emily Haidet, Curator of Public Programs, who will introduce tonight's speakers. Thank you very much.

Emily Haidet (06:30):

Thank you, Gaëtane. I'm pleased to introduce tonight's speakers. Jonas N.T. Becker is an award-winning artist who splits their time between Chicago and their home state of West Virginia but recently has spent time here in Columbus. I've gotten to know them very well, both as a Wex Artist Residency Award artist and a 2023–24 Global Arts and Humanities Discovery Theme External Fellow at Ohio State. With their exhibition *A Hole is Not a Void*, Jonas considers the value of natural and human resources, their commodification by the powerful, and the holistic inequity that results.

Using their work to speak to an ongoing system of injustice, Jonas reveals the true cost involved, the impact of generations of extraction on the landscape and individuals and families. Jonas's short film project *Class Struggle* is a collaboration with Judith Transue, a community organizer and activist, and also Jonas's mother. Judith joins Jonas tonight for a conversation moderated by Gina Osterloh. Gina is a colleague of Jonas's, an associate professor in the Department of Art here at Ohio State, and a 2024 Guggenheim Fellow whose photographic work was presented last year in a solo exhibition at the Columbus Museum of Art. Please join me in welcoming our esteemed panelists to the stage.

Gina Osterloh (08:26):

Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for being here for the summer exhibitions. Thank you, Gaëtane. Thank you, Emily, for the generous introductions. I first wanted to just briefly introduce Jonas and Judith again and we'll get started. So, Judith, clearly Jonas's mom, earned a Master of Social Work in community organization from the University of Michigan and a master's in Urban Planning from Michigan State University, and she's worked in social services and planning for Wayne County department of social services in the state of Michigan until 1980, then worked in developing community housing for people with disabilities in West Virginia from 1980 to 1990. I'm not going to read everything, but then, Judith, you returned to work for many years working for affordable housing in Michigan.

(09:21):

Jonas, so thrilled to be here. This is such a milestone exhibition. Born in West Virginia, and as Emily noted, you explore environmental justice and inequity. I'm also thrilled to be here because Jonas and I have known each other since about 2005. We both went to UC Irvine and spent many years together in Los Angeles. While our own artwork is very

different, we have so many commonalities in terms of issues of representation, concerns with visibility and invisibility, and the histories, the complex histories of photography.

(10:02):

I first wanted to start with a body of work in the exhibition titled *Better or Equal Use*. *Better or Equal Use* is a series of photographs made from coal dust that depict former mining sites redeveloped under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. And in these photographs, they're riveting, they're absolutely gorgeous, yet haunting. I'm struck by the use of material… and this use of material, coal, bringing us all back to the origins of photography as we know it today. Coal being one of the ingredients that Nicéphore Niépce, in the early 1800s, developed to fix an image to make it permanent.

(11:00):

Yet, this material of coal was not well received. It was overshadowed by Jacques-Mandé Daguerre because the daguerreotype had more clarity, and coal was so tenuous, right? So here we are at a threshold. Jonas, you have developed a new technique with an old technology to make coal more permanent, yet I know it's still very unwieldy, and through this materiality, you are connecting all of us in this room through the surface of the photograph, through a very urgent environmental issue. And I wondered if you could just speak a little bit more. Perhaps we can start with the series *Better or Equal Use* and your use of coal.

Jonas N.T. Becker (11:50):

Thank you, Gina. I think one thing that I'm really interested in, in terms of... you know, in working in photography, we were talking about this a bit earlier, but in working with photography, we're so often using tools and materials that are external to what is being photographed. So whether it's the land or people who are being photographed, our film, our cameras, they're all imbued with cultural meaning. But they're inherently outside of what we're depicting.

(12:21):

And I really, with photography, felt a necessity to connect what I was making and the images and the physical material of what I was making to the land itself. And so, kind of struck out to develop a process where the image was made of the land. And that's… in some ways, that's the origin of developing that process.

(12:51):

I think when we see photographs, we so often see just this surface. So we see a picture of flowers and we say, that is flowers, not, that is a picture of flowers. And so I also felt like it was really important to move my work towards a process that called our attention to the surface, the subjectivity, and the objectness of the photographic image.

Gina Osterloh (13:16):

Thank you. Could you kindly share, Jonas, with the audience, what exactly is going on in those images and maybe not so much the technique, but what are we looking at when we look at that body of work? It's arresting.

Jonas N.T. Becker (13:32):

Hopefully you'll all join and come into the gallery outside and see the works that we're talking about right now, but when you look at those photographs, what you're looking at is a piece of paper, coal, sugar, gelatin, and glycerin. And everything that you see, including the detail of the landscape, the deep detail of the redevelopment, is made of just those ingredients—all you're looking at. Essentially for me, what feels really beautiful and poetic about the work in part is that the image we're seeing is no more and no less than a buildup of the earth.

Gina Osterloh (14:14):

Right.

Jonas N.T. Becker (14:15):

A shadow is like a lot of coal and a highlight is no coal.

Gina Osterloh (14:16):

And in that series, *Better or Equal Use*—and *Better or Equal Use* is the body of work that is in the gallery before the first gallery. So it's on this level, first level, Gallery A, and the second room back there. *Better or Equal Use* comes from a particular term. And maybe could you share a little bit what the audience what that means?

Jonas N.T. Becker (14:46):

Yeah, so I started... This is maybe taking it back a bit. You can let me know. But the project really started with a curiosity, a deep curiosity in this US Congressional Act called... the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. And what drew me to this as a point of departure for the project was the act essentially says, Hey, you mining company, cool. If you want to blow off the top of this mountain, you can, but you have to agree essentially to do one of two things. One is reinstate the original facade of the mountain—which is ridiculous, or, this is just funny, I mean not funny at all, but in any case—or redevelop that flattened site for better or equal community use—mostly defined by the mining company themselves.

(15:45):

For me, I guess what was fascinating about this is it sets up this exchange value, this weighing of this incredibly biodiverse mountain that stood in its place for thousands and thousands and thousands of years and has cultural connotations, familial relationships, memories, history, and weighing that against this supposed better or equal community use. So it's this mountain versus what has, in large part, been redeveloped for what I would say are further generations of capitalist extraction.

Gina Osterloh (16:22):

Thank you, Jonas. And just to follow up with that body of work, and then I want to segue to a question for Judith. Those photographs are formally and compositionally… the images are, to me, gorgeous. They're both romantic and haunting. They're quite eerie. In thinking about traditional landscape techniques where you might have trees on the edges and our eye is guided into the center or an incredible amount of detail in the shadows… Could you speak a little bit about just perhaps the connection again between the materiality of coal and this soft, velvety tonal range that you're achieving?

Jonas N.T. Becker (17:17):

We love that tonal range. This is two photographers. We love that tonal range. (audience laughing) The process that I'm working with, with ground coal, builds off of and adapts some of the processes from a late 1800s photographic printing process called carbon printing. And one of the reasons I gravitated towards that history is that carbon printing was primarily used to depict the onset of modernism—so trains, big machines, and then romanticized sublime landscapes. That's the history of that process that I was building on. So in adapting part of that methodology for what I was doing with the coal, I was really interested in building and making connections to a history of landscape photography and working in landscape photography that has, I guess, some of these, just that history.

Gina Osterloh (18:30):

When you're in that gallery, you have to take your time. The tonal range fluctuates between the most rich black to a brown, to a brown-black. And the lighting also needs to be very subtle because the coal is still very fragile in that gallery.

(18:57):

I want to segue to Gallery B, which is the beautiful walkway up and you make a turn, and featured in Gallery B is a film titled *Class Struggle*, which stars and features Judith Transue. And in the film, Judith and Jonas are playing a board game called Class Struggle. Judith, could you perhaps introduce this board game? What is this board game?

Judith Transue (19:36):

What is this board game?... This was a board game that many of us in the New Left bought in 1979, actually, which was sort of a socialist answer to Monopoly. Maybe it's our natural greed, but it actually is not as interesting as Monopoly. (audience laughing) But, nonetheless, actually, it's a very good teaching tool. And when you shake the dice and land on all these various squares, it offers a very good vehicle for discussion of any number of political ideas, strikes, and issues that were very current in 1979, and some of which we have to redo all the time, such as women's rights. But that's what Class Struggle was. And so, the game was sitting in our house for a long time.

Jonas N.T. Becker (21:00):

But very dog-eared and obviously well loved. Looked like you guys played it a lot.

Judith Transue (21:05):

Well, not that. We just played vigorously, (audience laughing). And I was just very interested when Jonas said, “Let’s do this. Let’s make a movie with this and see what we can do in terms of discussion of political ideas and transmission of political ideas through generations.” And that was the vehicle for that discussion.

Gina Osterloh (21:50):

Who are some of the key players in Class Struggle?

Judith Transue (21:54):

Of course, there’s the capitalists, who get to go first, naturally. There’s the workers. And then there’s the minor classes: the farmers and the students and the small businesspeople. And so, if you have a lot of players, you can have a lot, everybody can be their own class, otherwise you have to double up. But it was a good vehicle for discussion of a lot of things. And the beginning of some reflection in terms of the generational, since I am Jonas’s mother, and the passing on of ideas, and passing them on to still another generation.

Jonas N.T. Becker (22:54):

Even in your own lifetime. It was interesting to me because we were playing this game. This game came out in 1979. We were playing it and as we were playing it, every other square we landed on, you were like, “Ah! That’s not how that is...” There were all these reflections that you had because from 1979 to now, decades have gone by. When you think about the game, were there reflections that you have in terms of what’s changed since that game came out?

Judith Transue (23:28):

Well, the more things changed, the more they stay the same. And there certainly were reflections. At that point, we were talking about women’s rights and equal pay for equal work and things like that. And I think we’re still talking about some of those things, and Roe versus Wade just got overturned. And so we’re reflecting back to keep struggling on many of the same issues. So, those are some of the kinds of things. And I think it presents a little more simplistic view. Some of us kept thinking, “Oh, this is going to happen quickly.” And it did not.

Gina Osterloh (24:23):

In the film, I’m remembering, the board game, Class Struggle, is just one component of the film. There’s two main, would you say chapters, or components, Jonas?

Jonas N.T. Becker (24:37):

Scenes, chapters.

Gina Osterloh (24:39):

And can you describe the two and how they fit together? I was thinking some of the camera strategies between the two.

Jonas N.T. Becker (24:48):

Yes. First, big shout-out to the Film/Video Studio here. It was really one of the most exciting things about... My exhibition was really an exhibition that was one of those it-takes-a-village exhibitions. I think… I was thinking earlier, there were people involved from the geology library, Global Arts and Humanities Discovery Theme, Film/Video, the Wexner curators. There're really not many areas of OSU, in my opinion, that haven't touched this exhibition. I don't think I talked to maybe the business school; maybe I should have. But anyways, lots of hands, lots of collaboration, participation. But essentially, since I've been involved with the Wexner, I've been working with the Film/Video Studio. And I've been working with them on this long and extended film project that's about how politics are passed down through different generations. And the starting point for that has been my own generational inheritance of political ideas.

(25:57):

But the intention is a much larger project that will continue through thinking about how it is that we get to be... All of you are sitting here, you all have your opinions, your ideas. How is it that you got those? Did you come by them honestly? (laughing) (audience laughing) But we all got here somehow, right? And for many people, our ideas are a direct opposite, a 180 of our family. We turn away from those things that we grew up with because we find reasons that they don't suit us; they don't fit us; we think something else. But anyways, the larger film project will explore this full range of how political inheritance functions.

(26:45):

In large part because I find myself... We all are so focused on the present moment—I am me, this is what I think; you are you, this is what you think. But I think this broadening of perspective of how is it that we all got here...

(27:00):

Anyways, all to say, larger film project… and so, what I've been working on with the Film/Video Studio is two scenes from this. And what you were asking about, the two scenes… the first scene, my mother and I are playing Class Struggle. It's quite formal. The shots are very formal. We're in a black box. And then the second scene is shot in a very… I would say in a very traditional, documentary fashion.

(27:28):

And so, they actually almost work in opposite languages of filmmaking. The first one, everything in the game, everything that we talk about is meant to be a metaphor. It's a stand-in for something outside of the space that you see. Whereas in the documentary space, what you see is what is there. It's a one-to-one. And so the film ultimately will combine a number of different strategies of filmmaking to create these different layered meanings.

Gina Osterloh (27:56):

And there's the board game Class Struggle, and then in the second part, Judith, you're really sharing the history of your activism.

Judith Transue (28:04):

Yeah, well, and the personal… history of what I did and my life, but as part of the bigger struggles of the time for equal rights for women, for civil rights, and for unionization, for many other things, as well as the personal involvement with raising a child and trying to impart those values as well and hopefully pass them on.

Gina Osterloh (28:53):

And in the film, there's Judith, Jonas, and also Ocean, right? Ocean is now… ? .

Judith Transue (29:01):

Two.

Jonas N.T. Becker (29:01):

Two.

Gina Osterloh (29:02):

So it's definitely a multigenerational cast. Absolutely.

Judith Transue (29:08):

If you can impart those values by singing "Solidarity Forever" about 42 times, the child will remember those things, I think. (audience laughing) Hopefully they're sort of embedded. They won't remember them, maybe not consciously, but hopefully be out there organizing something by ten or twelve years old. (audience laughing)

Jonas N.T. Becker (29:41):

That's slow for our family. Low bar, low bar.

Judith Transue (29:47):

But there is always that hope and the grounding; it's political values, but it's basic human values, and those are the things that we tried.

Jonas N.T. Becker (30:08):

Mom, I have a question for you. I was sharing earlier that one of my favorite things to do at public presentations of my work is to ask you to give a tour of the show.

Judith Transue (30:17):

Yeah.

Jonas N.T. Becker (30:19):

And I know you just walked through the exhibition, and I don't mean to put you too much on the spot-

Judith Transue (30:21):

Okay.

Jonas N.T. Becker (30:23):

But just wondering if anything stuck out to you, any bodies of work, or if you had any questions for me about any of the projects?

Judith Transue (30:40):

I like the better, best, and highest use work very much. And I like that... I am very conscious, I guess, of the fact that… I think it was your life in West Virginia and your growing up with your father and myself that inspired some of this, and just… that understanding of Appalachia… and Appalachian culture. And that just really inspires me. I don't know if you want to reflect on that some.

Jonas N.T. Becker (31:26):

It's interesting because one of the things that I've been thinking about with this entire exhibition is the idea of generations and inheritance. And it's something that runs through more systemic understandings of inheritance or systemic understandings of generations, like generations of extraction, or generations and different iterations of capitalist endeavors to generations that we're talking about quite literally in the film with you, me, Ocean. So, it's interesting to think about how your own upbringing, or how where you're from, or those things affect your practice.

(32:11):

I think, first I would say, I would shout out our family friend, Sammy Petonk, because first of all, I think I mentioned earlier, for me becoming just very curious with this congressional act, but one of our family friends brought this up to me. And I think the thing that's interesting to me is I think that the way that artists... I don't know how common it is for us to talk about where these ideas come from or where these projects start, but for me at least, it's often this thing that while my practice tends to be very solitary, the ideas come from a very communal place and a very conversational place.

(33:00):

And so, the idea for that project came out of a conversation with somebody that I used to take baths with when I was two years old. So… I think these conversations and the way that you grow up really impact the practice. And one thing I always think about is that… we're talking a lot today about land. And I think… when you grow up in a place where extraction is common, you often see these high walls of mined-out mountains. And you can see—I'm not sure I quite understood how unique this was—but I could always… From the time I was born, essentially, I was seeing the way land is formed in layers.

(33:43):

It's formed in these layers that show time; they show slow time; they show history; they show materiality. And so, I always had this innate understanding of the way that land is not a surface. So, what we were talking about with photography earlier, land is not… nice sunset, pretty prairie, or whatever these things that we see that are just out on the surface. Land is these layers of history, of culture, of family, of experience. And so, I think that that's something that I innately grew up with.

Judith Transue (34:22):

Well, also appreciate the irony on the best and highest use. First of all, of course, that's a real-estate term, which brings it directly back to the land, but I appreciate the irony of the fact that what your photographs show is that the reclamation efforts mostly featured prisons.

Jonas N.T. Becker (34:51):

Yeah, there's that and then big-box stores that are hiring people to work 39 hours at minimum wage.

Judith Transue (35:00):

Yeah.

Jonas N.T. Becker (35:02):

There are a lot of carceral facilities, but also big-box stores, call centers that are for luxury brands that somebody working at that call center could not afford. There's this range of these capitalist endeavors.

Gina Osterloh (35:21):

I think that's important to make clear. So when you see these photographs in the series *Better or Equal Use*, the pictures made of coal, the mountaintops are blown off, and then there's a deal with the mining company that they will restore the land to either better or equal use. And most of the sites include prisons, malls, and there was one where—it was one of the most haunting ones to me—there was a bridge and almost, I think, nothing.

Jonas N.T. Becker (35:49):

Bridge to Nowhere.

Judith Transue (35:50):

It was a road, a bridge that was a road to nowhere.

Gina Osterloh (35:54):

Right.

Judith Transue (35:55):

But perhaps they'll think of something. (audience laughing)

Gina Osterloh (36:06):

With that, since we're on the topic of the mountain-range work, the first body of work when you walk into Gallery A is *Blank Topographies*. It's an incredibly stark, stunning, white, minimalist room. Could you describe and share with the audience what exactly the topographical raised reliefs are and how that's connecting with capitalism and exchange?

Jonas N.T. Becker (36:35):

To engage with capitalism is to engage in land-based capitalism and real estate as a foundation of that. And I think that for that project... Just simply put, that project is an aesthetic project but also a research project, which is that for the last however many years I've been working on that project—I think maybe six years—I've located the most expensive mountain land sold in the United States—the top three to five of them. And then located them on these maps… map quadrants that are these things… it's called a raised-relief map. And what it is… is a sort of three-dimensional visualization of the topography of that map.

(37:22):

They're readily available on the internet, on eBay. There's sites that sell them, aftermarket sites that sell them. And they're common in cabins, lawyer's offices, random places where people have this nostalgia and aspirational relationship to the land: Oh, this is the place my family always used to go, outside of upstate New York, or wherever. But there's this sort of aspirational relationship with the land through collecting these objects. They're collectible. I should have said that.

(37:56):

So, for each of these places that I've researched each year, I find the map that it's located in, acquire the map—usually through eBay at this point—and then for the project, I'm obscuring and camouflaging any way that we would understand this land's value by painting it white. And so, you can't see anything but the white surface.

Gina Osterloh (38:22):

And most of them… Are they the most expensive mountain ranges sold each year?

Jonas N.T. Becker (38:27):

Yeah. Most expensive parcel of mountain land. And some of them... There's a variety of reasons that something can be expensive. It could be near New York City, or it could be… It has a lot of mineral resources. But what I've done with the project is obscure that and through the titling, I've asked for a different consideration of land and its value. So the titles reflect on everything from how many monarch butterflies pass through that parcel of land to the financial… to the sale price.

(39:06):

Some of the titles are the sale price and some of the titles reflect on a variety of things that range in each of them. But they don't say what they are because, in large part, what

I'm hoping is just to ask and question: How can we think about land outside of its financial value and relationship to capital?

Judith Transue (39:30):

I am wondering if you would talk a little bit about *Thank God for Mississippi*, because I like that work a lot, but it may not be as evident in terms of the meaning. So, that one.

Jonas N.T. Becker (39:49):

Yeah. So, if you go up the ramp… and then you'll see in Gallery B, I think they're not labeled with letters. So you go up the ramp… The first gallery—take a left, first opening—There are six large-scale photos that are part of a series called *Thank God for Mississippi*. I would say the project overall is an attempt to reflect on large-scale socioeconomic factors. So we read about—open up the newspaper, whichever is your choice—and we read about these large-scale statistics. This is the most, this school district has the lowest test scores, this state has the worst response to mental health. We have this range of ways to understand things that are largely intangible and very… for most parts, unrelatable because we don't have a way to directly connect with a number that's larger than something we've ever seen. Five million… I mean, I've never seen five million of anything. So I think that those statistics become largely inaccessible for our ability to connect.

Judith Transue (41:00):

Worst nutrition, et cetera.

Jonas N.T. Becker (41:03):

Also, that.

(41:04):

The project started from a point of wanting to think about the personal impacts of these larger socioeconomic conditions in my home state of West Virginia. And so, to create the work, I researched and traveled to the most common sites for fatal jumps and built a very large boom. So, a very large pole… big stick to hang a four-by-five. So, a big stick for a big camera, out over the edges of these cliffs to photograph the view down, which was far enough out that it was the view that you could only get if you had already committed to this jump.

(41:45):

And the jumps are a range of jumps. Just to acknowledge, some of them are cliff-jumping sites. So, high-risk behavior… what is it that goes behind high-risk behavior? Some of them are slips and falls under the influence, and some of them are suicide. And so, there's a range and there's a nuance in that to understand. The photographs are these views that are straight down.

(42:11):

I think from thinking about photographic history, it was really important for me to photograph not the view I could safely see from behind a rail or whatever my position was but actually photograph this view that really reflects the gaze of whoever has made that decision.

Judith Transue (42:30):

I think the expression “Thank God for Mississippi” is pretty common in West Virginia. And what it means is that in any list of these statistics, like worst nutrition, worst educational performance… Any of those statistics, West Virginia often comes in 49th, just above Mississippi. That’s why the expression is used.

Gina Osterloh (43:01):

Thank you. And I remember that body of work very clearly from right after grad school.

Jonas N.T. Becker (43:06):

Yeah.

Gina Osterloh (43:06):

You were still in grad school, I think, for that one.

Jonas N.T. Becker (43:08):

Yeah.

Gina Osterloh (43:11):

I think we’re about out of time. It just has been such an incredible honor, Judith and Jonas, to speak with you this evening. I just wanted to thank everyone again for being here and thank the Wexner so much for making this all possible. And I think Emily is going to say a few words.

Emily Haidet (43:30):

I am. I just wanted to thank you all again. Thank you, Jonas, Gina, and Judith for being so generous in this conversation. And thank you all for attending this evening. We’re so grateful you spent this beautiful day with us. I do want to invite you all to continue the conversation out in the galleries and in the reception just outside the theater. I also encourage you to check out the Wex Store this evening—it’s open late—which is carrying the catalogue of Tanya’s exhibition *My Mind is with the Weather*; her poetry book *Slow Scrape*; and also the Smash Capital T-shirt, which you may see in Scenes from *Class Struggle* from Jonas N.T. Becker.

(44:11):

Thank you again and have a great evening.