CCAM

center for concrete and abstract machines

[in]formal
[in]formations
07.03.23
new inc, new york

Schedule

11.00 opening remarks

session 1

11.15 Kristin McWharter
How to Be A Good Sport: Algorithms for
Competitive Collectives

12.00 Daniel Lichtman
Collective Worldbuilding with the
Community Game Development Toolkit

[in]formal
[in]formations

lunch

12.45 walk together to Maman [~$20]

session 2

1.45 Muindi Fanuel Muindi
                    Measure with Care

2.30 Lee Tusman
     Web-based Preservation of Online Art
                            Communities

[break]

session 3

3.30 Garrett Laroy Johnson
        "To Get Concrete, We Have to Get
        Abstract": Towards Collectives of
        Machinic Fluency in Media Arts

4.15-5.00 Asa Sakrison
 Concering Concern, Creativity and Caring
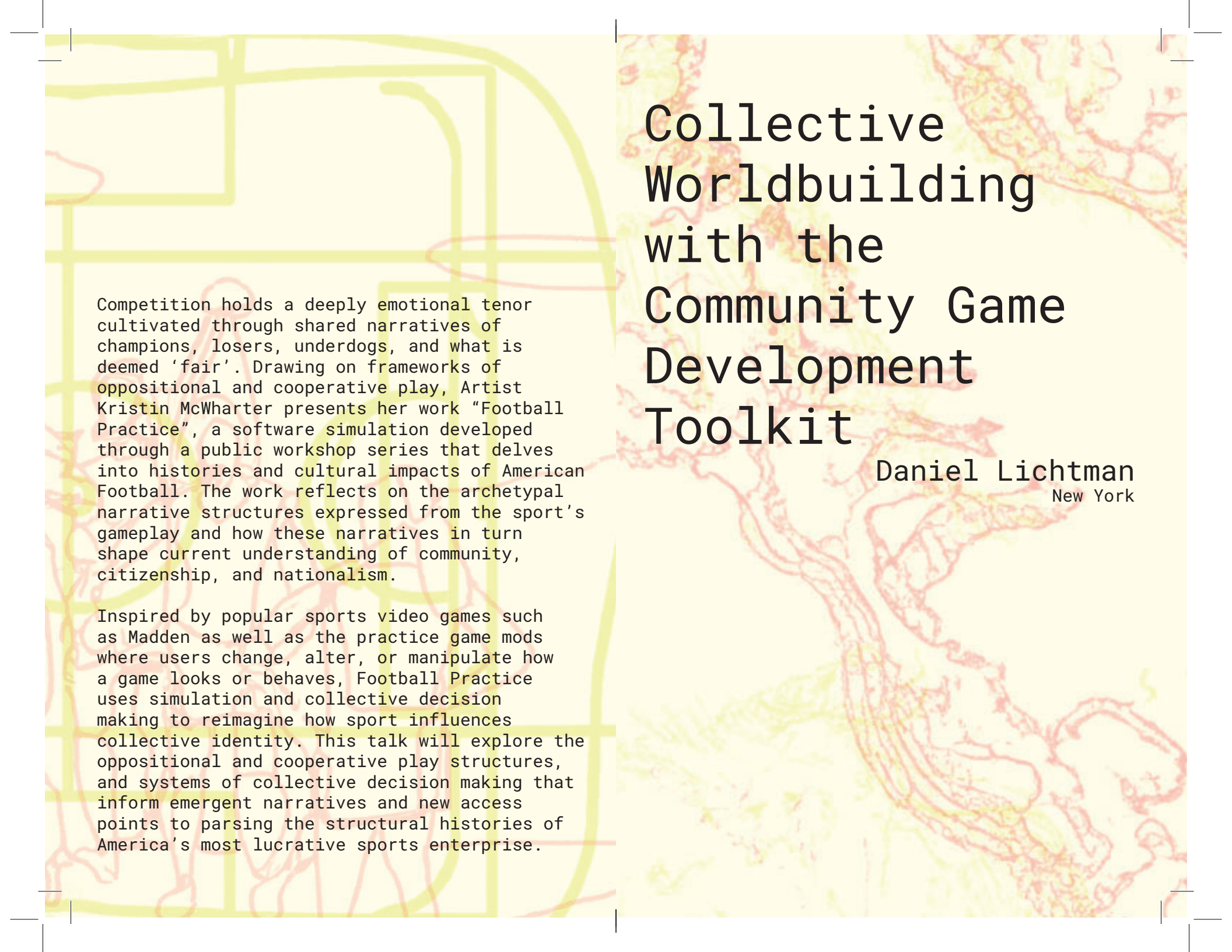   for our Practices

reception

5-6 Balcony, light refreshments provided

www.abstractconcrete.center
@ccam_chicago

How to Be a Good Sport: Algorithms for Competetive Collectives
Kristin McWharter
Chicago

Collective Worldbuilding with the Community Game Development Toolkit

Daniel Lichtman

New York

Competition holds a deeply emotional tenor cultivated through shared narratives of champions, losers, underdogs, and what is deemed 'fair'. Drawing on frameworks of oppositional and cooperative play, Artist Kristin McWharter presents her work "Football Practice", a software simulation developed through a public workshop series that delves into histories and cultural impacts of American Football. The work reflects on the archetypal narrative structures expressed from the sport's gameplay and how these narratives in turn shape current understanding of community, citizenship, and nationalism.

Inspired by popular sports video games such as Madden as well as the practice game mods where users change, alter, or manipulate how a game looks or behaves, Football Practice uses simulation and collective decision making to reimagine how sport influences collective identity. This talk will explore the oppositional and cooperative play structures, and systems of collective decision making that inform emergent narratives and new access points to parsing the structural histories of America's most lucrative sports enterprise.
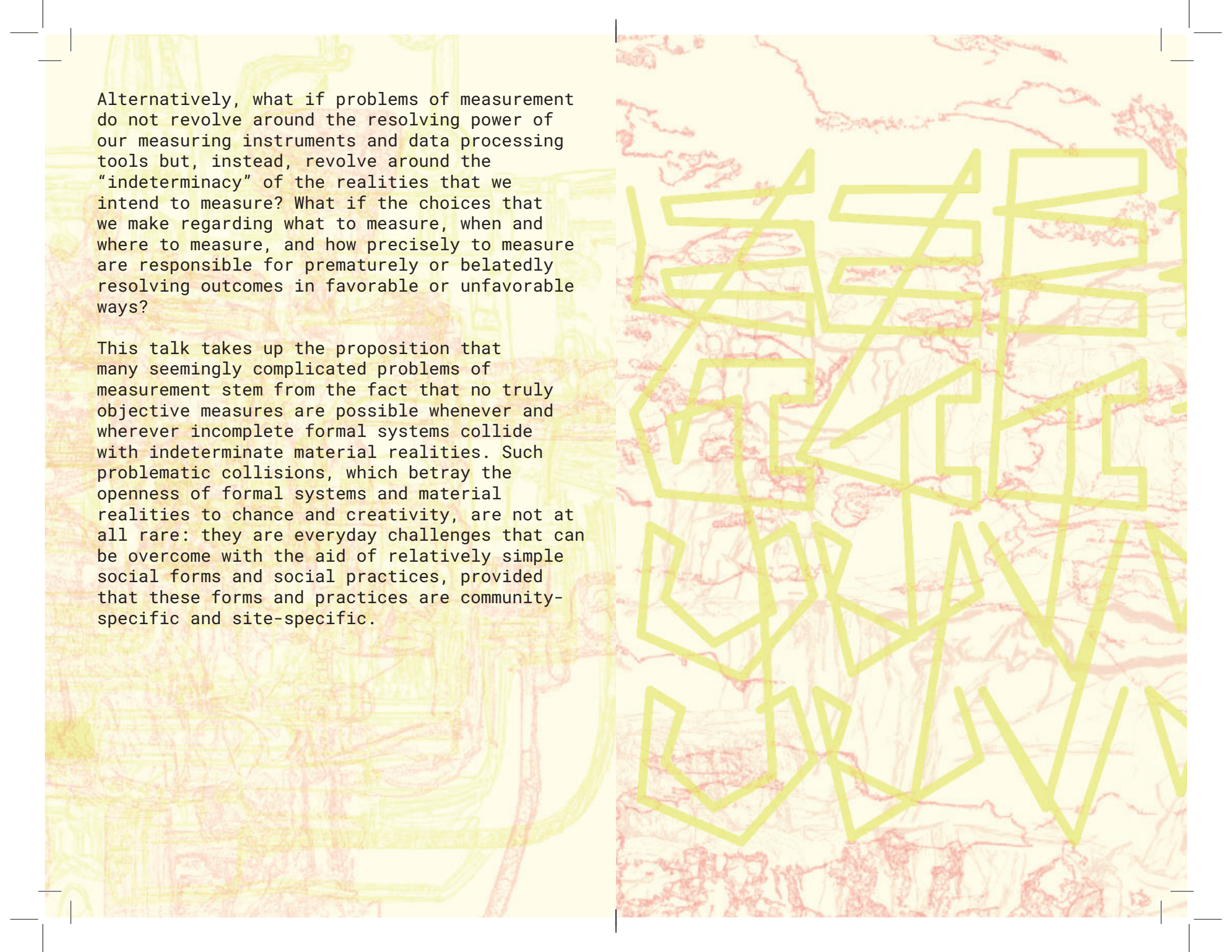
Measure w/ Care

Muindi Fanuel Muindi
Seattle

In this session Daniel Lichtman will introduce The Community Game Development Toolkit and lead a collective worldbuilding activity using the toolkit.

The Community Game Development Toolkit is a set of tools that make it easy and fun for students, artists, researchers and community members to create their own collage-based, interactive 3D environments and story-based games without the use of coding or other specialized game-design skills. Building on the Unity game engine, the toolkit provides intuitive tools for diverse communities to represent their own traditions, rituals and heritages through interactive, visual storytelling.
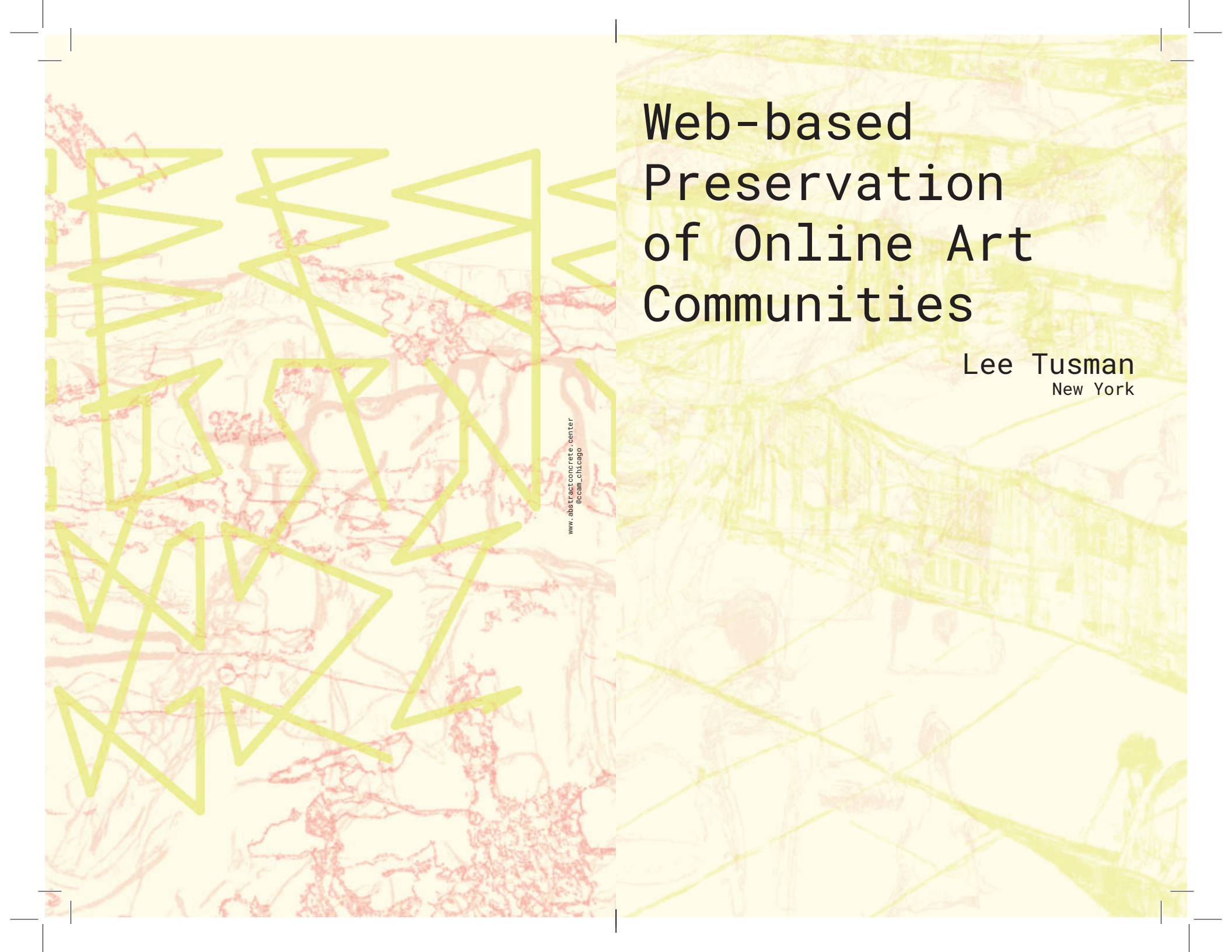
In order to quickly create vibrant, visually rich scenes without the use of 3D modeling, the toolkit draws on creators' own photos, collages, drawings, sound recordings and 3D scans to create objects and textures in 3D space. This technique allows creators to bring their own visual references and sensibility into the game environment and makes creative experimentation rewarding and fun for creators who may have no prior experience in 3D modeling or even visual art.

Do all problems of measurement really revolve around the "resolving power" of our measuring instruments and data processing tools? Or, in other words, can all problems of measurement really be solved by fashioning instruments capable of more precise measurements and by developing data processing tools that record, sort, filter, and match measurements with greater accuracy? Is the imperative really to feed more precise data into our machines and models in order to more accurately predict favorable and unfavorable outcomes?
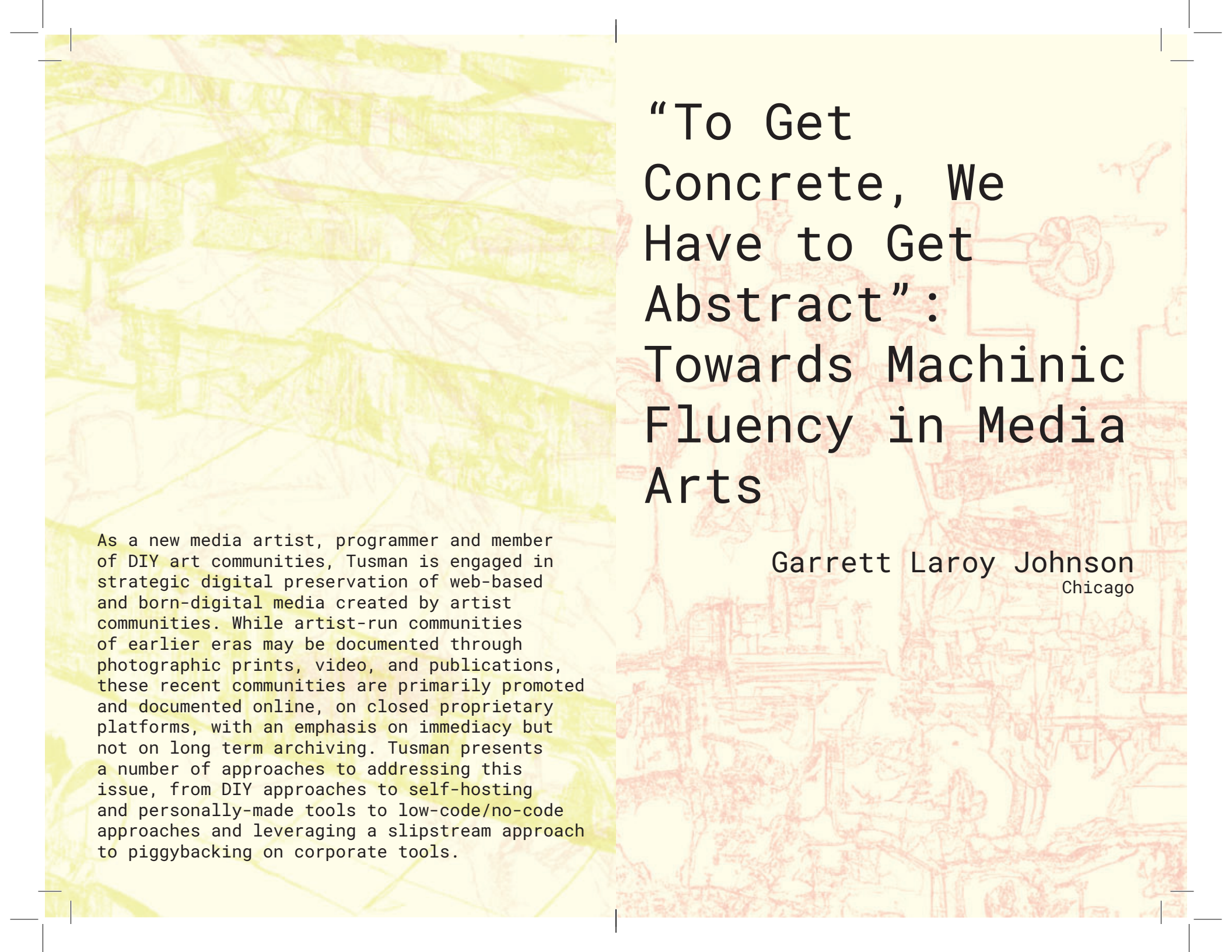
Alternatively, what if problems of measurement do not revolve around the resolving power of our measuring instruments and data processing tools but, instead, revolve around the "indeterminacy" of the realities that we intend to measure? What if the choices that we make regarding what to measure, when and where to measure, and how precisely to measure are responsible for prematurely or belatedly resolving outcomes in favorable or unfavorable ways?

This talk takes up the proposition that many seemingly complicated problems of measurement stem from the fact that no truly objective measures are possible whenever and wherever incomplete formal systems collide with indeterminate material realities. Such problematic collisions, which betray the openness of formal systems and material realities to chance and creativity, are not at all rare: they are everyday challenges that can be overcome with the aid of relatively simple social forms and social practices, provided that these forms and practices are community-specific and site-specific.

Web-based Preservation of Online Art Communities

Lee Tusman

New York

"To Get Concrete, We Have to Get Abstract": Towards Machinic Fluency in Media Arts

Garrett Laroy Johnson

Chicago

As a new media artist, programmer and member of DIY art communities, Tusman is engaged in strategic digital preservation of web-based and born-digital media created by artist communities. While artist-run communities of earlier eras may be documented through photographic prints, video, and publications, these recent communities are primarily promoted and documented online, on closed proprietary platforms, with an emphasis on immediacy but not on long term archiving. Tusman presents a number of approaches to addressing this issue, from DIY approaches to self-hosting and personally-made tools to low-code/no-code approaches and leveraging a slipstream approach to piggybacking on corporate tools.

Concerning Concern, Creativity, and Caring for Our Practices
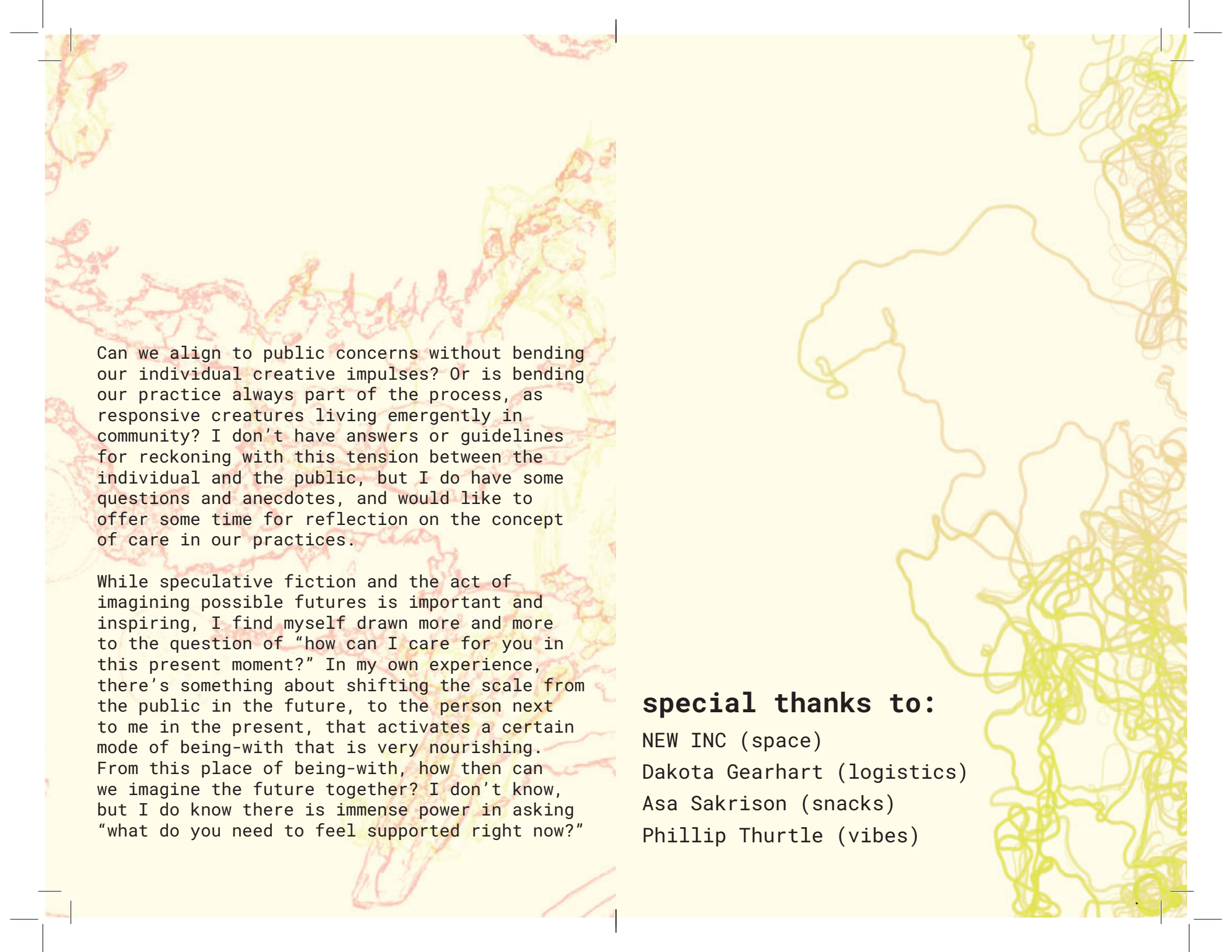
Asa Sakrison
Portland

This talk proposes 'machinic fluency' as driver of new collective organizational practices in arts-research. First, I describe a machinic fluency. Second, I outline and project the activities of CCAM, the Center for Concrete and Abstract Machines, a nascent Chicago-based organization for media arts study and practice.

Machinic fluency describes a marriage between theoretical and applied practice. The machinic references the work of Felix Guattari, who proposed the mechanosphere as a framework for generating understanding and tactical interventions in our contemporary political and social situation. The mechanosphere is made up of machinic assemblages both concrete and abstract. Drawing on Albert North Whitehead, I outline a dialectic between concrete and abstract connected to a practical, transdisciplinary fluency informed by Gilbert Simondon's essay on the Technical Mentality.

Elaborating practically on technical mentality, I report on the immediate and project happenings of CCAM. CCAM is an artist-run center for experimental media arts research + practice founded Summer 2023 that looks to make paths for technical and theoretical exchange with practitioners and theorists around the world. CCAM offers courses of study in technics and theory and hosts working and critique groups look forward to offering transdisciplinary collaborative and intensive workshops, as well as microresidencies.

Can we align to public concerns without bending our individual creative impulses? Or is bending our practice always part of the process, as responsive creatures living emergently in community? I don't have answers or guidelines for reckoning with this tension between the individual and the public, but I do have some questions and anecdotes, and would like to offer some time for reflection on the concept of care in our practices.

While speculative fiction and the act of imagining possible futures is important and inspiring, I find myself drawn more and more to the question of "how can I care for you in this present moment?" In my own experience, there's something about shifting the scale from the public in the future, to the person next to me in the present, that activates a certain mode of being-with that is very nourishing. From this place of being-with, how then can we imagine the future together? I don't know, but I do know there is immense power in asking "what do you need to feel supported right now?"

special thanks to:

NEW INC (space)

Dakota Gearhart (logistics)

Asa Sakrison (snacks)

Phillip Thurtle (vibes)

07.03.23