by way of

November 13, 2026 – February 7, 2027

by way of an Introduction

This exhibition marks the culmination of the Regional Artist Mobility Program (RAMP), the inaugural residency exchange developed in partnership between Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) and Flux Factory, a New York-based arts organization.

At its core, RAMP aims to expand opportunities for Ohio and New York artists to develop their practices, to nurture creative dialogue, and build connections and cooperation among artists from different regions of the United States.

Artists were selected *by way of* an application review process in which each organization selected two artists from the other organization's applicant pool. Through this process, CIA selected Flux Factory-affiliated artists Li-Ming Hu and Itala Aguilera, while Flux Factory selected CIA faculty members Rachel Ferber and Mike Meier. Ferber and Meier spent six weeks living and working in New York from late May to Early July, while Aguilera and Hu completed their six-week residency at CIA from mid-September through October.

From access to world-class museums and state-of-the-art fabrication tools to exchanging ideas with material experts and different creative communities, the residency experience offered artists new resources and perspectives that could help inform and catalyze an expansion of their respective practices.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to the exhibition's co-organizer, Meghana Karnik, Curator and Exhibitions Director at Flux Factory, for initiating this partnership between our organizations and bringing it to life through RAMP. I see this project as an unofficial continuation of a previous exhibition Karnik guest-curated for Reinberger Gallery in 2020, aptly named *TITLE TBD. TITLE TBD* highlighted the precarity of an artist's life amid the growing failure of once-trusted institutions to provide the necessary support for artists to sustain their practices within a system that, over time, has increasingly undervalued the very creative labor it once vowed to support.

Building on this, RAMP considers whether intentional relationships between institutions that include resource sharing and infrastructural support, might help to bring repair to this fracture and more directly improve conditions for artists.

I'd also like to thank Flux Factory Program Director Susan Katz for her work in stewarding RAMP and partnering with the Kettering Foundation to secure funding support; Graphic Design Associate Professor Adam Lucas and his third-year Graphic Design students for collaborating with us to design the exhibition's graphics and their various applications; and the incredible CIA Exhibitions + Galleries team—Seneca Kuchar, Thomas Kassai and Frank Hadzima—for their talent, dedication and labor. I am also grateful to the Roulet-Hernandez Family, the Kettering Foundation and, of course, RAMP artists Li-Ming, Itala, Rachel and Mike for entrusting us with your work.

I am deeply appreciative of the collaborative efforts of the students, artists and arts workers who, *by way of* the ever-evolving exchange of ideas, ventured to create an exhibition that speaks to the lived experience of the creative process. Exhibitions are built *by way of* the collective efforts of many, and it is my pleasure to share this capstone of our collaborative work with you.

— Nikki Woods, Director of Exhibitions + Galleries, Cleveland Institute of Art

by way of: Notes on Regional Artist Mobility

Recently, an artist asked me whether, amid widespread AI scraping, she should share new work online. The question was not just about copyright, but about artists' agency over their knowledge and craft. I acknowledged it was a difficult question to live with, given artists are already expected to freely provide content, research and public engagement in exchange for the possibility of future compensation or professional advancement. The expectation exists in art schools and artist-run spaces alike. AI introduces another set of actors that extract value, often without artists' knowledge, consent and compensation. The exchange left me wondering why creative labor is so easily taken for granted.

Where is the time and space for work that isn't immediately extractable? Unproductive time is a basic condition of artistic freedom. As Christina Sharpe writes in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, you must "become undisciplined" to prevent your own annihilation. In these days of economic contraction and the wild west of large language models, it seems we are at a critical juncture where our collective choices will become a referendum on how we value human life and creative labor.

Featuring work by Itala Aguilera, Rachel Ferber, Li-Ming Hu and Mike Meier, RAMP's culminating exhibition, *by way of*, takes artist mobility as a form of time travel, drawing on the 1901 Moberly-Jourdain timeslip: an account by two visiting academics to Versailles who became convinced they had wandered into the 1790s and spent years in the archives trying to prove it. *By way of* takes its title from the common preposition for an indirect route—a nod to the oft absurd, circuitous path taken by makers for their art. Leaning into processes of working backwards, taking the side quest, wandering off or rerouting, each of the artists in *by way of* channels a practice through something that already exists: *by way of* a melting shoe, *by way of* reenactment, *by way of* material resistance, and *by way of* the terminally online.

A fashion-designer-cum-performance-artist, Aguilera's investigations into striptease through dissolving and edible apparel take on a new sculptural language in a pair of candelabra shoes, activated on opening night. Ferber's exacting attention focuses on the dross of consumer culture, retooling its incidental forms and markings as a framing mechanism. Her anthotypes, made from foraged mulberries of New York and green tomatoes from her garden in Cleveland, interest her as a means of discreet communication. Hu reenacts Jensen Huang's interview with Condoleezza Rice on *Only in America* take for take, mapping the Nvidia founder's journey from working-class immigrant roots to the helm of a company central to the AI revolution. Microchips, slip-cast ceramic computer components, and screens bring the materiality of computation into the show. Meier's encounters with historical paintings in New York became points of departure for a new body of work that reimagines religious iconography and allegory, from the torment of Saint Anthony to the slaughter of innocents, as a lens on today's political violence, class relations and spectacles of power.

From New York *by way of* Cleveland, RAMP is an experiment in institutional solidarity, with artistic freedom as its ambition. Rather than treating a residency exchange as an opportunity for artists to gain professional exposure, can movement between different institutional cultures interrupt established expectations and make new forms of support possible? What happens when artists aren't pressured to make every detour count toward an arrival?

— Meghana Karnik, Roulet-Hernandez Visiting Curator | Curator + Exhibitions Director, Flux Factory

Artists Represented

Itala Aguilera, Flux Community Artist
Textile Artist + Designer
Rachel Ferber, Assistant Professor CO/RE, CIA
Interdisciplinary Artist + Designer
Li-Ming Hu, Flux Factory Community Artist
Interdisciplinary Artist + Former Actor
Mike Meier, Associate Professor of Painting, CIA
Visual Artist + Musician

Contributors + Special Thanks

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Performance Musical Accompaniment
Michael Butz
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Fabrication Studios Studio Technician
Thomas Kassai
Lead Art Preparator
Susan Katz
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Meghana Karnik
Roulet-Hernandez Family Curator
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Josh Werling
Digital Output Center Manager
Nikki Woods
Director of Exhibitions + Galleries
The Roulet-Hernandez Family Curator Fund
The Kettering Foundation

A Note on Class Collaboration

A class of seven third-year Graphic Design students designed the visual identity and its applications for *by way of*. At the beginning of the design process, the students worked with Reinberger Gallery staff to research and ideate through different ways the exhibition identity could come to life.

Typographically, they landed on Fraktion, a sans serif and monospaced typeface pairing that possesses a balance of industrial rigidity and distinctive character. When needing to be more neutral, the fonts can recede to the background and support the artists' wide range of work through functional typogaphy. At the same time, especially when set in heavier weights, they can also convey an expressive personality.

Once the typeface was established, each student was assigned to a different exhibition application, from the title wall to the website to the program you're reading now. Through iteration and alignment in critiques and studio sessions, they worked together to refine their individual designs and converge towards a cohesive visual identity.

For most of the students, the design process was an immersion into the dynamic mix of real-world studio practice: focused heads-down work, crucial collaboration and the challenge of reacting to changing parameters as a project progresses.

As always, it was an honor and joy to work closely with the Reinberger Gallery staff on this project. Their thoughtful and professional approach and deep trust in the students demonstrated how meaningful designing with and for partners in the arts and cultural field can be. I look forward to many more fruitful collaborations.

— Adam Lucas, Associate Professor, Graphic Design

Graphic Design Students

Alex Benjamin
Work Labels + Didactics
Danisha Bravo
Program Guide
Ry Constantinescu
Outside Activation
Gianna LeMaster
Audience Participation
Arden Luplow
Microsite
Angel Ramirez-Banda
Title Wall
Riyan Sita
Inspiration Pamphlets

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Cleveland Institute of Art
College of Art + Design