

BEYOND POINTING

and they open up
cupcakes stores everywhere

if you don't know what
gentrified means

Heather M. O'Brien
Jonathan Takahashi

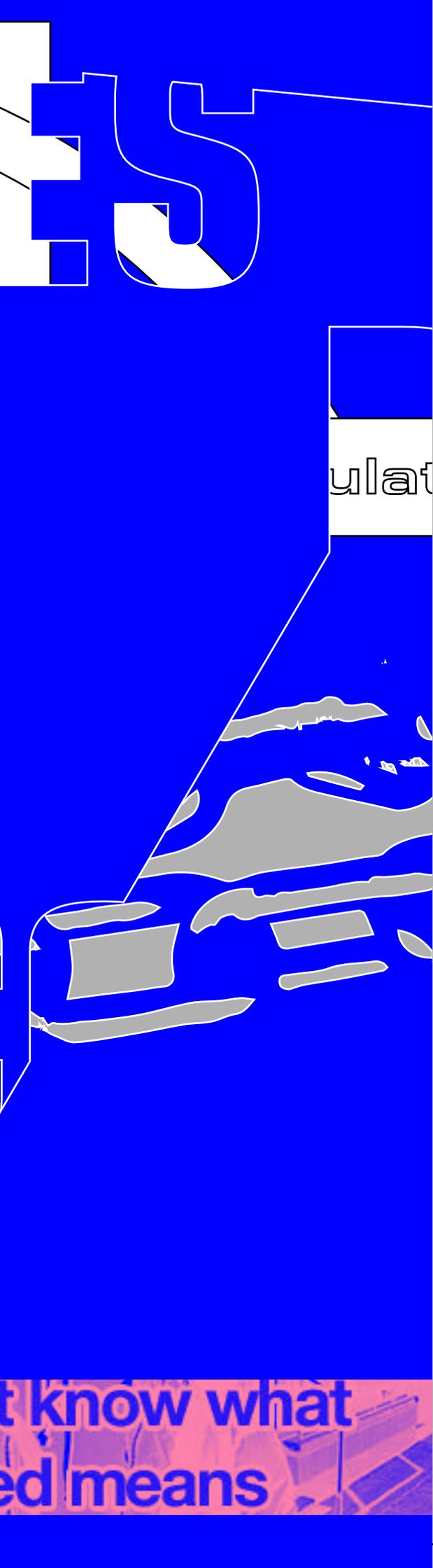
raise the property value and sell it at a profit.



Image Credit: Heather M. O'Brien

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As artists, we are part of the problem. Our presence and cultural privilege assists in the process of active displacement of low income and working class communities. Oftentimes, we too must move out. This described guilt can become an opportunity to begin unpacking our own personal misplaced ideas of erasure in a hyper capitalized cityscape. How do we survive complicity? Our precarity, realized and scrutinized, can be a resource instead of the typical well of infinite despair. It takes time to learn how to point at a problem, yet too often we feel the work ends there. When it comes to Contemporary Art, there's a certain cultural capital gained by criticizing capitalism, but it doesn't necessarily mean we are putting anything on the line to dismantle it. Armed with the understanding of the historical and political relationships gentrification has played within major metropolitan cities, this module will move towards a place where artists can resist becoming instrumentalized for commercialized financial tidal waves. We will reconsider where we live and work, how to build bonds of co-struggle with our neighbors, and how to pursue research that is genuinely on-the-ground. Before looking at the planetary, we must learn from and center the local voices of those most affected by displacement. How might we encourage popular education and empowerment without permitting ourselves to ride the waves of gentrification, as if absolved from questions of property speculation and skyrocketing rents? What if we see our role as artists as being deeply tied to the health of our neighborhoods?



**MODULE LED BY HEATHER M. O'BRIEN AND
JONATHAN TAKAHASHI**

Heather M. O'Brien is an artist, filmmaker, and Assistant Professor of Studio Arts in the Department of Fine Arts and Art History at The American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Her work aims to unravel the contradictions of capitalist desire within domestic space. She has been awarded artist residencies with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Marble House Project, Santa Fe Art Institute, and Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild.

Jonathan Takahashi is an artist, educator and organizer born and raised in Los Angeles, California. His work contextualizes community dialogue through local organizing and grassroots projects, while considering if and how aesthetics fit into the urban landscape. He recently was awarded the Kashima Residency in Beppu, Japan.

Heather and Jonathan began collaborating in Los Angeles, California, in a group called School of Echoes, which operates as an open listening process of community-based research, popular education, and organizing to generate experiments in political action. In 2015, School of Echoes joined with others to form the Los Angeles Tenants Union / Sindicato de Inquilinos de LA, a membership-based tenant-centered movement fighting for the human right to housing for all.