

## Public Art Works

SEASON 1 - EPISODE #3

### PUBLIC ART/PUBLIC ACTION

Xaviera Simmons & Kate Gilmore,  
moderated by Paola Mendoza

TRT 35:01



**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Hi. I'm your host, Jeffrey Wright. And welcome back to the Public Art Fund podcast, Public Art Works. On today's episode, we want to start by thinking about the intersection between public art and public action.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** These can be very different things with very different intents. Public art isn't by definition political. And public action isn't by definition, well, art. But there are ways in which artists working in the public sphere can blur these lines—and blur them productively, we think, especially with so many of us here in the United States and in New York City specifically thinking more about public action. Thinking more about the roles our voices and our bodies can play in public space when it comes to speaking up for what we believe is just and right.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** According to a 2018 poll conducted by the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation, one in five Americans have participated in a public protest and/or political gathering since January 2016. And nearly one in five of those participants had never done so before. New Yorkers are, of course, no exception.

**PUBLIC VOICE 1:** I went to the March for our Lives last year,

**PUBLIC VOICE 2:** I participated in the Women's March.

**PUBLIC VOICE 3:** The Women's March, a couple of times.

**PUBLIC VOICE 4:** Last weekend I participated at a march with the Laundromat Workers Association.

**PUBLIC VOICE 5:** I went up to Albany for health care. Reform New York Health Act, Healthcare for Everyone.

**PUBLIC VOICE 6:** Eric Garner protest in Staten Island,

**PUBLIC VOICE 7:** Some of the signs say, we are here for you, we support labor workers, we want rights, and yes we can, sí se puede.

**PUBLIC VOICE 8:** “Fund the Subway” or “Congestion Pricing Now.”

**PUBLIC VOICE 9:** “Actions, Not Thoughts and Prayers,” or something like that

**PUBLIC VOICE 10:** *Ariba los vendedores, abajo los explotadores.* So, “Up Are the Workers and to the Ground are the Exploiters,” the ones that take advantage of you.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Thinking back over the past few years, there are so many aspects of these efforts and actions that stay with us, for better or for worse. Which brings us back to this idea of the intersection between public art and public action. What exactly can they share?

**PUBLIC VOICE 2:** Public action is an art form.

**PUBLIC VOICE 11:** Public art is a form of expression.

**PUBLIC VOICE 12:** Well I think that art is an expression of yourself, an expression of your views can be an artform.

**PUBLIC VOICE 13:** Art’s like the subconscious of the society without them saying it.

**PUBLIC VOICE 5:** Art can talk about anything

**PUBLIC VOICE 14:** You can just like write something on the wall or paper on the street and it can be a form of art and protest.

**PUBLIC VOICE 8:** I absolutely think that can send a message.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** With this in mind, Public Art Fund wanted to bring together artists and activists in this episode—three formidable women who I’ll let introduce themselves.

**KATE GILMORE:** I’m Kate Gilmore I work in lots of different things, performance, videos, sculpture, installation. I am a professor at Purchase College. I guess to sum up my work, I always have a hard time doing that but I’m interested in how the body engages with space whether it’s physical, social, political. The work sort of can exist in video, single channel video, or can exist in large scale performances with lots of people and sculpture and installation and things like that.

**KATE GILMORE:** Because it’s my experience being a woman has been sort of central to the content of the work, from the beginning, whether I was making like a pot out of ceramics or making a large scale public art piece. It’s always been through my lens. Looking at my experience, as a woman, and how I’ve navigated the world and also looking to the history of women and how they have navigated the world. And then looking at how women

have progressed in society or regressed, and how a woman is kind of functioning and nonfunctioning in specific societal structures.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** My name's Paola Mendoza. I am a filmmaker and a writer. My work for the past decade has specifically dealt with immigration. And I deal with immigration from the space of undocumented immigrants. Since Donald Trump's election I have now merged my artistic work with direct activism, what I like to call creative resistance. And so, it hasn't necessarily changed the way in which I approach art, but it definitely has changed the way that I approach my activism.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** And I'm Xaviera Simons. I am, I guess visual and performing artist. For me the medium is not really the thing. It's really which media, medium like can work with which idea or time period. So my studio is very cyclical in that way. I kind of think of it as like having a bunch of sheep that I have to take care of. So, you know, a lot of the time I'll make photographs but the photographs really are informed by performance and installation. And those are informing my text-based sculptures. And I really enjoy doing large scale public works now. I've always been interested in the history of this country and also the history of landscape and landscape painting and landscape photography.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** But I think right now, I'm in a place of really looking at lineage and heritage and thinking a lot about being a descendant of slaves and what that means in terms of understanding art practices and also understanding the consistent disadvantage that's particularly happened to Black Americans who've descended from slavery here in America for 400 years. And thinking about the fact that that group in particular is basically at the bottom of most every scale in society. And that's very strange considering, for the most part, we've consistently been here for 400 years. So I've been looking at a lot of that in my work. And, and that's all tied to the formal processes that I work through.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Both Kate and Xaviera have worked with Public Art Fund on projects that illuminate aspects of their broader practices. Here's Kate, talking about *Walk the Walk*. Which you'll hear a bit of too...

**KATE GILMORE:** in 2010, I did a piece with Public Art Fund at Bryant Park. It was a large yellow cube in the park. There were seven women walking on top of it for an entire workday and then throughout the whole week, five days. And they were walking for ten hours a day, two groups of women, five hours each, about thirteen miles each group. They were all dressed identically, all different women from all different places and walks of life and ages and groups. And the rules were they had to navigate their own space, they couldn't just follow each other. But they had to be in movement. They weren't speaking, they could only communicate with their feet. It was opened on the bottom. So the public could enter the bottom and the women could communicate with the public through their feet. So sometimes they were angry, sometimes they were not. Yeah it was a kinetic sculpture that was ongoing for an entire work week in Bryant Park.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** And my project was called *Bronx as Studio* and it was in 2008, I believe. And it was kind of initiated with Public Art Fund and the Bronx Museum to engage the borough of the Bronx. And I basically, you know, thought of legal and illegal street activities and how you could visualize those. So, you know, anything from like playing dominos to holding a microphone, doing a fist fight, as like a performance space thing, in a moment. Or doing hopscotch. It was basically like a mobile studio, so we'd go to different part of the Bronx and we'd stand outside for eight to ten hours a day for a few weeks and invite passersby to engage. And a lot of different types of things happened. We went to skateparks, we went to markets, we went, you know, just on Bronx streets, and, you know, produced a good amount of work. And all of those images were sent to the participants. So if you went to some people's houses in the Bronx you'd see images um that are connected to the Public Art Fund project.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** While their works were very different—Kate's performers stomping circles around one another on a bright yellow cube in the middle of Bryant Park; Xaviera's performers enlisted, instructed, and photographed right on the spot in the Bronx—there is a kind of kinship that these works seem to share. The women in Kate's performance can seem at times bored, angry, tired. Their engagement with and performance of Kate's instructions was entirely up to them. And depending on that performance, the viewer might ask, is it resistance? Or is it routine? In many ways, it's this ambiguity and this agency that made the work so successful.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Xaviera's work empowered its performers too. And she too was directing people. She was inviting them to partake in the creative process and claim agency over the ways in which their images were made, captured, and sent out into the world. In the resulting photographs we see Bronx locals on their BMX bikes, wearing masks, petting dogs, and toting boom boxes. Someone's screaming into a megaphone. Someone's play-fighting with a friend—which, visually, has its own ambiguities too.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** So what happens when these directives, these actions, these artworks, play out in public?

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Here's Paola, kicking that conversation off.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** I want to talk a little bit about what it means to be an artist creating work in a public space. How do you confront that experience of knowing that people are going to be engaging in your work in public? And do you have any concerns, as to when you are creating those pieces, how people will be activated by your work? Do you think about, and there's a lot of questions in here so you can pick and choose, but do you think about the audience while you're creating the work in and for public spaces?

**KATE GILMORE:** I think about the audience in any work that I make. Even if I'm making a sculpture, I'm always thinking about how an outsider is going to view something. But when you make work directly for a public for me the most important part is how an audience is

going to engage, how an audience is going to perceive this work. Thinking about who is going to be able to encounter it, what type of environment it's going to be, you know, what are the politics of the space? All these different things. So, that's kind of the first thing that I do. And then, then everything else starts happening, sort of what physically can happen, like how can we make something dramatic and physical because for me that's really important, the strength of the piece and the physicality of the piece. How will this not kill somebody. But how will it scare someone and not kill someone. How does it sort of demand attention? How does it, like, make people comfortable enough to enter or be a part of it but also manipulate a little bit? I think about aesthetics. I love beauty and there's nothing wrong with it. I love color. If it's in a landscape, if it's in a city, if it's in like a huge park, you know all these sort of formal decisions are made. But, you know, I would say the first and most important part of making a public piece for me is who is going to see it and what is the sort of dialogue I want to have with that specific environment? So that's kind of a general way I approach making public, public pieces.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Which is not all that different from how someone might approach a public action, protest, resistance—this idea of first thinking about who will see it, who will engage, then creating a form and an aesthetic from there. For Xaviera, audience is important too. But, for her, the terms “public” and “community” bring complications in and of themselves.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** We've been talking about the public and community... I've been trying to think and I realize that most of my public works have actually been segregated. Like there's the public, right? And then there's other things. Like for instance, my Public Art Fund project was actually produced in the Bronx, specific communities, primarily. And it, the work was shown at the Bronx Museum. So while that sounds amazing, it's a public work for a very particular landscape and group. And I'm really excited for the idea where I can like make work for a public larger than even what is my conceived, or perceived community.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** It becomes a little bit problematic for me thinking about have I even made a work in the in the larger public? Because statistically in America, 70% of the population is considered white, and 13% is African American, and then you know, “others.” And then there's people who kind of intersperse. So one would think that then a public work would have to engage, interact, and be reflected on by at least a large cross-section of the American public. And so I think that I've actually made segregated public works, which is something I just came to as we were talking. And that actually breaks my heart because public art is really some of the most difficult works to make, because it depends on the temperature of the public, right? And I think America has shown itself and how we're living right now, it's a pretty conservative space. So the limits to what you can do publically are very intense, unless, you know, I think that white male artists particularly, and then white male and female artists, they can fail and like keep going. Whereas I feel like there's a lot of pressure, especially for Latino or Latina and African American or descendent of slave people, or colored folks, we are not given enough resources to actually try a thing, you know? So the public spaces that we work in are, are very often contained and curtailed to certain areas. And I think that

that's something that has to shift. And I think it's something that I'm thinking a lot about.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** There's so much that was just unpacked there. One, I think you how can we be artists if we are not allowed to fail? Like part of being an artist is experimentation, is being bold enough with an idea that you are unsure if it's going to work. But I also, because you just had this revelation in this moment, I think you know, it's not surprising that we as artists are, are reflecting, essentially, what is going on in this country, right? And here's my question to that, so one of my favorite quotes—and I am aware that is a quote from a white man, but that's okay—is a quote from Brecht. And he says, “Art is not a mirror with which to reflect society but rather it should be a hammer with which to shape it.” And so I'm curious about what you all think about that. It's, it's something that I'm constantly talking through myself, the role of art. Is it a mirror or is it a hammer?

**KATE GILMORE:** I'm definitely on the hammer side of things...

[LAUGHTER]

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** I'll pull you in on the joke here. Because there's a good amount of Kate's past and recent work that involves an actual hammer and other destructive tools. Take *Heart Breaker*, for instance, a single-channel video from 2004. In it, Kate, wearing a pale yellow dress and matching scarf and heels, takes an axe to a large, heart-shaped structure made of mismatched scraps of wood streaked in red paint. She sweats and pants and struggles as she labors over the course of the video to tear it down.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** In the video *Higher Horse* from 2008, Kate had two male performers take sledgehammers to a pedestal on which she stands, rendering it to rubble over time.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** More recently, Kate's work has included live performances that evolve these actions and aesthetics. For example, as part of her recent traveling exhibition, “In Your Way,” Kate invited gallery-goers to take a sledgehammer to a series of pristine—and, dare I say, Donald Judd-like—metal cubes. It's this action that makes or completes the work, in a sense.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** These build on a series of scuffed, malformed, and dented sculptures that Kate made and, well, bashed, similarly in her studio.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** So, where were we? Right: hammer or mirror...

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Talk to me about your hammer.

**KATE GILMORE:** I think both have worth, you know, because revealing darkness is important. I'm mad and angry and I'm not ashamed or afraid of it. So I definitely am into the destructive aspect of art-making, in order to do something else with it.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Right.

**KATE GILMORE:** That's the challenge for me, is where does the destruction actually lead? And that's the, you know, that's the question. It's like, is it destruction for the sake of destruction? Is it rage for the sake of rage? Does this accomplish something? I can't totally answer that question.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Right. Beautiful. Hammer or mirror?

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Hammer or Mirror. I mean I think it's both. I think that these wack-a-doodle men who said these things they get a lot of credit for saying these kind of interesting turn of words. But I mean mirror, hammer, it's not that far off. Because I mean, if you turn a mirror on somebody it pretty much could become a hammer depending on, you know, how they're reflecting on themselves in general. You know? I mean a hammer seems "more aggressive" than a mirror but I think turning the mirror very simply in America, and especially right now, and if you just turn the mirror a little bit, is going to cause a lot of issues.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Like for instance, I'm doing a lot of archival research and it's tied to the landscape and how America was built. And a lot of the work is turning a mirror on whiteness, of course, because that's the group, whether you have become part of white America for centuries or whether you like slowly engaged into it, and now this is your thing, that's the group that holds the most power here in this country. So, you know through the research there's a lot of mirror-turning, right. But that mirror is a hammer because it's like even if I say "white," people start to get uncomfortable and upset and like, in their feelings. And like, when I look at the image now, I'm not so much interested all the time in like what happened to the black people who were sicked-on by dogs. I'm more interested in who held the water gun?

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** I think about that all the time...

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Those are the people, that's the mirror I'm interested in looking at time and time again right now. Is well what happened to those people? And like, what cross did they bear for centuries doing this to, to groups? And so in that way turning the mirror is, it puts me in a different space right now because it's the mirror as the hammer. So it's kind of the same to me.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** One recent and exceptional way in which Xaviera has wielded her mirrored-hammer or hammered mirror is in her photography, which has a performative quality to it too.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Her 2018 solo exhibition at the David Castillo Gallery in Miami was called *Sundown*. And it was so titled for American cities and towns that remain inhospitable to Black Americans after dark. The exhibition featured Xaviera performing a kind of character, standing in front of floral backgrounds, and holding black-and-white images of Black Americans.



**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** One image in particular shows a couple dancing exuberantly, suggesting the sort of thing that one might yearn to do in safety once the sun has set. A separate series from 2018 features a photograph titled, *A Country Built on Free Labor*. In it, Xaviera stands against a rock formation which itself stands against a blue sky. She holds hand-painted sign that obscures her face and says exactly that: “A country built on free labor.”

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** This brings us back to resistance and public action and that initial question we posed about the ways in which public action can be its own kind of public art—and vice versa. And for that we turn to Paola, who has a resonant example of her own.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** I was one of the co-founders and the artistic director of the Women’s March. And so post-January, once he was inaugurated and he was the president, the first six months of 2017 were exhausting and we were like in it in the front lines, and specifically like around the immigration community, which is the work that I’ve focused on, like we were under attack and it was emotionally draining. And there was a group of us from the women’s march that came from an artistic background. And while we were incorporating art as much as we could into like the narrative and the work of the Women’s March there was still something lacking and so we came up with this idea of forming a chorus, a group of women to come together to sing in resistance, but really under the idea that joy is an act of resistance in these moments.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** And so, um, we put out a call online and we said, anyone that wants to come and sing, we’re called the Resistance Revival Chorus. And thirty women showed up. And we started singing and we were singing old Civil Rights songs and, and Labor songs and like really going into the history of resistance in this country. And it was so amazing. These thirty women were singing in this living room and we felt invigorated, and we felt in many ways healed for that moment. It was like, oh my god, this was amazing! So we were like, let’s do it again next week. And we put out another call and another thirty women showed up and it was phenomenal and fantastic. And I was like okay, I want to, I want to go into the public space and I want to take this into the world. And so we decided to do a flashmob in Times Square and we dressed in white. And there’s all sorts of historical reasons why we’re dressing in white, thirty women in Times Square, flash mob, and we just started singing in the middle of Times Square.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** We were singing a, a labor song called *Rich Man’s House*. And so that kind of opened up this space of, of music and song and resistance and healing. And it’s been amazing because this chorus, the Resistance Revival Chorus, we’ve performed at the Grammys, we’ve performed at Carnegie Hall, now it’s going to be three times. We’ve gone into protests. We sang when we found out that the kids that were being separated from their parents were being housed in the Bronx. We went to Bronx and we sang in front of the shelter at the Bronx. We were singing in front of the jail just last week when they were freezing inside of the jail. The chorus went and we sang there. So we’d go from these very institutional spaces to being on the ground in, in issues that are important to us and impact us in, in the



chorus. So it's been extraordinary and a great surprise because, like I said, I am not musically inclined but I'm in the chorus and I'm managing the chorus now too.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Can, can people come and join the chorus at any time?

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Yes! They can. They can...

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** How do you find out more information?

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Online. Facebook. But the other thing that's been really great is that we wanted to let other people create choruses around the country. So there's a toolkit, so if you want to start your own resistance revival chorus slash Burbank, California, you can.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Paola talks about the Resistance Revival Chorus as being emblematic of the ways in which her creative practice has changed since the 2016 election. Which is true for so many artists, Kate and Xaviera among them.

**KATE GILMORE:** I had a solo show planned for January...

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** As in January 2017...

**KATE GILMORE:** and it was supposed to be just, a piece like in a commercial gallery right? But I was just like I cannot do the same show. So I made a whole new show and it ended up being these huge steel boxes, these women on top of these boxes and they were just banging for hours at a time on the same beat. So it was just this beat of refusal, and it was the only thing that I could do. And it was, you know, on a storefront so people were coming in. It was it was really moving. So I would say, yeah, my work has totally changed. I'm not feeling very funny, I'm not really. I'm usually you know pretty funny like in my work there's a lot of humor and I'm not feeling funny at all. The work has become really just straight-up aggressive or straight-up angry, very simple. The outfits have changed. They're work outfits. They are women performing but they could really be anybody. There's like brass knuckles involved. There's like boots, baseball hats, sweatsuits, stuff like that. I mean, it's like this is my fashion of like of revolt I guess.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** For me it's just been, especially the past couple years, it's been just amazing to look at what's happening politically and try to translate that into a historical art-engaged environment and that's tied to thinking about furniture-makers, architects, industrial designers and historians and thinkers.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** When you look at America, there's an invisible layer that's, that's kind of constantly, under the surface and it's something that I'm constantly thinking about, especially if you think about colonial America. I'll go to these sites where colonial American like reenactments or whatever and they always gloss over the fact that enslaved black people

actually built these things, like built the structures. And there's where it gets complicated. Although you do know some names. It's like a covered history. There is record of it, but it's not something America is like, "We're celebrating X, Y, and Z group of slave people." You know, and I, and so for me with my new work it's actually looking at the loss of potential, the loss of wealth, the loss of resources, you know, as it ties to the group that I'm a part of, which is a mixed race group of people that are foundational to the society. And it's really amazing to do because there's so many gaps in the narrative that I can, I could do whatever. I've always gone to archives but now my work is really about the source.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Performance remains a significant part of Kate, Xaviera, and Paola's practices. And I think that says something about this moment too, and the need for empathy and also the need, sometimes, to put our own bodies out there and on the line.

**KATE GILMORE:** Performance is in almost every piece. And even if it's not in a piece, like the body is very clearly involved in any, any of my pieces. For me, the body carries content, carries history, it carries pain, it carries happiness, it carries um anger, it carries rage. You know the body doesn't forget. We don't forget the atrocities of our past and we don't forget what our like lover did to us yesterday. Whether we remember it so specifically or not, the body sort of carries every thing.

**KATE GILMORE:** I'm trying to reflect a specific person in our society who perhaps has not been included. And in doing that it's really important that that particular body is seen, and seen in relation to an extremely public space. And this has always been a challenge is these, can the objects work publicly by themselves? And unfortunately they don't work as well because it's really important that these specific figures and their marks and their histories and their place in society and where they exist on the hierarchy and power is very clear in just how they are represented within this particular structure. So body is an object, it's a tool. It's also for me the source of all the content. And then the object is there it support and also to reflect, like to show the history. So you see the hammer beating the steel. You'll see the woman walking on the structure, there's the marks, the heavy marks. So it's a reminder that someone was there, someone was working, someone is trying to achieve something, someone is not going to go away. And so for me the body is the place that that has to exist.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Hm. Beautiful.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Paola has thought a lot about the body in the context of her work too, especially around issues of visibility.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** I started off as an actress. I studied theater specifically and I wanted to be a theater actress because I wanted nothing to do with movies, but I wanted to tell stories with my voice, my space, my body. And I think now, I no longer act but it is ultimately the foundation of all the work that I'm doing. And I think what I didn't realize at that moment when I decided to be an actress as a child of an immigrant was to be an artist as a child of an

immigrant was in and of itself like this drastic measure in my house. You know, my mom was like, “I did not come to this country, I was not homeless, I did not sleep on the streets, I was not on welfare, I was not on all these things so that you could then grow up and be hungry and not be able to have some sort of financial security in your future. That’s not why I came to this country.” Which I think is it’s own pressure of being an immigrant in this country. But what I didn’t realize then that I realize now, and goes to your question is the act of being an immigrant, the act of being a woman, the act of being a woman of color and saying look at me, this is me and my stories, was in and of itself a, a political statement. And so I do think that like performances and putting the stories that I put forth, which are specifically poor women, single moms, they tend to be either Latinas and/or of the black experience, normally within Latin America. That in and of itself is important because I’m saying that these stories are valuable. Not only are these stories valuable, but these stories are the fabric of this country. And they are, they are the people that you walk by on the street and you ignore.

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** And I always get emotional about this but my mother was also the mother of one of the many people that organized the largest protest against a sitting President in the United States. And that lineage is, is critical. Like I could not be who I am without my mother. And so for me performance means that. It is a moment to say, these women matter, are valuable, are inextricably linked to all of us, and their stories are heroic. So that, that is how performance is connected to the work that I do. Sorry.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Do you need support or do you need to like let it...

**PAOLA MENDOZA:** Oh, I’m good. Yeah. I always cry about my mom. But yes. Thank you. I appreciate the question.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** God this word performance is getting me tied up again right now. The level of non-performance, or the disappearance of black bodies in so many spaces has become so very apparent to me. So I am enjoying right now being performative inside my work and holding up the hammer or mirror in, in a lot of my photographs. I think those are the most critical works for me right now. But I also like the idea of narrative as performance, and so a lot of how I write about the work, a lot of the sculptural works that I’m making right now, the furniture-based works everything kind of has a performative lens because like you, I also trained as an actor and I did that really to be able to understand emotions and how to work with the body as an emotional tool. So performance is pretty much in like everything that I do. And even it’s like, you know, an inanimate object, like a piece of furniture, I feel, it feels very performative. And right now, with a lot of my new works the performance is the thing.

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** I think for me performance is very immediate. It’s almost one to one. You know people get to have a reaction and a discomfort or a comfort like immediately and I’m interested in that. I’ve performed in my work. Historically have performed you know looking at other artists, Vito Acconci and Yoko Ono in particular. I’ve re-performed some of their directives in their works. But I’m actually now much more interested in directing and

choreographing. I'm interested in character development and in building a character inside of a space. And similar to what Kate said, I mean the body, it's an easy marker to control or to see like all of this lineage, history, narrative, space, potential. So I, I really enjoy that. And bodies are sculptural so it's, it's beautiful to be able to sculpt bodies that then can convey a large set of emotions to a public, a "public."

**XAVIERA SIMMONS:** Beauty is a way, or color, beauty is a way to draw in people into a narrative, right. And right now it's pretty rough, you know, what we're living through. So how can I use a performance of beauty and esthetics to actually like draw people into the rest? Which is, like, pretty grotesque when you think about the history of this country and where we're at right now.

**KATE GILMORE:** You know, this incorporation of emotionality I think is really important and the, the body is this great vessel for that. Performance exists beyond the way we're used to having this conversation and that's probably why you're annoyed with the word is because we are performing in the way that we've been taught to perform, and we're saying that perhaps we're unwilling to perform that way. And and I think just by our existence and our continuance and our refusing to disappear or incorporating of joy and emotionality and insisting on the presence of your mother, all of those things are essential to making people understand the situation that we're in and how power affects us all and how we have a voice, and an important voice for changing some things.

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**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Thank you so much for listening. For more information on Kate, Xaviera, and Paola's work, please visit us at [publicartfund.org](http://publicartfund.org). For more information on the Resistance Revival Chorus, please visit the group's Facebook page and, to start your own Resistance Revival Chorus, check out that toolkit Paola mentioned on [Medium.com/@resistancerevivalchorus](https://medium.com/@resistancerevivalchorus), who I will let sing us out...

**JEFFREY WRIGHT:** Public Art Works is a podcast by Public Art Fund, produced with SandenWolff.

As the leader in its field, Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

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