

OK, welcome, everyone. My name is Jamie Costa. My pronouns are she, her, hers. And I have the gallery experience associate at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. We're thrilled to present today's program as part of COLA 2021-- which, if you have not seen it online yet, it is up through next Thursday, July 22.

However, I will note we are currently experiencing some website issues, so it is offline, unfortunately. But we are working to resolve it as quickly as possible, so stay tuned for updates on that front. And before I introduce and hand it over to Maura, I do have a few housekeeping bits I wanted to go over.

First, please make sure your microphone is muted during the speakers' presentations. We'll have a few minutes toward the end of the program for a Q&A, so please enter your questions in the chat box, or if you feel comfortable, at that point of the program, you're more than welcome to take yourself off mute to ask your question directly to Maura.

And as a reminder, the program is being recorded so that it can be made available online at a later date. And finally, we do have a sign language interpreter service, whose name is Byron-- really grateful to have Byron here today. And Byron has been provided-- services have been provided to us by the city of Los Angeles Department of Disability. If you do require or need the service, we recommend pinning Byron's window for quicker access. And with that, I'm so honored and really happy to introduce Maura, and hand it over to you.

Thanks so much. I think I know some people who are here. Thanks so much for coming. Today I'm going to do a little mini presentation called A Tour of Los Angeles Real Estate Fraud. Basically, I'm going to present some ancillary research that goes along with the video that I made for COLA that's up on the website right now. Do you think we should post it now or-- the link to it?

Yeah, I can-- or Stella-- thank you, Stella. Yes, The link to view Maura's video is now in the chat for folks.

So the video's about 20 minutes, and we're not going to-- I'm not going to screen the video now, because it's better to watch it-- there are laggy issues. It's better to watch it on your own. But just to give a little background into what the work is about, this is the third video that I've made that's about money laundering and financial crimes, specifically through the lens of Paul Manafort's daughter, Jessica Manafort.

I got interested in Jessica Manafort because she's a filmmaker-- a little-known filmmaker. And I was interested in the ways that her-- I guess everyone knows who Paul Manafort is, although soon we're going to forget who he is, I think. He was kind of a minor character. He was the chairman of the Trump campaign for about four months, and then resigned from the Trump campaign because he-- the *New York Times* published what was called the black ledger an August 2016 detailing a bunch of off-the-books payments that he had gotten for political consulting work that he did in Ukraine.

So he had been involved. I kind of think of him as this sort of basically minor criminal. He had been involved in a variety of shady dealings, including money laundering and real estate fraud. And I've been very interested in the kind of relationship between art, and particularly female artists, and money, and financial crime.

And so when he was like in the news and I started to read about him, and then I read that his daughter was this filmmaker, I got really interested in, well, what does the art of the daughter of Paul Manafort look like? And can you trace out any of the kind of--any of her relationship to this criminal activities in her films?

So the film that I made for COLA is about her-- she's only ever made two films. Her second film came out in the summer of 2018. It's called *Rosy*, and it is this neo-noir psychological thriller about a young woman who is kidnapped by a man. The man is in love with her, and he thinks that, if he kidnaps her, he can talk her into falling in love with him.

And he locks her in the basement of his grandmother's house. That's the plot of this movie-- went straight to streaming. It received no critical reviews. I think very few people have seen it. So what I did for COLA was I took this film and I re-edited it and interwove it with the story of Jessica Manafort and her husband-- her now ex-husband, Jeffrey Yohai's involvement in a series of real estate frauds, for which Jeffrey Yohai is currently serving a prison sentence.

So she was involved to varying degrees in these real estate transactions over the course of their marriage, and after they got divorced, she and him were sued for-- by one of the lenders that they defrauded for \$21 million. So if you want to watch the video, that's what the video is about. It's about the relationship between her film and the series of real estate frauds.

And I was particularly interested in what I think is the striking visual similarity between the house in her film-- the house where her main character is trapped-- and one of the houses that was involved in this real estate fraud, this house called 1550 Blue Jay Way. I was watching this film, and I was like, wow, that house that she picked looks exactly like this house that she committed these financial crimes with as an instrument. So that is the point of exploration of my video.

So anyway, what I'm going to show you now is not that. In the video, I really focus on this one house. It's the title of the video is 1550 Blue Jay Way. But they actually were involved in four real estate frauds in Los Angeles-- also a few in New York and stuff, but I'm in Los Angeles today.

So they were involved in four different instances of real estate fraud. And so I thought what I would do is drive around the city of LA and shoot videos at all four of these locations, and walk you through what has happened with these properties and what is the current state of these properties. So I will get started. Did I forget anything, Jamie? Does that sound right to you?

I think you captured it all very well, and I think-- yeah, we'll talk more after the presentation.

Yeah. If anyone has any questions, feel for you just to unmute yourself. I know this is presentation style, but I really-- I like to chat, so I don't mind. How'd that look? Look OK? Yeah?

Yes.

OK, great-- OK, so here it is, a tour of Los Angeles real estate fraud. So here-- so I just thought I'd start with a picture of our characters so that you can have a sense of who are subjects are. This is Jeffrey Yohai on the left, and this is Jessica Manafort on the right. They were married. They eloped in 2013 against their families' wishes, so they got secretly married.

I was able to find one image ostensibly from their wedding, although I haven't been able to find their marriage record. But this randomly showed up in one of my million Google searches. So this is from when they got married, I guess, and there's nobody there.

So they snuck off together and married, because he was-- so this was not the beginning of his criminal activity. He had allegedly lots of problems with gambling debt and all kinds of [INAUDIBLE] issues and stuff like this. And so she was forbidden from marrying him, and married against her father's wishes.

So the tour starts in Los Feliz actually pretty close to where I live. So in June 2014, an entity-- a corporate entity called Mt Yohai LLC purchased an empty plot of land at 2521 Nottingham Avenue, and it was purchased for \$770,000. I have looked up this plot of land, and I'm not-- actually, since Yohai purchased this, no one else has bought it. So I don't know what that means. I don't know who owns it right now, if it's been seized by the government.

Some of the properties have recently gone back to Paul Manafort, who's out of prison now, of course. Yohai's not out of prison. He'll never get out of prison, I don't think, [INAUDIBLE], because he didn't have political friends in the way that Paul Manafort did. So I don't know. So currently, in the sale record, this is the last sale of this property.

It would be very boring if I told you everything, but just to give you an example of the sort of things that he was doing over and over again, so he purchases this property in June 2014, and then in September 2014, he takes out a loan against the value of the property-- although, in this case, the loan is not from a financial lender, but is rather from this property management firm called Abra Management Inc.

And so what Yohai would do basically is he would buy these properties and then tell people he was going to develop them. He was telling people he was a real estate developer. And then he would get a loan-- like a construction loan-- against the value of the property, and then, instead of building anything, he would just spend the money. And he did this over and over again. So this is the pattern.

I got curious about what Abra Management Inc was, because it seems weird that a property management company would loan him \$400,000. I don't know who they are, but I can tell you that they have really poor Yelp reviews. They have one star. And they have a lot of reviews. People really hate them.

So just some highlights-- these people are the worst. For the record, I always pay my rent on time, but they're constantly charging you with mysterious fees and threatening you if you don't pay. Even if you never got notice, you owe something. Their phone number never works, if you need clarification about a charge-- horrible, horrible company. The city really needs to investigate them.

Oh, and this is a city event. How perfect. I think we're in the wrong department, though. So I don't know what the deal with these people are, but they loaned him some money right at the beginning of his little criminal enterprises in Los Angeles.

So here's the property now. I climbed halfway up it, and then I realized my shoes aren't very good for it. There was a lot of coyote poop. It's my analysis of this hillside. Nice view-- really nice view. There's still nothing there. Maybe if someone could buy it. Maybe this program is like real estate tips for investing in Los Angeles.

Maybe that'll be a part 2, Maura.

[INAUDIBLE] OK, so the second part of the tour is really close. You could do this yourself also. It's not a bad day to do this tour. You see a lot of Los Angeles. But the second one is really close. You can just walk there actually, it's 2410 Nottingham Ave. So this property was purchased in November 2014, and it was purchased for \$3.2 million.

It's a single family home. And it was purchased with a loan from a lender that he worked with a lot, and who ended up suing him and Jessica-- as I mentioned earlier-- this investment firm called Genesis Capital Master Fund LLC. And they gave him a \$3.5 million loan for the purchase of this house-- so slightly more than it was actually worth, ostensibly because he was going to renovate it or develop it.

This is Genesis Capital's website currently. When all this stuff about Manafort came out, there were a lot of questions about what Genesis Capital actually is. I don't know how well these questions have been answered, but they loaned the Manaforts money over and over and over again. And they ended up repurchasing a number of these properties after they went into foreclosure.

And when all of this hit the news the first time, there was a group of lawyers in New York who were doing an independent investigation of some of the Manafort properties in New York that Genesis Capital was also involved in. And at the time, Genesis Capital's website was broken, and they were like, what is this company? It's just very, very strange. Since then, they've fixed their website, so now they look a little bit more legit. But you can see that they're advertising themselves as flippers.

This is what 2401 Nottingham looked like when Yohai purchased it-- some images I just found in an archived website. Here's an image from Google Maps actually of it in development. So in the years since this property went into foreclosure, it's been bought and sold a number of times by developers.

And it was recently sold. After this after these developers purchased it and then renovated it in 2017, it was recently sold in June 2018 for \$8.495 million. So this is it during its renovation. And then here's this video that I found from the developer.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- What's up, everybody? Welcome back to Hastings and Novak Estates. I am Jason Hastings. Today I am going to take you on a tour of one of the most gorgeous houses in all of Los Feliz. We just closed escrow on this property a couple of weeks ago. It's a six-bedroom, nine-bath home, 7,200 square feet-- completely renovated, just gorgeous. Enjoy the tour.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Well, thank you guys for watching. I hope you guys enjoyed the tour of 2401 Nottingham. Please give us a like. Subscribe to our YouTube channel. We do post weekly. Follow us on our Facebook and Instagram, and we'll see you guys next week.

[END PLAYBACK]

OK, subscribe. Of the four properties, this is the only one that appears to be currently inhabited. Here is my-- the result of my investigation-- this is from this week. I couldn't get very close to this one because it has a big fence.

OK. So the third [INAUDIBLE] on the tour is 5050 Blue Jay Way in the Hollywood Hills. It's on one of the birds streets. It's actually the most famous bird street, because I guess the Beatles wrote a song called "Blue Jay Way" at some point in some house down the street.

This is the subject of my video, so I'm not going to go too much into detail about 1550 Blue Jay Way, because you can see I get-- I go on a tour of it in my video. You can get a very detailed idea of what this house is like. There it is on the bird streets. It's going to take you a minute to drive over there.

So Blue Jay Way was purchased in July 2015 for \$7.5 million, and it was partially purchased with a loan from Genesis Capital again from-- for a \$4.85 million and with a second loan from a private investor for \$3 million. The private investor was-- went under the corporate entity DJ Blue Jay Way LLC. Also, I haven't really been talking about this, but all of these are different LLCs-- 1515 Blue Jay Way. He had a whole system of LLCs, some of which owned each other.

So anyway, so this other private individual, DJ Blue Jay Way LLC, turned out to actually be Dustin Hoffman invested \$3 million [INAUDIBLE] in April 2016, he does the same thing. And again, I've left out some of these details. He actually takes out numerous loans against the first property, the empty lot. That one-- he gets loans over and over, including a loan from Kathleen Manafort, his mother-in-law.

He's got multiple loans that are secured against that property. Blue Jay Way-- he gets the second loan from an investor called RS Lending Inc for \$884,000. And he has plans drawn up with the city to tear this property down and build a spec house, which, of course, he never does.

No one is living currently in this house I just went back this week to see how it was doing, so here's a little video of it. It's been renovated since-- so Genesis Capital re-bought it, and then they sold it to a developer called [INAUDIBLE] Equities. And [INAUDIBLE] Equities renovated it, but they did this kind of surface level renovation. So you can see that there's just been weird white tile applied to the exterior of it, which is an odd choice.

And they have been trying to sell it essentially to another real estate developer, according to the real estate agent who I spoke with, Justin. It's still for sale. I don't know if Justin's ever going to unload it. Justin is a character in my video. Here's the pool-- again, very nice view.

Pool still looks good. Here's Justin's phone number. If you're interested in purchasing it, the price has come down recently. When I went to see it, it was \$11.5 million. Now it's down to \$9.65 million. I think it's been pretty massively-- radically overpriced, I would say, because I'm not sure-- if you're going to flip it, I'm not sure how you're going to go up from that amount. It's on a pretty small plot of land. So they're having trouble unloading this one.

OK, and the last and most exciting stop on the real estate tour is his fourth purchase. I'm sure and I'm showing you these in chronological order based on when he purchased them. So this is 779 [? Stradella, ?] which was purchased in January 2016-- so shortly before his shit fell apart. And so this is a property in Bel Air. Currently, it is a single family home.

He bought it again with another loan from Genesis Capital master fund. He had a \$5.95 million loan. The total purchase price was \$8.5 million. I'm pretty sure that the rest of the money is coming from these various additional loans that he's getting off of the other properties. Yeah, so he spends \$8.5 million on this one. This is what the property looked like when he purchased it.

He maintained ownership for this property for quite-- of this property for quite a while. In February 2018, he pled guilty to one count of wire fraud and he had-- he got a plea deal, supposedly in exchange-- it's unclear. The trial transcripts, all the court documents are closed. They're not available to be seen.

For some reason, he told a bunch of people at the time that he had turned state's witness against his father-in-law and was-- the feds were giving him a deal. The feds denied that that was ever the case. And in any case, I think maybe he didn't have very much to give them, because he reached his plea agreement and ended up in prison.

I think he's serving a six-year prison sentence right now. So in the time when he pled guilty, before he breached his plea agreement, he was renting this property out on Airbnb. And there was a little bit of coverage of this at the time, because his-- it's in this very upscale neighborhood in Bel Air, and his neighbors were not very happy about the Airbnb activity.

So here's the original Airbnb listing. He's renting it out for \$1,300 a night. And then this is from [INAUDIBLE]. So what ends up happening is the restraining order has taken out against him barring him from promoting the Stradella road property as a, quote, "party house," and from offering to rent it for such purposes.

It's kind of a funny restraining order. So it says, guests and residents are prohibited from anything that is lit, burning, or on fire in or near brush, shrubs, or anything else that is combustible. So this is what is happening with the house now.

So this house is-- actually is currently owned by someone. It was purchased in June 2019 for \$6.6 million. And I found a demolition request. So it hasn't been approved by the city, at least according to the online records. So someone is planning on tearing this house down, and presumably building a spec house there. But for now, it's very, very empty. And that is the end of my tour. Oh, wait. How do I stop the share? Thank you.

Thank you so much, Maura. Yeah, that last house is very jarring.

Yeah. Oh, by the way, I got too afraid to go in, so I've got to go back. [INAUDIBLE] to come with me. I was too--

Oh, yeah.

[INAUDIBLE]. I wasn't expecting it to be so-- I wasn't expecting to be able to walk through the fence like that and just get in there, and so I was very startled. And I was like, do I go in? But I wasn't ready. It's like [INAUDIBLE].

Oh my gosh-- yeah, take a friend. So we want to, of course, leave time for folks if they have questions. Again, feel free to enter them in the chat, or if you want to jump in with your question-- but I think, maybe just to kick us off into that, I have some questions for you, Maura.

And I think the first place I want to start, which I think is really-- just that last shot of the Stradella house that you showed us and kind of segue into this question, when we last talked about this work, one of the things that really jumped out to me was how you described how money has hollowed out places like Los Angeles.

And then, in the actual work, one of the last things that you say is, quote, "Los Angeles is a city of empty houses, and no one has anywhere to live." Can you talk about this a little bit more? How do you see this work as engaging or responding to the current housing and homeless crisis in Los Angeles?

I don't know. As I was finishing up making the video and I spent a lot of time thinking about this, it's-- a lot of the video is about fantasy and this-- the fantasy of this film that she makes. And it was really important to me to think about the way that this is not just sort of a funny story, but we're actually living in the consequences of this kind of behavior.

This is not like a victimless crime. These places are being hollowed out, and three out of four of the properties are-- I mean one is an empty lot. But the 1550 house has been bought and sold numerous times, and no one is living there. It's just being sold from developer to developer.

And meanwhile, evictions are at an all-time high in Los Angeles. There's obviously a homelessness crisis. And so it was important to me to just think about the way that this represents the larger world that we're living in.

I was thinking about this also, because in some ways-- oh, I'm just looking at Antoinette's question. Hi, Antoinette. I guess I was thinking about, how do you depict something like real estate fraud, which is so big? And it's something that I have a vague idea is happening all the time.

But it's happening on such a large level. Actually, my neighbor who lives next door to me is a real estate flipper, and he's done some pretty weird things since I've been living here. And I think that this is just a kind of ubiquitous activity that's happening all the time.

And for me, Jessica Manafort, and Paul Manafort, and Jeffrey Yohai-- they're not particularly distinguished criminals. I think they're basically doing what a whole lot of people are doing all the time all around us. Because he is a quasi-public figure, he becomes a useful lens to understand a larger issue.

I don't think Jeffrey Yohai in and of himself is particularly interesting or important, but I think that he provides a good vehicle for understanding something that otherwise would be too huge for me to wrap my brain around.

Antoinette says, so LA has a long history of real estate scams. Yeah. Did you pick up anything especially distinctive in the Yohai MO typical of this particular era? Super granular historical claims, but I do think that we're in this moment of wild speculation.

It's a good moment for scammers, because people are willing-- people have this sort of idea that real estate will always go up. It's always a good investment or whatever. If you're someone like Yohai, who has sort of nominal access to celebrities like Dustin Hoffman, you can kind of convince people that this is a really good idea to tear down this house and build a \$30 million spec house.

And then that sounds great, and then you can just pocket the money and do it again. And the Hoffmans, who I don't feel bad for at all-- but they never got their money back. They were just totally defrauded. I do think that there's something about this moment in which there's this kind of eerie lack of reality.

Everything is just operating on the level of this sort of fantasy of endless prosperity. And so people are just buying things and building nothing, and so it's just this kind of idea that's being sold over and over again.

Yeah. I think a good segue to my next question or something I wanted to talk a little bit more about is just, throughout your work and then also throughout the tour that we saw, you obviously did a lot of research, and just looking at the money and the paper trail, so to speak. And to me, that really helped to exemplify the just exploring of the economic complicity that's behind real estate fraud, money laundering.

And I'm curious if you can talk about-- a little bit more about your interest in exploring economic complicity. And how did it change or expand your process, research, and understanding particularly of Jessica Manafort and privilege in general?

Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I'm preempting a question you're asking me in a second, Jamie, I'm sorry if I'm doing this. But I guess I am interested in the ways that we, as artists-- all of us, myself included-- hold ourselves apart or see ourselves as doing this kind of pure thing, while meanwhile, we're actually, in some ways, subject to power and rationalizing our relationship to power away than maybe any other people.

So part of my ongoing work has been-- I don't know if anyone remembers, but there was a database of hacked text messages that was released onto the internet several years ago. They're actually Jessica Manafort's sister's-- Andrea's iPhones messages. And they go up until like 2017.

And a lot of them are between Jessica and Andrea, and a lot of them talk kind of candidly about their parents, and their father, and the criminality. There was some media reporting on it, because they say like striking things like, all of our money is blood money.

And like one of the things that really struck me when reading through the text messages-- which are really intense to read through-- it's the transcript of an entire person's life over the course of years-- is that Andrea, the sister, who's a lawyer, is much more overtly critical of their father than Jessica is-- who's an artist.

And Andrea's always kind of like, dad's a murderer. And Jessica's like, eh. She's always kind of like-- she won't quite go that far. And I was like, well, of course, she won't go that far. She needs her father's money to be able to make her work. So in some ways, she's much more on the hook than Andrea is, who makes her own money-- sort of. She does. She has a real job.

And I thought that that was kind of sad. My dad doesn't international criminal, but if he was, I wonder what it would be like. I wonder what that would do to me. And so in some ways, I find Jessica Manafort a kind of-- I just find her an interesting character.

Her second film, *Rosy*, which is really kind of sad-- her first film she makes when she's still young, and that's financed exclusively by her father. I made a video about that as well. Her first film was called *Remember the Days*. It's this poppy teen drama, and it's really happy. And then her second film, which she had to get outside financing for, *Rosy*-- which is about what this new work is about-- it's really sad. It's really depressing. It's really dark. It's kind of dreary. It's quite hard to watch.

And it's this story about this woman who is going around to New York telling everyone she's an actress, but really she's a call girl. And that's the kind of reveal in the film. And I was like, well, that sort of says everything, right? You're walking around telling everyone you're an artist, but where are you getting your money from? What is it that's enabling you to be able to say that? Yeah.

Yeah, I think that did preempt my next question, but I'm going to ask it anyway. I think one of the things that-- when I watched your work, that really jumped out to me was we hear *Rosy*, we hear you as the narrator, and then also just when you're doing the tour in 1550 Blue Jay Way, but we don't really-- we don't hear directly from just Manafort-- her voice.

We only read or see her text messages. And I think the one text message that just has really stuck with me and has been on mind is where she is having a conversation with her sister. And she says, I feel like a failure-- which, I feel-- I think, on so many levels, that's something we can all relate to. And so I'm curious about, why was it important to show a multiplicity of female voices in various forms in relation to power dynamics and agency?

Yeah. I'm really, really interested in this. And in my last two videos, I started putting myself as characters into the videos-- even just in the little stuff I show you, like breaking into abandoned lots in Bel Air or whatever. And in the *Rosy* video, I go on this tour of the house and talk to the real estate agent.

And I guess I'm sort of interested in my own complicity in that, or her as a kind of alternate version of me. And I've been thinking more and more about what it means to be a political artist. There's this really beautiful essay by the artist Andrea Fraser, where-- that she published as part of the Whitney Biennial years ago, called-- I can't remember it's called-- "There's No Place Like Home" or something like that, where she talks about the ways that like a lot-- in the art world, we're talking about politics all the time.

I'm sitting here talking to you about real estate fraud, and like we're all excited to do this. And what Fraser says is that this is a thing that's happening in the art world all the time. Everyone wants to talk about politics in the space of art talks, or in their work, or curating shows, or whatever.

And she's like, but the thing that we're like not talking about are the politics that are in the room-- my direct relationship to power-- not just like this real estate fraud that's happening outside of me way over there, but actually, everything that I do is to participate in this sort of system-- this hierarchical system which is based on domination, and largely based on economic domination, but also obviously racial domination, gender, patriarchy.

And she says the reason we don't want to talk about that is that, if we were really to deal with it, we'd have to deal with our own unpleasant feelings. A lot of the ways of those power dynamics manifest are through like feelings of jealousy, and anger, and greed, wanting to get something, wanting to have something or get an opportunity.



And so I've been thinking in my own work more and more about, well, first of all, I think the multiplicity of female voices is really important, because I do think of my work as feminist and-- but I'm also not really interested in a kind of feminism that's just sort of like, go women. As a white woman, I really feel like I have this complex subject position, on which, on the one hand, you can say that I definitely face like the same systemic oppression through patriarchy, but on the other hand, I also am the recipient of a lot of privilege as a white woman.

And so I've always been interested in a feminism that can sort of talk to both things-- both critique the patriarchal and capitalist structures that are outside of me, but then also critique the way that the structures are internalized through my body. Yeah, and so that's, I guess, one of the ways that I'm trying to work through complicity in my work. Was that clear, sort of?

Yes. I also want to just reiterate to everyone, if you do have a question, please jump in, whether that's in the chat or if you would like to take yourself off mute. And Maura, I don't know if-- there is a question from Mary that I don't know if you want to address now.

Yeah. It sounds like the loan process is a vicious circle and in a bubble. Did you find any ways that the loan process could be broken into? I don't know. You know what, Mary? I did this other project right as I was working on this one. I had to make two projects at once because of COVID, because everything got-- all my deadlines got shuffled.

In the other project I launder money as a performance. I just tried to launder money by myself. I didn't try to take out a loan. I formed an LLC, and then I purchased an artwork. And then I purchased the artwork as a sort of vehicle to funnel money through, and then resold the artwork afterwards.

And I talked to a lot of financiers. I did all this research to try to figure out the right way to do it. And the real thing that I learned from that process is that I don't have enough money to launder money. I just can't do it. I just made more money.

I sort of nominally did it, but I did such a fucked up baby version of it that I wouldn't recommend it as a real how-to for anyone. So to answer the question of, how could the loan process be broken into, I don't know. I have to think about that a little bit more.

But as of right now, I think that I might just be a little too broke to be able to really break into any of these systems. I thought actually about trying to purchase like some teeny piece of land. I feel like Gordon Matta-Clark did that in the 1970s. He figured out a way to buy tiny in-between parcels in New York City or something-- although, of course, the real estate world was very different when Gordon Matta-Clark was going around carving holes into everything.

So I don't know. Artists have definitely purchased property before as a kind of experiment-- like art project. But I haven't figured out how to do it yet. So I don't know-- maybe the next piece.

Stella just asked a question. I will read it. Is there a reason why you feel so drawn to essay films as an art form? How do you think the style of film ownership-- how do you think the style of film strengthens your critical feminist approach to media analysis?

Yeah, I consider myself an essayist. That's my primary artistic identification. I really love Timothy Corrigan's book on that called *The Essay Film*. If anybody is interested in this subject, that's been really informative in my practice.

He gives this kind of definition that he draws from Aldous Huxley actually of essay as this way of speaking that moves between registers. He says that it has-- that all essays have three-- at least two out of three registers. One is the objective, where you're communicating facts. And so there's a lot of didacticism in my work, where I'm just-- this happened on this date. I'm just teaching you about something. That's the objective lens.

The subjective-- so essays typically have a personal-- there's some kind of personal account. So in this case, it's my voice, and also my body moving through these spaces. And then there's the abstract or universal. And I'm not sure. I think probably abstract and universal attempt to play out in my work. I'm not exactly sure how they do that.

Although, I think questions like failure-- I actually feel like some of the emotional register that comes through in her relationship to her work maybe starts to get there. Also, essays are very associative. So they can weave things together from multiple places, which is very much just how my brain works.

The inside of my brain is one of those things, where it's-- everything is connected with the red string or whatever. My biggest problem is generally just trying to unfuck that so that people can understand what's happening in my brain. But that sort of associative mode, where one thing connects to something else is very much just the way that I think.

I will put it in the chat, the name of the book. It's called *The Essay Film*, and it's by Corrigan. Oh, oops-- I think I just sent that to-- out to everyone. Yeah. There it is. Yeah. Oh, and also, I should say that other artists-- one of my teachers was [INAUDIBLE], who works in feminist essay video.

I think that there's this long beautiful history of feminist essay video particularly, and that there's something about-- I feel like there's something in the feminist imperative that the personal is political, that it's not just that I'm relating a bunch of didactic facts to you, but that my voice and subject position are-- my experience is part of that-- is part of the experience of knowledge, I guess.

And let's see. Have you invested any cooperative or collective home ownership groups? Is this a possibility for artists? I have not, but my friend, Olga Koumoundouros, who's also a wonderful artist, who was a COLA recipient a couple of years ago-- she has done a bunch of work into looking into this. There are some in Los Angeles. And it comes out of this sort of moment of collectivism in the 1970s. Yeah.

There's nothing official about this, but I live in a quasi-collective way. I'm very lucky. I live in this really beautiful place, but it's only possible because a friend of mine subsidizes me and another friend to be able to live here. And so I think what ends up happening in Los Angeles is there's this sort of echelon of people who are like buying and selling these multimillion dollar homes, none of-- which are totally financialized, which don't even function as shelter anymore. And then the rest of us are just trying to band together to be able to find a place to live. Yeah.

Great-- well, I have one more question for you. And I want to circle back to when you talked about essay films, and just them being associative, and also just the importance of personal experience. And one of the things that really struck me about *1550 Blue Jay Way* was the first-- I think it was roughly the first half of the film presents this dual narrative of Rosy, and then Jess Manafort, and her story.

And then it switches to your personal experience of touring inside 1550 Blue Jay Way. And we talked a little bit about it when you were still making the work, but for everyone here, can you tell us a little bit-- walk us through this creative decision a little bit?

Sure.

How was that experience? And the other part of the question is, you've obviously done a lot of investigative work too, and I know a large part of your practice is also as-- your private investigation. So I'm curious if you can tell us how that aspect fed into the-- this particular personal experience of the film, and how that will carry forward in your work moving forward.

Yeah. Yeah, I don't know how it's going to carry it forward [INAUDIBLE], but I'm interested. Yeah, I'm in an interesting moment right now. I just realized, I think I'm happiest when I'm traipsing around Los Angeles. And I just realized-- I was working on this film, and I was looking at the Zillow listing for this house, and it was like \$11.5 million. And the Zillow thing popped up and was like, do you want to tour this? Are you just in this property?

And I was like, what if I say yes? And so I did, and then I immediately got a callback. And I just realized how insanely easy it-- people will just let you in anywhere. So me and my roommate-- who's an architect, who's wonderful, who helped me a lot with this film actually-- just his architectural analysis-- so we went together, and pretended to be this couple, and got this tour where this guy was talking really openly about Manafort.

He ended up sending us all these blueprints that Manafort had made up. And it was just this delightful discovery that I could do that, and that people will talk to you or accept you at face value, to some extent. Yeah.

Even just, when I was this week going to visit all those properties to shoot this video for this, I was like, I'm having such a good time. I'm actually thinking of calling Justin the real estate agent back, because he's having so much trouble selling that place. And I think I might just come clean and tell him who I am. I don't know.

He's my video. He did give me permission to film him on video, so-- but I don't know that he knew where that was going when he gave me that permission. But yeah, the other thing you're talking about is that I've been lucky enough to be working for a private investigator, which is something that I'm just starting to do full-time right now.

And it came out of this work, actually. I was doing my own investigations and figuring out how to pull court documents and stuff. And so my boss saw my work, and offered to train me. And so now I'm doing that full-time, and it's been really amazing. I've been doing it more and more, and now I know things that I didn't know when I was working on this work.

There's stuff that I should have pulled, things that I could have gotten that I'm starting to go back and look at now. The thing about Manafort and Yohai is they're not-- like I said before, they're not terribly interesting criminals. They're kind of low level, which is why they ended up going to prison in the first place.

The people who are the real criminals are not going to-- they're not getting caught like that and going to prison. I was really disappointed when I started working on this project, because I looked up Manafort in the Paradise Papers and the Panama Papers, and he's not in there, which I was super bummed out about. But the reason he's not in there is because he wasn't-- he didn't have enough money. He's not at that level.

So at some point, I'm going to have to turn my sights to something else. But I feel really invested in this process of investigation, and I'm also really interested in physically going to places and talking to people. I guess one thing that I am thinking about right now is, when I was in the process of making this LLC to try to launder money, I-- the way that you do it is you form LLCs under these people who are registered agents, who basically just-- their job is to sign corporate documents for people so that they have these anonymous LLCs.

So if you look up my LLC, it goes to Rose Garcia in Cheyenne, Wyoming, instead of to me. And I'm very curious to meet Rose Garcia. I've tried to email her, and she has not responded to me. But I have a real interest in these people who are registered agents and what their lives are like. And so that's the thing I've been thinking about getting into lately.

Very, very, very interesting-- well, does anyone have any other questions for Maura? No?

[INAUDIBLE]

I think we can end it here. Yeah, thank you so much, Maura. Just again, if you have not seen *1550 Blue Jay Way*, please see it. It is really stellar, and we'll make sure to send everyone the direct link to view it. It will be up through next Thursday, July 22. Thank you, Stella.

And on behalf of the gallery, Maura, I thank you so much for your time, and just really generous support, and just being here today and sharing insights. And thank you for everyone who joined us today. I also want to acknowledge [INAUDIBLE] excuse me-- who is our sign language interpreter today, and also [INAUDIBLE], who is with the Department on Disability, who helped secure the services for today. And we hope we'll see you again for our next virtual show and what we have coming up. And have a great rest of your day, everyone. Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE]. Thanks.