

# Authorization Sessions

A Proposal in Two Parts for  
Artists Space  
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# Unaffiliated Artists File Mesh Network

To structure my participation in *Authorization Sessions*, I first organized a meeting with the staff of Artists Space that reflected on and grappled with the premise of the project itself. In this we examined Andrea Fraser and Helmut Draxler's "How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction" (1994) as a possible conceptual forerunner. We decided that it would be helpful for each member of the administrative team to delineate their individual responsibilities in the organization. These proved to be unique as well as overlapping.

Subsequently, several meetings were organized to discuss ways in which the institution as it currently stands could be made to operate better. One of these meetings took the form of an evening workshop led by RB, an artist and a member of NYC Mesh. NYC Mesh is a community-owned decentralized network with wifi router "nodes" spread throughout New York City, which cooperatively disperse data without relying upon a conventional internet service provider or central server. From this emerged the idea of updating Artists Space's Unaffiliated Artists File as a mesh network.

Artists Space was founded in 1972 to support artists living and working in New York. From its inception it privileged the exchange of artistic ideas and information outside of commercial formats. As well as participate in exhibitions and programs, from 1974 artists could submit work to the Unaffiliated Artists File, a file of artists in New York State who were not represented by commercial or cooperative galleries. The File informed the selection process of Artists Space exhibitions, and was utilized by dealers, curators and collectors. To be represented in the File, artists would submit slides of their work, along with a resumé bearing a current New York State address and telephone number, and other descriptive materials. Each slide would be labeled with the artist's name, the work's title, the medium, the date, and an indication of top and front. Artists were reminded that: "it is a good idea to update the material in your file periodically."

As an art student in New York in the mid-2000s, I became aware of the Artists File. By the time I graduated it was no longer active. Following the migration of the Artists File to a digital apparatus, it exists in two ways: as an online

artist registry at [local-artists.org](http://local-artists.org), and as a physical archive of thousands of folders, slides, and printed documents in storage at The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

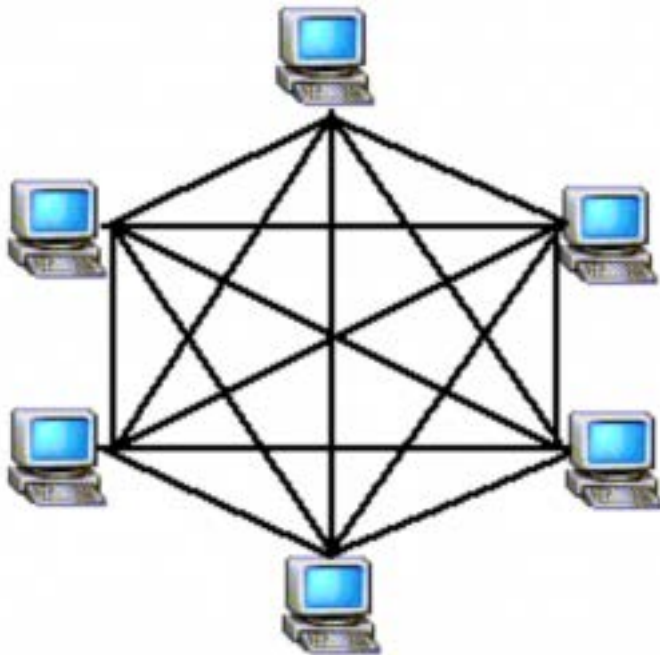
As a way of renewing Artists Space's commitment to artists, in line with its stated mission, I propose that the Artists File be renewed in the form of a mesh network, accessible to those who visit the physical site of Artists Space. This structure would allow researchers, visitors, and employees alike to have access, without risk of overwhelming the network with high traffic. It would also have a social function in the space, adding an element of public engagement beyond those offered by the formats of exhibition and programming.

With the aide of a mesh network, the legacy of the archive room at Artists Space (a room housing computers, microfilm viewers, etc.) can be updated and, with a new web interface, many aspects of the institution's digital footprint can be integrated. Through a mesh network (which has the benefit of lessening on site dead zones, where the connection is weak, while providing faster connections with greater network traffic) the artist registry could be reborn. Additionally, it would encourage an open source approach within a non-hierarchical architecture, which is in dialogue with the lineage started by Trudie Grace and Irving Sandler in forming an institution that puts the work and concerns of artists at the forefront.

Alongside reconsidering the digital presentation of the archival Unaffiliated Artists File, Artists Space should institute a program that integrates the artist registry into curatorial plans. This could take the form of an annual or bi-annual exhibition that draws from the artist registry, selected by an outside or internal curator.

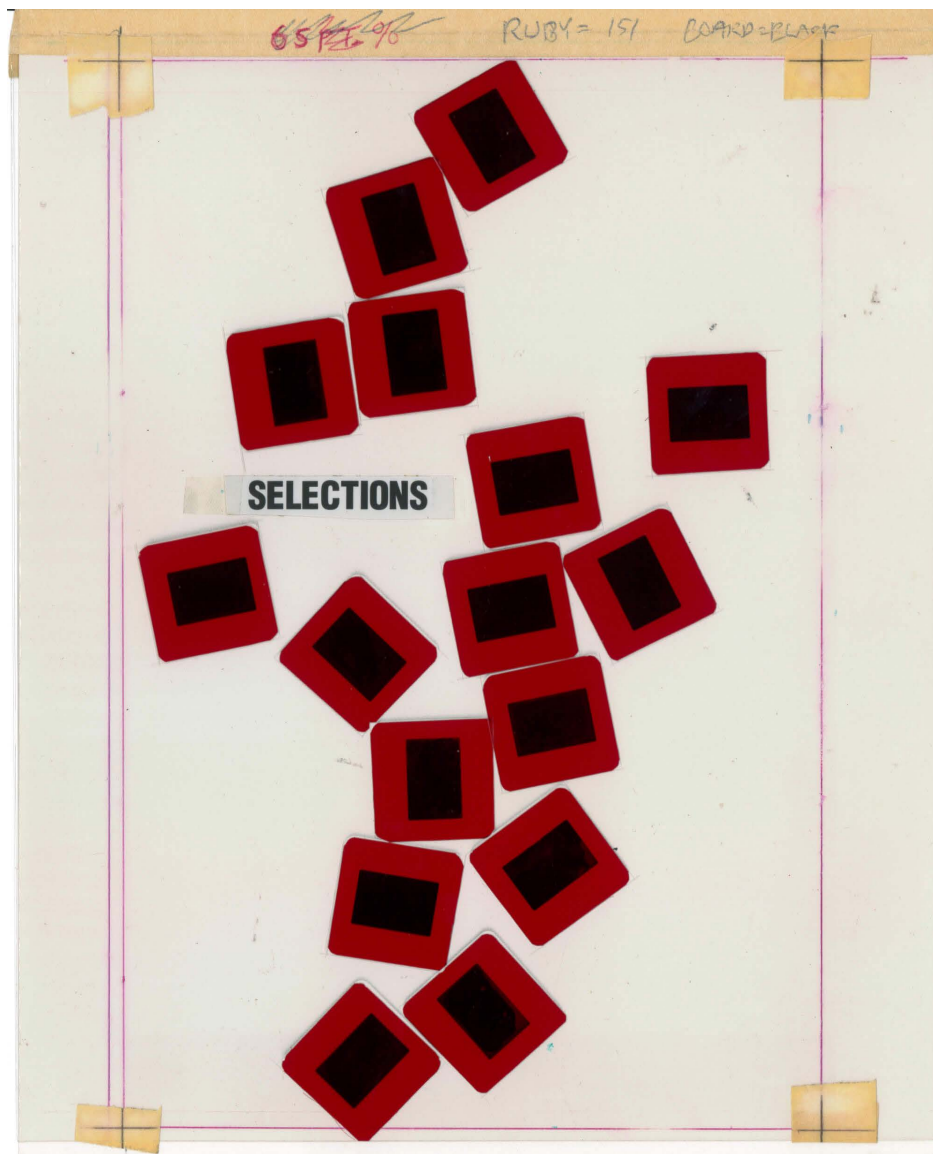
Finally, Artists Space should make a concerted effort to digitize and organize the physical files of the artist registry for use by scholars, critics, curators, artists, and supporters of the arts—facilitating historical research into the work of underrepresented artists and providing a platform for new and emerging voices.

## Mesh Topology



Diagrammatic illustration of a mesh network topology

Artists Space  
Exhibitions  
!



Artwork for cover of a booklet accompanying the exhibition *Selections from the Artists File*, Artists Space, September 18 – October 18, 1986.

Artists Space  
Exhibitions  
!



The Unaffiliated Artists File at Artists Space, c. 1986

# Art & Activism Residency Program

I propose that Artists Space further solidifies itself as an institution engaged with critically thinking cultural producers by creating a program that would function as a residency for artist/activist organizations in the New York City area.

The landscape of the city has changed drastically, both economically and physically, in the last decade, and staggeringly so by comparison to when Artists Space began. Artists have directly and indirectly contributed to these changes, sometimes to the rancor of long-established communities. In the 2016 exhibition *Decolonize This Place*, a wide array of performances, meetings, lectures, and other events turned 55 Walker Street into a hub for local grassroots organizers dealing with several urgent political issues, including Indigenous struggle, Black liberation and resistance to state-sponsored anti-Black violence, a free Palestine, de-gentrification, and the figure of the global wage worker. Following the large impact of this program in a short period of time, it behooves an organization such as Artists Space to continue to support this work—albeit in a more sustainable, long-term manner. This support could take the form of a residency program where an organization working at an intersection of art and activism would be able to launch a new project or obtain much-needed resources to continue a project already underway. Alternatively, it could involve providing available space and resources to several organizations to use as meeting space on a regular basis, as has been offered to Working Artists for the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.) in the past.

As state support for public programs continues to shrink, and federal impudence into the matters of “sanctuary cities” makes its impact, independent cultural organizations have a vital role to play in stepping in and providing space for grassroots and community-oriented productive work.

Participating organizations in *Decolonize This Place*:

Aida Youth Center—Palestine  
AKA Exit  
Al-Awda NY  
Black Poets Speak Out  
Bronx Not For Sale  
Chinatown Arts Brigade  
Comité Boricua en la Diáspora  
Common Practice New York  
Direct Action Front for Palestine  
El Salón  
Global Ultra Luxury Faction (G.U.L.F.)  
*Hyperallergic*  
Insurgent Poets Society  
Jive Poetic  
Justice for Akai Gurley  
Mahina Movement  
NYC Stands with Standing Rock Organizing Committee  
Queens Anti-Gentrification Project  
Take Back The Bronx  
*Tidal: Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy*  
Wing On Wo & Co.  
Woman Writers Of Color  
Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.)

For more information see [artistspace.org/exhibitions/decolonize-this-place/](http://artistspace.org/exhibitions/decolonize-this-place/).



Artists Space  
Exhibitions  
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*Decolonize This Place*, Artists Space, 2016

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Performance at *Decolonize This Place*, Artists Space, 2016