

Layet Johnson

Layet Johnson
215 Greene St.
Apartment 5
New Haven, CT 06511
layetjohnson@gmail.com
(501) 425-0973

January 6, 2019

Professor Ambrose
Chair – Department of Art
University of Colorado, Boulder
1085 18th Street
UCB 318
Boulder, Colorado 80309

Dear Professor Ambrose and Esteemed Committee:

I am writing to express interest in teaching at the University of Colorado, Boulder, as Assistant Professor in Foundations. I believe I have the enthusiasm, openness and dedication to foster a productive learning environment for students, while simultaneously continuing to push my own research in studio art. In teaching full time as Assistant Professor at Central Connecticut State University over the past two years, along with co-directing the University Art Gallery and maintaining an active studio practice, I have learned a great deal about art education, including how to teach traditional techniques alongside contemporary art theory while sharing my own practice with students and colleagues. If hired, I would be thrilled to engage with your community of faculty, staff, and most importantly students at the University of Colorado, Boulder, by joining your conversation on art foundations and their importance within the greater art field.

In addition to this letter, please review my curriculum vitae, statement of research philosophy, statement of teaching philosophy, references, and digital portfolio.

I am currently an Assistant Professor of Art at Central Connecticut State University on a 2 year appointment. Since beginning at CCSU, I have taught three courses a semester while co-directing the art gallery, advising senior art majors, participating on committees, and joining the university community in inter-departmental collaborations. Each semester, I have taught one foundational course, alternating between 2D Design and Drawing 1. Beyond foundations, I have taught cartooning, figure drawing, and curation. As a professor, I've made it my goal to

show students the range of possibilities within art making, from simple design to complex production, and to encourage their creative journey by strategizing with them on how to connect their curiosities and experiences with art history as a form of contextualization. I believe my portfolio characterizes my desire to foster a thoughtful and challenging art dialogue through various media.

I received a Bachelor of Arts in Drawing from Hendrix College in 2008, where I was awarded the President's Scholarship, an art scholarship, and the Service to the Department Award in the Department of Fine Arts upon graduation. I then received a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Georgia in 2011, where I held teaching assistantships and taught four courses including beginning and intermediate drawing. Following graduate school, I held numerous residencies along with fellowships at the Vermont Studio Center and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. I have been a visiting artist at Hendrix College, the University of Saint Mary, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and Minneapolis College of Art and Design. My recent solo exhibitions include *Mystery Bird* at Pina (Vienna, Austria,) *August September* at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and *Is This My Tongue?* At Institute 193 in Lexington, Kentucky. Recent group exhibitions include Utopian Visions Art Fair (Portland, Oregon) and the inaugural Bandini International Film Festival (Los Angeles) among others.

My studio practice and research is comprised of two parts: cartooning and conceptual art. While my cartooning on the one hand is a private endeavor encouraging an intimate reception, my conceptual practice concerns space and thus involves a larger critical audience. While each practice operates on similar semiotic structures and are essentially translatable, their methodologies are totally divergent. If hired at the University of Colorado, Boulder, I would commit my studio practice to developing my understanding of cartoons, comics, and animation, with the goal of publishing comics and producing animated films. As a conceptual artist I would continue to exhibit in galleries and alternative spaces, proposing projects and collaborations internationally, and reporting to the department and my students on inner workings of the art world and contemporary art developments. In the Fall of 2018, I curated an exhibition of 31 women comic artists at CCSU. While the impetus for the exhibition was in reaction to the current presidency and in support of the Time's Up and #metoo movements, my gallerist and frequent collaborator Haynes Riley at Good Weather (North Little Rock, AR) saw it also as an extension of my own conceptual art practice, combining my interdisciplinary work and interest in comics. As a subsequent traveling exhibition presented by Good Weather at The Front in New Orleans, we are thus re-presenting the exhibition, with essays by Haynes and myself in a catalog that

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concern my connection to the exhibition. While the exhibition is not about me, we have found it interesting to investigate my relationship with it and how it may inspire future projects.

As a professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder, I will be excited to work with undergraduate and graduate students across each of your departments and to participate on committees and in organizations dedicated to university and community service. If hired by your department, I will commit myself to students in Foundations and in upper level courses in developing their work and self-analysis through intensive studio work and critiques. After teaching at a small University without a graduate program, I will be excited to join the vibrant interdisciplinary milieu that is unique to universities with graduate programs. As a professor I will work to relate undergraduates and graduates with one another as a means of engendering effective cross-generational communication. In setting an example as an artist, I will be eager to work with each art department as a means of expanding on my own art practice in and out of the studio. Relating my personal practice with students by encouraging interdisciplinary inquiry will connect my work to various disciplines and art historical moments and point students to the array of trajectories available to them within the art school. Outside of the classroom, I will pride myself on working in the studio daily and connecting with the greater Boulder community, in order to share my findings and research with those at the university.

I believe it is important to be committed to teaching a diverse student population. I have experience instructing students of all races, genders, ages, and sexual orientations, and am available to work with Disability Services in teaching students with physical and psychological issues. I believe that the strength of Universities comes from its multicultural perspectives, and that to relate art education to social justice, professors should be prepared to teach from various points of view and to push beyond standard Western Art themes while simultaneously being open to incorporating their own students' perspectives within their classroom structures. I believe the university studio should be an active forum for questioning cultural and socio-political realities, where art is upheld for its potential to transform thought and society.

I request an interview with you at your convenience. I would love to revisit the mountains and see the University of Colorado at Boulder for the first time, while meeting with your faculty, staff, and students, to discuss and possibly present on my work in Foundations and in the studio. I sincerely look forward to the opportunity of joining your community and moving to Boulder, to focus on

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teaching and my work in the studio. I have lived in Northern New Mexico before and miss life above 5,000 feet, so I know I'd love to return.

I believe that I am the ideal candidate for this position. I have the experience, enthusiasm, motivation, and communication skills to fulfill all the requirements of an assistant professor in Foundations at The University of Colorado, Boulder.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Layet Johnson

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Curriculum Vitae

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Education

2011 MFA – The Lamar Dodd School of Art, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
2008 BA – Cum Laude, Departmental Honors, Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas

Residencies

August 2016 – Mural Artist in Residence, Gallery Protocol, Gainesville, Florida
July 2015 – July 2017 Emerging Artist Resident, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
April 2012 Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont
Feb – Mar 2012 Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Amherst, Virginia
Sept – Oct 2011 Grinnell Area Arts Council, Grinnell, Iowa
August 2011 Elsewhere Collaborative, Greensboro, North Carolina
July 2011 Andes Sprouts Society, Stamford, New York

Solo and Two-Person Exhibitions

2017 Solo Exhibition – *Mystery Bird*, Pina Gallery, Vienna, Austria
2017 Solo Exhibition – *August September*, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2016 Solo Exhibition – *Is This My Tongue?* Institute 193, Lexington, Kentucky
2015 Solo Exhibition – *Caffé Lasso*, Ritual Valencia, San Francisco, California
2013 Solo Exhibition - *Trip*, Good Weather Gallery, North Little Rock, Arkansas
2013 *Homie Sapiens Vol. 2*, Layet Johnson and Haynes Riley, Page and Vessel, Pontiac, MI
2013 *Homie Sapiens*, Layet Johnson and Haynes Riley, Thea Foundation, North Little Rock, AR
2012 Solo Exhibition – *Sacred Jest*s, The Invisible Hand Gallery, Lawrence, Kansas
2011 Solo Exhibition – *Marcus*, Ciné, Athens, Georgia
2011 *Visiting Artist Solo Exhibition and Lecture*, Hendrix College, Conway Arkansas
2010 *Two Bros!*, Athens Institute for Contemporary Art, Athens, Georgia
2010 *Platonic Voyage*, performance and lecture, Dugg Dugg Gallery, Charlotte, North Carolina
2009 *Platonic Voyage*, Visiting Artist performance and lecture, Alfred University, Alfred, NY

Group Exhibitions

2018 *Utopian Visions Art Fair*, Presented by Good Weather, Portland, Oregon
2018 *The Contemporaries: Hot Takes*, Light Art + Design, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
2017 *Icebox 3*, Gallery 360, Little Rock, Arkansas
2016 *Bandini International Film Festival*, Arturo Bandini, Los Angeles, California
2016 *Art Bandini* Art Fair with Good Weather, Arturo Bandini, Los Angeles, California
2015 *Drive*, Soil Gallery, Seattle, Washington. With Joshua Bienko and Piper Brett
2014 *Athens Arcana: A Contemporary Tarot*, Athens Institute for Contemporary Art, Athens, GA
2014 *Common Descent*, Central Booking, New York, NY

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2013 *In All Kinds of Weather*, /Protocol/ Gallery, Gainesville, FL
2013 *Bad As I Wanna Be*, Ortega y Gasset Projects, Queens, NY
2013 *Landscape Painting*, The Bedfellows Club, Minneapolis, MN
2013 *Inaugural 21 C Museum Hotel Bentonville, AR, Vitrine Exhibition*, 21 C Museum Hotel, Bentonville, AR
2013 *Bulldog Inn Art Show*, Bulldogg Inn, Room 104, Athens, GA
2012 *SIDESPACe*: A contemporary video series at ATHICA, Athens, Georgia
2012 *Chow Chow!*, Eastern Tennessee State University Slocumb Gallery, Johnson City, TN
2012 *Perfect Lovers*, White Box, Manhattan, NY
2012 *All Hail the Subgenius*, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont
2011 *So Many Open Houses*, Low Key Arts, Hot Springs, Arkansas
2011 *A Happy Ending*, Marco Polo Quarterly Arts Mag (marcopoloartsmag.com)
2011 *The University of Georgia MFA Candidates Exhibition*, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
2010 *68.57: From Point A to Point A: 12 Drawers from Athens*, MOCA GA Extension, Atlanta, Georgia
2009 *Making Masters*, Madison Museum of Fine Arts, Madison, Georgia
2009 *Athica Emerges*, Athens Institute for Contemporary Art, Athens, Georgia

Public Works

2017 Hand-painted Mural and Signs, Loblolly Creamery, Little Rock, Arkansas
2016 Mural, Gallery Protocol, Gainesville, Florida
2016 Hand-painted Outdoor Signs, Orbea USA, North Little Rock, Arkansas
2016 Hand-painted Indoor Signs, Portable Kitchen, Little Rock, Arkansas
2015 Hand-painted Window Sign, Pawderosa Pawn, Little Rock, Arkansas
2003 Mural, Riverfront Park River Walk, Little Rock, Arkansas

Art Instruction

2017-2019 – Full Time Faculty, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut
2015 Instructor – 2D Design, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas
2014 Guest Lecturer – Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, Minnesota
2013 Guest Lecturer –University of Saint Mary, Leavenworth, Kansas
2012 Guest Lecturer –University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2011 Visiting Artist – Studio Visits and Critiques, Hendrix College, Conway Arkansas
2010-2011 Instructor- Drawing 2, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
2009-2010 Instructor- Drawing 1, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
2010 Conference Session Presenter- Travelers in Virtual Worlds, SECAC/MACAA conference, Richmond, Virginia. Joint Chair with professor Peter Baldes, Virginia Commonwealth University
2010 Teaching Assistant- Art and Technology (CMS) with Michael Oliveri
2009 Teaching Assistant- Hypermedia with Didi Dunphy

Curatorial Work

2019 Fall, (Upcoming) Chase Westfall at Central Connecticut State University Art Gallery

2019 Spring *Sex, Death, and Visceral Honesty: Artworks and Publications by Independent Women's Comic Artists from the 1960s Underground Movement to Today*, co-curated by Leela Corman, presented by Good Weather, The Front, New Orleans

2018 Fall, *Sex, Death, and Visceral Honesty: Artworks and Publications by Independent Women's Comic Artists from the 1960s Underground Movement to Today*, co-curated by Leela Corman, Central Connecticut State University Art Gallery

2018 Spring, *Crypto\$Crystal* by Plakookee, Central Connecticut State University Art Gallery

2017 Fall, *Blazing on the Pinnacles and Minarets and Balanced Rocks*, Central Connecticut State University Art Gallery

2013 *Last Forever*, Haynes Riley, Outer Space Gallery,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/outerspacegallery>

2013 *World Peace*, Joshua Bienko, Outer Space Gallery,
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/outerspacegallery>

Reviews and Publications

2018

Comic Art At CCSU Gives Voice To Issues Of Women, From Beauty Standards To #metoo, Hartford Courant, October 22, 2018, Hartford, Connecticut, <https://www.courant.com/ctnow/arts-theater/hc-ctnow-sex-death-ccsu-1025-story.html>

The Downward Spiral: Portland. Dean Kissick visits Portland, Oregon for the Utopian Visions Art Fair, Spike Art Magazine, September 19, 2018, Portland, Oregon <https://www.spikeartmagazine.com/en/articles/downward-spiral-portland>

TBA: Utopian Visions Art Fair Lives Up to Its Utopian Ideals, Portland Mercury, Portland, Oregon, September 16, 2018
<https://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2018/09/16/22940971/tba-utopian-visions-art-fair-lives-up-to-its-utopian-ideas>

2017 Essay and Drawing for Angelika Loderer, *Quiet Fonts*, Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna, Austria <http://www.pw-magazine.com/2017/angelika-loderer-at-sophie-tappeiner/> & <http://www.sophietappeiner.com/>

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To Make a Public: Good Weather, Temporary Art Review, February 14, 2017
<http://temporaryartreview.com/to-make-a-public-good-weather/>

2015 *Camaro Jr*, Weekly Comic, The Arkansas Times

Statement of Research Philosophy

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My research philosophy is divided into two parts, the first being in the studio and comprised of cartooning, and the second being out of the studio and comprising conceptual gestures, such as performances and site specific sculptural installations. My current research in cartooning is towards publications and developing state of the art narrative animation. As a conceptual artist, my research involves proposing international site-specific exhibitions, and joining collaborative design projects, performances, and conferences with a network of artists. To connect these two pursuits, it is important to describe how my cartooning morphed into conceptual art before splitting into two equal parts.

I value the term “cartoon” for its undervalued position compared to “drawing.” Cartoons find their strength in their subversion. In magazines and newspapers they break up text like graffiti breaks up walls and train cars. Cartoons work where so much art fails. They are brutal in their humor and in their sorrow. Simple cartoons are like symbols, and in sequence like words. Comic theory states that in the margins between comic panels, readers are able to fill in the blanks with their imagination. While drawings are specific (they represent the human hand,) cartoons are general (they represent human thought.) In short, cartoons *work*.

It makes sense that my conceptual practice is derived from cartoons. I began making conceptual art out of a desire to break from traditional methods of art making and presentation. But early on, many of my performances and conceptual sculptures were based on cartoons. Or I would use comics as schematics to describe the various concepts I hoped to convey in my other work. They were small doodles with added text, i.e. primitive comics. Later on I learned to imagine and implement simple works without these cartoons. Ideas remained, language replaced proposal sketches, and conceptual materials became the total physical object. I practiced showing up and making the work there.

For an exhibition in 2009 or 2010, I made “drawings” on a wall by striking it with a lasso coated in charcoal powder. In my 2015 exhibition entitled *Caffè Lasso* at a coffee shop in San Francisco, I encircled the ceiling with 200 feet of sailboat rigging. I wanted to capture the entire space. In my 2017 winter exhibition, *Mystery Bird*, at Pina, Vienna, I found that the space was heated by a small wood burning stove and decided to chop enough wood for the gallery’s winter season. We bought one metric ton of local apricot wood that I cut in the gallery and we drank apricot liqueur at the opening. The action drew a direct line between the space and me.

When I lived in New York, I was short on cash, space, time, and ideas, but like a plant in the sidewalk, the smallest art form pushed through. It was about all I could muster at the time but it fit, like the first days of an exercise routine. When I finally made a break from the big city, I bought a scanner and began to make more cartoons and show them. Now I obsessively make cartoons that are deeply personal, though I like sharing them. I draw imaginary places and people, and use them to process ideas from my life. I draw friends and tell stories. Put simply, they are a kind of journal. I still make conceptual work though. To me, conceptual work does well at generating complex conversations among creative people, the kinds of folks thinking 10

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steps ahead, so long as the content is there. Not all ideas are worth mulling over. Cartoons on the other hand are for dreamers. As Trina Robbins once said, they're "for looking at and reading, not discussing."

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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The studio is a holistic space. Look at as much art as possible without taking away too much work time. The art should be diverse. Watch documentaries and read artist writings and interviews without take up too much work time. Experiment with materials. Know their capabilities. Copy master artworks. Establish clear concepts, attainable goals, and firm deadlines without being too strict. Be serious. Be comfortable. Be uncomfortable. The studio is a safe space. Have fun with a purpose. Make friends and have conversations. Be honest and sincere with your work. Be compassionate in critiques. Get weird. Be normal. Nurture your style. Ask what material will do the most service for your idea. Drink water. Do Yoga. Breathe.