



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Monira Foundation and Home Gallery Present a Panel Discussion:
*Artists as Civic Leaders in Times of Crisis***

The conversation will take place on the occasion of the closing of [My Home Your Home](#), a Monira Foundation exhibition at Home Gallery, and in recognition of civic work by local artists William Chan, Peter Cramer, Azikiwe Mohammed, Candace Thompson, and Jack Waters

NEW YORK CITY, NY – On Saturday, August 28th at 7:30pm at Sara D. Roosevelt Park (corner of Chrystie Street and Hester Street), Monira Foundation will present a panel discussion on artist-organized civic work. The event takes place in celebration of the closing of [My Home Your Home](#), a Monira Foundation exhibition, and in recognition of the [Black Painters Academy](#) and [New Davonhaime Food Bank](#), new initiatives founded by Azikiwe Mohammed, a former Monira Foundation artist in residence, on the border of Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

Ysabel Pinyol Blasi, Executive Director of Monira Foundation and the curator of *My Home Your Home*, said, “This exhibition takes place during a time of extreme uncertainty in the lives of artists and community members on the Lower East Side. Broadly speaking, artists are better equipped than most of us to respond creatively and collaboratively to changing conditions--both in the studio and in civic life. I’m looking forward to this discussion as an extension of conversations that began at Home Gallery.”

New York City’s health agency reports that to date, one in every 221 residents of Chinatown and the Lower East Side has died of COVID-19, a fatality rate 61% higher than Manhattan’s average. In 2019, 18% of the neighborhood’s 75,000-person population faced food insecurity, with food pantries reporting a total shortage of 4,338,618 meals, a crisis that has been compounded, according to a [study](#) by the Food Bank for New York City, by record-high unemployment, lost wages, closed schools, and shelter-in-place directives.

Saturday’s panel takes place concurrently with The People’s Festival, a program of the [NYC Civic Engagement Commission](#), Department of Cultural Affairs, the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, and Public Artist in Residence Yazmany Arboleda. This five borough series of outdoor events in neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic celebrates New Yorkers’ resilience with live performances, interactive workshops, and community information and resources.

About Monira Foundation

Monira Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit institution, functions as a radical experimental laboratory, working in close collaboration with artists, curators, musicians, producers, and writers to conceive, realize, and present innovative projects in all media. Its mission is to expand the reach and quality of art available to the public through residencies, exhibitions, and educational programs that address urgent and ongoing community needs, particularly as these needs evolve and change.

About the panelists

William Chan is the founder and director of Home Gallery. He went to Iraq as a soldier in the U.S. Army, believing that as an immigrant it was his patriotic duty to help make America and the world greater through this act of war. This experience led Chan not to a career in the military but to an MFA degree and a book, *Ten Years After Iraq*, pairing his photos of combat “brothers” and Iraqi civilians with phrases that bespeak his own personal humanity and the apology he felt he owed the Iraqi people. Recent projects include a series of interventionist anti-war performances aimed at prompting sincere dialogue in a country where real conversation, across not just party lines but also neighborly and familial ones, has all but stopped.

Peter Cramer and **Jack Waters** are artists known for their cross-disciplinary multimedia works that encompass experimental film, documentary, and diaristic approach. After the loss of friends and their own HIV diagnosis in 1991, they reinvigorated investigation of AIDS, LGBT political struggles, sexual/racial identity and erotic subject in films, videos, performances, and installations. Peter and Jack co-established Allied Productions Inc, a nonprofit arts umbrella in 1981, served as directors of ABC No Rio alternative art collective from 1983-1990, and in 1996 founded Le Petit Versailles, a community garden based in New York City. Their work has been shown and recognized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New Museum of Contemporary Art, Anthology Film Archives, and the Smithsonian Institution, among many others.

Azikiwe Mohammed's artwork has been shown in galleries both nationally and internationally. A 2005 graduate of Bard College, Mohammed received the Art Matters Grant in 2015 and the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist Grant in 2016. Mohammed is an alumnus of Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, New York, and Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, New Jersey. His work has been featured in magazines, including VICE, i-D, Artforum, Forbes, BOMB and Hyperallergic. Mohammed has presented solo exhibitions in venues including the Knockdown Center, SCAD Museum of Art, and Spring Break Art Show, and he has been featured in group exhibitions at MoMa PS1, Antenna Gallery, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, among others. He lives in New York and currently has his studio at Mana Contemporary.

Candace Thompson (all pronouns accepted) is a human being who collaborates with soil, plants, microbes, fungi, animals, food, land, digital media and other human beings in the search for healing, resilience and mutualism as we face the climate crisis. Their project, The Collaborative Urban Resilience Banquet (C.U.R.B.) uses citizen science, non-human storytelling and foraged community meals to unpack the complexities of edible urban ecosystems and imagine a future where the streets are 'clean enough to eat off of'. They are also the Manager of Solar 1's Stuyvesant Cove Park, a two-acre native food forest in lower Manhattan where the public is encouraged to forage from clean land atop a former industrial site.

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To learn more about Monira Foundation or to schedule an interview, please e-mail info@monirafoundation.org. Visit the Monira Foundation website at: www.monirafoundation.org.