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VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

GIRLS MAGAZINE

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



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GIRLS MISSION STATEMENT

GIRLS is a revised portfolio of interviews from a nationwide community of real, strong womxn. It's a magazine that is 100% all womxn, which is beautiful in its rarity - the magazine is a safe space FOR womxn ABOUT womxn. Created by Adrienne Ramsey, it serves as a content destination for multigenerational womxn. Read on for an engagement of feminist voices and a collaborative community for independent girls to discover, share, and connect. The usage of the terms "girls" and "womxn" refers to gender-expansive people (cis girls, trans girls, non-binary, non-conforming, gender queer, femme centered, and any girl-identified person).

Front and Back Cover Image: Photo by and courtesy of Zabrina Deng

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: OFFICE HOURS

BY ADRIANNE RAMSEY

Being a woman in charge is not an easy feat, especially when running an art space. Since I started *GIRLS* in 2017, it has been a treat to witness the evolving careers of past participants, where they decide to go, and what they choose to do. Hannah Gottlieb-Graham was completing her senior year at Sarah Lawrence College and presenting her black-and-white analog photographs when I interviewed her for the inaugural issue of *GIRLS*; now, she is Founder and Director of ALMA Communications, a New York based boutique, women-run arts & culture agency. A couple of days after I published *GIRLS 9*, Cameron Shaw was promoted to Executive Director of the California African American Museum (CAAM), and a week after I published *GIRLS 10*, Legacy Russell departed the Studio Museum in Harlem to become the Executive Director and Chief Curator of The Kitchen. There are several women directors whom I am either in conversation with or admire greatly, such as Connie Butler (MoMA PS1), Johanna Burton (MOCA), Thelma Golden (Studio Museum in Harlem), Ann Philbin (who recently announced she will depart the Hammer Museum next fall after an incredible 25-year run), and Monetta White (Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco). While I have highlighted women in business throughout *GIRLS*' history, I found it important to have an issue dedicated to women who founded and directed their own art spaces. This raises a further question – what is art? The beauty of art is that it can both be created and presented through different methods. In this case, the four spaces that are featured in *GIRLS 19* exemplify just that – a costume design house, a bookstore that also features art exhibitions, an experimental art gallery, and a commercial art gallery. I would like to thank Madeline, Laura, Jackie, Callie and Julia for participating in this issue and advocating for the importance of women at the helm. Lastly, thank you to Haley Mellin and Jeremy Maldonado, Founder and Director of Giovanni's Room (Los Angeles), for purchasing an ad and supporting a small business!

CALLIE JONES & JULIA LI



Callie Jones previously served as a Director at Skarstedt and Fergus McCaffrey Gallery in New York and at Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco. For the past decade, Callie has developed close relationships with numerous private collectors, artists, and institutions, working both domestic and international fairs including Art Basel, Frieze London, TEFAF Maastricht, among others.

Julia Li previously served as the inaugural Director of Inclusion and Belonging at the Asian Art Museum, where she developed and implemented the museum's first diversity, equity, access and inclusion strategy. Julia is dedicated to championing underserved voices and artists with powerful stories to tell. She is also the founder of Create Space Generator, a nonprofit creative entrepreneurship incubator.

*Photo Credit: Zabrina Deng
(From L-R): Callie Jones, Julia Li*

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity. It took place in October 2023.

CALLIE JONES & JULIA LI

GM: Can the both of you talk about your individual backgrounds in the arts?

CJ: Since I was a little girl, I always knew I wanted to work with artists. I loved visiting museums and was enamored by paintings. I interned at the Rachofsky House in Dallas as a teenager, ran a small gallery during college, and started working at galleries in New York as soon as I graduated. It was always a dream to open my own space and I'm extremely grateful to have the opportunity to now do so!

JL: I was born in Shanghai and moved to St. Louis at a young age. Living between two worlds and identities was a whirlwind. Art transported me into a space of comfort, connection, and belonging no matter where I physically was. I went on to study painting and received my BFA from Washington University in St. Louis and MBA from UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. My love for artists led me to found Create Space, a nonprofit dedicated to creative entrepreneurship, and previously serve as the inaugural Director of Inclusion and Belonging for the Asian Art Museum. I'm thrilled to start COL Gallery and continue our dream of supporting artists.

GM: How did the two of you meet and eventually decide to begin a partnership?

CJ: I met Julia after I relocated to San Francisco from New York this past year, as she was working at the Asian Art Museum. We connected immediately and it was clear that we shared similar values and outlooks on life and the art world. We really wanted to build a space focused on empathetic communication, long term relationships, honesty, and transparency, all of which are unfortunately often lacking in this field.



Photo by and courtesy of Zabrina Deng

CALLIE JONES & JULIA LI



Installation view of *Belonging* at COL Gallery (September - October 2023). Photo by and courtesy of Philip Maisel

GM: This September, you both opened COL Gallery. How did this space come to fruition?

CJ: Opening a new space is always a risk. There is a huge amount of competition now globally, as the art world has expanded exponentially since I started working in it. But we both really craved an artist's first space, which for us even starts with the name, COL Gallery, named in honor of Richard Nonas, who was an incredible sculptor that I had the great pleasure of working with for many years.

JL: Given Ghirardelli Square's purposeful design as a community center – and as it is the home of Ruth Asawa's first public work – the location immediately appealed to us. We hope to create a space for makers to gather – painters and writers and creators – those interested in the arts and apprehensive about entering it. If our space does that, then for us, it will be a success.

GM: Why was it important to the both of you to establish a contemporary art space in the Bay Area?

CJ: I was always fascinated by the Bay Area, having written my thesis on Jay DeFeo and after reading a good deal of Beat poetry and writing growing up. California, of course, has captured the imaginations of so many. San Francisco in particular has always attracted people for its tolerance, and as being a city that prides itself on individual and aesthetic freedom. I really believe that people underestimate the Bay Area, especially right now. There is an enthusiastic, knowledgeable collector base here, museums with incredible collections and visions, and artists eager to be given platforms to show their work – work that is relevant to an international discourse. We are grateful to be a part of the long, rich lineage of creatives in the Bay and hope to continue pushing it forward in some small way.

CALLIE JONES & JULIA LI

GM: COL's inaugural show, *Becoming*, features ten femme artists who exhibited paintings and sculpture. What was this show about?

CJ: I was always fascinated by the diaristic nature of abstraction; if you could strip the object from its maker, what does that mean? We built the show around that idea. For me, everything we do is uniquely tied to who we are, which is a really beautiful thing – that we all have the capacity to leave our individual marks on the world. So even though these artists work in abstraction, their practices are intimately tied to their personal experiences, considerations, complications, and aspirations, and I just love that. It shows how complicated we all are, that you can take the idea of “abstraction” and everyone has a different view of what it looks like.



Photo by and courtesy of Zabrina Deng

GM: What are your upcoming plans for COL Gallery?

JL: We are very excited to be presenting Lily Alice Baker's works at the end of October. She is an insanely talented London based painter and it will be her first show here on the West Coast. She draws on both AbEx and the history of figurative painting and explores gender and performativity, and we fell in love with her work immediately.

CJ: In December, we are showing the photographs of Jan Meissner in her first California exhibition. Over the past two years, using a long-range lens, she has worked at night from her Manhattan rooftop, capturing fragments of life inside of distant windows. I own and live with a few of her images and always dreamed of showing them if I opened my own space. In January, we are showing the paintings of Francisco Moreno, a Dallas based artist who is a dear friend. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to show a new body of his work. His technical facility is unmatched and the way he renders his imagined worlds really draws the viewer in. This is done in such a way that you constantly want to come back to them and see what you might have missed at first glance.