

On October 15, 2020, about 30 people gathered over zoom for a lecture by artist and writer Theodore (ted) Kerr hosted by Temple Contemporary and Critical Dialogues and Foundations. (view the event [HERE](#).)

As part of his lecture, Kerr invited people to respond to two prompts in breakout groups: *What are your pandemic songs? What are things from the early part of the pandemic you don't want to forget or be forgotten?* max, Clare Nicholls, Lena Kolb, Marilla Cubberley, Vatina, Feather Chiaverini, Abbey Muza, and Mel - artists in Tyler's MFA program, who were part of Kerr's weeklong teaching residency - were in the breakout groups to take notes, participate, and report back.

The notes are below. The songs were compiled to be shared: ["It's been such a long time" - a pandemic playlist](#). Towards the end of the event Kerr had one more question for the group: What is needed now? (these responses are also below).

In recent years, Kerr has taken on questions and note-taking as part of his practice. For his Tyler teaching residency, he and the artists discussed the art-of-notes, and practiced note-taking on each other. For Kerr, the practice is a form of witness, a service that requires that attention to be paid to one's self and others. Note-taking is not an objective practice. Notes are contend, but also come with the filter of those who take and circulate them. By considering note-taking as a practice, room is made for a variety of ways in which testimony can be heard, understood, and shared.

Kerr used the notes taken by the artists' within the breakout groups and treated them as fabric, to be manipulated, braided, cut. What emerges is less of a transcript, and more of a mood.

# “It’s been such a long time” - a pandemic playlist

**"It's been such a long time" - a pandemic playlist**

40 videos · Updated today

Public

This playlist was compiled from attendees to Ted Kerr's October 15th lecture for Temple Contemporary in collaboration with Critical Dialogues and Foundations. People were invited into small groups where they were invited to share their COVID-19 songs, and memories about the early days of the pandemic they did not want to forget. Their songs and memories were recorded by artists in the TYLER MFA program as part of Kerr's

- 3 **Suite II Overture** - Janelle Monáe (2:32)
- 4 **EARTHGANG - Bank (Official Audio)** - EarthGang (3:00)
- 5 **Blue** - Joni Mitchell (2:58)
- 6 **The Weeknd - Blinding Lights (Official Music Video)** - The Weeknd (4:23)
- 7 **Tame Impala - Borderline (Official Audio)** - Tame Impala (3:58)
- 8 **Talking Heads - Burning Down the House (Official Video)** - David Byrne (3:54)
- Blondie - Call Me (Official Video)

“It’s been such a long time,” is what someone in one of the breakout groups said when asked to think of songs from quarantine. At the time of the event, we have knowingly been living collectively with COVID-19 for 8 months.

The songs on this playlist speak a shared sense of humor, depression, resiliency, hope, and witness.

[\*\*LISTEN HERE.\*\*](#)

# What are things from the early part of the pandemic you don't want to forget or be forgotten?

Some thoughts on music and memory and tough times:

Music can open up space for scary thoughts,  
fill the void,  
[you] don't have to have your own thoughts.

Listen a lot to music, especially while riding a bike.  
Biking in an empty city was incredible,  
hopefully this will never happen again.

Listened to a lot 80s music and moody music:  
Police - Blondie - Talking Heads - The National  
Listening to burning down the house by the talking heads in soho  
after the "looting" (incredible moment).  
Appreciation of picture matching the music



Murals in New York, during Summer 2020 BLM protests (*images from upcoming What Does an Uprising Doula Do? Zine, [What Would an HIV Doula Do?](#) + [ONE Archives Foundation.](#)*)

Music being important to cope with stress and sadness: Lockdown - Anderson Paak

Jessie Ware released an entire album "What's your Pleasure."  
Disco, sad. I'm thinking of specific songs,  
*Remember Where We Are, Save the Kiss.*

Don't worry be happy - as an eerie song, a song that makes you worry more

Music helped to center me when I was not getting along with my family.

Family dynamics during quarantine: 1 person feeling stressed makes everyone stressed.  
"Hurt people hurt people."

Hard Candy Christmas, by Dolly Parton, has become my COVID-19 anthem.

It's about being alone and trying to figure out what to do with yourself,  
It symbolizes the boredom before we knew how covid affects our lives  
funny because it was not Christmas  
but now it will be COVID christmas. sad, wistful, hopeful.

I listened to *Don't Ever Change* The Kinks.

Listening to it feels kind of ironic because everything is so different  
and so many people are talking about how they want to go back to "normal"  
but many folks know that "normal" is that we need change.

We shared stories of our Friday's before the stay at home order:

- Was living in NY in a living situation that became increasingly uncomfortable as the stay at home order went on. Their roommates were making transphobic and xenophobic remarks. Had to move to a during the pandemic which felt scary and potentially unsafe, plus moving to a new city.
- Gallery was open and I was feeling unsure about if it should be. Consulting a bunch of people and realizing I had to just listen to myself.
- Had worked for 6 months to organize a weaving workshop where a teacher was traveling from Far away. I felt really confused about what to do. There was so much misinformation and unknown so it felt hard to make a decision.

Things that happened in the early days:

- Birthdays in COVID mine was in May.
- My Grandmother turned 100 this summer (socially distant birthday).
- I moved to Philly during quarantine.
- I listened to Ursula le Guin - Tehanu (audiobook)...also generally, Podcasts
- I had surgery at the start of the pandemic. I went to my parents house to recover, which means I left my people for 5 months. Immense isolation.
- I was forced to move out of my dorm and come home to do online studio classes.
- When Temple went online, me and my roommates got to spend more time together and created a supportive community.

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**YES TO HOUSING FOR ALL! YES TO FREE THEM ALL!**

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NO TO ZERO FOR THE ARTS is an alliance of artists, arts organizations, audiences, advocates that began pushing for progressive policies in support of Philadelphia's people communities, grassroots organizations. Learn more at: [notozero.art](http://notozero.art) and [Philly People's Bailout](#).

A conversation between two people from Florida:

A: Omg. I was in Belgium when they *hot-spotted* in COVID. Before America.

B: Omg. How was it getting back?

A: In Belgium when it was a hot spot! I was there on a fullbright. People were trying to send us home. The State department was flaky. Cool to have a group of people in the grant cohort. Belgium took it very seriously, which is why we didn't want to leave. Fine for being outside 250 euro on spot. I miss the new family there. Still in contact with a professor and family made in Belgium. Getting back was difficult and when I finally got back to the US it was full. PLEASE RESPECT SOCIAL distancing with two people next to me. That was my first experience with how covid was going to be in the USA. [thinking back, I ] knew it was bad when they wanted to send us home.

What we should not forget:

- **an eerie feeling** of something to come while flying back to the US from Sao Paolo, everyone was starting to wear masks
- **frenzy with which we hoarded:** at the grocery store, at Walgreens
- **apathy:** we *should* wait before we act
- **capitalist systems infiltrated** our moment of panic
- **hoarding/buying up of things made them unavailable**

- seeing empty shelves,
- worrying that they too maybe were being pressured to participate
- trying to resist being influenced by everyone in their moment
- daily live videos from the mayor. **surreal terror**. also grounding.
- **dancing as therapy**
- Quarantine being a time to listen to new bands: "We are all human" Harley Poe
- remembering **early covid panic moment**
- **boredom was painful.**
- **creative people were rushing to respond**
  - **people were wanting** to have something to say
  - making something to respond to covid was novel
    - Now that feels kind of gross
- a lot of people being productive
- a lot of people saying you don't need to be productive
- **immense isolation**
- transition to online studio classes was tough
- **having no rituals was painful**: rituals were missed at the end of the school year
- **immediate air of uncertainty**, how quickly **things fell apart**, life turned on its head



Artist [Julie Tolentino](#) said this early in the pandemic.

Things I remember:

- being sent home from senior year of high school. Everyone was joking about the shutdown, and thought we'd be back at school soon.
- going back in time to go back to Minnesota at the start of covid. it was snowing, people hadn't fully responded to the start of covid. made a lot of food, now feel some nostalgia for that time where I made really complex food.
- being in NYC during spring break: came back to dorms, surreal moment of everyone in the dorms learning school was going to shut down before announcement, RA was speechless, didn't know what to say
- weeping at the kitchen table listening to Joni Mitchell
- taking everything for granted
- returning home to Las Vegas, seeing the strip totally empty for the first time ever
- finding some old elastic in my stash and being able to make masks
- seeing all my opportunities fall through
- finishing work early and taking a hike in the Wissahickon with my family. Felt like stealing time back, reclaiming it

What needs to happen now?:

Listen to our bodies and reach out when you can.

Check in check in check in

Share art! Experience art! Make art!

Stay hydrated! check on your people!

To not be so hard on ourselves for not being able to be more productive

Drink lots of water

Trust that we're doing the best we can (and sometimes our best isn't great)

Vote

Sit in the sunshine and do nothing!

Share playlists and be outside!!

Enjoy the moment and make record of it, in whatever way you want

Record your history. Record the history of your community.

"don't forget to download the chat"

ABOUT

Abbey Muza is an artist and weaver working in Philadelphia, PA. They are an MFA candidate in the Fibers and Material Studies department at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture.

Clare Nicholls is a weaver who is obsessed with stories. [www.clare-nicholls.com](http://www.clare-nicholls.com)

Lena is an artist born and raised in South Philly. She has spent the last decade living in New Orleans and has recently returned to Philadelphia. Lena works with yarn to make images and tell stories. You can check out her work @\_Arachne\_\_ or [www.LenaKolb.com](http://www.LenaKolb.com).

Theodore (ted) Kerr is an artist and writer from Canada, who currently lives in NYC. He is a founding member of WHAT WOULD AN HIV DOULA DO? [www.tedkerr.club](http://www.tedkerr.club)