

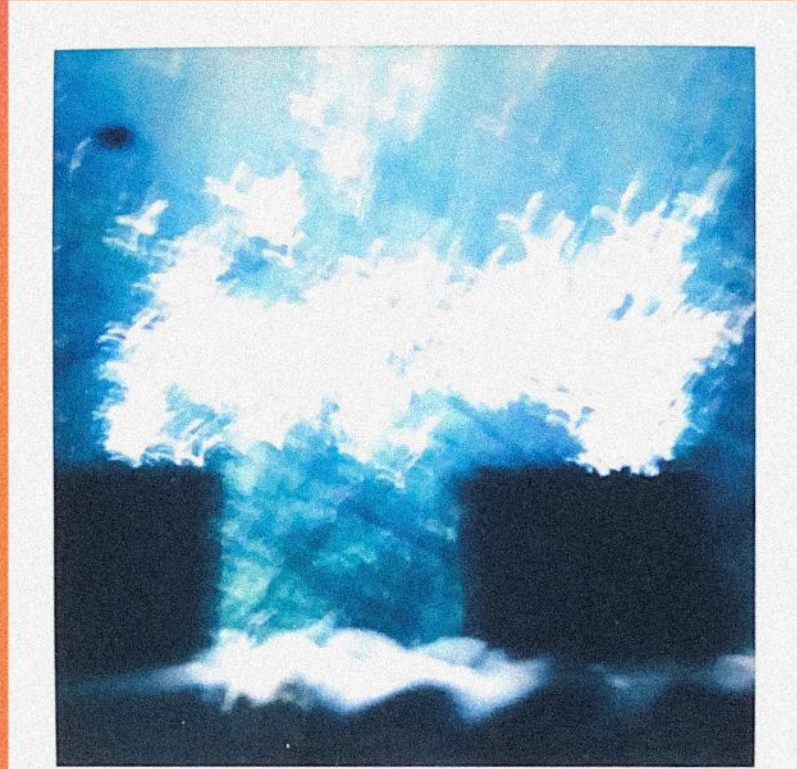
MEI'S

MAHARAM 22' FELLOWSHIP

FINAL REPORT



TO NEW BEGINNINGS



Brooklyn, Crown Heights

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I want to thank those who've supported and mentored me. Thank you, Maharam, HYPOTHEkids, Christine Kovich, Students of Pathways to Graduation Program, Beam Center, Ulli K. Ryder, Leslie Ponce-Díaz, Karen Harris, Kevin Jankowski, Scott Malloy, Lisa Cramer, Alexx Temeña, The Haus of Glitter, Kai Cheng Thom, Mark Anthony Hernandez Motaghy, CHMA, MAMAS, Deepa Iyer, Adrienne Maree Brown, bell hooks, and old/new/emerging friends.

Special thanks to Ulli K. Ryder, Leslie Ponce-Díaz, Karen Harris, Kevin Jankowski, Scott Malloy, and Lisa Cramer, who advocated and celebrated my start of all past, present, and future chapters.

As designers, we become educators. As educators, we become learners. As learners, we become storytellers. We transform and are transformed.

TO NEW BEGINNINGS

1. Provide an overview of your Maharam Fellowship including details on the foundation, organization, non-profit or government agency you worked with this summer. Describe your role in the experience noting key responsibilities. How and what did you learn about how the organization functions?

This summer, Carmen and I collaborated with HYPOTHEkids (a K-12, STEAM-education non-profit based in West Harlem, NYC) and Beam Center (Brooklyn, NYC) teams to redefine design pedagogy through the Biomedical Engineering Design Thinking lens. *The Pathways to Graduation Program* (an 8-week program for newly immigrated students with various levels of English proficiency to earn their GEDs). The cohort was of about 25 students, ages 16-23 years old, and four languages: *English, Spanish, French, and Arabic*. This program, supported by the NYCDOE and three non-profits, operated within two weeks rotations - first, with Beam Center learning to create memory boxes; second, with HYPOTHEkids learning to create heart rate sensors; third, with Solar One learning to develop a large stand solar charger; fourth, with Beam Center closing out the program.

My role with the Maharam Fellowship and HYPOTHEkids was as a Curriculum Designer and Educator. My key responsibilities include the following:

1. **Interacting** with staff members (i.e., Curriculum Specialists, Directors, etc.) to successfully re-formulate STEAM pilot lessons.
2. **Redesigning** the current Bioengineering Design Curriculum with interactive, empowering toolkits.
3. **Researching** and assessing successes in the engagement/cost-effectiveness of developing this new intergenerational educational curricula.
4. **Facilitating** accessible, memorable, and intergenerational education with HYPOTHEkids and Pathways to Graduation Program's student cohort

It was refreshing to experience the non-profit space as a designer - first and foremost - I was able to see the level-groundedness internally in operations. Though we had HYPOTHEkids Bioforce Program Director and our internship advisor, Liv Newkirk, we were given the opportunity and agency to re-formulate the Bioengineering Design Curriculum (with set needs) to what Carmen and I strived for in visual and accessible development. I was also intrigued by the program's rotations between non-profits as it allowed for expansive engagement between students, educators, and facilitators.

2. What non-art/design activities did you engage in? What were your non-art/design learnings? How did you work with non-art/design organization staff and/or constituents?

Moving to Crown Heights, Brooklyn, was a new experience. Each day throughout the Maharam Fellowship, I slowly familiarized myself and engaged with emerging community events (i.e., MOLD Magazine's *Community Kitchen activation* at Brower Park, Interference Archive *No Pipelines Propaganda Party*, & Brooklyn Peoples March Rally & March). It was nurturing and transformative to see how the community came together in efforts of care.

We familiarized ourselves during our first couple weeks with the previous HYPOTHEkids curriculums on Biomedical Engineering before being on-site. Once on-site in Harlem, NYC, we spoke directly with Director Christine Kovich for the first time after our virtual interactions, and she introduced us to our supervisor, Liv Newkirk. We developed relationships and learned a bit more about the roles of the in-crew staff, how the non-profit space operates, and how HK lesson plans were put together in-house from HYPOTHEkids Headquarters.

In the third week, we spent some time focusing on the experience of using heart rate sensors with Arduino (hard/soft)ware. Then, Liv invited us to join one of her HYPOTHEkids Bioforce classes on Arduino and Coding at Columbia University's Engineering building to build our senses on what could be imagined for developing our lesson plan in the Pathways to Graduation program. With this, we were exposed to different teaching methodologies in the Bioforce program alongside our RISD education, the logic of problem-solving in coding, and the opportunities design could offer.

With researching, developing, and redesigning engagement materials, we also dedicated time to teaching our 2-week curricula successfully to the *Pathways to Graduation Program* student cohort. In addition, Carmen and I communicated with each other on the effectiveness of our teaching and how to share content made accessible to context.

beam center & columbia



community

3. What did you learn about art and design's role in social justice, community, environment, sustainability, public policy and/or other areas?

4. How did the experience match your original proposal? What was different and why? How did your work with the agency/organization evolve from the start to the end of the fellowship?

I have learned from this process that the designer's role can be an open, expansive conversation that offers strategies to visualize community building. As designers, we practice collaboration to interrogate the systems in which we adopt/adapt/change ideologies, and as artists, we inspire brave spaces of critique applied to cultures/relationships/spaces.

Art and design must allow for communication. It's necessary. The experience of living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, known to be a space of care and mutual aid, I reflected on ways the arts and design have been integrated into organizing, teaching, collaborating, celebrating, and resting. I've seen it, experienced it, and felt it.

I felt blessed and affirmed to engage with HYPOTHEkids x Beam Center through the Pathways to Graduation program as an educator and designer intern/fellow. We designers and artists are educators through learning, making, and conversing. Thinking of Deepa Iyer's, *The Social Change Ecosystem Map*, the interdisciplinary merging of roles into a co-regulated network allows for the imagined future of co-liberation to be actualized.

In redesigning this curriculum and its pedagogy around slowness and accessibility, the way we engage with materials and concepts of Biomedical Engineering Design is changed to unlearn harm that design and education teach us to move linearly/fast. My contributions to this experience asked of the "with" in adapting our methods to each lesson plan and allowing the agency of students in the classroom to creatively express themselves in whichever way they choose, whether through language or interests. We centered the experiences of these students through empowerment in understanding the many forms of communication that inspire co-creation and community-building.

There are reasons why art and design engage people: it transforms social engagement and empowers emerging learners to be generative, joyful, and non-capitalist practices - co-regulation of the collective network.

designing



designing heart rate monitors

In both experiences (virtual & transitioning to in-person), Carmen and I started to recognize the limitations of our initial proposal, which included the engagement of public space (i.e., collaborating with NYC public parks and NYCHA) to intergenerational learning. We acknowledged that plans change as time progresses and that with the *Pathways to Graduation Program*, we were excited to learn from this experience in building community and designing interactions with students.

Though different, the classroom is a public space. It's often not engaged/centered on seeing the potential it has to create "home" to the experiences of students (in this experience, 25 of whom are newly immigrated, ages 16-23 years, with various levels of English proficiency and are in the process to earn their GEDs). This agency is embodied in collaboration, flexibility, and joy. These students grew up in different parts of the world before coming to this chapter, where they share their stories, redefining the classroom as a space of intergenerational learning through their terms.

We asked ourselves,

"How might we develop these multilingual materials visually to align both contents to context? How can we utilize design to inspire joyful and accessible experiences?"

This was the context to what was the making of content to our HYPOTHEkids 2-week lesson plan: Concepts of Biomedical Engineering Design, *Designing a Heart Rate Monitor*. Our proposal matched experience and imbued ideas of deconstructing normative spaces of power. The classroom, indoors or outdoors, had to reflect critically on "inclusivity," where "to include" is to build foundations with the students. Students are designers, educators, learners, and storytellers.

As designers, we became educators. As educators, we became learners. As learners, we became storytellers. *We transform and are transformed.*

5. Define what you learned throughout the experience from an academic, personal and career perspective. How might the fellowship shape the development of your work and career in the future?

A question I kept finding my return to is,

"How do we intend to arrange *'with'* and *'not for'* marginalized students to create spaces of empowerment, embodied ways of agency, and expansive accessibility?"

This experience has opened doors for me to see more fully how design can be utilized as a tool to learn with community, practice in slowness, and see the multitudes - unlearning the harm of how capitalism perpetuates the *"for."* The *"for"* suggests power, hierarchy, linearity, and speed of a *"relationship."* Practicing *"with"* has been crucial since my arrival of being with self, home, and community in relationships.

Academically, it teaches me that education is not just institutional. The transfers of knowledge are relational. This experience has allowed me to reflect on how through generations, our collective offerings are education. For example, when students of the Pathways to Graduation program collaborate across different languages, intuition is visualized into conversation, and that knowledge is education. We are our own designers, educators, learners, and storytellers. We transform and are transformed.

Personally, it reminds me of practicing moments of slowness. To recenter a process emergent and slow is to experience release, healing, and joy. If capitalism forces us to abide by systems of survival into collapse, the past and present ask us collectively to slow down and critically imagine our futures. For example, feeling the affirmations of our students with each other when the content is understood or having one-on-one conversations with our students to see where they're at. It's a practice vital to living against the normative harms of capitalism, and to know is to "not know."

Professionally, it offers me the experience of transformation in seeing the expansive possibilities of design outside of normative "tradition." Design learning is not linear and is intrinsically embodied in fluidity. As stewards addressing social justice and sustainability, we can no longer live by systems that force us to produce and consume. We must acknowledge that accountability is care and that design allows opportunity to communicate these imagined care futures in our current state. For example, seeing how students centered their joy in presenting their creative group heart rate sensors on their terms. I saw through how design is helpful to organize within not only the nonprofit space but also any area of profession.

6. Provide specific examples of how you utilized your art and design thinking and skills throughout the experience. Was there acceptance of your contributions and skills? Did you experience any resistance in your work with the agency/organization?

teaching

What defines a good need statement?
 ¿Qué define una buena declaración de necesidad?
 Qu'est-ce qui définit une bonne déclaration de besoin?
 ما الذي يعرف بيان احتياجات جيد؟

Step 2: Label, Etiqueta, Etiqueta
 التسمية, التسمية, التسمية

Entertainment, Entretenimiento, Divertissement, الترفيهيات	Food, Comida, Alimentos, الطعام	Logistics, Logística, Logistique, اللوجستيات
		Table cloth, mantel, nappe de table, غطاء الطاولة

The Basic Steps of Engineering Design: Idea -> Finished Product
 Los pasos básicos: De la Idea al Producto Final
 Les étapes de base: De l'idée au Produit Fini
 الخطوات الأساسية: من الفكرة إلى المنتج النهائي

Idea	Idea, Idée, فكرة
Visualization	Visualización, Visualisation, تصوير
Blueprint	Diseño del plano, Plan, مخطط
Proof-of-Concept	Prueba de concepto, Preuve de concept, إثبات الفكرة
Prototype	Prototipo, Prototype, نموذج أولي أو مبدئي
Finished Product	Producto final, Produit fini, المنتج النهائي

Open Mic: What did you learn today?
 ¿Qué aprendiste hoy?
 Qu'avez-vous appris aujourd'hui?
 ماذا تعلمت اليوم؟

00:10 | Whole Class

our lessons, strategies, & activities

Throughout Maharam Fellowship, with the full agency in curricula development from HYPOTHEkids, my skills and contributions were more than accepted and encouraged. Carmen and I used our art and design thinking skills to preplan the Biomedical Engineering materials and communications redesign.

Our mornings consisted of brainstorming ideas, writing notes, and sharing feedback in the first couple of weeks. Planning helped us to construct goals, deliverables, and methods. We referred to visual learning methods from our past studio experiences at the Rhode Island School of Design, which inspired us to experiment with individual-to-group programming. Miro helped us define our core questions to prompt conversations that needed to happen about access to equipment, language, and space.

We focused on using heart rate sensors in the third week with Arduino (hard/software). Liv, HYPOTHEkids Bio-force Program Manager and our internship supervisor, invited us to join one of her HYPOTHEkids Bioforce classes on Coding at Columbia University's Engineering. We were exposed to different methodologies of the design process in the Bioforce program alongside our RISD education, the problem-solving logic in coding, and the opportunities design could offer. Within the same week, we visited the Pathways to Graduation students back at Beam Center to get to know them, see their Identity Boxes projects, and share stories of home.

With researching, developing, and redesigning engagement materials, we drafted prototypes of each lesson plan for our 2-week curricula on the accessibility of language and visual communication. After each session, Carmen and I communicated with each other on the effectiveness of the design implementation and how to share content made accessible to context. Finally, we celebrated the students at the program's end with polaroid film I bought for memory-making artifacts.

7. Do you see impact to the agency/organization you worked for through your contributions and the use of your art and design thinking? (Examples may be a new openness to working with artists and designers, changing approaches to systems and practices, utilizing art and design thinking in their problem solving, refining communication internally and externally, and engaging new audiences for their work among others.)

HYPOTHEkids is a K-12 non-profit working directly with the New York City Housing Authority community to support marginalized youth in bridging the gap within the sciences (located in Harlem, NYC). In efforts toward their goals of centralized involvement of the arts, Carmen and I engaged a more integrated, in-house approach to arts/design thinking, allowing HYPOTHEkids to recognize the importance and need of artists/designers. This included developing relationships with staff, redesigning expansive educational practice(+s), allowing for openness to the arts/design, and storytelling amongst students/educators/facilitators.

I see an impact in the progression of our HYPOTHEkids curricula redesign and teaching as we are transitioning into another pre planning phase (like Pathways to Graduation Program) under Beam Centers' Apprenticeship Program (outside of the Maharam Fellowship, to be determined).

As mentioned within our goals of Summer 2022 Involvement, we envisioned and accomplished expansive means of community engagement by developing accessible toolkits to meet and get to know the students where they're at. This means to run our curricula successfully, is to conduct workshops/programs/exercises in multiple iterations with establishing language accessibility and common ground in our one-on-one facilitation with students.

Now reflecting upon our goals of Societal Regeneration, we have been asked for the rerun of our intergenerational curricula by both HYPOTHEkids x Beam Center to start a new tradition between nonprofits and become a blueprint for future collaboration and teaching. This opens up more opportunities and spaces of conversation to develop a regenerative, long-term framework of accessible education and community building. The underlying importance to greater society is knowing that building a community is also to practice regeneration and co-regulation.

This grant has and will continue to foster relationships to catalyze change and create impact. To the words of Adrienne Maree Brown, "inch wide, mile deep."



TO A GROWING LOVE!
TO A GROWING LOVE!
TO A GROWING LOVE!

last day at Beam Center <3

8. How do you feel about the value and impact of this kind of fellowship for RISD students and the support you received from Maharam, the Career Center, and others throughout the experience?

This was an experience where I could embrace the values of my design practice through areas of interest (i.e., community engagement, storytelling, and nonprofits) with HYPOTHEkids x Beam Center *Pathways to Graduation Program* and the Crown Heights community.

The impact of the Maharam Fellowship on RISD students is immense. It offers students the opportunity to develop and foster relationships in their social progress and sustainable impact areas. As art/design reminds us of the presence of history in visual storytelling deeply embedded in a community's social fabric, we artists/designers/educators/learners/storytellers can co-create old/new/emerging ways of meaning-making, wayfinding, and community-building.

The support I've received from Maharam, RISD's Career Center, old/new/emerging friends, family, and more throughout this experience has been the most moving. I'm at a chapter in my life where as a senior, soon to graduate from the Rhode Island School of Design with the Class of 23' as a First-Gen, Queer, Nonbinary, Chinese American with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Industrial Design and double concentrations in Nature Studies/Scientific Inquiry. I'm so grateful to have been able to build these lasting relationships.

I've found design to be a medium for slow yet generative thinking and community building. This took time. "Institutional tradition" has made me reflect on and critique RISD's design curricula over my time in this institution. This Maharam Fellowship has allowed me to see, foster, and practice potential social impact.

I want to share a quote from Rehearsing Solidarity, Learning from Mutual Aid that resonates with this past summer and moving forward, stating, "careful choreography of infrastructure where communal aesthetics function in tandem with meaningful solidarity" (Mark Anthony Hernandez Motaghy, with CHMA and MAMAS, 53).

MAHARAM