Ayesha Williams: Good evening everyone. I am Ayesha Williams, and for those of you new to our community, The LP is a Black rooted POC-centered arts organization working at the center of arts, social justice, and community building.

Since 2005 we have advanced artists and neighbors as change agents in their communities. Thank you for joining us for part one of Radical Mapping: Making Meaning in our Communities. This program is supported in part by Humanities New York. We are presenting Radical Mapping Part One: Fireside Chat with Julie Mehretu and Kemi Ilesanmi. On the screen is a slide with the title, today's date and time and the listing of the panel. The picture is an abstract with many intersecting lines and marks titled Retopistics, A Renegade Excavation.

We would like to begin the program by sharing a few access notes. The project is committed to hosting accessible and inclusive events. Real time captioning CART is available for the program. You can turn captions on or off with the closed captioning tab located on the features bar at the bottom of the screen. We will be recording today's session for archival purposes and the recording will be available on YouTube after the event. We also encourage you to share any questions you might have using the Q&A function at the bottom of the screen and we will reserve the chat for chatter. We can't see each other but we want to know you are there so feel free to hop into the chat and make noise and share thoughts and all the above.

We begin each program with a land acknowledgement. We acknowledge that our primary location of operations at 1476 Fulton Street sits on the occupied and unceded lands of the Canarsie, who are part of the Munsee Lenape. We recognize them as the original stewards of this land and pay respects to their elders past, present, and future. I invite you to join me in acknowledging the histories of the land you are gathered on and pay respect and gratitude to the stewards.

Throughout history, maps have helped shape human endeavor and experience. Maps have been used to name and delineate land, peoples and states. For just as long, artists, activists, communities and those cartographically marginalized, have drawn themselves, their histories and dreams and realities on new self determined maps. We will explore how Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities can use practices like cultural asset mapping and archiving to invest in and make meaning in our neighborhoods.
We’ve gathered a global group of artists, historians, map makers, local leaders, community members, and you to share how mapping concepts and methods can democratize the knowing, keeping, and making of people and place. For today’s program we are joined by The LP’s executive director Kemi Ilesanmi and artist Julie Mehretu for a conversation. You can access the bios via a link in the chat and now I am excited to turn it to Kemi. Welcome.

Kemi Ilesanmi: Good evening, thank you for the introduction. So incredibly excited to have everyone in the Zoomiverse joining us and thank you Julie for joining in the conversation, I have been excited for a while. I am Kemi Ilesanmi, I use the pronouns she/her, and I am the executive director of The Laundromat Project. I am calling in from Flatbush Brooklyn, and I am a Black woman wearing white rimmed glasses and medium length dreadlocks and seated in front of a book shelf with art and my favorite books, art books in particular, and I am wearing a dress that reminded me of a Julie Mehretu painting even though it comes from the other side, a print from Nigeria. Multiple colored with spirals and swirls and things of that nature.

So again, incredibly happy to have Julie here and each of you. And as you may know, Julie has a beautiful and head spinning stupendous retrospective on view at the Whitney Museum and has been curated by Rujecko Hockley. If you have not seen it please do yourself a favor and go and see it. You have in New York until August 8, or you can check it out in Atlanta or Minneapolis in the coming months.

On screen, you are looking at an installation shot from the Whitney of a painting made specifically for the space. Named “Ghost Rhythm,” it is a large multi colored painting. Reds and blues and greens and whites and blacks. Marks of various sorts. It is facing a large window that overlooks the city of New York and the Hudson River and in the distance New Jersey. And there are viewing couches in between. So here is how the artist Glenn Ligon describes Julie’s work and place in our time:

“Julie is the painter I turn to when I want to think about how to trouble the line between abstraction and figuration, between local and global concerns, between painterly restraint and joyous abandon. She’s a history painter and an Afrofuturist at the same time.” That is high praise from a high place and points to the ways that Julie has mapped new paths in painting and in our understanding of cities, time, politics and power.
To offer a bit of history, Julie and I met over 20 years ago at the Project, the influential gallery that operated in the late 90s. She was a new artist and I was a new curator and we were both just beginning our journeys and here we are 20 years later. And like so many I was immediately intrigued and impressed by her work and mind and spirit. Not long afterwards the Walker Art Center invited Julie to be an artist in residence in the Twin Cities, St. Paul and Minneapolis, and it led to two incredible things I think.

One was the residency project, *Minneapolis and St. Paul Are East African Cities*, that invited new immigrants from the horn of Africa, mostly high school students that had only been in the country for three to five years or less than that, to document their own lives through photographs and sound recordings and these materials were then used to create a beautiful interactive website and all of the photographs and sound recordings generated in the program, later on became part of the permanent collection of the Minnesota Historical Society, one of the things I am most proud of. You can look at the material that Julie helped to create and put in the world through working with the students.

So the first photograph you are looking at to give you a taste of the project, is a poster that came out of the project. At the top is multicolored with bars and at the top is a map of the state of Minnesota with a red star indicating where Minneapolis and St. Paul are. There are five layers of text in different languages. And it says “Minneapolis and St. Paul Are East African Cities.” Next slide please. Thank you.

This is a picture of Julie, who you can see on the far right. And she is gesturing to a number of young people and there are a lot of things on the walls, they are paying attention and engaged. This is baby Julie from 2002. And the last slide is one still image from the website and it states a picture of the different flags that represent the different students that attend Edison High School.

This is one of the photographs you can see taken by the student, the photograph of the flags on the right, photograph on the left is the student Marian who stated this and you can see that this is all embedded in a website that looks like a Julie Mehretu painting as you move through. So this was done with great care to be reminiscent of Julie’s work. So to give you a bit of a taste.
And next slide, so the other thing that came out of this residency, was that it was capped with an exhibition called *Drawing into Painting*. This was Julie’s first Museum solo show curated by Douglas Fogle and myself in 2003. At that time Douglas wrote “Mehretu charts a visual course that not only speaks to the tragic aspect of history but also to its moments of liberation and freedom.” That statement still holds true today and the photograph you are looking at now is from that show. It is a painting that opens the Whitney show called Transcending the New International. It is black and white, it is large scale, and it almost looks like it has two wings in various black gestures emanating from a centrifugal force, and in front is a wooden bench for contemplation.

If you fast forward, this evening Julie continues to map and explore across institutions and geography, and tonight we get to touch on her painting practice and other ways that she is mapping new worlds for us to discover. So again, welcome, Julie. So great to have you here tonight.

Julie Mehretu: Thank you it is such an honor to be here. And I love the idea of the conversation and the project that you are doing on radical mapping, and it is amazing that it is happening at the same time as the show. And that our history together, I will never forget the time you called after my opening at the Project and invited me to the Walker for the residency project. It was an important marker in my life. It is an honor to be here  The first catalog and all of the work was memorable so thank you for the invitation.

Ilesanmi: Thank you and nice to go down memory lane. So I found a quote by you that I really loved and fits with the theme today. "I”—it is you speaking, "I am constantly mining the counter narrative, the counter realities, and the counter possibilities." So the idea of the counter is tied to the idea that we are trying to explore, and radical mapping, the program. What did radical mapping mean to you, what is the idea of moving in the counter space?

Mehretu: Answering the question of what radical mapping means, is complicated. Mapping is a complicated project and in many ways the use of maps has shifted over time. And it has operated for systems of power in particular ways, and operated for systems of extraction, colonialism, and other forms of trying to deal with orientations around space that are about delineating, and claiming, and marking space in those ways. The language around map making and surveying is a form of knowledge that comes from the colonial background, and navigation
background. But the idea of trying to make sense of space through the abstract ideas of mapping has been a long time part of all forms of culture, and has been a way of trying to make sense of the world and trying to make sense of our space, and this is part of, like, homo sapiens from the beginning of time.

I have been interested in map making since my drawings started to look like maps. It came out of what happened naturally in the drawings. But from that time I started to build a map archive and read early maps to understand the currents in the Polynesian islands and southeast Asia, the points of orientation through the Pacific Ocean, through star maps, which actually are markers in a way that shift over time and through space, but were our first navigation devices, so all maps of land came from the idea of the celestial as a guiding marker for us. But that is the constantly evolving and moving reality. And to me, you know I guess those were important ways to think about making sense of space and its information.

But to understand the mechanisms of the systems, it helps in finding places where there are gaps and breaks in the systems and what works in that language and what doesn’t. How useful is the map and those types of questions that come up on the other side of pushing the absurdity of the effort of mapping to the maximum.

And not to say there is not massive value in the scientific knowledge of space and that effort. But that is to say, there is also a futile effort in that because space is constantly evolving and changing and shifting; and culture and people don't engage in land in a way that we understand maps to be, so for me all of that was very very interesting. Especially again coming from the African perspective where, you know, again, being a person who emerged in the postcolonial moment and came into the world and of age in the postcolonial moment, really understanding how complicated and counterproductive and harmful and violent maps were for most people and most cultures.

And in the country of Ethiopia we see the daily outplay of the violence by the delineation of ethnic groups by geography and what can happen when systems of power affect, build up, and balkanize culture based on those types of things. So it is a really, really complicated space, is what I am trying to say, and it is always an interesting space for me to think about culture, space, myself, and who I am. Which is what basically I think I try to do in making.
Ilesanmi: Yes absolutely. That was really rich and had so many different threads. I want to place us in a map, on a place, which is the project I was sharing about, *Minneapolis and St. Paul Are East African Cities*. That was a project that was incredibly on the earlier side of my career as well, and really influenced what I do. We had a great program at the Walker at the time that led directly to the work I do now with The Laundromat Project that is a one-to-one relationship between your project and what I get to call my career now.

So I am curious, and speaking to what you said about maps and geopolitics, and the people you noticed the first visit you made to Minneapolis and said, “These are my people, I recognize these folks,” at the TSA and airport. And when we invited you to become an artist in residence you were clear who you wanted to work with and they were people who were new to the city, and they were there because of issues related to maps—how maps had been done to them, and now they are invited to create new maps of the city they are in. I am curious about 20 years later, what of the project still stays with you or shows up in the way you think and move through your work. What stuck?

Mehretu: Well I think, what was interesting is when we did the project, that was like, right on the edge of technological capabilities. Pre phones and cameras and phones. Instead of giving people phones, we gave students film cameras. Disposable film cameras, so that is something that stuck. In thinking about that, one way that project still resonates and I bring that up because, we have an artist collective and nonprofit organization, artist residency project we have in the Catskills, Denniston Hill, me Paul Pfifer and Lawrence among others, one of the projects we are focused on and developing right now is the Exodus media workshop.

It is a more complex and sophisticated project in a way because of what we can do with technology and because of film editing and how much that technology is evolved, but also I think, liberatory ideas around pedagogy and thinking around how to approach this so there are many. At that time there were a few, I was a younger artist and there were fewer people trying to figure out this idea and this is something that Paul Pfifer has been thinking about and working about and brought to the Denniston Hill conversation. And a project we are really trying to evolve and develop as part of the Denniston Hill curriculum.

And in that there is the aspect of really trying to, how do you make—this goes back to that project, how does one make sense of their own reality and self. How do you make sense of
yourself in the world around you and art's place in negotiating that. A lot of these students, it was clear to us, most of their parents were not that excited about an art project. Or they were excited about them doing an art project, but they were not encouraging of most of the students to think about art as something they can do, they were encouraged to go to science and medicine and things that seemed more lucrative and productive. And productive I think is more the word than lucrative. And could contribute to development and contribute problems in the world, and it was really interesting to get to talk to them about how art plays that role as well and the role of art in making sense and in envisioning futures, in making sense of one's self and making, being able to work through cognitive confusion, work through displacement and how to reorient and find one's place, and how to claim place and these—a lot of these I think are strings to those projects that are part of the Exodus media workshop in a way.

So that is something that even thinking about it now, I was attracted to do it as a residency project was interesting. I am a painter. Painting is a very solitary—I work with other people, but generally you are by yourself working and thinking through things and it is a self expressive kind of space of trying to make sense of one's self but in the process of this, in a process where through drawing and painting and the making of creative work different things start to happen and that is an isolated internal experience for the most part.

Even though I think of intuition as a space of collective congregation in a way. Overall it becomes a very solo project. When I was invited to do the artist residency, I was interested in how to empower these new immigrants to the area. I remember that experience, I was much younger than they were. I was in second grade instead of 7th, 8th or 9th or 10th grade. But that experience of building new realities and making new friendships and understanding cultures in ways your parents don't understand—that was something I wanted to provide certain tools I use in my work to those young artists and students.

Ilesanmi: That was powerful and all of that, thank you for sharing. Nice to hear how that continues to resonate. We don't know how things might show up later in our lives. I remember one particular day when we had the students visit and one of the young women said, we were in a conference room at the Walker Art Center and we normally went to visit them at the school, you know, being on their turf, but we had invited them and one of the young women said are we in the Museum? Is this a Museum? It was something new for her. And we got up and took them downstairs and gave them a tour of the Ultra-Baroque Show. So it was an introduction to this
theme, art was part of the world in this visual way. Or more institutionalized way because obviously there is incredible art in east Africa and among them culturally as well.

Mehretu: Just to touch on that one point. What was interesting is through the project and through their work, and incorporating their families and parental and ancestral stories, and migration stories, and activities in the city and an expression of their daily lives—their families became completely involved in the project. And they were excited and came to the Museum, not just for the exhibition. They all were participating in the viewing of their work in the Walker Education Center so that was really cool too to bring that community into the art center of Minneapolis.

For me that was a moving moment as well. I really appreciated how it became a two-way, where we learned a lot from working with them but it became this effort to study the city and this culture together and what is cool about the community is it was a big Eritrean community, big Tigrayan, and Ethiopian and these are, it was interesting to all work together, big Somali community. And how differently everyone approached it and how respectful everyone was of each other's culture and work and the similar background and was potent about creating. They were engaged in having their work as part of the website and having their work as part of the historic institution and that they were part of this bigger project in the institution that their city was proud of.

Ilesanmi: 100%. Sticking with Minneapolis for a moment, this is a heavy week. Yet another Black man, Black person killed at the hands of the police and in Minnesota, near the greater Minneapolis Twin Cities area, Daunte Wright. And in thinking about your work and visiting the show at the Whitney and the pieces kind of building off Ferguson, there are pieces referencing Charlottesville, being haunted, they are layered in there. That material is sitting in those paintings—throughout your career and your practice, the emotional and racially charged and politically charged, and this telling us specifically about the American racial project. The failed project is so embedded in your work and I want to hear how you think about our emotional map or your emotional map. And how you process. How does emotion fit into the making of your work with this material at its base?

Mehretu: What it brings up for me is the show that's at the New Museum now, Grief and Grievance in America. That show I think what it offers is the numerous ways that is processed
and digested and metabolized in efforts of creation. I think that one can't live in this context without having to negotiate the reality of that. And to be honest I don't think that you need to be an artist of color or a Black artist. Goes back to the ideas of Baldwin when he talks about freedom and that no one is free until everyone is free. And you know the letter he wrote his nephew when he wishes him Godspeed, that is the fundamental issue.

This is the only way it will change is through that fundamental desire for liberation for everyone, so that predicament and the tension of constantly living within that madness and violence and negotiating that, is part of the effort of, you know, thinking around invention and creativity as a possibility for something else. Not just an insistence, on being able to invent and mine another possibility, that can be thought of as many many ways. But, someone said recently in this conversation I was listening to on the Paul Holdegraber podcast with Natalie Atoke, she was in this conversation and she talked about joy as a dissident state of mind and a constant resolve against madness and death.

And what I love about that quote is, she was saying, thinking, about joy as a place of resistance. Like as a form of invention. Not a desire for a constant state of happiness, but to find joy as a way to negotiate madness and death and violence. That’s part of the insistence of creativity and being and invention. And insistence on song and on humor, whatever the coping mechanism is and mechanisms of invention and possibility. So I think that’s been fundamental to any human who has had to suffer through any of these systems of violence and oppression. But especially in a racialized situation. Racialized and classist situations. Of really, you know—of horror and violence within the daily experience of that uncertainty of that kind of reality that your children or your siblings or your nephews could be shot—what happened yesterday could be any of our relatives. The daily experience of that is a constant reality.

Yet we all keep driving, we live. And you see the reality, and we live with a lot of joy as well as a lot of constant mourning. And it is that place between those two and the breaks in that, that is part of the tenor of making. But we are way more complex than just that suffering person, and that is a really important issue and one of the beautiful deliberate intentions of the show, Okwei's show I would recommend everyone to see when you get a chance.
Ilesanmi: I agree—It’s called “Grief and Grievance” at the New Museum. I don't remember when it closes but I am sure someone can tell us in the chat. I think people have a little bit of time. Thank you for that.

And Alice Walker has talked about the space of joy and joy as a space of resistance so it is living in that space and trying to hold on to both of those realities of the deep sorrow that is our state oftentimes as Black people and people of color in this American context. And, what would joy look like without Black folks? The way that depth of being able to just claim joy is a big part of our story in this place.

One of the things I wanted to hear about, so you, really one thing that struck me in the Whitney show is sheer scale. I want to talk a little bit about the making. So the sheer scale of the work that they do mark time and place. They have a cinematic quality and they are enveloping and overwhelming and impossible to ignore and then, there is all of this tactility, you are using, from Sumi Ink to acrylic to spray guns and hydraulic lifts and all of the stuff to make. So I want to hear about the claim, how you construct your aesthetics also through space and through tactility.

Mehretu: Great question. I think—it is all evolved. It was a very long time additive process. It all began with a tiny rapidiograph pen or an etching needle on a copper plate. And little by little that evolved to tracing a ruler and then painting a line then masking a line, and then acrylic paint and being able to push that. I was saying earlier today I don't have the patience or capability. I don't know who that person was that could sit there and draw like that for hours anymore, that is the joy, one of the pleasures of going back through this work and being able to see all this work together that was a different person. I mean 25 years ago—that was a different person who could do that or 20 years ago or ten years ago. And the work has evolved usually. But the new intentions in the work, it is felt and desired and comes through, much more experimental ways and other times, at the earlier days I think I really tried to build everything around the idea of what did this contribute? Could I create a way of painting that related to the rapidiograph pen and related to the idea around map making that I can draw in painting, not just use painting as a place for form of expressive work or working without paint. How could I investigate what I was trying to do within the drawing. How can I make paintings where you could layer nine things at once? With mylar you could not do that; you could only build so many generations to a tectonic you could look through, so paint became the technique, the technique became how to build that.
to actually serve that purpose in the work. How I build layers of maps and space and projecting wire frame drawings created a link to socialized space in a very different way and to political intention and to myth and to memory.

All of this came through by being able to use these different forms of information and technology and language. And as those became layered and more complex, I was able to play with those in a different way something else could emerge from within that. And when the language started to evolve in the Modama paintings and lift off, the aperture—the infrastructure of the architecture and that place—that is when I started to let the architectural language go and move into these paintings and mark what can evolve in that grey space. What could exist there?

Then that became more interesting and important and it evolved into the blurred photographs. So each of those techniques, whether it was the spray technique and I wanted to get a more opaque spray, than I was able to do with screen printing to make a spray painting, rather than actually spraying it because I could not get it as thick as I wanted. So all of the ways of thinking around image making and playing with the visual language and trying to do something that conceptually was also related to what I was thinking about in the marks. So the digitized spray operates similar to the way the marks operate—in a different way; participating in the construction in a different way, but they are all related to one another, and they emerge out of each other.

Ilesanmi: Absolutely, that is fantastic to hear. So one of the things that is interesting that I did not think about and realize until I was at the Whitney show that opens with the Transcending the New International and closes with Ghost Rhythm, is that both of those paintings20 or so years apart. One at the Walker made in relation to the window at the Walker in the gallery, Gallery 8 it was called at the time, and the Whitney in relationship to the window looking over the city. And dealing with issues of immigration and by the way, the Transcending piece for those who don’t know is dealing with the post colonial utopian and dystopian moment of Africa coming out of colonization in the 60s and early 70s. So, kind of you know, two paintings created knowing where they would be and how they would be placed specifically. And I wanted to hear about making these paintings with the actual space in mind.

Mehretu: I did not think about that when I, until you mentioned it, that is the first painting you see. The first painting of that scale that I made. And it was made as a panoramic painting
opposed to that wall looking into Minneapolis. It took time to get to what that would be, but it was after 9/11, the other paintings were informed by that post 9/11 moment. And this was trying to negotiate the idea of the failures of this utopian desire on the continent and the kind of entropic, dystopian reality that evolved in the continent in terms of all different dynamics and yet there is this constant generative aspect.

But what is interesting is that that was also taking place in a daily reality in the United States. At that time. It was almost consuming itself and its previous kind of internationalist, global, optimistic perspective that was the pre 9/11 Clinton era informed you of, like, American progress. The idea of the American engagement internationally, and globalization and technology and the web could offer all of that. And we see, we live in a different moment now and that felt very naive. But right after 9/11 that world shifted. It was a visceral shift. And that painting was made during the moment of the Gulf War. In that moment of repressive reactionary internal changing of the United States.

But I was thinking about the continent of Africa. That is interesting, looking back at that moment. But again both of them are dealing with the idea of displacement, migration and the complications around that. And the contradictions inherent in the world, and thinking around the kind of human needs and the human rights, dignity, and reality of most people in the world, and how do we negotiate that and why does this border, why does it create, give certain people access to resources and others not? And it literally means life or death. And this, this river being a description of that. But it is interesting that the paintings have the relationship and I am grateful for you to bring it up and I had not thought of it until you mentioned it. It's an interesting way to think around space and—

Ilesanmi: Echoes and the desire to create something that does relate and respond to a space. And a lot of times they do that with paintings, and the paintings move around but it is interesting to have the two come together here. So thank you for that. I just read the label and went wait a minute there’s a moment. So I want to open it up to Q&A and we have a few and encourage everyone to use the Q&A box to share those.

So Kellen Cooks writes, “How did you become interested in maps as a child or young adult and what types of maps did you grow up on? And also do you think that Gen Z, having grown up on Google maps, might have a different spatial imaginary compared to any generation
before?

Mehretu: Yes absolutely and I think that really happens with every generation as technology has evolved and shifted, but yes without a doubt, there is no—when I was making this early work in the exhibition, I was talking about this earlier with some other friends. There was no internet as we know it. It was the beginning of email when I was making the early maps. There was no sense of the spatial ideas that we even think around through what the internet has offered the world. It was such a different spatial imaginary that was even possible when I was in school.

In addition to that, yeah, my children negotiate the world through Google maps. To this day, my older son counts on his map to get him around. He recognizes his neighborhood but it is really this, and there is an advantage to those that are spatially challenged like me to have the resources. It’s interesting my father is a geographer and there were maps in our life and a globe but really not much more than other people.

But what came up more in my life was a conversation around development and how land and government and people are the creators of these structures including the maps. Not geological terrain but political geography and political terrain and economic terrain so being raised by a geographer was formative in my world but even more so his Africanist agenda. And my parents together, that reality. I grew up with them fighting over the maps in the car. You get lost -- I told you to turn here. I am saying that in a playful way not like - he’d pass the folded map around and spill something on it. It was a different spatial sense. And of course, yes it will inform the imagery a great deal.

Ilesanmi: I imagine quite so. We have one anonymous question here, “Time being an abstraction, revolving, via art -- what difference space --” I am not sure about that. But the second question, in the same question is “What narratives perhaps as possible future imaginations are we protecting or projecting in the here and now?”

I’m actually going to link this to a question I had and I was thinking about...There are two related here. So, you, Julie, I imagine you are digging through the archive of a long lost and forgotten library or archive. What map or image would you most love to find? And, what do you feel you are leaving as inheritance with what you are creating. And it can be paintings or other things for folks who 100 years from now are going to be looking through an archive.
Mehretu: I’ve been thinking about the archive a lot recently and the difference between orally and orally communicated narratives and history and knowledge forms. And that transmission of knowledge through being told stories and how that changes and evolves over time. And this kind of tradition of actually keeping the kind of you know -- organization of libraries and archives and the Cartesian very rationale way of the European tradition, of trying to maintain a literary - most cultures that used language -- how we use that as a form of like, trying to understand and hold knowledge. And I wonder how, what rises to the top and I don't know what would be my most favorite thing to find.

I think I’m still on a mission to go and see what I can find that has already been found and there is an enormous amount of work in the world I want to see and a sadly lot of that is in places that I, Syria being one of them that I want to explore and learn about how these cities evolved and look at the spectacular kinds of buildings and knowledge. And history that we have. So I can't answer that to what I would most love to find.

But I do think, in terms of futures, I think it would be more interesting to think about, rather than what we leave, what are we like, what’s the discursive shift that we are creating. Not just on a discourse but how are we making and imaging other possibilities so that this, the systemic racism and classicism and failure to, of the collective we have seen over and over and the catastrophe we are catapulting with such speed, how can we use these forms to imagine other futures and maybe these futures the archive is not, not what will be, the most important and I don’t know if we’ll even be here to find such thing but that effort of the thinking in a planetary way is a much better form of survival. I am more interested in that. I support and adore the institutions that have kept and maintained and archived work because that is how we are able to study them.

So I am not being critical of the institutions, I mean I can be in ways but that is not what I am being critical of here. My interest is, in creating, generating painting is for the visceral and communication experience now and the transformative experience with art now. And the possible way of thinking about possible futures in the collective conversations that we are having.

Ilesanmi: Thank you for sharing that and moving that discursive space feels like such the
project. If we could really shift conversation and be part of that ongoing project. Because we are building on the discursive shifts that other people made for us.

Mehretu: Absolutely.

Ilesanmi: I am going to end, our time has gone quickly. You had a show and I know this is, you will tell us... In Addis in 2016, what was that like for you to have your first show and return, it was called your homecoming show. Tell us about that.

Mehretu: It was an amazing experience. Dagmaweed curated that show along with Elizabeth Georges who runs the museum there at the university and it was a really moving and incredible experience to go back to Ethiopia with the work. And in a way a lot of my history with Ethiopia is through my family and has been through going back with my family and through my father. And all of his family. And our family through there. So this was really my first experience with Ethiopia individually -- of course I had been there many times. But there was this very independent like, experience of myself having an engagement with Ethiopia as me. With the students and lectures and exhibition and the audience. And the welcoming of the work. The welcoming of thinking around the work. The excitement around that was so moving and palpable and how much the conversation has evolved from that point and how much the Addis Photo Fest and other projects happening there, how much that has shifted and the students work has shifted. In terms of that, in Addis Abba, it was powerful to see the changes before the show.

And how much it evolved. So for me it was a really moving and transformative experience and people were so generous and kind and welcoming and that is, it felt, it was a profound experience.

Ilesanmi: Thank you for sharing that. I remember that being something that you wanted to happen and was really excited to see that. So thank you Julie. This has been beautiful and incredible and to chat with you this evening and see how your work has changed and shifted and grown and evolved and deepened in so many beautiful ways over the last 20 years.
Seeing the show at the Whitney, being able to see all of that together, really incredible, I would encourage everyone to do that and every time I have seen you speak or be engaged with you in conversation directly or seen you on a Zoom chat you are always just so incredibly thoughtful. That was something that came across right away 20 years ago, so I am happy to be in conversation with you. So thank you for being in conversation with all of us. Thank you so much for joining us and chatting with me. I am going to turn it back to Ayesha to wrap us up for the evening. Thank you everyone for joining tonight.

Mehretu: Thank you Kemi.

Ayesha: Thank you Julie and Kemi for such an insightful and powerful conversation and I could not think of a more perfect way to start off our two day journey grappling with these topics and ideas. So thank you so much we have been really excited and waiting for this to happen. And also a special thank you to our supporters for making programs like these possible and also a huge thank you to the LP team for the thought, time, and care and consideration that was placed into putting the program together.

Also, I want to thank all of you, the over 200 attendees. I know you can't see each other. There are over 200 of you in the chat so thank you for joining and listening and sharing all the incredible resources that we will be sure to share with folks in the post follow up after the program. I hope you take what you heard and learned to your communities and work towards a more just future. We will be sharing the recording and transcripts shortly.

And I hope you will join tomorrow. We have two parts of the program. We have cartographers, we have urban planners artists and historians to dig in deeper around the conversation of what is radical mapping. If you can join it's at noon and 4:30 EST we dropped links in the chat so I hope you attend. And we also invite you to stay up to date with what's happening at the LP.

You can see on the screen here, all of our various handles and ways to follow us and learn more and get involved in what we do. So I hope you have a good evening. We are finishing right on time which is amazing. 7 o’clock and yes thank you so much.