



Jen Delos Reyes Lauds Initiatives at the Wassaic Project

Jen Delos Reyes, director and founder of the annual international art conference, Open Engagement, praises the [Wassaic Project's](#) Community-Building-Through-Art.

Jen Delos Reyes was honored as a guest speaker at Wassaic Project's Summer Preview Party on June 13 and gave an exclusive talk on the premier day of the new exhibition, *Deep End*, the following day. At the Summer Preview Party, Jen applauded the Wassaic Project for "doing the challenging work of community building" by focusing on selflessly "building a space that supports and highlights others." While she conceded that enhancing community through art was no easy feat, Jen continued to affirmed that the "work they do is an invaluable form of social practice."

In the words of Jen Delos Reyes, it would be oversimplified to view the Wassaic Project as just another art gallery; their desire to proactively strengthen the bonds of the local community via education programs, festivities, and workshops is what makes the Wassaic Project a shining gem in the heart of Dutchess County, NY.

While trained as an artist, Jen Delos Reyes does not refer to herself as one, but rather identifies as a creative laborer, educator, writer, and radical community arts organizer. Describing herself "primarily as a convener and a community builder," her practice is as much about working with institutions as it is about creating and supporting sustainable artist-led culture. Jen worked within Portland State University from 2008-2014 to create the first flexible Art and Social Practice MFA program in the United States and devised the curriculum that focused on place, engagement, and dialogue.

Jen is also the director and founder of Open Engagement, an international annual conference on socially engaged art that has been active since 2007 and hosted six conferences in two countries. The Open Engagement conference was initially created to provide support and foster a community for artists and has, since 2007, grown to include over 4000 attendees and 1100 presenters. Jen depicts Open Engagement's most important work as "creating a site that nurtures socially engaged art," and she had no doubt that the Wassaic Project, presenters at this year's Open Engagement Conference in Pittsburg from April 17 to 19, is "a fellow traveler" on this journey to developing a more sustainable community consciousness and identity through art.



Deep End, The Wassaic Project's latest exhibition, runs from June 14 to September 20, and is open to the public, free of charge, every Friday 6-7pm, Saturday 12-7pm, and Sunday 12-6pm. The Wassaic Project also provides tours of the exhibition on the last Saturday of each month, June-September, at 4pm.

For further information on the wonderful community building events and programs the Wassaic Project has to offer, please see the website www.wassaicproject.org or contact:

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Jen Delos Reyes is currently working on *I'm Going to Live the Life I Sing About in My Song: How Artists Make and Live Lives of Meaning*, a book exploring the artist impetus toward art and everyday life. Check out her latest work at www.jendelosreyes.com.