

COMMONWEALTH: EDITORIAL NOTE

By The Editors

This publication is anchored in the spirit of a miniseries, or perhaps a pamphlet series. Three volumes, mainly in digital format, include networks of content linked to the *Commonwealth* project. Through this content, we approach our contexts, ideas, and feelings (many of these contradictory) in various ways and from multiple latitudes that are at times almost impossible to reconcile. The only possible way to work has led us to unravel the semantic content of the “common good,” “commonwealth,” “common debt,” and other permutations from their mix of meanings. Instead of thinking about the utopia of putting something together, we work from the reality that things break and that it is not bad to operate from the cracks. The broken and the interrupted as a positive value.

This art project is manifested through such various components as an exhibition, editorial content, and public programs. The sections dedicated to participating artists, mainly from the exhibition at the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art, not only share documentation of the works in the exhibition but are also approaches to the ideas that fueled them.

These materials do not seek to explain the project in a totalizing way; they are an array of multiple approaches to and from it. We have included the fragmentation and changes of direction that

have occurred since the beginning of the crisis caused by the pandemic as well as the irresponsible responses to the pandemic exacerbated by our capitalist contexts, racist attacks by the police in the US, and public reaction to these various catastrophes. In the case of Puerto Rico, we keep in perspective the 2019 summer uprising, the unusual seismic activity that has hit the southern section of the island since the beginning of the year, and the fact that at the moment of writing this note we are in the middle of hurricane season. Also, we do not hide the uncertainty related to the next elections in both the US and Puerto Rico.

Many things have happened since we started talking, and many more will continue to happen. This project is an invitation to work together, to keep up the dialogue despite our unstable contexts, and to allow art and the thoughts it provokes to sustain themselves as necessary tools from the present.

One aspect of our collaboration included the formation of conceptual tools, which are represented in each issue in some way. We organized these tools into three main conceptual categories: Collectivity, Spatial Economies, and Historical Agency. We found these categories useful to think through the artist commissions and the public programs that followed. As a result, the publication is also structured around these principles, creating tracks for the content to follow.

This first issue has contributions by three participating artists: Mónica Rodríguez, Sharon Hayes and Duron Chavis (with Quilian Riano). These provide context, not explanations to their respective *Commonwealth* projects. There is a journalistic note focusing on Richmond's Confederate monuments by Brian Palmer. Since the three organizations started to work together

a series of working concepts were developed as our orientation tools. Here we present them as a series of icons produced by Lorraine Rodríguez. Also included is a comic strip by Jimena Lloreda.

Commonwealth is organized and curated by Beta-Local co-directors Pablo Guardiola, Michael Linares, and nibia pastrana santiago and former co-director Sofía Gallisá Muriente; ICA at VCU Chief Curator Stephanie Smith; Noah Simblist, Chair of Painting + Printmaking at VCUarts; and Kerry Bickford, Director of Programs, Nicole Pollard, Program Coordinator and Nato Thompson, Sueyun and Gene Locks Artistic Director at Philadelphia Contemporary.

COMMONWEALTHS.ART

