



Department of Records  
& Information Services

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## **NYC PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE JULIA WEIST DEBUTS DIGITAL PUBLIC ARTWORK SERIES “PUBLIC RECORD”**

*Weist, artist-in-residence with the NYC Department of Records from 2019-2020, created a series of 11 artworks that are accessible through the City’s official government records portal*

**New York** - The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, NYC Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS), and Julia Weist, who served as the Public Artist in Residence (PAIR) with DORIS from 2019-2020, have announced the initiation of the public artwork series *Public Record*, which represents the culmination of Weist’s residency. The series consists of 11 individual photographic prints submitted to DORIS as official correspondence, triggering the use of the city’s public records protocols to access the art. Digital versions of the artworks are now available by submitting a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request by following the instructions on [the archives.nyc project page](#). By inviting people to access the pieces that make up *Public Record*, Weist encourages her audience to consider the huge amount of historical information and records maintained by the City of New York as an alternative form of public space.

“The arts have the power to help us see the everyday in a new light,” said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals**. “Julia Weist’s months-long exploration of the Department of Records’ vast archives as Public Artist in Residence has brought us this exciting project, which asks us to consider our city’s records as a new kind of public space and site for artistic intervention. Particularly while we are limited in how we can access physical public spaces, we encourage all New Yorkers to engage with *Public Record* and use these pieces of our collective past to inspire civic participation in the present.”

“Julia Weist has used the rules and laws governing public records to create eleven photos documenting how City government has viewed and interacted with artists and public art over centuries,” said **Pauline Toole, Commissioner, Department of Records & Information Services**. “Her public records offer the most creative use of the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) portal in its history. The staff and leadership at DORIS have been intrigued by these artworks and delighted to have worked with Julia.”

“I’m thrilled we’re launching this project, and I thank DCLA and DORIS for their support and collaboration this past year,” said **Julia Weist**. “Now more than ever the idea that public art can be displayed and experienced outside of traditional contexts is timely and important. The project’s

central concept—that the public record is a form of public space—allows New Yorkers to engage with the work despite current restrictions.”

Weist described her process in creating *Public Record* and the decision to launch it now in a [piece published in the journal n+1](#). Weist began her PAIR with DORIS in April 2019 as one of four artists-in-residence embedded in city agencies. She worked closely with DCLA and DORIS staff as she began to center her work on the archival records stored in DORIS’s warehouse in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and in the Municipal Archives space located at 31 Chambers Street.

Images related to Weist’s PAIR are available for download [here](#).

During her residency at DORIS, Weist researched the municipal government’s relationship to art and artists as documented in the Municipal Archives, looking particularly at records featuring criteria for evaluating art, surveillance of individual artists, and notes on artists’ role in civic life. Weist used these findings as the foundation for a series of eleven photographic prints that comprise *Public Record*, and then leveraged the City’s records retention procedures by transferring artwork created onsite to Pauline Toole, Commissioner of DORIS. As a result, the artwork became subject to the [NYC Agency Head General Subject Files Retention and Disposition Series](#) which require they be kept, processed, and made public according to regulations. The public may view the physical prints by waiting for them to pass through the City’s archiving process into the publicly-accessible collections of the Municipal Archives. Alternatively, digital versions of the works are available by submitting a Freedom of Information request through NYC’s Open Records Portal, following the instructions provided at [archives.nyc/julia-weist](#).

Weist was [one of four artists placed in residence with NYC agencies](#) as part of the 2019-2020 PAIR program. PAIR was inspired by artist Mierle Ukeles’ pioneering artist residency with the NYC Department of Sanitation, which started in the late 1970s. Since its 2015 launch, PAIR partnerships have included:

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- Taja Lindley with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Janet Zweig with the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability
- Laura Nova with the Department of the Aging
- Tatyana Fazlalizadeh with the NYC Commission on Human Rights
- Rachel G. Barnard with the Department of Probation
- Tania Bruguera with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
- Onyedika Chuke with the Department of Correction (Rikers Island)
- Bryan Doerries/Theater of War with the Department of Veterans’ Services
- Ebony Golden with the Mayor’s Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence
- The Lost Collective with the Administration for Children’s Services
- Mary Miss with the Department of Design and Construction
- Social Design Collective and Christine Tinsley with the Department of Veterans’ Services

Learn more about PAIR on [Cultural Affairs’ website](#).

### **About NYC Municipal Archives**

The NYC Municipal Archives preserves and provides access to the historical records of the government of the City of New York. It is one of the largest repositories of historical government records in North America. Collection highlights include 9 million historical vital records, more than 2 million still images and thousands of hours of film and video footage, 400 years of legislative and mayoral documents, and the most comprehensive collection of records pertaining to the administration of criminal justice in the English-speaking world. Documentation of the city’s

infrastructure include the exquisitely detailed drawings of the Brooklyn Bridge and Central Park, two of the greatest public works achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Archives online gallery provides research access to over 1.7 million items digitized from the vast holdings. [Access the gallery here.](#)

### **About NYC Department of Cultural Affairs**

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) is dedicated to supporting and strengthening New York City's vibrant cultural life. DCLA works to promote and advocate for quality arts programming and to articulate the contribution made by the cultural community to the City's vitality. The Department represents and serves non-profit cultural organizations involved in the visual, literary, and performing arts; public-oriented science and humanities institutions including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic and preservation societies; and creative artists at all skill levels who live and work within the City's five boroughs. DCLA also provides donated materials for arts programs offered by the public schools and cultural and social service groups, and commissions permanent works of public art at City-funded construction projects throughout the five boroughs. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/culture](http://www.nyc.gov/culture)