

NIV RAJENDRA ON FLUID MUTUALISM

Interview by Katherine Jemima Hamilton

“How can our community, this school, and everything constructed within it, be an example of fluidity, transformation, and clarity?” The events at the Fluid Mutualism symposium, taking place online and in-person March 1–4, contemplate this question, meditating “on the importance of water and everything it teaches us about how to move through our brief time on Earth.” Organized by the Creative Citizens in Action initiative, in collaboration with CCA faculty, students, and staff, the symposium serves as an anchor point for the Deborah and Kenneth Novack Creative Citizens Series, a year-long conversation series that spans the disciplines of art, design, architecture, and writing.

In advance of the week-long symposium, student organizer and artist Nivedita Rajendra spoke to RRR editor Katherine Jemima Hamilton about her practice, what Fluid Mutualism means to her, and her [Compassionate Movement Workshop](#) on March 4th.



RRR

Can you introduce yourself and your practice?

**Nivedita
Rajendra
(NR)**

I am Niv, a socially engaged artist, currently practicing and living on the stolen ancestral homeland of the Ohlone community. I arrived here just in time to complete the last semester of my MFA Fine Arts program. Unexpected circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic offered me opportunities to make a home in Eora Nation (Sydney, Australia) and San Rafael, Colombia. My experience of CCA has been layered with learning rituals of acceptance and place-making, which has become integral to my art practice.

RRR

What does “Fluid Mutualism” mean to you? How do you bring it into your artistic practice?

NR

Fluid Mutualism is a state of being, a way of arriving at the world, and a value system. Do our daily choices uphold values of reciprocity and care? Are we working to navigate the ebbs and flows of our collective lives with clarity and generosity? A lot of us have lost track of what it means to be a human on this Earth—the incredible potential we hold to tap into the rhythms of nature and conjure joy into existence. I am grateful that this symposium addresses these questions by bringing in multi-disciplinary Indigenous and PoC teachers and artists. In my own work, I explore how the renewal and reinstatement of Indigenous spiritual knowledge can repair damaged relationships in human communities, between humans and the land, and between living and non-living entities. I, too, emphasize mutualism and dialogue and adapt my



creative media to the situations of the beings with whom I work.

RRR Water and communication with non-human species are themes that stand out to me about your practice. Can you pinpoint your fascination with the elements and how to communicate beyond your kin?

NR Much of my work acknowledges our deep visceral ties between one another. The current planetary crisis of extractivism and violence that we face is rooted in the neglect of these ties. Most Indigenous systems, including Ayurveda (the science I study and practice regularly), understand our composition as elemental. We are an embodiment of this Earth, of her elements. Learning to tap into this wisdom and expressing the myriad forms of kinship that exist around us all the time is key to my art-making.



RRR

Why is teaching important to you? What do you hope people will gain from your upcoming movement workshop Symposium Warm-Down on March 4th?

NR

Facilitation is a skill that feels innate to me and is one of the best ways I know to transfer love. Each workshop that I teach is rooted in the politics of radical care. I will be treating this movement workshop as a kind of magic-making—inviting participants into an act of conjuring brings forth transformed ways of breathing and moving, which did not exist prior. I hope participants learn tools that help them imagine more compassionate, present, and connected worlds into being.



Niv Rajendra is a socially engaged artist and certified Ayurvedic Practitioner pursuing their MFA at CCA.