

2023
YEAR
of
TURNS





Welcome to Mildred's Lane

"I dream of a new age of curiosity. We have the technical means for it; the desire is there; the things to be known are infinite; the people who can employ themselves at this task exist. Why do we suffer? From too little: from channels that are too narrow, skimpy, quasi-monopolistic, insufficient. There is no point in adopting a protectionist attitude, to prevent "bad" information from invading and suffocating the "good." Rather, we must multiply the paths and the possibilities of coming and goings.

-Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher"

Mildred's Lane welcomes a new age of curiosity – activating the nexus of science, life experience, and critical artistic practices. This unique situation, in the woods and the town, affords unique opportunities for participants to collaborate in the production of large-scale, research-driven, and conceptual (art) projects – reassembling the terms of the everyday within a genuinely transdisciplinary environment. This emergence is activated around a variety of events, workshops, performances, field trips, and lectures by an array of invited creative practitioners in the summer months and then provides a beautiful year-round residency for creatives, destination guests, and groups.

At Mildred's Lane, we are interested in new modes of being in the world – evoking a social and political entanglement that incorporates questions such as; 1) our relations to people and the environment, 2) systems of labor, 3) forms of dwelling, 4) cloth and clothing apparatuses, and 5) most importantly, creative domesticating. All of which compose the ethics of comportment. Strategically integrated into our daily working-living- researching-making is a co-evolving and rigorous engagement with every aspect of life – that we call workstyles – being is the practice.

These constructions are designed to cultivate shared experiences with the potential for transformative and lifelong effects on how we think of ourselves as social practitioners working in the world.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

from ex-Ambassador of
Entanglement, J. Morgan Puett

As you all know, Mildred's Lane has been navigating challenges to its sustainability over the last several years. To ensure our collective legacy, we are all looking to the future and the changes required to grow.

I want to announce out loud that I am stepping aside from my role as Ambassador of Entanglement. It is time. I put aside so many personal projects and interests for over a decade to act out increasingly demanding executive and administrative roles—in other words, being the director of Mildred's Lane. It is far more than one person can mentally and physically do, yet all have been labors of love for art, friends, landscape — LIFE!

I have been living in this expanded garment of a landscape for so long, raising a child, witnessing friends and colleagues come and go —expressing themselves, taking and making a small bit of its history — I feel it deeply, intimately. But now I see that it needs some mending, which requires thought, care, and calm retrospect. The next phase for me is emerging — a new, more focused role — a Land Stewardship to Mildred's Lane.

Land Stewarding is a way to pattern and tailor the landscape, establishing a stronger ecological program. Meanwhile, I will clear the path for a new executive generation for Mildred's Lane. I would like to introduce those brave souls who are helping me in this transition from Ambassador of Entanglement, until we establish a rotating directorial position.

Alex A. Jones (she/her) is now acting as Minister of Strategic Possibilities (one of seventeen Labors of Mildred's Lane, this one initiated by Abby Lutz, whose ongoing collaborations with me include A Guide to the Field Project). Alex is helping to manifest and co-curate new conceptual potentialities for this mutable subject of Mildred's Lane. Nick Bennett (he/him) is now acting as Ambassador of Transhistorical Agency (another one of the Labors; Natalie Wilkin carved out this labor in all aspects of life here during her residency from 2011-2014). Nick's labor of communication and administration is the core of the greater project. He will be critically negotiating entanglements forward.

Now, to the future: 2023 brings new turns for Mildred's Lane and the Mildred Complex(ity). The future of our lives and work depends on healthy ecology; hence, we put environmental conservation at the forefront of our artistic agenda. Mildred's Lane is becoming a conservation land trust, shifting our attention to an innovative experiment in creative ecologies, including all creative non-human life.

I am excited to share a new piece published in the March 2023 issue of Frieze, which speaks to the heart of this vision, framing Mildred's Lane in terms of sustainability and regeneration.

**Yours, in complexity.
J. Morgan Puett
Land Steward-in-Residence 2023**

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Collectives and
Cooperatives



Collective Crisis: Mildred's Lane builds on a tradition of intentional artists communities to promote sustainability and collaboration in the deep woods by *J. Morgan Puett*

All Together Now



MILDRED'S LANE is an art complex in rural Pennsylvania bordering Narrowsburg, New York, on the Upper Delaware River Valley National Park. Mildred's Lane consists of a home, a forest and a constantly evolving event site, hosting artists and thinkers from around the world who participate in and invent new forms of social engagement. Collaborators stay with us throughout the year but, in the warmer months, dozens swarm for sessions convened around special topics or projects, which are co-curated with visiting artists and scholars. Our network grows mostly by word of mouth and is self-selecting: all you need do to come

here is send a letter of interest. Hundreds of creative minds have flourished in this landscape, and you can feel it as you come up the long dirt lane through the woods, a bumpy half-mile journey which is often described as an initiation of sorts. As one local carpenter said to us years ago: 'Coming over the hill is like coming through a portal: we stop all our chatter and become silent and curious.'

There are dozens of discreet landscape interventions and art installations at Mildred's Lane, as well as a long list of past happenings. We are all entangled beings here, experimenting with ideas and with one another – sometimes

uncomfortably, but more often in wonderment – from the skilled artists who construct vernacular dwellings to the cultivated mildew that later blooms across their canvas walls. Raccoons scamper in the eaves of the *Barn Lyceum* (1997–ongoing) during evening lectures, making their nests as we exchange conversation. In early summer, seasonal colonies of bat pups learning to fly fall from the cracks of 200-year-old outbuildings. Hickory nuts drop and bang sharply upon the roof of the *Lunar Camp* (2015–ongoing) in autumn, startling the sleepers. Each year, the small-mouth bass in the *Algorithmic Pond Project* (2006–ongoing) grow larger.

Art fellows' fall retreat outside The Main House at Mildred's Lane, 2009. Photograph: Hope Ginsburg. All images courtesy: Mildred's Lane



Some visitors swear that Mildred Steffens, the property's previous owner who died here in 1986, still inhabits the old homestead, which has been rechristened *The Mildred/Lillie Archaeology Project* (1997–ongoing). If there are spirits afoot, they are as likely those of the Lenape people, from whom this land was once stolen.

Attuning ourselves to trans-historical entanglements, we search for new notions of what creative practice can be, particularly outside the confines of the academy, the commercialized art world and the urban metropolis. Sustaining an anti-institution requires rigorous training, and new behavioural codes for living in the wild at Mildred's Lane must constantly be devised. A site-specific language that we call 'Workstyles' has co-evolved through experimental activities. The language of Workstyles describes our 'creative domesticating', or the fluctuating forms of labour focused on environmentally sound living, social relations, forms of dwelling and aesthetic systems. Workstyles embodies an 'ethics of comportment' – our rigorous engagement with every aspect of life, our relations to each other and to the site itself.

A whimsical lexicon has evolved from this practice. Instead of an institutional director, Mildred's Lane has an 'Ambassador of Entanglement' – a curator/steward who orients residents to the site, people and projects. 'Masters of Applied Complex(ity)' are artists who build, repair and maintain the landscape's architectures and experimental constructions. The 'Ministry of Comfort' raises the bar in sustainable household mechanics, performing a sort of radical home-making. A Workstyles card deck manages and redistributes labour, disrupting the predictability of daily chores. Someone is always in charge of 'Hooshing', a form of conceptually charged styling, cleaning and arranging that heightens engagement with the environment. Dining is supplanted by 'Digestion Choreography', which turns everyday meals into the signature collaborative artform of Mildred's Lane: emergent events that intermix foraging, gastronomy, installation art and social practice in equal measure.

The language of Workstyles reinvents connections between working, making, cooking and living, which can contribute to sustainable modes of being in the

world. Creative domesticating is our version of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the total work of art. It does not take for granted the labours that often fall into capitalistic fissures, which are typically relegated to workers valued even less than artists. All residents of Mildred's Lane are thinking through problems of living, such as eliminating waste – whether through the rejection of single-use plastics (unaesthetic as well as environmentally destructive) or the conviction that cooking and cleaning are not 'a waste of time', but creative acts in themselves.

Mildred's Lane is part of a lineage of experimental aesthetic communities in northeastern United States. The Shakers, with their luminous efficiencies and radical model of gender equality, first came to New York state in 1774, about 100 miles away from Mildred's Lane. The members of their community inspired the world with their ways of dancing, making and communal living. The Shakers are now dead (celibacy was one of their central tenets, after all), but their art/life concept lives on in the outsized aesthetic legacy of their furniture and architecture. Functional and austere beautiful, Shaker

Above
Mildred's Lane, Social
Saturdays, 2013

Opposite page above
Mildred's Lane
Kitchen Laboratory,
2020. Photograph:
Robyn Lea

Opposite page below
Mildred's Lane
Renovating Walden,
2010–ongoing.
Courtesy: J. Morgan
Puett, Mark Dion
and Fellows of
Mildred's Lane;
photograph: Deborah
Davidovitz

design anticipated minimalism by several generations. In this tradition, Mildred's Lane deeply binds utopianism to aesthetic intention.

Around the same time as the Shaker experiment peaked in the mid-19th century, Transcendentalism also flourished in the woods. Mildred's Lane has fostered ties to the Transcendentalists; a re-creation of Henry David Thoreau's house at Walden Pond is the basis of an ongoing vernacular architecture project here, entitled *Mildred's Lane Renovating Walden* (2010 - present). An even greater influence upon the philosophy of Mildred's Lane is the Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, whose bold writing about women's labour sparked the fire of American feminism.

Radical collectives face many challenges to sustainability: overrated individualisms cause regrettable schisms; hierarchies emerge, undermining the common good; and capitalism strangles every last breath out of the collective spirit. Most experimental communities before us have managed to break free from society for only short periods. Like wildfires, experiments flare up to destroy the old and seed the new; they die when they've exhausted their resources. Then there is simply entropy – you might say *aging* – to contend with. Mildred's Lane is no stranger to these challenges. The most recent threats to our continuing explorations are local zoning laws that define 'home' according to standardized codes – those schema we seek to transgress!



**We are all entangled
beings here,
experimenting
with ideas and with
one another.**

Our goal is to establish a land trust that will preserve this idiosyncratic site and its transhistorical legacy. This requires fundraising, facility renovations to satisfy zoning laws, a legal framework to secure and share what we have, as well as other institutional trappings. To get there, Mildred's Lane must reconcile two apparent opposites: wildfire and sustainability. Sustainability is about perpetual adaptation, as well as burning the old to sow the new. Our structures are constantly collapsing and being rebuilt. This cycle is mirrored by one of our rituals at Mildred's Lane: at the end of each session, a sculptural bonfire is created and burned, representing the conceptual completion and destruction of what was before.

With limited resources, we hope not to burn out completely before reaching our goal. We swarm around the fire, rearranging, readapting and reimagining the fragile combustibility of exchange and collaboration – preserving the wild and ever-emergent community of Mildred's Lane ●



J. Morgan Puett is an artist and Ambassador of Entanglement at Mildred's Lane.

Written in collaboration with
Alex A. Jones and Alastair Gordon.

Introduction 2023:

YEAR *of* TURNS

turn | tern | verb and noun / – go on to consider something next: *we can now turn to another aspect (other aspects) of the problem.*

Summers at Mildred's Lane have been slow since the plague. Opportunities for gathering fallowed everywhere over the last few years. Now, we are turning our hearts and minds to the future as we resume a modest summer program, while continuing to work on site repairs and upgrades required in order to fully re-open. 2023 is a year of turns.

Sustainability is an urgent ideal. We are orienting ourselves around this notion completely, seeking a sustainable future in more than one sense. Summer Swarmings 2023 focus on ecology and the land – as we look ahead, we find ourselves turning to our roots, not least the ground beneath our feet.

With love,

J. Morgan Puett
Land Steward-in-
Residence

Alex A. Jones
Minister of
Strategic
Possibilities

Nick Bennett
Ambassador of
Transhistorical
Agency



SWARMINGS & EVENTS 2023

March 11 through May 21

EXHIBITION | the Mildred Complex(ity)

VIROSA PRESENTS: DEGENERATE CINEMA

VIROSA Presents: Degenerate Cinema is an exhibition of experimental film, prints, and sculpture by the collective VIROSA (Alex A. Jones, Bryan McGovern Wilson, Cameron Klaysen). Two recent narrative short films will be on view, both with deep ties to Mildred's Lane. **Poor Magic** is a surrealist short about a foolish magician in pursuit of his shadow, which was filmed at Mildred's Lane during the pandemic lockdown of 2020. **Fishbowl**, an experimental narrative about a man who breaks into a museum to clean fossils by night, was edited at Mildred's Lane in the deep winter of 2022 following filming in Los Angeles and Brooklyn. In addition to the films, VIROSA will exhibit objects in materials including glass, paper, clay, and 3D-printed plastic which have emerged from their practice of "degenerate cinema"—like radioactive decay, fragments emitted from an unstable center.

April 22

OFF-SITE | Catskill Art Space

INVISIONING ADAPTATION

Panelists include David Brooks, Simone Couto, Alexandra Hammond, Brian Kelley and J. Morgan Puett. Given the enormous challenge of climate change engulfing our planet, artists have a role in shaping public opinion by envisioning alternate futures that meet this crisis head-on. Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* comes to mind. On Earth Day 2023, climate artist and moderator Hovey Brock will engage in a dialogue with a panel of fellow climate artists whose practices wrestle with the social implications of the climate crisis, and envision new ways of adapting to it.



image credit: (above) VIROSA, *Phantom at Mildred's Lane*, 2022. Digital entity
(next page) Alastair Gordon, *Sister Tree*, 2012-2016. Ink on handmade paper,
20" x 15"



MAY 1 through JUNE 15

WORKSTYLES

with J. Morgan Puett / Shelley Spector /
Mia Eccleston / Cook Shaw / Alex A. Jones /
Nick Bennett

A small group of Mildred Fellows / resident-artists-in-complex(ity) will collaborate on Mildred's Lane repairs and maintenance. Each year we work for six weeks or more workstyling intensely: cleaning up the landscape and garden, repairing outbuildings and artist projects, and re-configuring domestic systems. We will dig deep into the framework of WORKSTYLES (noun and verb), our site-specific system of labor focused on environmentally-sound living, social relations, and aesthetics. Workstyles embodies our rigorous conceptual engagement with the maintenance of this land-based and dwelling-based project. It is our version of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the total work of art

The core of the practice and the educational philosophy at Mildred's Lane is an attempt to collectively create new modes of being in the world. This idea incorporates questions of our relation to the environment, systems of labor, forms of dwelling, clothing apparatuses, and inventive domesticating, all of which form an ethics of comportment embodied in workstyles. As a student at Mildred's Lane, these issues will be negotiated daily through the rethinking of one's collective involvements with food, shopping, making, styling, gaming, sleeping, reading, and thinking. The total space of the domestic will be part of the course of study.

May 22 through July 30

EXHIBITION | The Mildred Complex(ity)

ALASTAIR GORDON: PATTERN RECOGNITION #2

Reception and reading JUNE 16 in conjunction with the DEEP WATER LITERARY FESTIVAL in Narrowsburg, New York.

Alastair Gordon's drawings are reflections on time, memory, patience, and what William Gibson called "pattern recognition", simple markings and scratchings layered over rudimentary grid substrates. Alastair is also an author and critic. His books are about art, utopia, the built environment, and what Gaston Bachelard called the poetics of space. His drawings are fields of observation and duration. He draws with powdered pigments bound with gum arabic and black ink made from fermented carbon and pine-tree resin. The process is slow and repetitive, in the trance-like spirit of Henri Michaux's mescaline drawings from the 1950s and 1960s, works that began as written texts but turned into abstract *émergences*.

JUNE 30 to JULY 2

THE CORVUS SUMMIT

with J. Morgan Puett / Mark Dion / Barbara Bourland / Ian
Bourland / David Brooks / Adam Curtis / Courtney Dailey /
Hope Ginsburg / Jill Goldman / Pablo Helguera / David
Humphrey / Jennifer Coates / Asti Hustvedt / Jeffrey Jenkins
/ Rebecca Purcell / Jon Kessler / Cameron Klavsen / Richard
Klein / Abby Lutz / Claire Pentecost / James Prosek /
Trevor Tochydlowski / Shelley Spector / Dannielle Tegeder /
Thyrza Nichols Goodeve /
David Wood / and many more...

This important swarming will host our plenipotentiaries to collectively re-assemble the terms of operation for the future of our organization. Strategies for leadership, fundraising, programming, and collective ethos will be deliberated lovingly by this gathering of crows! The summit will include the first meeting of the Provisional Advisory Council for Mildred's Lane (June 30) and the triumphant return of Social Saturday on July 1st!

With guest lecture by Wayne County forester Trevor Tochydlowski, and musical performances by the Phrogs (Jennifer Coates and David Humphries), James Prosek, and Jon Kessler!

JULY 6 through 12

QUEER ECOLOGIES RESEARCH COLLECTIVE: LAND/BODY/EROS

with Alex A. Jones / Nick Bennett / Pia Bakala / Cy X /
Joanie Cappetta / briar coleman / Maurício Chades /
Institute of Queer Ecology / Adjua Nzinga Greaves / Darian
Razdar / Red Flower Collective

For the inaugural session on queer ecology, LAND/BODY/EROS will investigate the body as a central ecological concept, re-framing "nature" as the original trans body. This session will explore transformative and de-colonial dimensions of land and body through collective and independent reading, discussion, and creation. Forming an artistic research collective, participants in the session will discover creative strategies for mutual survival, re-forming relations with the nonhuman world rooted in embodiment, plurality, metamorphosis, kinship, and play. A Social Saturday on July 8 will feature digestion choreography by the food research and eating collaboration Red Flower Collective.

LAUREN BOYD



COLE



July 16 through 30

ARBOREAL(ITY)

with J. Morgan Puett / Trevor Tochydlowski / Julian Maza
Jennifer Coates / Laura Silverman / Gabrielle Schaub /
others to be announced

With thousands of years of coevolution and creative emergence, it might've been different here now – but because of centuries of dominant cultural neglect for the nonhuman world, the Northeastern Deciduous Forests are in trouble. The Ash trees are dead, the Hemlocks are dying, and Maples are next to fall to fast-spreading diseases linked to climate change.

ARBOREAL(ITY) is a study into the possibilities of collaborating with the forest of Mildred's Lane, while navigating numerous challenges to its sustainability, not least as the Ash and Hemlock trees – two of the land's principal populations – quickly succumb to pestilent insect species. This July and August, we will bring together foresters, conservationists, and artists to envision and reconsider the meanings of a landscape's lifespan and legacy. We will be joined by Trevor Tochydlowski of the Wayne County Conservation District, and Julian Maza of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, among other experts. **This swarming will include a Social Saturday on July 22.**

This swarming initiates a new project, **WORKING (Withering) WILDS**, conceived by Land-Steward-in-Residence J. Morgan Puett. It is a new emergent collaboration with the non-human community of Mildred's Lane. The 'collaborative' is too vast to list here. They are hidden, overlooked, and yet to be identified through experience. An old Lenape Trail in the woods holds biological and ghostly secrets and stories that emerge from direct engagement. The collaborative observes and intersects with the labors of the forest. A factory in the forest – mending, infusing, melting. Emergent possibilities include trees, insects, birds, mammals, rocks, streams, earth, and microscopic beings. An ecological collective becoming, awakening senses for those who enter and readdressing our understanding of nature and landscape by escaping the rooted behaviors of the Capitalocene and Anthropocene.

August 7 through 13

MATRIARCHAL STUDIES HIVE

with Jill Goldman / Mia Pokriefka / Sarah Wallace / Letecia
Layson/ Rebecca Darling / Ame Simon / Tanja Thorjussen /
and others

Artists, writers and activists will be swarming at Mildred's Lane to re-imagine an egalitarian, non-hierarchical society based on shared values of respect, community, connectedness, compassion and reciprocity. Inspired by over three years of study of the work of Heide Göttner-Abendroth (Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures across the Globe) with Joanna Ebenstein and Morbid Anatomy, we will continue our ongoing exploration of matriarchal organizational structures (economic, political, cultural, and spiritual) as we reimagine a non-patriarchal society. The week will include looking at ways to challenge deeply ingrained cultural and social norms, and create new systems that prioritize gender equity and non-discrimination.

Image credit: from Jill Goldman's *Disentanglement/Re-embodiment*, October 2022. Photo by Jeffrey Jenkins

Dates TBD (early Fall)

BIBLIOPHANTICS

with Thyrsa Nichols Goodeve / Alastair Gordon / Jeffrey
Jenkins / J. Morgan Puett / Alex A. Jones / Rebecca Purcell
/ Barbara Bourland / Nina Burleigh / others to be
announced...

Several colleagues are steadily working on the upcoming book *WORKSTYLES OF MILDRED'S LANE*. This 25-year compendium features dozens of projects and voices. This year, the fan-favorite session *BIBLIOPHANTICS* will include a preview and workshop of the book's content, with readings by contributing authors and expeditions into the archives of Mildred's Lane. As always, however, the session will be first and foremost an intensive reading retreat. Silent periods of reading grow into evening socials, library games, and authors' performances.

DISENTANGLEMENT/ RE-EMBODIMENT



BEING THERE

Mildred's Lane is an ideal site for institutions, individuals, private groups, collectives, and corporations to hold retreats, workshops, conferences, or think tanks, using the site (and the creative practitioners that move through it) as a pedagogical tool. It is a tranquil meadow, far from distractions, deep in the woods, with a unique cultural atmosphere to catalyze creative discussion and making.

Individuals, classes, and institutions often visit for an overnight stay, weekend, or full week throughout the year.

See our **website** for more information on policies and pricing for short-term stays.

For all inquiries about being at Mildred's Lane, please contact us at

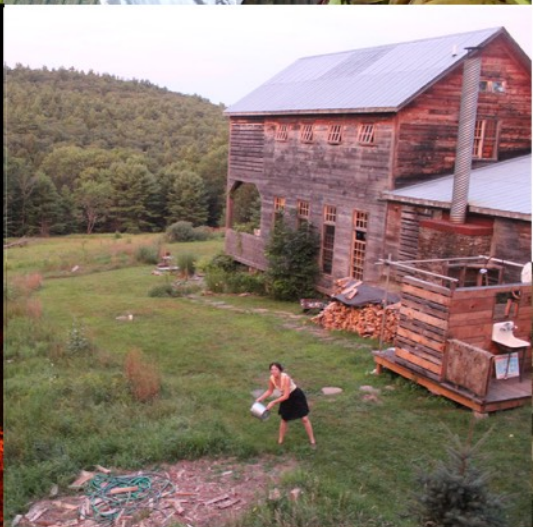
workstyles@mildredslane.com.

You can request an individual invitation, or start a conversation about how to bring a group.

Sign up for our **mailing list** and follow us on **social media** to stay tuned into event and swarming announcements.



image credit: the main house; (bottom left) the Sleeping Porch;
(bottom right) the Grafters Shack



Fellows and visiting artists over the years. Images: Mildred's Lane Archive.

Supporting Mildred's Lane

Support art & ecology!

Mildred's Lane is a conservation land trust-becoming and an emergent collective art site.

The costs are never-for-profit. Mildred's Lane functions as a generosity project working collectively and generously toward forming a landscape trust. All proceeds go to supporting the artists and community of Mildred's Lane.

We are a Pennsylvania Nonprofit, currently in the process of applying for federal 501c3 status. Donations to Mildred's Lane can already be made 100% tax deductible. **Please see our website for more information about sponsoring fellows, projects, and operations.**

CONTACT US

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