

Hello!!

Welcome to the first edition of the *Spikow Mail Art Project* of 2021, that I have affectionally code named “The Roger Project” for a while now. There is an audio version of this letter if you want to hear me read it on the website for this project.

In this letter, I am excited to explain this project to you and I’m excited to tell you about the exhibition *Melendez and Whittle: Composing and Collapsing* 2021 that this project is a part of. I also have a fun challenge for you if you have already received your card in the mail!

You are on this mailing list (to receive mail art through the mail) if you: signed up to my online call, responded to my mail art kit at the Kennedy Arts Center, signed up on this webpage ([sparklezilla.com/rogerproject](http://sparklezilla.com/rogerproject)) and/or were on our wedding (#spikow)/wedding reenactment (#spikow2) guest lists and therefore are part of our village that has and continues to shape who we are and support us, which we are constantly grateful for. This is an ongoing project; we are trying to release mailing art editions annually - if at any point you want to be removed from this mailing list - that totally fine! Just email me and let me know!

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Those who know us well, know that Clint’s dad, Roger Basinger, passed away suddenly in July of 2020. He was a larger-than-life personality with an incredibly generous spirit, and great sense of humor (its where Clint gets his sense of humor ☺). Like any sudden loss it was hard for us to wrap our heads around the instant absence of such an amazing person to us. Ever since I met Clint and his family, I started receiving these thoughtful cards in the mail from Clint’s parents. These cards would be covered in stickers, they would have tiny calendars inside, a thoughtful card with personalized optimistic writing and often a gift card to Burger King or Dairy Queen. It was always a joy to receive these cards in the mail, we really felt cared for. Eventually, I found out that my parents and sisters had also been receiving cards like this from Roger. When we were at his funeral, talking to people and listening to stories about Roger - I was shocked by how almost everyone I encountered there said “I’m really going to miss receiving his cards.” This must have been a full-time job for him - -Sending thoughtful letters and gifts to people in his village. Even later in life when his health gave him some trouble, he was still a very active pen pal.

I decided at that funeral, that I wanted to process his loss by keeping his memory alive. We want to keep talking about him and his impact and continue his project of sending people thoughtful mail. So, for a year, Clint and I have been making a mail art experience that connects to art ideas we are interested in presently and reminds you of or introduces you to Roger, and hopefully gives you a fun mail moment.

To explain the details of this first mailout - I need to give you a little bit of context for what I have been working this past year. ->Since 2019 I been shifting my primary concept from the idea of connection (worked on from 2013-2019) to the idea of teamwork. In a phone call with my friend Joe, he said he thought teamwork is connection towards a goal, which feels like the perfect way to think about this concept evolution.

After that concept shift, I have started to study and recognize the importance of shapes in my present and past work. From there I started building a foundation of visual shapes and decision prompts (ideas taking shape) from ongoing collaborations with artists and friends and family in my life who are/have been actively part of the conversation and preparation of my work over the past few years. I have been calling this foundation my “Shape Language.” I use this foundation to make decisions in my work (visual and otherwise) and include my “team” in everything I do.

So far, there are 25 people I am making Shape Languages for. Presently there are 13 in-process that I have started, 4 finished and 8 I need to start. This project is ongoing and I’m sure it will continue to shift. I made a shape language for Roger and a student I also lost in 2020 to help me keep conversations about them active through my work. Roger’s shape language is made from my layering his drawings of nature and then me finding interesting non-objective shapes. His color palette comes from a rich sunset painting his father did of their farm near Owensboro KY.

For this first mailing version - Clint and I laser cut the **card shape** at the Cincinnati Public Library Makerspace, that was an interesting shape we both thought was cool from the first shape language I made, that came from a collaboration with my friend and frequent collaborator - Steve Kemple. I loved the little laser burns that were left behind on the cards and wanted to explore the burn shapes by activating them with color. There is always something so exciting to me when shapes are developed through negative space or unexpected processes. So, Clint and I, added color to each card individually and uniquely by hand, reacting to the gentle burn patterns. We were hoping the card could feel like a little tabletop sculpture. **The envelope** has a textile print I made with Roger’s Shape Language and some of his drawings. You can probably see some of his pencil marks if you look closely at the envelope. We printed the envelopes also at the Cincinnati Library. Inside this card you will also find a bag of negative space. **This is your challenge!** I mentioned I love when negative space surprises me and entices me. I would love to see what you do with the negative space - make a diorama with it, make a sculpture, a collage, perform with it, use the shapes as a starting point to write a story or a poem or do a drawing, throw it in the air etc. - whatever you can think of that interests you! If you want to mail your negative space explorations back before *Composing and Collapsing* comes down at the end of December, I will include your creation in the show, or if you email me an image of your creation, I will include it on the project website. If you decide to pen pal someone inspired by Roger’s pen-pal I would love to include testimonials about that too! Also, Clint and I sealed the envelope with 3 custom stickers because if Roger had sent you a letter it would have been covered in stickers! The sticker in the middle was a drawing by Roger that Clint put together for this project!

Like I mentioned earlier this project is featured in the exhibition - *Melendez and Whittle: Composing and Collapsing* - -

I was invited to be part of this show earlier in the 2021. I was a little hesitant. I lost a few important people in 2020 and early 2021, that paired with being a teacher during a global pandemic made my mental health take a hard nosedive earlier in this year. Thankfully in April I started to recognize my struggles and take a lot of positive steps with friends and family and self-care to start feeling more like myself as the year progressed. But I was apprehensive about agreeing to this exhibition, since just earlier in the year I was struggling to do basic tasks not even thinking about anything extra. But I knew making art would make me feel more like myself and I had always wanted to show work with Chase Melendez. So, I decided to challenge myself and push through to do this show. I often tell people when they ask me what kind of artist I am that my primary mediums (instead of painter or sculptor etc.) are that I am a collaborator and color artist. Working with Chase was definitely going to nail both of those two things! In one of my very earlier planning meetings with Chase he said his goal was to take over the Wavepool gallery with color and he told me when he brainstorms what to make, he tries to create the art he wishes existed in the world. I knew after that meeting I had made the right choice. That Chase and I would together overwhelm the space with color and make the work we wanted to exist in the world.

Here is a picture of the first edition of the Roger project in the exhibition *Melendez and Whittle: Composing and Collapsing* --



I knew from the moment Maria Seda-Reeder invited me to be part of this exhibition that I wanted to include this project as part of it. Like I mentioned earlier, teamwork is the primary focus of my work right now and all my work focuses on bringing people together through art experiences. Not only did this show hold me accountable to finally sending out this first edition

of this project, but this project also connects this show to so many people and brings a lot of minds together. I will be sending out 10-20 of these letters each week that this exhibition is up. I have 96 cards laser cut for this first mail out. Anyone that visits the gallery is welcome to sign up on the website for this project to be put on the mailing list. I will keep mailing until I run out of cards. If you signed up and you do not get a card from the first edition you will be first on our list for the next edition in 2022. Also, since I love putting as many minds together as possible - on the website for this project there is a worksheet inviting you to share your thoughts on shape and teamwork if you want to be included in how I approach these concepts. I value you and your point of view!

Thanks for hanging out with us in this letter, being open to this project and our work and my exhibition with Chase, and thanks for being a part of our lives. If you want to honor Roger after experiencing this project - -Clint and I think he would definitely approve if you sent out mail or even just checked in on people in your village, but also make sure to make some time soon to eat your favorite meal - Roger loved a good meal with family! And try make as much time as possible to laugh and enjoy the little things. ☺ ☺

As always - Clint and I are rooting for you.

With love

