

27 November 2023

*We came together as strangers and left as family. The time and freedom to work and to be inspired by the work of others wasn't a situation I've been in before, but I hope to have more experiences like that. We were a group who have very different experiences and backgrounds... but at the Mahler & LeWitt Studios we formed a deep bond and that inspired my work.*

–Lonnie Holley, Artist in Residence

Supporters of the Mahler & LeWitt Studios,

Artist and educator Lonnie Holley was extraordinarily productive during his six week residency in Spoleto at the Mahler & LeWitt Studios: creating over a dozen paintings, twenty sculptures and numerous works on paper, besides performing with drums and trombone duo Nelson Patton at the Spoleto Festival dei Due Mondi and with harpist Mary Lattimore. The work has since been exhibited in Los Angeles and Zurich, with a major solo show slated for London (Camden Arts Centre) in 2024.

However, as Holley describes, the residency generated much more than these tangible outcomes. Recognised and respected for their crucial role in society, Holley and his co-residents formed a temporary international community of intergenerational and interdisciplinary thinkers and artists who – able to meet, share ideas and develop new work in dialogue with one another and the unique setting of the Mahler & LeWitt Studios – then take the fruits of those conversations back to their own communities and audiences: a butterfly effect of thought, intention, and, ultimately, action.

And so Holley's studio in Spoleto had an open-door policy, for both co-residents and the visiting public during the Spoleto Festival. A place to meet and discuss topics at the core of his practice and our shared world – the impact of technology on society, the fragility of the environment, and systemic inequalities and prejudice. Spontaneous collaborations arose with co-residents: Abbas Zahedi worked with Holley on new sound works in the Torre Bonomo, and his ideas and words found their way into Nisha Ramayya's poetry.

Together their work poses important questions, encouraging us to see and think with new perspectives, and in so doing offers hope in deeply unsettling times.

This is just one example, from the thirty or so full-time residents who participated in the Mahler & LeWitt Studios program this year, across four residency sessions, of the kind of work and experience we generate in Spoleto. Fully funded opportunities like those we provide — guaranteeing artists freedom: process led, not goals led — are extremely rare, and we thank you for enabling this work.

Holley, although only now garnering the full recognition he deserves, is a senior artist and Zahedi and Ramayya are becoming established. Equally important are the opportunities we provide for younger people. 2023 saw the launch of our first comprehensive Schools Project. Working with some forty students from Spoleto's Liceo Artistico, aged between 16 and 17, we organised a module inspired by the work of Anna Mahler. One participant told us: "The project has given me the confidence to believe I can continue my studies at university level. I now realise that is what I want to do." Meanwhile, graduates from university programs, who often balance their practice with other jobs, benefit immensely from the communities we bring together. Our partnerships with Yale School of Art, University of the Arts London, and the Ivan Juritz Prize (for

graduates of European HE humanities programs) are aimed at providing support to artists at this stage.

We have an exciting program developing for 2024, including a number of Open Call opportunities. Whilst most of our residencies are research focussed, some develop into specific projects. The Spoleto Festival has been an ideal venue to present these and, after their residencies, photographer Luis Alberto Rodriguez (in partnership with Fondazione Carla Fendi), artist Jonathan Monk (in partnership with Vittoria Bonifati and the Torre Bonomo), composer Baldwin Giang (in partnership with the American Academy in Rome), geographer Alberto Valz Gris and artist Cecilia Ceccherini (in partnership with Saverio Verini and Spoleto's gallery of modern art) will all present at the Spoleto Festival. More details can either be found in the review publications accompanying this letter, or will follow soon.

Our Friends, Patrons and members of the Director's circle also form a vital community, facilitating the work we support with exceptional artists. **Supporting our work through an annual donation will mean we can keep providing these transformational opportunities.** As communities continue to splinter and points of view polarise, discursive spaces, like those that the arts can provide, particularly residencies like our own, are more necessary now than ever before.

On the surface of it, Anna Mahler and Sol LeWitt are two radically different artists (and that diversity reflects one of our strengths). However, we'd like to point out one significant similarity in their experience as 'emerging' artists. In 1962 Anna Mahler wrote, "I grew up among the battles and scandals of the Cubists, Constructivists, Dadaists... Everything I saw in these surroundings seemed new and very interesting to me, but when I began my own work it was not new to me any longer, and I decided to seek my own way, well aware of the danger that it would not look new. The important thing was to be sincere, and to try to express only what I could, wanted, had to say." Sol LeWitt, meanwhile, in a rare in-depth 2003 interview with Saul Ostrow, said, "I reached a point in the evolution of my work at which the ideology and ideas became inhibiting. I felt that I had become a prisoner of my own pronouncements or ideas... At that point I had moved to Italy. Quattrocento art really impressed me. I began to think about how art isn't an avant-garde game. It has to be something more universal, more important."

Both artists, then, felt challenged to break the mould, understanding that it was their prerogative, as artists, to do so. Our residency program aims to create opportunities for artists to do just that – to challenge their own status quo, to provoke sincerity, and to shed light on the threads of experience that connect us. On behalf of the respective families of Anna Mahler and Sol LeWitt, and all of the participants in the program, we thank you for all that you are doing for the Mahler & LeWitt Studios.

Our best wishes,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Guy Robertson' and the signature on the right is 'Eva LeWitt'. Both are written in a fluid, cursive style.

Eva LeWitt and Guy Robertson –Directors, Mahler & LeWitt Studios