

claude wittmann
#6, 17 Paton Road, Toronto ON M6H 1R7
clowittmann@gmail.com, 647 701 4301

Statement of Interest
(Value Exchange Proposal below)

Dear Selection Committee,

I believe that the Weston Common is a right fit for my next move.

Community

The Weston Common is a project with strong community-based ethics, and this is very attractive to me. "Home" is primordially safe housing, but, as I currently experience the dismantlement of my 17 Paton Road artists' community, I acknowledge that home, for me, also fundamentally means community. It is about a sense of flow and respect with other human beings living around me, about the constructive exchange of ideas and feedback. It is about mutual support. It is about an actualized wish for collaboration and democracy. My desire is to move to a place where I can integrate into and contribute to the life and growth of a community.

I am a 56 year old transgendered artist living with invisible disability that limits my ability to sustain full-time work, and I am a recipient of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). I have a PhD in science and formal training in butoh, performance art, bicycle mechanics and sound-based wheel building. I dedicate my art practice with sound and bicycle wheels to disability art and advocacy and to art community building. I acknowledge my privilege of being white and of living on a land that, despite a 2010 settlement with the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, still embodies the need for a substantial amount of work towards true reconciliation. I trust that the Weston Common could consider my social identity as a strength to add to their mix.

Weston

Weston would be a very fertile ground for my art, in particular my work with bicycle and wheelchair wheels. Weston was once known as the "home of the bicycle," due to the massive Canada Cycle and Motor (CCM) factory and head office situated at the intersection between Lawrence and Weston Road where a Tim Hortons is now located. CCM produced millions of bicycles and ice skates here until the building was closed in 1983. CCM was so much part of the Weston social fabric that apparently, Weston residents would set their watches to the CCM factory whistle that signalled plant shift changes. In 2011, author John McKenty signed copies of his book "The CCM Story" at the Weston Frontlines Youth Centre (sources listed below). This history is not dead, and I can only look forward to research more of it from a working class perspective, a bicycle wheel builder's perspective, and from a sound-artist's perspective with a lens about how CCM distributed privilege at the time. I can imagine here the seed of a slowly growing wheel-based community project that would deconstruct privilege while warming hearts.

My space

I have lived in a live/work space since 2005. One of the uses I envision of my space in Weston for after the pandemic, is to open it to one-on-one skills sharing. I am one of the rare wheel builders who uses the

resonance of spokes to build and true bicycle and wheelchair wheels; I enjoy and have experience in sharing these skills with others, mainly through part-time summer jobs I have held at bikechain, a diy bicycle repair workshop on the University of Toronto campus. My skills sharing would include wheel truing and also acoustic and electronic sound improvisations with wheels. Since Weston is wheelchair accessible, I would also finally have the opportunity to invite wheelchair users to collaborate with me. (You will read more about that in my Value Exchange Proposal.) Finally, I would also use my space for daily practice which includes drawing, bicycle wheel truing, sound making and recording in a research about how truing wheels inevitably balances brains.

Need

My artist friends and neighbours and I must vacate 17 Paton Road before September 1st, 2020, following an order of evacuation by the City of Toronto for life and safety reasons. This order is not subject to the Toronto's current moratorium on evictions (due to COVID-19) as it concerns our safety. It only depends on the City of Toronto's Fire Chief and Chief Building (Toronto Star article about 17 Paton Road attached). As I am painfully losing this community, I am realizing with renewed clarity, how vital it is for me to live with like-minded people; at the same time, I am facing a rental housing market that bluntly discriminates against my social identity and my financial means. I need housing. I need housing for my survival and my art practice. While I can definitely afford the one-bedroom units currently available in Weston, there is no way I could find and afford any live/work unit on the open rental market in Toronto. Given the space that my practice requires, I would prefer the 700 square feet one-bedroom at Weston.

On a final note, need is extremely rarely considered by art organizations when distributing funds; I recently received the COVID-19 grant by the Toronto Arts Council and another grant by the AGO, and these were my first experiences of being seen by funding bodies as a whole human being with needs rather than only as an artist with merit.

Today, you have in your hands applications and decisions to make that relate directly to our very basic right to housing. I hope that you will be allowed to consider the needs of your applicants.

Reference letter attached, from Sean Lee, Programming Director at Tangled Art + Disability.

Sources

[Author shares CCM's connection to Weston](#)

[Last chance for Weston, Toronto's rustbelt](#)

[The History of CCM in Weston Ontario](#)

[The story of CCM: Weston plant created much more than bikes and skates](#)

[Toronto artists fight to save their affordable homes amid fire concerns and pandemic](#)

claudewittmann.ca

minimalaction.ca

claudewittmann
claudewittmann.ca; minimalaction.ca

Throughout my 15+ year career, I have collaborated with numerous musicians, sound artists, radio artists, dancers, performance artists, disability rights advocates, income security advocates, housing advocates, and organizations working in these fields, and have initiated numerous community engaged art projects. In my still very nascent efforts to address my responsibility as a 1st generation white settler, I have also established trust with a very few members of the Indigenous community.

Prior to 2017, my work seeded the emergence of *small ephemeral communities* that bridged my authenticity, performance art and my everyday life players. One way I achieved this was by tapping into the history of radio as a community builder. Using and teaching live FM and internet radio, I generated new participative ways of experiencing equality, equity and democracy (examples of my initiatives: *Radio Confessions*, *Trans Temporary Radio*, *Internal Democracy*, *Radio Equals*, *Landsgemeinde*, *LEGS*, *Authenticity-integrity-identity-equality*, *Voice and live internet radio at Workman Arts*).

In 2017, I chose to work towards and with *long-lasting community*, and I decided to position the start of my artistic gestures where the need for a systemic change was that would improve the life of the disability community i belong to. Since then, I spark and sustain community action using a set of different skills. I have designed postcards (for Crippling the Arts, Shelter and Housing Justice Network, Inkling Symposium); I have taught emotionally integrated letter-writing workshops (Ryerson School of Disability Studies), organized community-based advocacy actions for ODSP recipients (minimalaction.ca), some covered by the press. I recently started to teach how to bridge art and advocacy (Workman Arts, CAMH). Finally, I also most pleasurably share my sound-based bicycle and wheelchair wheel repairing and building skills as art and advocacy community building tools (*drop-in and i will pay you \$15/hour to... , wheels/politics/panic*).

For the Value Exchange Program at Weston, i would like to offer:

drop-in to read from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report (TRC report, 2015)
2h/month

This offer is an invitation for Weston community members to participate in a large initiative started in 2016 that reads the whole 2894 pages of the TRC's report. The initiative is called [2894](#). The TRC's report does not represent the full truth, but it is an official document that our federal government has commissioned on our behalf and my contribution is to facilitate the opportunity for others to read from the report or to listen to it, especially whomever of us who has the privilege of not experiencing the violence and systemic oppression that individuals and communities with Indigenous ancestry do experience. About 2/3 of the report has been read, and each reading is

broadcast on an internet worldwide soundmap, the [locustream soundmap](#). The webcasting occurs through a free application named Locuscast. Past participants have reported deep emotional involvement, gratitude for the opportunity, and also impulses to find their own way to trigger some kind of change. A few readers have organized their own community readings.

For Weston, I envision a monthly 2 hours long drop-in, possibly in one of the Artscape Flex studios. Participants come for the amount of time they want, and, in turn, they read from the report for 10 minutes each while others waiting to read are listening. I facilitate the webcasting on the soundmap, and I make sure that I have the technology on hand to make the readings accessible to all. If individuals are interested, they can download the Locuscast app and read on their own at home or facilitate other readings.

DIY bicycle wheel repair drop-in

3h/month

Youth and adults will be invited to come with their bicycles and/or wheelchair wheels to learn to fix their flats and/or wobbly wheels and adjust their brakes if needed after that. I have the tools and teaching experience from past employment and volunteering, more particularly at bikechain (references below). This drop-in would be a considerably simplified version of [drop-in and i will pay you \\$15/hour](#), a project I did in collaboration with the 7a-11d International Performance Art Festival and Tangled Art + Disability in Toronto. Another iteration entitled [wheels/politics/panic](#) is planned to be realized bilingually with the Galerie du Nouvel Ontario in Sudbury. In Weston, I could start by running the offer in my live/work unit as a monthly one-on-one repair on appointment, and then I could organize a larger and more appropriate space which maybe the Front Lines Youth Centre could help me find. Participants would learn a skill that will be very useful for them and spare them future expenses. They would also share into the pleasure of sounding wheels and maybe accept to record some sound experiments with me after the repair is done.

References

Beth Austerberry Executive Director of bikechain bikechainuoft@gmail.com 905 921 6381	Katherine Hale Sports wheelchair using teacher and coordinator Ontario Para Network Sports wheelchair rental btg@onpara.ca 416 426 7131	Sean Lee Director of Programming at Tangled Art+Disability sean@tangledarts.org 647 725-5064	Danielle Tremblay Executive Director Galerie du Nouvel Ontario danielle@gn-o.org 705 923 6404; 705 673 4927
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