

VALERIE SKAKUN
b. 1986 Houston, TX
Dual U.S. and Canadian citizen
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I am a multidisciplinary artist/educator based in New York City. My work spans across several mediums, incorporating sculpture, textiles, installation, performance, sound, and curatorial projects. I received an MFA from Hunter College of the City University of New York in 2019, and a BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 2009. I am appreciative to the Canada Council for the Arts for awarding a Digital Originals grant, Queens Council on the Arts for two SU-CASA grants, PlySpace Residency Program for a Resident Artist Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center for an Artist Opportunity Fellowship, and to Highly Authorized for a fully funded residency. I am beyond grateful to the New York Foundation for the Arts for awarding a Rauschenberg Medical Emergency Grant as well as a Tri-State Relief Fund to Support Non-Salaried Workers in the Visual Arts, CERF+ for a COVID-19 Relief Grant, NYC Arts in Education Roundtable for an Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund, and to Foundation for the Contemporary Arts for an Emergency Grant COVID-19 Fund.

The philosophy of my recent body of work is informed by the process of being chronically-ill / immunocompromised, learning to walk again after a serious bicycle accident, and regrowth after atrophy. My work involves co-existing with communities of microorganisms and references "organs" as a double-meaning of body parts and musical instrument, physical therapy equipment, prosthetics, decaying organic matter, and plants/foods which protect and heal our bodies. I have explored sculptures as objects of ritual, collaborative movement, and play, ranging from time-based devotions to endurance trainings in order to transform mental and physical states of being. The materials and rituals which help me to regain and maintain a somewhat functioning body and immune system inform the materials and processes used in my sculptures.

My red blood cells are mutated, spherically shaped and fragile. Though I was a chronically-ill infant, I was not diagnosed until I was a child at age five. My spleen had filtered out most of my red blood cells, resulting in a hemoglobin of 3.6 g/dL. After an emergency room visit, multiple tests, and a blood donation from my aunt who could match my O+ blood type, my spleen was removed in order to stop the destruction of my red blood cells.

In 2014 I was struck by a car, whose driver ran a stop sign, while on my bike and left unable to walk for a year, resulting in permanent damage to my bones, ligaments, and muscles; I have since navigated life with chronic pain. Though utilizing a daily physical therapy routine in an attempt to re-build my muscles to take the load off of my joints, my left leg is smaller, weaker, and in much more pain than my right.

Due to a neglectful capitalist healthcare system in the United States, whose focus is a final outcome of "fixing" bodies just enough but not more than to be able to return to work, many of my symptoms have gone without proper care, with suggestions of further highly invasive surgeries that will leave me unable to walk for yet another year and without my insurance covering the outpatient care which invasive surgery entails.

Being immunocompromised with a blood disorder and no spleen, in addition to the multiple bodily injuries incurred, I vitally rely on the healthcare system for infectious disease emergencies, life-saving medicine, routine check-ups, blood tests, and imaging; I am extremely fortunate to have access as millions of people are uninsured in the United States. Since there is little to no support in long-term care, I have researched ways in which to aid my ailments, providing myself the preventive and restorative care in which the healthcare system fails, and have translated my daily rituals into art making processes.

My rituals may aid in my ailments; however, they do not cure disease or medical disorders. Full and equal access to quality health care is a human right.

I am one half of interdisciplinary collaborative Skakun&Spadine. Together we work in the realm in which the physicality of sculpture and sound overlap. Our sound sculptures have been performed at art and music venues across NYC, including Outpost Artist Resources, Pioneer Works, NY(G), 205 Hudson, and Club Sourdough.

See videos of performances here: <https://vimeo.com/user80239543>

EDUCATION

HUNTER COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, New York, NY

Masters of Fine Arts: May 2019

THE COOPER UNION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AND ART, New York, NY

Bachelor of Fine Arts: May 2009

Honors: Four-year full tuition scholarship

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF ART, Oakland, CA

Mobility Student, with focus in Textiles: Spring 2008

EXHIBITIONS

- 2022** *Milk Kefir SCOBY Outdoor Offering*, High Desert Test Sites at the Sky Village Swap Meet, Joshua Tree, CA
- 2021** *Milk Kefir SCOBY + Artist Book Farm Fridge Offering*, Chaseholm Farm, Pine Plains, NY
- 2021** *Milk Kefir SCOBY + Artist Book Outdoor Offering*, Ridgewood, NY
- 2020** *In Union, Remotely*, Shaker Museum, Mount Lebanon, NY (with P. Spadine) ([Online due to COVID-19](#))
- 2020** *Spring 2020 Fellows*, [PlySpace Gallery Online](#), (with P. Spadine)
- 2020** *Art Parade: Finale*, MadJax Studios, Muncie, IN (with P. Spadine) (in collaboration with Professor Rachel Cohn and her 4D students at Ball State University) (cancelled due to COVID-19)
- 2019** *Second Sundays: September 2019*, Pioneer Works, Governor's Island (with P. Spadine)
- 2019** *Salon XIII*, NY (G), Brooklyn, NY (with P. Spadine)
- 2019** *Mayday*, 205 Hudson, New York, NY
- 2019** *Fire Over Heaven*, Outpost Artists Resources, Ridgewood, NY (with P. Spadine)
- 2019** *Salon X*, NY (G), Brooklyn, NY (with P. Spadine)
- 2018** *The End*, ValeRina Gallerina, Ridgewood, NY (with P. Spadine)
- 2018** *Electrolytes are Lost when U Sweat*, Brooklyn, NY (with P. Spadine)
- 2018** *Dolly*, 205 Hudson, New York, NY
- 2017** *Darkness Show*, ValeRina Gallerina + Greg, Ridgewood, NY
- 2017** *Faculty Show*, USDAN, Wheatley Heights, NY
- 2016** *Finger Food*, The Hand, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016** *Wish You Were Here*, Interstate Projects, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016** *Now, Therefore*, ValeRina Gallerina + Greg, Ridgewood, NY
- 2016** *Rover 2016*, Starr Space Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015** *Solstice Show*, ValeRina Gallerina + Greg, Ridgewood, NY
- 2015** *Time and a Half*, ValeRina Gallerina + Greg, Ridgewood, NY
- 2015** *Connections*, ALL GOLD, Long Island City, NY
- 2015** *Magic Scents*, ValeRina Gallerina + Greg, Ridgewood, NY
- 2015** *Solstice Show*, TH Studio, Navy Yard, NY
- 2015** *I Will Never Smile Again*, ValeRina Gallerina, Ridgewood, NY
- 2015** *Meownifesto*, ValeRina Gallerina, Ridgewood, NY
- 2014** *Show + Tell*, ValeRina Gallerina, Ridgewood, NY
- 2014** *The Last Brucennial*, 837 Washington St., New York, NY
- 2013** *Bushwick Open Studios*, The Freedom Garden, Brooklyn, NY
- 2012** *GO Brooklyn*, The Freedom Garden, Brooklyn, NY
- 2012** *Bushwick Open Studios*, The Freedom Garden, Brooklyn, NY
- 2012** *New Goo*, The Freedom Garden, Brooklyn, NY
- 2012** *Necklace Sandwich/ The Freedom Garden*, The Freedom Garden, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011** *Deck the Walls*, Sardine, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011** *Brooklyn Beefsteak*, The Bellhouse, Brooklyn, NY
- 2010** *The Brucennial: Miseducation*, 350 West Broadway, New York, NY
- 2009** *Black Thursday Halloween City!!! Black Friday Fireworks Stand*, Troutman Studios, Ridgewood, NY
- 2009** *End of the Year Show*, The Cooper Union, New York, NY
- 2009** *Human Hazard*, Houghton Gallery, with Eliza Winston, New York, NY
- 2008** *Dream Job*, Frankenart Mart, with Kirby McKenzie, San Francisco, CA
- 2008** *End of the Year Show*, The Cooper Union, New York, NY
- 2008** *Fiber and Dye*, University of California Botanical Garden, Berkeley, CA
- 2007** *Stranger Drawing Show*, Glassell School of Art, Houston, TX
- 2007** *End of the Year Show*, The Cooper Union, New York, NY
- 2007** *90 Ludlow Show Organised By Patterson Beckwith*, 90 Ludlow, New York, NY
- 2006** *End of the Year Show*, The Cooper Union, New York, NY
- 2006** *Two Dimensional Design*, Lubalin Center, New York, NY
- 2006** *Color*, The Cooper Union, New York, NY
- 2005** *Placement and Spectacle*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX
- 2005** *Lactose Intolerant*, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Art Gallery, with Sean Nichols, Houston, TX
- 2005** *Imprint (#3)*, Gremillion and Co. Fine Art, Houston, TX
- 2004** *CCA Summer Photography*, North South Gallery, Oakland, CA
- 2004** *Imprint (#2)*, Gremillion and Co. Fine Art, Houston, TX
- 2003** *Imprint*, The Art Guy's Studio, Houston, TX

ARTIST TALKS

- 2020 *Artist Pecha Kucha Talk*, David Owsley Museum of Art, Muncie, IN (with P. Spadine) (cancelled due to COVID-19)
2020 *PlySpace Fellowship Artist Talk*, Ball State University, Muncie, IN (with P. Spadine)

PERFORMANCES

- 2020 *Collaborative Box Bellow Organ*, Smhoakstock X, New York, NY (with P. Spadine) (online due to COVID-19)
2020 *Collaborative Organ Ensemble*, MadJax Studios, Muncie, IN (with P. Spadine) (in collaboration with Professor Rachel Cohn and her 4D students at Ball State University) (cancelled due to COVID-19)
2020 *Collaborative Organ Demonstration*, David Owsley Museum of Art, Muncie, IN (with P. Spadine) (cancelled due to COVID-19)
2020 *Modular Sound Sculpture: Benches*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, Seeds, Brooklyn, NY
2019 *Balance Board Bells*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, Club Sourdough, Brooklyn, NY
2019 *Modular Sound Sculpture: Benches*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, 205 Hudson, New York, NY
2019 *Balance Board Bells*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, NY (G), Brooklyn, NY
2019 *Bicycle Organ*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, 205 Hudson, New York, NY
2019 *Modular Sound Sculpture: Benches*, in collaboration with P. Spadine, NY (G), Brooklyn, NY
2018 *Penelope's Suitors*, in collaboration with Mildred's Lane, Deep Water Literary Festival, Narrowsburg, NY

RESIDENCIES

- 2022 *Marble House Project*, Dorset, VT. Free to accepted artists. Housing and meals provided. (June 2022)
2022 *A-Z West Work Trade Residency*, Joshua Tree, CA. Housing and use of studio provided in exchange through work trade.
2021 *ChaNorth*, Pine Plains, NY. Private housing provided. Food provided through work exchange at McEnroe Organic Farm. (May - Feb)
2020 *Saas-Fee Summer Institute of Art*, Berlin, DE. (Online due to COVID-19)
2020 *PlySpace*, Muncie, IN. Fellowship to cover food and supply stipend. Housing provided. (with P. Spadine)
2019 *Vermont Studio Center*, Johnson, VT. Fellowship to cover all residency fees. Housing and meals provided.
2017 *Highly Authorized*, Ellenville, NY. Residency fees waived. Housing provided.

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2021 *City Artist Corps Grant*, New York Foundation for the Arts. \$5000 grant to New York City based working artists to help sustain their practice and engage the public across NYC's five boroughs.
2021 *Rauschenberg Medical Emergency Grant*, New York Foundation for the Arts. \$5000 grant to assist in emergency medical expenses.
2021 *Tri-State Relief Fund to Support Non-Salaried Workers in the Visual Arts*, New York Foundation for the Arts. \$2000 grant to assist in workers in the visual arts who have experienced financial hardship from lack of income or opportunity as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.
2020 *COVID-19 Relief Grant*, CERF+. \$1000 grant to artists who are facing dire insecurities caused by the pandemic.
2020 *Arts Educator Emergency Relief Fund*, NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. \$1000 grant to teaching artists and arts education administrators who are facing serious financial hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis.
2020 *Digital Originals: Interactive Virtual Organ*, Canada Council for the Arts. \$5,000 grant to create a [website](#) with an interactive virtual keyboard whose notes are individual recordings of handmade pipes from our new series of sound sculptures. (with P. Spadine)
2020 *Foundation for the Contemporary Arts Emergency Grants COVID-19 Fund*, Foundation for the Contemporary Arts. \$2,000 grant to artists who have had performances or exhibitions canceled or postponed because of the pandemic.
2020 *Resident Artist Fellowship*, PlySpace. \$3,000 stipend covering travel, living, and studio space as well as the material budget for public programming and a community collaboration through the Ball State University School of Art. (with P. Spadine)
2019 *Artist Opportunity Fellowship*, Vermont Studio Center. Merit-based award covering the full cost of the studio residency program.
2019 *Oral History and Objects*, SU-CASA Artist in Residence, The New York City Council, the New York City Department for the Aging, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Queens Council on the Arts. \$4,500 plus \$1,000 supply stipend.
2016 *Textures in Textiles*, SU-CASA Artist in Residence, The New York City Council, the New York City Department for the Aging, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and Queens Council on the Arts. \$4,500 plus \$1,000 supply stipend.

PRESS / PUBLICATIONS

- Valerie Skakun, *SCOBY*, Asplenia Press, Ridgewood, NY, October 2021.
Jensen, Sarah. "[Muncie's First Thursday Gallery Goes Virtual During Pandemic.](#)" *Ball State Daily*, 3 June 2020
Fang, Benjamin. "[Maspeth Seniors Unveil Collaborative Art Banner.](#)" *Queens Ledger*, 24 May 2016
Fang, Benjamin. "[Local Artist Wins Grant to Teach Seniors about Textiles.](#)" *Queens Ledger*, 23 February 2016
Valerie Skakun, *MUTATIONS*, Ridgewood, NY, August 2015.
Valerie Skakun, interview by Patrick James Lynch, *MyNY: Episode 12*, podcast audio, October 31, 2011.
Ohad Meromi, Pam Lins, Patterson Beckwith, eds. *This is Not an Exit: Sculpture for the Camera*, (New York, 2007), 8-9.
Patterson Beckwith, ed. *90 Ludlow Show Organized by Patterson Beckwith*, (New York, April 28, 2007) 6-7.

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

VALERINA GALLERINA + GREG, Ridgewood, NY

Co-Founder, Co-Curator, July 2014—November 2018

- Co-run an art gallery in the basement of our apartment in Queens. Co-Founded with Rina Goldfield and the soon-after partnership with Greg Skiano, all artworks submitted are accepted and exhibited as part of an egalitarian philosophy.
- Send out open calls and create a space for artists to show works to an accepting audience. Each show has multiple participating artists. Over 200 artists from various cities and countries participated in shows.
- Establish and distribute Emerging Artist's Fund, a monetary award given to a randomly chosen artist participating in each show.

<http://valerinagallerinaplusgreg.tumblr.com>

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, Brooklyn, NY

Director, Curator, July 2016—December 2016

- Future Development was a space curated by Valerie Skakun in her former studio in Greenpoint, under the basement stairs of an industrial building; it subsisted as an experimental space for emerging artists to exhibit new work from the moment the building was sold, after decades of artists occupying the building and sharing the space with their community, until we were kicked out of the building by the developers.

<http://futuredevelopmentspace.tumblr.com>

THE FREEDOM GARDEN, Brooklyn, NY

Artist-in-residence, October 2011—September 2013

- Use backyard as art studio to create dyed tapestries and various art works installed in the basement music and art venue.
- Participate in group meetings concerning curating for music shows and art openings.
- Hand dye and screen-print t-shirts to sell as \$7 merchandise. Money from sales was evenly distributed to participating artists in shows.

TEACHING

STUDIO IN A SCHOOL, New York, NY

Teaching Artist, September 2016—Present

- Attend artist training sessions at Manhattan headquarters covering a variety of materials, methods, and age groups.
- Communicate extensively with the program coordinators for various programs.
- Attend planning meetings with school principal and teachers to tailor units and materials loosely based upon classroom curriculum.
- Design detailed lesson plans to foster the creative and intellectual development of New York City youth.
- Order supplies within outlined project budget.
- Teach art to inner-city public-school students.

USDAN SUMMER CAMP FOR THE ARTS, Wheatley Heights, NY

Lead Teacher in Sculpture, May 2017—September 2017

- Design detailed lesson plans for a variety of sculpture materials including a compilation of professional artist references for each material. Materials include cardboard, metal armature wire, plaster gauze, chicken wire, papier-mâché, paper clay, casting plaster, clay, and foam.
- Communicate with the Art Chair regarding logistics of classroom management, choice-based lessons, alternative materials for students with different tactile facilities, and logistics in installing large-scale collaborative sculptures for the gala.
- Attend workshops on the use of various art materials as well as leading choice-based classrooms.
- Order supplies within program budget.
- Teach sculpture to students 8-16 years of age.

BEAM CENTER, Brooklyn, NY

Instructor, January 2017—July 2017

- Collaborate with magnet coordinators and teachers on experimental problem-solving units based upon classroom curriculum.
- Design detailed lesson plans that help young people build their character and self-esteem, develop skills that are useful in today's workplace, and prepare for a life of continual learning and meaningful action.
- Build prototypes and prepare materials for each lesson within the unit.
- Order supplies within project budget.
- Teach unit to inner-city public-school students.

SUNNYSIDE STRING SCHOOL, Sunnyside, NY

Head Art Teacher, January 2015—August 2016

- Teach after-school art class to children ages 3—9.
- Design detailed lesson plans for exploring the various possibilities and experimenting with different materials and methods in the practice of art making. Projects include collage, dioramas, drawing, dyeing, illustrated books, painting, papier-mâché, printmaking, resists, and sculpture. Foster the students speaking aloud about their works to the class when the projects are completed.
- Communicate to the director the lesson plans and what supplies to order.
- Relay to the director and other teachers when there is a concern with a student.

FRIENDS OF VAN CORDLANDT PARK: ART IN THE PARK, Bronx, NY

Head Art Teacher, May 2015—October 2015

- Organize an art program funded by The Bronx Council on the Arts.
- Teach a diversity of art forms integrating materials found in Van Cortlandt Park to children 6—12.
- Plan detailed lesson plans for introducing a range of techniques while utilizing immediate surroundings in the practice of art making. Projects include watercolors, printmaking, tie-dyeing, sculpture, collage, cyanotypes, and rubbings.

VISITING ARTIST INSTRUCTOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY, Muncie, IN. *PlySpace Fellow, community partner with 4D students at the School of Art. Developed and co-taught a 9-week unit focusing on collaboration and experimentation in sculpture and sound. February – April 2020. (with P. Spadine)*

BEAM CENTER, Brooklyn, NY. *Visiting Artist and Instructor, Summer Day Program, August 2016, July 2018.*

THE NEW SCHOOL, New York, NY. *Guest Instructor, Senior Seminar, May 2016.*

TEACHING ASSISTANT

2019 Alexandro Segade, *Professional Experience, Hunter College BFA*

2018 Nari Ward, *Sculpture Methods, Hunter College MFA*

VOLUNTEER

THE COOPER UNION, New York, NY

Sculpture Teacher for the Saturday Program, Fall 2009—Spring 2010

- Prepare detailed lesson plans, including method/material time-span, artists to cover, and exhibitions to attend.
- Demonstrate techniques for building from cardboard, papier-mâché, plaster, clay, wire, and plastic.
- Facilitate critique of finished works.
- Supervise field trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Create art history packets and accompanying slide shows. Screen movies relating to subject discussed in class.

BOARDS

HUNTER COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, New York, NY

Board Member at Large, Graduate Student Association, January 2017—August 2017.

- Represent the MFA students on the Graduate Student Board at Hunter College.
- Communicate with the MFA students to advocate for their wants and needs to the administration of Hunter College.
- Vote on delegating budgets for outlined project proposals.

EXPERIENCE

APRIL MAY JUNE, Brooklyn, NY

Owner, Designer, May 2010—Present

- Operate and manage a small hand-dyed fabric company based in New York.
 - Train and oversee my assistants with completing tasks in which require extreme attention to detail and have pressing deadlines. April May June's textile products are designed and fabricated in my Brooklyn studio. Products include hand dyed clothing and accessories, and hand dyed houseware. We accept custom dye orders from clients and collaborate with multiple New York artists.
- www.aprilmayjuneskakun.com

BARNABY FURNAS STUDIO, New York, NY

Artist's Assistant, May 2015—March 2018

- Assist in the preparation and production of artworks and upkeep of the studio.
- Aid in developing and finalizing multiple large-scale paintings for September 2015 solo show, *First Morning*, and February 2018 solo show, *Frontier Ballads*, at Marianne Boesky Gallery's Chelsea location.
- Complete and communicate with Barnaby on a daily basis regarding the tasks executed on a very tight scheduled check-list.
- Mask off specific areas of paintings with tape and very precisely cut detailed shapes off the tape with an X-Acto blade.
- Mix pigments and binders to exact ratios requested. Test on canvas to show dried results.
- Apply gesso in a very stylized and textured manner to the raw stretched canvas.
- Keep inventory of supplies, and re-order when necessary.

EXOVAULT, Brooklyn, NY

Assembler, Metal Worker, Office and Production Assistant, July 2009—June 2014

- Operate CNC (Computerized Numerical Control) milling machine to create brass and aluminum cases.
- Sand, patina, and polish metal. Sand, stain, and seal various woods and composites to fit into grooves on the posterior of the case.
- Assemble and inspect iphone cases.
- Prepare orders for shipping (print orders, shipping labels, packing slips, business cards, and product boxes with company logo).
- Keep inventory of orders placed, orders shipped, and number of cases in stock.
- Train new employees in production and safety measures.

PIOTR UKLANSKI STUDIO, Brooklyn, NY

Textile Production Assistant, July 2010—February 2011

- Fly to Paris one week before the exhibition opening to work with Christian Scheidemann on a painting severely damaged during shipping.
- Design and make hundreds of tie-dye paintings for Uklanski's show *Discharge!* at Gagosian Gallery.
- Create color boards using three qualities of cotton and testing the color results of various dyes and bleaches.
- Train assistants in dye production, including safety and technical aspects.
- Keep inventory of tie-dyes created, each with a number, picture, and description of how it was made.
- Keep inventory of pigments and chemicals. Place orders for new materials to arrive before stock materials run out.

ANNA CONWAY STUDIO, Brooklyn, NY

Artist's Assistant, September 2008—May 2009

- Assist with under painting of large-scale panel oil painting of the Astrodome interior.
- Collect and sort relevant fabrics for Ms. Conway's leash company, Found My Animal, for the collars.
- Organize press packets with mission statement, product sample, press release and CD.

JACKIE BROOKNER STUDIO, New York, NY

Artist's Assistant, January 2007—December 2007

- Build scale models for Ms. Brookner's sculpture, *Urban Rain*.
- Research Norway's waterways, plant life, and bird populations in preparation for park commission.
- Maintain BioSculptures (transplant moss, ferns, algae, feed fish in water).
- Fabricate boxes for shipping and storage of sculptures.