

# MFA Brown Art Who We Are

*By Carlos Rosales-Silva*

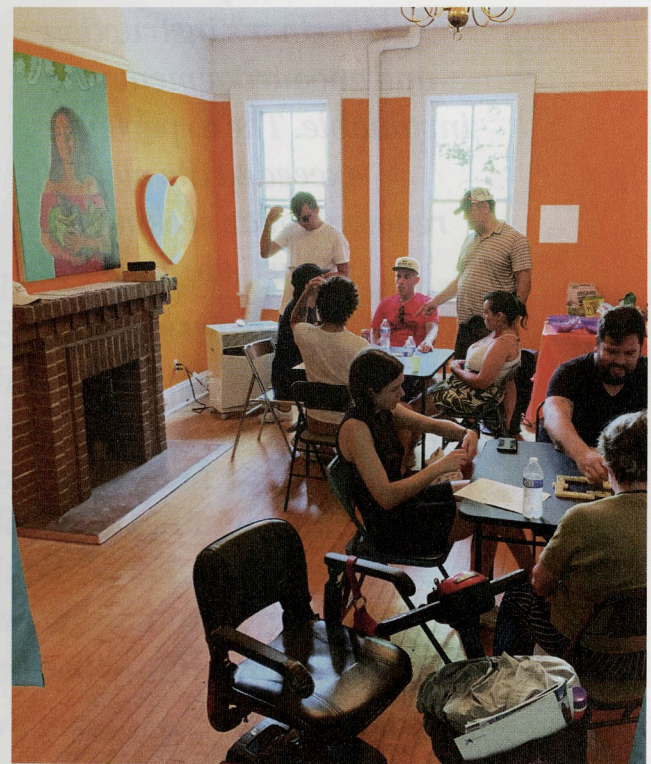
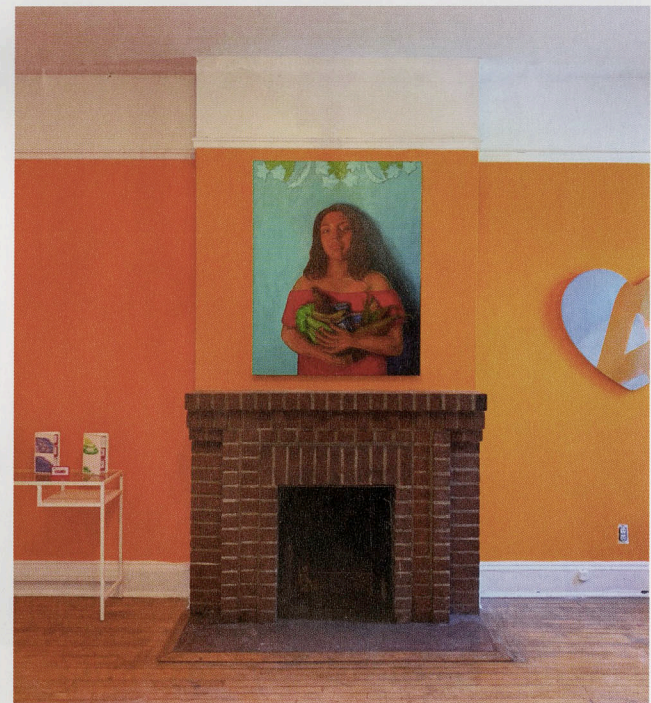
**M**FA Brown Art is an anti-institution that focuses on filling gaps that schools and nonprofit arts institutions overlook or antagonize. We directly fund and support Black, Brown and Queer artists and practitioners without tokenizing or expecting free labor.

MFA Brown Art began as a provocation. As a first-generation child of immigrants, the decision to make art professionally was a concern for my family, and with good reason. The arts, as we know them in this country, are not set up to consistently support even the most privileged of artists. The baseline investment required for education, studio, research and materials—along with the commitment of time to practice—leaves professional art-making in an exclusionary realm often overpopulated by the wealthy. This exclusion extends from curatorial departments to what is being archived as part of the record of American art. These facts result in an often inequitably challenging experience for Black and Brown artists during their time in residence while attempting terminal degrees in the arts field.

MFA Brown Art was an attempt to address the issues my peers and I were experiencing, using the access I had to an accredited and respected institution. [Rosales-Silva is pursuing an MFA at SVA.] Our program offered targeted workshops led by Black and Brown artists and practitioners that focused on archiving, the capitalist politics of institutional language

in the arts, and community-building through game playing. All collaborators were paid and offered access to institutional credentials.

We encouraged everyone to list their involvement on their CVs as part of a funded institutional project. We published three short-run artist books and even set up a micro research award. While most aspects were funded out of pocket, I tried to imagine what social and professional capital could be useful to participants through our institutional adjacency. One of our projects was a community-building workshop where two artists, Daniel Almeida and Maximilian Julia, hosted an event called “Pieza,” where they taught Caribbean dominoes to visitors throughout the day. “Pieza was a domino marathon aimed to bring a group of Latin American artists together,” explains Almeida. “The word ‘pieza’ is the Spanish equivalent of ‘piece.’ It is also used to denote a courteous dance between two, a bedroom, an artwork and a single tile on a set of dominoes. Even though the origins of dominoes lie far beyond the Americas, the game has come to traditionally serve as a ‘refuge’ of shared leisure where friends and family gather around a table to throw some bones [tiles]. These gatherings usually occur in backyards and plazas. ‘Pieza’ draws from this context to re-create a space of free assembly where mixed opinions and political exchanges take place.”



MFA Brown Art installation on Governors Island featuring artwork by Josh Rios, Marisol Ruiz and Juan Bravo.