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A Place for Literary Pirates

WRITTEN BY [OLIVER MORRISON](#) ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2014. POSTED IN [ARTS OUR TOWN](#), [ARTS OUR TOWN DOWNTOWN](#), [ARTS WEST SIDE SPIRIT](#).

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Artist Beatrice Glow has created a free library on a boat in the Hudson River

New York artist Beatrice Glow is building shelves and stacking books on a historic boat along the Hudson River for her latest art installation: a floating library.

While many of the 150 people that can fit on the boat may show up in order to page through old volumes or feel the breeze off the water, they may also be in for a surprise. Although Glow wants boaters and bibliophiles to come, her ultimate goal is more subversive: to create a community of intellectual pirates.

The problem for the millennial generation, she thinks, is that all her contemporaries have ever known is the constant drumbeat of wars and rising global temperatures. As a result they have become inured, hopeless and apathetic, to the point that they stare down at their screens and are quicker to answer a text than engage with someone in front of them, Glow said.

So instead of asking for money for passage onto her ship, “the fee that I’m charging to get on board is turn off your phones.”

“We had a joke that I should wear a sequin parrot on my shoulder,” said Glow, who will be counting and greeting people as they board. “It’s based on pirate utopias and mini-societies that have evaded living on the grid.”

The floating library is being staged on an 81-year-old boat called the Lilac that used to take supplies out to lighthouses. The Lilac is one of only three of its kind still around and it has seen many lives, including a retrofit for World War II, before finally being decommissioned and turned into a floating museum under refurbishment. Glow drew inspiration from the repurposed spaces of South American artists, where she spent several years after graduating from NYU.

“[The museum] is fixing the mechanical issue of an 81 year-old ship,” said Glow. “And the floating library is proposing to deal with a parallel of fixing socio-cultural issues.”



Visit the Floating Library

Lilac Museum Steamship | Hudson River Park’s Pier 25, New York City

September 6, 2014-October 3, 2014

Open Wed-Sun; Hours vary, see schedule online at www.floatinglibrary.org

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It’s an ephemeral project opening on Sept. 6, which after a month at Pier 25 just north of Stuyvesant High School, will be broken back down on Oct. 4 and the books donated. But Glow sees this as an advantage. Unlike the institutions on land that have to persist for long periods, the short life of the floating library will give people permission to engage in ways they wouldn’t otherwise.

So she has collaborated with a number of artists over months of coffee meetings to create workshops inside the boat’s cabins.

“We’re one of the performers of her performance piece,” said Alexander Campos, executive director of the Center for Book Arts who will lead workshops and forums on the boat. “We’re an item or component in her piece, a prop if you will.”

The main attraction is the silent library on the top deck, where readers will be asked to stay quiet as the open sky and the open book compete with the sounds of the Hudson for their attention. Passengers will then be able to indulge the spirit of DIY-“maker” culture through bookbinding and modular furniture workshops.

Indeed, most of the project will be constructed on the boat and then taught to participants in workshops: the furniture and shelves on the library deck will be made from just 30 donated wood pallets, each of which can be assembled and reassembled, shifting in form as needed. Glow grew up along California’s fault lines so she has a deep appreciation for structures built on a fluid foundation.

Participants can dangle their feet on a swing that was made from the pages of a chapter in Moby Dick by the artist Amanda Thackray. By literally turning the pages of Moby Dick into rope, people will be able to see that the physical parts of boats such as ropes have always been imbued with the magic of literature.

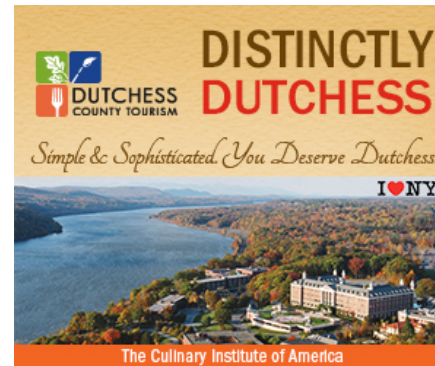
Then participants can immerse themselves in a cabin full of pulsing electronic music from six artists who created music inspired by works of literature.

Or they can attend the workshop of Glow’s mentor, the Bronx artist Nicolás Dumit Estévez, and apply dark eye shadow and make sandwiches from French cherry jelly, natural peanut butter and “dense, healthy” bread from Zabar’s.


“The full title is ‘Talking life and art while applying eye shadow and spreading PB+J on bread,’ so it’s a long title,” said Estevez, of his performance piece scheduled for Sept. 27. He wants to explore people’s associations with these objects, such as when of his aunt hit him for rummaging through her expensive vanity, and in part because he wants to try looking like a raccoon and give others permission to do the same.

Instead of a library full of academics with their heads down, Glow hopes to produce daydreamers whose eyes drift up. The floating library is what a library would look like if it was built by and for artists rather than by and for academics: under the open sky and over the undulating waves, books are not problems to be solved but inspirations to be dreamed up.

“This is an in-between space between art and life, water and land,” said Glow’s mentor Estevez. “You can sort of dream things, imagine things and also bring them to fruition.”



Retail Workers Need More Hours To Survive



**Stuart Appelbaum, President
Retail, Wholesale and
Department Store Union**

In New York City and throughout the country, the inequality gap continues to widen and working people are being left behind. Retail workers, in particular, continue to be underpaid with inadequate part-time hours and unpredictable scheduling.

The real problem is that the retail industry has shifted away from stable jobs towards part-time, on-call work that denies employees the opportunity to work the amount of hours that they need to earn enough to support themselves and their families.

When workers are under-scheduled and their hours are subject to change on a moment's notice, they have no certainty as to how they'll survive. Part-time work has become the new norm, but people still have full-time families and full-time responsibilities.

Take Melody Pabon for example. She is a mom, a full-time student and a cashier at Zara. Her manager frequently sends her home early, which cuts back even more on her hours and shaves money off her paycheck. Due to the low wages and insufficient hours she received at Zara, Melody had to pull her son Mason out of daycare because she couldn't afford it.

In order to reduce growing work-hours uncertainty in our economy, we must update the definition of reporting to work to reflect today's employment practices.

Currently, the reporting pay law is not enforced in New York State. In 2012, 73 percent of retail workers said they were paid for a full four hours when sent home early. Employers do not adhere to this state law, nor are workers made aware of their right to four hours of pay should their shift end early. From childcare to transportation, the cost of reporting to work can run high in relation to daily earned income. Working New Yorkers need stronger reporting pay law enforcement so they are paid for the time to which they are entitled by law.


Additionally, workers no longer report to work in person. Instead, more and more companies are requesting that workers call their manager a few hours before their shift in order to know if they are scheduled for work or not.

Employers contend that this practice allows them to respond to customer traffic and sales, yet it leaves workers in the lurch when the shift they were counting on gets cancelled at the last minute. The time they spend waiting to hear about their on-call shift is time they could have spent working at a second job, taking care of their family, or attending school. In reality, the time on-call workers spend waiting for notification must be classified as reporting to work.

The bottom line is that even as wages go up, part-time workers cannot provide for their families without adequate, stable, and predictable hours. If we want to make sure that working families are able to support themselves, we need to support them in building a collective voice to address all of their concerns in the workplace, including the hours they work. Wage increases and other workplace improvements are never guaranteed without a contract. Collective bargaining is the only vehicle for workers to democratically decide how to build family-sustaining jobs.

What would truly make a difference in retail and in other low-wage industries would be to provide workers with livable hours and regular schedules that their families can rely on – and a union contract which guarantees the gains they have made can't be taken away. Collective bargaining—and fairness for workers who seek it—has always been and will continue to be the single most important means for creating jobs that can build better lives and stronger communities.

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