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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2, 2022

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harDCore: past/present/punk

SPRING/BREAK Art Show LA
February 16 – 20, 2022

Photographs by Leslie Clague, Cynthia Connolly, and Farrah Skeiky

Transformer is honored to be participating as a Special Project at the SPRING/BREAK LA art show with *harDCore: past/present/punk* curated by Transformer's Executive & Artistic Director, Victoria Reis.

Featuring many never before printed or exhibited black & white photographs by artist Leslie Clague, co-author of *Banned in DC* with artist Cynthia Connolly, in tandem with works by Farrah Skeiky, this special exhibition presented as part of Transformer's 20th anniversary celebrates the people who shaped Washington, DC's punk scene – a vibrant, alternative community that embraces a DIY ethos – and highlights those who continue to evolve harDCore as a provocative and proactive art form and culture.



Transformer's presentation of *harDCore: past/present/punk* portrays the active participants in the Washington, DC punk scene's early 80s founding, to its present community. Defying the hearsay of punk being a white male centered community, the three women photographers in this exhibition have been at the center of this musical scene spanning several generations. Their photography captures the energy and spirit of an evolving musical genre that is often considered heretical, belying the hearsay that punk is anything close to dead. Never before seen or exhibited photography of harDCore founders such as Minor Threat and Bad Brains will be presented in dialogue with photography of more recent bands such as Homosuperior and Priests.

To purchase *harDCore* artworks, visit: <https://flatfile.transformerdc.org/collections/hardcore-past-present-punk>

MEET THE ARTISTS: Cynthia Connolly & Farrah Skeiky will be in person at Transformer's SPRING/BREAK LA booth on February 16 & 17, 2022.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS & CURATOR:

Leslie Clague studied graphic design and photography at American University in Washington DC and illustration at Parsons School of Design in NYC. She documented the DC punk scene in photos and co-produced the 1988 book *Banned in D.C.* Moving to Pittsburgh, Leslie studied sculpture and Installation at Carnegie Mellon University and started organizing art events/happenings. Relocating to Seattle WA, she became a member of Soil Artists Collective, then a co-owner of Project 416 arts space; founded the alternative arts newsletter *Redheaded Stepchild* and later joined the Fuzzy Engine gallery as a participating artist and curator. Back in Pittsburgh, Leslie worked at the Andy Warhol Museum as an artist-educator, creating community programming and organizing events. then pivoted to community work in a small nonprofit. She divides her time between art and photography and working as a community advocate.

Cynthia Connolly is a photographer, artist and curator from Washington, DC. Connolly grew up in a community of musicians and artists who booked their own performances and produced and manufactured their own vinyl records. Her art and curating are inspired by those with the energy and drive to create on their own and who are focused yet

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selfless in their pursuits. Connolly's philosophy is that "nothing is too difficult to accomplish; if you have a great idea, nothing should stop you from making your idea a reality." Initially organizing her own exhibitions in abandoned buildings, cafes, museums, bars, and backyards, Connolly's artwork has since been exhibited in multiple independent cultural spaces, galleries and museums, and is in many private collections (including those of her artistic peers such as Michael Stipe, Nick Hornby, Gary Hustwit and Ian Mackaye), as well as the The J. Paul Getty Museum, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Smithsonian Museum of American History, American University Museum at the Katzen, among others. The recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts grants for her projects, she has been curator for Arlington County, Virginia for over a decade and continues to search the world both as curator and artist to connect disparate places, people and things.

Farrah Skeiky is an Arab American photographer, musician, creative director, and writer based in Washington, DC. Her work celebrates those who make and do in their element, subcultures and underrepresented communities. Raised in Seattle and later in the DC suburbs, Skeiky has been immersed in two regions known for significant contributions to underground music that have informed her work. She began photographing live music in 2008, focusing primarily on punk, DIY, and drag communities. Skeiky highlights race and gender inclusion within these groups and examines how transience works for and against them in an ever-changing city. Skeiky has been published in The Washington Post, The Guardian, National Geographic, Rolling Stone, Kerrang, NPR, AV Club, NYMag, Vanity Fair, PDN, and more. In 2020, Skeiky self-published a photo book *called Present Tense: DC Punk and DIY Right Now*. An exhibition of the same name was presented at Transformer's 17th Annual DC Solo Artist Exhibition in Jan/Feb 2020 – Skeiky's first solo exhibition.

Victoria Reis is a curator and arts organizer who has been actively supporting contemporary visual artists and arts organizations within local, national, and international contexts since 1991. In 2002, Reis co-founded Transformer, an internationally recognized non-profit visual arts organization based in Washington, DC. Since 2006, Reis has been leading Transformer as its Executive & Artistic Director, curating and presenting substantial exhibitions and programs in support of emerging artists, and new & best practices in contemporary visual art. Reis has established comprehensive partnerships & collaborations with an extensive range of international cultural, educational and diplomatic organizations and institutions, and has launched and advanced the careers of several hundred artists. In May 2017, Reis expanded Transformer's programming to include *Siren Arts*, an Asbury Park, NJ based summer residency program for emerging visual artists working within the performance art discipline. Reis is a Founding Member of Common Field, a national network of art spaces and artist-led initiatives. She has been a member of ArtTable since 2000. In 2018, she joined the Board of Directors of Monmouth Arts, supporting artists and arts organizations throughout Monmouth County, NJ.

Exhibition Hours: Visit SPRING/BREAK Art Show website for details: <https://www.springbreakartshow.com/>

Image Credits: (Top right, clockwise): Cynthia Connolly, *Ian MacKaye (v) getting his head shaved at the Dischord House, 1982*; Cynthia Connolly, *Jeff Nelson (d) in the office at Dischord House, 1982*; Cynthia Connolly, *Brian Baker (g) in the Minor Threat van on Western Avenue near Mazza Galerie, Washington, D.C., 1982*; Cynthia Connolly, *Lyle Preslar (g) in the Minor Threat practice space, basement, Dischord House, 1982*; Leslie Clague, *H.R., Bad Brains, at 9:30 Club, April 29, 1982*; Farrah Skeiky, *ONJ, 2016*.

t r a n s f o r m e r is a Washington, DC based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered, non-profit visual arts organization. Founded in June 2002 by artists & arts organizers, Transformer's mission is to connect, elevate, and serve a diversity of emerging artists and arts leaders. We develop innovative, multi-faceted exhibition and program platforms, both independently and through global partnerships, to present artists' evolving ideas and work, advance new and best visual arts practices, and engage audiences with emerging contemporary art. Transformer is committed to diversity, professional excellence, artist equity, open dialogue, expansive cultural exchange, and freedom of artistic expression.

t r a n s f o r m e r's 2021/22 Exhibition Series and programs are supported by: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The CrossCurrents Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, The National Endowment for the Arts Art Works, The Robert Lehman Foundation, The Sachiko Kuno Foundation, Truist Foundation, and our Visionary Leaders Circle – a growing group of individual donors & corporate sponsors.