COMMON FIELD

PART I

FOUNDATIONS

GOVERNANCE

THROUGH SUNSETTING

BY

SARAH WILLIAMS & JACKIE CLAY

On October 2nd, 2022 in Seattle, at what would be the final Common Field convening-style gathering, “What Now: Towards Artist-Led Movements,” we-as two of the last four remaining Common Field board members-spoke briefly about the work of the past few years, the challenges, and the hopes around the decision to sunset the organization. Anne Focke, an early and long-time Common Field board member, approached Sarah after the remarks and shared her sentiment, that while there is often a lot of contextualizing and discussion with those who decide to start an organization, that it is also important to hear from those making the decision to close it.

We write this as we move through the final stages of sunsetting Common Field—a process that started over a year ago at this point. We joined the board a few months after each other, Jackie in Fall of 2018, and Sarah in early 2019. During this time we navigated many unexpected responsibilities in terms of Governance, but most unexpected was the work of deciding to, and following through with sunsetting.

Something we want to detangle a bit in this reflection is the audit process that was undertaken in 2020 and 2021 and the Public Support Test, which combined, spot lit a confluence of issues that felt impossible to resolve in a generative and accountable way. The audit process, led by Shana Turner and Mandisa Moore-O'Neal, resulted in a roadmap for reorienting and organizational repair work. Some of this work, we came onto the board with some understanding around and with the intention of supporting its evolution, and other information around acute instances of past harm by the organization were new information for us, which catalyzed the need to take serious action.

This work came at a time of major internal shifts within the organization. We had a new interim Executive Director (Sheetal Prajapati), a few recent hires on staff, and a board—now significantly reduced in size and without any original members, as most people cycled off sometime between 2020 and 2022, and we hadn't felt as though we could responsibly add people in the midst of the upheaval. With truly impressive effort on behalf of Sheetal and the staff, and a commitment to a new chapter, Common Field began the necessary work outlined through the audit process, until we were made aware of the organization's inability to meet the Public Support Test assessed by the Internal Revenue Service.[1] The test holds nonprofits to a standard where a portion of their funding must come from the "public" to maintain their nonprofit status.[2]

"THE AUDIT PROCESS [...] RESULTED IN A ROADMAP FOR REORIENTING AND ORGANIZATIONAL REPAIR WORK."

The assumed intention of lawmakers and the IRS is that nonprofits remain beholden to and serve the public; that is, rich companies or individuals could not use nonprofits as tax shelters passing wealth from foundation to foundation, and never move dollars into the broader economy for collective good. Because Common Field had emerged and evolved as a project of the the Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts-a private, nonoperating foundation-most (approximately 90%) of the funding throughout the first five years of the organization's life has come from the Foundation, leaving the organization in an extremely challenging, if not impossible, situation in terms of meeting the Public Support Test.

REFERENCES

1. **Public support holds nonprofits to a standard where approximately one third of their funding needs to come from public interests (individuals - but under XX amount, government funding, etc…) to maintain their nonprofit status. The assumed intention of this guideline is that nonprofits remain beholden, or at least supported by the taxpayers they serve (a nonprofit being at its most baseline a tax categorization for a business). Nonprofits must reach this threshold of a cumulative one third public support within their fifth year of operation**

2. **Which is important for the nonprofit to continue to receive funds from individuals, private and public entities, for those donations to continue to be a tax right off with the IRS, and for the nonprofit to avoid some general business taxes.**

We found this out in Fall of the organization's 4th year in operation. This left us less than 15 months to raise large amounts of public funds to attempt to meet a minimum threshold, or take significantly less that was available from The Warhol Foundation in Year 5-cutting programs and staff significantly and abruptly in 2022.

We were faced with the choice to attempt to reconcile this public service issue—meaning raise hundreds of thousands of dollars from individuals and government grants within two years (if the IRS approved an extension); reduce the size and scale of the organization significantly—reducing staff and pausing programs to fundraise was something that would have conflicted with the plans and repair work outlined in the audit report; or alternatively to sunset the organization in a responsible fashion over the next year. Should we wait for the IRS to do it and likely have to make a series of very abrupt decisions about closing which would have put staff and network members in precarious positions?

What we learned through the audit process and resulting document really came into play here. Common Field had never raised more than $50,000 of public funds in any previous year, and the handful of us with a responsibility to the governance of the organization were not in a position to raise that amount of money in that amount of time either. As we discussed and strategized around it, the realities of asking individuals to support Common Field financially—an organization that has been perceived as monied and "heavily tilted toward [...] larger, resourced, well-known institutions and nonprofits,"[3] or recruiting board members with extensive fundraising experience—felt somewhere between extremely challenging and unethical, given the level of complex and intersecting challenges the organization faced.

From there, we, as the board with Sheetal, made the decision that the most responsible and accountable way forward was to conscientiously sunset the organization throughout the course of the next year (2022). This allowed us to continue to plan the Seattle convening and follow through on our commitments to the organizers and community there; we were able to give the staff nearly a year-long timeline to plan for the eventual closing and significant severance package; and finally, to be able to really learn through and document the process as a final service in transition.

REFERENCES

3. **Quoted from the Audit Report**

As we reflected on this in advance of the Seattle Convening, it felt like somewhat of a full circle moment. Of the convenings we had attended over the years, one of the presentations that most resonated with both of us, was a conversation between Deana Haggag and Elissa Moorhead in Los Angeles titled “Sunsetting as Praxis.” The discussion posed the questions: Is dying the worst thing that can happen to an arts organization? Why are there so few models of successful closures in the field? What resources could exist to best support a fruitful sunset? And how can practitioners have these conversations in the spirit of success and not shame?

Something that we remain proud of, in the work we have done together as a staff and board over these past few years, is that even in our transition to sunsetting, we were able to hold true to the larger mission of the organization of creating resources for the field. Understanding that even in closing—in all its challenges and discomfort—this is an opportunity to share the work we are doing, bravely and intentionally, as a model.

Another one of the major takeaways from Deana and Elissa’s talk, was that the cycling of organizations can be a productive process, that the ending of one thing, can make space for many new things to grow. Through this learnings project, and our partnering with Los Angeles Contemporary Archive to house Common Field’s archive ongoingly, we are endeavoring to thoughtfully compost the work of Common Field, in hopes that it will nurture, in some way, what is to come next.

With gratitude and appreciation to the Common Field staff—Mars Avila, Kristel Baldoz, Maude Haak-Frendscho, Chris Tyler, and especially Sheetal Prajapati—who have been incredibly thoughtful, steadfast, and integrous in guiding the organization through an audit process and sunsetting decision and rollout in this past two years, we offer this final work with deep personal and collective commitments to the field and a hope for the future. See you there!

-Jackie Clay and Sarah Williams

AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

EPISODE 1 — FOUNDATIONS

KEYWORDS

ARTISTS | FIELD | ORGANIZATION | SPACES | ARTS | NEA | PEOPLE | SUPPORT | NONPROFIT | ORGANIZING | FOUNDING | PROJECT | NETWORK | COLOR

[Music fades in]

00:08 **Narrator 1**
Welcome to *Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field.* This is the organization's final project as it closes in December 2022. In this four-part podcast and writing series, we'll explore what we've learned together through the life, work, and closing of Common Field, a network-centered arts nonprofit organization. You'll also hear about artist-centered work, pushing our field forward today, and our dreams for the future of creative sustainability from network members across the country.

Each podcast episode is paired with commissioned writings from Ikram Lakhdhar, writer and former Common Field staff member, Racing Magpie cofounder Mary Bordeaux, with artist Clementine Bordeaux; Allison Freedman Weisberg and Shaun Leonardo, co-directors of Recess; and Common Field board members, Sarah Williams and Jackie Clay.

You can access these writings, additional episodes in the series, and project materials for *Common Work: Learnings for the Future* on CommonField.org through April 2023. Beyond that, you can access the project in full on our platform partner websites, including Jack Straw Cultural center, and Lohar Projects.

Thank you for listening.

[Music fade out]

01:35 **Narrator 2**
You're listening to Episode One, Foundations. This episode we'll explore the history of artists organizing that inspired Common Field, and the nature and work of founding arts organizations. This episode includes conversations between Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland, and Sheetal Prajapati, Executive Director of Common Field on the history of organizing in the field; and on the work of creating new places and spaces for our creative efforts with James McAnally, co-founder and former board member of Common Field and artistic director of counterpublic in St. Louis, Missouri, with Anaïs Duplan, writer and cofounder of the Center for AfroFuturist Studies in Iowa City, Iowa.

And now Roberto and Sheetal.

[Music transition]

02:31 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Roberto, it's so nice to be in conversation with you. I'm Sheetal. Right now I'm the Executive Director of Common Field. But, Roberto, we've known each other for quite some time, right?

02:43 **Roberto Bedoya**
Yes. I don't know how long ago, 15, 20 years ago…

02:48 **Sheetal Prajapati**
15, 20 years ago, we were in graduate school together at the School of the Art Institute. So I'd love it if you could just tell us a little bit about you and how you define the work that you do in our field.

03:00 **Roberto Bedoya**
I've been in the field, good 40 plus years always working in nonprofit artist-centered organizations. I've had many different sorts of hats I've worn. I started off as an artist as well, writing here in the Bay Area. I had a job with CETA, (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) which is important to know that it was a jobs program that also fed the development of the alternative space movement of the 70's. From there, I went to Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco.

So then went to New York, tried to be an artist, came back to California, ran Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions for a moment, an alternative space. Then ultimately at the Getty Research Institute doing cultural programming.

When I was in San Francisco, I was at Intersection for the Arts, and became a board member of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO). I raised that point because I think it was a network of alternative spaces. It was an effort to organize artists doing work that was about empowering talent and empowering communities, which I think kind of speaks to my own motivations.

04:31 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Yeah. I think that's a good segue into talking about going back to the roots of artists organizing and the kind of the social and political environments that led to those moments and this kind of work.

04:46 **Roberto Bedoya**
I'll always see artists organizing themselves in the context of the empowerment movements of The 60's and 70's; People of color, gays and lesbians, queer artists, all kind of committed to an ethos of self-determination and butting up against the powers that be.

So in the artist community it was like, let's start these not DIY nonprofit art spaces. They were doing work that was not so tied to the market. It was the beginning of installation work, performance art, all these kinds of cultural practices that were not embraced by the museum world or the marketplace. That was my scene, the alternative art world. I was always very mindful of what it was, what were the conditions for artists of color, at this moment in time?

05:52 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Can you talk a little bit about not just the form of the work, you know, ephemeral, performative work that didn't really fit into collection-based practice, but the content. What were artists making work about at that time, that some ways necessitated a space outside of these spaces?

06:09 **Roberto Bedoya**
Sure, it goes back to my characterization of the Emancipation Movement.

God bless artists, and that DIY spirit, they started to make their own spaces. Believe it or not, there was a moment in time when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was supportive of this work through the SEEDArts program, and they'd support these emerging spaces, these delicate spaces, these artist-centered organizations.

07:00 **Sheetal Prajapati**
The work of creating a space that was open enough to welcome all of those perspectives, also, quite important for certain groups of artists that you've identified. I would love it if you could just take a minute to share a little bit about what your role was at NAAO and what you did there. And then talk a little bit more about that advocacy piece that NAAO was so critically a part of in the 80's, around the culture wars.

07:29 **Roberto Bedoya**
Sure. I was on the board of NAAO (National Association of Artists' Organizations), for many years. I was thinking earlier about, you know, the NEA believed in emerging art forms. They had a division called InterArts, which was sort of performance art, but also, you know, dance. All these organizations came together and were members of the National Association of Artists' Organizations. The NEA supported NAAO, mainly through its role as a convener. So we would have national conferences that were always fun and really energetic.

We were based in Washington, DC. When the cultural wars started to happen, it was artists that were part of my membership that were being attacked by Jesse Helms, in the far right for their content. They filed a lawsuit because they were denied their fellowships by the chairman at the NEA at that time. They sued to get their money back. And we, the National Association of Artists' Organizations, a network, also joined that lawsuit, mainly arguing that the organization that presented these artists were also being penalized, being denied grants. So there was a chilling effect around a law that Congress had passed called Standards of Decency language, that was part of the criteria that the NEA had to use in their deliberation process. So we challenged that Standards of Decency language. So we spent about 10 years in the courts and went to the Supreme Court and we didn't win the lawsuit, because we had no "standing." And I put that in quotes, meaning that the standards of decency language had never been applied to deny artists or arts organizations their monies. Then the other effect that it had upon the agency was that the government got rid of it's fellowship program.

9:59 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Because you were on the board of NAAO, and also at the helm of it during different periods of its life. For you, as an arts worker, and even thinking about what you do now, for you what was important about NAAO for the field?

10:18 **Roberto Bedoya**
I love the arts. What comes to the foreground is Patti Smith and her line - “outside is the side I take, that's where I wanna be” (sic). So in some ways, I always loved, kind of artists that worked outside of the margin. But it was a movement to find peer support, for experimentation, for discovery, for imagination.

10:47 **Sheetal Prajapati**
You currently work as the Cultural Affairs Manager at the City of Oakland in the context of the city and government. I'm just wondering if you can talk a little bit about why [you are] working in the ways that you're working now like post-NAAO?

11:03 **Roberto Bedoya**
Sure I can tell you a little bit about that. But let me talk a little bit about NAAO. I think when I left, I was just exhausted. But also, what I realized is that, and you probably know this, it was financially very difficult. Because basically, you're trying to organize a poor constituency. My membership dues could not pay what it meant to have an office and staff to do that. The philanthropic support was there for a moment in time, because we were associated with a lawsuit. And then when the lawsuit got resolved, that money just kind of disappeared. [A] kind of weakness that led to the demise of that, or led to the fading away, of that network.

I find myself intellectually sort of thinking about cultural policy, how it's formed, what kind of policy you wanna make, the policy arguments necessary to move a concept forward, the organizing that you had to do. And all sudden, you know, there I was, in government. Government is complicated. It's just, it's very bureaucratic and difficult sometimes.

12:22 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Working in those spaces where you see the most possibility for making these kinds of policy changes?

12:29 **Roberto Bedoya**
Yes, and no. I mean, I think about governance and not government, first of all. So NAAO was a form of governance. I still feel that governance, how does my city organize itself around community cultural development? It's very important. I mean, the thing about cultural policy we need to be mindful of is that culture is fluid, it's always changing and unfolding. So as a government bureaucrat, I need to make sure that my policies don't strangle folk, but actually support folk.

13:10 **Sheetal Prajapati**
Do you have a sense or feeling about impact in relation to scale?

13:15 **Roberto Bedoya**
Sure. We live in a moment, [a new kind of,] localism has a lot of power right now. I'm on the ground. I think about governance, I think about government, I think about democracy a lot. What does democracy look like? I believe in government as a form, if we can imagine it. I'm going to refer to a political philosopher named Chantal Mouffe, and the notion of democracy as a chain of equivalences. How do those equivalences work? That's a homework assignment of democracy.

13:56 **Sheetal Prajapati**
What I was thinking about while you were talking about democracy as a way of moving through something, what do you think the role of the artist is in this support of democracy, participation in democracy?

14:11 **Roberto Bedoya**
Sure, I think an awful lot of civic imagination, what that is. How do we imagine our lives together? And how do we employ song, movement, gestures? All these things that help us think about our lives together. I think one of the challenges of America is this ethos, that of the “I” at, at the expense of the “we.” So individualization is like, “yeah, I'm gonna go out and make my fortune. Yeah, I'm gonna make it in New York.” And it's not to deny the “I” but the “I” exists in the context of a “we” and “us.”

14:58 **Sheetal Prajapati**
You know, I agree with you wholeheartedly. Part of the reason that I even considered coming on to this role at Common Field was because I was starting to think about the potential of actually building collective practice. To me, Common Field seemed, in some ways, like an expression of the ideal.

One of the things that I thought was beautiful about the way Common Field started was that it not only was started by people that were doing work in the field, but its founding board and its board members since then were all practitioners. And, that gave the organization a leadership model that I felt curious about. At the same time, that model didn't allow for the organization to financially sustain itself. So on one hand, this, like, work of collective action was actually happening, but the structure for supporting it just didn't exist. How do we translate collective thought, or collective ideals into actual action?

16:03 **Roberto Bedoya**
A couple of things come to mind. How can we imagine different kinds of networks? What does a network look like if you want to be a network of care? So the language of intersectionality that is kind of closely linked with emancipation movements, demands a different kind of network.

16:26 **Sheetal Prajapati**
I agree with you, Roberto. And I think you brought up another point that's worth reflecting on considering this is a newer moment for many, many artists and administrators of color. You, Roberto, are one of the only examples (Roberto laughing) - I'm not exaggerating - for most of my career, of a person of color, that was in a leadership role that I could actually point to.

16:57 **Roberto Bedoya**
Yeah, there's truth to that. And I understood that.

17:01 **Sheetal Prajapati**
One of the things that I think about a lot, because I am of this moment where I've been able to bring artists of color into the spaces I worked in ways that weren't possible. And, as that is happening, what I've found is that there's still not good infrastructure for supporting those folks, once they get into those spaces. Do you think the proliferation of folks of color, having more visibility across the field and even in the market, will change these systems?

17:33 **Roberto Bedoya**
It's a great question, you tell me what you find out, you know. I worked at the Getty, I loved working at the Getty, they were really good to me. But it's not an organization of color. It's whitespace.

I don't demonize the big guys. I understand that they're different. And so, I look at people of color that are in that field of opera, and symphony, and museum world and, more power to them. How do they figure out their relationships, to the activist community, to race and racism in America?

18:19 **Sheetal Prajapati**
What you're saying really resonates with me, which is that we are in these kind of unique positions of both having opportunities in a way maybe folks like us haven't had before, but also having to do self reflection on where we want to sit in this space. For a long time I was like, "I'm gonna work in museums and try to change that." Then I got to MoMA (The Museum of Modern Art). And I was like, "that's not the work I want to do."

18:45 **Roberto Bedoya**
I'm glad you had a moment like I had a moment at Getty. But you know, it goes back to a driving force - artists. What do artists want? What do artist support systems look like? They want money to do work. They want health care. They want a variety of basic sort of needs. And what is the organizing that needs to kind of advance and support artists? I think about self care.

I want to go back to, if I could imagine a new network, it would be grounded in networks of care, but also networks that prompt civic imagination.

19:29 **Sheetal Prajapati**
There's a lot more visibility around the dialogue of "what does it mean to support an artist in a holistic way?" There's an ecosystem of support that they need in order to not just do their work, but to live and do their work.

19:44 **Roberto Bedoya**
...and trying to figure out, how to animate a social movement of belonging? Belonging is like this big North Star in my career. I've done a lot of work around that. What does that look like? Those are things I've reflected on…

[Music fades in]

20:15 **Narrator 2**
And now, on founding organizations with James and An.

[Music fades out]

20:23 **Anaïs Duplan**
Well, James, my name is Anaïs Duplan, I use he/they pronouns, I am the co-director/ program coordinator of the Center for Afrofuturist Studies (CAS) as well as a Post-Colonial Literature professor at Bennington College. I'm gonna let you introduce yourself, James.

20:46 **James McAnally**
James McAnally, I use he/him pronouns. I am the Executive and Artistic Director of counterpublic, which is a triennial civic exhibition based in St. Louis. For the purpose of this conversation, I'm also a founder of The Luminary, an independent space in St. Louis, and one of the early founding members of Common Field.

21:11 **Anaïs Duplan**
Well, institution building is a pretty specific thing to get into. And I wonder if you could describe when you first became interested in that.

21:22 **James McAnally**
Yeah, a lot of ways I feel like, if I could describe myself as anything, it is kind of an institution builder. Institutional practice would be the closest form of practice that I could identify with at this point. My first experience was in founding The Luminary, which it’s kind of earliest roots were in 2007. I moved to St. Louis, having grown up in Mississippi, and I was a musician and a music writer. In St. Louis, it's a pretty desegregated place, people's studios are in their homes, there aren't that many places to gather, and I fell into it in that way. Just really, like looking to be with other artists caused me to found an organization.

Then from there, it was really about asking questions. I find myself drawn to spaces of lack, or something that is maybe missing, and to think, “What can I do to address that in some kind of way?” I think that that central thread has run throughout everything else that follows.

22:31 **Anaïs Duplan**
I definitely relate to falling into it and it makes me think of when I was first thinking up the CAS program.

Which tells you kind of how little experience I had with fundraising. There is a double edged sword to falling into it, where if I knew how much it was going to take to pull off from the start, I probably wouldn't have done it. Or I would have done it differently. But then also, there was a real benefit to kind of just finding ourselves in the middle of it and needing to find the money, which we did, you know, and it worked out. That starting energy feels like a little bit of ignorance is maybe a good thing. How in the know, did you feel as far as how institutions actually work and how to run them?

23:33 **James McAnally**
I, likewise, had no idea what I was doing (yeah). And it's one of those common questions, “Would you do it again?” And it was an easy answer, “like no way.” There's no way I would do it again. But also I couldn't. There's no way to get back to that founding moment. And I think there is not really a way to explain its emergence in a way that is any kind of model. I'm curious if you experienced this too, where people come to you and ask for help or insight, when they're looking for advice.

24:05 **Anaïs Duplan**
Usually, it is the kind of query I get a lot is from other people who want to start residencies for black and brown artists. Even within the field of like their residency, there's so many deviations. There [are] places that make you pay them and there [are] places that will pay you, and there [are] places where you can bring your kids in places where you can't and… so I just start by making that landscape clear. There's like limitless possibilities for what a residency is. And the fact that like, in my case with the CAS program, [which] lives within Public Space One (PS1), which is an organization that I think by the time that I met them was already 15 years old. I don't think that I would be able to sustain the CAS program if it wasn't already housed within another organization.

25:03 **James McAnally**
Yeah, I mean, I think that, I don't know that anything I do is a model. But like, as far as models go, one in which you can collaborate or be embedded with other people is almost always better. I think that's really like, resonant. It's really a smart strategy that also puts you in dialogue with other people from the beginning.

25:27 **Anaïs Duplan**
Yeah. It also speaks to the nature of PS1 as an organization.

I was the artist, kind of my project. Then by virtue of the scale of what ended up happening, it stopped making sense for it to be my project even. You know, and then it became just kind of part of the landscape of PS1. As you know, in terms of institutional structures, there's a lot of conversations that have to happen as far as like, "Am I an employee? Am I a contractor? Am I an artist? Am I getting paid? Where's the money coming from?" We had to have a lot of conversations about the value structures that were embedded in our institutional structure. The Luminary, was it pretty clear from the beginning how we all should be structured? Or did you have to sort of arrive at that?

26:28 **James McAnally**
Yeah, I mean, I think we made at The Luminary, a pretty early decision, that we needed to be a nonprofit. But early on, it was actually meant to be, create a container that kind of exists outside of any individual. So it was a conscious choice to kind of formalize, maybe like two years in. If you're trying to create something that is long running, that's sort of the form you have to engage with. That's the simple version.

The more complicated answer is that at some point, say 2011, there was a point in which we were a nonprofit, we were a for-profit, and then we were running a publication that we called anti profit, which was almost entirely like operating it through a barter system. So at any given moment, you'd like, look at it, and we're engaging in multiple economic models at the same time because none of them work. None of them were complete, and none of them really represented what we did.

27:30 **Anaïs Duplan**
I'm really struck by that being, like, at least three things at once. Can you talk about the for-profit side of that, and how that differed from a nonprofit?

27:47 **James McAnally**
For profit, for us, it was really, it was a kind of like, an underlying business model. When we started out, again, kind of like operating with what's at hand, we did not have connection to personal money. So it was really like a problem solving question. You know, we started out as both kind of like, an art space and a music space, in its early history. So it was kind of a natural thing to do. It also was what worked, practically.

At some point, it's nonprofit-ness, grant funding, fundraising took over and allowed for the for-profit to kind of just fade away, which was also necessary. It's sort of added up to an organization, but on its own, none of the things could have done that.

28:33 **Anaïs Duplan**
I guess this is kind of going back to something that you said about structuring in such a way that it wasn't dependent on any particular person. Which I feel like in many ways, maybe we're on the other side of that somehow. It's now like, very clear in a concrete way to all of us, that the organization will ideally outlive us all. So like success, what is it, succession? Yeah, and like imagining what we're doing beyond each of us as people has been sort of like a conceptual mountain to climb. It really kind of changes our orientation to what it is that we're doing.

29:19 **James McAnally**
Yeah. I'm curious, kind of jumping back to something you were talking about earlier, What were the phases? Or when did you kind of have to just identify with being “this is my artist practice, and this is an organization?”

29:33 **Anaïs Duplan**
Certainly, like when I left Iowa. The reason I was in Iowa in the first place was for grad school. When we started all this, I was like, “oh, like, I'll just stay in Iowa as long as this project exists”. And then, I think, just at the end of my two years, I just really need to be around people of color, like more of them, more of the time. Then I ended up getting, landing my gig in New York. Then we had to have this conversation around like, okay, if I move all the way to the East Coast, I'm not just like a quick driving distance away, “Do we just stop doing it?” At that time, we were just so blown away by the reception and kind of how well the first two years had gone, that it felt really arbitrary to stop. That was like the first step of imagining the CAS program without my constant presence.

30:32 **James McAnally**
There's all these like individual moments, right? Where you're like, talking about, how do you make it work? Do you have to like, bend your life around this organization? You know, I think it's very hard for a person, or a group of people, who have an idea and found something.

31:04 **Anaïs Duplan**
Yeah, I wonder if you could talk more about counterpublic and you started it. It was like, part of The Luminary before? Now it has spun off to such an extent that you are sort of just at counterpublic. Like did you see that coming at all? Or what led to that?

31:23 **James McAnally**
Yeah, so counterpublic started as a project of The Luminary in 2019. It was meant to be a kind of anti-triennial in a lot of ways. Like, what if you take this model, but instead make it for your neighbors instead of the art worlds? We did it and then it was kind of like to do it again… I remember the co-curator 2019, who's still involved, Katherine Simóne Reynolds. We were like talking about it, like we can't ever do it like that again. It's got to stand on its own. [in it] It just sort of like, needed to be an organization financially, team wise. It was the way to avoid burning everyone out trying to do everything.

So it's been like a multi-year process of trying to like, me step out of The Luminary, hand it off, set up this other organization, which has very different founding scale. But again, it's kind of not repeating the, "let's just make it happen no matter what personal cost or what time."It's kind of one answer to, "No, I wouldn't do it again." That doesn't mean I won't found a thing I just need like, I have different eyes open in terms of what founding something means in a way that can support people more holistically.

32:46 **Anaïs Duplan**
This was as cool as I thought it was gonna be, this conversation (Anaïs laughing)

32:56 **James McAnally**
Yeah, it was great. (Anaïs laughing) It was short, it went so fast.

32:59 **Anaïs Duplan**
Yeah. Yeah, there, there's lots more that I'm curious to ask you about.

33:04 **James McAnally**
We'll find, find our ways.

[Music fades in]

33:14 **Narrator 3**
Thank you for listening to this episode of *Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field*. This project was produced with Chris Tyler and Raquel Du Toit, graphic design by Alexa Smithwrick and copyediting by Nicolay Duque. Jack Straw Cultural Center recorded, edited and produced this podcast series. Common Work: Learnings for the Future from Common Field was developed and curated by Sheetal Prajapati in collaboration with the Common Field team.

33:46 **Narrator 4**
Theme music by Josh Nucci. Common Field would like to thank The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, whose significant and ongoing support of the organization has made this work possible since 2013.

[Music fades out]