

## **Radio Equals**

**February 11, 2017, 3 p.m.**

Conversation between Julian Higuerey Núñez and Rodrigo Marti

Documentation by Yaniya Lee

Radio Equals, initiated by Claude Wittmann in 2014, consists of one-on-one conversations about equality in as egalitarian a way as possible. The hour-long conversations are broadcast live in the gallery on select dates and at [claudewittmann.ca/radio/radio\\_equals\\_TPW.html](http://claudewittmann.ca/radio/radio_equals_TPW.html). They are not recorded; listeners are invited to be present in the gallery during the broadcasts. The conversations are designed as a relay, with each conversation partner inviting the next.

A writer is invited to document each conversation. What follows is documentation by Yaniya Lee.

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### Radio Equals II documentation: Equality through difference

Last week at Gallery TPW, I listened to a live broadcast of Radio Equals. The room was bright and the ceilings high. Sets of felt covered benches lined the walls. Nine people sat around, listening on headphones, as Julian Higuerey Núñez and Rodrigo Marti talked about equality.

They decided this would be an experiment. They would take how they relate to each other as a starting point for considering the question of equality. In a way, they hoped, their conversation would model what equality might be.

Julian and Rodrigo are friends. They have been for a long time. They began by noting the differences and similarities of their situatedness in the world. They are Latin-American-born, Canadian art-men in their mid-30s. Rodrigo is a white passing man. Julian has a slight accent. They grew up middle class and followed academic paths to points of discontent.

They invoked the idea of privilege, a shared experience they felt comfortable speaking from. Privilege, to them, is the basis of so many hierarchies in society. To think about privilege, they talked about class. Any North American myth of meritocracy was shattered for Rodrigo by the conditions of poverty he observed in Mexico. Julian, who was raised comfortably in Venezuela, agreed. They have never seen Latin American extremes of poverty in Canada.

After going over the similarities in their experience, they became more interested in how difference might be the true basis of their relation. Rodrigo appreciates the perspective Julian brings him. Differences, they feel, create a tension in the relationship that requires them to listen

to each other. They decide their differences, more than their similarities, are what could allow them to have a worthwhile conversation about equality.

Sitting in that room, it was hard for me to listen to two men I had never met talk about equality. Listening to a live performance in this way is intimate. It brought my defenses up, and made it difficult for me to let their conversation sink in. Attempting to follow their abstract considerations only made my mind slip to my own experiences of inequality, which have all felt terribly concrete and personal. I was suspicious of their neutrality. If these men indeed believed, as they affirmed, that equality is a foundational value of our time, I was frustrated at the uncomplicated way they approached it as a concept.

When I began writing this, I realized that my focus on their privilege and my marginalization had dulled my ability to hear them clearly. A time lapse gave me precious distance from the closeness of listening. I remembered that we can only ever think-understand-consider-feel from our own positions. There are realities beyond our experience that we can become aware of exclusively in listening. To be given a point of view that is other than our own, to understand a perspective from beyond our own subject position, is a gift that contains the potential for tremendous change.

The poet Audre Lorde stressed the importance of our ability to recognize difference. She wrote: "it is not those differences [of race, age, and sex] between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behaviour and expectation."\*

Early on in the conversation, the two men fretted: Do all our similarities make us unsuitable to discuss equality? I remember looking around at the other people in the room, their bodies composed or relaxed into attentiveness or distraction. In the space of listening, we were all together. What if true equality is a kind of complicated heterogeneity? By examining the ways in which they are not the same, and that they continue to influence one another, Julian and Rodrigo allowed us to sit together, peaceably, in some sort of unity.

\* Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," 1980.

**Radio Equals** is a project initiated by **claude wittmann** in 2014 and which has been given life by about 15 people up until now. Radio Equals aims at being a thread of bodies and minds exploring equality in process and content and it manifests sporadically as one-on-one egalitarian, one-hour long conversations about equality. The conversations take place in intimate settings, such as a sound booth in a performance art festival, a closed kitchen of a gallery, a home or an office and this intimacy is extended to listeners through the intrinsic quality of live radio, be it FM narrowcast and/or FM broadcast and/or live streaming through an internet channel (NAISA, CFRC, CKUT. Wikiradio UQAM, Radio Equals temporary live-streaming site). Radio Equals is not recorded or podcasted.

**Julian Higuerey Núñez** (1983) lives in Toronto.

**Rodrigo Marti** is a Mexican-Canadian artist working primarily in drawing, painting and installation. He has a Bachelor Degree from Concordia University and an MFA in Social Practices from OTIS. His work traces personal, familial and cultural histories in an empirical process of discovery that is constantly negotiating his role, rights and responsibilities as an artist, citizen and an individual. His recent body of work looks at his historical use of imagery and weaves personal mythologies through a drawing diary, assemblages and the making of stage props that mark pseudo-fictional life events. He currently lives and works in Toronto.

**Yaniya Lee** is a Toronto based writer and researcher. In 2016 she curated the program of videos *Labour, Land and Body: geographies of de/colonialism* for Vtape's Curatorial Incubator. From 2012-2015 she hosted the *Art Talks MTL* podcast, a series of long-form interviews with art workers in Montreal. She is an Editorial Advisory member of *C Magazine* and a founding collective member of *MICE Magazine*. Lee is currently an MA candidate at Queen's University where her research draws on the work of Black Studies scholars to reconsider black art histories in Canada.