

**StoryHarvest: Cultivate Community through Participatory  
Arts Practices**

by

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## ABSTRACT

As a storyteller and multimedia artist, I have incorporated participatory models in my arts practice from my videos and teaching to my food performances. In this thesis, I discuss my journey exploring different ways of storytelling by shifting the narrative “point of view” from “I” to “we”. The new “art object” is the process, the participation, and collaboration. In my work, I seek to highlight common elements of everyday life.

My thesis project, StoryHarvest, was a festival to cultivate community through cooking, eating, and storytelling at the Collard City Growers lot, an urban garden in Troy, NY. During StoryHarvest, participants experienced a culmination of the arts practice I developed over the years I have worked on my MFA. I question the traditional experience of art in which someone might only view the original artifact. Does the work allow for “ways of living and models of action,” echoing *Relational Aesthetics*, a term coined by French critic and museum curator Nicolas Bourriaud?

I use food as one of my main materials because it touches everyone. It is the perfect medium to connect all aspects of my work: personal narratives, participatory practices, performance, and sensory experience. I explore how food and art transforms individuals, from the molecular to the community level.

By empowering and teaching neighborhood youth to use media arts to tell their own stories of growing and eating food, I believe I am replacing myself as the intermediary (storyteller). My desire is for the audience to participate and experience the moment while we collaborate as storytellers.