

On collaboration



Visual artists Jamie Nami Kim and Paul Waters discuss collaboration as an ongoing conversation, joyful exchange, and learning experience.

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As told to Jamie Nami Kim and Paul Waters, 1168 words.

Tags: [Art](#), [Collaboration](#), [Inspiration](#).



Paul Waters, *Conversation* oil on cut cotton collage on canvas, 36h x 30w in



Jamie Nami Kim, *Ten Women*, cut paper on board, 37h x 95w in

How does a collaboration begin?

Paul: It starts with a conversation. It needs to be straightforward, open, honest, and it should allow free exchange between what's being talked about.

Jamie: I like it when those kinds of conversations aren't prompted. When it's spontaneous. It's the kind of conversation that feels like it's happening to the people who are in conversation. They are both the recipients and participants of what's being exchanged.

There's a real joy that happens in these kinds of exchanges. So, in our case, we marinated for a long while in the free exchange through conversations for about a year before we actually discussed doing any art work together. Our conversations, in retrospect, were a very important part of our collaborative experience.

Paul: Yes and it's an ongoing conversation. It doesn't have a beginning and doesn't seem to have an end. I feel like that's what happens when you have a longtime collaborator. You say one year; I think it's actually been going on for longer. There's a real mystery in that. Our collaboration has been happening in nonlinear time.

What makes a great collaboration?

Paul: I think that one must do their work to be free of their ego. You have to be comfortable with being vulnerable especially if we are talking about creating expressions. You need to tell your personal story, whatever the story is. I think it's very exciting when you can share your story with somebody who embraces it and

understands it clearly. It's equally exciting when you can listen and embrace someone else's story.

Jamie: A lot of the time in our culture, we often privilege action over feeling and presence. Two or more people come together because they like to create. The questions will go towards an outcome: What are we going to do? What are we going to make? How? It's all very action and outcome driven. What happens if we give more time and energy towards staying in a non-outcome driven state? I'm very appreciative that you and I exercise a lot of patience and curiosity to stay in a present and open state. That wasn't always easy for me to do at times and you helped me a lot to get there.

Paul: You need to seek out the flow and get away from your individual self as much as you can. That's the experience I had with you.

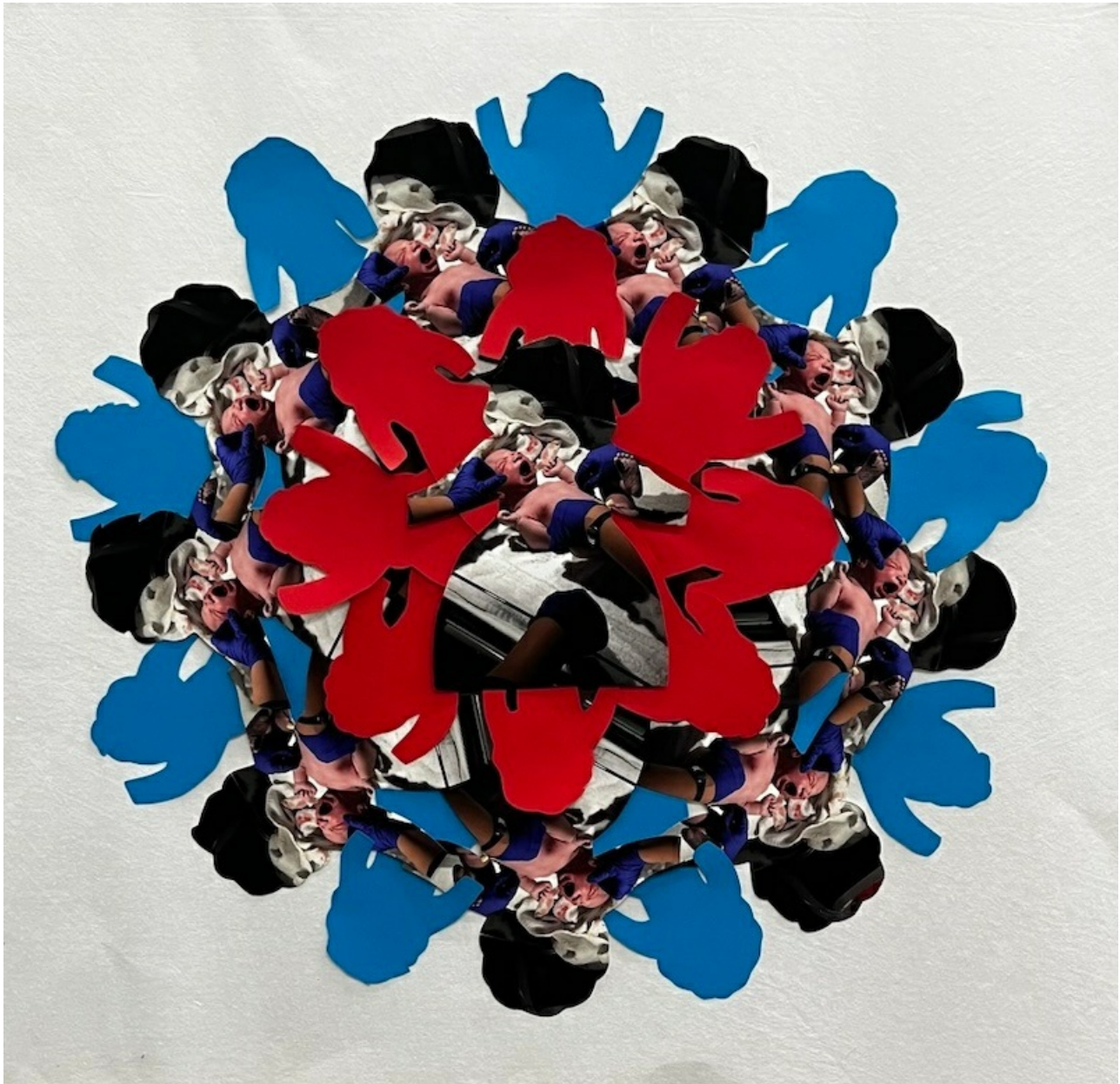
I let go of immediate concerns and enter into dream time. When I can get into that state, the unexpected and surprising always happens.

Jamie: Yes, it was helpful for me to have a method of getting into that space of dream time. Meditation, breath work, and dream analysis has really helped me access this space. Art-making of course is another way of entering into nonlinear time.

Language is also important. What words do we choose to speak in our mind to get out of our own way? Each person has to do their part in making powerful decisions about how they speak to themselves and to others. The focus needs to be centred on the collective experience and not an individual experience. More 'us/we' and less 'me/I'.



Paul Waters, *Warrior Woman*, oil on cut cotton collage on canvas, 36h x 30w in



Jamie Nami Kim, *New Life*, cut paper on paper, 24h x 26w in

Paul: People need to be honest and that's very hard. There's a fear we all carry. Everybody wants to be accepted. People place barriers between themselves and other people out of fear and instead of getting closer, they end up further away. Shutting down and creating barriers is an indication that you don't have enough love with yourself. Love is central in the picture of collaboration.

And it should be fun!

Jamie: Yes! If you start to feel it's not fun, then you gotta ask yourself what's going on?

Not feeling joy is a signal that there's something you need to work out. It doesn't mean it's over. It just probably means there's something that hasn't been said or something that hasn't been heard. So conversation is really important throughout the entire process. Open dialogue, open channels both with yourself and the people you are collaborating with.

Paul: Feedback is also very important. Listening and digesting what's being shared is part of the process of creating. I learned to feel free enough in myself to accept criticism. I cultivated humility by taking time to understand myself and embrace myself. The more you love yourself, the more people will love you. I heard that as a child. Makes a lot of sense.

Humbleness is a part of humility. Humbleness is to embrace sensitivities. Appreciating what's around you, appreciating the strengths of commitment and respecting others and their emotions.

What do you love about collaboration?

Jamie: Everybody has a story. Collaboration allows us to express our stories by celebrating the humility and humanity behind each story. At the core, our stories are the same.

It's very exciting to witness each other bringing our own experiences and wisdom into a collaboration. There's such a deep level of satisfaction and celebration that happens when you collectively make decisions and collectively determine that something is complete.

I love the sparkle that happens when we are in sync-it's a real "yeah!" feeling that is large and energising and feels so good to share. It's the feeling that anything is possible when we do it together.

Paul: Collaboration is a wonderful learning experience. More specifically, I think intergenerational relationships are very important because of the exchange of language and interpretation which is not only healthy but also a very large measuring tool. Learning how to talk to different generations has helped me to grow and learn more. I think generational differences create fear and hesitation in people because of those differences. And that's a bad omen. So for me it's been a great learning tool to see how you fit into the great and changing cultural dynamics.

Jamie Nami Kim and Paul Waters Recommend:

Stay true to yourself. Have happiness doing what you love.

Be kind. Be graceful.

Celebrate happiness. Enjoy loving.

Make art. Relish the creative part of you.

Be love. Love and accept love.



Paul Waters and Jamie Nami Kim sketching *Twins*



Paul Waters and Jamie Nami Kim, *Twins*, oil on cut cotton collage on canvas, 36h x 48w in

Name

Jamie Nami Kim and Paul Waters

Vocation

visual artists

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