

# EMBRACING FLUIDITY: COLLECTIVE ART AND ALTAR BUILDING WORKSHOP

By Jessica Mazzeo



## Institute for Women's Leadership

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to *practice* leadership *through* action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

# MISSION STATEMENT

**Embracing Fluidity** is a self-care workshop -- including meditation (mind), movement (body), and the creation of a collective altar/art installation (spirit) -- that explores and celebrates fluidity: of identity, of nature, of the universe and life itself.

**Goal:** to create a communal space where (especially) women, femmes, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people can feel comfortable freely being/expressing themselves and self-representing outside of institutions such as school and work.

**Intended outcome:** Attendees will feel inspired to create art/altars as therapy and ritual, enhance their self-care practices and leave with more knowledge and resources regarding holistic practices.

The poster features a dark blue background with a white crescent moon and a reflection of the moon on water. The text is white and arranged in a clean, modern layout.

**EMBRACING FLUIDITY**  
Collaborative Art + Altar Building Workshop

DECEMBER 5  GARDEN OF HEALING  
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M. 27 Bayard Street, New Brunswick  
EE Paterson St. Stop

*Bring an object or art piece that represents fluidity: of emotions, of nature, of personality, etc..*  
*Wear comfortable clothing!*

**FREE FOOD & DRINK  
WILL BE ENJOYED**

Co-sponsored by:  
Institute for Women's Leadership  
Rutgers Not Just Yoga

RSVP HERE:  
<https://goo.gl/forms/bP3jYLWDRcSDaiYP2>

# INSPIRATION

“I take a lot of my inspiration from observing how nature and the industrial world interact. I am fascinated with the ways changes in environment affect the mind and how we move through the world. How do we exist on a day-to-day basis in a state of being pulled from, yet in a way still immersed in nature?”

To be fluid is to resist boxing myself in. Mixed media – such as collaging -- is my preferred outlet because it embraces multifaceted-ness. Art-making is an ongoing, ever-changing experience that allows my intuition to guide me.

The altar building process is a way to reflect on what fluidity means to each person by representing it in a sensory way. Altars can be seen, touched, heard, even smelled. I usually create small altars for myself in my room, and I wanted to see how this process would play out collectively. What can we learn from each other’s interpretations, perspectives, and creations?”

# INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS

- 1.(1) **Corporatization of Higher Education and the individualistic attitudes that come with it** —> ways to create a more communal culture
  - Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish, 1975.
  - "The Corporatization of Higher Education" by Nicolaus Mills, 2012.
- 2.(2) **Capitalism and the Commodification of Labor (Arts and Creativity)** —> alternative ways of thinking/living
  - "Unschoolers of the World, Unwork! Grassroots Lessons and Strategies against 21st Century Capitalism" by Peter Jandric and Astra Taylor, 2016.
  - "Commodification of Art versus Creativity: The Antagonist Art Movement in the Expanding Arts Scene of New York City" by Michelle van Riemsdijk, 2016.
- 3.(3) **Spirituality** —> queering of feminist spirituality.
  - "Queering Feminist Witchcraft." *Feminist Spirituality: The Next Generation* by Catherine Telford-Keough, 2009.
  - "Bound in the Spiral Dance: Spirituality and Technology in the Third Wave." *Feminist Spirituality: The Next Generation* by Anna Mercedes and Jennifer Thweatt-Bates, 2009.
4. The workshop was a culmination of these concepts into a communal, creative, alternative space of expression.

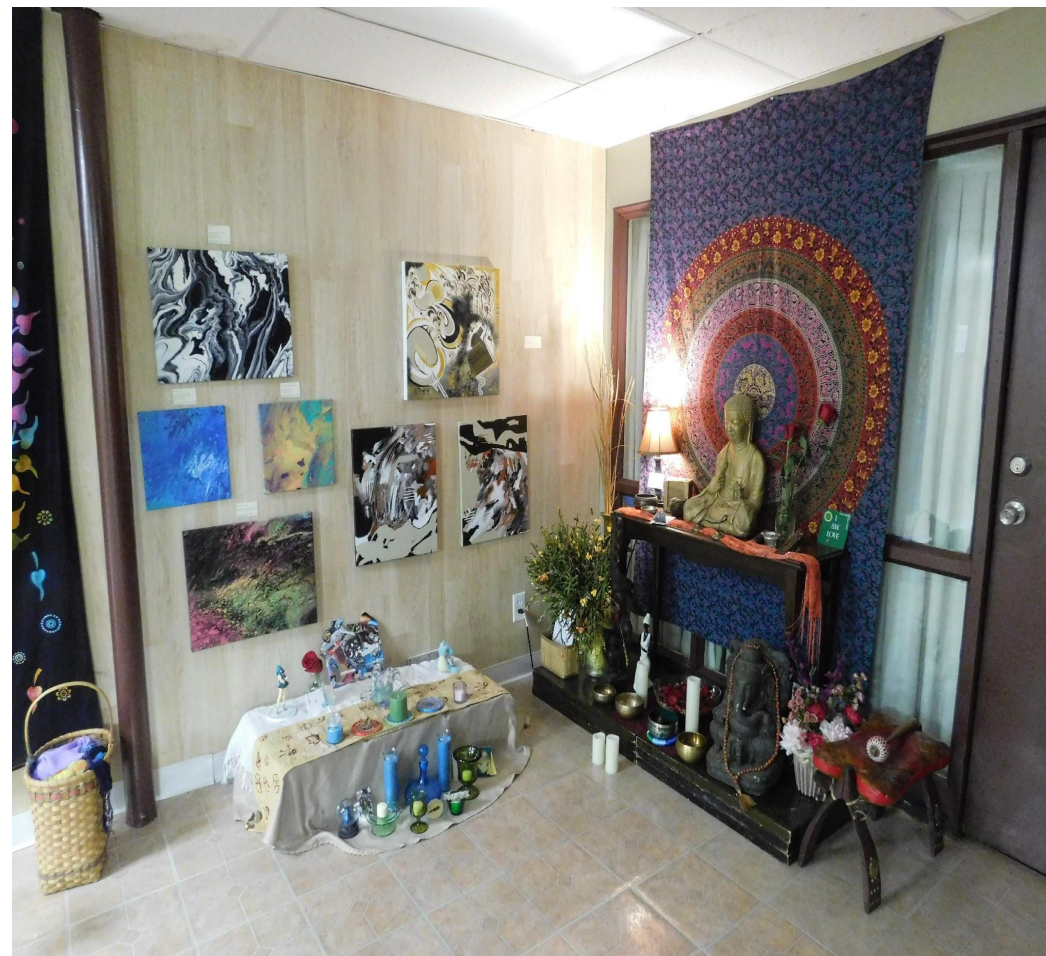


# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS





# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS CONT.



# CONNECTION TO WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

## **Subject Matter**

- Fluidity; of identity, nature, personality, etc.
- Mirrors the various conflicting ideas that emerge when women lead
- Interdisciplinary; corporatization, capitalism, arts, spirituality

## **Planning**

- Non-hierarchical leadership – did not try to dominate the planning portion
- Included spiritual women artists of various backgrounds
  - Photography, Meditation, Movement, Painting

## **Space Creation**

- Safe, inclusive, non-judgmental space
- Asked attendees to be co-creators of the space
- Sensitive to accommodations needed



# LESSONS LEARNED

(1) Event planning does not have to be a one-woman job

(2) Choose who you work with carefully – working with people I could rely on and who were also passionate about art/spirituality helped everything run smoothly

(3) Find a balance between planning and going with the flow

# LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

## **Digital element:**

- Website for a feminist art collective that I am already apart of (will launch in conjunction with their projects)
- Pictures from the event
- Online art submissions (visual arts, writing, etc.)
- Ongoing list of affordable local resources for holistic healing (farmers markets, places that sell natural body products, vegetarian/vegan food, etc.)

## **Working with Garden of Healing:**

- Carla (Owner of Garden of Healing) offered to have altar art-making embedded into one of her future workshops
- Asked me to create a short guide about planning Embracing Fluidity for people who want to hold events there but don't know how to go about it.

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