
OCTAVIA
PROJECT
Positive Obsessions
2026

WHO ARE WE?

The Octavia Project brings together young people in Brooklyn to imagine new futures for themselves and their city. Through free programs that blend leadership development, skill building, and career exploration in STEM and the arts, the Octavia Project has created spaces where curiosity, creativity, and confidence can thrive. Over the last 12 years, hundreds of young women and gender-expansive youth have found community and amplified their voice through the Octavia Project, and in doing so, have learned that imagination is one of the most powerful tools for justice.

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Summer Showcase '26



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GILLIANA ORTEGA



EDEN LAMA

Once again, I am reborn under this surface





Being at OP, connected me back to nature, emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Oftentimes, we'd go outside and all I'd do is stare at the trees and the way they moved through the wind. Even when we weren't outside, OP was, in it's own way, a blanket of safety and comfort. In the outside world, to when I'm back at school again, to the daunting future ahead of me. After being untethered from my mind, body, and soul for what felt like a long time, under the cover of these trees, of these people, I grew to know, I felt immense peace. I was grounded again.

Joy is infinite, in everything you do





We were reading a book called “The Sapling Cage” by Margaret Killjoy where witchcraft was a major element to the story. With lead teachers Magenta and Sarah, we talked about the practice of chanting and how it can connect to transformation and manifestation.

I titled these photos as “Joy Is Infinite, In Everything You Do” because for an activity we created a chant of our own. This line is a piece from that chant, and everytime I look at these photos, I am reminded of the joy that OP brought me, that wonderful times do exist, and to always look for the magic in the moment.

END OF BEGINNING





As OP began to wrap up its 2026 summer institute, we were asked “What do you want to keep thinking about, doing and creating after the summer ends? These post-it notes were all the little things we were inspired to do because of the program. Each little piece of paper represents the kind of impact OP was able to make on young people like me.

-Eden

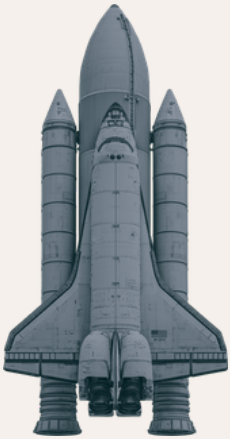
★ROSELYN RODRIGUEZ★



ARTIST STATEMENT

This year at the Octavia Project I was so excited to be able to be a Fellow. And there's no other people I'd rather do it with. Thank you all for the memories this year.

- Roselyn



ALEKSIA BALA



ARTIST STATEMENT

My collage represents a bigger picture of knowledge and my love for everything creepy. When choosing the main pieces, I wanted to incorporate elements of chemistry and sci-fi by using colored paper and different illustrations from magazines. My favorite part of the artwork is a picture of a turtle's internal organs, which really freaked me out when I first saw it!

- Aleksia



★ADHYA SHAH★

The bus skids to a halt, shoving my kajal into my eye, and drawing looks of both confusion and concern from fellow passengers on the 7:00 AM MTA bus. My eyes, haphazardly done, are tired from the constant poking, tearing up at the thought of more. Giving up, I drop my beloved kajal back into my makeup bag, and gaze out the bus window, turning up the volume on my Bollywood playlist.

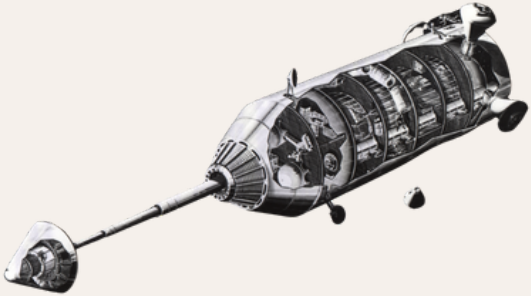
A guilty pleasure of mine since eighth grade is kajal, a creamy type of eyeliner that, unlike regular eyeliner, can go inside your eyes. Originating in South Asia thousands of years ago, kajal is also believed to ward off evil eye, and protects one from "नज़र", or evil eye. "नज़र न लग जाये" is a common saying in Northern India, in the language of Hindi. This translates to "Let evil eye not fall upon you", a phrase said lovingly by all South Asian women as they place a small dot behind their loved ones ears. Kajal is a generational staple within my family, a meaningful, and protective step of our routines that we never fail to forget. After years and years of seeing the women in my family apply kajal, I too wanted to apply kajal, be proud of who I am, and have my very own "काली काली आंखें" which in Hindi translates to, dark dark eyes. The way kajal makes my

eyes look sharp, defined, and alive in a way, makes me addicted to putting it on every morning before school.

My parents, torn apart by divorce, familial rivalries, and arguments, could not be more different from each other. Families hailing from opposite sides of India, languages that sounded alien to the other, are connected by kajal, worn by both of their ancestors. My grandmothers, whom I've always believed to despise each other, and whom I never thought to be anything like the other, are connected in ways I never realize. Connected through love for me, connected through their insistence on protecting me from those who may not have my best interests in mind, reflected through the little dots they've placed behind my ears growing up. Connected through their consistency in always telling me to be myself, to never dim my light no matter what others say. I take what my grandmothers have taught me growing up, and lead my life with positivity, refusing to let the doubts of others bring me down. I hope to be the light in rooms, fill others with happiness, and hope to be the person a friend can rely on in times of need.

As I apply my kajal, whether it be on the bus before school, my first period class, or the days that I wake up early enough to put it on at home, I am reminded of my grandmother's lessons and our memories together. One of my most fond memories is with my paternal grandmother, watching an

Indian horror movie, Chandramukhi. Chandramukhi is a woman, who is most famously known for her smeared kajal, causing many people to be wary of kajal. While I have heard this in the past, I say that it's the way you put on kajal, both literally and figuratively, that defines it. You can put on kajal and own it, or you can put on kajal, and let the thought of Chandramukhi scare you into taking it off. I believe that this can act as a metaphor for something bigger in life, as it relates to the confidence and positivity in which you bring forth in life, and the pride you bring in your heritage. Kajal for me shows the pride in my heritage and the importance of protecting the light within myself. It provides a metaphor for life, that if you allow yourself to express who you are, it will accentuate the power within you. I give kajal five stars.



★FARIZA RAHMAN★



TThe characters, Kiezu (top) and Lueji (bottom) were a married couple from the Ndongo Kingdom during the early 1600s (modern Angola). They were separated due to Kiezu being murdered and turned into a spirit unwillingly bound to a dark entity.

- Fariza



★ SALLY ZENG ★

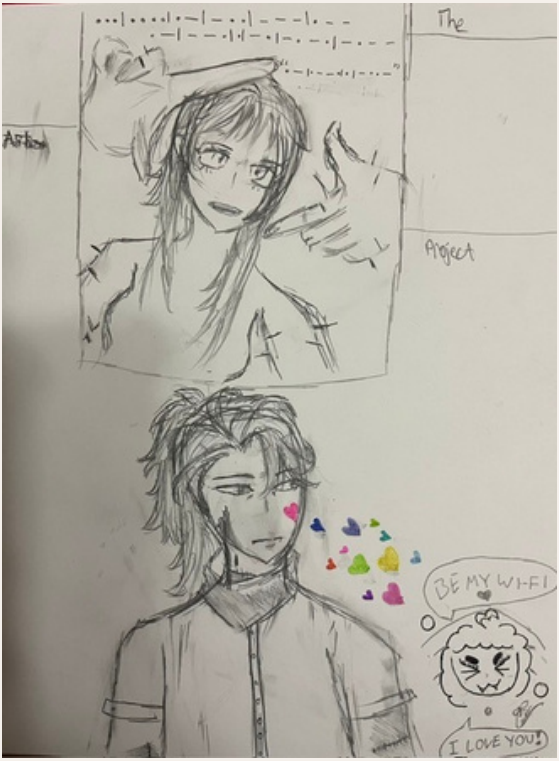


This is a drawing of lilies that I drew with oil pastels. Although the mood of the drawing is relatively happy, I drew this while I was going through a hard time, which is evident in the rough lines in the background. I love art so much because I can always express everything I feel into it.

- Sally



EMMA HU



ARTIST STATEMENT

For this art work specifically it's a cover for a personal story I've been writing and that writing has inspired me to try and continue and implement new things that the Octavia project has taught me into the story, this is one of the many arts I've made inspired by the story I've written.

- Emma



★ CAMERON BRENNER ★



This is a character lineup of 4 distinct characters that fulfill different tropes. All character designs are unique and done by me. They are characters for a dystopian post apocalyptic body horror story.

- Cameron



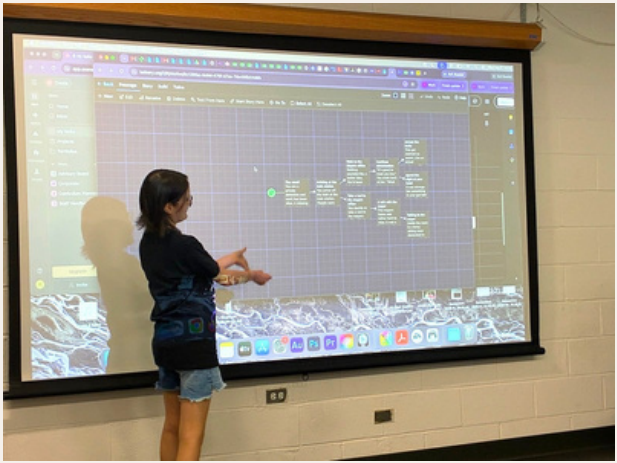
GROUP PROJECTS!

In addition to individual projects, Octavia Project Summer Institute Participants worked on many collaborative group projects, facilitated by our Lead Teachers and Guest Speakers.



★ TWINE ★

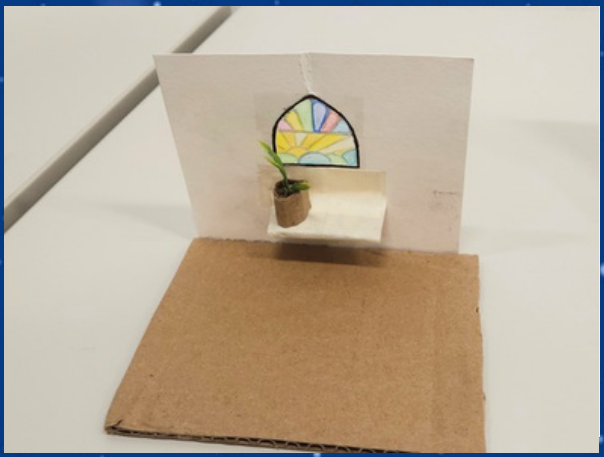
Throughout the summer, we generated many story ideas across our multidisciplinary workshops, eventually developing and programming one into a narrative-based computer game. Each game engages different speculative genres, from horror, to fantasy, to science fiction.



Click here to play this year's twine games!

ARCHITECTURAL MODELS

In our architecture workshops, we took places that are important to us and transformed them. By creating 2.5D models, we were able to build on earlier conversations around space utilization and architectural practices across cultures.



★CITY SOUNDSCAPES★

In groups, we worked together to tape and edit field recordings and foley. Together, we created soundscapes that represent our overlapping experiences of NYC across the boroughs.



Click this link to listen to our soundscapes!

EMERGENT TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

The second part of our two-day urban planning workshop leveraged what we learned about our city to dive deeper into worldbuilding. Through these topographic maps, we mapped hot spots and developed ideas for how our worlds might navigate areas with varied intensities.



INDIGO-DYED BANDANAS

We took a trip to the Pratt Textile Dye Garden to learn about techniques for processing indigo and the history of the plant's usage around the world. By using japanese itajime techniques, we created bandanas with geometric patterns.



★NATURE CYANOTYPES★

We layered plant materials with drawings and writing on transparent film to create poetic compositions that reflect the nature around us. These layered compositions were arranged on pretreated paper to create flattened cyanotypes.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR OCTAVIA PROJECT SUMMER INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS!

Adhya (Fellow)
Eden (Fellow)
Eros (Fellow)
Fariza (Fellow)
Roselyn (Fellow)

Aleksia
Alexia
Asia
Cameron
Cinder
Ellie
Emma
Genesis
Gilliana
Hafsa
Jada
Luis
Marsha
Mavis
Nashmia
Raziah
Sally
Stacey
Teri

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR OCTAVIA PROJECT SUMMER INSTITUTE STAFF!

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ray ferreira

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Aneesa Ramautar

GUEST TEACHERS:
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Jada Cannon
Nadira Simone
Stephanie McMorran

CAREER PANEL:
Hachette

Octavia Project is made possible with funds from the Statewide Community Regrants Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by Brooklyn Arts Council.

BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL

Octavia Project is supported in part by a grant from Brooklyn Org.

BACKED BY BROOKLYN ORG

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

NYC Cultural Affairs

Our deepest gratitude to all of those who made this year's Summer Institute possible, including the Octavia Project Advisory Board & Board of Directors, our BFF donors, all of our supporters, as well as our Summer Institute partners:

Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA)

Pratt Institute Writing Department

And our funders:

Anonymous Donor, through ViaNova

Brooklyn Arts Council

Brooklyn Org

Cowan Slavin Foundation

Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)

New York State Council on the Arts

Regenerational Roots Foundation

Stonewall Community Foundation

THANK YOU FOR READING!

