

SUBMERSIVE PRODUCTIONS  
Presents

# ATALEPSIS



A collaborative\* creation by:

**Core Creative Team:**

Mika Nakano  
Trustina Sabah  
Susan Stroupe  
Glenn Ricci

**Contributing Artists:**

Helen Garcia-Alton (lights)  
Deana Brill (costume)

**Production Manager:**

Tessara Morgan

**Show Runners:**

Griffin DeLisle  
Debra Lenik  
Mara Falbo-Wild



**Cast:**

Francisco Benavides  
Hannah Fenster  
Joshua Hne  
Megan Livingston  
Ursula Marcum  
Bao Nguyen  
Jess Rassp  
Trustina Sabah  
Lisi Stoessel

**Technical Director:**

Tyler Brust

**Workshop Leader:**

Tara Cariaso

**Intern:**

Chloe Azcuy

**Devised by the cast and Core Team who all contributed to the physical world-building of the experience.**

**Submersive Productions** is: Co-Artistic Directors Ursula Marcum and Glenn Ricci, with Core Creators Josh Aterovis, Tina Canady, Marissa O'Guinn Dahl, Kim Le, Michele Minnick, Mika Nakano, Trustina Sabah, Lisi Stoessel and Susan Stroupe.

We are a collaborative artworks company that creates original, site-specific immersive works where artists and audiences engage together at the intersection of histories, mythologies and the immediate experience. Based in Baltimore, we devise works that make the audience essential to the journey of the narrative.

We are also a collective of over fifty artists and performers who gather to make worlds that engage the senses and unfold stories, both familiar and forgotten.

**For more information, visit: [www.submersiveproductions.com](http://www.submersiveproductions.com)**

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**Mayor Brandon Scott & The City of Baltimore  
The Puffin Foundations, LTD  
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Aaron Barlow, Alex Ciardullo, Gaeun Chloe Kim, Alec Sparks, Colby Staley, Linda Stirling, Heritage Players, and all of our test audience members and treasured supporters.

**Donations in any amount gladly accepted through PayPal: [info@SubmersiveProductions.com](mailto:info@SubmersiveProductions.com)  
and Venmo: @Submersive Productions**

Prefer a tax-deductible donation? You can find us on [Fractured Atlas](#). And thank you!

**For each run, there are two Benefactors,  
three “Creators” and one DJ.  
The absent Creator’s room remains explorable.**

Character	○	Performer
Benefactor	○	Joshua Hne
Benefactor	○	Ursula Marcum
Benefactor	○	Jess Rassp
DJ Conrad Formica	○	Francisco Benavides
DJ Siren	○	Bao Nguyen
Timekeeper	○	Hannah Fenster
Phoenix	○	Megan Livingston
Madame	○	Trustina Sabah
Strata	○	Lisi Stoessel

### **Land Acknowledgement**

As this far-future world accepts our contributions, we acknowledge that we are always in a cycle of giving and receiving with this land. It is past, present, and future all at once. It remembers even as we forget. Right now, we are existing on the unceded ancestral lands of the Piscataway, Susquehannock, and Nentego (Nanticoke) peoples. The living community of the Lumbee migrated to the city of Baltimore beginning in the 1930s and persists in the face of continual colonialist imposition. The living communities of Black Baltimoreans reflect the will of their ancestors on this land. We honor them too.

Our relationship to the land does not exist only in the past tense. None of us are truly separate from one another and none are separate from those who came before and will come after. We are in context: our blood our spirit is the land. We live and die here. We make and create and connect and we long for. It remains to be seen whether these humble acknowledgments will allow us to heal the many rifts between our land and each other; or whether we will leave the work of remembering to a different species entirely.

## \*The Making of Katalepsis

Believe it or not, the original concept for Katalepsis in 2019 was about three “creators” living lives of solitude due to a deadly viral pandemic. Then a real viral pandemic happened. Our lives were forever changed, including how we envisioned this show. So yes, this is our “Pandemic project\*,” and, much like how you experience the show itself, there are a lot of stories that could be told about how we got here.

“Katalepsis” is a fully original work devised through Submersive’s own style of collaboration. No one author, no one director, just twenty artists working together to make something much bigger than any one of us could conceive on our own. Research and dreaming, sharing ideas and pulling from our everyday experiences. Talking it through, idea by idea, day by day, week by week. Centering the work to maintain trust, accountability, safety, and mutual respect. It may sound like an inefficient way of doing things, but it all accrues into a machine that generates a staggering number of ideas without the need for a single genius-like figure to control the final outcome. If there is genius, it’s in the process.

As with most Submersive Productions, many of the contributors served in multiple roles, and everyone is actively encouraged to participate in areas outside their designated role. All voices respected, all ideas heard, centering kindness, and always allowing lots of space to be fully and fallibly human. The following narrative gives you a peek into our process, and attempts to credit the work of the last three years where conventional theatre titles don’t quite apply.

All Submersive projects are guided from start to finish by a Core Team of artists, in this instance our “Core Four” (C4) were **Mika Nakano**, **Trustina Sabah**, **Susan Stroupe**, and **Glenn Ricci** (creator of the seed of the original concept), who assembled in spring of 2020 to begin slow-walking this project through an



*Sketch of dress by Deana Brill*

unknown timeline until we knew it was safe to start devising. The group took a detour outdoors for [rECHOllection](#) in 2021 when they felt their vision for a close and intimate show could not yet be fulfilled but had an abundance of material that needed its own show.

In the early development days, **Deana Brill** (Costume Designer) produced a sketch (image right) of a dress in the form of a head-to-toe mushroom (along with ideas for making it that eventual led to the mycelial environment we installed at The Peale). The image stuck with us and, though the dress was never made, mushrooms became the answer to the question that nagged us: Who are the Benefactors? Thus began our deep dive into all things mycelial.

Many Zooms later in the late summer of 2022, the team had grown to twenty and development began at Submersive's newly acquired "Subhub" space. **Tara Cariaso** (Workshop Leader) kicked things off with a weekend focusing on archetypes, somatics, social justice, and self care. (She was also the resident mushroom expert.) Through the fall, the group carried on, building little environments, creating moments, exchanging discoveries and bits of found dramaturgy. **Susan** (Acting and Dramaturgy Advisor) picked up on Tara's foundation, having performers explore embodiment of their characters and posing provocative questions to spurn us deeper into the dramaturgy and world-building.

Creative weather patterns formed and it was frequently impossible to know where one idea left off and the other began and who came up with what. Everyone became a dramaturg, bringing in books and dropping links into our Slack. Designers would appear throughout the process to participate and share. **Glenn** as Sound Designer would float various sounds and compositions around and underneath the activities. **Mika** (Designer for the overall environment) led "design jams" with **Deana**, **Jess Rassp** (Performer/Fabricator), **Ursula Marcum** (Performer/Designer/Fabricator), **Helen Garcia-Alton** (Lighting Designer), **Glenn**, and **Lisi Stoessel** (Performer/Designer), where they covered walls with layered attempts at "mycelial" growths and engaged in questionable kitchen experiments too messy to explain further. **Helen** aimed lights and lasers at the constructions and **Deana** showed us the joys and dangers of a heat gun.

As the most sound-oriented characters, **Megan Livingston** (Performer/Composer/Musician), **Francisco Benavides** (Performer/Fabricator), and **Bao Nguyen** (Performer/Fabricator/Composer) experimented with instruments, synthesizers, layered vocal looping—all promising a rich, if challenging sound environment. **Glenn** set up a functioning pirate radio station at 107.7 so that both DJs could get used to broadcasting themselves to radios placed elsewhere around the building.

**Ursula, Josh Hne** (Performer/Fabricator) and **Jess** initially joined the cast in the role of puppeteers, eventually developing the Benefactors into full-body puppets. **Lisi** began developing Strata by stockpiling clothing and mirrors, mining endlessly rich veins of mismatched fashion. **Trustina** (Performer/Designer) conceptualized Madame's living space and wove in mycelial inspired gourds to both the space and the tasks and lessons for her "apprentices." **Hannah Fenster** (Performer/Fabricator) deeply enmeshed herself in **Ursula's** design for her character's room, literally weaving together process and character in a cycle of fabrication and performance (a common refrain for all involved). **Megan** worked with **Glenn** to create a "playable" room with a variety of instruments that at points were used for their intended purpose and often to create a thunderous, room-shaking effect.

**Tessara Morgan** (Production Manager), diligently kept the production on the rails, even when the devised, freeform nature of these sessions did not always appear to be forming any recognizable vehicle.

Arriving at The Peale in mid-January, **Tyler Brust** (Technical Director) took the basement by storm, erecting walls faster than anyone could say "I think we are going to need a lot more of this mycelial material!" He expertly repurposed the Peale's old plexiglass panels, and juggled everyone's ambitious requests, always minding the codes and limitations of the historic structures (read: lots of clamps).

Many early rehearsals were "build days" during which each performer could spend quality time inhabiting their space while helping with fabrication. We quickly learned that set building and character building were actually one and the same, and all performers benefited from even the most repetitive tasks performed in situ.

At one point or another, everyone engaged in the secret, patented process we developed to create the fungal growth hanging throughout the whole space, which affectionately referred to as our "mycelial quilting circles." **Chloe Azcuy** (Student Intern) joined us to put every bit of her MICA skills to use as we had her detailing parts of the set and building additional costume pieces.

Finally, we were joined by Showrunners **Mara Fabro-Wild, Griffin DeLisle, and Debra Lenik**. **Mara** brought her years of experience with Submersive (going back to our first show) to calmly navigate the chaos. **Griffin** inquired about every detail of what we were doing and documented it with no small amount of reports and spreadsheets woven together with dramaturgical sensibility. **Debra's** years of events experience allowed her to calmly enter mid-stream swim along until it all started to click. The three of them preset and reset roughly twelve million (give or take) items per show with professionalism and care. All four worked with the C4 to revise and refine the

onboarding phase dozens of times until we landed on the introduction you finally experienced.

Then we run and test and fix and run and test and fix and discuss and re-stage until magically and suddenly, it starts to look like a show.

And then you came. We're so glad you made it. We'd love for you to tell us *your* story.

\*Our other "Pandemic project," *The Boundary*, will appear later this year. Stay tuned!

Interested in some of our dramaturgical sources? Here's a short list of some of the most influential:

**Toni Morrison**, "**The Future of Time**," a 1996 speech for the National Endowment for the Humanities. [https://neh.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/11215/3774/LIB39\\_002-public.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://neh.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/11215/3774/LIB39_002-public.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

**adrienne maree brown**, ***Emergent Strategy***, brown's 2017 book of essays, strategies, and visions for the future

**Louie Schwartzberg**, ***Fantastic Fungi***, Schwartzberg's 2019 Netflix film about mycelial networks

**Anna Tsing**, ***The Mushroom at the End of the World***, Tsing's 2015 book about the destructive cycles of capitalism, co-dependency among species, and rethinking mushroom behavior