

And the Chalk Morphs in the Wanton Screen

by Dorothy Rose Howard

In Whistlegraph's first solo show and exhibition, the artist group (Jeffrey Scudder, Camille Klein, Alex Freundlich) presents a new body of work featuring creative documentation of a selection of "whistlegraphs" — an art form of scored musical drawings they created, beloved by a growing online community. Whistlegraphs are memorizable lyrical poems that double as graphic scores, resulting in reproducible drawings.

Blending drawing with live performance documentation is Whistlegraph's bread and butter; and it is this evasion of capture that also makes artifacts of their work so limitless. A set of files make up each of the ten whistlegraphs curated for Feral File — a high definition video performance and graphic score made for the exhibition, in addition to a curated selection of TikToks of that same work, accessible through a custom interactive player. Each whistlegraph piece by the group has generated countless media artifacts and recordings in the form of social media posts (by Whistlegraph and fans alike), works on paper, and live recitals. Part of the beauty of this format is that once you grok it, you can make a whistlegraph yourself. Indeed many do write their own whistlegraphs — or interact with the group's in the form of duets, mashups, and sing-alongs to the tune of digital folk.

Like Harold and the Purple Crayon, Whistlegraph draws a world into existence. Their work is a refreshing reminder that the inner child's creative light needn't be dimmed with age. Friendship radiates through everything the trio does, whether colorful chalk art on a park basketball court, or candid-yet-choreographed performances recorded on their iPhones. But Whistlegraph is also hip to Fluxus and other traditions of contemporary visual art that wrestle with philosophical questions more often taken on by composers, such as the abstract qualities of graphical notation, or art as language. In their practice, they dwell in the noise of moving from analog to digital and back again.

In an exclusive Feral File "Close-Up" text accompanying the exhibition, writer Dorothy Rose Howard discusses Whistlegraph's musical vernacular and digital folklore.

People Pleaser

Lyrics:

When you're told "Amazing! Incredible" best beware
Someone's always saying, words you wanna hear
Products of low self-esteem,
peacefully prove their being mildly mean
to those around them

Composed by Jeffrey Alan Scudder on January 14, 2021

This instance of "People Pleaser," recorded on April 18, 2022, and its supporting materials were produced for Ten Whistlegraphs.

At the time of its composition, "People Pleaser" was the longest whistlegraph in the groups' repertoire. It is rendered here by Whistlegraph in pencil on a Kamiterior Memoterior Colors Memo Pad.

Whistlegraphs are audio-visual digital artworks performed manually by drawing and singing. Every whistlegraph results in a poetic image through the performance of a graphic score.