

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.

What's Inside Your Heart?

Lyrics:

What's inside your heart?
Nothin' but the hole you left behind
Pumping blood and worms inside
Hey what's up? Where's the love?
Looks like you could use a hug

Composed by Whistlegraph on February 6, 2021

This instance of "What's Inside Your Heart?," recorded on April 15, 2022, and its supporting materials were produced for Ten Whistlegraphs.

"What's Inside Your Heart?" was the first whistlegraph composed for three players. It was produced as the group's first music video and single in the spring of 2021. Here the group performs a classic rendition with their fountain pens on an Exacompta Bloc FAF Desk Pad backlit by a flashing Aputure MC RGBWW LED Light.

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.