

## [Kholoud Sawaf, work sample summary.](#)

### [Work Sample 1](#)

*Vietgone* written Qui Nguyen directed by Kholoud Sawaf

**Producing Theatre:** TheatreSquared, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

**Time:** rehearsed in February, and performed in March - April, 2018.

**Length of provided video:** 1 minute (please review the full minute).

**Length of full performance:** 2 hours, 30 minutes with one intermission.

**Number of performances:** 24.

**Reach:** +4200 people

### **Summary & context:**

*Vietgone* is a modern twist on the All-American love story, it pulses with contemporary energy. It's the classic boy meets girl – except this boy and girl are refugees from the Vietnam War newly settled in a relocation camp in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

This video shares a part of the 'Romantic Montage' that uses iconic moments from American romantic comedies, such as *Dirty Dancing*, *Ghost*, and *Say Anything*.

Playwright Qui Nguyen wanted his Vietnamese refugees characters to fall in love using such familiar references to the American audience. This was part of his efforts as a playwright to make us identify more with the Vietnamese characters, and my efforts as a director to bridge the gap between the familiar and unfamiliar.

### [Work Sample 2](#)

*10,000 Balconies* Conceived, created, and directed by Kholoud Sawaf

**Producing Theatre:** TheatreSquared, Fayetteville, AR supported by the Building Bridges Grant from the Doris Duke Foundation.

**Time:** devised and written between June 2016 - August 2019. Performed in August/September of 2019.

**Length of provided video:** 2 minutes, 50 seconds (please review full video).

**Length of full performance:** 1 hour, 20 minutes.

**Number of performances:** five.

**Reach:** +500 people.

**Summary & Context:**

Loosely inspired by *Romeo and Juliet* and set in modern Damascus, Syria, *10,000 Balconies* is an original devised multisensory performance art work. It provides an intimate window into the oldest continuously-inhabited city in the world, suffused with Syrian poetry, original music, and cultural dances. The show performed five times to audiences in Northwest Arkansas, and it offered opportunities to engage with Syrian culture through tasting Syrian food, learning traditional dances, and experiencing fragrances from the city of Damascus.

This excerpt starts with the free pre-show community engagement workshop, then moves on to share parts of the performance including moments from Syrian wedding, the Mawlawiyah Cultural Dance, the Syrian uprising, as well as a part of the balcony scene.

**Work Sample 3:**

**Promotion video of *Hold Fast*** a 35 minute site-specific play devised by ensembl.

**Producing Theatre:** ArkansasStaged, Curbside Theatre project.

**Time:** Devised March-May, Rehearsed May-June, Performed July-August of 2020.

**Length of provided video:** 1 minute, 25 seconds.

**Length of whole performance:** 35 minute with no intermission.

**Location:** 30 different households in need.

**Reach:** 500+ people.

**Summary & Context:**

Inspired by the experience of COVID 19, Curbside Project offered an experiential care package for audiences in Northwest Arkansas. An ensemble of local artists in Northwest Arkansas created an original interactive performance piece, *Hold Fast*, and presented 30 free shows in front yards, backyards, and outside nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. Our guides were the musical energy of pop power ballads of the 1980s. Our hope was to make the audience laugh, and engage their sense of wonder during absurd times. The creative process took COVID protocols in consideration and created a piece of artwork where the audience can interact with actors from a distance, participate in a dance, and create rhythm with the performers.

This link provided is a promotional video that was created to market the production as well as support fundraising efforts.

#### **Work sample 4**

##### ***The Suburbs,***

Still photo from a play titled *Should We Dance Instead?*  
Written by Phanesia Pharel Directed by Kholoud Sawaf.

**Producing Theatre:** Thrown Stone Theatre Company

**Time:** Written in November between 2020 - July 2021.  
Performed in August / September of 2021.

**Length of performance:** 22 minutes.

**Location:** West Lane Inn, Ridgefield, Connecticut.

**Number of performances:** 12.

**Reach:** +1500 people.

##### **Context & Summary:**

Playwright Phanesia Pharel brings the history of Ridgefield to build a story based on its circumstances during American slavery. The play tells the story of Uncle Ned and his wife Betsy, a free Black couple who resided in Ridgefield and maintained a stop on the Underground Railroad. They return to implore present-day townsman Marem to consider restoring a once vital and communal home, now on the market for an exorbitant amount of money, to its original purpose. The play discusses themes of race, class, and identity.

#### **Work Sample 5**

##### ***The Suburbs,***

Still photo from a play titled *The Caterers*  
Written by Tony Meneses Pharel Directed by Kholoud Sawaf

**Producing Theatre:** Thrown Stone Theatre Company, Ridgefield, Connecticut.

**Time:** Written in November between 2020 - July 2021.  
Performed in August / September of 2021.

**Length of performance:** 18 minutes.

**Location:** The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

**Number of performances:** 12.

**Reach:** +1500 people.

**Context & Summary:**

*The Caterers* by Tony Menses: Set in 2050, the caterers is a physical comedy that wrestles with themes of gender, race, and class. As caterers bustle about preparing to serve guests who were gathered for an engagement party in the suburbs, a newcomer (Josphine) appears, and one of the caterers (Garcia) is enthralled by her. Thinking she has come to cater, Garcia trains Josphine and falls in love with her. Craving their own slice of privilege and grandeur, and seeking respite from the grind of their lives, the caterers stand in stark contrast to the unseen guests.

## Work Sample Summary

### Sample 1

Sabine Schmidt  
“Black Arkansans Along the Buffalo River”  
Essay  
2110 words  
2022

Written to do justice to the wealth of information discovered while I did research for the photography part of *Rememorials*, this essay weaves together the main story of the Black Villines family of Boxley Valley and the sketched stories of other Black residents in the Buffalo River region of the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. All names, numbers, places, and historical references in the piece are factual and verifiable. Some details, especially regarding the fate of Tim Villines’ older brothers, are based on hearsay, and readers have to draw their own conclusions where necessary.

While I believe in the power of the visual image and try to avoid lengthy explanations of the photographs I create, the *Rememorials* project took a needed turn towards the written word after a few months of working on research and photography. I had learned the stories of the people I originally meant to honor through this project. But I had also found out much about their descendants, ancestors, neighbors, students, and people in their communities that was worth remembering. The paper houses photographed at the sites south of Fayetteville, in Boxley, Charleston, and Joplin held so many stories that needed to be told. I work both as a photographer and a writer. Telling at least some of those stories made sense, and I expanded the scope of *Rememorials*. This essay is the first written part of the project, and the first to be presented to the public. I read it at an arts event organized by the National Park Service to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buffalo National River. The responses from audience members and NPS employees—summed up in the remark “I didn’t know that happened here”—indicated that I may be on the right track.

### Samples 2 to 5

Other than writing, my main tools for *Rememorials* have been photography and handmade paper models. I researched the sites of racial injustice and initially constructed three miniatures of buildings that once stood at those sites: an 1830s single-pen log cabin, an 1850s dogtrot cabin, and a schoolhouse built in the 1920s.

I experimented with various papers and matboards and settled on Canson inkjet photo paper. It has an off-white warmth that catches light well. I also used Utrecht butterboard, which is thicker and more textured and reflects light. Both materials can be quite luminous, especially in low light. Deciding on the right scale for the models took some time. Making the models is slow and meditative, full of repetitions and redos. The result is a clean, stripped-down design that keeps the houses recognizable but light and fragile, easily changed by wind, rain, and mud.

I photographed them as close as possible to the original location. Before I made the picture, I spent time determining the model's orientation, deciding on the best time of day, scouting the location for access issues, paying attention to items that might block the view, and so on. Invariably, the paper house and the camera attracted attention, and I sometimes lost the good light but gained an interesting conversation--at the Charleston site, for instance, I met a man who had once attended the school whose paper model I was holding in my hands.

Two of these four photographs show paper models at the sites of the original buildings; in the other two, the same model was placed in locations of significance for a family's history.

## **Sample 2**

Sabine Schmidt

*Boxley*

Medium-format color film photography

16"x16"

2022

Canson inkjet photo paper, foamcore, PVA glue

The model shows the Villines cabin, built in the 1830s in Boxley Valley on the Buffalo River in the Arkansas Ozarks. It is placed exactly where the original log cabin stood. The house in the background was built in the 1940s; a photo of the log cabin standing immediately next to the newer house was available to verify location, orientation, and construction details. Piety Villines and her three sons, all born into slavery, lived in and near this cabin.

## **Sample 3**

Sabine Schmidt

*Parks Cemetery*

Medium-format color film photography

16"x16"

2022

Utrecht butter board, Canson inkjet photo paper, mat board, PVA glue

The model of a double-pen dogtrot cabin with attached kitchen represents Parks Station, a stop on the Butterfield Stage Coach Route south of Fayetteville, Arkansas. Placed in nearby Parks Cemetery, the paper model sits among graves of enslaved and enslaving members of the Parks family.

#### **Sample 4**

Sabine Schmidt

*Joplin*

Medium-format color film photography

16"x16"

2022

Utrecht butter board, Canson inkjet photo paper, mat board, PVA glue

The same model is shown in downtown Joplin, Missouri, at the spot where Liza Parks froze to death in 1912. She had been enslaved at Parks Station.

#### **Sample 5**

Sabine Schmidt

*Charleston*

Medium-format color film photography

16"x16"

2022

Canson inkjet photo paper, foamcore, PVA glue

The model of a 1920s Rosenwald school was photographed in a field outside Charleston, Arkansas. Formerly the anchor of a thriving Black community, the school was closed when Charleston schools integrated in 1954. The Black teacher lost her job; her application to teach in the newly integrated school was ignored. Two families from the original community still live near the site.