

*17776, or What Football Will Look Like in the Future*

Reed Arts Grant Experience Proposal

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With the support of the Reed Arts Grant Experience, I will direct a devised theatrical production using Jon Bois' *17776* as a source text. This text, a series of fictional audio transcripts, asks its audience why humans are on this planet and how we should be spending our time. In the year 2026, humans suddenly stop aging, being born, or dying. 15,000 years later, what does the world look like? What would you do if you had infinite time, money, and resources? What would you do next? After that? After that? After that? Even the most basic form of resource scarcity, opportunity cost, is gone. Who would you be, after fifteen thousand years of being you? Would anything really matter, if there are no consequences? Would there be a point to humanity's continued existence? Is there even a point right now? The text's answer, drawing from historian Johan Huizinga's theories, is that humanity exists to hang out, tell stories, play games, and enjoy each other's company. I intend to work with a company of artists, actors, and theatremakers to develop this text into a live performance, and I would love the opportunity to manifest Bois' idea of humanity's future both onstage and in the rehearsal room.

Over the last several years of the pandemic, we have been given the opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities and how we see the world. Living through the COVID-19 pandemic uncovered cracks in our society, and raised the question of if "normal" was even something worth going back to. It's hard to imagine a new, better way of seeing the world, and even harder to actually make it, but that's okay. To even acknowledge that these exploitative systems are not an inherent part of human society is an important first step, and that's part of what I'm seeking to achieve here. Theatre creates a new community with each production, and every member is given the opportunity to decide how it should function. This makes theatre the perfect form to explore *17776*, a work about not mistaking the way the world's always been for the way it has to be.

I love directing theatre, and I intend to pursue it after graduation. I've taken Reed's only directing class, and have assistant directed on various projects at the school. This grant would be a huge step in allowing me to grow and gain directing experience that I will be able to use on my thesis next year, and beyond.

The production itself will have a cast of six actors, and a production team composed of myself, a projections designer, sound designer, lighting designer, stage manager, and dramaturg (a research-oriented role concerned with development and use of a script). I have already started to build this team, and have eight individuals interested in participating. The Theatre Department has generously offered use of the Black Box Rehearsal Room as a rehearsal and performance space.

The themes of *17776* will echo through the entire process, including the design. While light on physical scenery, the production will make heavy use of projections. There are almost no visual descriptions of the world in the source text, and so the audience is forced to imagine this far-future using only their own lived experiences. They are able to place themselves squarely inside this world, and see that its people are not too different from themselves.

This choice is also inspired by the theatre history I've studied at Reed. The use of projections as a substitute for, or addendum to, scenery was originally developed by mid-twentieth century German theatre artists and theorists Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht within the Epic Theatre movement, which used the theatre to invite the audience to engage with the world in which they live. Since then, projections have been employed in science fiction theatre (such as Ray Bradbury's *To the Chicago Abyss* or Phillip Glass & David Henry Hwang's *1000 Airplanes on the Roof*) for the same effect, as well as enabling the representation of fantastical imagery not feasible to depict onstage. Here, I intend to work with a projections designer— Si Zheng Song, a Reed student, talented artist, and frequent collaborator of mine who has already signed on — to engage with this history and bring these ideas to the Reed stage.

The process of devising, designing, rehearsing, staging, and performing this production will take place over the course of ten weeks in Summer 2023. The first two weeks will consist of scriptwork by myself, the dramaturg, and the projections designer, where we will adapt the source text into a script and determine which elements of the narrative will be spoken by actors and which will be represented through projection. After that, I will assemble the entire company for six weeks of rehearsals (five times a week, for three hours each). The first two weeks will consist of generative work to help the company bond as collaborators and understand the world they are creating onstage. The next three weeks will be focused on rehearsing the show. This will be followed by a week of technical rehearsals that incorporate the design and production elements into the actors' work, and then finally a performance for the Reed community in the first week of September.

Assuming that the school's COVID-19 regulations remain as they are now, the production will be presented to a limited in-person audience and livestreamed online. If regulations permit, the in-person audience capacity will be increased. If regulations tighten, rehearsals will be held outdoors, and the show will be presented exclusively online in the form of projections accompanied by live audio.

With support from the Reed Arts Grant Experience and Reed College, I will be able to compensate my company for their work. Student artistic and theatrical projects are frequently uncompensated, as these are passionate artists who are willing to work on their craft for free. However, the work they are putting in is legitimate, difficult, and time consuming, and I want to help offset their time with a small stipend of \$250 per company member. I have also specifically constructed the schedule and time requirements such that company members should have the ability to hold a full-time job while working on this project. The larger time commitment of the director in a project like this will not allow me to hold a full-time job, which is why I will receive the other \$3,150 offered by the grant. I will also provide my designers with a budget of \$100-\$250 each.

In one scene of *1776*, a character remembers what it was like to live in our world:

“Back then there was real fear...I remember feeling so alone. Like I was the only one fighting it.

We were all in it together, though. Every stranger you ever met, they were fighting the very same fight you were. Of course, you didn't talk about it with them, but all of us saw that terror, the terror any mortal person has...It felt lonely, but we were never alone.

We all had each other, no matter how often we forgot it. All of us, we always had each other.”

With the isolation caused by COVID-19— the dissolution of communities and tradition as seen throughout the world and on Reed’s campus— this sentiment becomes even more resonant than when it was published in 2017. Even the simple act of bringing people together— in rehearsals and as an audience— is a powerful one, and a step towards creating a more caring world.

*17776* is a work that’s been deeply influential on me, both as a person and an artist. To have the Reed Arts Grant Experience support me as I engage with it on a deeper level in the medium that is best suited for the conversations it starts would be an incredible honor.

## SCHEDULE

<b>Weeks 1-2</b>	Scriptwork & storyboarding	Turn the source text into a script with projection storyboards.
<b>Week 3</b>	Ensemble building using devising techniques	Create a cohesive and collaborative company and introduce the actors to the play. I will continue to write the script, informed by work done in the rehearsal room.
<b>Week 4</b>	Generation using devising techniques	Use devising techniques to immerse the company in the characters & the world of the play. Script finalized.
<b>Week 5</b>	Rough draft of staging, stumble-through	Begin roughly staging the play, leading into a full run-through. Preliminary designs due at the end of the week.
<b>Weeks 6-7</b>	Moment to moment scene work, first designer run	Work through the play, moment by moment, with the actors. Designer run at the end of Week 7 (where the designers see the full play for the first time).
<b>Week 8</b>	Scene work, work-through of acts	Go back through the play, fine-tuning and developing individual scenes. Another full run-through at the end of the week.
<b>Week 9</b>	Problem-solve and integrate tech	Start adding technical elements. Any issues identified in the previous weeks will be addressed.
<b>Week 10</b>	Tech, dress & performance. Post-mortem.	Full integration of technical elements. Final dress rehearsals, and a performance. One final meeting with the company.