

Teacher Guide

Ekene Ijeoma | *A Counting*

Beginning July 23, 2020



<https://a-counting.us/?city=houston>

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Public Art Installation Overview

- *A Counting* is a remotely accessible, participatory public art project by the Texas-born, New York and Boston-based artist Ekene Ijeoma.
- Ijeoma is a conceptual artist whose practice encourages new ways of seeing and understanding social issues. Leveraging computational design and conceptual art strategies, Ijeoma translates research and data studies into multimedia and multisensory works of art.
- Ijeoma is founder of the Poetic Justice group at MIT Media Lab.
- *A Counting* reflects on the linguistic and ethnic diversity of the United States by capturing “voice portraits” of major U.S. cities. The Houston iteration is the second in the series following New York City.
- The work can be accessed by visiting camh.org/beyond or calling 281-248-8730. Houstonians wishing to add their voice to the project can call the hotline and when prompted record themselves counting in their native language from one to 100. Additionally, individuals from around the world are invited to contribute to the project by helping with the transcriptions of the recordings.
- The recordings from the voices are algorithmically processed into video and sound works that are generated in real-time, to create an ever-changing and developing work that can be seen at: <https://a-counting.us/?city=houston>
- *A Counting* addresses the undercounting of marginalized communities in the United States census.
- Ijeoma’s art practice illuminates issues of social justice through works of art.
- This collaborative piece serves as a meditation on immigration and assimilation in the United States and seeks to provoke discussion and critical thought around what it means to be “counted.”

Houston

There are over 100 languages spoken in Houston. Whatever language(s) you speak (English included), we want to capture all voices and accents, especially those of marginalized communities. This edition is being developed with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and presented as part of *Beyond CAMH*.

Watch video	Listen to sound	Record	Transcribe
DURATIONS 1 ITERATION: 2x30s ALL 100 ITERATIONS: 0 Days	DURATIONS 1 ITERATION: 2x30s ALL 100 ITERATIONS: 0 Days	NUMBERS 1 to 100 in any language ESTIMATED TIME TO RECORD: 5m	CALLS 16 in 4 languages ESTIMATED TIME TO TRANSCRIBE: 3h

11 calls with unknown languages. Help transcribe recordings of people saying their languages by clicking [here](#).

16 calls in 4 languages with no transcriptions. More languages are added to the artwork as they're transcribed. Help transcribe calls in your languages by clicking links below.

English 2	Hebrew 1	Mandarin-Chinese 1	Spanish 2	Unknown 11
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7 languages recorded across 18 transcribed calls

Creation 1	Felice Cleveland	English, African-American 1	Sanjuana Banda
Maria	Kent Michael Smith	Quincy Berry	Spanish, Castilian 1
English 18	Nancy O'Connor	French 1	A. Rossetti
Ellen O Heller	Quincy Berry	Spanish 1	Vietnamese 1

7 languages transcribed across 20 participants

Creation 1	OMJ	Kent Michael Smith	English, African-American 1	Sanjuana Banda
Maria	Ellen O Heller	Laura Dickey	Quincy Berry	Spanish, Castilian 1
English 14	Felice Cleveland	Nancy O'Connor	French 1	A. Rossetti
AD	Joanne Baptista	Sanjuana Banda	Sarah	Vietnamese 1
Alex P	Kelley F	Victoria F	Spanish 1	X Lu

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Key Questions

- What is a voice portrait? How is this similar or different to other notions around the idea of traditional portraiture?
- How do we create spaces and places to interact with art safely during a global pandemic?
- What is the Census and why is it important?
- What are other examples of participatory artwork?
- How does participatory artwork expand or challenge your ideas about what defines a work of art?

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts | Artist Ekene Ijeoma has created a work to collect “voice portraits” of people in a community counting from one to 100. Think about a topic or issue that you care about. Collect a series of “voice portraits” recording people in your community sharing their thoughts about your chosen topic. Collect your recordings in one place. How do these different voices and experiences change or impact your thinking around your chosen topic? How can you share these “voice portraits”?

Visual Art | How can you make and share artwork safely during a global pandemic? Research what artists and arts organizations are doing during this time. Create a work or plan an event that celebrates new artwork and respects social distancing and quarantining.

Civics | Research the census and what that means. Use the data you collect to create some charts and show how the information has changed over the years.