

The Wandering House

About the Project

The Wandering House is a mobile audio-recording studio, fashioned out of a retrofitted ice fishing house, that will collect Northfielders' oral testimonies during summer and fall of 2019. Community members will be asked to share their ideas and ideals of *home* and how *immigration*, and the influx of people perceived as different, have affected these notions. Participants will also be invited to share their own family stories of immigration.

The project's main objective is twofold: first, to collect oral testimonies from Northfield residents on notions of *home* and *immigration*; and second, to create a video installation that combines the testimonies with an image track comprised of long takes from in and around Northfield. The final montage will offer the community a unique way to reflect on timely issues—like migration and displacement triggered by war, political unrest, and climate change—as they witness what a place like Northfield *looks* and *sounds* like, in all its vibrancy and contradiction.

Participants will be invited to enter the house and respond, in two or three sentences, to these questions (keep in mind that this is a work-in-progress and the phrasing and scope of these questions may vary):

1. How long have you lived in Northfield?
2. What does *home* mean to you?
3. How has your idea of *home* been affected, positively or negatively, by the influx of immigrants? Can you offer an example?

The Wandering House will encourage participants to respond candidly to the questions asked. This will not be an interview, nor a conversation. *The Wandering House* will not be a place for debate, or a platform for persuasion. Instead, it will offer an opportunity to express one's feelings and ideas with the goal to contribute to a soundscape that will reflect back to the community its very essence. People will not be required to identify themselves, and if they prefer not to have their voice recorded, they will be given the chance to fill out a short questionnaire (comprised of the same questions) and leave it in the house's mailbox.

While not subtle, the use of an itinerant house—a modern confessional of sorts—will present a powerful metaphor and an invitation to reflect that I am confident Northfield residents will want to engage with. By transforming potential spectators into active contributors, *The Wandering House* will generate thoughtful work that relies entirely on public participation for its success. This spirited approach to public engagement—one that involves direct interaction between locals and myself, an immigrant woman of color—will encourage the community to contemplate and reconsider their pre-existing conceptualizations of *home*, offering a much-needed counter-narrative to prevailing and official histories.

Having the backing of the City of Northfield—such as securing permits needed, facilitating connections to organizations and people that might be interested in supporting the project and/or taking part in it, as well as general logistical guidance—would go a long way in helping me secure funding and gather momentum to make this project feasible.

Project's Timeline

What I've done so far:

- Select contractor with whom to work (January 2018).
- Contact Director of the Arts at Carleton College to secure a space to house video installation (January 2018).
- Contact Human Rights Commission to present project's idea and secure their endorsement (February 2018).

Because *The Wandering House* project involves several moving parts, I am writing to request your support for the project's research and development phase. This phase, which will take place in summer/fall of 2018 and winter/spring 2019, includes the following steps:

On-going

Apply for grants to retrofit house; reach out to individuals, groups and various organizations in town to enlist their participation and support (Senior Center—50 North, Riverwalk, VFW, Rotary, various churches, schools, etc.).

Summer/Fall 2018

Look for fish house; develop informational materials/brochure that explain the project in detail; acquire fish house.

Winter 2019

Retrofit house into a well-functioning mobile audio-recording studio; secure permits and/or other logistical support; explore collaboration with artists from the Northfield community.

Spring 2019

Test house/studio's audio-recording capabilities under different scenarios (cold and warm temperatures; different noise ratios depending on location, etc.).

About the Artist

Cecilia Cornejo Sotelo is a Chilean-born filmmaker, teacher, and film curator based in the United States. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications Studies from The University of Iowa and a Master of Fine Arts in Film, Video, and New Media from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. With ties to both the American Midwest and the central coast of Chile, Cornejo Sotelo's work explores displacement, marginalization and belonging and is rooted in the experience of living *in-between* cultures.

In 2012, Cornejo Sotelo embarked on the "Living Marginal Project," a multiplatform endeavor intended to function as a series of audiovisual meditations on belonging. In support of her work, she received an Established Artist Grant from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (2014) and an Artist Initiative Grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board (2016). More recently, she received a Jerome Foundation Film, Video, and Digital Media Grant (2017) and an Artist Initiative Grant (2018), both in support of her current film, *Ways of Being Home*.

Cornejo Sotelo's work has shown locally and abroad at venues such as MoMA's Documentary Fortnight, L'Alternativa (Spain), Arsenale (Berlin), InVideo (Italy), Melbourne Latin American Film Festival, Puerto Vallarta International Film Festival (Mexico), Festival Internacional de Documentales de Santiago (Chile), Cine las Américas, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Athens International Film Festival, Tucson Underground Film Festival, Gene Siskel Film Center, Miami International Film Festival, and Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival. She currently teaches in the Cinema and Media Studies Department at Carleton College.