

A detailed diorama of a futuristic landscape. In the background, a dark, textured wall features a waterfall and a large, yellow, dome-shaped structure with circular openings. The foreground is a reddish-brown terrain with a winding blue river. Scattered across the landscape are numerous small, white, dome-shaped structures with dark openings, some of which are surrounded by green patches of grass. A white, geodesic dome is visible on the left side of the diorama.

# Exploring A Virtual "Utopia"

This Education Interactive is based on the work of Becky Wareing Steele featured in an exhibition at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College from August 3 to November 3, 2019.

Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov

# List your own communities...

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For example:

- School
- Family
- Friends
- Neighborhood
- Interest/hobby groups
- Others?

# Definitions and interpretations of "Utopia"

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- "a place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions" - [Merriam-Webster](#)
- "In 1516 Sir Thomas More wrote the first 'Utopia'. He coined the word 'utopia' from the Greek *ou-topos* meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere'. But this was a pun - the almost identical Greek word *eu-topos* means a good place. So at the very heart of the word is a vital question: can a perfect world ever be realised?" - [British Library](#)

What would your version of Utopia  
be like?

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Becky Wareing  
Steele created  
*Utopia: A Society For  
All* as a commentary  
on how we build  
community in an  
increasingly divided  
and virtual world.



Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov

During the COVID-19 requirements for social distancing, we now connect to each other mostly through online communication and communities.

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While Wareing Steele's work was not created as a response to the current need for social distancing, we can revisit her work thinking about this as one perspective.



HYBL FAMILY  
SCREENING ROOM

BECKY WAREING STEELE

UTOPIA

a new society for all

AUGUST 2019 - NOVEMBER 3, 2019

Presented by  
the Hybl Family Foundation  
in partnership with the Hybl Family Foundation

BECKY WAREING STEELE

STEP INSIDE *UTOPIA*

PICTURE YOURSELF IN UTOPIA

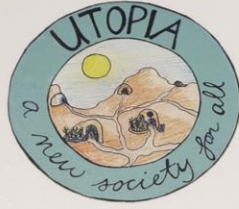


In the next slide, you "turn" to the right to read the gallery text.



Read the  
gallery text.

## Why did Wareing Steele create this society?



*Utopia: A New Society for All* is a socially engaged art project founded in 2017, a turbulent time for many. The 2016 presidential election had exposed rifts in our communities, leaving the country feeling politically and ideologically divided. Climate change took on greater urgency as more devastating severe weather events revealed what the future might hold. And the tools that many of us use to feel more connected to others, like social media, proved both socially isolating and vulnerable to damaging outside interference. In such an uncertain social and political landscape, the need to build real community took on a new importance for Denver-based artist Becky Wareing Steele.

Wareing Steele, who specializes in small-scale sculpture, turned to art to bring people together. She founded *Utopia: A New Society for All*, a socially engaged art project that exists in two forms: a physical

and virtual reality. As a physical object, it is the 1:160 scale diorama installation behind you. As virtual reality, it is a new community created by a group of real people from around the world—who are each represented as hand-painted figures in the diorama installation.

*Utopia* falls under the category of socially engaged practice, a type of art making where the process of collaboration, participation, and interaction is as much a part of the artwork as the art object itself. The art of *Utopia* isn't just the diorama installation. It also includes the conversations and relationships formed among the citizens of *Utopia* as they grapple with the questions that define society. What does it mean to build community? What are the possibilities of social, cultural, and political life? How can we build a better world?

Blair Huff  
Curatorial Assistant

What are the benefits and  
detriments to building and sustaining  
online communities?

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Blair Huff  
Curatorial Assistant

Explore the galleries with us in the next slides.





"Step up" to see the village of Utopia up close.



Wareing Steele's artwork represents a virtual society through a physical model of that community.



What immediate observations can you make of this artwork? What questions arise?







#### What do the numbers mean?

You can use the numbers next to each label on this table (like #1) to find the structure on the Map of Utopia hanging on the wall. Each building in Utopia is labeled with a number on the map.

#### Where do people live?

The houses in Utopia are called Earthships, a style of passive solar dwellings pioneered by architect Michael Reynolds in the 1970s. This style of architecture uses local or recycled materials to create environmentally sustainable homes that produce water, electricity, and food for its occupants' use. For example, carefully placed windows regulate heat by letting in sunlight, while thick walls act as insulation.

Becky Warving Steele  
American (born 1983)

#### Utopia

2017-2019

Wood, foam, sand, clay, paint, hand-painted figures, paper-mâché, 3-D printer pen, hair modeling water, scenic modeling materials

On loan from the artist

Advance to the next images to look more closely...





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov





Now take a step back. Keep in mind your questions and observations as the next slides continue to let you "walk" around the exhibition.



The artist envisioned the homes of Utopia citizens through these sketches. The homes are called Earthships.

Earthships are a style of passive solar dwellings pioneered by architect Michael Reynolds in the 1970's. This style of architecture uses local or recycled materials to create environmentally sustainable homes that produce water, electricity, and food for its occupants' use.

By using an Earthship as the model home in her society, what issues may Wareing Steele be addressing in her commentary of our current world?

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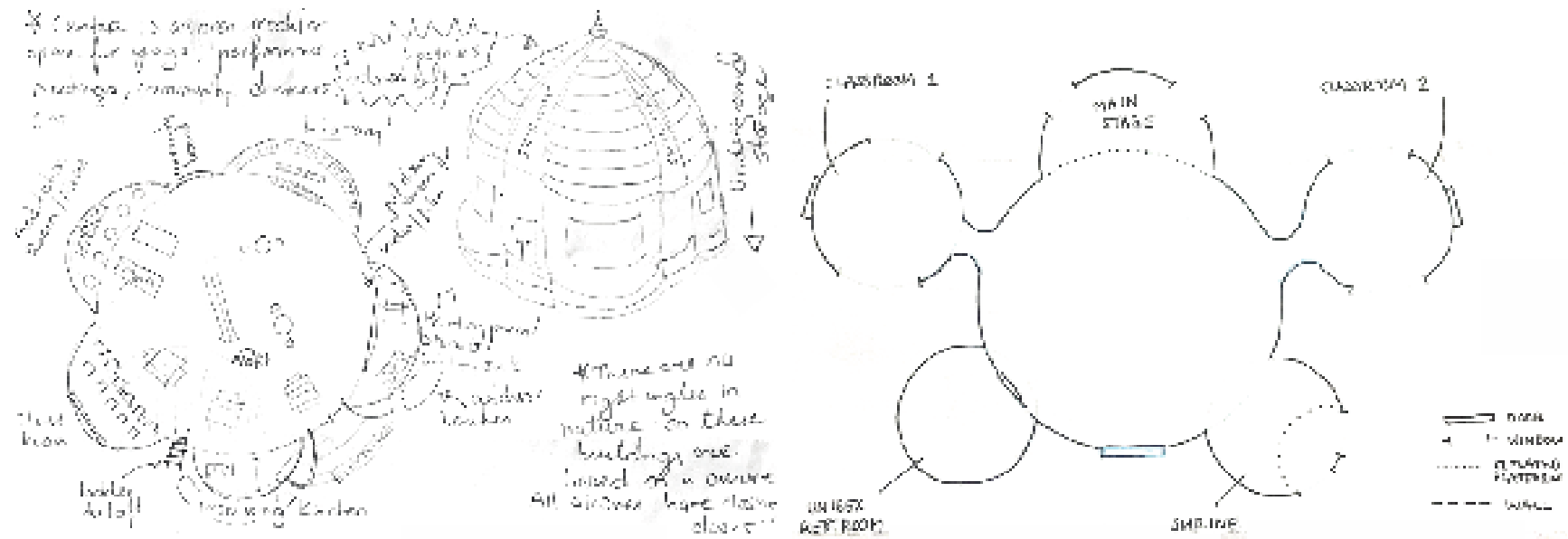
The citizens of Utopia participate in occasional community meetings as well as democratic voting procedures.

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In the next slides, consider how voting influenced the design and other aspects of their community.

## #54 Community Center

*Utopia* citizens' votes shaped the final design of the community center. Here are two examples from their ballots:



## #1 Community Green House

### What grows in Utopia?

In addition to their individual gardens, citizens decided what to grow in the community green house (#1) by vote:

- Black Beans
- Garbanzo Beans
- Peas
- Quinoa
- Melons
- Tomatoes
- Lettuce
- Sweet Peppers
- Broccoli
- Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes
- Beets
- Onion
- Garlic
- Melons

Peek inside the geodesic dome greenhouse.  
Can you see the plants inside?





Photo courtesy of Daira Dundov

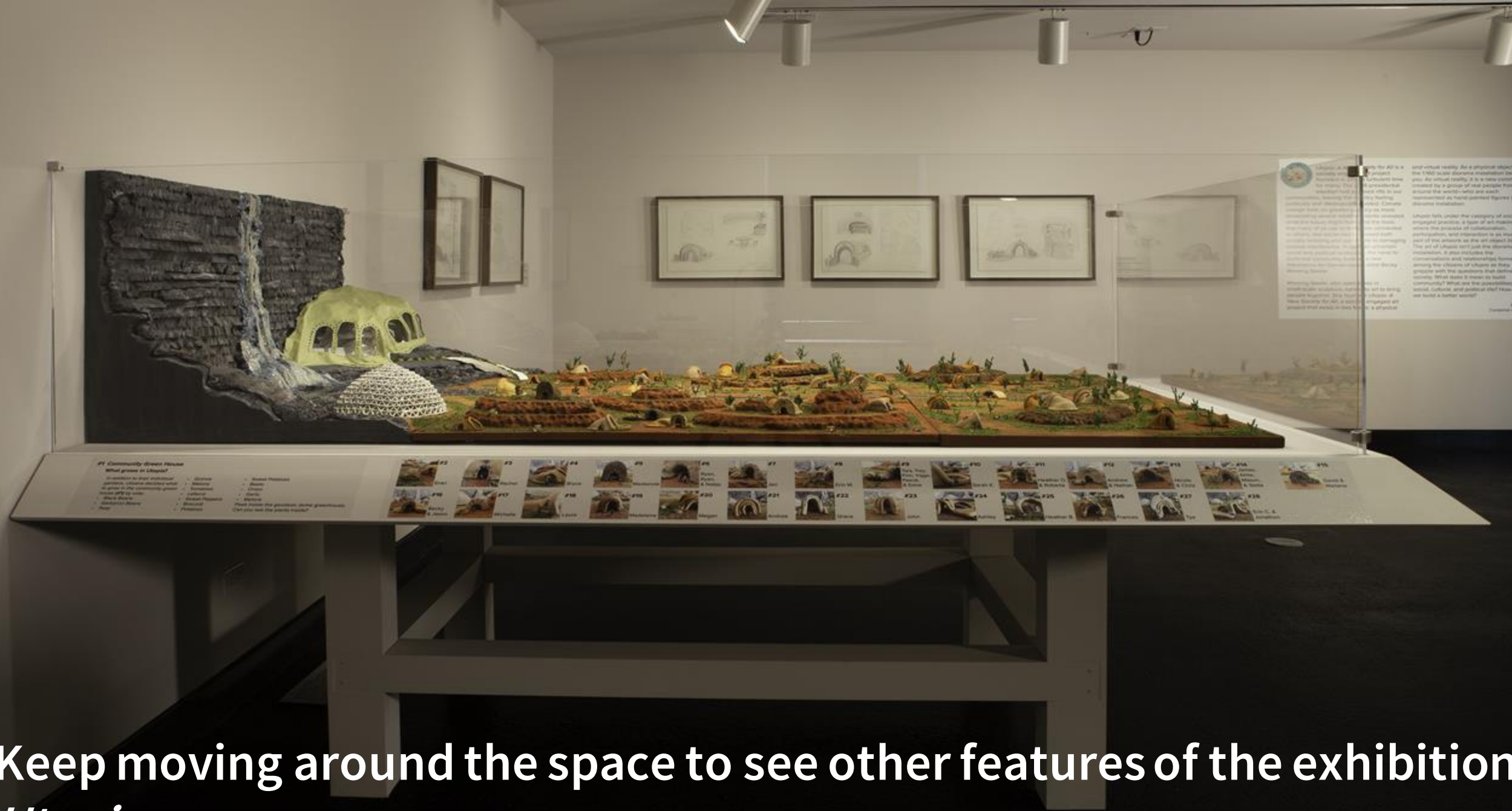


What might the experiences of living in this Utopia be like? What did you see that makes you say that?

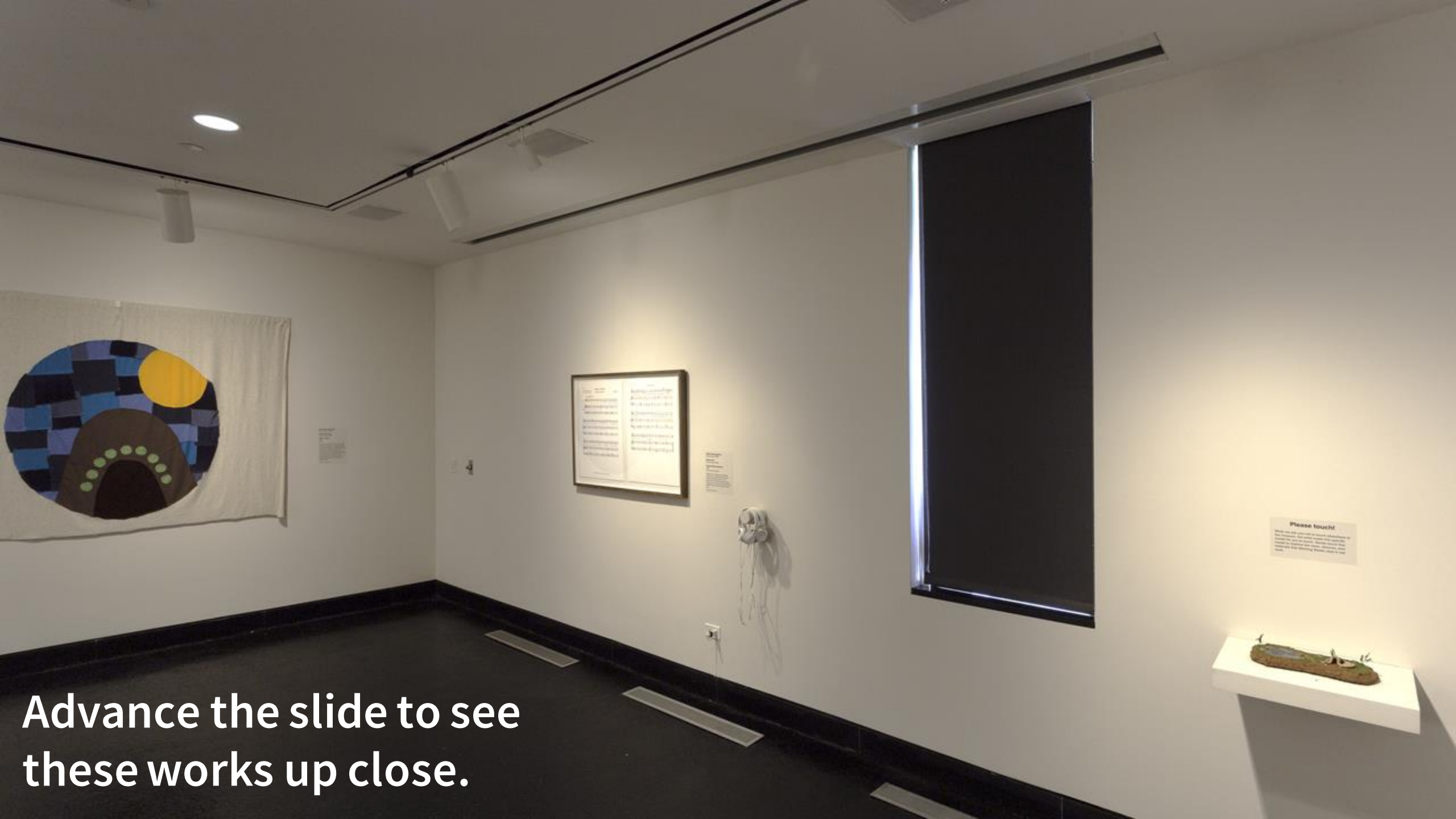
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What challenges might you face living in this community?





Keep moving around the space to see other features of the exhibition *Utopia*.



Advance the slide to see these works up close.



**Becky Wareing Steele**

American (born 1983)

**Nathan Hall**

American (born 1982)

***Utopia National Anthem***

2019

Ink on paper, audio file

Nathan Hall, a composer and Utopian, called on the citizens of *Utopia* to help create the society's anthem. It was important to the citizens that the anthem focus more on the future than the past and that the music was easy enough for all to sing.



Becky Wareing Steele  
American (born 1983)  
Nathan Hall  
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*Utopia National Anthem*  
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called on the citizens of Utopia to help  
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sing.



# What are the benefits and detriments to having a national anthem?

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Consider the context within your own personal experience, opinion, prior knowledge, etc.





**Becky Wareing Steele**

American (born 1983)

**Shawna Doering**

American (born 1983)

***Flag of Utopia***

2019

Fiber

Notice the repetition of circles in the flag. Shawna Doering, who is both a fiber artist and a citizen of *Utopia*, and Wareing Steele, surveyed the citizens of *Utopia* to identify a symbol that could best represent this community: a circle.

Circles represent unity; a connection to the planet, the sun, and the moon; and the circular nature of this self-sustaining society.

What does a national flag represent?  
How could a flag be interpreted  
differently by different groups of people?

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As you answer the questions, consider the context within your own personal experience, opinion, prior knowledge, etc.



In your exploration of Wareing Steele's *Utopia*, how does this society compare to online, virtual reality, or social media-based societies?

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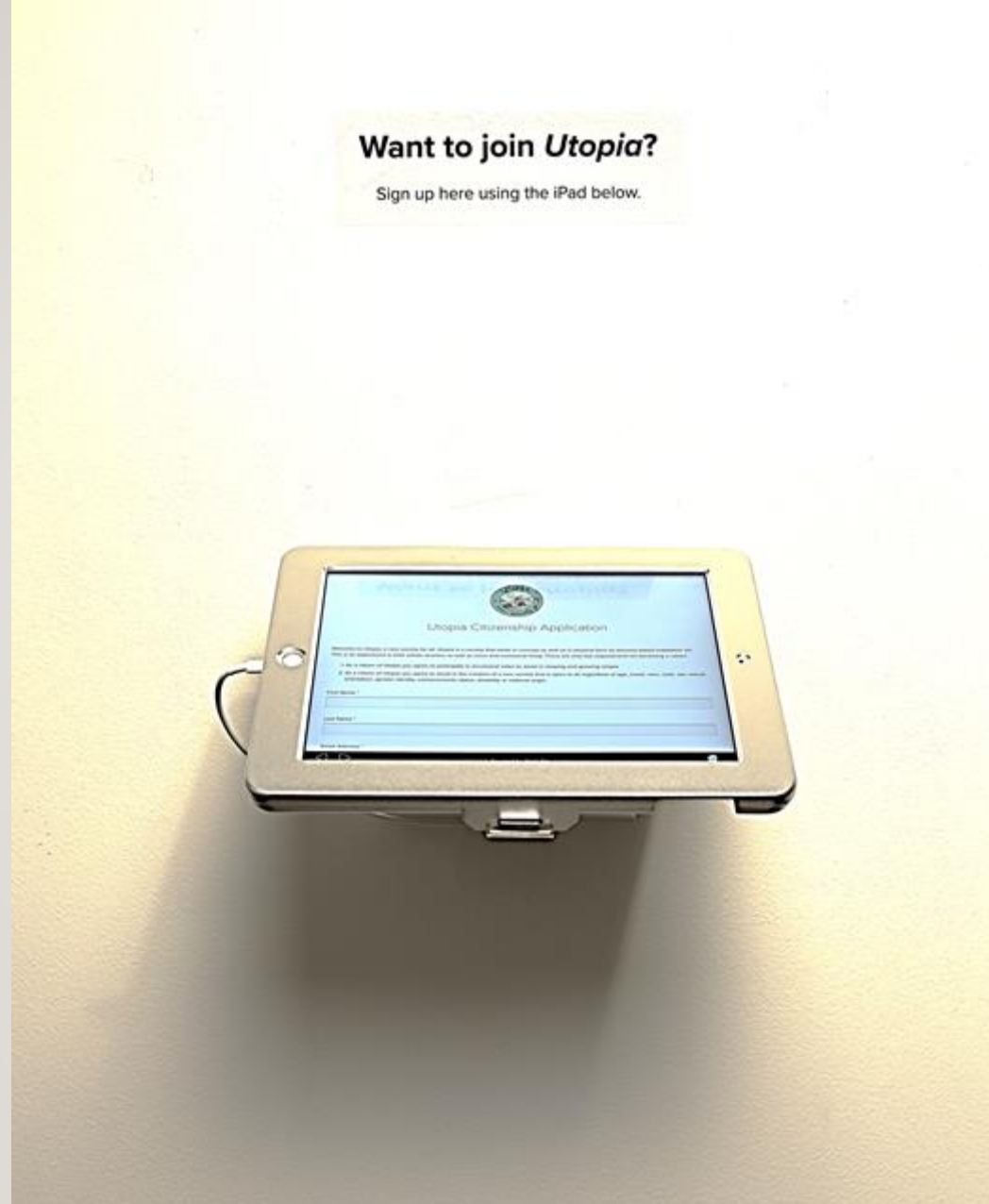
# Design your own Utopia:

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- What might your Utopia look like? (Draw a map or elements of your society)
- Where might your Utopia take place?
- Who would live there and how would they be able to become a part of your community?
- What would be the foundations for your society?
- What rules would people have to abide by?



Wareing Steele created this Utopia to provide a new society for all and she invites you to apply to become a member.



If you would like to become a part of Wareing Steele's Utopia, [click here](#) to apply.

# OTHER RESOURCES

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[Artist's website: Introduction to Utopia](#)

[Online Images](#)

[Utopia Application](#)

[Meet the Citizens](#)