

## **10-03.space**

Alma Alloro

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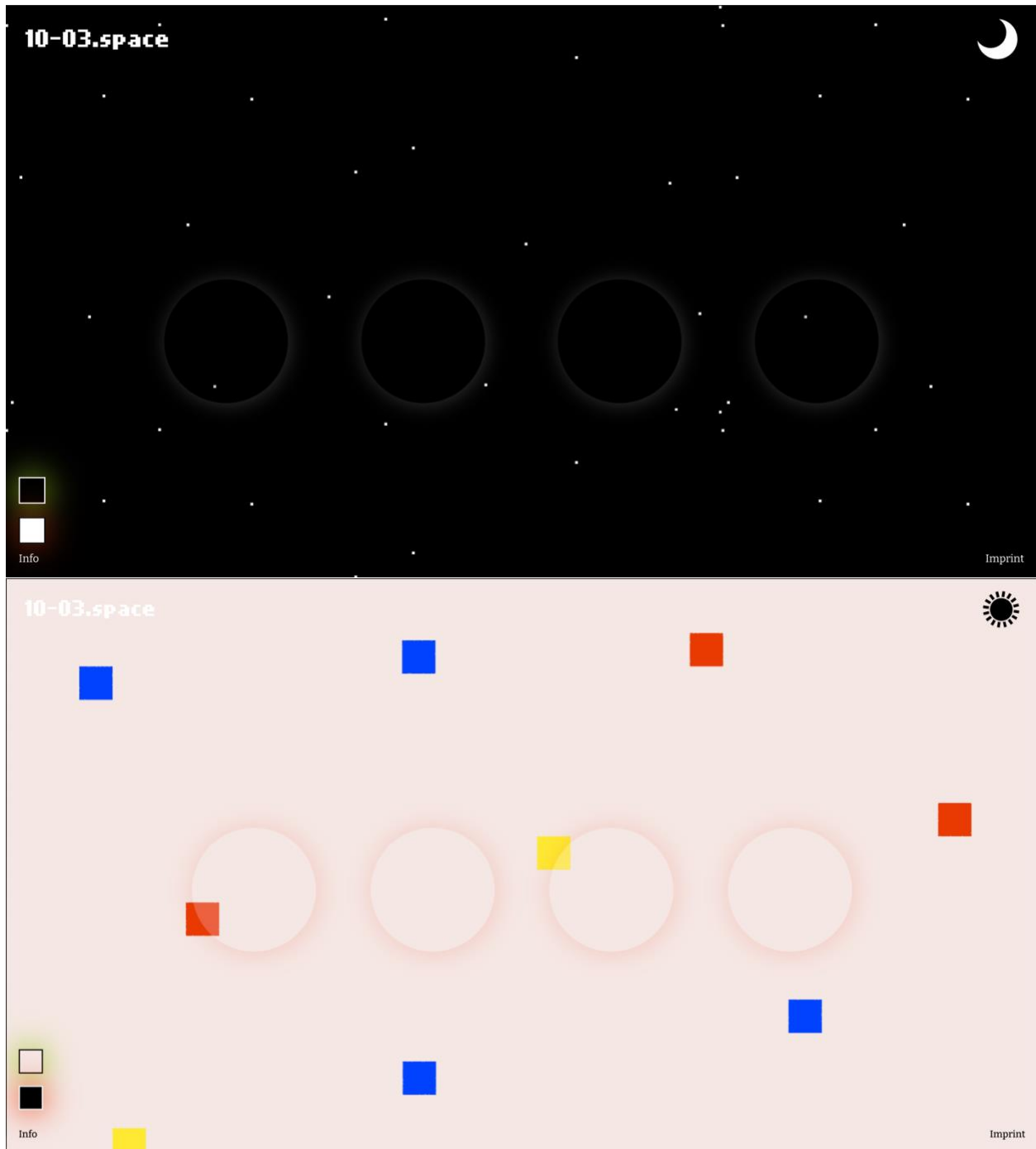
Kate Averett, Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center

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## 10-03.space

Alma Alloro



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### Interview: Alma Alloro and Kate Averett

*Alma Alloro on craft, necessity, and the making of 10-03.space, a new Internet art commission capturing the thoughts, ideas, memories, fears, and hopes which arose and developed during a year of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**Kate Averett:** Let's start with how this piece started for you. Was it conceived of to be a piece for the internet or did it start off differently? Because I know it's been almost, if not over, a year in the making.

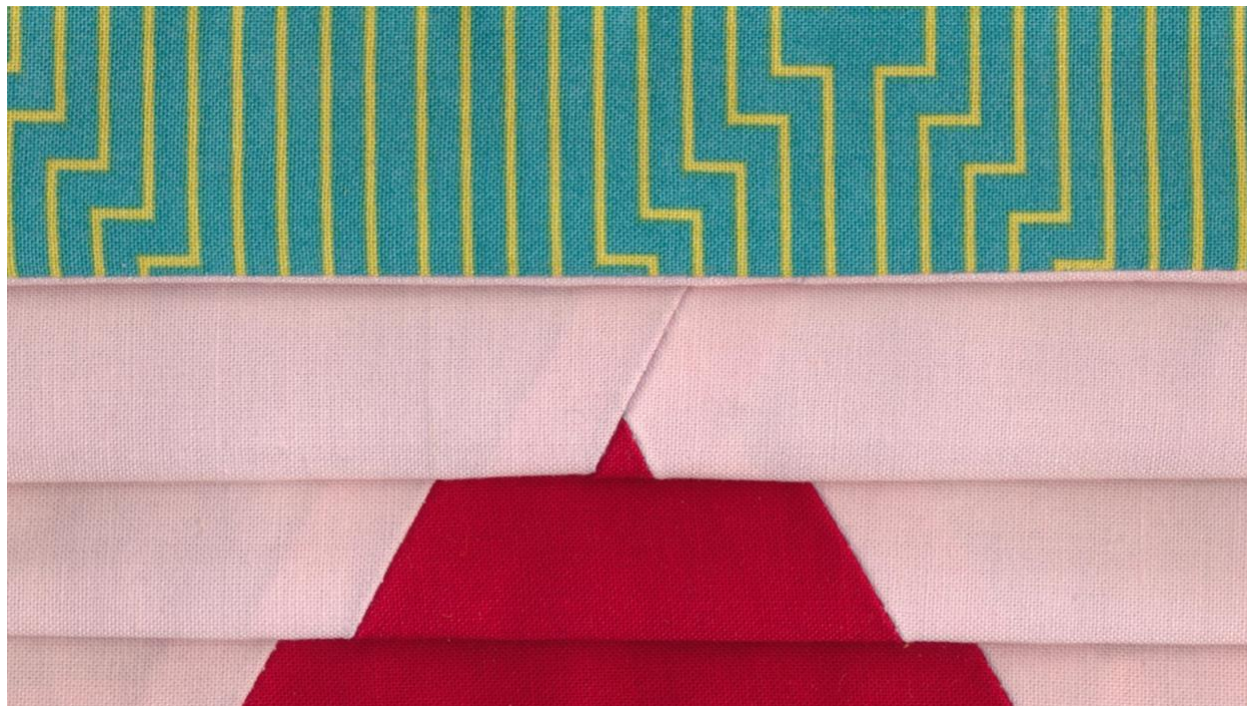
**Alma Alloro:** Yeah, a little bit less than a year. Well, it's a very...still evolving project for me. It didn't start quite as an art project. I'd been asked almost a year ago by a friend here in Berlin to make her and her partner masks. I posted what I made on Instagram, and people just started asking me to make them more and it just was... I was overwhelmed with requests to make masks.

And since I'm working with this idea of, "How can we utilize textiles to make animation?" I started to scan many of the masks that I made shortly before shipping them over, or sending them, or giving to people, so I began to collect this archive of scanned, digitized versions of those masks that I made.

But really, the main reason behind making them was people needed a mask, and I was able to make them. Naturally I didn't want to repeat myself, and I tried to make each of the masks quite unique, but it wasn't really a goal, it's just something naturally that happened, just to get myself interested, and so that would be what I call the first part of the process. It's just collecting now, like, creating this archive over time.

And the second part was, after I was asked by the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center to create a digital-based work, it was clear to me that this is my opportunity to create something with those masks. I wanted to make something that would be

unique to the Internet. That led to the idea of making this site, which I see as a platform. I also like to see it as like a fanzine, not exactly a website, not another Wordpress site or another Facebook page, but something that has its personal touch also on the site itself.

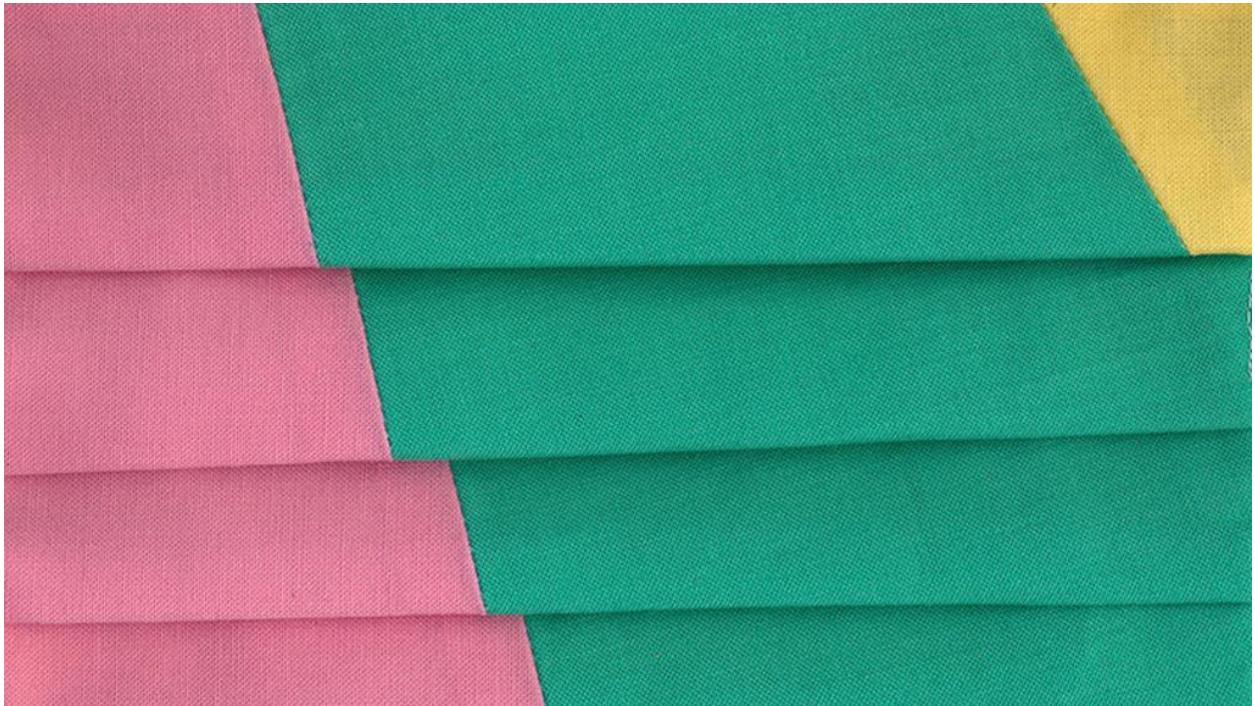


**KA:** I love you're like tapping into these two ever-present narratives that we've had throughout the last year: this DIY approach to fill needs and provide community care, like making masks and distributing them. I know that a lot of your work has to do with this distribution of labor and the way that we understand labor, especially when you talk about creating something that is meant to be seen over the internet and meant to meet the needs of the time period and that we're living in. I think a lot about the labor that has been put on creatives in this last year, like additional labor of the expectation to completely innovate and rise to these occasions. So, I would love to just hear a little bit more about that relationship between the care and labor involved in the creation of these masks and then also into the coding and creation of 10-03.space.

**AA:** Really good question.... The subject of labor is something that was always close to me. One of the things that I explore and like to point out, I suppose, is the part of labor in the fabrication of a work of art, and the role that it plays, and also how it's often being

overlooked by art critics, by art appreciators. I think this was an opportunity for me to bring it up very, very broadly. Because I started making the masks for the people, and it wasn't something that was decorative, it was needed. This is for us, it's an opportunity to see the role of the artist. What can I bring to the table?

This collective care that we have is a responsibility, that we all in our way can participate, and that was for a short while my participation. But we all, by looking after one another, we're all part of it. I don't know how much of this that I'm saying now will be relevant in a year. The idea that we should look after one another, I think it should be relevant always, but this year showed it very, very sharply. I hope I also deliver a message of pro-mask, as an opposing expression to anti-mask.



**KA:** Aesthetically, your masks are so beautiful. In your writing about this piece, you express the idea that these masks being worn around are like an exhibition; they have this whole life out in the world. That it's a celebration of caring for one another, and protecting one another in the face of anti-masking, and all of this.



**AA:** It's also another way to, like, if we cannot go to museums, this is another way to connect between the physical art that we all miss now and hope to be able to experience again very soon, and the digital or web-based opportunities. I was drawn to the idea that there's this thing that you see, that also has its own existence somewhere on a physical level, on individuals' faces. This is of course a big part of it. It's this image that's spread around the wall, like it's an entity that has more than just its one specific location.



**KA:** You had to learn how to code to create this. Did you kind of sit down and think, “Okay this is what I want it to look like; let me accumulate the skills in order to make it look that way,” or did your process of learning how to code determine the aesthetics and functionality of the piece?

**AA:** I started learning how to code last year, like summer last year. I started to take tutorials on that, but there were a lot of things that I had to learn specifically to make this website. So I did learn a lot, but it's not like I started to learn for it. But I kind of made a big push to be even better.

It is very important for me to be close to the craft of what I make. For example, six years ago when I felt like I wanted to do quilting. It's always, there's the thing that I want to make, like quilting for example, and then I learn how to make it. It's never the other way, like, "Oh, I know how to quilt, now let's do something about it."

It's really important for me to be able to make things myself. The downside is that I am not an expert in anything. I'm not an expert in sewing or quilting, I'm not an expert in web design, I'm not an expert as an animator, but I know all these different things. So this is supposedly the downside of it, but also I see a creative potential, though, because the work is limited to the constraints of my own ability. It can never be more than what I'm capable of. Of course I occasionally ask for tips and advice, if I really need something, or hit a wall, in a way that is really essential for the experience of the work. But it's always, let's say 90% within the constraints of my own abilities.

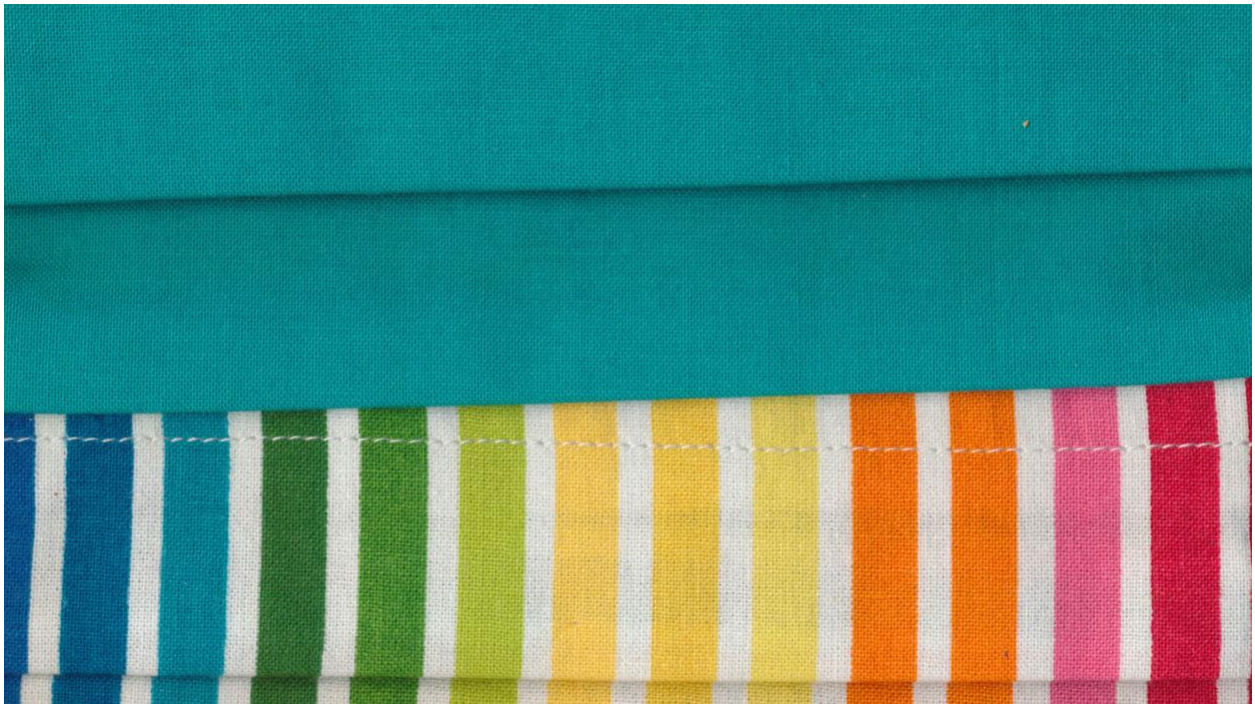


It's important for me that, in the process of fabricating artworks, we think equally about the concept as well as the fabrication itself. That goes for a lot of artists that are very very focused on the technicality side of things. Like, you see realistic oil painters—of course I'm not at all undermining realistic oil paint, I know some of them are amazing—



but you can see a lot of people going so in detail, into the technicality of things, that it can sometimes be a little bit of a lack of creativity or depth or originality. And then at the other end, which is actually my subject at the moment, you see like, the grand master artist that comes and is like, “we shall do that” and then hires a company of 20 people to make the work entirely themselves. So this is something that I would like to suggest; I would like to show a critical point of view on that.

Specifically with textile, and even more specifically with quilting, it’s something that is often overlooked and it’s specifically upsetting because it’s feminine labor. It’s something that women do in their free time, and historically it’s also women that had the wealth to buy fabric in, I’m talking 18th century, 19th century. And only recently I see a change which makes me really happy, that textile work and those women are getting more appreciation. This is really good. This is a step into the right direction.



And if I go back to coding... I never really did anything like that, like coding. I think even my brother last year, he said, “Hey! Now you have a lot of time”—yeah, like he thought I have a lot of time now—”so maybe I’ll teach you some programming,” because he is a programmer and a mathematician. I completely—I didn’t want to hear that, like “nah.” I



think this is why I'm saying this is because I think that women are not encouraged to do it. I really regret that I haven't started learning it earlier, because there's no reason I wouldn't. Like, okay, I'm not a mathematician, but so what? You don't need to be a mathematician to do it; you just need to have the passion to do it.

**KA:** This is kind of a topic related that I would just love to hear your perspective on. You talk about the spaces in which women are funneled into or excluded from, which always makes me think of Anni Albers. She comes to the Bauhaus, and she and all of these women with a multitude of talents are funneled into the Weaving Workshop. Then they have to consider how to use weaving, how to use that material, to achieve their vision, and how to innovate on that. I know that her writings on material are so important to you, and especially your approach of getting down to the root of material is so in line with her philosophy. So I would love to know how that philosophy would play out on the internet, and with technology and with computers. I think so many people are running with that idea, but I think especially what you've done with this piece is so rooted in her philosophies and her writing on material.



**AA:** I'm sure you're much more an expert in her work than me, but yeah, especially with the Bauhaus people, the interconnection of being closer to the craft and to the technological side of things. But also, more importantly, is the process and experimentation being a key value in creating a work. A lot of the final decisions that I made about the work were part of, okay, I have a vision, this is what I think you should do, starting doing it, facing some sort of technical problem, or something doesn't work, and then ending up liking the way it is, and embracing it. I think this is something that you can say about any technology, not just the Internet.

For me, it's also, I would say, a teaching philosophy. As a teacher I would encourage that. I'm teaching young children animation, and this is something that's important on one hand is to get closer on some level to the technological aspect of your work, and be able to do it, but then not to get too stressed if you reach a point where something is not exactly what you wanted. It's something that I do also. You know, if there's something specific that I want to do, I can go and learn it, or I can pay somebody to make it for me. But I find it more fun and more interesting to embrace the moments.

*This is an edited transcript of a conversation that streamed to BMCM+AC's digital event platforms on Wednesday, April 14, 2021. Edits were made by JBMCS editors and Alma Alloro. View the work at [10-03.space](#), and view the full recorded interview [here](#). A walk-through demonstration of [10-03.space](#), which was cut from this transcript, begins at the 14-minute mark.*