VOLUME 6
2014 – 2015

Xpace
Cultural
Centre

Emerging artists and designers:

Are in the early stages of their careers;

Do not have an extensive exhibition history;

Can be any age;

Generate innovative, exciting and often challenging ideas;

Are not yet recognized as established;

Are professionals.

Volume is Xpace Cultural Centre's annual anthology of exhibitions, essays and interviews. These essays demonstrate the breadth of exhibitions, artists and designers that contribute to Xpace's place as a vibrant part of Toronto and OCAD University's arts community. This publication includes programming across all four of our exhibition spaces in the 2014-15 year.

About us

Xpace Cultural Centre is a membership-driven artist-run centre supported by the OCAD Student Union. We are dedicated to providing emerging and student artists, designers and art writers with opportunities to showcase their work in a professional setting. Our programming responds to contemporary issues in theory and aesthetics, and the interests and needs of our membership and community.

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Printed by: Sure Print and Design

Relief Support—Supported by The Ontario Arts Council

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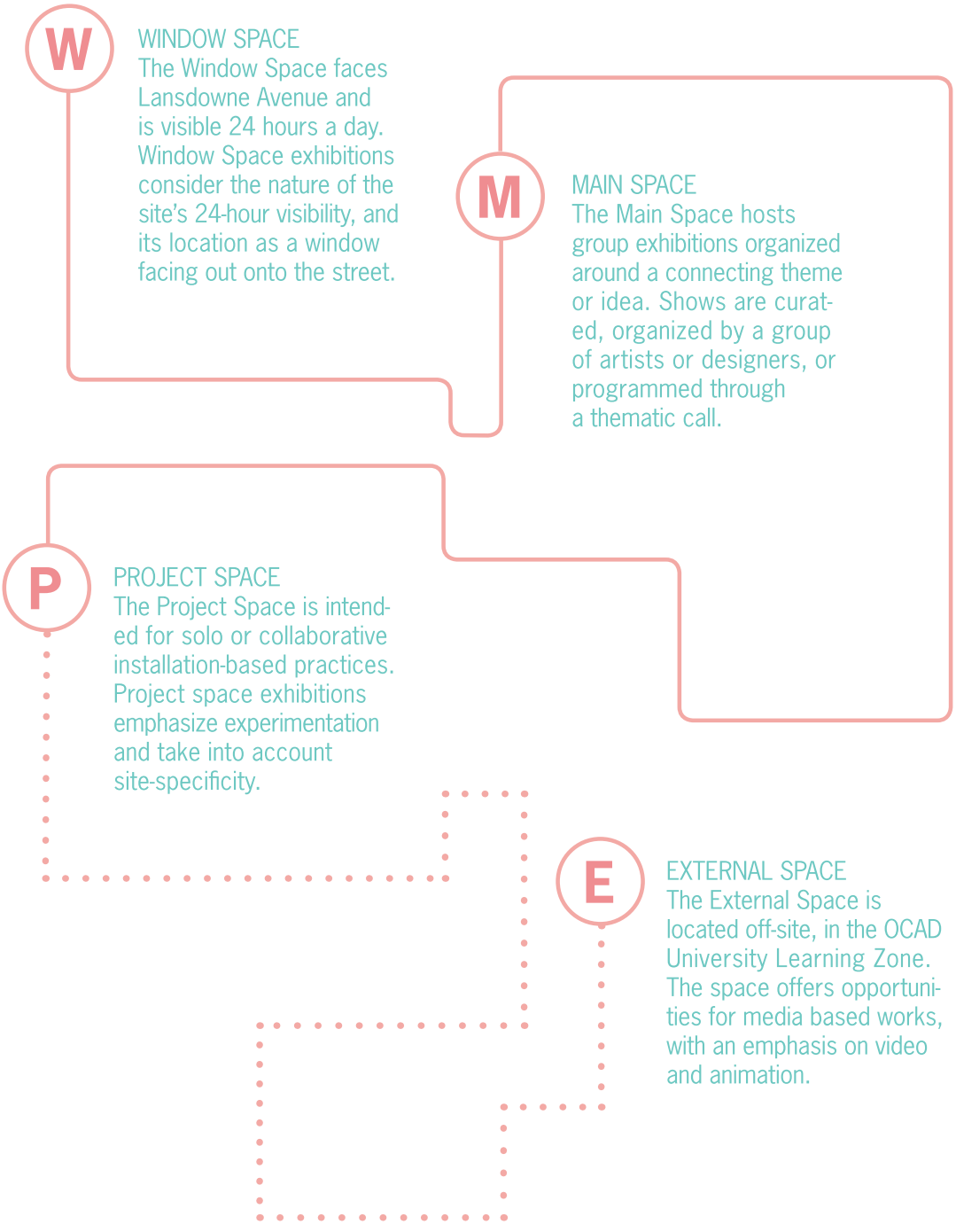

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Hudson Christie

Track and Field, Meeting

09.12.14 – 10.10.14

by **JONATHAN LOCKYER**

Hudson Christie's *Track and Field, Meeting* (2014) is a large-scale, three-dimensional realization of the artist's illustration practice. The work, which sees a humanoid figure jumping over a track hurdle while being impaled by an errant javelin, straddles the lines of absurdity, violence, and reality. In creating *Track and Field, Meeting*, Christie was interested in producing a single work that was viscerally destructive and violent, but at the same time imbued with a fantastical narrative that exists so clearly outside of reality, that it could therefore be read within a humorous, but equally dark narrative.

Christie, who had originally approached his art practice from a painterly perspective, began to take an interest in the broader characteristics of North American folk art, specifically woodcarving and other sculptural practices. As his practice continued to evolve, Christie found interest in the meeting of the vacant, uncanny, and emotive human characteristics common within the broader folk art movement. The harsh and simplistic characteristics in the work of a great deal of folk artists appealed to Christie. This interest in folk art has imbued his current illustration work with a unique aesthetic sensibility that takes its cues not only from contemporary and historical folk traditions, but also subversive animation and sculptural aesthetic trends. Rather than a direct reference, folk art became a foil for Christie's work, stating that,

"instead of seeing my work as "folk art" I think that I am taking aesthetic cues from that tradition and manipulating them into something quite different."[1]

Building on this mode of working between traditions, Christie states that:

When I am creating these sculptures, it feels like an extension of my drawing abilities. By capturing these images through the use of photography, it gives the work so much more body than I would ever have the patience for as a more conventional 2-D illustrator. Working this way allows me to create work with more immediacy, but that is also highly procedural.[2]

Christie cites three-dimensional illustrator Chris Sickels and his Red Nose Studio as a significant influence on his current practice. Sickels employs a similar strategy of creating elaborate three-dimensional sculptures and dioramas, and then photographs each as a way of framing and flattening the illustration. This process is similar to Christie's own approach, where photography functions as an illustration tool rather than a marker of the artist's own aesthetic practice. Whereas Sickels' work is susceptible to the variables of found material he regularly incorporates into his work, Christie employs a methodical process in the creation of his work. Christie's process is highly controlled, with a structured, linear progression from conceptualization to completion. Each sculpture or diorama begins as a two-dimensional sketch that Christie vehemently adheres to as the project becomes more fully realized. In a cyclical way, Christie develops these sketches into three-dimensional works, before lighting and photographing them, rendering them as a two-dimensional illustration. Christie likens his approach of the construction and staging of each illustration to the work of contemporary Canadian photographer Jeff Wall. Wall's elaborately staged compositional photographs are often part of a much larger process in the creation of the still-frame of a cinematic moment. This is not to say that Christie shares any aesthetic sensibilities with Wall's photographic practice. Instead, Christie sees the planning and staging of each of Wall's elaborate photographs as akin to his own construction of complex visual narratives within his own illustrations. Wall's use of the tableaux, and the construction of elaborate scenarios rendered in a two-dimensional plane has influenced Christie's own approach to photography, but for Christie, photography is simply a means to an end within his illustration practice. Its mechanics allow for Christie's work to be approached as contrived, planned out, and

1 The author in conversation with Hudson Christie, Sunday, August 10, 2014.
2 Ibid.

necessary to the artist's work.

Rather than seeing each setting as single moment of a broader narrative, Christie aims for each illustration to stand on its own, speaking to the viewer from a direct, comprehensible space. In *Work-Life Balance* (2014), Christie explored the ability for stand-alone illustrations to contribute to a larger narrative by creating a series of ten three-dimensional sculptures and maquettes out of wood, foam, oven-bake clay, and paper that were then, through the use of photography, rendered as two-dimensional illustrations. Each of the ten scenes presents jobs and hobbies that intersect in sickly dark and humorously incompatible instances. In separate scenes, a mortician moonlights as a magician, a surgeon dabbles in cross-stitching, and a dolphin trainer explores his passion for taxidermy. *Work-Life Balance* functions as a synthesis of two disparate but familiar elements of human life, captured with humorous irony in a single moment. It is this idea of contrasting tensions in the various facets of our daily occupations that informed Christie's most recent work.

The often-disturbing juxtapositions displayed in *Work-Life Balance* acted as a template for Christie's current project. While *Track and Field, Meeting* references many of the aesthetic and conceptual cues from *Work-Life Balance*, the artist sees the overall spirit and execution of the project as separate and unique from his previous bodies of work. Rather than render the final illustration through a large-scale photograph, Christie utilized the frame and shallowness of the window display as an alternative mode of "flattening" the sculptural work. *Track and Field, Meeting* was made somewhat in reaction to the artist's previous bodies of narrative work. Instead of building a story through a series of intertwined illustrations, Christie sought to create a work with considerable magnitude that could be viewed as iconic within the parameters of its exhibition. In conceptualizing *Track and Field, Meeting* Christie states that:

I just wanted to try on outright violence to see what it looked like; what it felt like. But not a violence that was discernibly real to anyone. I didn't want to cover it up or make it metaphorical, but at the same time didn't want to depict a scene of real physical violence.[3]

The title of the work is an almost-shameless pun on the literal meeting of not only two events—the hurdle race and the javelin toss—but also the unfortunate meeting of the hurdler with an errant javelin. The hurdler's vacant facial expression teeters between shock and ambivalence to the horror of the javelin lodged squarely of his torso. The work strikes a balance between humor, violence, and absurdity, imbuing an understanding in the viewer that *Track and Field, Meeting* is an instance of almost incomprehen-

3 Ibid.

sible, cartoonish violence that has become detached from reality. Christie's work recalls Susan Sontag's conception of the viewer's relationship to violence in photography and painting. Sontag states that:

> …the gruesome invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable to look. Those with the stomach to look are playing a role authorized by many glorious depictions of suffering. Torment, a canonical subject in art, is often represented in painting as a spectacle, something being watched (or ignored) by other people. The implication is: no, it cannot be stopped—and the mingling of inattentive with attentive onlookers underscores this.[4]

It is that detached, but equally confrontational understanding embodied in Christie's work that maintains an unsettling darkness, creating an underlying sense of tension and an inability to look away. The uncanny reality that Christie's work draws its greatest strength from becomes referential to our own societal disconnect with violence in our daily lives, and our ability (or inability) to relate to what we may see, but not necessarily experience.

4 Susan Sontag, ***Regarding the Pain of Others***, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003) 42.

Georgina Lee Walker

Non-Functional Objects in Space

10.17.14 – 11.14.14

by **INEZ GENEREUX**

> "Our own era…seems to be that of space. We are in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered. A period in which, in my view, the world is putting itself to the test, not so much as a great way of life destined to grow in time but as a net that links points together and creates its own muddle."—Foucault, *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*

Amongst the many aesthetic triumphs that design and construction have achieved, the materials that they employ have little to say on their own. The concrete slab has never been seen to amount to anything more than a means to an end.

Construction sites are a disruption in the eyes of our everyday lives. They give the passerby the sensation of a project unfinished, a visual upheaval that seems dangerous and raw. Piles of scrap metal and broken stone heaped on top of each other are kept separate from the common pedestrian, as construction work signs redirect ones path away from the site. We are told these heaps of material are not only a disruption in our visual field, but should be avoided physically as well. We develop different relationships to different spaces based on the ways that we are socialized to use them. Here we under-

stand that spaces in construction are in progress, liminal spaces that are not meant for use until construction is completed. Georgina Lee Walker's window installation *Non-Functional Objects In Space* addresses the understated concern that what makes a material function is not only its physical qualities, but the relationship between the material and the environment it is placed in.

Materials that are associated with construction have a generous capacity to influence space. They contain an understanding of human intervention that is present, but also in transit. *Non-Functional Objects in Space* aims to explore the issues surrounding the categorization construction sites as transitory spaces, and the artist's understanding of them.

For Walker construction brings to mind the idea of half up-half down assemblage. Assembled as well as disassembled. This ambiguous suggestion of transformation in progress allows for the collapse of space, where the building site gestures at the possibility for a completed space in the future, while also inhabiting the unfinished quality of a site under construction. Traditionally, when a dwelling lacks completion, we forsake the possibility of becoming attached to it, since we do not see ourselves as belonging to it. However, Georgina Lee Walker's installation gives the viewer permission to become attached to the space based on aesthetic principles, rather than functional capability.

Walker approaches the scene from a painterly perspective, by arranging and rearranging her hand made renditions of cinder blocks, sheet metal, and other construction materials until they have left the realm of a creative destruction, and instead have become a disruptive innovation.

In this way, the space the artist creates allows us to negotiate within ourselves our own personal boundaries of habitation and belonging.

By hand, Walker recreates the forms of cinder blocks, I-beams, caution tape and sheet metal in her reconstruction of a delicate scene. The materials aestheticized in Walker's installation are for the most part commonly associated with detritus, meaning the leftover, or excess. When we consider habitable spaces we traditionally find these leftover materials make the space unlivable, and as a result they are never seen as prized or sacred. For Walker, the detritus of the site is what makes up the landscape. It is not the decay of the space that she romanticizes, but instead the dynamic that the material creates with the space arouses the viewer's excitement. Having previously worked in the actual, physical labor of construction, Walker is familiar with the experience of preparing and handling each component that makes up the installation firsthand.

In efforts to stay true to the temporary nature of the original source, Walker creates her casts with paper maché. Rather than attempting to paint the essence of construction using archival materials, she has purposefully chosen a non-archival format. At the same time, she challenges the notion that the materials she uses are not precious, by her constant experimentation with their form. As iterations of the objects are more easily produced, she imagines the possibilities of the space without being confined to physical limitations.

A crushed I-beam, the graceful arc of barrier fencing draped over the entirety of the installation, there is a loss of purpose to the original visceral meaning of the shape. The final element used to derail our understanding of these newly rendered construction materials is through their immediate visual impact.

Walker paints the objects with soft pastel hues to amplify an implied invitation to the space. Using gentle pinks, blues and greens she reflects on the psychological nature of the space, overpowering the presence of reason. Deconstructing the inherent intention of the object, these new ruins defy by being estranged from their native purpose. Stripped of their function, the materials become re-imagined as art objects, valued for their aesthetic and formal qualities.

W

Carolyn Code

Extensions

11.21.14 – 12.19.14

by **SHANNON GARDEN-SMITH**

> Chests, especially small caskets...are objects that may be opened. When a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects; it takes place in exterior space.[1]

For her exhibition, *Extensions*, Carolyn Code has cement-cast twelve clasped purses into pure exteriority, closing off the possibility of interiority. As indivisible, impenetrable units, the purses withhold the intimacy of the inner compartment: their very fullness barring interior content. Unlike Gaston Bachelard's chests or caskets, which are hard-edged, stationary vessels tasked with the preservation of valuables, the purse is a more flexible membrane that acts as convoy to an ever-changing miscellany of objects. Purses are implicated in a daily economy of circulation, and are fittingly the storage places of the currency that enables our entry into the marketplace. However, Code's purses undermine their referent's characteristic malleability through materiality. As to-scale, earth-bound, solid masses of concrete—playfully resolute in their immobility—the weight of their cement bodies untethers them from mobilized human companionship. Emptied of wallets, change purses, notebooks, keys, pens, snacks, pills, lipsticks, phones or any object they might hold in our daily travels, the bags are further absolved of the human subject. They no longer belong to the individual, and, so, no longer serve as a model for the organization of our inner lives in the way that Bachelard's "objects that may be opened" do. They are envelopes become content. They are solid surface.

Moored in staggered groupings that eschew a sense of linear arrangement, Code's sculptures are displayed in a way that is reminiscent of the splayed out contents of a bag accidentally dropped and subsequently nudged into formation. In addition to the purses, *Extensions* also features a series of abstracted, imagined-tool-forms composed variously of wood, metal, and plastic, nailed to the wall like a Home Hardware tool organization board gone rogue. Code's vertically suspended hooks, pokers, wires, blades, knobs and

1 Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. pg. 85.

scrapers, dangle in a loose cloud formation opposing the thoroughly earthbound quality of her purse sculptures. Making a similar ascent up the wall are tufted, pale-blue triangular sections of upholstery finished in dark wooden trim. As hostile, pointed structures of upholstery and wood, these works prohibit their expected function as a resting place for the body. Code further distances the human occupant by mounting the upholstery on the wall.

Each series of sculptures in *Extensions* overturns the objects' conventional relationship with fixity and transience. Code pushes the form of her sculptures just outside of functionality, so that the objects function in the realm of symbolism. While Code's purse sculptures have been cast from a variety of molds, the assortment of forms is homogenized by the artist's standard use of concrete sometimes punctuated with metal chain as a strap. A similar flattening of difference is carried out by the tool sculptures, which, formed from a limited range of shared media, appear as variations on one another. The strategy of standardization is further played out in the unvarying use of blue upholstery and in the show's cluster of brushed metal cans handstitched with unifying floral insignia.

Where Code's concrete handbags are carefully divested of inner space so that they cannot be opened up, the entire conceit of *Extensions* is premised on a kind of opening up. *Extensions* reimagines the shelves, drawers, closets, cabinets and other interiorities that constitute storage spaces as, in Code's words, "accidental cabinets of curiosities". Here the physical archtecture of the cabinet has fallen away, so that the objects begin to drift impossibly across the wall. The garage pegboard has been replaced by the gallery wall and an assortment of objects which have forfeited the intimacy of human contact now belong to the theater of window display. Perhaps we might also conceive of the floating upholstery and tool sculptures—those hooks, chains, blades and points—as the objects that would spill out from the cement and chain purses.

Extensions is keenly interested in exploring economies of valuation, particularly as informed by Michael Thompson's 1979 Rubbish Theory—an idiosyncratic text that theorizes the process whereby the value of "things" is continually created and destroyed. Thompson presents a conception of cyclic temporality linked to the objects' fluctuations in value. He posits,

> When we take stock of our world, we are very selective; we only include those items that are of value—anything that has no value is excluded…Those objects that we include fall into two categories: those that increase in value over time (the *durable*) and those that decrease in value over time (the *transient*) …A transient object, declining in value, can sink into rubbish and then some later date be discovered by some creative individual and transferred to durability.[2]

Since the deterioration of an object can be tempered by maintenance, the

2 Michael Thompson, "Rubbish Theory: the creation and destruction of value" in Encounter, United Kingdom, 1979. pg. 12.

transient object relies upon intervention, notably, as Thompson's explication of his theory states: "by some creative individual". Rubbish Theory is premised on the economy of objects, wherein the possession of objects has moral implications for the human owner. Thompson notes, "those who own and control durable objects enjoy more power and prestige than those who live entirely in a world of transience or, worse still, a world of rubbish".[3] If we consider the nature of the storage space from which the objects in this show have been drawn—one where empty cans intermingle with impractical tools and inaccessible bags—Code's selection of objects, which she recasts in cement, metal, wood and plastic, ostensibly originate from the category of "transient" or "rubbish". Overturning their inherited constitutions of mobility/immobility through materiality and spatial orientation, Code's process simultaneously enacts Rubbish Theory's economy, transferring the objects from the categories of rubbish or transient to durable. The act of creating and reframing these objects as art objects ushers them into a new realm of circulation.

3 Ibid. pg. 18.

Julia Redding

Impalpable

01.30.15 – 02.27.15

by **JESSICA BALDANZA**

Julia Redding's *Impalpable* is an addition to her continuously evolving process-based practice. Redding's explorations into light, fragmentation, colour and sensation tap into universal human experience and beauty, the ephemeral quality of which requires real life presence to be understood.

Redding has been working for the past two years with a mixed media process involving elements such as colour and light. Her process begins by melting sheets of plastic acetate, scrunching them into balls, suspending them, then projecting various self-produced videos through the clusters. The resulting refraction of light and imagery is what Redding captures through photography. The actual content of the video is irrelevant, but she seeks to use heavily saturated colours. She then adjusts light and dark spots using Photoshop to ensure the resulting image is balanced and vibrant. Finally, she prints the retouched image onto sheets of acetate. For this installation Redding's work uses the window box as a space in which to capture the intangible nature of light and colour she seeks in her work. The piece consists of reducing the window with frosted glass to a "portal". Suspended beyond the glass are four framed acetate prints of her cultivated imagery, staggered about 6" apart and back-lit.

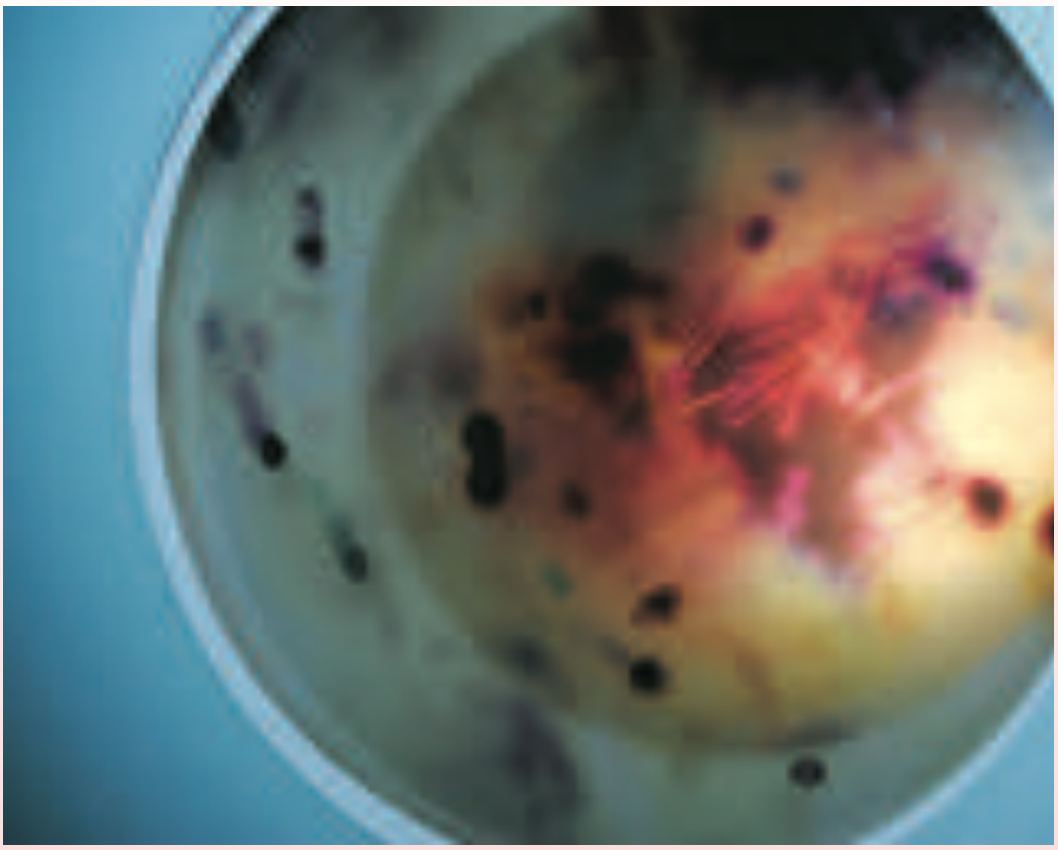
The resulting installation is viewed through the portal hole through which one can experience the abstract colours and textures, illuminated in what she calls a "3D light painting".

There is something inherently alluring about a portal that reveals a three dimensional space. The resulting imagery is comparable to the infinity of outer space or the micro-universe of a cell. Redding cites her experience on the OCAD U Florence exchange as her inspiration for her processed based practice consumed with light. She recalls the immersion into a culture so heavily inundated with history, which inspired her to react opposingly.

Florence is a city still dominated by its national historical roots, boasting grand architecture and fine art collections composed of traditional materials such as marble and wood, and imagery created with oil on panel and canvas. The sheer substantiality of it all, its weight, both historically and physically inspired in her a desire to capture the ethereal, the weightless, the luminescent and timeless.

Her mediums are light, colour, and space. Her process is an exploration in cultivating and making intangible qualities tangible. The abstract imagery depicted through a portal invites the viewer into the illusionistic space created by layers of abstracted, light and colour. Redding states her intention is to leave the concept ambiguous. The meaning is indefinite, and open, ideally to inspire in viewers a range of experiences not hindered by concrete subject matter. Experience and sensation meant to invoke wonder, memory and stimulation in the viewer.

Redding's work demands a presence, an interaction with its physical incarnation in time and space. She creates art of experience, and of beauty that demands no prior knowledge or understanding from its viewer. Her work maintains the importance of process and temporality, and requires an audience to keep the "experience" of art alive.



Diana Lynn VanderMeulen

slow blink at pink sun

03.06.15 – 04.03.15

by **REBECCA WELBOURN**

slow blink at pink sun is a mixed-media collage installation produced by Toronto artist Diana Lynn VanderMeulen. VanderMeulen uses the process of collage to explore natural and supernatural phenomena, magical landscapes and purgatories.

slow blink at pink sun invites the viewer to recall the optical illusion we experience after staring at the sun, or another bright light. Even after we look away from the light source, an image remains 'burned' onto our retinas. When we wake from a vivid dream, sometimes we feel that we can still see it all, even though our eyes are open. The image is fleeting, we can attempt to hold onto the memory of the dream, but it usually slips away from us. What is left is the imprint of the dream. Can we reconstruct the feeling like a place? Another world, another room, another landscape?

The experience of seeing a pink sun is a subjective one. The sun emits electromagnetic radiation, which contains an assortment of light wavelengths. The visible spectrum is described as the spectrum of colour that the human eye can detect and understand. At sunrise or sunset, the distance the light from the sun has to travel to reach our eyes is longer than it is during midday, for example. Air molecules in the sky during the day scatter blue light—the reason we see the sky as blue. When the sun is further away, the violet and blues have already been scattered across the sky, leaving the vivid pink, reds and oranges we see at sunset or sunrise. "The colors you see depend on the light's path before it got to you, how the object you are viewing reflects that light, and what your eyes are sensitive to. Absolutes don't really exist in color perception."[1]

VanderMeulen pairs thoughtful choice of colour with other materials

1 From an interview with Stephan Corfidi, "Red Sky at Night: The Science of Sunsets"

that further bend and alter the way we perceive the light we see. Use of iridescent fabric/paper, holograms, glitter, and opalescent and coloured plastics allow us to view the light in differing ways. The time of day, weather, temperature, angle and even eye-colour of the viewer alters the perception of this piece. What are we feeling? What thoughts and meanings do we assign to the colours and materials? These factors affect our acuity of the installation. In *slow blink at pink sun*, VanderMeulen lets go of the cold, frosty blue textures with which she often works, and pushes into an optimistic, hot-pink opalescent mirage. It symbolizes hope and possibility against a harsh, urban winter wasteland. The process of exploring the city, sourcing materials, experimenting with size and position could represent the process of taking our experiences, our interactions and relationships with others, comparing them against each other to form new understandings of our emotional landscape.

While some might consider the use of glitter, holographic paper and streamers to be 'girlish' or 'child-like', *slow blink at pink sun* reflects an environment that is not of this world, but perhaps a different one—a pleasure zone, full of bright light and colour. Imaginably, this is why we associate the transfixing nature of holograms and glitter with two ideas: childhood toys or future technology. We look to our past for the nostalgic, warm memories of childhood and also to the future for optimism, positivity and hope. The installation attempts to act as a portal to a place between past and future. Is a dream a place we went in our sleep last night? Or is it something we want for ourselves in the future? *slow blink at pink sun* as a window installation invites the viewer to pause while in transit for a moment of self-reflection in the present time.

Inez Genereux & Cale Weir

The Marbled Plane

04.10.15 – 05.08.15

by **KATE HICKE**

The Marbled Plane is a video-based, multimedia artwork by Inez Genereux and Cale Weir, who are collectively known as O.S.A. (Original Sports Angel). The installation employs parody and material investigation to explore contemporary and classical art aesthetics by poking fun at Internet art's fixation on classical sculpture and white marble. On a video monitor, the artists are seen filing at a Greco-Roman plaster bust, the debris of which, enhanced by CGI, falls from the video screen and appears to collect on the floor of the installation space. The dust extends to form "the marbled plane", a highly aestheticized world enveloped by marble-print vinyl, which represents the digital plane of "infinite aesthetic possibility", and the seemingly endless cache of Internet art that utilizes these visual components. For O.S.A., material decisions are central to the installation's success, and the distinction between printed vinyl and actual marble signifies the way in which luxury goods have been co-opted for use by artists, and by the middle and lower classes.

The concept behind *The Marbled Plane* can be interpreted from multiple points of reference, all of which can be tied to a movement in art history. O.S.A. references contemporary Internet art's obsession with marble, classical sculpture and stark minimalism. Like most internet trends, it cannot be given a precise point of origin. The ability to interpret *The Marbled Plane* from this vantage point is not accessed through art history texts, but instead by a familiarity with contemporary Internet art, most likely through use of websites and apps like Tumblr and Instagram. For those without exposure to contemporary digital culture, the plaster bust and marbled surfaces of *The Marbled Plane* may be interpreted as markers for the mid-18th century Neoclassical art movement, in which Greco-Roman sculpture and symbolism

became wildly popular and was revered as the pinnacle of artistic beauty. From the intended viewpoint, where the installation references Internet art referencing Neoclassicism, and the filing of the bust is a stance against what the O.S.A. views as an already tired and tried aesthetic.

The Marbled Plane is intended to be humorous, even for those viewers unfamiliar with current trends in Internet art, or with the subtle humor of O.S.A.'s artistic practice. This ease of accessibility and the installation's playful demeanor is recognizable by even those reading the installation as a modernist critique. Accessibility is a central tenet for O.S.A., who believe art needn't be pretentious or intentionally exclusive. A smirk or laugh should come naturally to viewers, and there shouldn't be a struggle to grasp the installation's broader themes, let alone find humour in its critical approach.

By using parody as a means of investigation, *The Marbled Plane* undertakes the same artistic aesthetic that it mocks, walking a line between satire and critique. However, the artists' measured theatricality of gesture and the overt absurdity of the entire installation means *The Marbled Plane* successfully differentiates itself as parody and escapes interpretation as homage. The act of filing down of the bust's nose, throat and nipples, is comical and absurd, and it is because of this satire that *The Marbled Plane* is successful in both critiquing and poking fun at its target.

It is indeed a strange occurrence that when the internet provides infinite aesthetic possibilities, the aesthetic parodied in *The Marbled Plane* has commanded such a massive online following. O.S.A. asks us to consider why Internet art is fixated on this particular aesthetic. Is the use of marbled and Greco-Roman sculpture conceptual or critical, or do people simply like the way it looks?

Is there something about the recent accessibility (or a digitized version, at least) of a luxury good that feeds into the millennial craze for marble-print sweatshirts, iPhone cases and timeline cover photos? Are we being duped, or are we, as a generation, just unceasingly ironic?

The Marbled Plane asks these questions but doesn't answer them, and instead lets us draw our own conclusions about where our tastes in art come from and what the consequences of aesthetically-driven art movements are. When we have endless possibilities at our fingertips, why are we rehashing disproved and discarded aesthetics? Isn't this the future?

e howey

Relatives

curated by: **Sab Meynert**

06.25.15 – 07.24.15

by **SAB MEYNERT**

> "The energy of free space is proportional to the power of sharing. The knots are a spatial map of historical memory and experience and in each new relationship they will tie a knot of non linearity."—*Appendix, Homeshop*[1]

e howey's *Relatives* is a multi-layered installation that incorporates the foundational aspects of their complex practice as a printmaker-artist. Using ink washes on acetate, howey creates a fragmented, echoing account of the ways in which space is taken up and animated by those who occupy it.

howey recognizes "for those who are on the fringes of margins, at the intersections of identities, there is little to no ground on which to be seen."[2]

With this window, howey aims to reflect these populations and invite them into the space.

Within howey's printmaking practice, images are often negotiated through the limitations and anomalous quality of opaque silkscreened drawings. In *Relatives*, by comparison, ink on acetate serves as a middle ground for projection and method, acknowledging the transitory aspect of the Window Space. howey's work has long documented identity and its activation through circumstance, be it physical, emotional, or otherwise. The transparency of a being and its vulnerability to outside influences is reflected in the use of acetate, a medium that can never be completely captured and is dynamic to the world around it.

Acetate is a plastic used in many parts of today's society to melt together defining elements, in clothing, in drugs, and of course as a medium. By using an organic substance, in this case ink, as a resistant but willing device to work with the plastic membrane of the surface on which it is applied, howey is mimicking the very nature of a displaced body.

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1 Homeshop. 附录 APPENDIX. Beijing, China: Homeshop, 2013. 12

2 In conversation with the artist.

As space has been designated through economic development, its subjective and objective qualities are activated by those who pass through it; the energy deployed in space creates it, and the balance between sharing a space and taking it up negotiates its use.

There is a disparity and yet eagerness with which residents of the Lansdowne and College area have used the neighbourhood over time. Through attempting to historicize the area when contemplating its use, one may erase its residual aspects, however in the case of that locality, the residue is a complex river of energy that is found flowing through the cracks in the sidewalk, up the buildings, within the many people who pass through the intersection everyday.

There are multiple margins that intersect between the attempts to develop the area, with the shutting down of certain alternatively-enterprising businesses (such as sex work and drug dealing), the addition of corporate food chains, and finally the very existence of Xpace within this context, there are many elements of the physical space, such as the intersection and the pavement which the window's light touches, that become secondary, though still dominant.

Perhaps we will have to go further, and conclude that the users of space are subject to its constructed intent. Colonized space seeks to erase and make efficient the destructive forms of capital, surveillance, and dismissal. For marginalized groups, space is limited further through techniques of gentrification, recession, and visual redesign.

The bodies most often encountering the space are varied and fringed; migrant, racialized, elderly, working-class, self-enterprising, young, queer. The visual representation of these identities is found through the work, fragmented bodies that float, addressing the viewers through the windowpane; In the spaces occupied, by the window and its reflection on the pavement and toward the street, howey aims to ask, who are these people? How do these spaces show their identities, engagements and presence? The geography of the space and character aspects of its deterioration, subjection and neglect, and its reparation and amendment, are all reflected within these people. *Relatives* acknowledges and invites their gaze and viscera as it is reflected back toward them with warm and transparent intent.

Bijan Ramezani

The Elusivity of Identity

07.30.15 – 08.28.15

by **FARAZ ANOUSHAHPOUR**

In his new work titled *The Elusivity of Identity*, Bijan Ramezani challenges the ways in which identities are constructed through the production, dissemination and consumption of massproduced images, especially those in reference to Iran, and his own Iranian identity. The work is the latest in a series of ongoing projects that explore what the artist refers to as "a self discovery of a distant culture that I identify with, but at the same time feel strongly disconnected from."[1] This dual condition of being simultaneously near and far—connected yet removed—is the narrative thread that pieces together this ongoing exploration.

As a first generation Canadian with an Iranian background, Ramezani begins his exploration by accessing and gathering an archive of personal and public photographs, as well as documents and objects that together seem to represent his Iranian identity. These are often the most iconic and the most accessible images of Iran, from pictures of the Iranian revolution from his family archive to popular newspapers and trending Google images of Iran. He then re-frames these images through a series of aesthetic and formal gestures that subtly communicate the layers of distance that exist between what is 'real' and visible and what is represented or simulated through the lens of mass media.

The project is placed appropriately in the Window Space of Xpace Cultural Centre, as it is able to speak to a wider audience and question the institution it represents. The installation is comprised of a series of photographic objects. A light box containing an image, which appears to show a crowd of men desecrating American flags in Iran, is paired with its original context: a reproduced stack of the Canadian conservative newspaper, The

1 Artist's Thesis "Persona Non Grata", 2014

National Post. Here Ramezani dissociates the image from its context, and aestheticizes it through the means of its display to bring his viewer one step closer to the image itself—to what is "raw and uncut"[2]. This pairing is coupled with a very similar kind of image, but one to which the artist feels closer: a black and white reproduction of an original photograph taken by his father during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The image depicts a group of unidentifiable women who, with the exception of one, are facing away from the lens of the camera and seem to be marching together. The lone figure in the crowd offers the photograph a moment of pause; a revelation. This revelation opens up a space for other narratives to emerge in the photograph. Ramezani then isolates and magnifies the very fragment that seems to speak to subjectivity in that image (both of the photographer and the photographed) and presents it to us as a rolled-up print, an object devoid of any subjectivity. A similar formal approach is echoed in a rolled-up print of a life-size Persian rug. Sourced from a thumbnail image in the online catalogue of IKEA, the reference image is already a representation of a cultural artefact that is appropriated and mass-produced.

While scrutinizing his dual nationality and identity, Ramezani creates an ambivalent space within which these images can fall out of their own bounded context and structures of representation and enter into a new network of references and narratives. Peeling back the layers of representation that are inherent in the production and consumption of mass produced images, *The Elusivity of Identity* ultimately points towards the futility of searching for one's identity through the perspective of others.

2 Artist Statement, 2015

M

Assemblage by Michael Abel, Connor Crawford and Parker Kay (2014)

Parker Kay, Connor Crawford & Michael Abel

Versioning

curated by: **Brendan George Ko**

09.12.14 – 10.04.14

by **BRENDAN GEORGE KO**

Facsimile

Before we first landed on the moon in 1969, a reconnaissance spacecraft named *Lunar Orbiter I* went in August 1966. Its mission was to take high-resolution images of potential landing spots for the Apollo moon missions to follow. Using 70mm film the small spacecraft automatically exposed for the moon's surface, developed the film, scanned and faxed it back to Earth—over a distance of 384,400km. This event marked the first time in human history the moon was seen from somewhere other than Earth's surface.

Hidden within the iconic images taken by the *Lunar Orbiter I* is an elaborate and advantageous process that shifted the way we see the moon in the sky. *Versioning* is an exhibition that examines how artists use various production processes to create new meaning into an object, image, or icon. This exhibition questions how process and technology can change the cultural value of an object and icon. Through the examination of three art processes, each artist exemplifies shifts in production, authenticity, and cultural value. In Parker Kay's 3D printed sculptures, the "aura" of the original icon is lost in its replication by replacing the hand of the artist with highly precise markings of a computer. Through the production process, Kay's sculptures reduce the icon to its most basic aesthetic properties, thus rendering them into simple commodities. Connor Crawford's sound and projection works create a liminal atmosphere in the gallery using a Youtube playlist that consists of liturgy music of various religions and simulated cathedral window casts. The purity of the sacramental state is challenged with the removal of the space (place of worship) and the loss of the "aura" in the sonic texture due to digitalization of sound. Lastly, in Michael Abel's paintings, which are aided by digital projection, mimetic Internet images are rendered using various painterly aesthetics. Though an original is born from the uniqueness of each brushstroke, the jpeg's iconog-

raphy precedes the painted tribute.

Through process each of the artists in this exhibition creates an original from a copy. In the philosophy of Robert M. Pirsig, it is not about arriving at the destination, it is how one arrives and what path one takes[1]. In a world saturated with information and media with instant access, we are challenged in creating new ideas when there is such an extensive history available to us today. Rather than creating new, we are able to create new context for the old. This tradition stems from a copy-paste generation, a generation that uses (samples) an endless surplus of commodity to create new form. Through reconfiguration and innovative production processes copies are then given a new form and arguably become originals.

The finished product is often seen for its value as a commodity, something easily consumed without acknowledgement of its process. In Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord argues that our society values a commodity's exchange value over its labor value.[2] In a post-industrial age production process is ambiguous due to the many hands evolved with production. This process takes place on a global scale and requires the combined effort of various professions and companies. From its design to construction to assembly, by the time the product is completed it has travelled the world and the only proof of this journey is a removal sticker that says, "Made in China." And as a result the finished product arrives mysteriously before the consumer with no visible sign of its own production. How do our commodities arrive in their marketplace? The same question could be asked about post-modern art processes.

The facsimile is pure in its own sense for being a blatant duplicate. If anything, it is a marvel of technology with its speed, detail, and multiplicity that the original lacked. Like the images produced by *Lunar Orbiter I*, we are granted an experience with the facsimile that triumphs the original—the almost 400,000 kilometers of distance turns from an obstacle to an opportunity for new experiences that would otherwise never had existed.

1 Pirsig, R. M. (1974). *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. William Morrow & Company, New York, NY.
2 Debord, G. (1995). *The Society of the Spectacle*. Zone Books, New York, NY.

Top: Michael Abel, Connor Crawford and Parker Kay (2014)
Bottom: Parker Kay (2014)

M

Daniela Jordan-Villaveces, *Fate vs. Faith* (2012)

Emma Edghill, Sonet Providence, Bryan Bermudez, Talia Peckel, Daniela Jordan-Villaveces & Sebastian Benitez

Beyond the Tropics

curated by: **Sebastian Benitez**

10.17.14 – 11.08.14

by **SEBASTIAN BENITEZ**

Over two hundred years have elapsed since the first Independence was declared in the Americas, marking the first formal separation from the European colonial regime in documented Western history. Yet a decade into the 21st century, with some countries achieving their independence in the past fifty years, a certain sense of unease close to notions of self and the nation still lingers in the background. With severance from the colonial order came the mammoth task of negotiating a broken past in order to construct a new national identity. Ambiguity, constant through the works in the exhibition, comes as the result of trying to bridge and make sense of fragmented notions of identity. In relation to their own backgrounds, the artists in *Beyond the Tropics* explore these themes through textile works, installation, painting and print media.

The title of the exhibition alludes to the act of seeing what lies behind and beyond the constructed imaginary built around the Americas' tropics since colonial times, which has taken many shapes and forms in past centuries. From the land of cannibals described in the writings of German soldier Hans Staden and later in Albert Eckhout paintings; passing through the land of treasures for the grab by the Spanish conquistadors' chronicles; and jumping to the more contemporary touristic marketing of land as vacationing

paradise; there is an inherent relation between the landscape and imposed power relations. Dealing with an ongoing negotiation of the remnants of colonial identity politics, the subjugation of the landscape with power dynamics and the negotiation of syncretic products within Latin America and the Caribbean, we find the works of Bryan Bermudez, Emma Edghill, Daniela Jordan-Villaveces, Talia Peckel, Sonet Providence and Sebastian Benitez.

In her series *A"Other"Place* (2014), Barbadian artist Emma Edghill explores the constructed representation of landscapes by means of painting. By focusing on overlooked and by-passed landscapes, Emma explores the duality of place in her perception of her natal Barbados. In her work, the artist combines real locations with personal memories and utopian imaginations, dealing with her perception of the landscape as home and land marketed as consumable, idyllic and touristic product.

Bryan Bermudez' *X Marks the Spot* explores the physical subjugation of the Peruvian landscape to neocolonial relationships. The series presents maps of South America where the artist marks with red "X"s locations in Peru where North American companies extract and exploit mineral resources under questionable conditions. In marking maps with "X"s, the artist also references the trope of treasures maps, comparing the current situation with the Spanish conquistadors' lavish myths of El Dorado: exotic conceptions of land with resources readily available for the grab.

In *Somewhere at the Bottom of the River Between Vega and Altair* Sonet Providence, referencing the landscape of her natal St. Vincent, explores and challenges the boundaries and definitions of distance and proximity through painting. Through her work, the artist abstracts and reconfigures the landscape by commanding it to a series of rules and systems set by the artist herself. The collapsed and transformed Caribbean landscape becomes the by-product of the artist's personal agency.

Talia Peckel's *Somewhere in Between* (2014) can be positioned as both dealing with issues of a postcolonial context and searching for local narratives. In her series, Talia explores current issues regarding identity politics in her natal Colombia. By revisiting photographs from a family trip to the Amazon when she was a child, the artist explores the complicated relations of "same" and "other" implicit in the photographs. In a play of the gaze, the artist questions her simultaneous placement in the images as both local but yet as a tourist to the region.

Daniela Jordan-Villaveces' *Fate vs. Faith* (2012) explores the syncretic nature of religious practices in South America, focusing on those in Colombia. Her installation is comprised by digitally printed and hand-dyed cotton quilts. The quilt's prints reference the ambiguities and overlaps of the roles of Catholicism and other esoteric practices within popular culture. The artist is interested in the contradictions that are naturalized in the post-colonial context.

Finally, in his work, Sebastian Benitez explores the ubiquitous nature

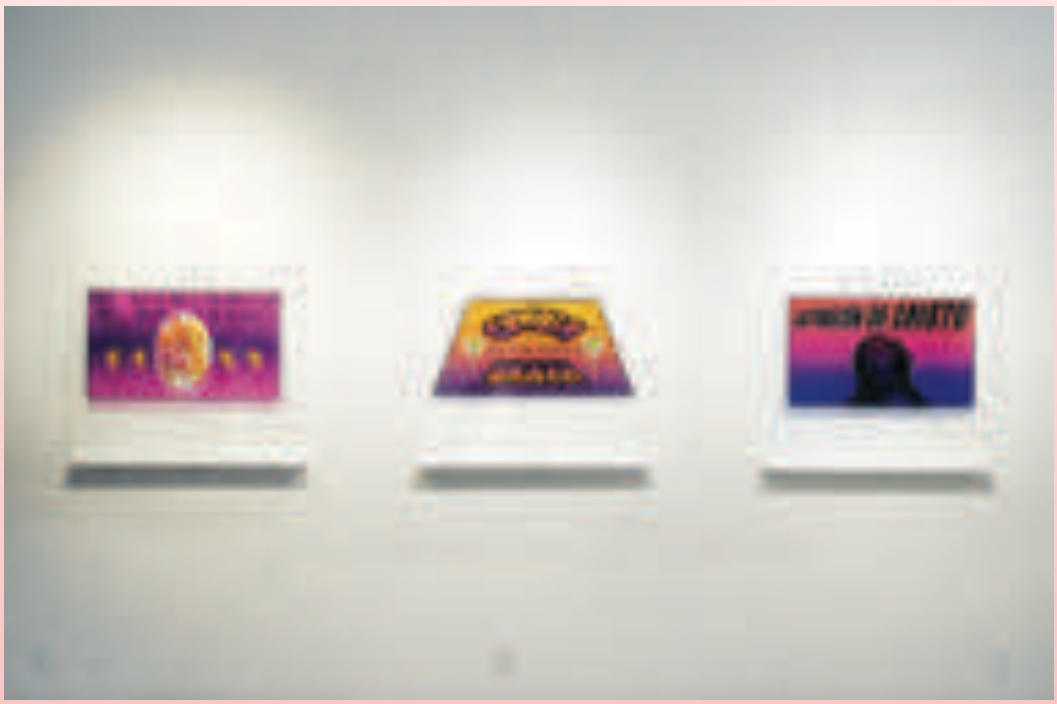
of catholic religious imagery within the Venezuelan public sphere. In his installation *Colección 2: Av. Urdaneta*, Sebastian references the often-religious imagery in the back of the buses in Venezuela and puts it in dialogue with the country's modern art materiality. His work also makes allusion to the negotiation and repurposing of elements of colonial inheritance within the contemporary context.

The ongoing explorations carried on by the artists in the exhibition can be seen as a sample of a larger concern around the idea of the self in relation to the nation state.

The works in *Beyond the Tropics* explore the contemporary remnants of the colonial past of Latin American and the Caribbean, and the ways through which the past shapes the current relations between individuals and the physical space they inhabit.

Bryan Bermudez, *X Marks the Spot* (2014)

Top: Emma Edghill, *A"Other"Place* (2014)
Bottom: Sonet Providence, *Somewhere at the Bottom of the River Between Vega and Altair* (2014)



Top: Talia Peckel, *Somewhere in Between* (2014)
Bottom: Sebastian Benitez, *Colección 2: Av. Urdaneta* (2014)

M

Anna May Henry, *My Calendar* (2014)

Alicia Nauta, Anna May Henry, Meg Remy, geetha thurairajah, Natalie Logan & Madelene Veber

OUGHT

curated by: **Joële Walinga**

11.21.14 – 12.13.14

by **JOËLE WALINGA**

The exhibition *OUGHT* compiles the variety of suggestions posed by parents to their artist children in misguided attempts to support, encourage, or simply understand what it means to be an artist. *OUGHT* exhibits the materialization of these sometimes ridiculous ideas, as artists actually attempt to create or fulfill what was suggested of them. With works by Alicia Nauta, Anna May Henry, Meg Remy, geetha thurairajah, Natalie Logan, and Madelene Veber, the show illustrates examples of non art-world or art-educated ideas about the function and aesthetic of art, while simultaneously illuminating the underlying encouragements and discouragements that exist at the foundation of the artist.

Emphasis is placed on attitudes towards art as a career, as most suggestions seem to strive for monetary or financial gain. Born of either sympathetic terror at the possibility of their child's potential financial struggles, or, more to my experience, the fear of being one day asked to support said child, parents do not hesitate to intervene in the life and work of an artist child.

Thro Pillows on Clearance, by Alicia Nauta, rings painfully true, as Nauta investigates what it's like to be an artist in a family who tries to be supportive, but doesn't always succeed. Working from the suggestion that she might make pillows for HomeSense, since "people would definitely buy them," Nauta's classic black and white prints of perfectly arranged shapes and objects are reassigned to a set of throw pillows on a HomeSense clearance rack. The red-tag reduced price that her pillows share with the lime, also on clearance, brings her print-works up against a seemingly displeased jury of consumers, whose primary concern is ornament. The scene initially draws on satire, as the viewer locates the irony in sacrificing the integrity

of one's work only to end up on a clearance rack, a kind of selling-out-but-on-sale, but it quickly becomes about an imposing attitude of misunderstanding-completely-but-telling-you-what-to- do-anyway, a truth shared by many artists.

Working from a similar suggestion, Anna May Henry tries to navigate supporting herself on the production and sales of an artist-made calendar. Henry's mother's advice was solicited and, not unlike most advice, well intended, when she suggested that Henry use her childhood painting skills to make a calendar for money. Henry's *My Calendar* is fully inked with the struggles of finding the time to paint, something she no longer really does, and is measured against the time required for printing the calendar, for self deprecation, for working her paying-job as a bartender, finding time for friends and family, and finally trying to figure out how to sell a calendar whose construction took so long that it is now outdated.

Meg Remy's mother's suggestion that she become a *Women's Advocate*, a career where she could both "make a difference in and make money," materializes in a 6-minute video that, unlike Nauta's and Henry's works, does not disguise feelings of futility with satirical irony. Remy's video shows her as a women's advocate, trying to help a woman whose situation is such that bureaucracy does not recognize it. Having experienced abuse herself and the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic intervention on behalf of women, her suggestions to the unseen subject, played by LuLu Hazel Turnbull, range from slightly illegal to very illegal before she breaks down and cries, illustrating for the viewer, as Remy puts it, that "passion is folly in the face of pragmatism."

geetha thurairajah, working from the suggestion that she "paint George Bush painting Putin," struggled to imagine what kind of studio a man like George W. Bush might have found appropriate for his creative ventures. Narcissism prevails as his space sends the viewer on a journey through religious fanfare, self-portraits and Barney-the-dog memorabilia. *Curious George* approaches the re-creation of the Bush studio conceptually, suggesting that a space or studio is little more than a place for self reflection.

Natalie Logan's *Dialogue With The Family* presents a similar distortion of reality. Using recording technology, Logan's videos offer the illusion of dialogue between a duplicated single subject, creating the opportunity for family members to converse with themselves in an unscripted interview. Originally, Logan's videos contained subjects who were not her relatives, and who were criticized by her mother at a recent exhibition as being "too boring." By indulging her mother's advice to focus the project on her own family members, the videos, now featuring her grandmother, her mother and her younger sister, become about a different type of mirroring, one between three generations.

The Curio Cabinet, Madelene Veber's series of works made for her parents' home, mark a perfect juxtaposition of ornament and function, as Veber actually creates the things her mother, inspired by home decorating

magazines, requests for her home. These contemporary works are—for a modest and lived in home—completely otherworldly. Veber emphasizes this through a series of photographs balancing contemporary ornament against real-life clutter, couch sitting, and utility, as her sculpture is converted into a key holder.

Each of these works, a delicate balance between the original suggestion and the actual work and style of the artist, present a perfect irony where the suggestion inherently fails. Drawing attention first to the suggestion at hand, and then averting the attention to the actual work of the artist, the viewer witnesses the circular process that is everyday lived by the artist child.

Alicia Nauta, *Thro Pillows on Clearance* (2014)

Top: Meg Remy, *Women's Advocate* (2014)
Bottom: geetha thurairajah, *Curious George* (2014)

Top: Natalie Logan, *Dialogue With The Family* (2014)
Bottom: Madelene Veber, *The Curio Cabinet* (2014)

M

Alize Zorlutuna, *labour for the horizon* (2015)

Hannah Enkel, Alize Zorlutuna & Anni Araujo Spadafora

Relief Support

curated by: **Amber Landgraff**

01.30.15 – 02.21.15

by **AMBER LANDGRAFF**

The exhibition *Relief Support* brings together artists Hannah Enkel, Alize Zorlutuna and Anni Araujo Spadafora to discuss how moments of intimacy and support are necessary when speaking about work and labour. The show is intended to provide a thinking through of how we build support structures and spaces. How can we can collectively come together when dealing with the ways in which we may find ourselves and our labouring bodies taken advantage of, exploited, and under-represented? At its core, the pieces included in the show are intended to reflect on and provide moments of relief in a conversation about work where problems often feel insurmountable, and where we, as individuals, feel like we face that struggle alone.

Precarity encourages a particular kind of vulnerability, and yet, for many workers, the instability and uncertainty that come with a precarious work environment are an ongoing way of life. Young workers, those who work in the service industry, women, and people of colour often find themselves in positions where their emotional labour is held hostage in exchange for a working environment that marginalizes, exploits, or makes invisible the work of their bodies. These days it seems, it is not enough for us to do a job well, we also have to love doing it, or at the very least perform a convincing semblance of that love. Where are the moments for relief? Hourly wages make the hours spent performing a job significant, and even in situations where there might not be enough work to do, constant occupation is expected. A productive worker is one who can account for every minute of their time. However, when there isn't enough work to go around, that occu-

pation becomes less productive, the worker must make ongoing attempts to find anything at all to do. Occupation again becomes a form of performance, as one cannot afford to admit that they don't have any meaningful work to do when they are shift workers and are paid by the hour.

This performance is exhausting, and often doesn't end with the end of the workday. A lack of long-term stability means that we are constantly searching for work, and searching for the experiences that will make us competitive prospects for a limited number of jobs. We are a workforce that, in many ways, never stops working.

Alize Zorlutuna's installation *labour for the horizon* offers an exchange of Zorlutuna's emotional labour for the labour of participants. These exchanges take place in a secluded, meditative and comforting space surrounded by a macramé hanging. The knots tied in the hanging become a visible sign of the time and labour spent by Zorlutuna in building that comforting space. Crawling into Zorlutuna's installation and spending time with the ambient sounds from a video projection of water and a measuring tape being pulled across the horizon line adds to this feeling of comfort, Zorlutuna has created a space where worries can be left behind, even if just for a little while. Participants are invited to share their own labour, which is negotiated with the artist in exchange for a conversation about family, love/heartbreak, intersections of identity, or their mental or physical health. Zorlutuna will create a reflection of the conversation that will be added to the installation over time.

While Zorlutuna is not a therapist, she is drawing attention to a kind of support that frequently takes place. Giving value to the emotional labour that goes into this kind of dialogue by requesting a one-to-one exchange of labour, Zorlutuna "acknowledges the informal means through which we support each other."[1]

Across from Zorlutuna's installation, Hannah Enkel has created a visual catalogue of tools and uniforms borrowed from many women that she knows, titled *Our Self-Made Uniforms*. The women include Esther Veens, a Social Worker and Resource Parent for the Children's Aid Society, Sarah Davigno, a Piano Tuner, Hailey McCron, a Nanny, Shannon Veals, a Business Owner/House Cleaner, Joële Walinga, a Server/Artist, Erica Podlowski, a Sous Chef/Baker, Anni Spadafora, a Barista/Artist, and Sarah D'Angelo, a Barista/Artist. Enkel also includes items that reflect her own labour as a Domestic Worker and Skin Care Product Producer. As Enkel explains,

"Women's labour is often invisible, and work that is done by women is not celebrated or valued as real work [in the same way that men's labour is]...

1 Alize Zorlutuna's artist statement, 2015.

our culture celebrates men's labour and their tools, while minimizing and erasing women's labour."[2]

By creating a visible collection of the tools and uniforms that these women wear when performing their work, Enkel has created a careful catalogue of these women's labour. The tools and clothes are not new items, but their use is visible through wear and tear, drawing attention to the time spent working. In this way, the collection can be viewed as a representation of the labour performed by the owners of the items.

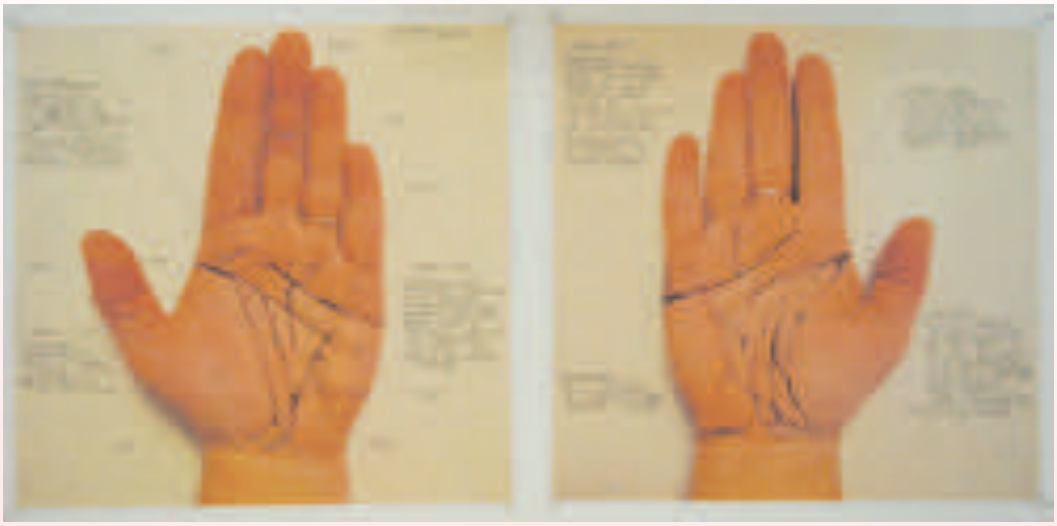
Anni Araujo Spadafora's sound installation *Basta Basta* started from a reflection on Roberto De Simone's 1976 modernist opera *La Gatta Cenerentola*. Speaking to Spadafora about the work, she describes two songs in the opera that are performed by a chorus of laundresses. In one of the songs they sing together about their labour as they wash, and in the other they sing about their bodies and sex. The combination of these songs brings attention to the fact that labour is something that is performed by our bodies, similarly to sex, and is something that can be celebrated together, performed as a chorus, an outpouring of relief. To create a similar feeling of this space of relief, Spadafora has created a mix tape, with overlapping sounds including an interview with her roommate Fran about her job as a waitress, environmental sounds including the sound of water washing an indigo cloth (a part of the installation), as well as clips from the opera of the laundresses singing.

The feelings that are reflected in the exhibition are feelings that are real for many of us, and that's what makes the works in *Relief Support* so remarkable. There is a beauty in seeing the generosity of the artists as they build support structures, offer their own emotional labour, draw attention and give value to the labour of others, and create a space for a joyous outpouring of relief that is much needed is a powerful thing.

The final work in the show is a collaborative work made by Spadafora and Enkel. One of the first things seen when entering the space is a giant denim work-shirt with a patch that reads, "When this shift ends." *Relief Support* asks us to think about the time that we spend working, the kind of work that we perform and whether there are alternative ways for us to work together. Enkel and Spadafora's statement,

"When this shift ends," is a significant one for a precarious workforce that never stops working. When this shift ends, I will take some time for myself to experience relief.

2 Hannah Enkel's artist statement, 2015.



Top: Alize Zorlutuna, *labour for the horizon* (detail) (2015)
Bottom: Anni Araujo Spadafora and Hannah Enkel (2015)

This exhibition acknowledges the generous support of the Ontario Arts Council

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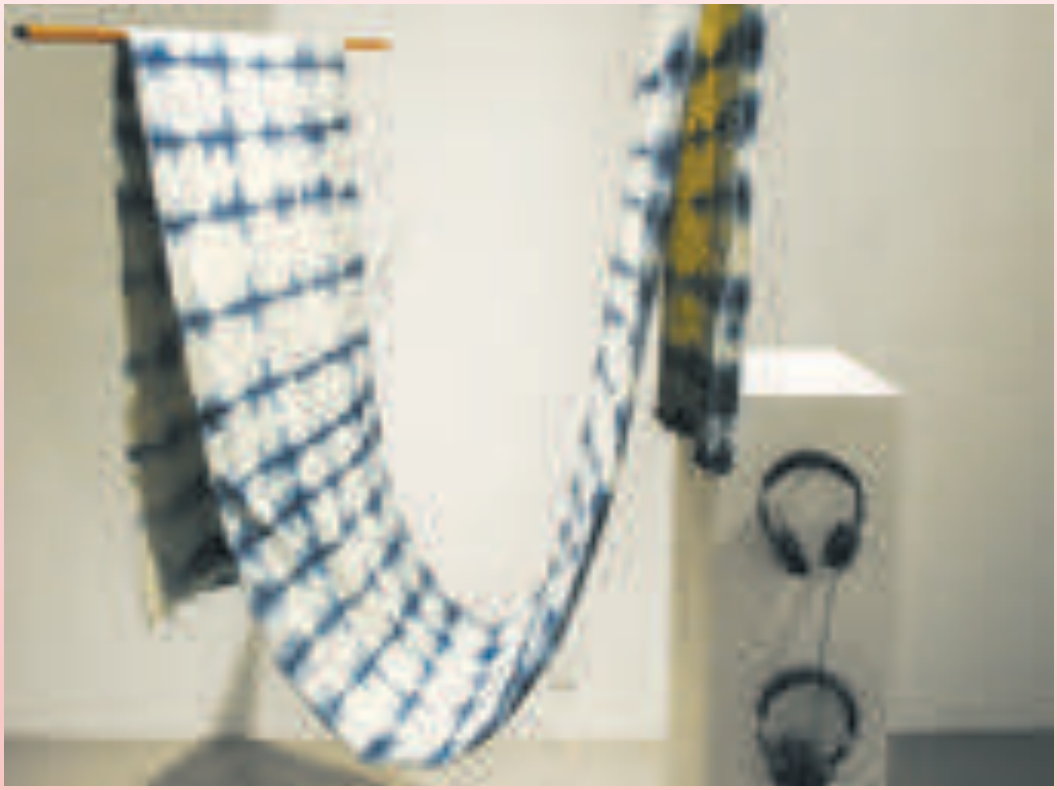
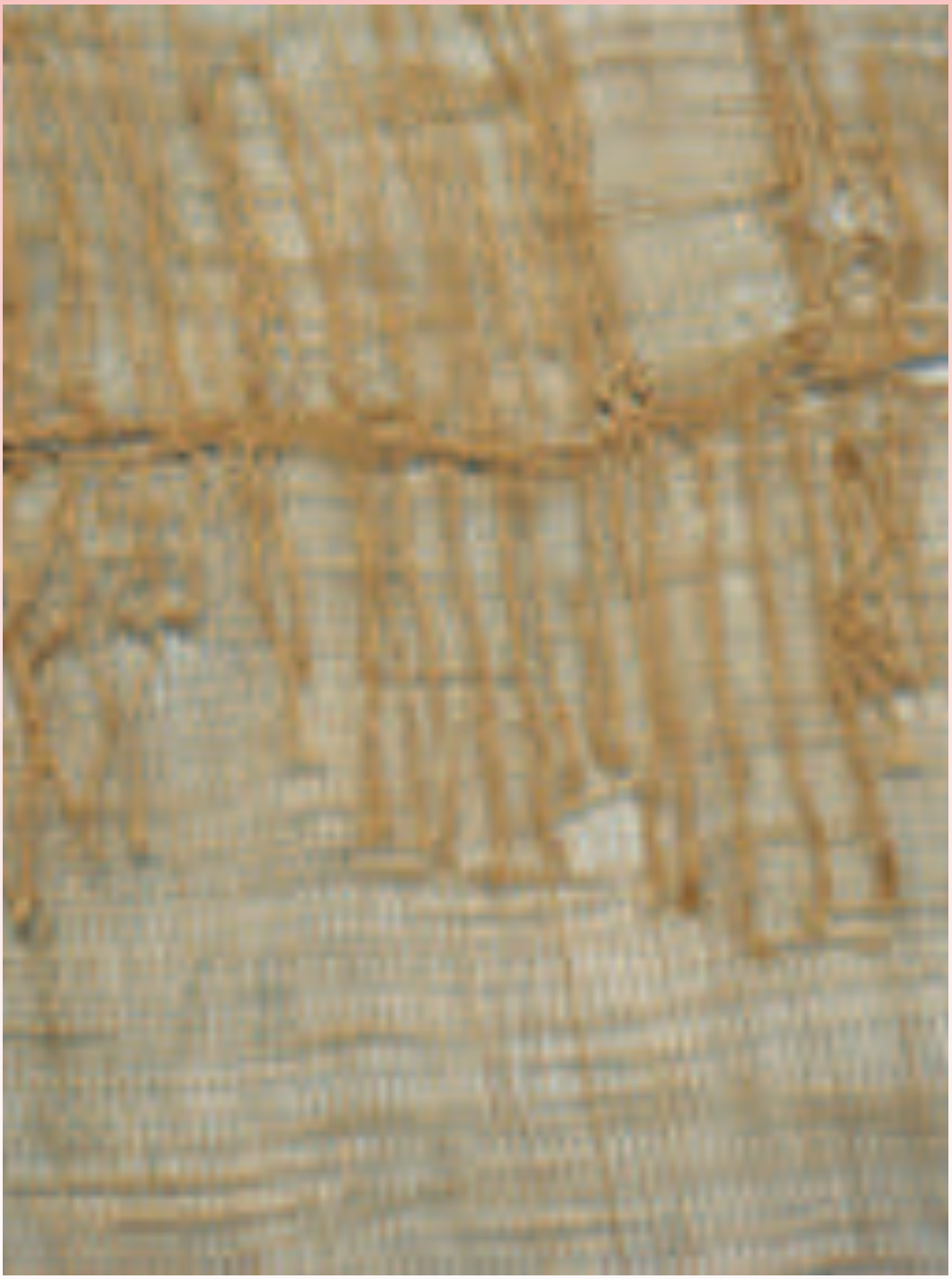


Top: Hannah Enkel, *Our Self-Made Uniforms* (2015)
Bottom: Anni Araujo Spadafora, *Basta Basta* (2015)

M



Claire Bartleman, *A Net. A Miss* (2015)

Claire Bartleman, Colleen McCarten, Sam Pedicelli & Charlotte Moynes

Pattern Makers

curated by: **Brette Gabel**

03.06.15 – 03.28.15

by **BRETTE GABEL**

The word, "pattern", is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, the word refers to a template used in the construction of garments, textile or craft projects. As a verb, "to pattern", refers to the act of repeating an action or image. The practices of Textile Arts and Crafts are deeply dependent on the creation and use of patterns. Equally, the artists exhibited in *Pattern Makers* engage with patterns and patterning on multiple levels within their work: as concept (noun) and action (verb) in an often overlapping and congruous manner.

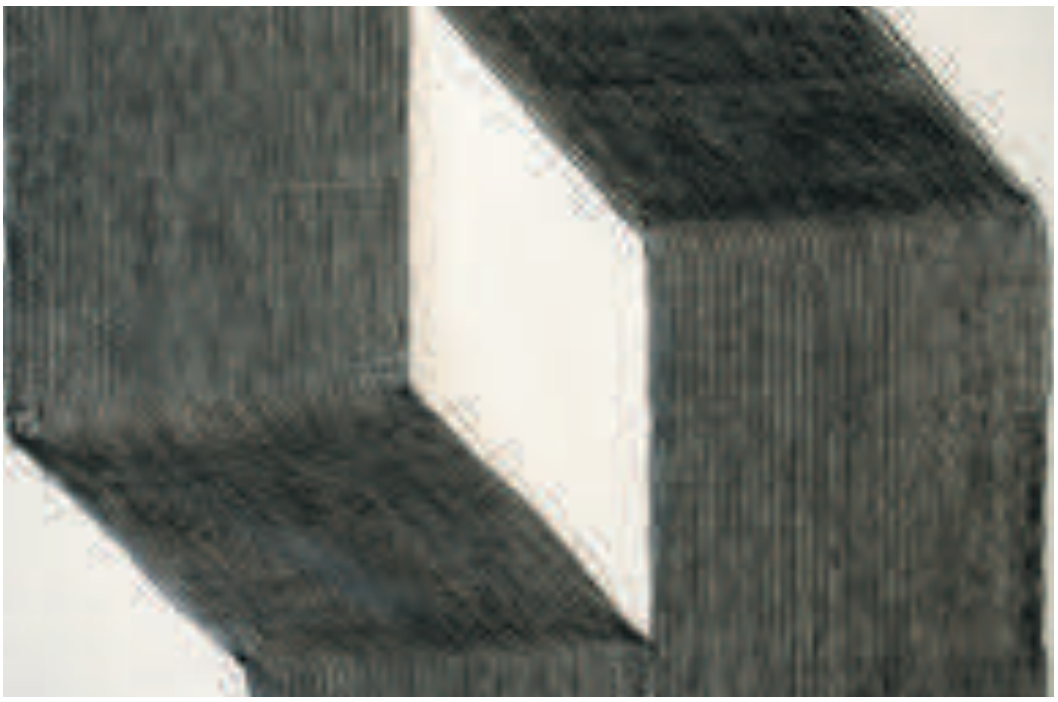
Colleen McCarten's weaving explores how handmade weaving warps and creates optical illusion through its natural flaws. McCarten weaves together black cotton string with fishing line and other non-traditional materials to create contrasting visual effects. The work connotes movement similar to a hologram or a Magic Eye poster. The eye blurs as it focuses on the work. McCarten further exploits these visual effects by placing a woven textile sample over a hand drawn weaving pattern in black ink on white paper. The drawing sample fixed behind the woven piece complicates the dimensional and tactile nature of the work, inviting the viewer to move closer to the piece. On closer inspection, the underlying layer of artifice becomes visible, referencing both the act of pattern creation and use of pattern as template in her work. McCarten both references and pays homage to textile process and the 'sampler', a test or practice piece created first before beginning a larger project. McCarten's work does not necessarily launch into a larger project, as each small sampler is the finished product. The work exists as an open ended question about process, pattern, the hand-made and imperfections.

Charlotte Moynes' work is understated and poetic: a simple embroidery stitch is drawn through plain fabric samples. The stitch follows a spiral, marking the passage of time. With each new pass of the circle, Moynes acknowledges the past and projects her work into the future by replicating and then improving upon the stitch work in each revolution. The work suggests a thought loop experienced during an anxious state while simultaneously hinting at the relaxed meditation produced by the act of stitching. While the works appear unassuming on the wall, the time spent ruminating on both the quality of stitch and repeated intention of meditation is embedded in the work.

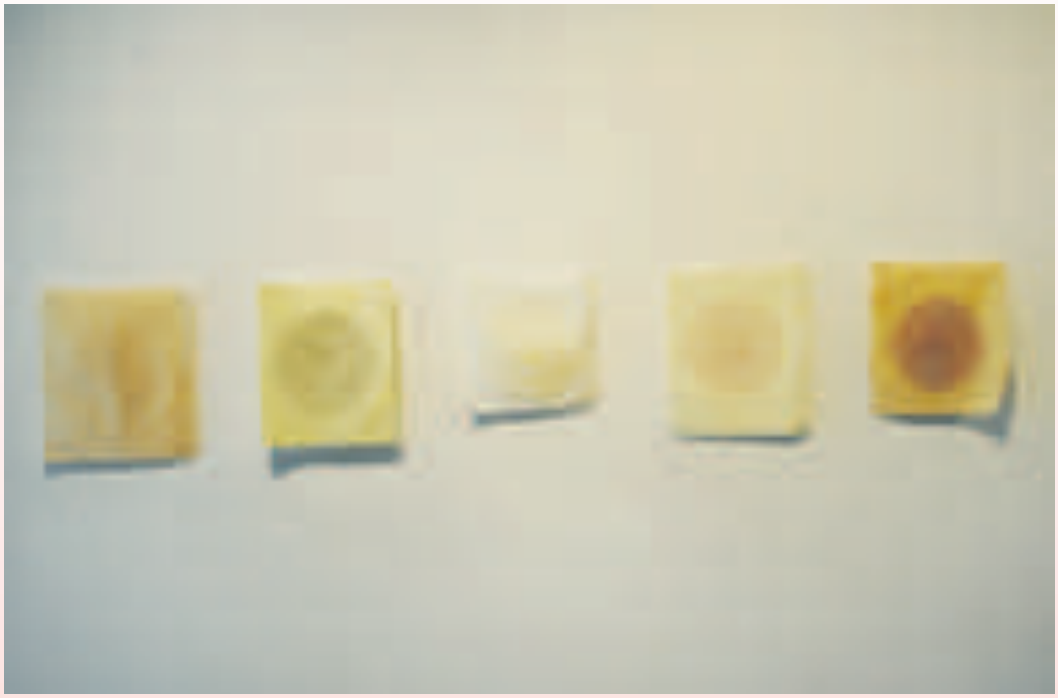
Sam Pedicelli's artistic practice explores Western culture's contemporary relationship with advancing technology. In her beadwork series, *The Curated Self*, Pedicelli takes imagery from the Internet and translates those images into an analogue beaded collage. Beadwork patterns mirror pixelated images, but unlike the contemporary relationship with images on the Internet, Pedicelli's process requires a considerable amount of time to translate each image. As creator she engages with each image for hours, in contrast to the momentary blip of time one might see each image in a flash when skipping around on the Internet. Just as an individual may quickly construct and curate a representation of their identity, interests or curiosities online, the image of self can shift and slip with ease, often unconsciously. Pedicelli uses the analogue practice of beading to slow that relationship with technology to a snail's pace, forcing an introspective examination of the process that is taking place.

Claire Bartleman's work examines the inherent flaws found in handmade textile work. Her piece *A Net. A Miss* is a large structure of hand knotted netting, a product of the artist's attempt to learn a traditional technique. As time passed and her project progressed the tension in the knots of the piece changed. This happens to many crafters as they learn a new skill and begin to comprehend the various elements of a process. The shift in tension causes warping, rendering the final design relatively "useless" as an actual net, while drawing attention to the details of the piece. The flaws within the work draw the eye to examine its construction more closely. The viewer is lead to consider the time and skill taken to create the work while following the pattern from corner to corner. Bartleman's lighting projects a shadow on the gallery wall that serves to replicate and highlight the delicate nature of the piece.

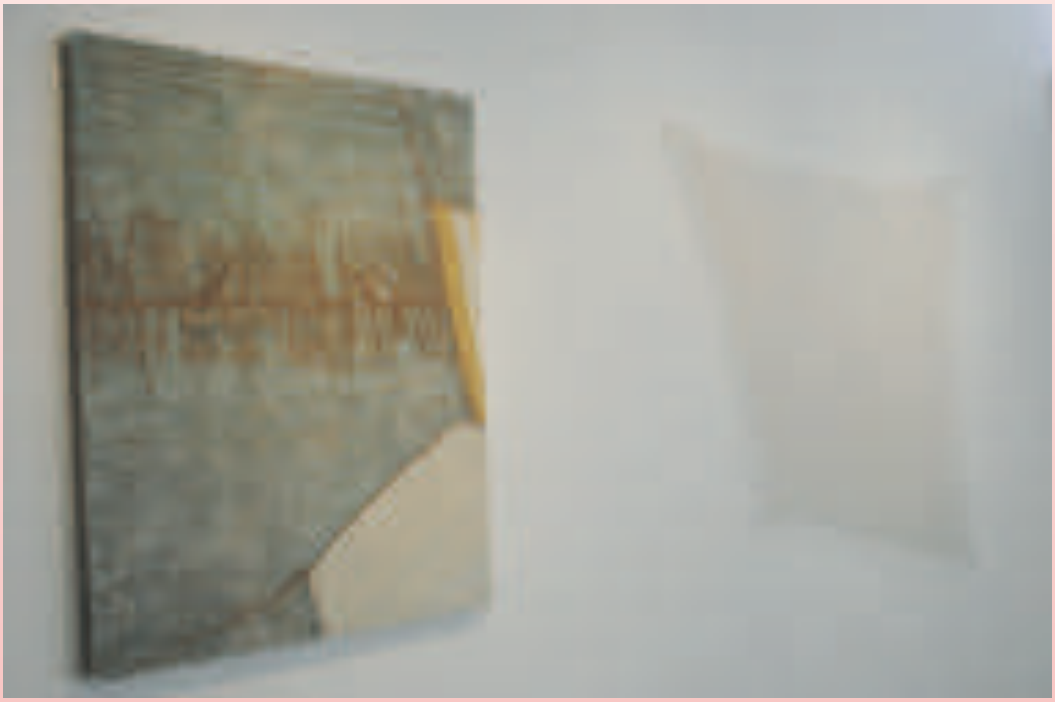
The work in this exhibition is dependent upon the relationship each artist has to the notion of the handmade craft. Within the simple gesture of creating something by hand, be it woven, knotted, or sewn, each artist embeds their time and meditative thought into their work. The repetition and time taken to create each piece acts as an additional ingredient in each artist's practice. *Pattern Makers* explores the artists' engagement with traditional practices and the creative impulse to subvert those traditions in order to embed a layer of individuality and open a conversation about the contemporary relationship to the handmade, the template, time and the self.



Top & Bottom: Colleen McCarten (2015)



Top & Bottom: Charlotte Moynes (2015)



Top: Sam Pedicelli, *The Curated Self* (2015)
Bottom: Claire Bartleman, *A Net. A Miss* (2015)

M

Victoria Delle Donne, *Compression* (2014)

Victoria Delle Donne, James Rollo, Franco Arcieri & Sook Jung

Spectres of The Future

curated by: **Shauna Jean Doherty**

04.10.15 – 05.02.15

Presented in conjunction with the Images Festival

by **SHAUNA JEAN DOHERTY**

> "A ghost never dies, it always remains to come and to come back...At bottom, the specter is the future, it is always to come"—Jacques Derrida[1]

Artwork relays information about the temporal moment in which it is produced, revealing to viewers the nature of their own era. This was the leading edict of Walter Benjamin's "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"[2] and guides my curatorial efforts in this exhibition, *Spectres of the Future*. Accordingly, the artworks that constitute this exhibition deploy the most common technologies of our time, offering a distinct vision of the present in anticipation of the future.

Together, Victoria Delle Donne, James Rollo, Franco Arcieri and Sook Jung each interrogate this physical world with technologies that gesture towards virtual realms. Through this assemblage of projections, radios turned theremins, and a hologram, these artists foreground the complexity of the physical body placed within a technological domain, where the nuances of human exprience and intimate exchange are complicated by the immaterial distance afforded by networked communication and digital devices. Their works are united by a haunting quality that articulates an anxiety spurred by technological ubiquity. In this exhibition the human form appears unstable, an apparition that threatens to disappear completely in the wake of digital discovery.

Through their works these artists ask, what does it means to be human in an age of technologies? What form does the body take when placed within the porous borders between reality and virtuality? And how do synthetic

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1 Derrida, Jacques. *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

2 Benjamin, Walter, Hannah Arendt, and Harry Zohn. *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

experiences affect real lives?

The division between the physical and the virtual has become increasingly ambiguous in the contemporary Western world, affecting our ways of knowing—ourselves—and each other. Online identity abstracts the body; avatars and disembodied communications impact contemporary notions of subjectivity and individuality. These works consider the deep ontological changes that have been wrought by this techno-reality, where self-knowledge is dependent on experiences that are often siphoned through technological media. Each work is a manifestation of the ongoing redefinition of personhood in the 21st century.

In her 1999 publication, *How We Became Posthuman*, literary critic Katherine Hayles rigorously proposes that we have deviated from the "liberal humanist subject" of the Enlightenment age, and evolved into a modern figure that she describes as the "post-human subject".[3] For Hayles, the body is diminished in the information age. Through the four works presented here, the artists attempt to relocate the body within a paradigm that again and again displaces it. It is made clear in Hayles's text that this post-human subject proposes new manifestations of self-hood, autonomy, and humanity as the biological being becomes increasingly combined with the digital devices on which it so depends. This imagined future where the organic human body is fused with synthetic machine components is a proposal that is often met with unease, understood as a threat to typical conceptions of human subjectivity. As Hayles accounts,

> "As long as the human subject is envisioned as an autonomous subject with unambiguous boundaries, the human-computer interface can only be parsed as a division between the solidity of real life on the one side and the illusion of virtual reality on the other...This view of the self authorizes the fear that if the boundaries are breached at all, there will be nothing to stop the self's complete dissolution" (290).[4]

Hayles exhibits a more optimistic attitude about the mixing of the human and the technological, describing this combining as a "dynamic partnership" (288). She uses the example of prosthetics to demonstrate the great potential inherent in the augmentation of the human body with artificial elements.

The blurring of boundaries between the real and the hyper-real contributes to an evolving meaning of "presence" in this intensely technologized social and physical landscape. Each artist in this exhibition responds to this deprioritization of physical presence by reconstituting the body in various iterations. Traces remain, whether as beams of light or invisible signals. At times the human body must animate the exhibition itself, illuminating the spectrum of human experience. Life and death. Analogue and digital. These works traverse the poles of materiality and immateriality, presence and absence, magnetic fields, and digital worlds.

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3 Hayles, Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago, 1999.

4 Ibid

Radio Spirit/Death Channel (2014) by Franco Arcieri features modified AM/FM radios that transmit a high-pitched sound when approached. The artist applies a macabre persona to his collection of possessed radio apparatuses with the inclusion of death in his title. To walk within the perimeter of his catacombs of obsolete technology is to resurrect them. Arcieri's modified radios align the invisibility of radio waves with the elusive immateriality of the human magnetic fields that activate his machines. The piercing hum is an analogue death rattle that marks the obsolescence of radio technology with their human-makers perhaps not far behind.

I Can't Actually See What You're Doing (2014) by James Rollo is much more alive: a responsive projection, human in its awareness and digital in its structure, titled with an apathy that denies its mystery. A digital projection that senses the viewer's corporeal presence seems to reach beyond the frame, imposing on the safe reality in which the viewer sits. The projection is a portrait of the artist himself, an immortalization of this moment in time. Rollo's work summons a future where projections are sentient and respond to your presence. The video's protagonist is a soulless spectre wading in a digital sea, Frankenstein's monster, capable of destroying his maker.

In Sook Jung's *Hologramom* (2014) the artist presents a holographic portrait of her late mother. The work, contemplative in its soft glow, proposes new corporeal possibilities in an advanced society. This image, in its unearthly luminosity, parallels technological obsolescence with human mortality. How can technologies be used to extend life, even in abstracted forms? Does this work provide comfort or longing?

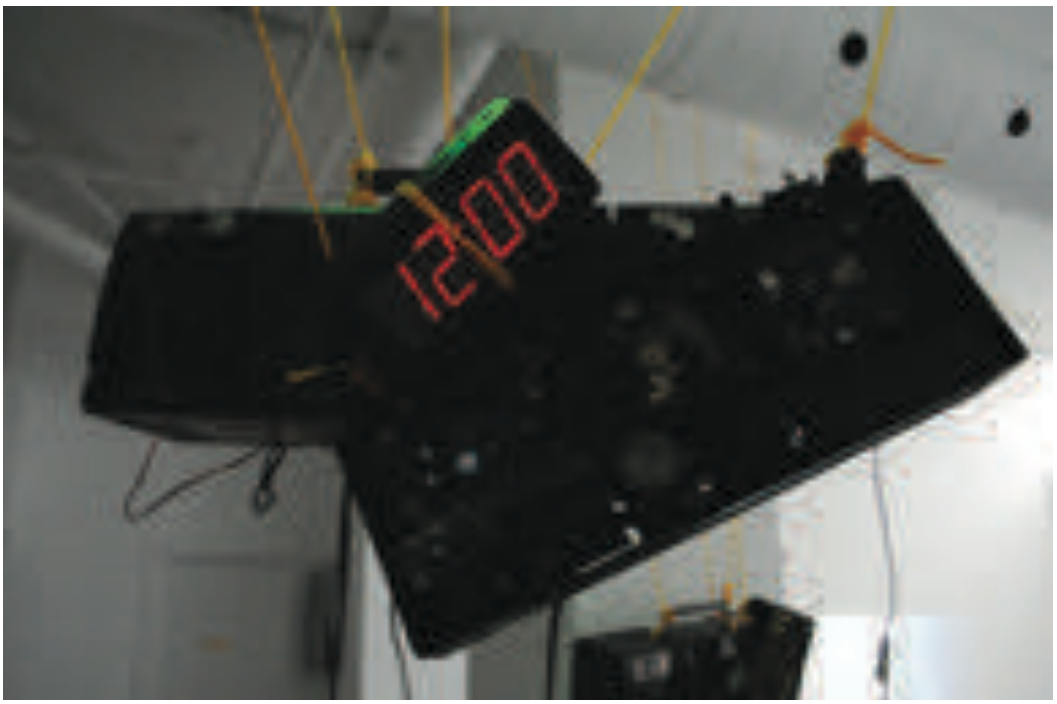
As Jack Halberstam and Ira Livingston assert in their text *Posthuman Bodies*, "posthuman bodies are the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality...The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image..a techno-body" (3).[5] In their text the authors maintain that technological progress does not necessarily mean the inevitable obsolescence of humanity, instead they imagine an evolution towards a new human form that combines with technologies.

In *Compression* (2014) Victoria Delle Donne literalizes the assertion that the posthuman body has transformed into the projected image itself. The work features a digital rendering of the artist consumed by the screen, unable to escape. In its haunting and spectral appearance, this work articulates an apprehension that has emerged with the proliferation of technology. So enmeshed in a simulacrum of projections and digital mediation, the artist becomes entirely consumed by the interface, her body mutating into a digital signal. Here the artist proposes the potentially destructive effects of digital representation on notions of subjectivity and identity, becoming fully engulfed in the digital apparatus. The artist is seen, detached from reality, stuck in the virtual with no way of breaking free.

Together these works test the limits of the human body by inserting the human form within the technological realm. In a reimagining of the

5 Halberstam, Judith, and Ira Livingston. *Posthuman Bodies*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.

relations between the physical and the artificial, *Spectres of the Future* preserves the traces of the physical body within a virtual paradigm that threatens to displace it.



Top: Sook Jung, *Hologramom* (2014)
Bottom: Franco Arcieri, *Radio Spirit/Death Channel* (2014)

This exhibition acknowledges
the generous support of
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IMAGES FESTIVAL

Top & Bottom: James Rollo, *I Can't Actually See What You're Doing* (2014)

M

Paul Chartrand, *The Conversation Teable* (2015)

David Caterini & David Schnitman, Paul Chartrand, Julian Garcia & Eli Kerr, Ambrose Li, Pablo Muñoz and Stephen Surlin

Politics of Design

06.25.15 – 07.18.15

by **EMILY GOVE**

Politics of Design is an exhibition that includes six projects by eight emerging designers who employ design methodologies to communicate political ideas, demonstrate the potential for protest and resistance, and examine the ways we use objects and space. From Graphic to Industrial and Inclusive Design, rapid prototyping methods to handmade ceramics and large-scale posters, the exhibition explores how design can inspire and instigate social change, and how it inescapably impacts the way we live.

In *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, Dr. Victor Papanek states that design "is basic to all human activities—the placing and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes a design process."[1] Since its first publication in 1971, Dr. Papanak's book was the first published text to explore the social responsibility of the designer, and it has since become one of the most widely read and circulated texts on Industrial Design. Papanak situates design as the "most powerful tool with which [humans] shape [their] tools and environments (and by extension, society and [themselves])," and the designer as the bearer of substantial moral and social responsibility to generate products with meaningful impact, both culturally and ecologically.[2] The projects in this exhibition demonstrate the capacity of contemporary designers to encourage and facilitate criticism and innovation.

In his project, Stephen Surlin engages with both historical and contemporary aesthetics of product design. The piece consists of a series of three

1 Dr. Victor Papanak, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change (2nd Edition)* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2000) 3.
2 Papanak, ix.

vintage straight razors, each carefully restored by the designer and accompanied by three distinctive stands. Each stand has been designed using open-source 3-D modeling software and fabricated by current rapid-prototyping methods (also known as 3-D printing) using Polyactic Acid (PLA) filament, a more sustainable alternative to more commonly used petroleum-based plastic. Each stand design allows the steel blades to dry fully after each use by allowing air flow underneath the razor's edge, keeping it safe from rust and further damage and prolonging their usability indefinitely. With this project,

Surlin hopes to generate an accessible, low-waste shaving system that sits in opposition to the economy perpetuated by the North American grooming industry, where commercial shaving products are costly, non-recyclable and built to be disposable.[3]

Paul Chartrand's Industrial Design practice focuses on hybrid sculptures combining living natural elements and manufactured objects. His furniture designs are often assembled as supports for small-scale functioning ecosystems. In, *The Conversation Teable*, Chartrand has employed re-purposed materials to construct a table that serves a second function as an incubation vessel for a small garden of mint to be dried for tea. Inspired by contemporary innovations in indoor and small-space edible gardens, the *Teable* acts not only as a practical gardening vessel, but also as a platform to support discussion while consuming the plants grown inside the structure. With this piece, Chartrand has generated a hyper-local system of production and consumption, and hopes to inspire dialogue regarding the politics of Western society's relationship to and reliance on industrial farming, which distances consumers from the products they consume.

Julian Garcia and Eli Kerr's *Lamp 1: access, light data* is a conceptual prototype that explores the current proliferation of smart security technologies. Increasingly, products are designed with embedded systems to optimize security through tracking the user's personal data. We provide access to personal data online freely, and secure it with passwords, personal security questions, and in the case of smart phone technology, fingerprints, rarely asking questions regarding how, and often even why, this data will be stored. *Lamp 1* is wired with a chip that can only be operated with a corresponding swipe card, thus tracking who is using it, when and for how long. This futile collection of data is in turn both humorous and disconcerting, generating questions regarding our right to privacy and the implications of surveillance.

David Caterini and David Schnitman's collaborative practice explores Graphic Design as an apparatus to exert control and support a capitalist system. In *Visualizing Economy*, Caterini and Schnitman explore the politics of data visualization, or the presentation of data in a pictorial format, for instance, graphs and pie charts. The piece consists of a playful infographic

3 Stephen Surlin artist statement, 2014

using arrows and text to outline the steps taken in the gathering and dissemination of data: Define, Collect, Organize, Reproduce, Distribute. A cycling video of images accompanies each step, representing the action across the scales of individual, city and globe. The designers argue that though data collection and visualization are generally thought of as objective, it follows a capitalist method where a select few control the means of production, and pre-made narratives form the basis of how data is collected, evaluated and represented.

Pablo Muñoz' poster series, *Unsettling: Queer Propaganda,* contrasts queer rights discourse in Canada with seldom-discussed issues of queer and gender variant migrants and how they are impacted by national borders. In each image, Muñoz references the poster design of the Black Panthers' Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, who served as the art director and designer for *The Black Panther* newspaper in the 1960s and 1970s. Douglas' "signature aesthetics of revolution,"[4] including bright colours, thick black outlines mimicking the style of traditional woodcuts, and the repetition of motifs like the panther and the clenched fist, have become inextricably associated with solidarity and grassroots social movements. In Douglas' posters, the artist portrays his community as freedom fighters in heroic opposition to the state. In Muñoz' posters,

> **the designer has placed the "oppressed"—in this case, queer migrants—as the heroes challenging the"state", in this case, borders and border enforcement agencies.[5]**

For this exhibition, Muñoz has mimicked the presentation of billboard advertising across the urban landscape by affixing a large-scale poster to the wall of the gallery. Through the referencing of the visual language of solidarity and the appropriation of the ubiquitous presentation of advertising, Muñoz conveys the image of a "united front of queer migrant rights activists."[6]

Inclusive designer Ambrose Li's series of slipcast ceramic bowls explores tenuous issues of language, accessibility and inclusivity. Each of Li's bowls is initially sculpted with Braille messages; during the process of demoulding, small pieces of the fragile text break or fall off, changing or jumbling the initial message completely. This fragility emphasizes the challenges faced by physically disabled folks as they navigate the built environment, where even subtle obstacles can deny access to specific populations. With these pieces, Li highlights an area of design that has not, until recent years, been held accountable to be accessible to all and has at times inadvertently sanctioned the exclusion of physically disabled communities. Architect Ray Lifchez argues that "inaccessible…environments endorse the participation of and distribution of resources to certain types of bodies in public space, while marginalizing other types of bodies from which access and resources

4 Colette Gaiter, *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007)
5 Pablo Muñoz artist statement, 2014.
6 Muñoz.

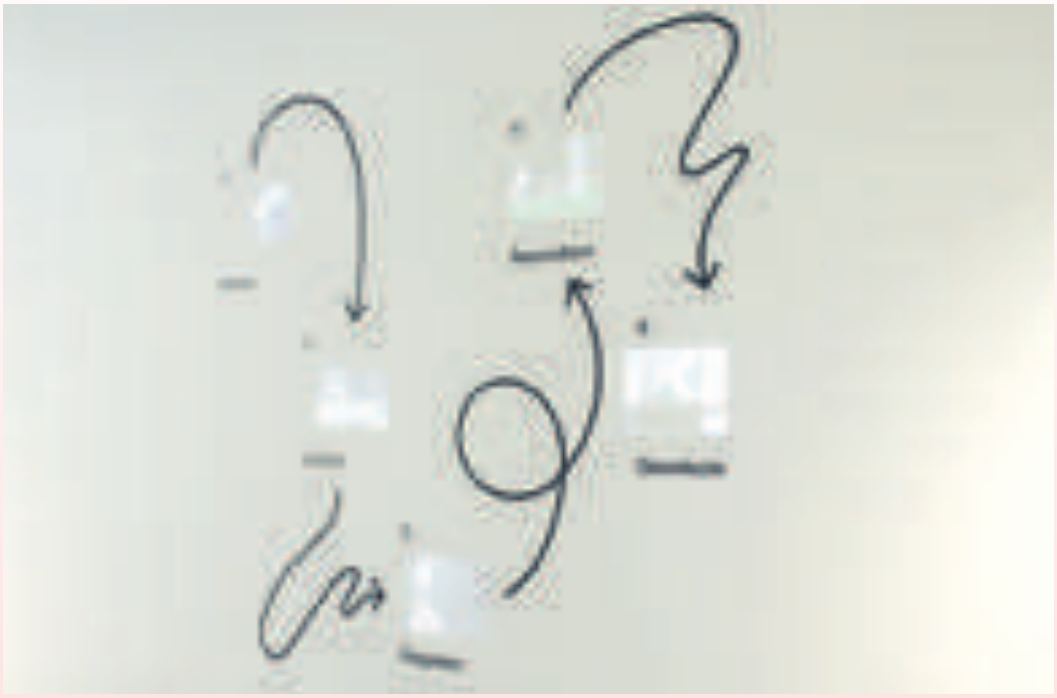
are withheld."[7] Though Li's ceramics may appear at first quiet and decorative, they speak radically to a history of design that has often valued aesthetics over inclusivity.

Viewing these projects together highlights the capacity of the designer to engage critically with their environment. Through these projects, and further exploration of emerging radical and politically engaged design in all disciplines we can both critique and better our current surroundings, and imagine the future of our designed environment.

Stephen Surlin (2015)

7 Raymond Lifchez, *Rethinking Architecture: Design Students and Physically Disabled People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) 1.

Top: Paul Chartrand, *The Conversation Teable* (2015)
Bottom: Julian Garcia & Eli Kerr, *Lamp 1: access, light data* (2015)



Top: David Caterini & David Schnitman, *Visualizing Economy* (2015)
Bottom: Pablo Muñoz, *Unsettling: Queer Propaganda* (2015)

Top & Bottom: Ambrose Li (2015)

M

Katie Morton, *Cry Me A River* (2015)

Lauren Cullen, Beth Frey, Katie Morton & Amy Wong

Girl Germs

curated by: **Emily Gove**

07.30.15 – 08.22.15

by **EMILY GOVE**

> "This is my TOP 10. extended dance remix. produced by revolution (summer) girl style now."[1]—Alison Wolfe, *Girl Germs 3*

The original *Girl Germs* was a zine produced by Alison Wolfe and Molly Neuman of the band Bratmobile in the early 1990s. Each issue consisted of interviews, personal stories, poems, short fiction, top 10 lists and mix tapes from contributors like Kathleen Hanna and G.B. Jones, alongside letters from readers and short descriptions and contact addresses for "cool publications and record company things that deserve some attention."[2] As a historic document, each issue of *Girl Germs* functions now as a cut-and-pasted archive of the Riot Grrrl movement, and the connections forged by its distribution across North America.

This exhibition was inspired by zines and mix tapes; the artists and works were selected in an intuitive, relational way. I chose works I wanted to see together and people I wanted to meet each other. Amy Wong describes mix tapes as "mini-curated universes…an art form motivated by love,"[3] and that sentiment expresses this show, too. *Girl Germs* also brings to mind dichotomies of sweet vs. nasty, dirty vs. clean, vulgarity vs. politeness, which all of these artists are exploring in some way. Like a mix tape, their practices are separate, but play off and inform each other within the gallery space. Here's my summer 2015 Girl Germs mix: Amy Wong, Lauren Cullen, Beth Frey, Katie Morton.

Amy Wong is "an angry Asian feminist disguised as an oil painter ;)."[4] Inspired by mix tapes and the aesthetics of teenage bedrooms, Wong's practice occupies space that is not intrinsically welcoming to women of colour.[5] She redirects and remixes visual pop cultural signifiers to deterritorialize and reclaim these images. In her painting-based installation, *Girl Gang Travel Mix*, paintings, drawings, speech bubbles, YouTube stills, postcards

1 Alison Wolfe, *Girl Germs 3*, reproduced in *Riot Grrrl Collection*, New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2013, p 74.
2 Wolfe, p 86.
3 Amy Wong, Artist's website (Song Projects), Web. July 30, 2015. <http://amy-wong.net>
4 Amy Wong, "Rhythm and the Monstrous: A Diary Manifesto for Oil Painters (Thesis Excerpt)," *Breach Magazine Issue 1: Decolonial Aesthetics*, June 2015.

and ephemera are collaged on the wall in an exploded cosmology, the juxtapositions generating new connections, meanings and personal narratives exploring gender, race, class and sexuality. A painting of the dulya—a Slavic, obscene hand gesture that replaces the phallic middle finger of the Western action with a clit-like thumb—hangs alongside images of Japanese kawaii nail art. A painted facsimile of the popular "Hang in there" motivational cat poster is surrounded by malevolent speech bubbles: "aiya" (a common Cantonese expression of exasperation),"Bitch Please," "eat shit and die." Amongst this found and appropriated imagery, Wong has included paintings referenced from personal photographs of living room dance parties and studio hangouts, and her niece striking a "power pose," an example of the confident posture that social psychologist Amy Cuddy suggests can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain.[6] The installation is accompanied by an infinitely looping mix tape of pop, hip hop, R&B, throat-singing, disco, New Orleans bounce and Chinese folk songs. The diverse references, images and media assert the impossibility of one true narrative or system of representation, and the fluidity between rigid categories of race and gender.

Lauren Cullen's practice uses the medium of rug-hooking to explore gendered narratives, both contemporary and historical. Cullen's rugs differ from traditional hooked objects, in which technical finesse and realistically drawn and shaded patterns are revered, Cullen's pieces are invested in hooking's potential to examine and critique the complex history of its practice in Canada. Within this history, the romantic narrative of the Victorian colonial woman maintaining her domestic home by crafting "happy," thrifty objects to warm their floors supersedes the contributions of First Nations peoples, and the dispossession required of those peoples in order for those floors to exist.[7] In contrast to popular rughooking patterns, often consisting of landscapes or flowers, Cullen uses text and colour to deconstruct the gender and class hierarchies that exist in hooking cultures. In *Proud to Hook*, Cullen hooks the title's text into a bright red and yellow rug. Using an intentional pun—"hooking" also refers to sex work—Cullen draws attention to those (predominantly white) women who have the privilege of laughing at that pun. In *Fucked Up*, *Fuck Binaries* and *Soft Bitch*, Cullen's profanity rubs against the grain of "polite" language, and hints at the "intrinsically nasty" nature of the rug:

> "Rugs conjure hair; both head and pubic. We can cut a rug and we can munch a rug. We can sweep an issue under the rug. We can shake out our rugs trying to rid the wool of dust and skin-cell build up, but we will never truly do away with past residues."[8]

Beth Frey creates sculptural work exploring girlhood and bodily boundaries. Frey's sculptures are created using a combination of hard and soft materials: chicken wire bases are coated and covered in pliable plastic sheeting, soft, sometimes melted fabrics, flexible paint skins, feminine garments and

5 Wong
6 Amy Cuddy, *Your body language shapes who you are.* TED talk, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 2012.
7 Lauren Cullen, "Proud to Hook: Rug Hooking, Matrilineage and the Canadian Palimpsest." Fifth Biennial Art History Symposium, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA. April 2014.

wigs in shades of pastel and neon pink, green, purple and turquoise. The resulting figures evoke images of childhood transgression, bodily disruption, or a birthday party gone horribly wrong. In this installation, Beth has created an explosion of exaggerated, abject 'girliness'. Soft, skinlike materials are layered with traced images of Miss Piggy, Lisa Simpson and Ariel the Little Mermaid to create transgressive girl-monsters; plastic fangs become eye sockets leaking sequined entrails and a pair of white and neon pink lace underwear becomes a mask for a disembodied head. The monstrous nature and leaky physical boundaries question the expectations of feminine etiquette and social mores.

Katie Morton's painting practice explores similar themes of femininity and 'proper' self-presentation. Morton paints images of women that are frequently both unsettling and playful. In *Witch at an ATM* Morton has created a strange narrative: a feminine green figure with a MOM tattoo and painted nails (the witch) swipes their card at an ATM, accompanied by two ghostly figures, described by the artist as "creepy girls,"[9] peering back at the viewer. An accompanying sculpture, *Cry Me A River*, consists of an angular feminine face with red lipstick and metallic yellow hair, built onto a household fan painted cotton candy pink. As the fan rotates, she cries an unending stream of blue glitter tears. The piece functions as a parody of teenage girl angst: infinite tears to a soundtrack of Justin Timberlake.

The installation of this exhibition was marked by points of connection: Lauren has been studying Beth's great aunt Elizabeth Lefort, a well-known Atlantic Canadian rug hooker, for her PhD research; Beth makes an appearance in one of Amy's paintings, a studio scene created during a Québec residency they both attended.

The gallery took on the environment of a teenage bedroom, the floor strewn with ephemera, craft supplies, hair extensions and a pizza box. The final result is a manifestation of that energy, a space charged with positive nastiness.[10]

8 Cullen, 2014.
9 Conversation with the artist, 2015.
10 Phrase borrowed from Lauren Cullen, who has a variation of it tattooed on her arm.

Top: (left) Lauren Cullen, *Proud to Hook* (2015), (right) Katie Morton, *Witch at the ATM* (2015)
Bottom: Amy Wong, *Girl Gang Travel Mix* (2015)

Beth Frey (2015)

P

Danica Drago

Reclaim: A Ceramic Site Intervention

09.12.14 – 10.04.14

by **JONATHAN LOCKYER**

Reclaim: A Ceramic Site Intervention is a multidisciplinary sculptural installation of recent ceramic work produced by Danica Drago. Rather than focus on the final product, Drago's project explores the detailed and self-directed process of conceptualizing, molding, firing, and displaying a body of ceramic sculptures. Drago, who is a skilled ceramicist in her own right, is deeply interested in how process affects the conceptualization and production of artwork, and uses the *Reclaim* project as a means to explore this creative sentiment.

Drago's practice as a sculptor is a manifestation of her interest in the multiple stages of ceramic sculpting. For Drago, each step within her creative process, beginning with the initial concept and strategy for creation, to the collection or purchase of materials, down to the firing and glazing of each object, is an integral element in the process of creation. Drago defines her practice as an ongoing exploration of the relationship between materials, and and their ability to build dialogue through the materials they are constructed with. Drago is respectful of the history of ceramic sculpture, and finds great enjoyment in the technical aspects clay sculpture lends itself to, which is somewhat ironic given Drago's practice as one of relatively open-ended cause, effect and chance. Drago's previous work built on theses ideas by exploring the intersections between hand and

machine-made ceramic sculptures, and the tensions that exist around the very notion of an object being "hand-made."

Drago approaches *Reclaim* as an artist avidly interested in the materiality of processbased creation, seeking new ways to expand on this practice. Drago accepts that, while working with a general concept of what her aims for the project will be, that a certain degree of error, improvisation, and experimentation is inherently unavoidable. Watching the project unfold is to accept a certain degree of variables outside of the artist's control that are a product of both the natural and constructed environments *Reclaim* took shape in.

The entirety of *Reclaim* is a product of Drago's residency at Artscape's facilities on Toronto Island's Gibraltar Point. But, that is not to say the project as a whole has been contained within the expanses of the Island itself. Through the artist's commitment to process-based creation, *Reclaim* took on unexpected twists and turns that were the result of the numerous and often-unpredictable variables associated with each stage of the project. Over a two-week period Drago commuted, by bicycle with a large two-wheeled trailer attached, to harvest natural, unprocessed clay from several sites along the Toronto waterfront. The sites included the Scarborough Bluffs along the city's eastern waterfront, to a condominium construction site along Queen's Quay just south of the Toronto Island Ferry Docks. The endeavor proved difficult in the sheer weight and quantity of the clay when one considers that not only was the raw material dug up by hand, but brought back to Drago's island studio by bicycle.

Each harvest yielded clay most emerging ceramic sculptors would be unfamiliar with. The clay ranged in colour from a light, sandy brown to an almost black, dense sludge that emitted an equally powerful odour. Drago feels that for many working within the medium, sculpting is a very clean, safe, and regimented means of production that stands in stark contrast to the messy, labour-intensive process of creation ceramic sculpting is derived from. Drago states:

For so many people working with clay, it becomes something that is totally clean and commodified, with no connection to the land of place it came from. It's very clean, neat and processed with all the convenience of a material you can buy prepackaged in an art supply shop. With *Reclaim*, I wanted to move as far away as possible from that concept and mode of production, and reconnect the act of sculpting with some of the processes it originated from, and the land that it came from.[1]

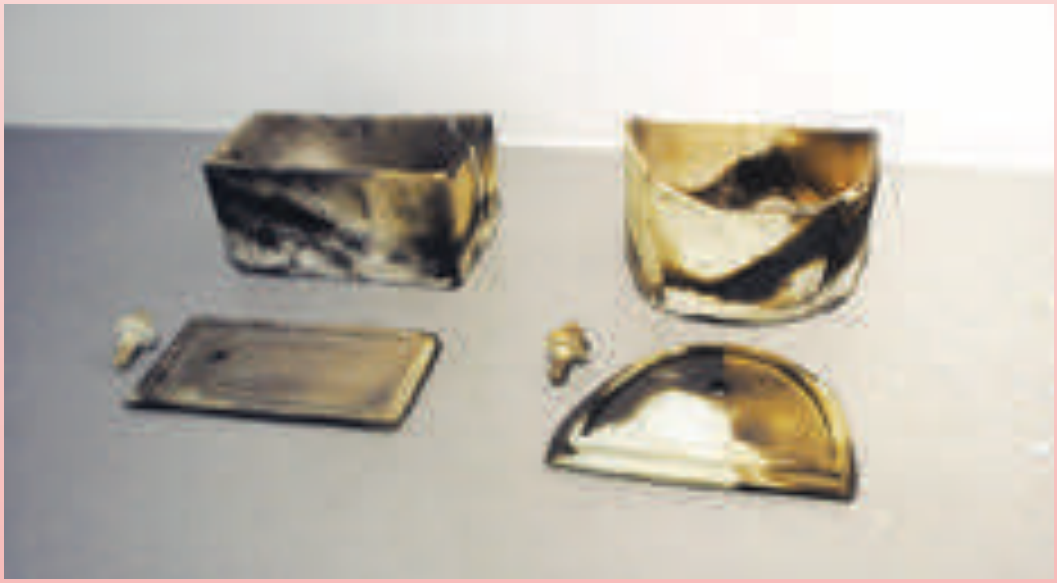
The laborious process of straining and purifying the harvested clay exposes

1 The author in conversation with Danica Drago, Artscape Gibraltar Point, August 12, 2014.

the basic realities of Drago's connection to her chosen medium. It is a messy and often-imperfect method of process that illustrates Drago's immersion in her work. The intimate connection Drago shares with her work extends well beyond the rendering of sculptural forms, infusing every step of the artist's process.

In *Reclaim*, Drago's commitment to process-based production extends beyond the creation of a gallery-ready object. Drago sculpted and fired—with the exception of two firing vessels—all of *Reclaim's* objects without the use of a conventional ceramics facility. Instead, Drago's sculptures were fired in two hand-built kilns on the beaches of Gibraltar Point. The construction of each kiln is further evidence of Drago's commitment to process-oriented production. Each kiln—one, a large pit dug into the sand of Gibraltar Point with a fire then built over top of the firing vessel, the other a more traditional kiln constructed from reclaimed bricks from the Leslie Street Spit—were susceptible to the changing elements in a day, and resulted in several delays in the firing process. Cold temperatures, rain, and high winds (along with summer crowds that occupy the numerous beaches of the Toronto Islands), presented a series of challenges that while anticipated, were unpreventable in Drago's process However, the kilns were not simply a means to an end in the creation of each sculpture. Instead, they were a vital means of process and production, with each kiln and its unique firing process becoming an extension of the final sculptural product.

Through every step of *Reclaim's* production—from conceptualization, to the harvesting of clay and kiln materials, to the final rendering of each sculpture—one see's Danica Drago's commitment to the entirety of process-based sculpting. It is a unique connection between landscape, space, technology, and aesthetic exploration that gives life not only to the project, but also to Drago's broader artistic practice.



P

Sean Stewart & Jason Deary

In Between Things

10.07.14 – 11.08.14

by **CORRIE JACKSON**

> 'The object, then, is vision, it is a surface filled with ego eyes. Its constructedness matters less than the way it goes about reconceiving our own willed surfaces.'—Travis Jeppesen

In the exhibition, *In Between Things*, the role of the support and surface in the works of Sean Stewart and Jason Deary comprises the basis for each artists approach, where the ability of a support to guide, contain, and articulate a gesture seems to be not only the structure upon which these artists lay their marks, but the support on which their practice is built. For Stewart and Deary process is the focus of their approach. Stewart's paintings (whose compositions are done in variations of acrylic, oil, spray paint, and charcoal) are installed alongside Deary's sculptural works with a composition and treatment that stem from his painting practice. The sculptures are composed of foam, wood, wire, string and other materials, and are as much experimentation in the means of creating a surface as Stewart's painterly experimentation.

Their work, by their own testament, is process based, looking more at the gestural responses materials evoke in relationship to each other, then approaching a work with a final composition in mind. These works are a testament to their structures, the interplay and gesture that becomes the visual surface, fully reliant and responsive to the structural framework on which it rests. These works also echo a distinct history of negotiating the act of making with the inherent histories their materials contain.

There is something undoubtedly romantic about paying attention to the inherent power of a surface, about our ability to look into a surface and see it for its potential to hold, to become an aperture for the gaze. As move-

ments such as the Support/Surface artist collective of the late 60's, begin to be recovered once again in our social memory through recent retrospective exhibitions in L.A. and New York. The work of these artists resonates with a contemporary motivation to explore formal approaches to contemporary materials (think artists like Julia Dault, Hugh Scott Douglas and Dashiel Manley). There seems to be a kindred impulse, at this moment, to deconstruct painting, to herald the material of painting, and to return with new complexities to this moment, concurrent to abstract minimalism, but in its own way attentive and concerned with colour, gesture, and our relationship to touch and material.

As Raphael Rubinstein writes in his recent review of the *Support/Surface* exhibition at Canada Gallery this past summer;

> "In combining the language of formalist abstraction with a self-evident procedure, they tell us something new about painting" and in looking upon the current response in contemporary art he writes, "The kindred impulse—to deconstruct painting, to turn to the everyday world for materials, to favor process over image,… is seen everywhere in current abstraction." [1]

Stewart responds to these current trends, while also maintaining a commitment to the relationship between canvas and stretcher, never separating one from the other, as many from the Support/Surface movement did, but rather delves deeper into the inherent tension between the two material elements. His painterly mark making is guided by the support of the painting itself. The mark making seems guided by the surface's internal structure. Not unlike Harold Town's body of work from the early 1960's, wherein the internal structure of the compositional elements point to the constraints of the painted structure, jutting against the corners of the surface. Town's interest was in tension and discomfort, pointing out the discomfort and limitations, be they political or material. This is perhaps exemplified when two of his works at the Venice Biennale of 1964 where two of his 'enigma' drawings were ordered removed by an Italian cardinal. Tension, even at its subtlest, is a powerful force once given attention. Similarly in Stewart's work the tension that is inherent in the material surface, the warp and weft of the unprimed canvas wrapped over the corner of the paintings support is a moment when structure once again defines the nature of its surface.

Stewart's gestures seems responsive to the contained structure he creates, varying from a traditional stretcher to ones hand-built, jutting uncomfortably. The scalloped imagery in, around the edges of the works, specifically distort and amplify the curvature of the canvas, accentuating the tension between the surface and its underlying structure. In *Shapes shift, lines follow*, 2014, gestural marks create a patterned surface in friction with the unprimed, unmarked segments of the canvas, the Matisse-like gesture brings us back to the colour, the sensation of drapery being pushed back.

1 Rubenstein, Raphael. *Theory and Matter, Art In America*. September 2014, http://www.artinamerica magazine.com /news-features/magazine/theory-and-matter/

For Stewart, the material speaks to its own condition: canvas becomes adhered to canvas, cut out and applied through impromptu materials such as tape, bookbinding glue, and the adhesive nature of the paint itself. A *Mammoth Boiling House* holds an internal structure that seems to echo a stretched hide, an internal structure that defines tensions within the canvas is drawn in with graphite, becoming a container for the marks and imprints to the surface that seem impromptu but are compositionally articulate and which play with the absorbent, textured surface of the unprimed material. Found materials and objects seem absorbed into the visual field, shaping the compositional structure. A metal bar that the artist found in a creek near a construction site, titled *Jeff Bridges*, seems to pull and respond to the structures in surrounding canvases.

Stewart's approach is based in the surface's response to the structure, while Deary focuses on the process of creating structure, and how arrangement is guided by material choices, and the layering and configuration of materials.

Working in a variety of mediums, the sculpture showing at Xpace is a recent endeavor. Having focused on painting previously, the sculptures gesture towards the textures and forms that emerge from his collage-based painting practice, activating their surfaces. Made from combinations of foam, wood, wire, mesh, metal, plaster, drywall compound, stucco mix, Plexiglas, vinyl and spray paint, the internal structures are alluded to in their form and scale.

Extending the gesture beyond the painted surface. The compositional choices, and black and white painted elements derive from a number of sources that seem to resonate at differing degrees in Deary's work. Deary's move to sculpture can easily be traced back to his early collage work, most closely reflected in his painting *Old Haunts*, where he applied 2 dimensional paint 'swatches' on a surface when dried—a form of building a surface which formally, materially and technically, resonates with the additive sculptural process of his current works.

Perhaps most resounding is the visual relationships between Deary's painting, with its black and white textural elements, and the black and white reproductions of artworks and sculptures in the art history textbooks sitting in this studio. References to Henry Moore and primitivist sculpture can be found only pages apart from each other when looking through these texts, and their forms and textures leap from the page into Deary's sculptures and paintings.

The speckled surfaces of Moore's plaster maquettes seem to be particularly poignant given the unfinished appeal of Deary's technique. This tactility (which for Moore was quite constructed, as he would use a domestic kitchen grater to nick the surface of his large bronzes), is clearly also the priority in Deary's final works, which have more of a sense of unfinished maquettes. Yet the potential for recreation on a larger scale does not seem to be the focus of his concerns.

The sculptures themselves echo the textures and forms of his painting,

now rendered in 3-D, holding much more trace of the artist's hand than the paint—on paper—on linen ever could. They are rough gestures towards the process of their making, seemingly temporal in their material.

Ideals of materiality cannot be separated from the works that sit within the exhibition. There is something within the ontology of work that holds a gesture, the brush stroke or the artists touch within its surface have a certain historical, elemental sensation. Greenberg's influence on the Prairie artists and Emma Lake school, and Ronald Bloore's monochrome white paintings, where forms are distinguished by their tactile surface presence can also be seen in these works. It is attractive, and it, without pause, reminds us of the value of sensation, of the action, the reaction, and the tension held within these gestures.

P

SAS (Sagan MacIsaac, Arielle Gavin & Sarah Butterill)

The Artists in Her Studio (After Jane Eyre)

11.21.14 – 12.13.14

by **NIVES HAJDIN**

> "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will."—Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Sagan MacIsaac, Arielle Gavin, and Sarah Butterill, the cheeky all-female art collective known as SAS, play with notions of constructed identity and environment in her multi-layered, metafictional installation, *The Artists in Her Studio (After Jane Eyre)*. SAS assumes the role of a singular fictional persona by conflating three women into one character to critique outdated assumptions of female individuality, or lack thereof. She also pays tribute to the trope of the solitary artist in Charlotte Brontë's timeless classic, *Jane Eyre* (1847), one of the most celebrated literary heroines in the western canon. Influenced by *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys's 1966 prequel to the novel, SAS's performance builds on the conversation of racism and colonialism addressed by Rhys, while drawing on humour and satire to unhinge flawed perceptions of gender, race and social class. Her work is an exploration of performativity and to what limit these boundaries can be prodded and pushed.

Framed as a celebrity artist, SAS has been tasked with designing an amusement park that commemorates *Jane Eyre*, complete with rides and

attractions inspired by various passages from the novel. The exhibition itself features physical manifestations of her process, including sketches, models and mood boards, as well as videos of the artist in action, charting the construction and proposed inauguration of the theme park, *Thornfield Unbound*, in Whistler, B.C., in 2015. A video projection features SAS in her studio; explaining her practice, creating preliminary documents, and contemplating art in its various forms, be it the profound appreciation of a flower garden or the mentorship of a respected figure. Another set of monitors depicts the artist onsite at the theme park construction site, what Torontonians know to be the dog bowl at Trinity Bellwoods, just another one of SAS' many jabs at the overtly fabricated nature of her performance. The informal style of the artist's testimonials is itself a gag, existing as careless point-and-shoot recording by a studio intern and thereby exposing the seams of the artist's "genius" and process.

There are differing levels of theatrical spectacle at play within *The Artists in Her Studio*; in the exhibition itself, in which the three women occupy and perform within a fictional studio space, as well as in the scripted interviews and staged artifacts on display, all acting as markers of authentication of an event that never happened. The undertaking recalls Iris Häussler's *He Named Her Amber* (2008–2010) at the Art Gallery of Ontario[1], in which the artist hoodwinked audiences with a seemingly authentic excavation project at the Grange, a 19th-century house attached to the gallery, involving the discovery of objects hidden away by the house's servants and the "hiring" of a forensics team to assess the findings. The revelation of the project's fabricated status was met with admiration as well as outrage, and yet Häussler's institutional critique demonstrates how performance art can destabilize systems of power from within. Similarly, SAS implementation of humour as a subversion strategy is not immediately apparent; why do these three artists want to build a Jane Eyre theme park? Is SAS even a real collective? Her practice inherently fosters ambiguity and expects her audience to do a double-take of sorts, blurring what resides in the realm of the real, and what belongs to her fictional microcosm.

The ruse circles back to the park's "commission" by Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, viewed by the collective as a proponent of neoliberal feminism: a postindustrial feministmovement disguised as a means of workplace empowerment for women. Sandberg's #1 bestselling book, *Lean In*, encourages women to adopt an entrepreneurial, can-do attitude in the workplace inorder to attain economic prosperity, and yet it fails to address that "feminism has been retooled as avehicle for expression of the self, a "self" as marketable consumer object".[2] SAS's identification of Sandberg as the park's imagined benefactor raises questions about the misguided efforts of this type of feminism to unite all women, and the artist consequently presents the theme park as a unified "women of the world" experience. SAS conceives of various rides and attractions to poke fun at the ideals of woman-

1 Gillian MacKay, "Iris Häussler: Brilliant Disguise," Canadian Art, Winter 2009, pp. 82-87.
2 Susan Faludi, "Facebook Feminism, Like It or Not," The Baffler, no. 23, 2014.

hood by highlighting certain flaws and stereotypes associated with women of the Victorian era. *The Red Room Hysteria Ride* "simulates the unmanageable emotional excesses Jane experiences in the Red Room [Chapter Two]," while the *Jolie Laide Unmakeover Spa* allows visitors to "achieve Jane's famed plain-featured look".[3] Theme park employees even don Victorian-era garb as their uniforms, represented by a costume on display in SAS's studio—borrowed from Toronto's own Comrags, who designed the costumes for the Canadian Stage's production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*.

SAS's installation within the Project Space features ephemera from the artist's studio, including postminimalist assemblages, copies of the novel, and various pamphlets, buttons and didactic panels intended to recreate the "accessible" nature of the museum. Viewers are encouraged to digest the elements of her artistic process, both in her presence and absence, through mood boards corresponding to various attractions. The suggested theme park location of Whistler speaks to SAS's conception of "wholesome family fun"—SAS even enlists the help of her colleagues in Banff to shoot on-location footage featuring the towering Rockies in the background—itself a jab at the stiff disposition captured in James McNeill Whistler's iconic 1871 portrait of his mother.

SAS provides no shortage of art world jokes, and yet the exercise is not a farce; rather, it provides a shrewd critique on the supposed ideals of womanhood, the problematic shift towards neoliberal feminism, and similar issues that struggle to achieve resolution and continue to warrant critique. SAS's employment of humour and satire makes her seem naïve to these deeper issues, but by severely exaggerating certain ideals and behaviours, she alerts her audience that she is aware of her contradictions, that she is the mastermind behind it all.

3 The author in conversation with SAS on Sunday, November 9, 2014.

Special thanks to Lisa Smolkin, Meghan O'Neill, CN Tower Liquidation (Sebastian Butt and Charlie Murray) for their participation and support.

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Dylin North

Where my ass has been

01.30.15 – 02.21.15

by **RACHEL LUDLOW**

Where my ass has been is a series of small paintings by Toronto-based artist Dylin North. The series playfully catalogues the artist's movements from place to place and serves as an archive of his time spent on buses and trains. Based on cell-phone photographs taken by North between 2010 and 2015, the paintings depict his interpretations of the abstract, geometric and often brightly coloured patterns that adorn the seats aboard these vehicles. The paintings are small, measuring approximately eight by ten inches.

North uses various paint applications that provide an effective translation and simulation of the industrial-strength velvet that covers the seats of most public transport vehicles of a certain era. The familiarity of these patterns is oddly comforting, perhaps that is because the painted image, removed from its original context aboard some form of public transit, becomes a reminder of the security of the everyday. These patterns could be from any bus anywhere, they are something you have seen before and they are something you will see again, a signal of stability in the banal.

The paintings are about the space between departure and arrival, where being in transit is about residing in an in-between non-space. This non-space has characteristics that enforce a way of being, and this can be limiting or freeing, depending on one's view of the experience. While aboard a bus or a train, a passenger has limited options, restricted mobility, and a reasonable expectation of quiet stillness. Each of the paintings is titled with its origin and destination points and is chronologically numbered in order of when the journey was taken, such as *Seat #16 Toronto to Niagara*. If the title of a work can lend information regarding what the work is about, North's paintings are about the "to" in the journey evoked in the title.

I sat down with North to discuss this series of work. He described for me how the paintings were prompted by a ride on the bus, probably on one of his monthly commutes from Toronto to Niagara. Acknowledging the design of his seat to be eccentric, North took a photo and texted it to a friend. After this, he started noticing that the various seat designs ranged from interesting to ridiculous, and he started collecting the photographs.

North says the paintings started out as a sort of joke, as he saw the patterned bus seats and thought that they looked like Abstraction. I am interested in how much of a direct effect Abstraction has had on this type of patterning and imagery, and thereby how Abstraction has made its way into mass-consumed consciousness in the form of the Ikea-type giclée print, the bus seat, the hotel hallway artwork.

North is pulling something that has been filtered through the lens of mass culture back into the realm of fine art by re-interpreting, through painting, the degenerate geometric designs that decorate public transit seats. A layering and looping occurs in this process that serves to level the function and value of both formal Abstraction and its "less authentic" reproductions.

The bus ride to Niagara, which takes about 90 minutes, has always been, for North, a sort of break. It is the time between spaces and places and doing things. During his travels throughout North America and Europe, his time on buses and trains was his only time to think about what he was doing and what he was seeing. When he was wandering around a city he felt distracted, prompted, even obligated, to be out and doing and seeing more. He didn't feel like he should sit down and read a book, because why would he read a book while he is in London? He would read and write and think and pause while in transit between places. Being stuck in the container freed him from thinking about other uses of his time, it allowed him to "recover from having too many options in a space where [he had] none."

Where my ass has been at first struck me as sort of just whimsically geometric abstract images, and it was not until I pulled back my gaze and the individual dots and strokes blurred that I saw the recognizable fabric. I laughed out loud at this interaction going on between my eyes and my brain and my heart. I liked the painting when I did not know what it depicted, because it felt calm and it felt easy, like a friend that I haven't seen in years. Someone who knows me so well that our re-connections are effortless. There is an ease that comes from the familiarity with these abstract patterns and what they represent—the in-between space of a forced slowness that offers both relief from and comfort in the everyday.

Dan Frawley

We Dream in Terrain

03.06.15 – 03.28.15

by **LUCAS JOHNSON**

Dan Frawley has been slowly working towards his exhibition, *We Dream in Terrain* for several years. His method was simple: search for locations with geographic similarities (a clear horizon and a hill crest), lock a 4x5 camera to a tripod, select a starting point, and, walking forward, take a photograph every five meters. As the frames progress they reveal nothing new about the landscape that lies in front of the lens. However, because the camera is placed without concern for the uneven ground on which it sits, each frame references the land's unique topography through the skewing of the image's horizon.

For this installation, Frawley has wrapped ten 42" x 54" black and white Giclee prints around the North, East, and South walls of the Project Space. The immersive prints create a panoramic view reminiscent of the images beamed back to earth by NASA's rover, *Curiosity*, which was sent to Mars to document the topographical terrain of the planet. Frawley's final images are worlds apart in space and technology from those of NASA, but make interesting companions for comparison. Frawley's instincts found a location where he could explore his method in order to understand the land where he placed his camera. This seemingly random method of capture is actually a very definite act. Frawley's camera, like Curiosity, is placed by its owner, reducing it to a strict recording instrument. The cameras on both devices remain static until they are instructed to move increasingly forward into the future by the same force that put them there. The initial landing spot of both devices was purposeful, leading to a set of images that investigate a landscape through progressive frames.

Frawley's images are shot in the stark midday sun, which adds to the sense of an arid landscape. The midday sunlight presses the small plants and

stones in the foreground onto their own shadows, creating a footprint that references the location of the camera in relation to the sun. This lack of long shadows and shallow depth of field effectively flattens the landscape against the wall. The dryness of location and light, combined with the monochrome nature of black and white photography, creates a frame that compresses perspective—as if reducing the immensity of a landscape between two glass slides ready for microscopic inspection.

In his article, "Reading Photographs Iconographically or Ichnographically" (2005), Lars Kiel Bertelsen compares the image of astronaut Neil Armstrong's boot print captured after his moon landing, his 'one small step' remark, and a passage from H.G. Well's novel, *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). He argues that there is a startling similarity between Armstrong's quote, "That's one small leap for man, one giant leap for mankind," and Well's passage about a similar moon landing ending with, "an extremely big leap." These two examples use 'leap' as a metaphor, which when aligned with the imprint of the photographed boot print, creates an image ready for mass consumption. This connection, in the mind of the viewer, satisfies their need for photographic pleasure by applying a suggested response through their experience with popular culture. The historic meaning of the image is now one of mass culture, rather than just an image of Armstrong's boot print.

We Dream in Terrain, engulfs the viewer in a sea of images that reference *Curiosity's* images. Yet, unlike the rover's images—which were beamed back and presented over a long period of time as the project progressed—Frawley places his images side-by-side, allowing the viewer to mentally walk through his work sideways. The shift in horizon angle gives the feeling that you are gentling rumbling forward in the landscape. His images create a window for the viewer, bringing them closer to a world where they physically are not; creating the impression of a nameless alien landscape. That *Curiosity's* images can be recalled while looking at Frawley's work naturally creates an otherworldly feeling of distance, creating a flat abstract map of experience that can be re-charted by the viewer's movements through the gallery.

William Andrew Finlay Stewart

Memorial

04.10.15 – 05.02.15

by **NATHAN HOO**

William Andrew Finlay Stewart's video installation, *Memorial*, is at once quietly meditative and poignantly thought provoking. The work challenges the viewer to draw a connection between the scrolling list of film credit names and those we chose to honour in war and post-catastrophe memorials. As the video progresses, this juxtaposition reveals itself to be both simple and profound.

Inspired by the lists of deceased and missing service members displayed in a book at the North Atlantic Aviation Museum in Gander, Newfoundland and at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, as well as the names of those who died during the 9/11 Twin Tower attacks at the 911 Memorial in New York City, *Memorial* places the credit sequence in a similar tradition. On his website, Stewart describes the similarities of these memorial lists and film credits as follows:

> **It is the experience of being told "These names represent people. People who have done something. Remember them". In this way film credits, like war memorials and postcatastrophe lists of names, overwhelm, but unlike those solemn tributes they are presented in the context of entertainment.[1]**

Stewart was struck by the similar manner in which film credits resemble these memorial lists. In this work, he treats film credits with a level of reverence usually reserved for sites of mourning and veneration, while also subtly hinting at a general state of indifference or boredom towards these same lists.

The video, a symmetrically pleasing static shot, depicts an audience in a cinema after the film has ended. The flashing light of the projector and an accompanying soundtrack by Jon Lawless signal that a credit sequence has started. While cinema staff routinely go about their cleaning tasks, a few

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1 Stewart, William Andrew Finlay. "Memorial." *Wafs.ca*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Mar. 2015.

attentive audience members remain in their seats watching the credits scroll while others choose instead to stare at their phone screen or leave the theatre entirely.

The installation space mirrors the cinema seating in the video and generates a slightly disorienting effect on the viewer, giving them enough time to wonder "am I watching myself?" In this way, *Memorial* offers two perspectives. The viewers of the installation become the object dismissed by the on-screen audience while simultaneously recognizing themselves in the as those who dismiss. In combination with the durational aspect of *Memorial*, these multiple perspectives add a dynamic and layered dimensionality to the work. Over time, the viewer is able to move between perspectives.

The durational aspect of *Memorial* allows the viewer to meditate on the work. The continuous 12-minute take does not bombard the viewer with continuous action, but instead offers an image on which they can ruminate over a set period of time. By spending time with the work, one begins to draw connections between three separate concepts: the virtual video space and the installation space, the spectators in the video and the viewers, and memorial and cinema.

The title, *Memorial*, in relation to the video is unsettling because it directly places ideas of memory and loss into the context of entertainment. The way Stewart sets up this juxtaposition is simple, and yet the questions invoked in the minds of critical viewers are insightful. Does it signal a gap in our appreciation of the film industry and those who work to bring us a widely popular source of entertainment? Does the work suggest that as viewers we ought to give more of our attention and time to the hundreds of people whose names we routinely ignore by leaving the cinema before their names make it to the screen? *Memorial* does not provide any definitive answers, but it certainly leaves its viewers with questions. The piece, like a list of names, has the potential to evoke a quiet moment of contemplation if they take the time to appreciate the image in front of them.

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Vida Beyer

Body's in Trouble

06.25.15 – 07.18.15

by **DANIELLA E. SANADER**

("Two cursors, approximately 'hand sized."[1])

Vida Beyer's installation *Body's in Trouble* is framed by a large needlepoint banner of a computer window, which hangs on the North wall of Xpace's Project Space like digital heraldry. It includes lyrics sourced from a 1988 song by Mary Margaret O'Hara from which Beyer's installation takes its name. ("Who, who, who do you talk to?/Who do you talk to?/Who do you talk to?/When your body's in trouble."[2]) It is a song about difficult embodiment, lyrics navigating the uneasy terrain of attachment and isolation, and is displayed in CAPTCHA-style text: distorted words commonly used to distinguish humans from computers. Referencing a pop song from the year of her birth (and mine, incidentally), the banner bookends the quasi-autobiographical iconography of Beyer's installation as a whole: an uncanny assemblage of oversized cursors and icons, densely drawn video stills, new-age remedies, and hand-made glitches. Nostalgias and cynicisms for an internet made tactile.

Body's in Trouble reconfigures the digital world of Beyer's memory as a strange yet potentially inhabitable space. ("I come from the net."[3]) In my mind, it's a living room. Objects are resized to meet the scale of the body, reformatted in soft contours. There's a tarot deck described by the artist as "the size of a low-ish coffee table,"[4] and a shag rug emblazoned with the LiveJournal logo. There are dense drawings that read like open browser windows or perhaps even images on the walls of a home. Living rooms are often configured for a body's comfort and care—a meeting-place for family and a site of relaxation or play, where troubled thoughts (or troublesome people) are not permitted entry. Nostalgia is perhaps the living room's most prized senti-

1 A note from Vida Beyer to me about *Body's in Trouble*, May 27, 2015.
2 Lyrics from "Body's in Trouble" by Mary Margaret O'Hara.
3 Line from opening sequence to the television series *Reboot*.
4 A note from Vida Beyer to me about *Body's in Trouble*, May 27, 2015.

ment: the nostalgic also deals in the comfortable and familiar, the softening of an object's edges, a yearning for when things were simpler, easier, better. A view of a rosy past is a helpful balm for anxieties in the present. ("Permanent Gaycation."[5]) Nostalgia doesn't leave much space for difficult people, and I hardly need to outline the anxiety felt by many queer and feminist folks in the living rooms of our families. However, like many others, I feel a palpably soft nostalgia for the internet of my teens as a space for navigating desire and developing forms of digital intimacy and community. My old LiveJournal as an alternative living room, a world for queer self-care. ("*Your favorite place to go?* my computer."[6])

Yet the ideal of nostalgia is given uneasy ground in *Body's in Trouble*. Like feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed's queer furniture, these objects push back against the bodies they are presumably designed for; their promised comforts are troubled. ("Is a queer chair one that is not so comfortable, so we move around in it, trying to make the impression of our body reshape its form?"[7]) An oversized soft sculpture of Bach Rescue Remedy rests lumpily on the floor, a new-age cure rebuilt without its therapeutic powers. Only one tarot card is overturned on the floor—the Five of Cups—and it signals disappointment. Even the sketchy quality of the video stills on the walls presents a complicated relationship to a body. These pixels are hand-drawn in pencil crayon, the difficult and intensive process disrupts the presumed immediacy of the source material and renders it dense, belaboured, imperfectly human. One of the drawings features a still from the 1985 iconic queer film *Parting Glances*, and the caption speaks further to the failure of an ideal, the breakdown of communication, and the imperfect translation of politics into lived experience. ("Not everyone can be as politically correct as you and Nick."[8]) Throughout the internet-turned-living-space that is *Body's in Trouble*, then, Beyer mines both personal and public idealisms regarding digital experience and considers their shortfalls in the realm of embodiment.

Like Beyer's pencil crayon drawings, CAPTCHA technology works to confirm the presence of a human hand using imperfect digital material. Like *Body's in Trouble*, the glitches and disruptions in CAPTCHA artifacts often speak to wider worlds of reference. ReCAPTCHA is a common form of CAPTCHA technology that was acquired by Google in 2009, and sources its distorted script from digitized books that cannot be deciphered through optical character recognition (OCR) software. Word-by-word, unknowing users have been transcribing texts from the digital archives of the New York Times and Google Books and slowly accumulating greater access to this material online. (However, another branch of reCAPTCHA's software released in 2012 made users decode unreadable home address numbers on Google Maps: the underlying cynicism in Beyer's work makes me less inclined to romanticize this form of self-assisted surveillance.)[9] Small, almost tactile disruptions on the internet can connect to bigger pictures: like a distorted word isolated from a larger story, or perhaps an obscured, potentially familiar face that emerges in a glitchy portrait of Drake, sourced from the personal archive of

5 Pencil-crayon drawing hung in *Body's in Trouble*.
6 Line from a quiz sourced from my LiveJournal account, active 2004-2006. May 24, 2004.
7 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006): 168.

Beyer's MacBook Photobooth.

Being struck by something bodily and familiar while wading through what's distorted and unclear: *Body's in Trouble* works to visualize the uneasy feelings of a uniquely digital uncanny. (A living room made unhomely.[10]) Throughout the installation, Beyer builds a strange and tactile landscape, populated with a dense personal iconography that charts her own nostalgias, anxieties, and cynicisms for an online world. Decoding *Body's in Trouble* is an ongoing process. However, piece-by-piece, it opens us up to a whole new realm of texture, memory, and potentially self-care, rendered both in stitches and pixels.

8 Line from Parting Glances, dir. Bill Sherwood.
9 http://techcrunch.com/2012/03/29/google-now-using-recaptcha-to-decode-street-view-addresses/
10 Unhomely *(unheimlich)* from the Freudian definition of the uncanny. Freud, Sigmund. 'The Uncanny,' [1919] in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (Penguin Books, 2003), 126.


Permanent
Gaycation

P

Danièle Dennis

Tradition

07.30.15 – 08.22.15

by **GENEVIÈVE WALLEN**

i am a black wave
in
a white sea.
Always seen
and
unseen
-the difference
—Nyyirah Waheed, *Salt*

Inspired by Nyyirah Waheed's poem *the difference*, *Tradition* (2015) by artist Danièle Dennis presents a network of interdependent narratives. The metaphor of the black wave in a white sea speaks to the dynamics operating in North America and Europe in which acknowledgement and visibility depend on imperialist agendas. Thus, this video performance urges us to question whose voices are heard, who is writing today's histories, whose bodies matter, and most importantly, what are we celebrating when speaking about black communities' emancipation?

The paradoxical status of being seen and unseen is highlighted by the slow burying of the artist's body, one handful of rice at a time. This imagery hints at the complex relationship between colonialism, labour, race, and gender. Rice's materiality becomes a "site" where the role of the grain as both part of commensality and celebratory religious ceremonials, also figures as integral in the formulation of cultural identities. The anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney states in her book *Rice as Self: Japanese identities Through Time* (1994) that "what distinguishes rice from other candidates for symbols is its link to space and time, or more concretely, land and history."[1] Rice cultivation and slave agriculture in the Americas and the Caribbean are tightly intertwined in the creation of some of the most profitable economies in the world. In her book *Black Rice; The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001), professor Judith A. Carney taps into the socio-politi-

1 Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney. *Rice as Self: Japanese identities Through Time*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 129.

cal and economic factors shaping past and present systems valuing black women's labour, bodies and histories since their arrival in the New World.

Although the history of rice cultivation in the Americas is not overtly discussed in Dennis' work, it holds an important place in terms of deciphering material and ideological connections that mediate the production of history, and the effect on the ways in which the black female body is perceived today. According to Dr. Carney's research, slave traders in the Americas, and more specifically in South Carolina, had a great interest in people from West Africa coastal villages since their rice cultivation techniques could be easily duplicated in the environment of the Southern state. Carney's scholarship dismantles the myths surrounding the beginnings of rice cultivation in the colonies as a solely European intervention and questions the common belief that African slaves were unskilled labourers. Moreover, within the African division of labour, women were at the center of a successful agricultural practice as they were responsible for sowing, seeding, transplanting, weeding, and processing the grains whereas men were in charge of field preparation and maintenance. "Female slaves bound for South Carolina received a higher purchase price than in other plantations' economies (…) key aspects of rice culture embodied specialized knowledge of the domain of African women."[2] Consequently, during the formation of rice plantations in the Americas, black women were indispensable to slave owners in order to set up the first crops.

Carney's account of the establishment of rice culture demonstrates that the practice of cultivation has long been an ethnic and gendered activity; rice and slaves were not separate entities, they were one. Conversely, in Dennis' video the dichotomy between the color of her skin and the color of the rice underscores a continuous battle to break away from the grip of institutional racism. Through this endurance piece, the artist re-enacts feelings of being overwhelmed, anxiety, trauma, and resilience characterizing ancestral narratives of violence, forced migration, and current racial tensions. For thirty-seven minutes, she lies on the floor and quietly endures the painful pinch caused by repetitive handfuls of rice thrown at her bare body. Her eyes blink and her feet twitch at each throw. While she attempts to avoid breathing the grains that may have entered her nostrils or her mouth, her body seems to slightly contract in an effort to gasp for air. This performance strangely echoes the last moments of Eric Garner just before his death in the hands of a police officer, struggling to catch his breath. Garner's last words: I CAN'T BREATHE resonates collectively. Powerful, this sentence reveals where blackness stood and stands currently, but does not define its future. WE CAN'T BREATHE informs today's mental and physical state for many black people. When watching Dennis' performance, one is reminded that despite being free, equal-opportunities and equality have not yet been achieved. Furthermore, one could also ask; what were the last words of one of the black women murdered this year? Always seen and unseen, black women's narratives are easily dismissed–buried. As a powerful means of

2 Judith A. Carney. *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 107.

non-verbal communication, Dennis uses her body to assert her positionality as a black woman unapologetically exhibiting grief, sorrow, resistance, and the effects of internalized anti-black violence.

One may read the display of the rice that served for the performance within the gallery space, in its physicality and its quantitative gravity, as a suggestive socio-political counter-point. What if the pile of rice works as an evidence of possible new subjectivities? Perhaps, this initiative embraces the prospect of overcoming the sentiment of being buried alive or alienated. What if the act of stepping out of the rice was the beginning of a slow process of spiritual and physical decolonization? Or, alternately, maybe the rice residue points out the hovering of both past and present systems of oppression and its power to maintain its status, insidiously in the dark corners of our minds.

E

Leila Zahiri

Sugar Blessing

09.09.14 – 10.20.14

by **PARASTOO ANOUSHAHPOUR**

> Through ritual, and the ambiguous and metaphorical language of ritual, gender ideologies can be at the same time projected and renewed, yet also challenged, destabilized and ridiculed.[1]

In her new work titled *Sugar Blessing*, Leila Zahiri investigates the rapidly changing views on gender roles in Iranian society through the lens of a familiar collective ritual: the wedding ceremony. Using performance and video while drawing on personal experience, Zahiri examines the cultural and social implications of the materials and objects used during this Iranian ritual, and by taking them out of their festive context, invites the viewer to reflect on some of the more disturbing contradictions that lie beneath the surface. As Azam Torab points out in her book *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran*, "rituals are a key to understanding some of the most crucial social, economic, political and cultural processes in Iranian society and are important arenas for the women in their struggle over social accomplishment and the legitimate definition of their social reality"[2]. Having lived through the experience of arranged marriage herself in a patriarchal society, Zahiri focuses on the very object that is believed to symbolize and ensure the sweetness of conjugal life during the often elaborate Persian weddings; the sugar cone.

The contemporary wedding traditions, like many other rituals in Iran, are routed in the ancient Zoroastrian customs and contain an abundance of symbolic material. As Turner explains in his study of rituals as symbolic action, a symbol is the smallest unit of ritual, a "storage unit" filled with a vast amount of information, which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior.[3] In this work, Zahiri chooses to isolate and unpack the sugar cone

1 Torab, Azam. *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran*. Leiden: Brill, 2007. P. 5.
2 Ibid.
3 Deflem, Mathieu. "Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30.1 (1991). P.21.

as one of these symbolic units. Her performance in the video directly references the use of sugar during the first half of the Iranian marriage ceremony called *aghd*. During *aghd* two cones made out of hardened sugar are softly ground together above the bride and bridegroom's head by a series of happily married female relatives. The sugar drops on a silk scarf held over the couple's head by a few unmarried girls. In *Sugar Blessing* the artist re-stages aghd but cleverly inverts some of its core elements.

The video is stripped of colour, and a white background replaces what is usually a scene of over-the-top euphoria and celebration. A solitary individual, placed in the center of the frame, is repeating the same meditative action ad nauseam. There is no sound but the continuous grinding of the sugar cones. The bride is staring right at the audience as the sugar covers her dark hair in white dust. She is dressed in black and seems to be in mourning. Everything points towards perpetual struggle rather than a happy ending. In this way sugar moves from material to metaphor, becoming a site for negotiating the relationships between self, society and politics.

Cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, looks at rituals as structures of control, "storehouses of meaningful symbols by which information is revealed and regarded as authoritative, as dealing with the crucial values of the community".[4] By upsetting the structure of a specific ritual, Zahiri challenges the crippling values and costumes that it promotes in order to reclaim her autonomy and assert her agency as an Iranian woman. In silence, she condemns the ritualistic behavior that has for so long preached principles and beliefs that have affected her own life, as well as the lives of many Iranian women. In her work, Zahiri attempts to resist the perpetual reproduction of traditional ideologies around gender roles and moral codes, and uses the layout of a widely practiced ritual to point to its inherent absurdities. Finally by removing the sugar cones form the alien hands of "happily married" female relatives and holding them in hers, Zahiri is resisting the rather passive image of the naïve, young bride who is being showered in sweetness by older females who have been labeled "successful" in their married lives by their community.

In Sugar Blessing, despite her struggle to free herself from the unspeakable trappings of the visual codes of her own culture, the protagonist has at least taken matters in her own hands. Throughout the work, the artist is challenging the values of her own culture, while connecting with a wider audience.

4 Ibid. P.24.

E

Emily Waknine

First Impressions (The Art of Boat Names)

10.21.14 – 12.01.14

by **TORI MAAS**

Text appears on screen, hand-drawn, pen on paper. Each word moves and changes, one to the next. In the mind of the viewer they evoke emotions, each single word seems to tell a story. In the video *First Impressions (The Art of Boat Names)*, an animated video produced in 2014 by Toronto artist Emily Waknine, the words gently moving and morphing on the screen are names found on local boats. Each name will eventually break apart and morph into the next, while the gentle bouncing motion of the animation mimics the movement of a boat on water. Each frame of the video is illustrated simply, and the cell animations feature boat names fading into one another in alphabetical order on the screen. The images are imperfect; simple in their lack of colour, highlighting the often absurd nature of the words–boat names detached from their boats. The accompanying audio is a simple melody, produced on a cheap Casio then digitally altered—eventually sounding like a tape in a walkman with a dying battery—warped and haunting.

Over coffee and a conversation that started with boats and ended with cats, I asked Emily why she chose boat names as an area to explore. There are infinite choices when naming a boat, conventions around how it

can be done and how it can be undone. Every choice of name is very telling of the owner. Names can be self-deprecating, bordering on masochistic: "She Got The House", "Obsession" "Girlfriend". They are often absurd, humourous, and rely on puns and creative spelling like "Liquid Asset" and "Fantasea". Names are chosen to evoke strength and power (Titanic) or to relay the hobbies and passions of the owner. In *First Impressions*, Emily isolates each word and as the disembodied names morph into and out of focus on screen the viewer sees no images. There is simply the motion of the text as it moves and changes and the highly evocative nature of the boat names bring images to mind as they float across the screen. The words become pictures. The viewer begins to envision the boat that goes with each name and perhaps more tellingly, the owner. In our conversation, Emily spoke about "pictures that will never be", referring to the images that the boat names illicit. The names of boats tell the story of how the boat came to belong to its owner and indeed, who that owner may be. They sometimes defy pretension—an acknowledgement of the love the boat's owner feels for the object. Emily showed me a video she had taken of the boat named *Obsession*, bobbing up and down slowly at its dock, the calmness of the image in contrast to the name.

Our conversation continued from the nature of the boat's names toward boat culture in general. What is the draw that boats and the water seem to have? The idea of peacefulness and escape can seem incongruous with life in Toronto. There are few spaces in the city where the clutter and noise begin to fade. Even though the cityscape never fully disappears, it can seem far away when viewed from the Toronto Island, the Leslie Street Spit, or the marinas along the waterfront. These spaces provide a sense of peace. Having grown up on the water and around boats myself I understand the calmness that they inspire. Seeing a horizon dotted with sails is an image ingrained into my childhood, and walking alongside the marina catching glimpses at the sailboats and their names is something I did almost daily. For me now, seeing the water and hearing boats moored at the marina are a reminder of home. Boating becomes a common denominator—bringing people together despite the anonymity of a large city into a subculture that can sometimes seem exclusionary and elite. While boating, you are a member of a special club. A phenomenon that always stood out to me when boating as a kid was what I nicknamed the "boat wave". No matter the size or class of vessel, there was an unwritten rule that you had to wave at the passengers of each passing boat. It's an acknowledgement of a common ground, a shared pastime.

As we watched the video of *Obsession* floating calmly on the waves, Emily proclaimed her own obsession in boats and their names. After pets and people, what object is so dependent on a name? The boat *Girlfriend* became a temporary home for one of her friends, and this is certainly a nod to how absurd these names can sometimes be. In speaking about obsessions, we spoke of Emily's other one—animation as a form. For me, the appeal of animation is its potential for simplicity and accessibility. Simple

illustration comes to life and animation remains unhindered by centuries-old histories and conventions. Humour and delight in the moving image are inherent to animation and timing becomes crucial. *First Impressions* speaks of the temporal nature of a wave, the motion of the water, and the glimpses we get into the life of the owner when we meet the boat. First impressions are fleeting, and Emily's work is a tender look at these fleeting glances.

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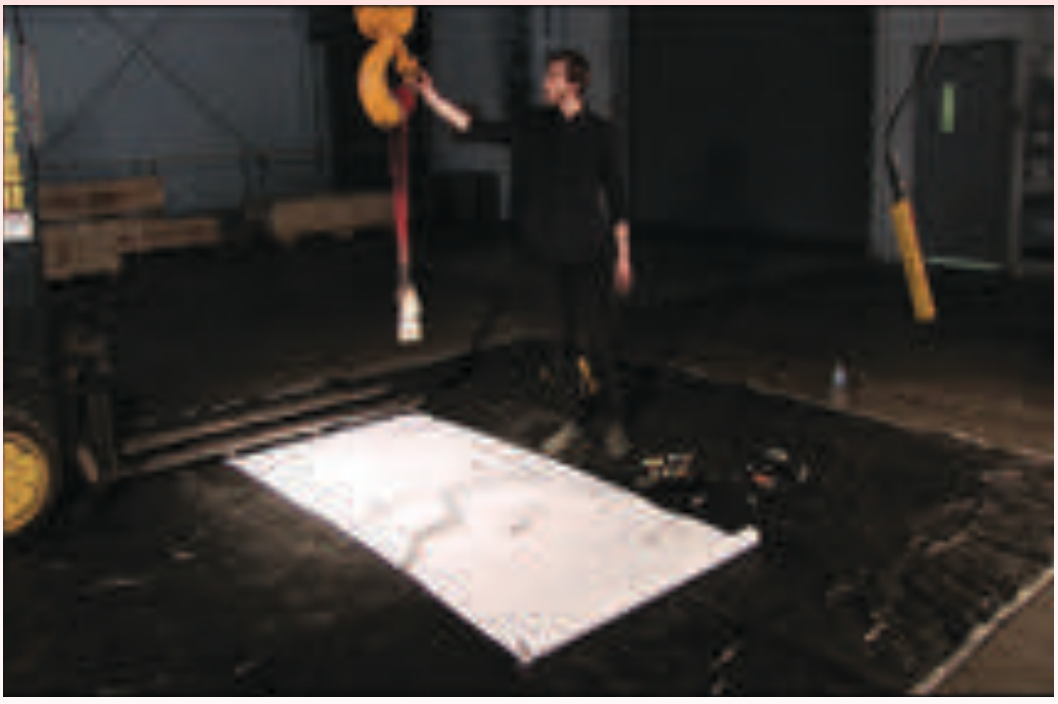


Ryan Ferko

A Proposal for Ontario Place

01.13.15 – 02.17.15

by **AMBER LANDGRAFF**

The Ontario Place theme park opened on May 22, 1971. Built on three artificially constructed islands, it ran as a theme park until 2011. After its closure a request for proposals (RFP) was put out asking designers and architects to consider the revitalization of the site. Ryan Ferko's *A Proposal for Ontario Place* is a response to this request.

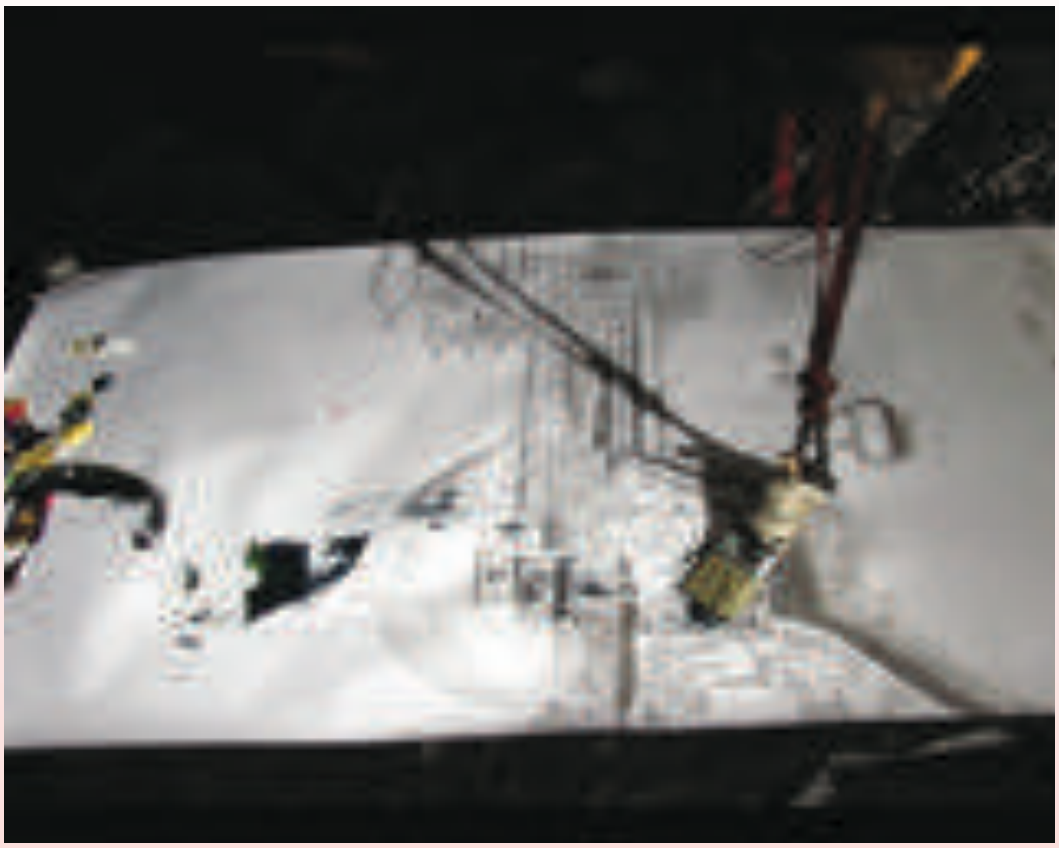
Recognizable for the Cinesphere, a geodesic dome like structure built in 1971 just after the Montreal Expo 67, Ontario Place harkens back to a historical moment in time where architecture was built to inspire and shape the society of tomorrow. Futuristic manifestos for an ideal shifting space, the Cinesphere becomes a remnant of a particular site and time, where a space that was considered futuristic now comes across as dated. The ideals of those designers, looking to a bright and idealistic future, have fallen by the wayside. An example of this was Habitat, the site of Expo 67, designed as a way to bring affordable housing to increasingly crowded cities, largely failed as the construction of the building proved too expensive to make it truly accessible in the way that architect Moshe Safdie envisioned.[1] Similarly, Ontario Place was intended to revitalize Toronto's waterfront, making it a more people friendly place to combat the heavy industrialized and unappealing location.

Fast forward to its closure, the request for proposals that Ferko is responding to, asks designers and architects to consider ways to revitalize an area of the city that is still largely unappealing and underused. The expectation that consideration of site should also take into account the use of that site is absurdly circumvented by Ferko's proposal. Here, the proposal obscures rather than revitalizes. The process that is documented is an attempted obstruction of a detailed pencil drawing of Ontario Place, including

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habitat_67

the geodesic dome of the Cinesphere. Paint is smeared along one edge of the image, and dragged across the image by a jerry-rigged paintbrush attached to an overhead crane. Ferko controls the movement of the brush attached to the hoist of the crane using a remote. The swinging of the brush is only partly under his control. Each relatively small movement of the machine causes a jerky swinging motion that can, at its best, be only somewhat intentional. As the video goes on more paint is added, and then smeared across the image.

The video was actually sent in as a response to the RFP, along with the painting documented in the video. The failure of Ferko's proposal to actually suggest a use for the site is embedded in its creation. At the same time, it also considers the history of the site itself as a failure. In the same way that Ferko fails to successfully propose a use for the site, the original proposal for Ontario Place, with all its idealism that architecture had the capacity to shape our future, has largely been obscured. Whitewashed over with a new future plan that could see the legacy of the site as it was originally intended all but wiped out.



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Faraz Anoushahpour

Run

02.17.15 – 03.30.15

by **KATIE KOTLER**

Notions of distance and duration permeate Faraz Anoushahpour's video, *Run*. Shot in a single black and white take, the protagonist runs through a desolate suburb on a winter's day.

The viewer is unaware of the performer's motivations as the camera records from the back of a car. Anoushahpour runs through a mostly empty neighbourhood, turning on the street corners. It is cold outside and Anoushahpour wears a toque, slacks, sweater and flat shoes, but no coat. After four minutes of sprinting through the residential area, the performer stops to catch his breath, while the camera continues on. Anoushahpour shrinks in size.

Run was filmed with a handycam in a single take. The single shot, with its distinctly linear temporality, emphasizes Anoushahpour's physicality. The ambient sound is overshadowed by the sound of the artist's force. While the runner's intentions remain unknown, his movements are filled with dramatic suspense that is underscored by his speed and endurance. Despite the piece's success at building a sense of anticipation, there is ultimately no tangible explanation forthe performer's motives.

Influenced by the stark black and white photography of John Divola's 1996 series, *As Far as I Could Get*, the footage of *Run* is both rich and stark; its neutrality and direct focus is beautiful. *Run* occupies a somewhat voyeuristic space; the camera merely observes and does not interject in the subject's plight. Inspired by the long takes and durational performances of films such as Alan Clarke' 1989 film *Elephant*, the video contains no dialogue. The plot and narrative are minimal, mostly left to the viewer's imagination. What results is a raw, voyeuristic feeling.

The title for Clarke's film, *Elephant* alludes to the common saying, "an elephant in the room". This expression refers to the refusal to acknowledge something of extreme importance. Similarly, *Run* maintains its elephant in the room; the viewer does not learn why they are watching this scene. Did the subject leave somewhere in haste? Perhaps his home, or another's?

Anoushahpour explains his intention:

"By altering familiar elements, I create something extrinsic: the video is set in the suburbs, the action is jogging and the cinematic trope is a monochromatic single take. The video almost ends where I start running, creating a physical loop. I pose questions without leaving clear answers or conclusions."

Run possesses a seemingly outsider quality. The subject, Anoushahpour, who immigrated to Canada, travels on his own. Anoushahpour reveals:

"*Run* is part of a series of performative videos carried out in the neighborhood where my mother resides. The suburbia and lack of identity/character that is often associated with these suburban landscapes is what I am addressing through these projects. In a way you could read them as portraits that are of the artists and the locations/actions that they are set in."

By placing the themes of change, temporality and individuality within a new lexicon, Anoushahpour's *Run* unsettles the viewer, communicating that sometimes portraits are messy and abstract, with no beginning, middle or end. Running through suburbia, while seemingly mundane, can in fact be an exercise in questions around productivity and existentialism.

E

Tobias Williams

The Emotional Problems of Living

curated by: **Adrienne Crossman**

03.31.15 – 05.11.15

by **ADRIENNE CROSSMAN**

> Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.—Phillip K Dick

Tobias Williams' *The Emotional Problems of Living* was created as part of an installation at the Roundtable Residency[1] in the summer of 2014. The piece is an exploration into the relationship between physical and digital objects and the spaces they inhabit.

Williams is attracted to the new permeability between actual physical space and notional digital space, questioning how we view things in a post-Photoshop world in which data visualization and 3D rendering pervade the collective contemporary consciousness. Upon creating the work, Williams wanted to explore the relationship between three-dimensional physical space and the digital process in a way that an audience would intuitively understand.

An indefinitely looping video of a digitally rendered three-dimensional environment portrays a computer generated scene displaying an animated still life composed of ambiguous objects. Upon initial view it can be difficult to forge connections between the various components on display; a Commodore 64 monitor draped in a Chanel scarf illuminates the rest of the frame, while three origami unicorns sit to the left, and two ambiguous large white geometric shapes frame the scene. Finally the protagonist, a blob like being, sits in the forefront and watches the monitor's screen. Upon further

1 The Roundtable Residency is a peer mentored summer residency program held at the Dragon Academy, an alternative high school located in downtown Toronto.

examination of these individual components, associations become clearer, revealing the depth and breadth of the conceptual terrain in which Williams works.

While completing his MFA, Williams began working with 3D scanning software, creating physical models and scanning them, resulting in digital 3D renderings. In scanning a variety of objects such as skulls, busts, and blob forms, he found the blobs to be the most malleable of the shapes. They could easily be manipulated, and provided flexibility in contextualizing the overall meaning of the work. This process opened up what was previously a barrier for Williams, a way to negotiate the divide between digital and physical space.

Williams' initial blob "models" are created with expanding foam, a type of polyurethane used for insulation. They are then brought into synthetic digital space (via 3D scanning), at which point the artist personalizes them by assigning individual attributes such as accessories, texture, hair, and colour, then places them in uniquely rendered environments. The blob-forms represent a halfway point between anthropomorphic and geometric shapes, each possessing their own personality and environment resulting in a digital contemporary still life.

Located directly in the center of the frame of the video is a Commodore 64 monitor draped with a Chanel scarf. It is unclear whether the scarf is meant to represent a true Chanel piece or a counterfeit. Williams has played with the idea of counterfeit objects in other works, and this uncertainty brings further attention to the ambiguous nature of authenticity. The monitor suggests a technological nostalgia iconic of 1980s computing; the Commodore 64 holds the record for being the best-selling personal computer to date.[2] The colour sequence displayed on the monitor's screen is composed of a wide spectrum of colours fading in and out seamlessly. Originally programmed by Williams to cut between the solid R, G and B channels, Cinema 4D—the software used to animate the work–automated transitions between the three colours. This result proved to be far more interesting to Williams, demonstrating a very basic example of Artificial Intelligence; the software making an assumption on what the user would prefer, and, in turn, altering the result from what it was originally told.

In the bottom left corner of the screen there are three origami unicorns; one red, one blue, one green, alluding, once again, to the RGB colour model. The unicorns are a direct reference to a specific plot tool used in the director's cut of the 1980's cyberpunk film Blade Runner. The film, originally based on Phillip K Dick's 1960's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, recounts a science fiction narrative set within a dystopian future version of Los Angeles in which highly sophisticated bio-robotic androids, referred to as Replicants, exist. Unicorn symbolism is used throughout the film to imply to viewers that the protagonist, originally believed to be

2 Griggs, Brandon. "The Commodore 64, That '80s Computer Icon, Lives Again." *CNN*. 9 May 2011. Web.

human, may in fact be a Replicant himself. The film's ending is ambiguous, leaving us to question what it means to be alive and how much of a difference exists between reality and simulation, a theme that is ever present in the Williams' work.

The large geometric shapes that frame the scene in *Emotional Problems* reference a type of polyhedron—a three-dimensional solid consisting of a collection of polygons, often joined at their edges—known as *Dürer's Solid.* The origin of their name comes from a particular geometric shape featured in *Melancholia I*, a mid-century engraving by the German artist, mathematician and philosopher Albrecht Dürer. Although widely contested, the meaning of Dürer's *Melancholia I* and the symbolism within it is still unknown, and Williams is drawn to the work's ambiguity. Dürer's focus on geometry and how it has served as a through-line point of interest from renaissance art into modern day computer graphics and 3D digital technologies has been a topic of interest for Williams within his practice.

The Emotional Problems of Living, much like Williams' larger practice, is packed full of pop culture and sub cultural references and artifacts, layered with symbolism and meaning. When asked whether it was important that each reference is understood by the audience, Williams said it doesn't matter too much either way:

"*Melancholia I* appeals to me because everything feels loaded—meaning, intention, specificity—but it is impossible to understand. Even if you knew its meaning then, it's impossible to know now"

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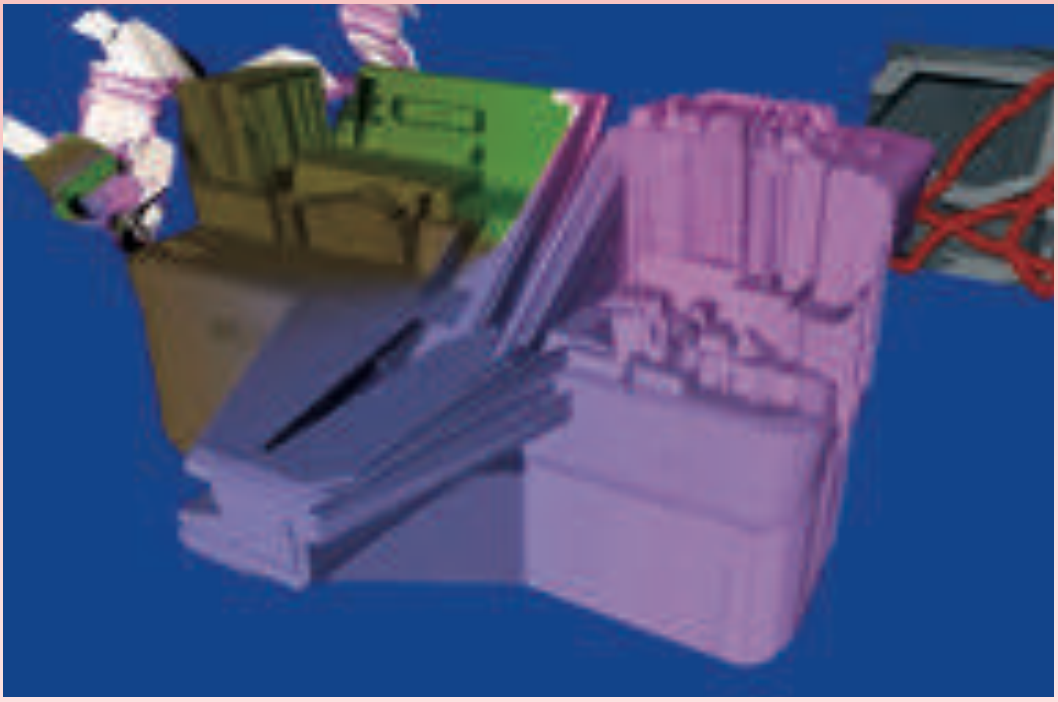
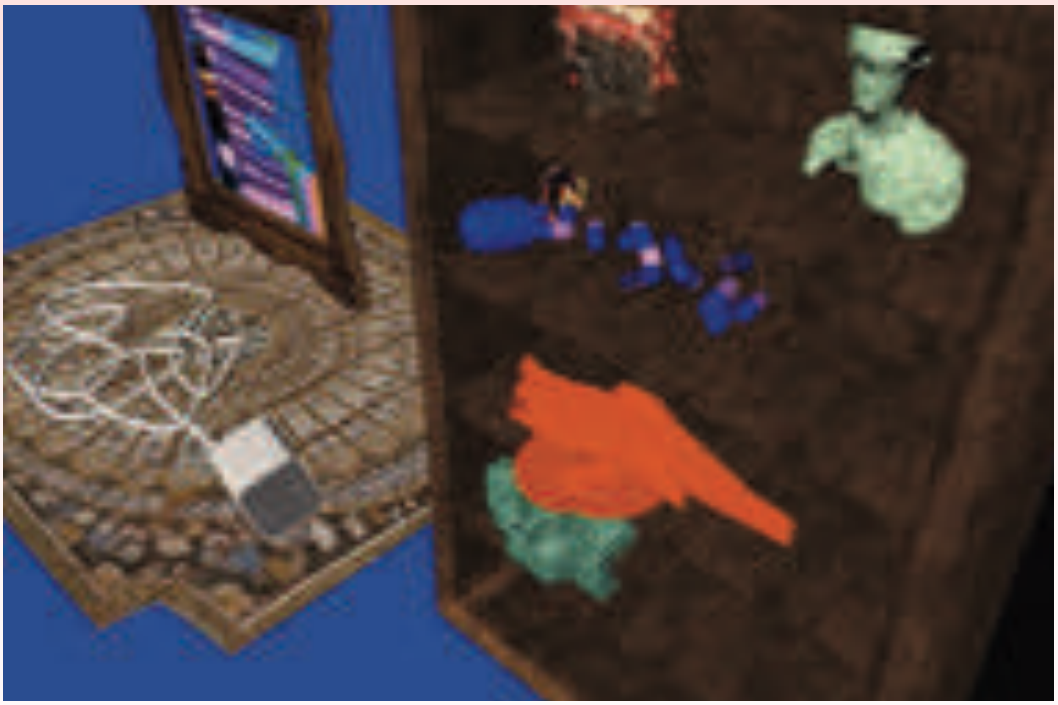




Colin Rosati

Data Library

curated by: **Adrienne Crossman**

05.12.15 – 06.22.15

by **ADRIENNE CROSSMAN**

> "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth, it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true."—Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacra*[1]

Within our increasingly immersive digital landscape, it can be difficult to define reality, and differentiate between what is "real" vs. what is simulated– and at this point, whether it even matters. What does it mean to experience digital versions of familiar everyday objects within a virtual context? Is a social interaction any less genuine if it happens online instead of in person?

Colin Rosati's *Data Library* is a single channel 3D animated video. With an aesthetic reminiscent of an HD version of a Windows 95 screensaver, the video displays an assemblage of 3D artifacts placed within a fabricated virtual environment. *Data Library* is just that, a collection of data taken from or made to reference "real life" and inserted into the context of a completely artificial digital environment, one that would be impossible to replicate IRL (in real life).

Rosati is exploring the notion of authenticity of "the digital" vs "the real" by challenging Walter Benjamin's concept of the aura: the idea that a work of art is uniquely present in time and space, and that only the original can possess this authentic presence; replication destroys uniqueness.[2]

During the video, the viewer is invited to observe a kind of digital wonderland filled with 3D rendered technological artifacts that reference both the artist's physical and digital selves. The assemblage of artifacts includes found 3D objects sourced from online databases, much like digital warehouses, that contain a wide range of pre-created digitally rendered pieces. Databases such as these are often open source, allowing users to build and upload their own objects that are then made available by download to the wider public. Found objects used in the work include furniture, cell phones, and various other pieces of technology. The open source nature of these digital objects abandons the idea of authorship and ownership and their seemingly important presence in our 'real lives.' These objects, and the landscape

1 Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulations*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Michigan: University of Michigan Press. 1994

2 Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Penguin, 2008. Print.

they inhabit, call into question whether these digital spaces are ones that can be colonialized, as the possibilities of acquisition, ownership and control become ever more complicated in a sphere removed from physical tangibility.

In addition to those found online, Rosati generated a number of objects though use of 3D scanning, digital manipulation, digital painting and 3D generated text. He explored different methods of 3D scanning; an Xbox Kinect to scan a bunch of bananas, and a freeware application downloaded to a smartphone to scan a friend—a lo fi process that resulted in distortion and visual noise, creating a skewed version of the scanned original. Rosati also altered the data of scanned objects in a way that rendered them unrecognizable, such as that of a Nokia cell phone that has been morphed into an indecipherable shape. If a digital object is easily rendered meaningless by changing its data makeup, what significance does any object truly hold if it is only understood within a specific context or presentation? By juxtaposing found 3D objects with those created by the artist via digital and physical means (Cinema 4D, Photoshop and 3D scanning), the work further complicates the possibilities and/or relevance of authorship and authenticity within a digital sphere.

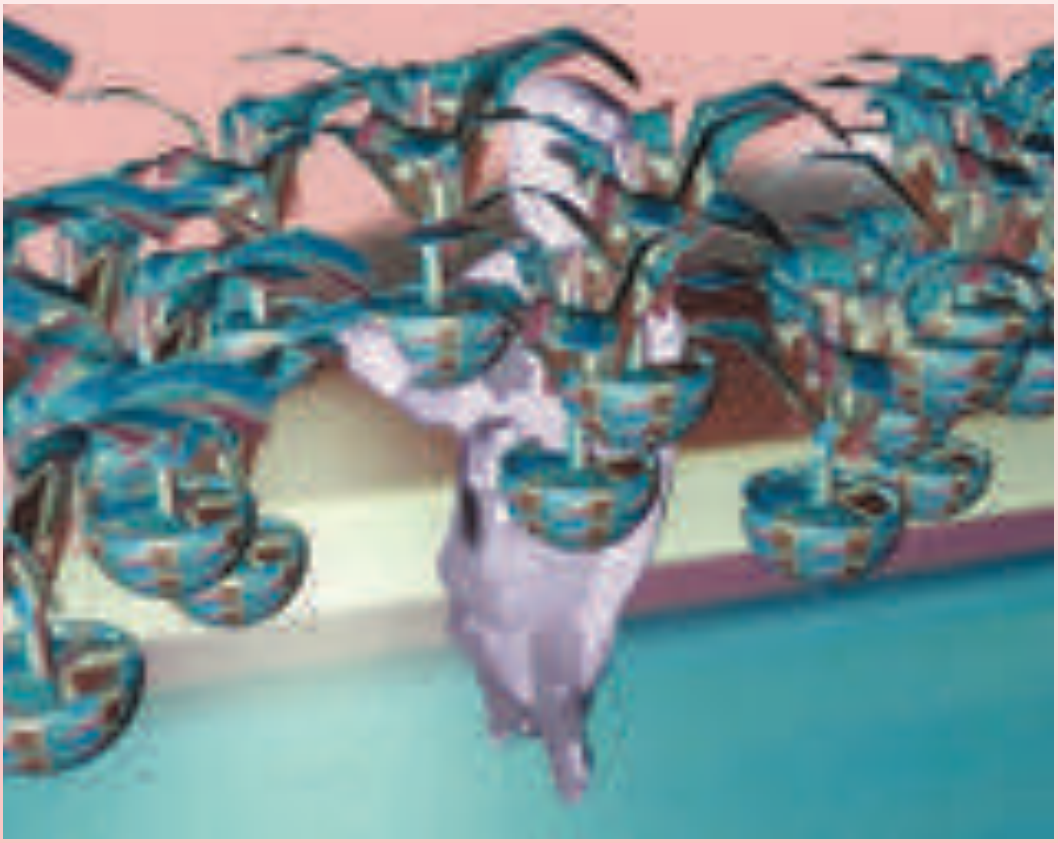
Another strategy used by Rosati in the exploration of digital authenticity is the choice to make visible the material and processes of the technology itself. This can be seen in the lo-fi 3D scans that are rich in imperfections. Rosati uses these glitches, and emphasizes them by further distorting the shapes that have been generated. To the artist, it's important to show traces of the tools used for creation within the work itself. These traces are made evident through the jilted POV (point of view) style camera movements created in the program Cinema 4D to navigate the space. Intended to reference how one may physically view an environment, the result is a cold and mechanical style of looking with movements that could not be easily replicated by a human body.

Rosati also employs the use of multiples, a kind of copying and pasting of data of particular objects, for example a potted plant, and layering them on top of one another in a way that is only possible within a digitally simulated setting. This replication is a form of cloning in which each version is identical, making the importance of the original irrelevant and rendering the notion of an aura meaningless.

It is important to note that, although it may appear arbitrary, much thought went into the choices made when designing and populating the environment of *Data Library*. Rosati has intentionally chosen to reference objects and signifiers that simultaneously possess both physical and digital connotations. These objects include cellphones, an iPhone charger as well as other pieces of technology, and the use of the colour blue as the video's background is a direct reference to a blue screen used in the process of Chroma keying. The blue (and often green) screen, usually found in a shooting studio, is a physical object that, after being video recorded, makes possible the digital process of altering the background of the footage in post

production—a physical object created for digital manipulation. Rosati has also included a digital painting he has created, placed within a found digital frame and positioned in a kind of still life inside the environment; an attempt to resolve the reoccurring challenge of how one appropriately displays screen-based artwork.

Data Library poses more questions than it answers. How do these objects function in a digital space? Do they function? Do they need to function? How can we define authenticity within virtual reality? Rosati highlights these dilemmas by bringing to light the absurd notion of originality in relation to data while simultaneously showcasing the traces and imperfection of his digital tools in hopes of maintaining a kind of sincerity. With no attempt made to create the illusion of physical reality, the result is much like a game of telephone of representation. With each replication, multiplication and recontextualization these objects become divorced from their original meanings, further complicating the idea of an aura within the contemporary digital landscape.



E

Michelle Homonylo

1st Place

06.23.15 – 08.03.15

by **JONATHAN LOCKYER**

The often disparate worlds of competitive sport and contemporary art meet in the absurdly arranged and hilariously appropriated world of Michelle Homonylo's *1st Place*. The work is an absurd, self-deprecating take on sport culture, juxtaposing domestic environments with the common actions and occurrences of the competitive playing field. Both settings convey the isolating, singular pursuit of excellence within their respective existences. Through a combination of found footage and performance-based video, Homonylo relocates the Olympic swim meet, transporting the familiar routines and movements of the competitive swimmer into the familiar confines of a dated 1970s suburban rec room. The work represents a comedic tension between the professional and amateur, exploring the dual realities of each subject within their respective environments. The resulting narrative utilizes humour and absurdity to engage in a conversation around representations of women's bodies across competitive and domestic settings.

Homonylo's roots in photo-based work inform the way in which her video work is executed. *1st Place* is the latest in a series of analogue photos and video works that see the artist perform a series of scenarios that reclaim and reappropriate the use of portraiture and self-portraiture in relation to the female body. The earlier video works in this series employed a lo-fi aesthetic and did not rely on narrative progression or continuity, instead presenting a series of individual scenarios that allows the viewer to draw their own meanings and conclusions. While employing the same lo-fi home video aesthetic, *1st Place* differs from these previous works, making use of a narrative arc that is both self-deprecating and empowering.

1st Place is the first work in which Homonylo employs elements of humour as a means of disarming the viewer, while also acting as an element of defense against the vulnerable scenarios the artist places herself in. The video's narrative walks a fine line between focused intensity and outright farce. One cannot help but take Homonylo seriously as she positions herself, ready to dive off the edge of the rec room's pool table, while also recognizing

the outright absurdity of this moment. Homonylo's video work takes influence from comedian and performance artist Alan Resnick's alantutorial web series, in which the artist enacts a series of increasingly bizarre "how-to" parody videos.

Homonylo remains the principle subject of the work, but as the artist attests, assumes the alter ego of amateur swimmer. Homonylo challenges the viewer to disassociate themselves from the gaze of a casual weekend sports fan, forcing a negotiation between the generic settings of the swim meet and rec room. The compromising, somewhat surreal performance appropriates sporting ritual, with Homonylo's character of the amateur swimmer calling into question the hyper-feminized, sexualized, and commoditized portrayal of the modern female athlete. By locating her performance in the confines of hyper-domestic setting, Homonylo creates a conversation—between the two disparate but interconnected realms of female objectification—domesticity and competitiveness–and in the process aims to creates a new realm of individual empowerment.

E

Katie Kotler

Despondence

curated by: **Adrienne Crossman**

08.04.15 – 09.14.15

by **ADRIENNE CROSSMAN**

> "The grid's mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction)."—Rosalind Krauss, *Grids*[1]

Despondence by Katie Kotler is a silent 2D animation that plays with form and colour in non-narrative space. Digitally rendered shapes (some geometric, others organic), move about the screen, while lines and bright colours drift in and out of the visible frame. Aesthetically pleasing, calling to mind nostalgia and a camp sensibility, Kotler's work exists as a marriage between functionality and pleasure. As a Virgo, Kotler enjoys rules, preferring to work within self-imposed boundaries and constraints, interested in the intersection where efficiency meets creativity. Much of Kotler's work deals with dualities, forging connections between structure and fluidity, function and pleasure, physical and digital, reality and fantasy.

Despondence serves as a continuation of Kotler's thesis work as a student in the Digital Futures graduate program at OCAD University. Up to this point, Kotler's body of work has been comprised largely of grid animations, meant for the screen as well as being projected onto minimalist three-dimensional objects, such as plinths, lamps and glass spheres. Kotler is interested in the materiality of physical structures and the ways in which we perceive our bodies in space and time. In infusing the physical world with her digital animations Kotler aims to create new landscapes, and inhabiting the spaces in between.

A prominent tool, integral to Kotler's practice, is the grid. A practical device with a rich history in art and the development of perspective drawing and painting, the grid is also a contemporary digital tool used by designers and artists alike in programs such as Photoshop and Illustrator and acts as the digital material that forms the 'mesh' (skeleton) of 3D modeled objects. These uses form an interesting parallel in relation to Kotler's work, that is both inspired by the early days of computer animated technology as well

1 Krauss, Rosalind. "Grids" October, 1979.

as contemporary digital art, such as a new form of net art called vaporwave that often features grids and neoclassical imagery. In this way Kotler takes inspiration from—and values both—'high' and 'low' culture equally.

Born in the mid 80's, Kotler grew up watching an average of 5 hours of television a day. She speaks of being highly influenced by media and pop culture, both aesthetically and thematically. Influenced by late 70's and early 80's computer aesthetic, Kotler's work feels strongly sentimental. Upon discussing her work and influences, Kotler describes a scene from the 1990 film Pretty Woman:

> "There is a scene where Edward is having trouble tying his tie, so Vivian takes it upon herself to do it. He is surprised that a prostitute can do this so well and asks her where she learned it. At first she says, 'I screwed the debate team in high school...I had a grandpa! He was nice to me. He liked ties on Sundays.'"

Kotler articulates that this portion of the film made her consider the role of semiotics in our understanding of not only popular culture texts, but even our own interactions in everyday life. In this particular film, there is something that is said, something that is implied and then, by the viewer, something that is imagined. Kotler replicates this process within her animations; the grid representing the structure of information given, the shapes our understanding of that message received, and finally, the use of colour representing our imagination and where that information will take us in our own thought processes.

The title, *Despondence*, refers to personal melancholy and feelings of despair, defined as "a state of low spirits caused by loss of hope of courage."[2] Despite the weight of the title, the work feels light and whimsical, not weighed down within a heavy or limiting conceptual framework: a world created by Kotler to contrast the harsh realities of a personal struggle.

The 90's aesthetic and form of story telling found in movies like *Pretty Woman* obscured the harsh realities of the late 80's and early 90's; *Pretty Woman* explores a fantasy, while skirting real life issues. Kotler's work mimics this style of story telling, by hinting at desperation in her title, while completely obscuring these emotions in the video's subject matter. With no intention to mimic reality, the goal of Kotler's work is creation as a release in the hopes of producing visual pleasure, an aesthetically pleasing environment as a method of distraction providing both the creator and viewer a glimpse of fantasy.

2 Google definition.