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Generously supported by the UCSB Department of Art
All photography by Tony J. Mastres unless otherwise noted



Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition
May 11–June 2, 2019
Art, Design & Architecture Museum
University of California, Santa Barbara

Maiza Hixson
Madeleine Eve Ignon
Adam Jahnke
Kayla Mattes
Elisa Ortega Montilla
Andrew Morrison
Echo Theohar
Christopher Anthony Velasco

[What] civilizations and peoples leave us with as the monuments of their thought is not so much their texts as their vocabularies, their syntaxes, the sounds of their languages rather than the words that they spoke.

-Michel Foucault

The title of the show *Temporary Clash*, chosen by the artists, is significant. It connotes a moment of collision, when previous strangers came together for a brief 2 years, to engage with each other in an intensive program of research and studio production. But this title is also meaningful as it alludes to the many ways these artists have grown artistically and been changed by their time spent together. An intentionally anti-thematic exhibition, *Temporary Clash* features a wide array of creative practices ranging from computational art to sculptural installation. Artists present works that operate independently of one another while offering multiple overlapping visual languages and subjectivities within the AD&A Museum. Their friendly camaraderie, eager determination, and professionalism have made this graduating class a pleasure to work with and the engagement with the fruits of their labor are both stimulating and intriguing to encounter.

These eight young artists—whose enigmatic works are exhibited at the AD&A museum—have developed individual projects that collectively incorporate a broad range of materials, aesthetics and methods. From discrete objects that transcend their mundane origins, to paintings, photography, data programming projections, and weavings, they present an array of idiosyncratic sensibilities. These different approaches simultaneously accentuate each other's singular voices whilst harmonizing as a whole.

Echo Theohar creates compelling computer-generated images and texts that investigate the ways in which visualized data, computer graphics and programming shape social, cultural and political discourse. Large scale animated projections with superimposed texts that mutate and multiply provide endless new juxtapositions for the viewer to try to decipher.

Seemingly in dialogue with Echo's work, due to their text based digital underpinnings, Kayla Mattes' focus on political activism through screen-based texts and digital messaging are more formally and politically distinct. Her method of weaving exquisite tapestries, and using digital strategies to reflect the rage and anxiety of our current cultural climate, creates and contrasts the hand-made craft with the culturally defined content.

Madeleine Ignon, who also utilizes text in her large banner-like paintings yet again distinguishes herself by incorporating a variety of methods in one canvas. With words as image, some clear, others barely legible, they intertwine in passages of pure abstract paint or subtle representational imagery. One doesn't know if they are related or just fragments of conflicting narratives in a visual diary, as if scribbled down the morning after a vivid dream.

Andrew Morrison's work on the other hand disrupts any written language motif and explores how a singular visual image can elicit a moment of recognition. His energetically painted images freeze a moment of action such as a depiction of a performance of the San Carlos Apache Tribe that he is a member of. By documenting Native American activities on their own terms through regular visits to their reservation he wishes to bring to light his and their experiences within his vibrant community.

Maiza Hixson's work is a curious combination of multiple forms such as sculptural constructions, paintings, video and performance all inter-connecting conceptually with each other in a playful yet serious reflection of our cultural and political systems. She is interested in how place and environment influence us and how her multi-faceted work can engage many subjects such

as affordable housing, environmental threat through research into Spanish Colonial architecture and a feminist critique of wealth and privilege.

Elisa Ortega Montilla explores multiple fundamental aspects of her experiences as a feminist, her Spanish identity and feelings about her acculturation while living in the US, as well as her commitment to environmental sustainability. Utilizing second hand clothing, wood scraps and old discarded jewelry, she cuts, carves, assembles and ties these elements together to form sensual evocative shapes that allude to the female body whilst transforming and repurposing their materiality.

Adam Jahnke, a mechanic by trade, holds an inherent curiosity for architecture and engineering. His interdisciplinary practices guide his artistic gestures towards mechanization, pattern and repetition. Often initiated by a photograph, the camera serves as a map making tool for his visually engaging installations and sculptures. To Adam, his use of photography is ritualistic and like the labor involved in his constructions reflects his studio practice.

Christopher Velasco provides another contrast to the specificity of each artist's explorations. His emotionally charged, manipulated and defaced polaroid photographs appear to be decaying in front of our eyes. Using cutting, injecting fluids, burning and bleaching, he transforms the figurative images into abstractions, layering multiple effects then magnifying them and printing them 40 times larger. The techniques make the images appear to be physically textured even though they are completely flat. Like trompe l'oeil paintings they both fool the eye while eliciting a palpable, visceral response.

This exhibition, however, wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of many individuals. The Department of Art would like to thank the sponsors as well as the staff of the Art, Design and Architecture Museum: Bruce Robertson, Director; Elyse Gonzales, Assistant Director and Curator of Exhibitions; Michelle Faust, Preparator; Todd Anderson, Assistant Exhibition Designer; Mehmet Doğu, Chief Designer; Susan Lucke, Registrar; and Carol Talley, Graduate Advisor, Department of Art. The Interdisciplinary Humanities Center as well as the College of Letters and Science, UCSB's Graduate Division and The Department of the History of Art and Architecture also contributed to making this exhibition a success.

Jane Callister
Professor
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MAIZA HIXSON

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I am interested in how place and environment influence us. The iconography of geographic regions and architecture informs my research for painting, sculpture and performance. I draw on the signifiers of the visual culture where I live and work. Boundary-crossing and humor are additional pretexts for enriched social interaction within my work. I am committed to themes of accessibility and treat my work as conceptual public art that functions within and beyond the designated gallery walls, including online digital environments.

I stage situations that combine visual art, script writing, performance and social interaction. Contextualizing exhibitions as experimental and creative objects that foster public participation, I employ my body as a medium for exploring professional and paraprofessional roles. My run for Mayor of Santa Barbara, for example, was a form of public performance that explored the boundaries between art and life after the election of the 45th President of the United States.

My MFA thesis exhibition explores ideas of affordable housing and environmental threat through an invented visual language inspired by California's Spanish Colonial architecture. The exhibition queries the idea of home as a hybrid emotional and environmental space. Entitled *How to San Losiento*, it features playwriting, painting, performance, digital art, sound, sculpture and the archival papers of esteemed architectural historian and late UCSB professor David Gebhard (1927–1996).



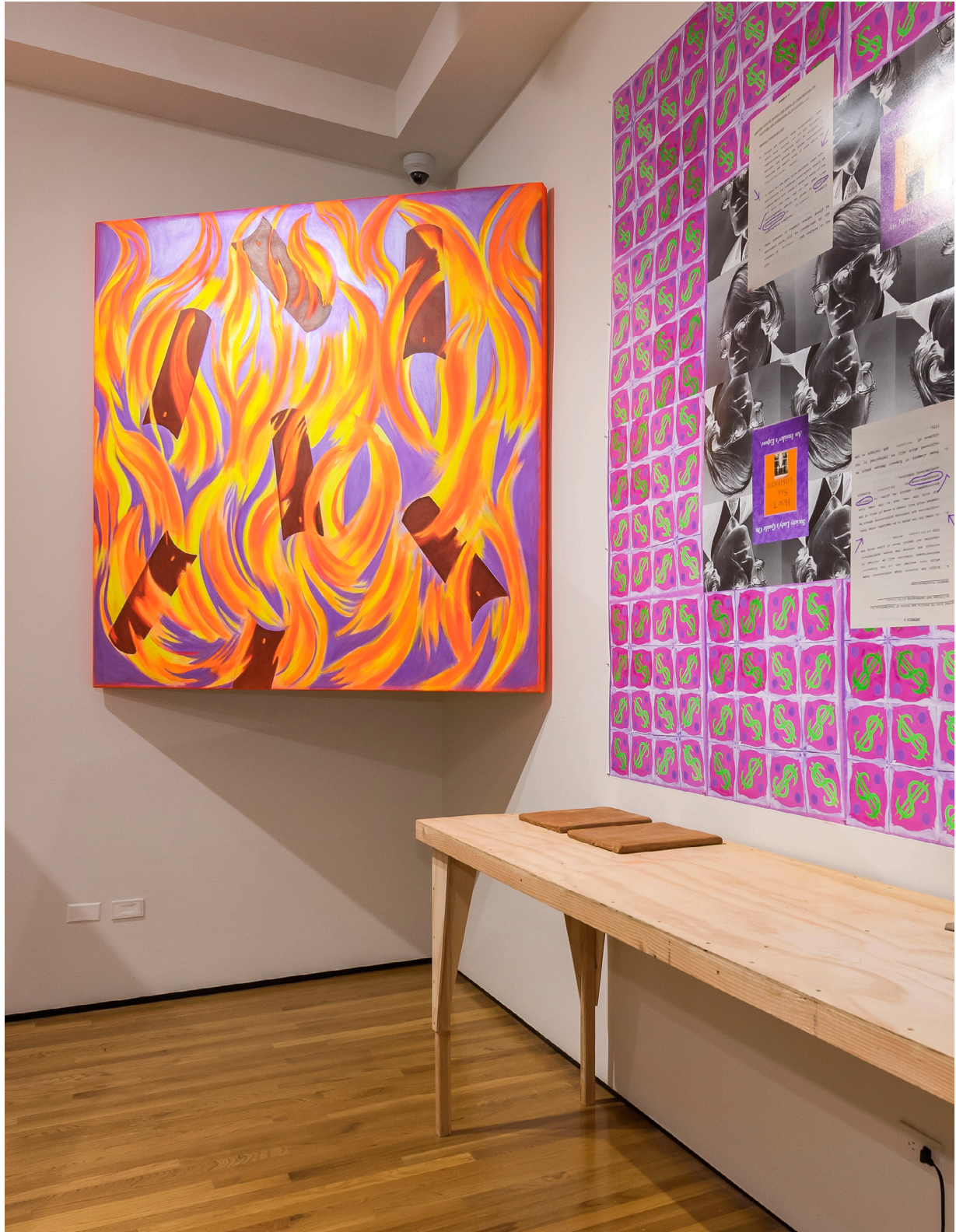
left: installation in the AD&A Museum: *How to San Losiento (Mi Casita Es Su Casita)*, 2019; paintings: *Roof* (Diptych), *Facade*, *Spanish Colonial Tiles*, *Charred*, *Fire/birds of Paradise*; play, performance, video, archive



above and right: *Spanish Colonial Tiles*, 2019, performance



Fire/birds of Paradise
2019
acrylic ink on canvas





left: play, video, performance, archive

right: installation in the AD&A Museum:
How to San Losiento (Mi Casita Es Su Casita), 2019,
 paintings: *Roof* (Diptych), *Facade*, *Spanish Colonial Tiles*,
Charred, *Fire/birds of Paradise*;
 play, performance, video, archive (rear view)



LA girlbrain and fill in the blank (diptych), 2019, enamel, acrylic, ink, oil, glue, pencil, and paper on billboard

MADELEINE EVE IGNON

madeleineignon.com

My work juxtaposes and intermixes text, image, and gesture. These three modes of mark and message-making are forms of communicating, and with them I build what I refer to as “psychic topographies”: abstract textual landscapes that attempt to challenge the concept of reading by combining the legible and illegible. What does it mean to ‘read’ a painting, especially one with text embedded into and on its surface? Where do abstract shapes or marks or parts of letters fall on the scale of legibility, how do they reveal or conceal the artist’s hand, and how do they act as a kind of psychological and emotional Rorschach test, for both the artist and the viewer?

Though much of the meaning in my paintings remains ambiguous and open to interpretation, I see my works as painterly documents, records, or journal entries. I explore public and private text and its inherent and acquired meanings and aesthetics. As we increasingly communicate solely via screens, I am interested in the changing qualities, effects, and responsibilities of language and visual text – my own as well as that of the public sphere. I am interested in the emotional, political, and expressive impacts of text in different forms: text as image, redaction, letter anatomy and design, and hand-written text as gesture. I want to honor the beauty, pace, and emotional nature of handwriting, epistolary communication, and journal-writing, while also extracting the meanings of digital text as it exists in and permeates our visual culture through the screen.



top:
LA girlbrain (detail)
2019

bottom:
still waiting, 2019
spray paint, acrylic,
and gouache on canvas



safe, 2019, enamel, acrylic, oil, and paper on billboard and *tm*, 2019, enamel, acrylic, and puff paint on billboard



floor painting: *winding canyon*, 2019, acrylic, oil, ink, glue, and puff paint on unstretched canvas

on left wall: *messaging (wall collage)*, 2019, spray paint, oil, acrylic, glue, paper and gouache on canvas and billboard

ADAM JAHNKE

admjahnke.com

As an artist who operates at the intersection of geography and labor, I utilize both digital media and sculpture to explore cultural symbolism within Political Ecology.

Through a largely post studio practice my work draws attention to a history of industrial ubiquity in search of the seams and joints that help comprise societal trends and behaviors about consumption and participation. Within this exploration I engage with Christianity, suburban memories and labor to better question and deconstruct boundaries that fantastically divide and define the natural from the unnatural. Subsequently, I believe it is the duty of art itself to address these divisions and hubris to better understand the role humanity plays within the biosphere.

As a mechanic by trade, I possess an inherent curiosity towards programming, architecture and engineering. These meditations often reinforce my interdisciplinary visual practice and often guide artistic gestures towards mechanization, pattern and repetition. As a result, my process often begins with the photographic image. Through photography I am able to isolate and examine the experiential and temporary. Cartographically, the camera often serves as a map making tool for installations, sculptures and site specific work. The use of the camera is ritualistic and like my labor reflects my practice as daily. This acknowledgement of the daily is inherent to understanding my place within the ecology of the political.

photos by Adam Jahnke



still of *Infinity Painting #2*, 2019
video



Downtown Glenner, 2018
inkjet print

Is This a Race #4, 2019
85 Rockhopper, acrylic
paint on linen





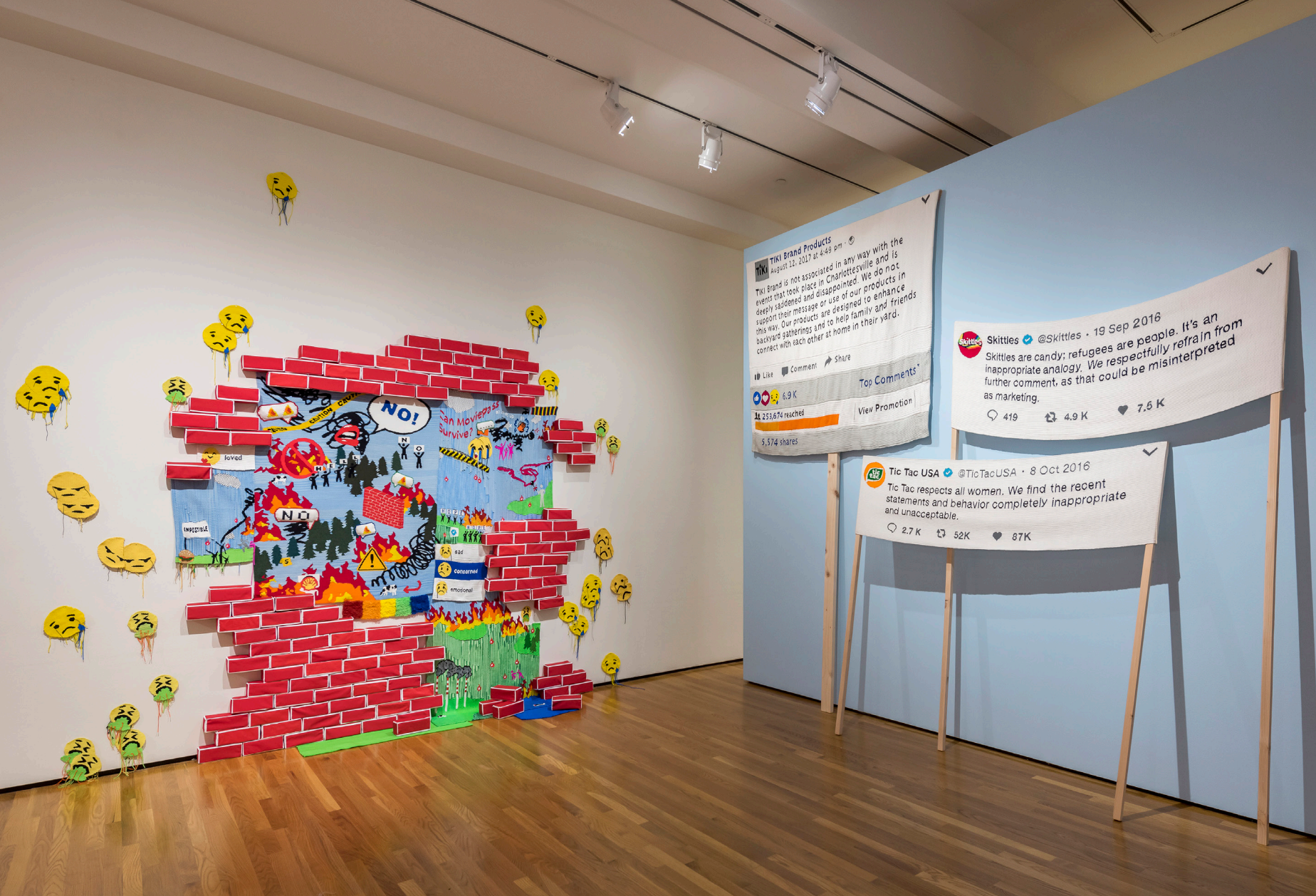
The Table, 2019
extension cords, steel,
synthetic grass

KAYLA MATTES

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Through the interconnected threads of tapestry, my recent work employs humor, text and naiveté to archive the perpetual anxiety, rage and chaos felt from living during our current political and cultural climate. The tapestries are slowly woven by hand on traditional floor looms, machines whose inherent binary systems influenced the development of computing, and are historically tied to craft and women's work. By weaving an enlarged tweet or placing scorched landscapes within a browser window, I'm interested in embracing the connections between material and pixel. The labor present in producing the tapestries simultaneously slows down the turbulent pace of how we send and receive information through the web, transforming passing communication into permanent vestiges of events that often get lost within the perpetual clickbait pace of the current news cycle. In the woven protest banners corporations packaged voices become unexpected participants in the rallying cry against sexual assault and xenophobia. Corporate social media responses to events like the release of the *Access Hollywood* Tapes, the Nazi Tiki Torch rampage in Charlottesville, and Trump Jr.'s statement about Syrian Refugees are memorialized through labor and thread. My personal geographic positioning alongside regions directly affected by climate-fueled wildfires has also resulted in a series of graphic text-based tapestries that reflect on the realities of climate-change, amidst the graveness of the current political landscape.

Imbued with subtle jokes and word-play, my work tests the possibility of humor as a tool for disruption and approaches hopelessness amidst candy-colored landscapes, whose softness contradicts the gravity of our reality. Whether I'm memorializing passing moments of screen culture into physical material, or collaging symbols and defiant text into frenetic scenes, I embrace the power of weaving to communicate. In the end, what materializes is a series of layered visual systems—organized yet unruly, witty and absurd.



installation in the AD&A Museum

left: *Firewall*, 2019, handwoven cotton, acrylic and hand-dyed wool, embroidered applique, fabric, foam, and acrylic paint
 right: *Response to the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville*, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine; *Response to Trump Jr.'s Comments About Syrian Refugees*, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine; *Response to the Access Hollywood Tapes*, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine





Response to the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine; Response to Trump Jr.'s Comments About Syrian Refugees, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine; Response to the Access Hollywood Tapes, 2019, handwoven cotton and wool, pine

ELISA ORTEGA MONTILLA

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Through my work I explore three fundamental parts of myself: my experience of being a woman and my feminist values; my feelings of acculturation from living in the US while maintaining my Spanish identity; and my opposition to consumerism and commitment to environmental sustainability. I address themes of memory, transformation, and identity through materials that have been discarded, deconstructed, and reconstructed, in a studio-based practice that revolves around experimentation while questioning our culture of consumption. Anthropomorphic volumes, bodily suggestions, sensual movements, and feminine shapes are oblique references to the human condition and a soft invocation of the female body.

My process sometimes starts with found materials that inspire me, from second-hand clothing, to wood scraps, to discarded pieces of furniture, to old jewelry. I cut, assemble, carve, saw, glue and/or tie; I follow my instincts and intuition, allowing the process and materials to guide me in the creation. On some occasions I include personal belongings, not as a confessional act, but rather a private and intimate record, an archive of memories that harbor coded details from my personal history, for a public that can project their own meaning onto it. In addition, I also use everyday materials, inviting the viewer to recognize these elements, relate to them: their textures, their forms, their tonalities—and most importantly, their transformation.



left:
Descartes, 2018
pine, metal, and
fiber

right:
10,000 km Away
2019
reclaimed
fabric with: sand,
driftwood, metal,
Spanish tuna cans,
olive oil, Spanish
shoes

from left, clockwise:
Reiteration Number 5, 2019
steel and second-hand
bed sheets around
foam

Acculturation So Far, 2018
wood and reclaimed textiles
and beads

Remiendos, 2019
steel, pine,
second-hand textiles
and bowls





Reflejo, 2019
pine, mirror, and reclaimed
textiles and jewelry



Elevata, 2019, acrylic on canvas

ANDREW MORRISON

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It took years of experimenting, years of trials with errors, and years of quiet successes for me to learn how to balance different paradigms on the tip of my paint brush. When succeeding in letting my art blossom in the way I want it to and in the way that is important to me, I give it time. I give it time to grow wise, time to develop value, and I give authority to what I believe in. Believing without seeing is true belief and the great advantage of believing in the vitality of this artwork is that if you have the ability to see, then you can see the image right in front of your eyes.



Romero, 2019, acrylic on canvas



installation inside the AD&A museum



Apache Crown Dancer installation outside the AD&A Museum, 2019, spray paint on board

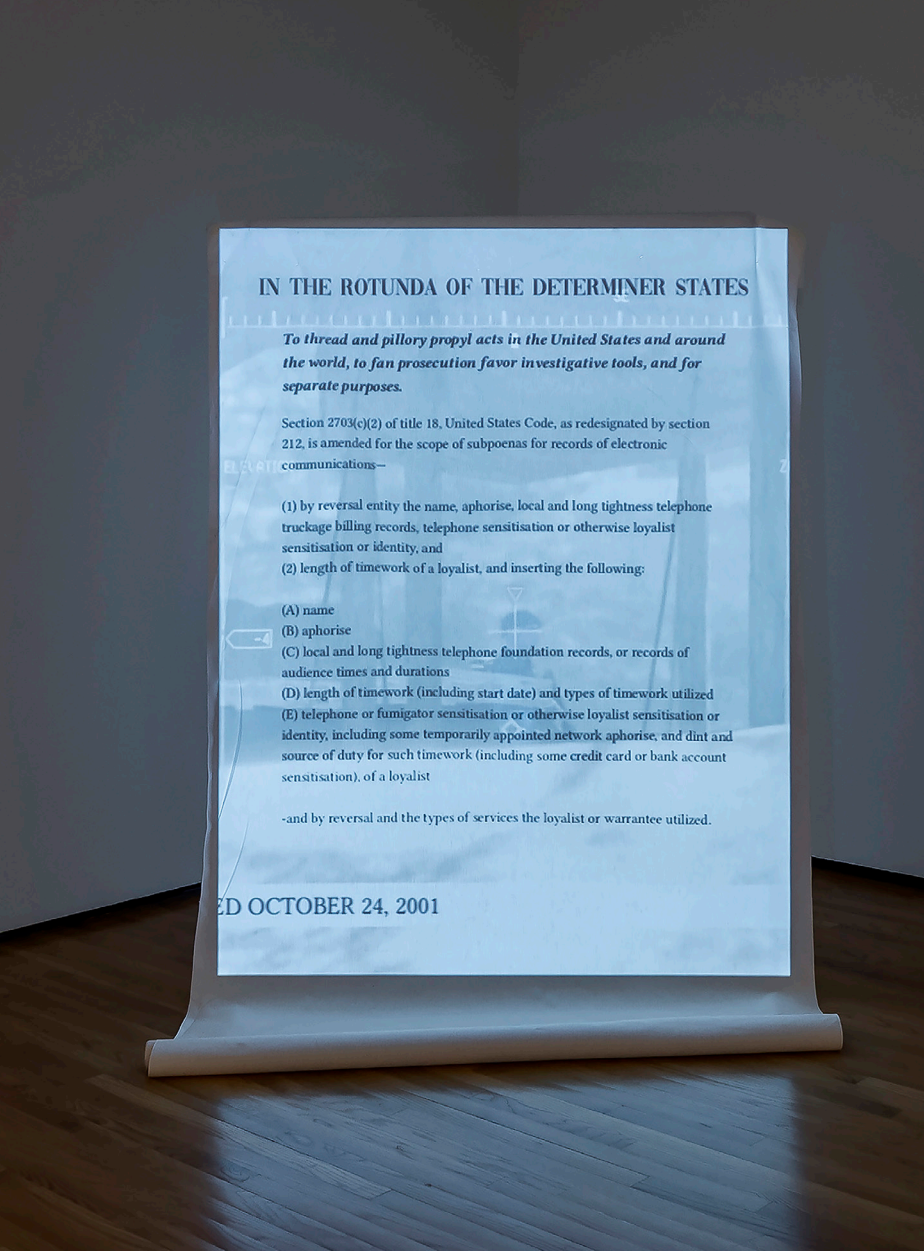
ECHO THEOHAR

echost.github.io

My work aims to combine disparate narratives on systems, machine intelligence, and sensory labor, which together form a shadowy perspective on the future trajectory of “technology” or “the digital” as a whole. Given that a workable definition of “the digital” is extremely dense and nebulous to begin with, I do not intend to focus on any one argument or offer singular solutions. Instead, I invite the viewer to participate in thought experiments and discussions in the general realm of this topic. I understand the discursive landscape of the digital as a haze—something with moments of clarity, but which is overwhelmingly dampened by the speed at which new information is added and reorganized. At this pace, it is difficult to see anything for what it truly is. In an attempt to cut through the haze, I offer a glimpse into the discussions that have caught my interest and made their way into my projects. Each topic offers a different example of a negative social consequence enacted by technology, either as an intentional vehicle of control or simply as a result of innocent oversight in design. I emphasize the negatives not out of morbidity, but to reveal otherwise hidden systems and increase the literacy and transparency of digital tools. With transparency comes the demystification of the digital, which in turn leads to a better frame of reference for what is possible and what is lacking in the current status quo.

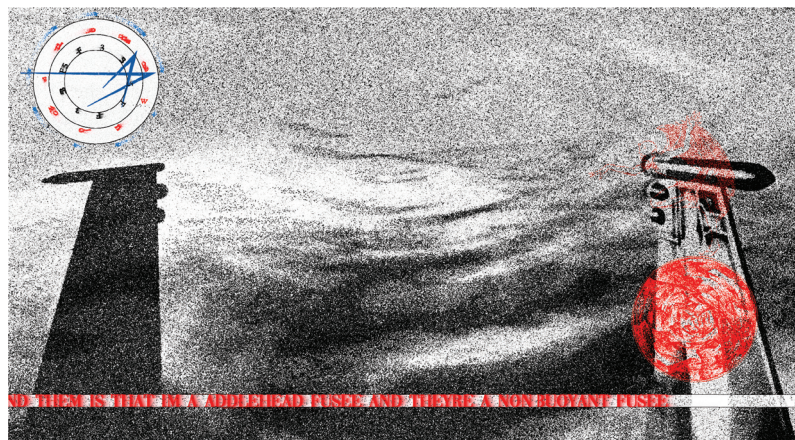
My installation in the show pauses on the mechanics of generative language and the ethnographies it seems to create—cut up and concrete poetry which wields its own charm and semantics. I pair dissociative imagery and symbols with the text, which has disambiguated beyond a clear meaning but maintains a semiotic integrity. In this way, I invite the viewer to guess at the rules governing the text and imagery, which build and deteriorate in cycles not unlike a script.

screenshots by Echo Theohar



left: *Living Document*. Generative text software made with RiTa & Processing 3, 2019

right: *F-35*. Vinyl, ripstop nylon, felt tip pen, 2019



Eye of God. Generative text software made with, RiTa & Processing 3, 2019



installation in the AD&A Museum, from left:

Living Document. Generative text software made with RiTa & Processing 3, 2019

Eye of God. Generative text software made with RiTa & Processing 3, 2019

F-35. Vinyl, ripstop nylon, felt tip pen, 2019

CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY VELASCO

christopheravelasco.wix.com/cav-photography

This series, titled *Fresh Donor*, is an exploration about the process of mixing photographic and painting techniques onto Polaroid instant film. I investigated the Polaroid as an object that holds memories, and I began to deconstruct it through cutting, injecting, burning, and cauterizing. These are medical procedures that deteriorate the image quickly into both non-representational and representational objects. These altered photographs become memories of loss, and they serve as a *memento mori*, a reminder of mortality. Instant film has an automatic quality that distills the relic to a fleeting moment in time as opposed to other forms of photography. It instantly captures and contains memories within its wide, white square frame.

Polaroid instant film naturally decays without proper archival techniques. However, in my experiments, I have sped up those natural and chemical processes and left behind a notion of it in its remains. These images become reanimated, similar to HP Lovecraft's character Herbert West in the film adaptation *Re-Animator* and his discovery of a serum to reanimate body parts. Although he is not a trained or licensed doctor, Herbert West experiments with bodies after he kills them. Similarly, my Polaroid "creations" are "killed" and then reborn through chemical and environmental processes but are not limited to the step-by-step stages of decomposition. The Polaroid is not immortal and should not be. By expanding the corporeality in the Polaroid, I challenge the notion of its instantaneous reproducibility and slow down its degradation and eventual death.



from the *Fresh Donor* series, 2018–2019, 30 x 25 inches, Archival Pigment print

photo by Christopher Anthony Velasco



Fresh Donor installation shot: syringes used in the making of manipulated Polaroids



Fresh Donor installation in the AD&A Museum

photo by Christopher Anthony Velasco

Maiza Hixson (b. 1977) is an artist, writer and 2017 UCSB Regents Fellow. She studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has exhibited and performed widely at such venues as: the Brooklyn Museum of Art; Baltimore Contemporary (Koban); Soap Factory, Minneapolis; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art; Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art; Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford; University of the Arts, Philadelphia; the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, and beyond. She is an affiliate of Independent Curators International. Her works are included in the collections of: Will Oldham, Larry and Ladonna Shapin, Patrick Stallard, 21C Museum, Aspect Chronicle of New Media Art, the Santa Barbara Center for Art, Science and Technology and others.

Madeleine Eve Ignon (b. 1987) lives and works in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, CA. She graduated from Connecticut College with a BA in Studio Art and a Certificate in Museum Studies, as well as from the Pont-Aven School of Contemporary Art in Brittany, France with a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate. She has been awarded residencies at Starry Night Program (Truth or Consequences, New Mexico), Vermont Studio Center (Johnston, VT), and Drop Forge & Tool (Hudson, NY), and has exhibited nationally.

Adam Jahnke (b.1987) is a multimedia artist who lives and works in Santa Barbara, California. Originally from Poway, California, Adam relocated to Santa Barbara shortly after the completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2011 from California State University Channel Islands. Adam's move to Santa Barbara was prompted through his involvement with local arts and transportation organizations. As a result, Adam's visual research is interested in exploring cultural narratives about industry, geography, transit, labor and urban design. Currently Adam furthers this interest through his professional capacity as the coordinator of a Do It Yourself bicycle space on UCSB's campus.

Kayla Mattes (b. 1989) received her BFA in Textiles from Rhode Island School of Design in 2011. She archives the ephemeral vernacular of digital culture through the interconnected threads of tapestry. Recent exhibitions include Tiger Strikes Asteroid (Philadelphia, PA), Border Patrol Gallery (Portland, Maine), Guerrero Gallery (San Francisco, CA), Museum Rijswijk (Rijswijk, Netherlands), and Hunter College (NYC). Her work has been featured in *Sight Unseen*, *i-D*, and *Sculpture Magazine*, and is included in the new book, *Weavers: Contemporary Makers on the Loom*, written by Katie Tregidden and published by Ludion.

Elisa Ortega Montilla (b. 1985, Spain) lives and works in Santa Barbara. She graduated from Pablo de Olavide College, Seville, with a bachelor's degree in Social Work and has a masters in Education and Human Rights from the University of Córdoba, Spain. A social worker with over a decade of experience, she has studied art in public and private institutions, including at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Complutense University in Madrid. She has participated in collective and solo exhibitions in Spain, Guatemala, and California.

Andrew Morrison (b. 1981, Seattle, WA) was born into a traditional Haida carving family from Hydaburg, AK, and an Apache language speaking family from the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Bylas, AZ. He has studied Northwest Coastal artwork his entire life and has studied Native American symbolism from such Native American Master artists as Terrance Guardipee and George Flett. His Bachelor of Fine Arts degree is from Tufts University and he is receiving his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His art has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in galleries throughout the United States, including the American Indian Center's Trickster Gallery in Chicago, IL; Washington State University's administration building Gallery in Vancouver, WA; Western Washington University's Viking Union Gallery in Bellingham, WA; Portland State University's Native American Student Center in Portland, OR; Jacklin Arts and Cultural Center in Postfalls, ID; Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center's Sacred Circle Art Gallery in Seattle, WA; and Upper Playground's Fifty24 Gallery in Seattle, WA.

Echo Theohar (b. 1993) is an artist and researcher based between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Her work investigates the ways in which visualized data, computer graphics, and programming shape social, cultural, and political discourse. She has served as a community technologist and lecturer at venues such as LACMA, The College Art Association, The Armory, The Mistake Room, Women's Center for Creative Work, The Processing Foundation, Coaxial, UCLA, Humboldt (Berlin), and AUP (Paris).

Christopher Anthony Velasco (b.1983) works between Los Angeles, CA and Santa Barbara, CA. He received his BFA from California Institute of the Arts and also has studied at Art Center College of Design and East Los Angeles. Velasco's work has been featured in wide range of art exhibitions including at Art Center College of Design, Avenue 50 Studios, California Institute of the Arts, Hibbleton Gallery, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Photo-L.A., and Vincent Price Art Museum. And was included in Where We Live: Student Perspectives, an exhibition associated with the Getty Museum's Where We Live: Photographs of America from the Berman Collection.

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