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Art Studio MFA Thesis Catalog, 2015

Author

Hill, Robin

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UC DAVIS **2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS** EXHIBITION

JUNE 5 – 21, 2015

OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 5:30 - 7:30PM

THE RICHARD L. NELSON GALLERY AND THE FINE ARTS COLLECTION

UC DAVIS



The seven artists included in this year's Art Studio Masters of Fine Arts exhibition, *jmwml*, create works that demand time, blur boundaries, and spill over into the realm of the everyday. As we become increasingly preoccupied with the instantaneous and technological, their art offers a space of reprieve and reflection; these emerging artists encourage us to momentarily unglue our eyes from our devices and look anew at the world we inhabit.

All seven artists are committed to experimental processes, improvisational outcomes, and anti-hierarchical forms of making. Matthew Debbaudt, Wesley Miller, Lauren Rayburn, and Jonathan Sprague use two-dimensional media in order to conjure dynamic bodies, fluid texts, and abstracted landscapes. Charged issues of historical and contemporary violence, environmental ruin, and gendered and national identities percolate through their works' surfaces. James Angello, Nuno Correia, and Matt Gilbert create environments and sculptural works with multisensory effects and strong psychological resonances. Their use of sight, sound, smell, and movement animates space and gives ordinary objects new life. *jmwml* provides a chance to absorb these diverse forms of artistic practice and participate in their experimental spirit.

The Master of Fine Arts Degree in Art Studio, established in 1969, is a two-year, critically engaged studio program that provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary study in the visual arts. As part of a small tight-knit community, students explore a wide range of media and approaches to studio practice. The Art Studio Program faculty share responsibility for the graduate program. Current faculty members engage in a broad range of disciplines including sculpture, photography, time-based media, painting, drawing, print-making, ceramic sculpture, and include Tom Bills, Darrin Martin, Hearne Pardee, Lucy Puls, Annabeth Rosen, Youngsuk Suh, Robin Hill, Tim Hyde, and Gina Werfel.

The exhibition catalog for *jmwml* marks the second year of a fruitful collaboration between the Art Studio Masters of Fine Arts students and the Art History Masters of Arts students, under the direction of Bridget Gilman (Visiting Lecturer in Art History) and Robin Hill (Professor and Graduate Advisor in Art Studio). Each artist partnered with an art historian, engaging in an extended dialogue about the artists' process and practice. The results, seven interpretive essays written by the Art History students, are featured in this catalog alongside the artists' own statements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

arts.ucdavis.edu/art-studio-graduate-program

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Robin Hill, Professor
Graduate Program Advisor
Department of Art and Art History
Art Studio Program
rhill@ucdavis.edu

Youngsuk Suh, Associate Professor
Co-Chair Department of Art and Art History
Art Studio Program
yssuh@ucdavis.edu

JONATHAN SPRAGUE.

Realizing that the limitations of the photographic medium and the allowances of an unchanging image are a photographer's grace and undoing, my recent work is an effort to expand on a singular moment. I use photography to extract a scene, whether it is fictionalized or a story based within the context of reality. My work is born from an exploration of the bond between humankind and nature, abandonment and growth – human impact on transforming landscapes.

I'm moved by places where damage and wonder seem inextricably entangled. I believe that our relationship with the natural world is a troubled one that can never be otherwise under the present cultural dispensation. I am inspired to document the remains, the societal footprints and detritus, hidden in our periphery, occupying the margins of our day-to-day existence.





Jonathan Sprague.

Jonathan Sprague

UC DAVIS 2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

JUNE 5 - 21, 2015

DECISIVE INTERVENTION

by Heather Wallace

Jonathan Sprague's photographs emit an aura of otherworldliness at odds with the assumed realism of photography. His work's boundaries seem to exceed the grasp of the artist, audience, and even the edges of the image.

Though Sprague's works cultivate a feeling of recording and exposition, the work itself is not strictly a factual depiction of the subject. Sprague's works should not be considered document; he carefully stages his compositions, and manipulates the subject into its final manifestation. Blacks are made blacker to become a void, contrast is heightened, and imperfections are erased. The degree to which Sprague attends to the subject before capturing it with his camera—the lighting, angle, the period of exposure, even the time spent waiting in the woods to find something—elicits a sense of care and meticulous process. Sprague makes fiction from reality.

Sprague himself finds it difficult to describe his intentions at times; yet, this resistance to language does not hinder the viewing experience, but rather amplifies it. The audience is inclined to accept the photograph as fact. Sprague's style does not shirk this assumption. Instead, he deliberately utilizes it to construct imaginary images, which the audience is initially inclined to accept as real.

The small flaws Sprague leaves in his photographs are meant to falsify the "truth" that is photography. Sprague calls them his "little secrets." The red light in *Tree Base* is assuredly not natural; the light reminds the audience that the photograph, while apparently a factual medium, can in fact be just as fictive as other art forms. The purpose of the hint is not to discredit the image, but to subtly reveal the degree of labor and work involved in creating seemingly truthful images, a process one may deem the decisive intervention.

Tree Base exemplifies this intervention.

Earthy/material aspects—weight, dimension, mass, and fact—are stressed in *Tree Base*, but so are metaphysical aspects—extraterrestrial, fantastical, and magical. The familiarity of the former qualities conflicts with the strangeness of the latter, creating a pleasing tension between the two. The audience is confronted by the violence of the tree's falling, but that violence is quickly abated by the calm of the composition. The tree fell. It is not still falling. The tree's isolation serves to further amplify feelings of unfamiliarity and otherworldliness; qualities not often associated with images of dirt and upended roots. Decontextualizing the tree from its environment, the aspect that makes it so alien to the audience, is another decisive intervention.

It is in the space of disjunction between subject and medium that the dialectic provoked by the photograph becomes more and more pronounced. The gaps between the real and the fictitious properties of the image prompt the audience to renegotiate their understanding of reality. The audience realizes the image's "secret" and begins to reevaluate their expectations. Reality is as much a carefully fabricated construct as fantasy.

james angeilo.

i am interested in found and fabricated objects as forms of response to my environment. I want to explore sculptural arrangements and systems of organization that allow me to experience new meaning in ordinary material. Working in a language adjacent to taxonomy and display, my work is the record of my relationship with these materials. My perception of an object changes as I discover and explore its inherent attributes. I am reminded of ontological questions regarding the nature of reality. What are the essential attributes of a given object? What constitutes its true identity and how do we decipher what is true in a material and perceptual sense?





James Angello.

mmnl.

UC DAVIS 2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

JUNE 5 - 21, 2015

THE ESSENCE OF THINGS

by Justina Martino

While surrounded by material possessions, we often disregard the complexities of the physical world and its influence in our lives. James Angello collects and juxtaposes quotidian objects in ways that reveal surprising meanings and connections. His works are constructed from materials such as glass, colored lights, fabric, plants, branches, rocks, and concrete remnants. When choosing materials, Angello considers their form, context, and animism—a belief that all inanimate objects contain a spirit or inherent essence. The human scale of Angello's assemblages encourages an interactive and exploratory viewing experience. Some of his structures contain objects that are obscured or only visible from certain angles. In order to see all of the components viewers must walk around and view the structures from multiple positions. This process may remind viewers to take an active role in perceiving and relating to their daily surroundings.

Within each assemblage, objects with disparate functions are intentionally juxtaposed to emphasize aesthetic relationships and reveal intrinsic similarities. Angello's imaginative constellations encourage viewers to make connections between objects based on their inherent rather than conventional attributes. In addition to encouraging viewers to look at objects in new ways, Angello's structures show that physical objects can have multiple meanings and functions. While all of the objects are assembled together to form a new structure, they also maintain their unique identities. An awareness of these multiplicities challenges the viewer to mentally engage in various ways of seeing and perceiving the physical world.

Angello's assemblages erase distinctions between objects and emphasize the connectedness of the material world. In an installation from his series *Losing Transparency*, a trio of unaltered, obsidian fragments rest on small hexagonal mirrors. This arrangement reveals the ways in which materials can assume multiple forms and functions. By looking at the mirror as an object that reflects or contains another object the boundaries between the two become unclear. This effect inspires viewers to consider the physical distinctions made between objects and the conceptual boundaries assumed between themselves and other matter.

Angello's sculptural assemblages illuminate the magic in the everyday. They encourage viewers to let go of mental expectations and question the commonly accepted meanings of objects. In another piece from *Losing Transparency*, titled *3 Million Years Before*, a structure consisting of a cylindrical, cement remnant and a tree branch sits atop a yellow stepladder. There are also two long pieces of black polymer clay that drape over part of the bottom step and rest on the base. Angello assembles objects based on intuition and aesthetic sense. However, the rest is up to interpretation. Just as each object is shown to have multiple definitions, the assemblages as a whole are also undefined. In a way, they ask the viewer to become an artist, poet, archaeologist, or inventor. For many, interpreting the structures may be an immediate response that illustrates the need to name, define, and categorize the material world. Angello's assemblages encourage viewers to let go of some of their preconceived notions and approach the physical world with receptivity and curiosity.

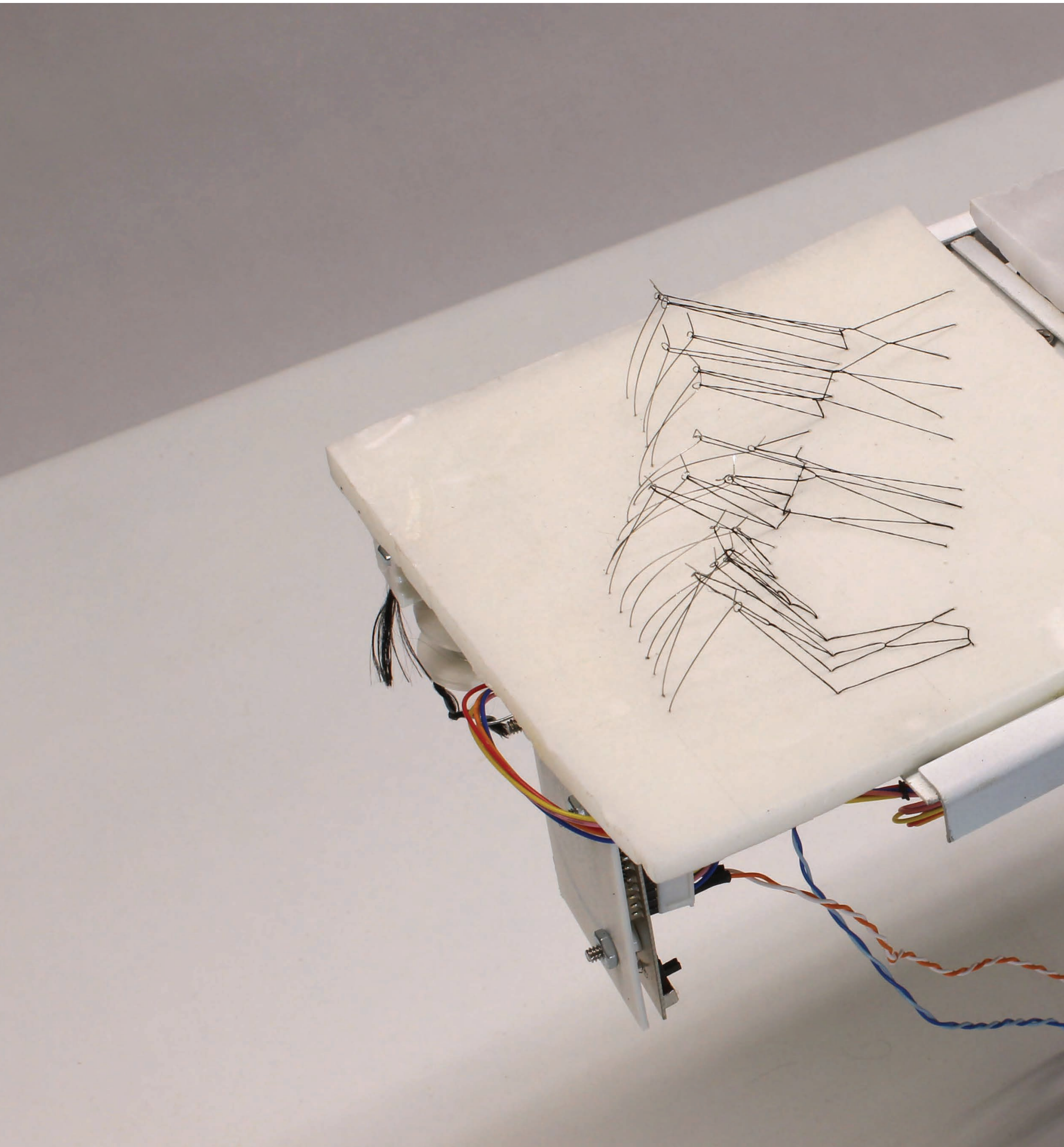
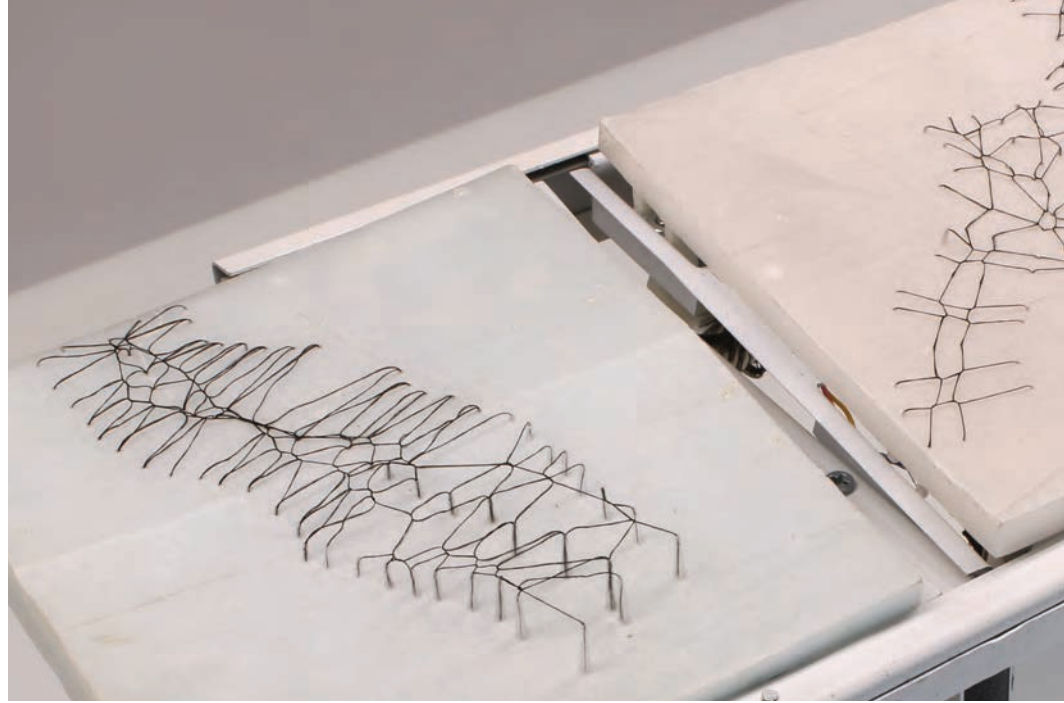
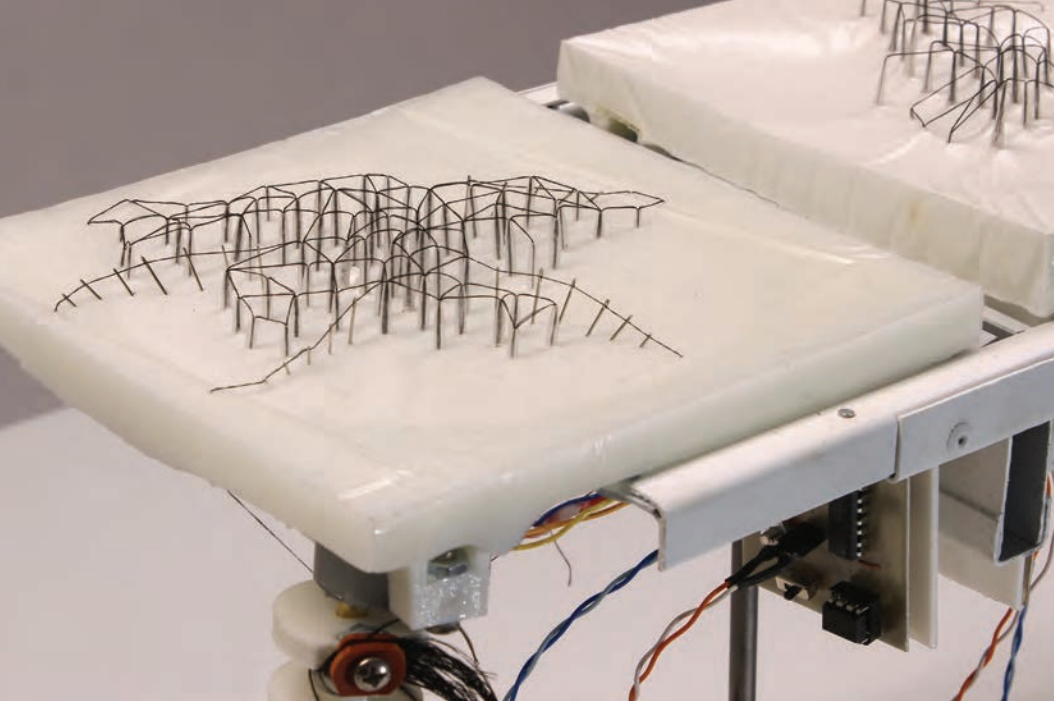
matt gilbert.

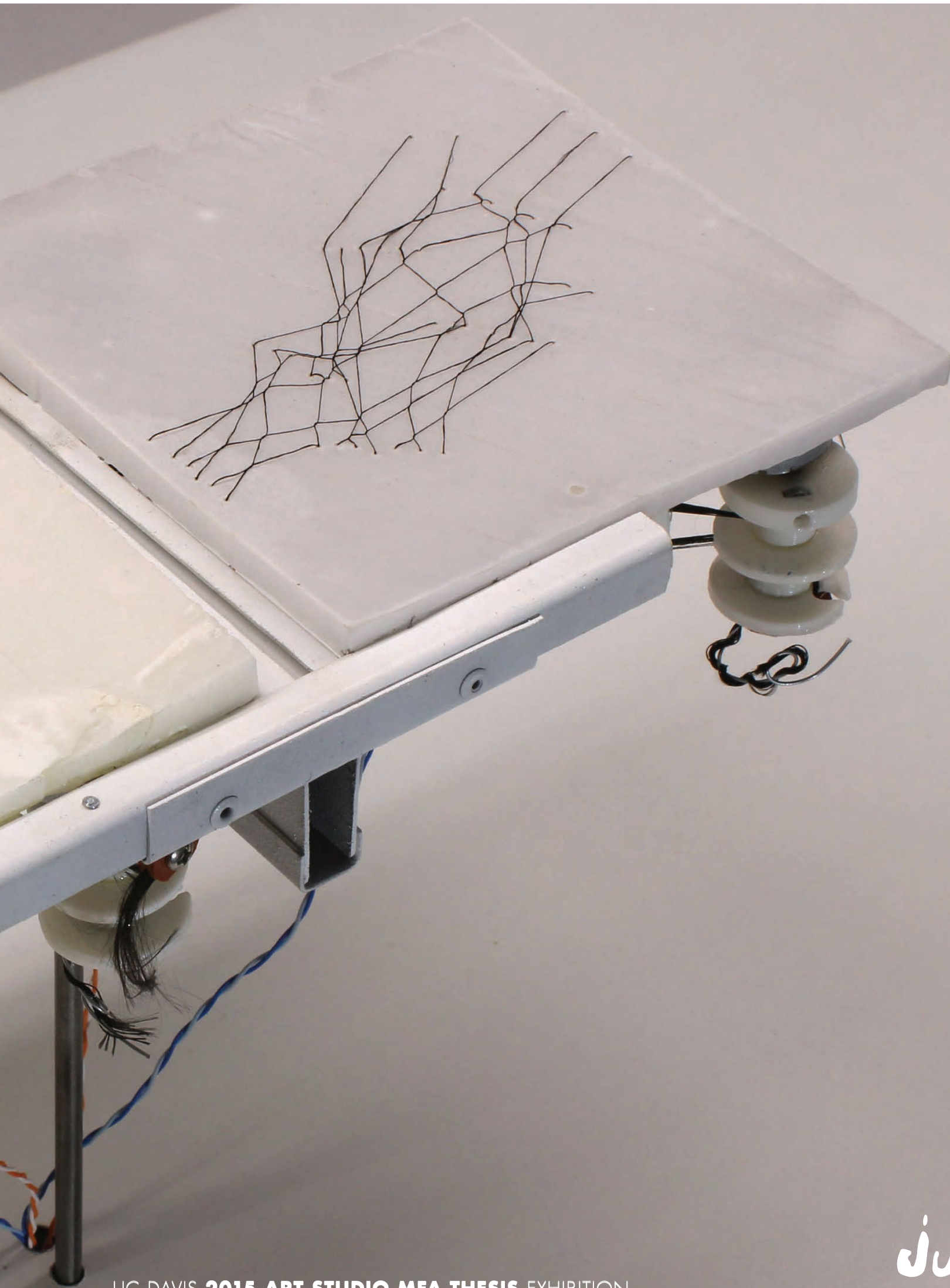
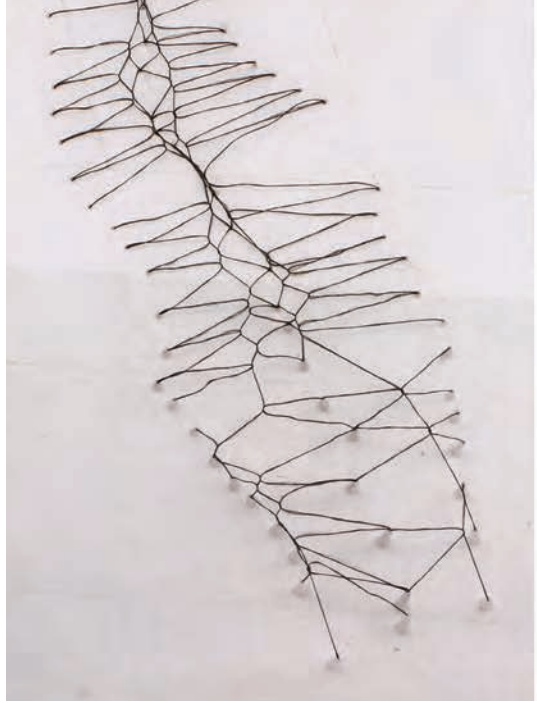
There's a certain viewing distance above a city that I arrive at briefly as my plane comes in for a landing. The traffic in the streets is visible, I can see that there is movement, but I can't make out individual cars. The role of the streets as a circulatory system is most visible at this height. The buildings grow and die, are consumed, discarded, or left to rot, and spread like a rash, or lichens. Lichens are always two, algae and fungus, living on top of each other like damp tenement apartments. There are viruses that live on other viruses, or at least prey on them, though they aren't considered "alive". Viruses lack homeostasis, the feedback systems that keep things in balance, like a thermostat (also not alive). They may attack each other, but they do so out in the open, borrowing existing cells rather than bothering to make their own, like a clandestine poker game in an abandoned building. By not building their own, they forfeit another qualification on the long

bureaucratic checklist for "life": their own cell structure. (One wonders if squatter's rights could be attained, overturning this decision.)

Yet, the distinction would not change the daily practice of virologists, who are instead concerned with the processes and the impacts of their objects of study. The builders of infrastructure would not have their work interrupted by my view from the plane. Deciding whether or not something is alive appears to involve some arbitrary criteria and a subjective determination. If it is a judgment call, what role does perception play in this decision?

My plane lands and I get a different perspective on this living city. Swarms of bacteria foil over and between each other, wrapped in the digestive tracts that they skillfully maintain—that would die without them—and are themselves wrapped in confused mammals on moving sidewalks.





matt gilbert.

zmmnl.

JUNE 5 - 21, 2015

UC DAVIS 2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

ART IMITATES LIFE: THE WORK OF MATT GILBERT

by Jamianessa Davis



While much of Matt Gilbert's work seems relatively mechanical, with its gears and wires, it does in fact have organic roots. Gilbert creates works of art not to merge the languages of mechanical and organic, but to question the validity of their separateness. He seeks to understand the nature of *life* through his own act of creation. Gilbert is driven to construct these pieces as a means of questioning why some entities are defined as *living*, while others are defined as *non-living*, though the latter clearly possess properties similar to that of living organisms. Gilbert is influenced by Jorge Luis Borges's writings on magical realism and surrealist philosophies. He utilizes elements of Borges's philosophies to create parallel realities within his art. Gilbert brings the relationship between real and surreal to fruition, furthering the idea of mechanical as organic.

This investigation of the mechanical as organic began two years ago, with a work entitled *Spider Puppet* (2013, mixed media), in which Gilbert animated sewing needles and filament using the animation program Blender, a microcontroller, and motors. He created a spider-like animal with the dynamism of an organic creature using his knowledge of computer programming and robotics. Gilbert studied human-computer interaction and graphic design, both of which inform his work. The palm-sized *Spider* is suspended and manipulated by numerous filament strings that allow its movements to seem natural, almost instinctive in manner. These manipulations of perception offer the viewer a mechanistic work of art that seems quite organic in presence. The piece is elegant in its design and modest in its execution, though the ingenuity of Gilbert's art is easily apparent.

Gilbert's recent series, *The Comparative Anatomy of Angels* (2014-15, mixed media), is a genesis of many of these conceptual ideas surrounding life and our observation of life. The artist is not attempting to create something that is *alive*, rather he seeks to investigate and manipulate our perceptions of what constitutes *the living*. The pieces in this series were created using filament strings that move and undulate through resin-mounted pipette tips with the use of small motors. The filament strings are intertwined in such a manner that each line plays off of the next; the movements of some pieces are slight and must be observed closely in order to comprehend their actions. This close observation also offers the viewer the opportunity to hear the soft hum of the tiny motors as each changes position.

In a gallery setting, this soft whirring sound almost disappears into the background, allowing the viewer to perceive the pieces as more organic than mechanical in nature. In this respect, the pieces become much more than the sum of their parts. An eerie quality emanates from the miniscule movements and sounds, tempting one to understand the pieces as biological beings. Gilbert's work is as much about artistic exploration as methodical investigation; both of these concepts coalesce to create a surreal experience that affects the viewer in an unexpectedly real way.

WESLEY MILLER.

my work hovers between field trips into psychological, subconscious territories and re-tellings and re-imaginings of history. Through intuitive, spur-of-the-moment approaches to composition I make marks, not knowing what their outcome will be. I use a state of not knowing to let marks playfully become shapes that trigger associations, memories and imagination, which in turn become content. That does not mean that I will not turn back to observation halfway through a painting. It is important that a transformation of material or ideas, perhaps both, happens on the canvas.

Reading is a part of my studio work. I especially appreciate texts that expand on our world and take me on a daydream journey. A recent favorite is the short story *The Aleph* by Jorge Luis Borges, where a fictionalized Borges sees the Aleph, a point in space where all time that ever was and ever will be is contained, and in which all the history and future of

every place and creature is visible. I connect Borges' idea of a portal to another world to the dreamlike worlds of Peter Doig or Neo Rauch, the humanoid abstractions of Amy Sillman, and the creative process as a whole.

Often my imagery teeters between abstraction and discernable representation, employing one to get to the other. Impressions from my childhood in Greece, Germany and Kentucky are origins of my sense of color, light and space. These places keep bringing me back to Edenic gardens and forests, but also conjure histories of destruction and cruelty. Atrocities committed by one group of humans I associate with – Colonialism, empire-building, witch-hunts – speak to another group's ongoing crusades. I see the gardens and forests as a foil to that ugliness and as a part of its history. All the while the act of painting itself is what propels the work.





Wesley Miller.

Wesley Miller.

UC DAVIS 2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

JUNE 5 - 21, 2015

PORTALS OF MEMORY AND HISTORY

by Piper Milton

Wesley Miller's current work exists between a historicized, conscious narrative and the realm of the fantastic — a transitory world that is abstracted and ambiguous. Finding a balance between these two poles characterizes much of his painting: the works are both psychological and physical, appearing differently for every viewer. Experimenting with relationships between color and tone, as well as the process of painting itself, Miller's pieces touch upon both the personal and universal. Through abstracted forms related to violence, history, and the legacy of colonialist oppression, these works call attention to how color and form can conjure emotional responses and hidden symbolisms.

Miller's canvases, at times geometric and spatially-oriented and at others focused on vegetal motifs and organic forms, leave traces of the experiences that inform the work's creation. By not holding each work to a specific narrative or forcing the pieces to communicate with each other, Miller's works stand alone as individual paintings. Yet, the paintings can also be viewed as part of a larger thematic group with shared aesthetic qualities, such as the emphasis on color or the relationships between complimentary forms and tones. The works' relatively large scale, along with Miller's conscious decision to not begin with a specific narrative, allows them to be spontaneous and shifting. Layering paint and forms to create new points of focus, the current pieces show Miller's interest in creating "short stories, not novels". The immediacy of Miller's approach is made visible to the viewer through purposefully unedited compositions. The artist allows traces of previous experiments to remain, sometimes partially obscured or altered. Miller's "short stories" are found in the brief moments of his process captured in action — sudden departures from the existing composition that veer off into other narratives or images within the space of a single canvas.

Like modern *vanitases*, Miller's paintings bring into fragmented focus an onslaught of death and violence, particularly in relation to Germany. Miller is German by birth, but has spent much of his adult life in the United States; his connection to European conceptions of identity and history is made visible, though never overt. *Scheiterhaufen (Opening)* shows a distorted view of a fiery stake, reminiscent of those used to burn accused witches in many of the German states during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another work by Miller, *Aleph/Placenta*, contains what appears to be a free-floating amniotic sac disconnected from its bodily host, a kind of placental portal into another dimension; though not historically oriented, this work too deals with themes of physical and mental transformation and violence. These transferences across time and space are made possible by the paintings' lack of strict narrative or overt symbolism. The works speak to specific elements of identity and history, but without forcing a singular point of view. Agency is given to both artist and viewer, capturing both Miller's personal investments and broader aesthetic interests — a dynamic balance that reflects his own identity as Euro-American, and universal themes of the effects of violence and displacement.

matt debbaudt.

goof(ball)

an artist statement

what is? i interest
an innocence, wild
only, in simplest
I'm not only child.
things that make me
laugh, make me squeal
joy, if not free
then pleasure i'll steal.
form in bliss fashion
say, "what's gross and disgusts"
shaped reflects passion
of, we should not discuss.



am not. i can. i can not. i



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matt debbaut.

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THE DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

by Arielle Hardy

Matthew Kelly Debbaudt captures a sense of motion and dynamism in static media by creating work so volatile that it seems to writhe and pulsate with an animation all its own. Much of the artist's current work is born of an interest in conferring cinematic qualities through techniques of painting and drawing. In the same way that films allow audience members to lose themselves in a manufactured world, Debbaudt seeks to engage his audience in a similar pattern of absorptive suspension. The work's intended focus is not specific representations but rather the sensations elicited—both visual and emotional.

Debbaudt pushes himself and the limits of his media in order to generate an immersive visual experience, hoping to conjure both attention and inquisition. He devotes himself ferociously to this practice, spending hours on end in his studio. The artist adopts a somewhat stochastic creative direction: seeing himself as the embodiment of dichotomous forces, he uses his left hand to create chaos, and his right to exercise control. He creates and destroys, appropriates “accidents,” and revisits themes derived from previous explorations. Embracing a protean creative process allows Debbaudt to experiment and evaluate his own responses to the work, engaging it in creationary discourse.

Often derived from personal experiences and struggles, the work is motivated by an interest in the simultaneous interiority and exteriority that defines human experience. Consumed by psychological questions regarding pleasure and pain, and sociological observations of positive human interaction and expressions of violence, Debbaudt is engrossed in understanding the drives and effects of the human condition. The artist processes the carnal, violent, tumultuous, and often contradictory urges of humanity in an effort toward unification that still retains chaotic vitality.

The psychological undertones that give rise to Debbaudt's work are mirrored by the graphic overtones that characterize his aesthetic. Instead of reflecting the world exactly as it is, explicit imagery is rendered in a deceptively unsophisticated style. The juxtaposition of cartoonish figures and abstracted forms, representational landscapes and ambiguous contexts, geometric and irregular structures, drawings and painted elements, and opaque and transparent materials all highlight a sense of tenuously compartmentalized (dis)order. Frightening or disturbing subject matter is treated with sardonic levity, depicting evil and concealing it in beauty—a kind of symbiotic contradiction.

Contradictions between these conscientious and impulsive forms are enhanced by Debbaudt's choice of palette. The contrast between black and white provides the framework for explosions of electric colors evoking passion and chaos. Ironically, the most frenzied portions of each work are those without color. The pigmented forms, while nuanced, appear less mutable. Woven throughout each image, however, are moments of subtle serenity: spaces where colors smoothly merge and stark, monochromatic tones provide clarity. Yet, the artist resists a stable visual foundation. The multiplicity of marks compounded with the intensity of color arrest and confound, while the aggressive vitality of the visual forms floods every sense with stimulation. This animated visual experience rewards attention to the details of each image, prompting the viewer to respond to the same vexing questions being engaged by the artist.

nuno correia.

it is difficult to draw distinctions between what I make in the studio and everything else I do. One cannot deny that a trip abroad or to the gas station influences the work I produce. I am beginning to suspect the difference between art and everything else is either negligible or nonexistent. After all, the line that separates art from the mundane is an artificial construct, and the various facets that make up one's life are related to and influence each other. This differentiation is a barrier, made by us, and placed somewhere between the studio and everything else.

I am interested in a living practice, or "social sculpture." I am interested in lending artistic form to any activity which can be considered, in a very basic way, an engagement with one's surroundings and materials. Whether this means building a sculpture in wood or documenting an activity, both engage and manipulate materials. I am inclined to state that what defines art

is not just a matter of context, but there is something deeper, more fundamental about bridging the gap between art and life. I am sure the answers can be found in the process, in the relationship between the artist and their materials. The role of "sculptor" seems a little arbitrary too, as this label falls short of what I actually do. I should employ any tool necessary to investigate an artistic problem, including the fabrication of a discrete object, installation, performance, video, or drawings. If the notion of art being separate from life is as dubious as I suspect, then rules or labels dictating appropriate media and materials are equally uncertain.





UC DAVIS 2015 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

nuno correia.

mmmmml.
JUNE 5 - 21, 2015

GETTING LOST

by Hannah Kagan-Moore

Nuno Correia's work doesn't break boundaries, it dispels them. Talking casually in his studio, he muses that for many artists, artistic inquiry is about goals: "I'm going to make a sculpture... I'm gonna make this object. But after you make so many of those, you realize it's not satisfying." Correia's vision takes on a dramatic range of material expressions, from spare furniture-and-sawdust installations to equally cryptic video showing soundless footage of driving California's highways. These perhaps esoteric images can leave the audience with more questions than answers—but then, the same is true of Correia's process, a circumnavigatory meditation in which "the questions... are the answers, that become more questions."

The spartan quality of these installations is no accident. Correia often describes his work as materially stripped down, including only visual essentials. "Whether I'm doing live installations, moving geometric forms... it's always about trying to resolve some fundamental issue." When pressed, he continues, "Why is [art] different from everything else? ...It'll be steel I-beams on the back of a truck... and I see it as a sculpture in a gallery."

Though Correia's work resists alignment with a singular art historical tradition, his emphasis on process echoes the traditions of Dada, Happenings, and Fluxus. Like these movements, Correia's work dismantles hierarchies within art and object making. He recalls, "There's a photograph of the time Chris Burden got shot in the arm... What you're looking at is the process that resulted in that object... I see the sawdust square and the chair in the same way, as a recording of a performance." Although aspects of Correia's process are fundamentally accidental, the practicalities of building the furniture and sifting the sawdust onto the floor involve deliberate rigor, and a trancelike focus associated with master craft.

This material process arises from a conceptual framework neither wholly spontaneous nor rigidly static. Rather, his furniture and installations arise contemplatively, discovering the unconscious conceptual by tuning out conscious practice through physical repetition. Considering without considering, thinking without thinking, the stereotypical Zen question about one hand clapping: Correia's work happens in the making of, and only then. "The sawdust is doing what it does best, and I just facilitate that." The chair in the sawdust is always now, temporally arrested—it lends its audience no clues about possible pasts or futures. It would be impossible to make the meticulous sawdust squares quickly, and it is partly this arduous process that lends the finished product a stillness and fragility with an undeniably magnetic draw.

The artist's works can be considered in strictly formal terms, but the installation's power lies with the meditatively cyclical quality of material as process, process as material. Correia notes that "the only way to understand it is to sit with the work"—to lend it your disciplined concentration. If you do so, "... After a while, you get to that point—you get lost in it. That's one of the important things about this process—the getting lost."

IAUГEП ҒАУЬЫГП.

i paint myself again and again, almost as a psychological tick or repetitive compulsion, struggling in my engagement with a second body. The other body in the room is a size 4, mass-produced dress form. Handicapped, sexless and sexual, this body is made to be covered and decorated.

Naked, I feel more honest with myself. In some ways I feel a step removed from the restrictive associations of clothing and merchandise, beauty and gender. My body is not the ideal of the two cultures that it originates from: Europe and Japan. Instead, it is a hybrid. Without clothing I become a body that moves and feels.

The subjects of Japanese woodblock prints exist within a flat, patterned, outlined world. For centuries, Western art has displayed the female nude realistically in the context of a three dimensional visual space. In fusing the two art traditions, I create a context in which my body feels natural. My many intermingled selves are actively and rebelliously struggling against both cultures' expectations of me as a woman.





THE DEFINITION OF BEAUTY

by Kristen Keach

Lauren Rayburn's work demonstrates a deep relationship with herself as reflected through the art of painting. Inspired by movement, martial arts, and her understanding of her own body, Rayburn calls into question traditional gender roles and stereotypes associated with femininity, body image, and American gender dynamics. Rayburn presents a series of artworks that confront the viewer's space while simultaneously providing a narrative, performative construct to push the audience to think about femininity and gendered body ideals.

Rayburn's paintings detail herself as the female nude protagonist. The artist presents her body in different positions, juxtaposed with a dress form fit to her exact measurements. The contrast of her body's animated, expressive movement opposite the static, inanimate dress form forces the viewer to question women's roles and places the original function of the dress form under critical scrutiny. To create these scenes, Rayburn initially produced still photographs of herself, but transitioned to studying herself on film so as to capture the essence of her body moving in space and time more completely.

The paintings are unframed canvas directly applied to the wall, as if they inherently inhabit the gallery space. At the same time, the nude's lively movements generate the sense that the figure infiltrates the audience's space to interact with both the viewer and the other paintings in her series. Her brush strokes change from painting to painting, beginning as solid, defined lines and gradually becoming loose, fluid, almost invisible borders surrounding the female form. Rayburn relies on flatness and her Japanese heritage to insinuate a dichotomy between masculine stereotypes of natural feminine beauty. The artist contrasts the nude figure with the dress form, bound by patterned cloth closely associated with kimonos, to mimic the restrictive nature of a corset and to emphasize a transition from masculine dominance to female confidence. The female nude is not passive, but actively engages with the dress form to elicit conversations about masculine versus feminine and female body types.

The female nude provokes the viewer to question traditional ideals of female beauty and changing gender stereotypes, asking questions such as: who controls these standards of beauty that pervade our society? Why do women conform to the stereotypes and body image ideals determined by the unforgiving fashion industry? In asking these questions, Rayburn's paintings explore masculinity versus femininity and the role of the male as traditional arbiter of women's body types and fashion trends. Her inspiration comes from not only dance, but also martial arts. The manner in which the female protagonist moves tethers a fine line between poised, choreographed feminine beauty and the precise masculinity seen in martial arts.

Rayburn's works enter into a conversation with one another to highlight and re-enforce a progressive movement across her painted surfaces. By employing her body as the female protagonist and painting in an airy style, Rayburn not only forces the audience to question feminine roles and ideals but also allows the viewer a chance to become enveloped by the grace and beauty of these works of art.

ART HISTORY ESSAY CREDITS



The Master of Arts degree in Art History is a two-year program that prepares students for further graduate study or professional work. This intimate program places emphasis on interdisciplinary training, the theory of art historical interpretation, the methodology of art historical research and writing, and museum studies experiences. The Art History faculty cover a broad range of specialized fields in visual and material culture, painting, architecture, photography, sculpture, and archeology; current faculty include Katherine Burnett, Lynn Roller, Jeffrey Ruda, Diana Strazdes, and Heghnar Watenpaugh and Visiting Lecturers Catherine Anderson, Letha Ch'ien, Bridget Gilman, and Linda Phipps.

Jamianessa Davis, a first-year student studying contemporary art, writes on Matt Gilbert's kinetic sculptures.

Arielle Hardy, a classicist and recent curator of a twentieth-century photography exhibition at the Nelson Gallery, analyzes Matthew Debbaudt's multilayered paintings and drawings.

Hannah Kagan-Moore, who works on issues of race and identity in fifteenth-century Northern Europe, contributes an essay on Nuno Correia's process-focused installations.

Kristen Keach, whose own work concerns artistic renditions of Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy" from the late medieval to modern periods, reflects on the gender politics of Lauren Rayburn's paintings.

Justina Martino, who both writes about and is involved in the Northern Californian contemporary art community, interprets James Angello's assemblages and found-object sculptures.

Piper Milton, whose research interests include seventeenth and eighteenth-century Italian print culture and architecture, unpacks the ambiguous landscapes and abstract figurations of Wesley Miller's paintings.

Heather Wallace, who concentrates in Middle Eastern illuminated manuscripts, writes on Jonathan Sprague's photographs of human impact on the natural world.

Bridget Gilman, Visiting Lecturer in History of Photography and Contemporary Art, served as a coordinator and editor for the catalog essays.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

RICHARD L. NELSON GALLERY & FINE ARTS COLLECTION AND JAN SHREM AND MARIA MANETTI SHREM MUSEUM OF ART STAFF

Rachel Teagle, *Director, Richard L. Nelson Gallery & Fine Arts Collection, and Founding Director, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art*

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Youngsuk Suh, *Co-Chair Department of Art and Art History, Art Studio Program*

Heghnar Watenpaugh, *Co-Chair Department of Art and Art History and Graduate Program Director*

2013 - 2015 ART STUDIO VISITING ARTIST LECTURE SERIES PARTICIPANTS

Ed Panar, Anne Ellegood, Anton Reijnders, Saul Melman, Rico Gatson, Deborah Stratman, Annie Lapin, Alec Soth, Julie Heffernan, Laura Owens, Ann Agee, Bill Arning, Jim Campbell, and Rackstraw Downes, *the inaugural speaker in the Betty Jean and Wayne Thiebaud Endowed Lecture Series.*

IN MEMORY OF

Freemond E. (Pete) Gadberry, *a retired fine-arts teacher at Vintage High School, in Napa, Calif., who gave a \$1-million bequest from his estate for the art department's efforts to recruit and support student artists. Mr. Gadberry, who graduated from the university in 1967 with a master's degree in fine arts, died in 2006 at the age of 69.*

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