

UC San Diego

Graduating MFA Exhibitions

Title

Bodies in Trouble: Artists from the MFA Program at UC San Diego

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*Bodies in
Trouble*

*Dustin Brons
Jessica Buie
Corey Dunlap*

*Jessica Frelund
Jonathon Paden
Garrett Pointer
Heejung Shin*

*Andrew Sturm
Sindhu Thirumalaisamy
Evelyn Walker*

Bodies in Trouble



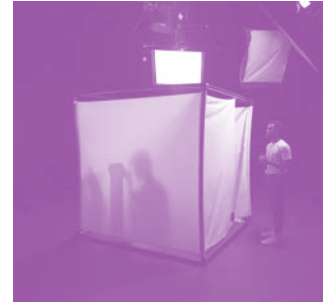
In exhibitions—like this one—that gather a group of artists based on an institutional affiliation rather than shared thematic or formal concerns, it can often be a struggle to understand how to think of the relationship between the parts and the whole. At the same time, the struggle can be rewarding when you consider that many of the works on display were generated in dialogue (both constructive and antagonistic, of course) with their respective counterparts. Having had the pleasure, along with co-curator Anthony Graham, to witness the evolution of these works and to learn first-hand about the artist's research interests and production processes, I have begun to see some broad, shared themes emerge. Specifically, many of these artists are reacting to the ever-increasing coding and disciplining of bodies along the lines of gender, race, legality, and economic status in contemporary lived and virtual spaces. The strategies that they each adopt in response to these hegemonic pressures range from efforts to subversively inhabit



and symptomatize them, to satire, social critique, camp performance, and even what might be called re-enchantment.

The body is the foundational site through and upon which social and political power is exerted. The work of both Corey Dunlap and Garrett Pointer exists at the threshold of formlessness and the bodily. Whereas Dunlap tests the visual limits between the virtual and the organic with images and sculptures that approach but never quite become bodies, Pointer devolves established bodily traits and gendered signifiers into limp, plasmatic blobs and childlike verbalizations. Jessica Frelund undoes what the body learns and becomes habituated to. She seeks out and enacts processes that force her and her collaborators to readjust on the fly, as it were, emphasizing the potentiality inherent in rupturing established ways of being and doing. Evelyn Walker, on the other hand, explores how mimetic objects such as puppets and dolls gain animate qualities and thus develop an uncanny bodiliness, and perhaps consciousness, of their own.

The body as a surface inscribed with signifiers of desire, gender, and race is central to the work of Jessica Buie and HeeJung Shin. Both cross the wires of heteronormative desire and redistribute its signifiers



in different directions. Buie photographs models striking poses that combine masculine and feminine codes; the ambiguity of which she heightens through cropping, collage overlays, and text. Shin's use of layering is more bombastic and has an overtly camp sensibility. She enters into and amplifies spaces of linguistic and erotic ambiguity. In doing so, she takes advantage of camp's unique ability to suspend norms and to inhabit a plurality of identities all at once.

Ultimately, the relationships between bodies are always mediated and reconstructed in the context of larger built and virtual worlds. Andrew Sturm's work deftly exposes the absurdity of Trump's proposed border wall, while using humor to call attention to the potential human costs of this emotionally charged symbol of exclusion. Sindhu Thirumalaisamy considers the environmental exhaustion wrought by urban development. But while such crises often evade representation, the gleaming white toxic foam that has appeared on the man-made lakes of Bangalore, India, offers a surprisingly palpable emblem of the sublime horror of ecological catastrophe. Dustin Brons and Jonathon Paden inquire into the virtual and image-based spaces in which we conduct our online lives. Brons points to the ideological and



economic forces that mediate not only how we see the urban spaces we live in, but also apperceptively in how we understand ourselves in relation to them. Paden turns his attention to the overlap of the real and the virtual. He uses augmented reality to create a ghostly, yet responsive visual manifestation of the metaphoric “cloud” that harbors the sum total of our data in aggregate. While the experience feels appropriately ephemeral, it could also be interpreted as an increasingly ominous reality of which we are only now beginning to catch sight.



While the somewhat arbitrary institutional framework of the UC San Diego MFA program is responsible for this grouping of artworks, the three years these artists have shared together—and the various friendships, shared concerns and problems that have emerged in that time—make themselves visible when we finally get to see them side by side in the same gallery.

—Jonah Gray

Dustin Brons



Dates
2017
detail/installation view
inkjet prints, tape
7" x 10" each

Dustin Brons works in photography, performance, video, and mixed media sculpture. His projects often revolve around minimal gestures carried out according to a set of parameters. Each page from a copy of *The New York Times* is folded to show only the photographs and hide all but certain captions and dates. A screen capture video follows as a cursor drags its way through a virtual panorama tour of the future site for a high-rise condominium tower. The resulting images call attention to what is missing as much as what is shown. The shots of luxury goods in the newspaper and the promise of the condo’s ad campaign to place prospective buyers in the center of the city are revealed as both illusion and powerful techniques of interpellation into the disparate flows of global capital.



Times I
installation view
inkjet print
58" x 85"

Jessica Buie

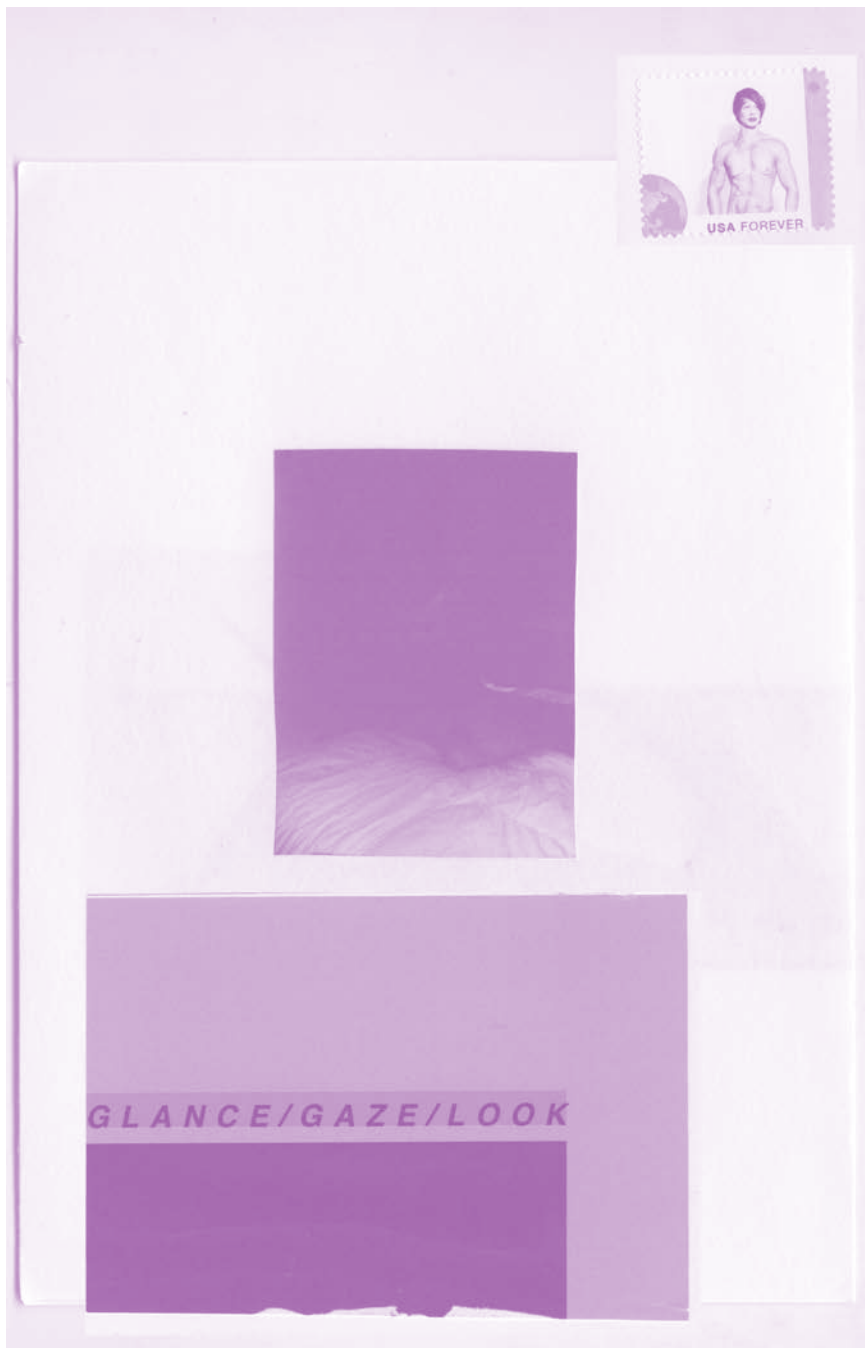


Times II
installation view
inkjet print
96" x 58"



Glance Gaze Look I
2017
archival inkjet print

Jessica Buie's conceptual photography practice combines traditional portraiture with collage and appropriation techniques. Her work questions how bodies are reflected and refracted, speculates on the aesthetics of queer desire—particularly through the subjectivity of female masculinity—and questions the nature of erotics. The subjects of Buie's portraits adopt sexualized poses, but not to expose or reveal. Rather, they endeavor to conceal in a way that both heightens their erotic charge and emphasizes the surfaces that obstruct our view. The surfaces, in turn, are accentuated and multiplied with the addition of collaged elements and handwritten texts that reframe and caption the photographs upon which they are layered.



My Butch Fantasy
(smooth satin)
2018
archival inkjet print



My Butch Fantasy
(good/bad)
2018
archival inkjet print



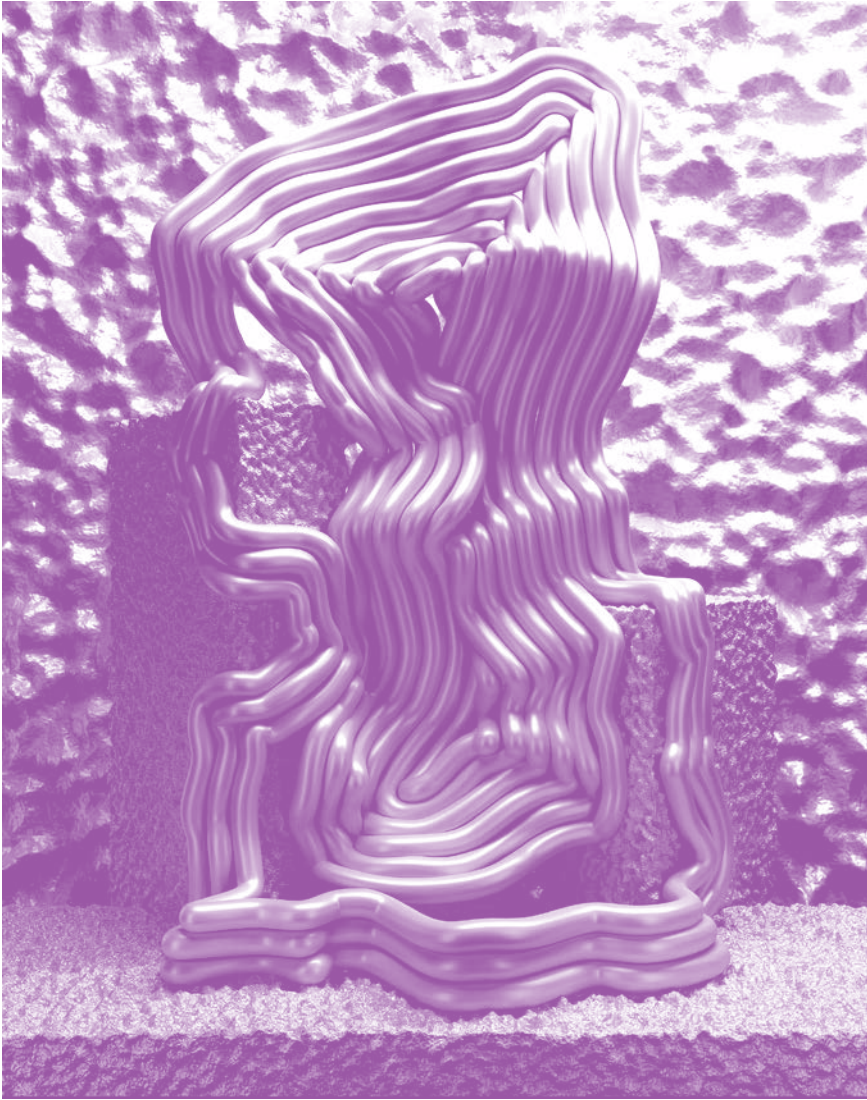
Glance Gaze Look II
2017
archival inkjet print

Corey Dunlap

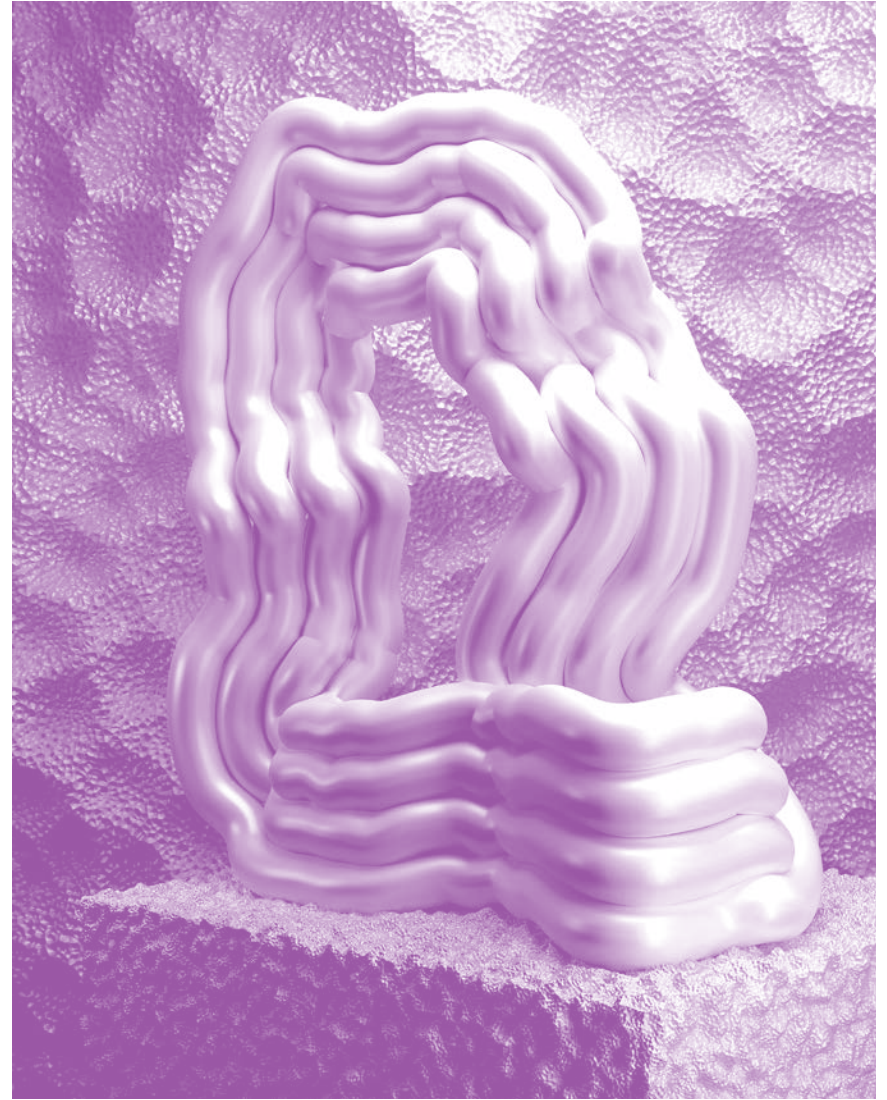


Coming 'Round the Mountain
2018
digitally rendered
ink jet print

Corey Dunlap produces digital images and sculptures that explore the materiality, representation and recognition of the body. He uses Blender, a commercial 3D-modeling software, to render objects in an illusionistic pictorial space that, while ostensibly non-representational, exhibit qualities akin to that of the body. They flop, squeeze, and droop—reacting to their virtual surroundings with a strange but consistent physical logic. The cold mathematical rationality of the software is harnessed to create an unsettlingly disordered inner world. The tension between calculation and carnality is made visible by straining the limits between what can be recognized and categorized and what is eerily familiar yet ultimately alien.

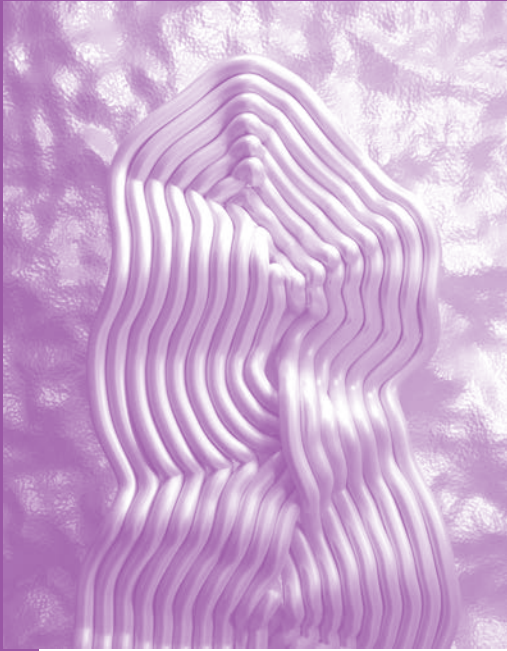


Relief
2018
digitally rendered
ink jet print



Folie à Deux
2018
digitally rendered
ink jet print

Jessica Frelund



Playing with Yourself
2018
digitally rendered
ink jet print



**Contextually, A Criterion Catalogue/
Preamble/ Before Beginnings**
2018

Jessica Frelund works across a range of mediums to trace, map, mould, and re-envision the body's capacity to respond to what she calls the "symptomatic self." By pursuing activities like learning to tap dance on a raft or taking lasso lessons from a trick roper, Frelund's work reveals a fascination with the moment of potentiality before artfulness is attained. In a recent performance, Frelund orchestrated a composition for nine guitarists of varying skill levels by using a principle of "derailment" to disrupt the players' established tendencies. In this sense, her work does not merely privilege amateurism but also a decisive unlearning of expertise.

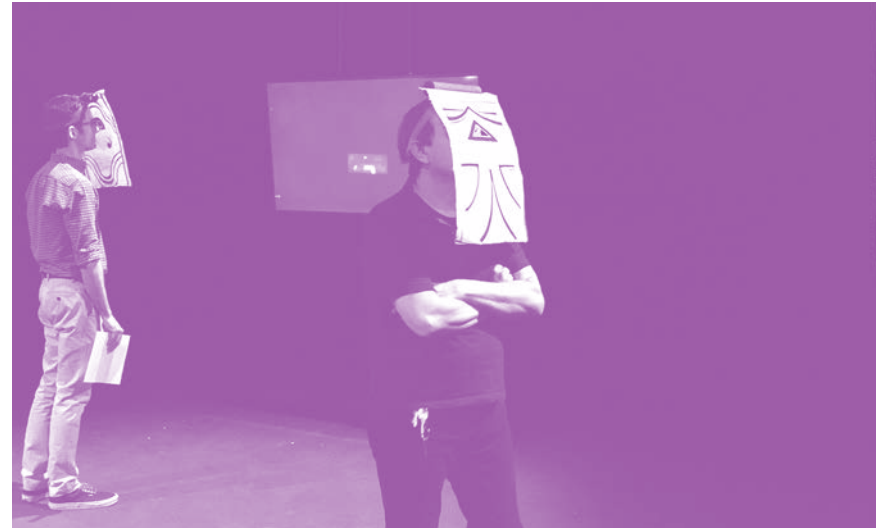


**Idiomatic Inheritance/ Inheritance,
Inhibitors/ In h: eritance, ibitors/ Inhibitant
Inheritors/ In H**
2017 – Ongoing

Jonathon Paden



Visual Conduction, Brush Thicket Copse
2017



InMemori
2016

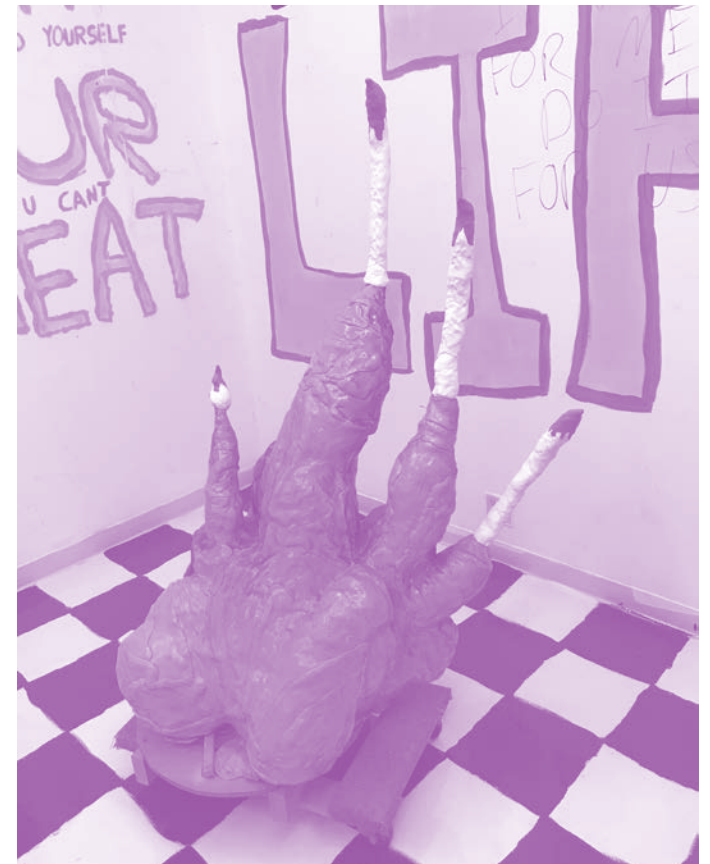
Jonathon Paden is a visual artist and researcher. His work often merges traditional and new media technologies to investigate contextual relationships in time. Programming and algorithms also play a central role in Paden's work. His recent collaborations have integrated computer science, nano-engineering, neuroscience, and the social sciences to develop new approaches for somatic interfacing in augmented and virtual reality. Recent works combine augmented reality, multichannel video, and kinetic sculpture to create immersive, semi-hallucinatory environments. Viewers are invited to interact with digitally modeled spaces and objects that allude to a virtual realm overlapping with and modifying their own.



Garrett Pointer



InMemori II: AM on FM
2017

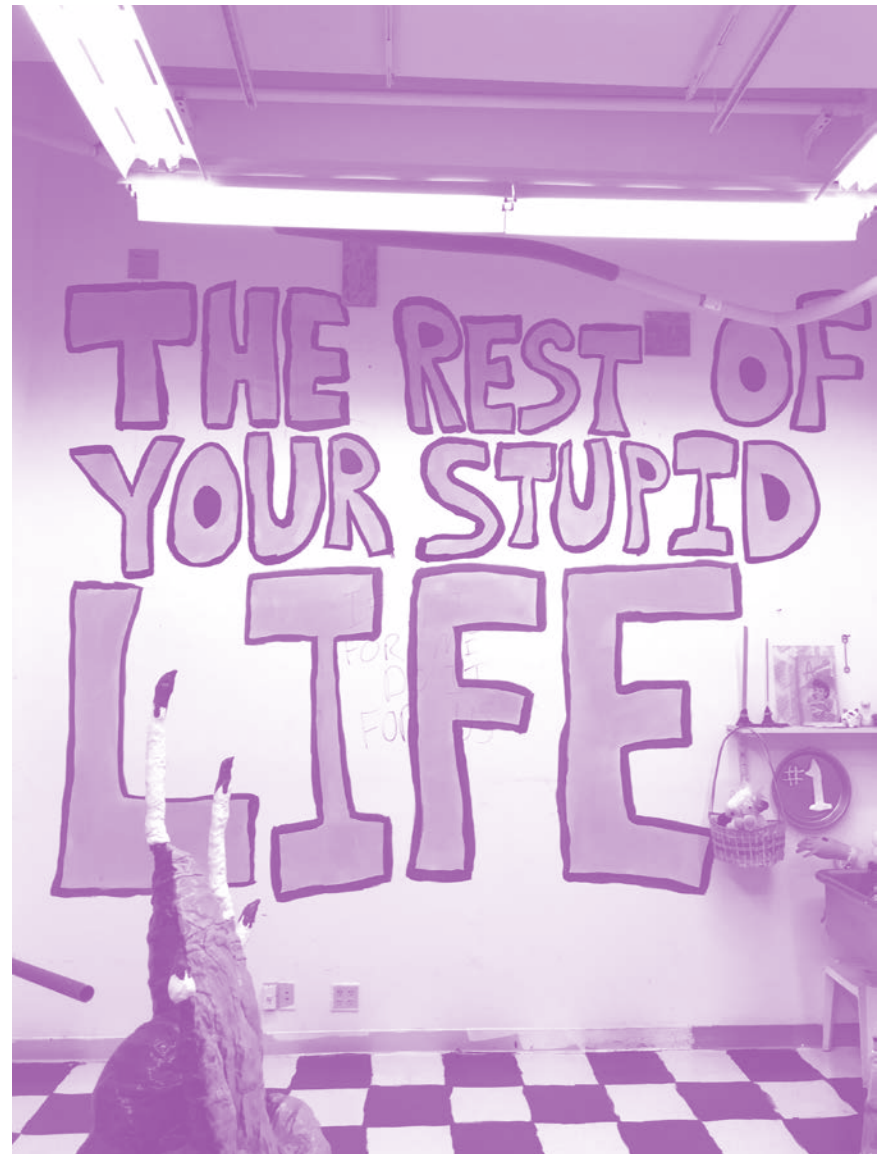


Claw
2017
epoxy, paint

Garrett Pointer works across sculpture, drawing, installation, and performance. He parodies masculinity by inhabiting and distorting lowbrow pop culture iconography. Large-scale works combine household materials (papier-mâché and duct tape) with cheap commercial goods to produce abject, amorphous, flaccid shapes. His sculptural objects are often set against backdrops—walls or whatever paper or scraps of wood are at hand—with awkwardly phrased schoolyard taunts scrawled across them in dayglo colors. NFL logos, cars, and abstract sculptures with palpably male traits are infected and deflated in contrasting proximity to poodles, roses, and a proliferation of Pepto-Bismol pink, rendering a uniquely masculine imaginary into something laughable.



Goth Sprinkles
2017
ink, paint on paper



S/t studio shot
2017

Heejung Shin



The Bad Guy
2017
ink on wood



Free Fish"es"
2018
double channel video

Heejung Shin works in painting, performance, and video. She uses word play and strategic (mis) translation to absurd effect as she highlights often hilarious slippages in meaning between English and Korean cultures. Her combination of rap and dance in music video form is an attempt to defy socially constructed ways of controlling and regimenting language and bodies. She turns the customary campiness of hip-hop performance into overdrive: intimations of sensuality become distorted and their frenetic pacing and action blur the distinction between human and animal—opening a space of resistance to the hegemonic forces of patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity.



Andrew Sturm



31 Foot Ladders

2017
homasote, bass wood,
hemp, chipboard, styrene,
paint
8" x 6" x 9.5"

Andrew Sturm is a visual artist and architect who works at the intersection of art, public culture, and the built environment. He works with communities, other artists, professionals, and institutions to better understand, disrupt, and alter social, environmental, and economic issues within the public realm.

His work *31 Foot Ladders* imagines a possible near future where the proposed 30' high wall along the Mexico-United States border has been built, which causes a reversal of power dynamics between the two nations. When north becomes south, unsafe becomes sanctuary, and defensive border becomes barrier to escape, one San Diego entrepreneur sees the wall as a unique business opportunity. Working from a satirical "fake news" premise, the work tests art's ability to invite exchange and debate by inhabiting the counterfactual.



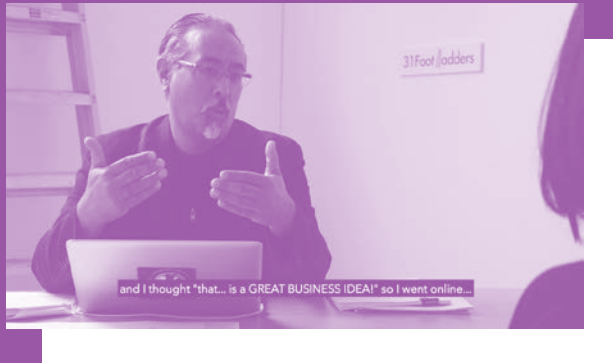
31 Foot Ladders

2017

still from video with subtitles

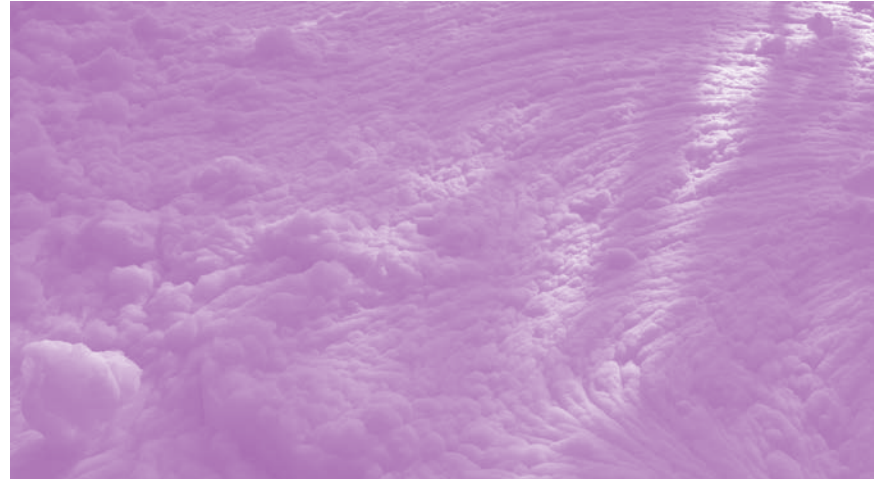
collaborators: Sindhu Thirumalaisamy,
Paolo Zuñiga, Ricardo Dominguez

Sindhu Thirumalaisamy

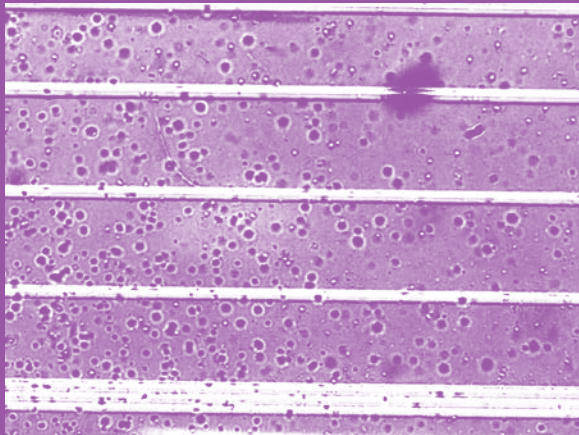


FOAM
2018
video stills

Sindhu Thirumalaisamy is an artist and filmmaker with an interest in sound and spatial politics. Her work is informed by the ways sound challenges regimes of representation and control. She approaches listening as both an incommensurable inner experience and one that is implicated in the more expansive environments in which we live. Her *FOAM* project responds to the ongoing ecological crisis in Bangalore, during which the city's man-made lakes have become heavily polluted. Thirumalaisamy takes the toxic white foam which gathers on lake surfaces as a symptom of the tensions inherent in Bangalore's self-styling as a global tech hub and the uneven impacts of its unchecked growth.

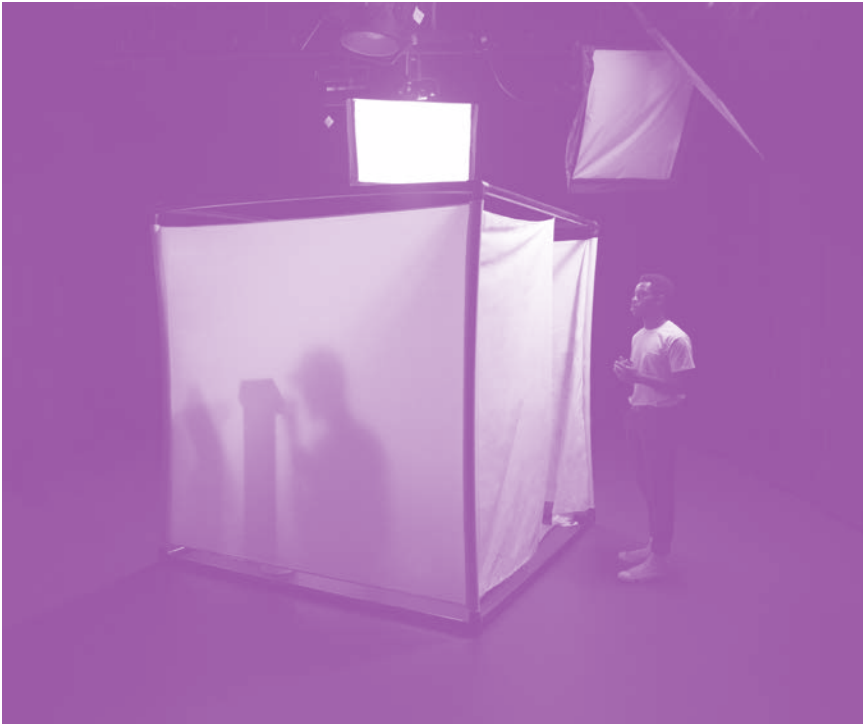


Evelyn Walker



Dopplegänger
2015 – present
Found objects,
reappearing characters

Evelyn Walker's multidisciplinary practice strategically infiltrates the visual rhetorics of the human and natural sciences in ways that question how they construct truth. She explores material agency, meaning-making, obsession, possession, and their inevitable fallout. Puppetry and ventriloquism, in particular, have been a focus in her work. Her production process often confounds logic by following the lead of the materials with which she works. The physical results of these associative chains are then presented to the viewer using borrowed museological display techniques in ways that strain their inherent claims to facticity and rationality.





Artists from the MFA Program at UC San Diego

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Bodies in Trouble is co-curated by Art History Theory and Criticism PhD student, *Jonah Gray* and MCASD Assistant Curator *Anthony Graham*.

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UC San Diego

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Visual Arts



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SAN DIEGO