PHASE SHIFT

2015 MASTER OF FINE ARTS EXHIBITION
DEPARTMENT OF ART AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Diana Abells
Natalia Arbelaez
Jeni Hansen Gard
TradeMark Gunderson
Christopher Harvey
Alyssa Johnson
Michael McDevitt
Shane McGeehan
Maija Miettinen-Harris
Peter Morgan
Liam Ze’ev O’Connor
Paul Scott Page
Sarah Schultz
Zac Weinberg
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That an MFA program exists at all is a strange and wondrous thing, especially it seems to me, at a place like The Ohio State University. OSU is large and complex, ponderous and heartbreakingly sincere. We exist here, among engineers and poets and agriculturists and we flourish.

The students that come through our program are chosen for the ways that their work and their writing spark our imagination: they are our nascent comets, blasting and sputtering through the building, conflagrations of heat and wonder, the arc of their orbit with us for a brief bright time before they pull away, set loose in the world.

For those of us, the faculty who remain behind and watch as our talented and troublesome get ready to leave this place, the MFA thesis exhibition is a culmination of so many things, of studio visits and hallway conversations, of flashes of genius and brick walls. It is the dialogue of a three-year conversation of the near disasters and almost misses that are at the heart of the compulsion to push the work forward. And push they did.

Therefore it is with great pleasure that I present to you the amazing, exhausting, often confounding, always captivating – The OSU Department of Art MFA Class of 2015.

Rebecca Harvey
Interim Chair
Department of Art

DEPARTMENT OF ART
THE OHIO STATE
In the Urban Arts Space this MFA exhibition looks like an attentively curated group show that might have proposed unconventional treatments of narrative. Narrative is returning in provocative form in young artists’ contemporary practice in European and North American cities, so it is not a surprise to encounter it in a leading MFA program. Where narrative is engaged through the modes of contemporary art practices that might comprise acts of writing, painting, sculpting and montage, or through concepts mobilized by time-based video, kinetics, or sound, is to encounter the deliberate entanglement of material with storytelling. Importantly, artworks are as much attempts at cancelling stories as telling them, since by the nature of working with materials they have also to narrate their own making. This is every artwork’s privilege and limitation, for confronted with the matter of their pixels, clay, paint, and so on, it can’t, unlike the text in a book, enable a frictionless escape into imagination. In front of an artwork we are always ourselves, looking, wandering around, facing, turning away from a cluster of things, of materials. This contributes to the density of the thicket in which materiality is productively entangled with the telling. Narrating certainly occurs, but its flight is weighed down by the ballast of having to be part of a thing in the world.

Writing in Aesthetic Theory, his unfinished last book, Adorno cannot conceive of an artist separated from their product since through its manipulation the material of the artwork bears the imprint of what the artist has done to it. The text is a little hyperbolic here, but his point is to drive home the idea that artmaking can only occur through a kind of mutuality: “The violence done to the material imitates the violence that issued from the material and that endures in its resistance to form.” No matter how much is imposed on the material it resists with its own properties. This mutual engagement of forming and resistance is itself a story that intertwines with any narrative content, and of course with the content that results from any decision to eschew narrative altogether. This fact has for a century been so embedded in artists’ consciousness of their task that it has become a kind of discipline knowledge, an intrinsic lore that we take so much for granted that we barely give it thought. Those clichéd phrases about truthfulness to materials or about letting materials speak for themselves that continue to surface in student critiques are the somewhat redundant voicing of this deeply embedded intelligence.

In Diana Abells’ carpentry and sheetrock video environments for exorcising childhood anxieties, the properties of materials are deliberately used to exert as strong a weight as possible on the intrinsic elusiveness of her video imagery in order to hold it to its mnemonic purpose. This drag on elusive video imagery by the expressionist-like geometry of her claustrophobic single-viewer rooms is for Abells a way of committing to the hard work of confronting childhood memories. With the diligence of a forensic investigator she consults family photos and footage found online to make models of interiors of which she has only vague memories. These models are then lit like sets and filmed to trigger the kind of involuntary memory that in Marcel Proust’s case was provoked by his intense reflection on the taste of the madeleine cake dipped in tea, upon which the image of his childhood house “rose up like a stage set.” Abells follows her conviction that such profound
memories can be provoked by the discipline of recreating the past. Through sheer force of will she would make happen what for Proust was only up to chance: “The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object…of which we have no inkling.” One of these locations is a South Carolina hotel to which her family took her for a wedding; the other her childhood bedroom. To the first she appends commentary from an episode of a kids’ television show that triggered the traumatic dream of being beheaded. On that occasion she was so frightened that she woke up. The changing lighting in the room shows it at the vantage point of the bed in which she would wake and fall asleep. The layered videos, of the collage of found footage with Abells’ own video of fabricated models passing for real interiors. In spite of setting out to clear things, through the forming and resistance of materials the work acquires the hallucinatory quality, the lures and the deceptiveness, of what Roger Caillois called the dream adventure. Victor Shklovsky’s literary criticism, as well as his idiosyncratic synthesis of autobiography and fiction in Third Factory and Zoo; or Letters Not About Love, advocate a narrative of fragments, of somewhat discontinuous anecdotes that would cumulatively tell a tale that ends closer to the chaos of the real world than would a conventional story. There is with Shklovsky’s writing of vivid fits and starts, of bursts of information and ideas, a startling materiality to the language and imagery that resembles the montage form of much contemporary art practice. We find this happening in both TradeMark Gunderson’s and Michael McDevitt’s installations, although their intentions and working modes are entirely different from one another. Each artist has constructed a room with a certain degree of verisimilitude. Gunderson sets up a threshold of three entrance doors, two of which on opening emit startling birdcalls, while from the third issues the sound of a squeaking hinge, all heard from old intercom speakers. Once inside the space we are plunged more vigorously than with Abells’ installation into the realm of the dreamwork where waking and sleeping states grow confused. A table covered in antiquated audio equipment, linens and obscure objects reminds us of Walter Benjamin’s interest in activating in the present the repressed promises of archaic artifacts. amongst the signs of hummingbirds are microphones from which we can hear a couple whispering. Several low-resolution videos pick up the whispered figuring out, from reflection on the furniture of all the rooms he has occupied, where he might be: “...the good angel of certainty had made all the surrounding objects stand still, had set me down under my bedclothes, in my bedroom, and had fixed, approximately in their right places in the uncertain light, my chest of drawers, my writing table, my fireplace…”

Diana Abells

Abells’ film of the model of her childhood room is seen from the vantage point of the bed in which she would wake and fall asleep. The changing lighting in the room shows it at night and at daybreak. She uses models made of foamcore and inserts in them dolls house furniture to recover control over her childhood. Through this work she returns to the past, as if revisiting that temporal point might calm it and enable control. This is not so far from Proust waking up in bed and enjoying the uncertainty of what for Proust was only up to chance: “The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object…of which we have no inkling.” One of these locations is a South Carolina hotel to which her family took her for a wedding; the other her childhood bedroom. To the first she appends commentary from an episode of a kids’ television show that triggered the traumatic dream of being beheaded. On that occasion she was so frightened that she woke up. The changing lighting in the room shows it at the vantage point of the bed in which she would wake and fall asleep. The layered videos, of the collage of found footage with Abells’ own video of fabricated models passing for real interiors. In spite of setting out to clear things, through the forming and resistance of materials the work acquires the hallucinatory quality, the lures and the deceptiveness, of what Roger Caillois called the dream adventure. Victor Shklovsky’s literary criticism, as well as his idiosyncratic synthesis of autobiography and fiction in Third Factory and Zoo; or Letters Not About Love, advocate a narrative of fragments, of somewhat discontinuous anecdotes that would cumulatively tell a tale that ends closer to the chaos of the real world than would a conventional story. There is with Shklovsky’s writing of vivid fits and starts, of bursts of information and ideas, a startling materiality to the language and imagery that resembles the montage form of much contemporary art practice. We find this happening in both TradeMark Gunderson’s and Michael McDevitt’s installations, although their intentions and working modes are entirely different from one another. Each artist has constructed a room with a certain degree of verisimilitude. Gunderson sets up a threshold of three entrance doors, two of which on opening emit startling birdcalls, while from the third issues the sound of a squeaking hinge, all heard from old intercom speakers. Once inside the space we are plunged more vigorously than with Abells’ installation into the realm of the dreamwork where waking and sleeping states grow confused. A table covered in antiquated audio equipment, linens and obscure objects reminds us of Walter Benjamin’s interest in activating in the present the repressed promises of archaic artifacts. amongst the signs of hummingbirds are microphones from which we can hear a couple whispering. Several low-resolution videos pick up the whispered
status, with which he furnishes this room McDevitt tells the story of the murder and its consequences in fragments. There is an echo here of Shklovsky's narrative of anecdotes, for in no grouping of these domestic items is the whole story told.

As we sit on the couch we experience the event through taking on various moments of the story or retelling a part of it from another perspective. Michael McDevitt

For visual art to narrate it would, for Adorno, have to enclose the artist's subjectivity within the object and its form, such that the story gets told through the impact that material and artist have on one another. The process of this mutual impact is itself another order of narrative, as mentioned earlier. It is never the case that an artist directs material from outside to enact his or her intentions. For the work to become something more than a simple entity, with or without narrative, it will have resisted the artist's subjectivity in the process of being characterized by it. "The artwork becomes objective as something made through and through, that is, by virtue of the subjective mediation of all its elements." For Adorno the artist negotiates between a demand that inheres in the material being used and a potential discerned in that same material. Of all the artists in the show Chris Harvey may be the most deeply invested as a subject in the materiality and form of his installation, yet at the same time the least visible. He has disappeared into what is a prolonged meditation on how best to answer the call to account for one's life in the form of the artwork.

Harvey's Apparatus for the Filtration of Cosmic Information draws together a heterogeneous assortment of objects with the homogenizing visual language of white body paint and fluorescent orange markings. These objects are arranged like actors on a stage defined by a blue screen circle, half of which rides up the wall behind the objects. A number of these structures are made of conjoined components—baskets and bamboo assemble into the form of a ten-foot high radar dish; a cluster of large crystals made of Styrofoam rests as a lure beneath a box trap; a plaster alien skull appears feather projectiles sit on a round side table. All are linked to one another by lengths of white rope that suggest a conduit or lifeline. That a sense of pulsing energy runs through the piece affirms that it can be taken as a wish-model for the formation of the artwork.

Farfetched beliefs, might be an important part of this process: "Harmonics, rhythms, and visual music / invisible waves and signals from stars / cargo cults and cultural appropriation/ reckless metaphors in theoretical writing / talking animal cartoons and sci-fi sitcoms..." As if in sympathy with Harvey's eclectic passions, Johnson and Rohrer advocate tolerance of an extremely broad consciousness net, stressing its inextricability from social life and belief systems: "...human cognition cannot be locked up within the private workings of an individual mind. Since thought is a form of co-ordinated action, it is spread out in the world, co-ordinated with both the physical environment and the social, cultural, moral, political, and religious environments, institutions, and shared practices.

Language — and all forms of symbolic expression — are quintessentially social behaviors." We respond to Harvey's complex installation as a work of engrossing modern fiction in which real-life experiences, fantastically improbable beliefs, pop culture narratives, richly distorted childhood memories, and wish-images of unrealistic projections find embodiment in Styrofoam models of cartoon-like clichés of burning fire, children's trap, and three-eyed alien. Relatively impoverished forms, handmade from found objects, are tasked with dissolving traditional ontological and epistemological boundaries to allow thought and feeling access to unimaginable freedom.

Erich Auerbach opens Mimesis, his extraordinary reflection on the depiction of reality in European literature, with the celebrated comparison of Homer's and Virgil's epics from a psychological perspective, comparing each to the biblical narratives as topologically directed, where imagination and epistemological boundaries to allow thought and feeling access to unimaginable freedom.

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The sublime influence of God here reaches so deeply into the everyday that the two realms of the sublime and the everyday are not only actually unseparated but basically inseparable.14

Sarah Schultz periodically visits the exhibition to continue her inscribing of the text of Old Testament psalms into a wide backlit scroll impregnated with ash and linseed oil. In the exhibition this unfurls from the floor upwards and is rolled up as it reaches the ceiling. It is speculated that some psalms were written by King David, although the composition of the entire one-hundred and fifty took place across many centuries. Long part of Catholic and Anglican ritual, the psalms are central to Judaism and feature extensively in practices of daily personal prayer as well as in synagogue services. Schultz’s piece is a labor of love, of endurance work, and patient than earlier, attributed by her to a simple love of the psalms. She accepts their imperfections, their occasional vindictiveness, along with their selfless devotional aspect. The linseed oil that stains the paper is a reference to vindictiveness, along with the selfless devotional aspect. The linseed oil that stains the paper is a reference to the weft of writing that slows down time but of course fails to stall it.

The psalms were written under conditions where poet authors asked for forgiveness, testified to their own failure, asserted the power of their community, and summoned support through praise of God. From Psalm eighty-eight—

“O Lord God of my salvation, / let my prayer come before thee; / For my soul is full of trouble, / And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.”

They are written as texts for a community, as a community voice, and the individual author falls away in this function. The interest in attributing some psalms to King David shows that our own age’s interest in literary subjectivity and biography imagines entirely different functions for authors than earlier, attributed by her to a simple love of the psalms. Schultz’s piece is a labor of love, of endurance work, and patient than earlier, attributed by her to a simple love of the psalms. She accepts their imperfections, their occasional vindictiveness, along with their selfless devotional aspect. The linseed oil that stains the paper is a reference to the weft of writing that slows down time but of course fails to stall it.

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Maija Miettinen Harris

Urbanization, industrialization, increased mobility...the rich in internal relations to what is now called environment...of myself,’ the idea of home delimited an ecological self, Norwegian ecologist Arne Naess writes about this in the important factor in life adjustment and contentment. The makes us feel that we “belong” to the place where we live, for that first event. Hansen Gard is interested too in what repurposed lumber for the dining table she has fabricated as an artist today. This perspective determines her choice as she asks what are the appropriate ways to live and work. Ecological thinking is embedded in Hansen Gard’s approach to Hansen Gard’s project blog.

They eat off are decorated with a map of their hometown on which two people are invited to share a meal. The plates they eat on different kinds of entity. The possibility of no stories, or an end to narrative, is interesting in challenges to perception, and in meditations on time’s paradoxes that include the varying effects of duration on different kinds of entity.

Scott Page is the other artist here who makes the most of the city in which he has found himself. His urban photographs map arbitrary journeys made across Columbus, an environment which through its expansive sprawl, its indifferent architecture, and prolific 1960s street signage can yield mind-bogglingly prosaic street views of abandonment and yearning. Page recognizes these qualities and draws this melancholy into images that often show unpeopled sidewalks outside buildings of an unfeeling functionalism. A winter photograph of a drab care center is composed to show a view past a foreground tree through a gap in the single-story building to an empty bench and second leafless tree beyond. The drained emerald of the painted brick looks no less miserable than the brown grass of the dying front tree beyond. The 'flaneur' or aesthete and...the pragmatic...These pictures touch on Page’s vision: “…a bridge between the ‘new’ photography and the contingency of the street, but also, paradoxically, a bridge between the ‘new’ photography and many of the most complex of these we see the back of a seated man motionless before a kitchen window, while beside her, in a room glowing red while abutting it on the right is the ‘flaneur’ or aesthete and...the pragmatic...These pictures flatten and contain the street, but in doing so bring a wider world into the dialogue, a world that is photography’s most contemporary problems.” It’s debatable whether anything like flaneurie could apply to roaming around Columbus, the flaneur being the nineteenth-century Parisian type whose smoking break at the back of a mall warehouse. Returning to the idea of narrative that that this essay initiated, here is the possibility of a bleak environment that may allow no stories to develop or be told. The possibility of no stories, or an end to narrative, is certainly explored by Peter Morgan in a number of video tableauvs that vivid domestic scenes into an eerie atmosphere. Fitted in single takes without any digital manipulation, these videos combine live action with projections to juxtapose discontinuous scenes and timespans. Morgan enacts subtle interferences with our attempts to make sense of the depicted spaces. In one a woman stands motionless before a kitchen window, while beside her, in improbable perspectives, a curtain flutters. In another the artist’s grandmother stands for minutes without any activity in a bedroom. One video shows a figure holding out a card in a room glowing red while abutting it on the right is the projection of a woman walking along the lip of a riverbank. In the most complex of these we see the back of a seated man apparently watching a projected film made of a walk along a steam, while on the table in front of him a silver container rocks on its base. Morgan treats these interiors as sets where camera position, changes to furnishings in the room, and strategic projections make the space perplexing, and strategic projections make the space perplexing. Morgan is interested in challenges to perception, and in meditations on time’s paradoxes that include the varying effects of duration on different kinds of entity.
Peter Morgan

Other videos of his confirm an interest in cinema, after all the medium of the greatest illusions. In one a spotlight washes over silver foil laid out in front of a projection of light reflecting off water at night. This is reminiscent of the early scene in Fellini’s Casanova when a character is shown rowing across what is the illusion of a stretch of water made from air blowing across black plastic. For Morgan our meetings with art should have this kind of theatricality where the experience of wonder is always countered by the transparency of its fabrication. He wants us to see ourselves being deceived, where the aesthetic response includes the pleasure we feel at simultaneously enjoying the contrivance and the lifelikeness of its artifice. Some of this knowingness extends to the intended response to his installation of four shimmering “paintings” in the hallway outside the gallery. These are constructed of stretched transparent fabric through which can be made out the wrinkled reflective Mylar beneath that gives them the illusion of an iridescent surface. They are a visual appearance they mimic the idle décor of conference centers while alluding to the recent enthusiasm for “zombie formalism,” the affectless recapitulations of mid-century abstraction.

The structure of Virginia Woolf’s 1930s experimental novel The Waves sets up an extreme contrast of temporalities through juxtaposing human and non-human agents. Each sets up an extreme contrast of temporalities—the materiality of the sea over the course of one day, sunrise to sunset. The sea is felt as if by an animal consciousness—“They materiality of the sea through the regularity of soft light, wet earth, and the routine lives of friends’ lives, often referred to as waves, is expended over the course of a day in the life of the sea. Shamayim (there are waters); the first of Liam Ze’ev O’Connor’s video installations, shows a long sequence of the sea and sky that slowly rotates on a large screen propped up on the floor against a pile of sandbags. O’Connor decided to invert the image of water and clouds after realizing that the Hebrew word for sky and heaven, shamayim, breaks down into “there” and “water.” Pillar of Cloud, the second video, hung close to the ceiling, shows vapor trail and explosion footage taken from YouTube clips of rockets shot back and forth between Israel and Gaza. This reminds O’Connor of the passage from Exodus where a pillar of cloud guides the Israelites through the desert.

Like Woolf, O’Connor juxtaposes two temporalities—the endlessly repetitive cycle of waves approaching the shore, of no human origin, that he explains was introduced in Genesis with the firmament; and the hubristic weaponry whose split-second explosions form dissolving pillars of cloud. In relation to enduring natural phenomena, O’Connor is suggesting, our lives are barely registered traces, yet even so are filled with arrogant self-aggrandizement. In a middle section of The Waves Woolf inserts the violence of incisions—“as if the sea were a knife, a knife of the sea. The sea is killing us and we wash in it. And what is there, except the sea?”—to unsettle the regularity of soft light, wet earth, and the routine lives of the protagonists. One character fancies his actions taking on volatile affect: “To speak, about wine even to the waiter, is to unsettle the regularity of soft light, wet earth, and the routine lives of other people, other entities. For the Surrealists drugs were only of use as an insight to the more intense intoxications other people, other entities becoming compositions with one another, taking on a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity).” It concerns entities becoming compositions with one another, taking on the open, or floating, temporality of Aeon rather than the measured temporality of Chronos—“The thin dog is running in the road, this dog is the road,’ cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to feel.”

It’s familiar knowledge that under hallucinogens we experience composition-forming with our environment, other people, other entities. For the Surrealists drugs were only of use as an insight to the more intense intoxications expected from everyday life in the city, from love, or from poetry and art. More than any other work in this show, Shane McGeeghan’s immersive installation invites us to disengage from the external environment and experience different temporalities in a state of induced intoxication. This is provoked by viewing a complex colored light imagery of plantlife whoils, veil structures, receding spirals made by infinitely receding diagrams of the DMT molecule. We gaze at this image as we lie on our backs listening through headphones to a sound generated on binaural-beat audio technology and based on the Theta wavelength. Sounds of this nature have been associated with meditative, creative and altered states of consciousness. The Theta wavelength of 4 Herz is too low to hear, but has been differentiated by McGeeghan so that one ear hears 60 and the other hears 64 Herz. The two channels of this soundtrack are therefore slightly out of phase with one another. Changing colored light reflects off water behind our head to provide the image with the illusion of three-dimensionality and pulsing forms. A smaller version of the print by which we are transfixed is framed on the wall outside the space.

McGeeghan’s work follows his research interest into extreme hallucinogens and in one sense, steps outside art into the

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Felix Guattari’s formulations of “becoming” in A Thousand Plateaus. The connection is most developed in the section “Memories of a Haecceity” from the chapter “Becoming-Intense, Becoming Animal.” They define haecceity as a kind of individuality that is different from the self-contained form we typically associate with humans and things: “You have the [haecceity] individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity).” It concerns entities becoming compositions with one another, taking on the open, or floating, temporality of Aeon rather than the measured temporality of Chronos—“The thin dog is running in the road, this dog is the road,’ cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to feel.”

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Felix Guattari’s formulations of “becoming” in A Thousand Plateaus. The connection is most developed in the section “Memories of a Haecceity” from the chapter “Becoming-Intense, Becoming Animal.” They define haecceity as a kind of individuality that is different from the self-contained form we typically associate with humans and things: “You have the [haecceity] individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity).” It concerns entities becoming compositions with one another, taking on the open, or floating, temporality of Aeon rather than the measured temporality of Chronos—“The thin dog is running in the road, this dog is the road,’ cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to feel.”

It’s familiar knowledge that under hallucinogens we experience composition-forming with our environment, other people, other entities. For the Surrealists drugs were only of use as an insight to the more intense intoxications expected from everyday life in the city, from love, or from poetry and art. More than any other work in this show, Shane McGeeghan’s immersive installation invites us to disengage from the external environment and experience different temporalities in a state of induced intoxication. This is provoked by viewing a complex colored light imagery of plantlife whoils, veil structures, receding spirals made by infinitely receding diagrams of the DMT molecule. We gaze at this image as we lie on our backs listening through headphones to a sound generated on binaural-beat audio technology and based on the Theta wavelength. Sounds of this nature have been associated with meditative, creative and altered states of consciousness. The Theta wavelength of 4 Herz is too low to hear, but has been differentiated by McGeeghan so that one ear hears 60 and the other hears 64 Herz. The two channels of this soundtrack are therefore slightly out of phase with one another. Changing colored light reflects off water behind our head to provide the image with the illusion of three-dimensionality and pulsing forms. A smaller version of the print by which we are transfixed is framed on the wall outside the space.

McGeeghan’s work follows his research interest into extreme hallucinogens and in one sense, steps outside art into the
realm of fluorescent posters and head bedroom art. He

As you lie down, listen to the mildly mesmeric beat, and

discharged from the body, and the pressure to maintain the

Haug again: “Resistless, the consumer is served, either in

fact Man’s equation of motor, transmission, tool, should be

“Resistless, the consumer is served, either in

To be effective as newly-
charged images, the redemption of signs of oppression like

The kind of painting to which Johnson alludes through her

slavery. But the views to which the title refers also apply to

Weinberg has it proclaim its semblance

Institutions still use this claim to innovation to explain their

But the views to which the title refers also apply to

Alyssa Johnson’s six red and blue paintings titled Voids From

Alyssa Johnson's six red and blue paintings titled Voids From

Alyssa Johnson's six red and blue paintings titled Voids From

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Natalia Arbelaez’s sculptures and of the chubby “Baby-Face” Olmec clay figures displays. But these are also descendants of ancient Peruvian sculptures whose skin is covered in glutinous drips. These ambiguously gendered groups of passive entities, each with the unreadable inwardness of some kind of science fiction alien, appear locked into the iconic poses of museum or shop displays. But these are also descendants of ancient Peruvian sculptures and of the chubby “Baby-Face” Olmec clay figures to which Arbelaez has responded, surrogates for the lost gold sculptures of her home country Colombia, most of which were melted down by Spanish colonizers. Like the disturbing excrescences of Arbelaez’s sculptures, the heavy physique of these naturalistic seated Olmec figures gives in to gravity.

Some of Arbelaez’s characters are fat as balloons, standing unsteadily as if unsure whether to take off or collapse. Others are tethered to clay posts or are fused head-to-head with a second figure. Some are cut off at the neck, their macabre expressionless faces suggesting decapitation. All are glazed off-white without additional color. In these configurations the white takes on its Japanese connotations of death and confers a ghostly quality on figures too fat, decaying or partial to have mobility.

Perhaps this is Limbo for those who have not resorted to plastic surgery, a place where bodies can be allowed to wear out unimpeded en route to the afterlife. Arbelaez is interested in the way our bodies deteriorate with age and is struck by the disproportionate amount of plastic surgery enhancements that Colombians undertake, much of it to hold this deterioration at bay. All her figures have equally ruined flesh but in their display there is often the sense of a hierarchy where the staggered and symmetrical figures across the wall suggests an obscure system of ranking, akin to our own preoccupations with social differentiation, although without the clothing or decoration that might distinguish status.

Is it likely then that Arbelaez is interested in commodities of revolution, in objects whose depiction of age and bodily degradation puts them well outside the possibility of offering up gratification? In comparison to Weinberg’s playful critique of the mechanics of semblance–value, Arbelaez troubles the self-assuredness of commodities by mixing signifiers of esteem and worthlessness. The obvious refinements of touch and material that she brings to these delicately modeled figures only makes their aesthetic of grotesqueness more compelling and disquieting.

To the credit of the faculty and its students there is an extensive range to the work in this show with no overlap of treatment or subject matter. There is an evident commitment by the institution to enabling hybridity in the intersections of concept and medium and in the development of new visual languages, often personal in form, that don’t require authorization of prior examples. In various ways I’ve had a twenty-five year engagement with The Ohio State University’s MFA program. This has sometimes entailed the close contact of being a visiting artist but has more frequently involved an attenuated connection, living hundreds of miles away and relying on hearsay from those I know teaching there. Given this back history I’m delighted to have had this opportunity to talk with these graduating artists and reflect at length on their work. I’ve found the experience profoundly engaging and moving and feel encouraged by the energy of all involved. To return to the thread of narrative that is worked through this writing I’ll close with a quote from Deleuze’s essay “He Stuttered” that I feel might apply as much to these visual artists as to any author. “This means that a great writer is always like a foreigner in the language in which he expresses himself, even if this is his native tongue...He is a foreigner in his own language: he does not mix another language with his own, he carves out a non-preexistent foreign language within his own language. He makes the language itself scream, stutter, or murmur.”

Mark Harris is a Professor of Fine Arts at University of Cincinnati.
I am working at the border between what is familiar and unfamiliar, pitting peripheral vision against central vision, and domestic architecture against geometric space. I examine a childlike perspective of space where memory and sight blur together in a room to create a surreal experience. Childhood is a point in life where an understanding of the world is still in flux. With so many unknowns, perception of space could be more objective and authentic, but also more invented, as memory, misunderstanding, and architecture become intertwined in an attempt to understand something that is strangely familiar.

My work has taken on the combined form of video and constructed rooms. The video begins a narrative, an emotion, or a document from the mind’s eye, and exhales it into the space. The rooms create a schematic, physical structure for the body to contend with and hold the content of the video. The architectural spaces surrounding the videos facilitate looking, moving, and containment. Together video and room represent the formation of a memory of place as they blend real-time perception with imagined constructions. The abstract is cast into an empirical world.

My Room
wood, drywall, video
2015
In creating figurative clay forms I’m representing humanity’s struggle to grasp our immanent existence. Through the clay’s rough, crude, and grotesque textures I’m referencing the human body’s carnal existence. The gesture and state of decay of the figures intend to admit how futile we all are. Because of our temporal presence, humans have found the need to create transcending connections to a higher power.

My work demonstrates the various conditions that people act out to gain a connection to the divine; in presence, tradition, and ritual. In the hierarchy and the positioning of the clay figures I aim to represent humanity’s ideas of man’s position in relation to a higher power. My work intends to balance the grotesqueness of the figure with the beauty of aspiration.

_Insignificant Grandeur_

*clay*

_2015_

*Clockwise from top: Classification, Top Cone Head, installation view, Shared.*
I began my work as a vessel maker and now define myself as an experience maker with vessel in hand. I see myself as a facilitator working in the space between people and the food they consume.

I make functional objects intended for use in everyday life. I design the vessel to exist as a transmitter and later an artifact. I orchestrate the parameters surrounding their use through civic projects focused on several aspects of growing, cooking, eating and sharing food.

My work focuses on the moment of human interaction, the touch, and the intimate connection. I am interested in the interrelationship that forms between people, through the vessel in the presence of food consumed.

**Partake Columbus**
*porcelain, glaze, wood, photographs, mixed media*
*2015*

[partakecolumbus.wordpress.com](http://partakecolumbus.wordpress.com)
Artist Statement
(serves one to many)

INGREDIENTS
Music
Media
Interface
Installation
Technology
Performance
Found Sound
Digital Musicanship

METHODS
Play
Misuse
Collage
Hacking
Interaction
Subversion
Cut & Paste
Appropriation
Reimagination

DIRECTIONS:
1. Combine two or more ingredients using one or more methods.
2. Mix well.
3. Remix.

Variations for a Door and a Flight
doors, sensors, microphones, video loops
2015
some things i was thinking about, in order of line length:

the problem of primitivism
surface, structure, idea and form
the false promise of convenience
the impossibility of being unnatural
harmonics, rhythms, and visual music
invisible waves and signals from stars
cargo cults and cultural appropriation
reckless metaphors in theoretical writing
talking animal cartoons and sci-fi sitcoms
the self-centering allure of axial symmetry
the bittersweet certainty of impermanence
the myth of identity and the vitality of myth
the role of projection in ordinary perception
nautical paint layers and visual hazard codes
chromatic vibration and the retinal experience
obsessive compulsive tendencies in physical art-making
pretending and believing as aspects of meaningful experience
psychic boundaries and the transformational power of suggestion
aspiration and inspiration as terms for both motivation and breathing
evidence of a neuro-biological basis for imagination in non-human primates

Apparatus for the Filtration of Cosmic Information
bamboo, wood, polystyrene, aqua-resin, plaster, found wicker and rattan, chair, paint, hardware.
2015
I use painting as a critical practice, bringing form to my interests in the intersection of power, race and social relations. My practice is an investment into color theory as a means of investigating power and reveals my interest in the politics and dynamics of color (use). Through my paintings I aim to draw attention to hidden oppressive constructs rigorously at work in our society.

Centered
video loop
2014
The narrative that unifies The Shooting is based loosely on events that occurred in my high school circle of friends. This work of fiction addresses questions of responsibility and culpability; questions that have stayed with me since that shot was fired decades ago. I wonder why my friend would have done such a foolish thing. I wonder if there was some way I could have prevented the events. I wonder how the entire community failed those three troubled boys. But mostly I wonder what my friend was thinking as he stood there on the doorstep of a stranger with a loaded gun in his hand.

The Shooting is also a rumination on the relationship between high and low art – between culturally esteemed fields such as gallery painting, installation, and theater and culturally undervalued fields such as comics, decoration, design, everyday objects, and handicraft. Integrated throughout the work’s form and subject matter, there runs a quiet monologue on my own uneasiness about the position of my work within the gallery and fine art context. I am particularly interested in the ways in which comics and painting intersect. Rather than just appropriating a simplified cartoon style, The Shooting explores ways in which my painting can utilize the narrative strategies of comics to tell a story within a gallery installation.
Within an altered state our minds deviate from regular waking consciousness, allowing us to perceive our surroundings in an entirely new way. My interest in such topics led me to a very powerful psychoactive compound known as dimethyltryptamine, or DMT, which became the influence of my work.

Altered States is a darkened space installation about psychedelia and personal experience. The work involves rippling water, pulsating lights, binaural beat audio, and a colorful fractal created by manipulating the structural formula of DMT. The viewer is offered two very different viewing conditions, and between the two the concept of an altered state is echoed: exterior or interior, public or private, standing or prone, commodity or experience, standard lighting or flashing effects, static image or moving image, and so on.

Altered States
digital art, photographic print, wood, audio, light
2015

Clockwise from top: installation exterior, installation interior, interior detail.
In the past three years I have explored the ambiguous intersection between my paintings and the studio practice in relation to the theories of cultural marginalization, liminality, and power in the global world, but also how at the same time the work emerges from my immigrant reality while not being a reflection of my biography per se.

Above all else, on a surface of a painting I aim to infinitely renew the moment of encounter. I perceive the rejection of the illusionistic space creating a perpetual experience of here and now, where the access to the time construct of past, present and future is obstructed. Through the manipulation of allover, dense, pattern-like configurations and the use of competing layers and forms originating from my cultural heritage, with bold, yet also subtle color variations, I want the paintings to strike the viewer visually as well as viscerally. Where the configurations start falling apart and the imperfection of the hand become visible, I see vulnerability but also delicate tension and confusion. Distinct from the surface are the painted sides, because I invite the viewer to look at the painting from different points of view, drawing attention to the paintings’ objecthood, while it is expanding to the space it occupies and ultimately to the viewers themselves.

**Straight Eclipse (I, II, III, IV, & V)**
spray paint, enamel, acrylic, and oil on canvas
2015

**Overdetermined**
acrylic, enamel, and spray paint on paper
2015

Clockwise from top: Straight Eclipse, Overdetermined, detail Overdetermined.
My practice is based in ocular exploration. By disrupting aspects of visual focus, I compose situations that filter or challenge the viewer's perception. Through sculpture, painting, or video, I investigate the natural phenomena of light and shadow, but most importantly edge relations, which engage the viewpoint and perception of the viewer. Architecturally, the interior and exterior of my work vacillates, revealing dimensions not entirely 3D or 2D but hinged halfway between. The experience resets the viewer’s perception. A filter or obstruction becomes an apparatus to coax the act of viewing, slowing down and distorting the reception of parts. This new sense of perception and misperception creates a blind spot; a quiver in the eye and mind, leaving the viewer caught somewhere in the middle of truth and illusion.

Aimless Eclipse
projected video, mixed media
2015

Video Series
digital video
2012-2015

No Deeper
digital video, mixed media.
2015

Top to bottom: installation view of Aimless Eclipse and Video Series, No Deeper.
Pillar of Cloud is a looping video, sourced from the internet, that show rockets being deployed between Israel and Gaza. I edited these clips so that the endless explosions begin to look like clouds. The title, Pillar of Cloud is taken both from the Israeli name for a 2012 military operation against Hamas, as well as from the book of Exodus, where a divine Pillar of cloud guides the Israelites through the desert. I look at these “clouds,” created from violence, and wonder if they are a perverse man-made recreation of the divine.

In Shamayim (there are waters), the Pacific Ocean rotates along the horizon, exchanging sky for sea and blue for blue, in reference to Genesis 1:6, where “G-d said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, and let it be a separation between water and water.” In Hebrew the word for sky/heaven is shamayim which breaks apart to form the two words sham (there) and mayim (waters). In this installation, the roar of the ocean transforms and becomes the explosion of rockets and the rending of earth.

Pillar of Cloud
single channel video projection on plexiglass
2015

Shamayim (there are waters)
video loop, drywall, wood, 2 tons of sand
2015
Through my photography, I explore overlooked urban images of the banal. This exploration helps me to engage more deeply with my location in space and time. A dialog with the subject begins as mediation on color, form, and texture inspired by the complexities of the built environment. From this elemental morphology, the conversation may continue along cultural schemata. For me, architecture stands at a nexus of race, class, culture, and art. Societal investment in the built environment as well as its absence seems to be a reflection of social needs, exploitation, vision, neglect, generosity, valuation, and their opposites. Architecture is culture in its most concrete form.

It might be said that photographs of buildings, parking lots, streets, and other structures of the built environment, depict familiar and known subjects that are readily part of the everyday human experience living and working in urban spaces. However, a photograph shows that which does not exist. The referent of the photographic image is out of context, out of frame, flattened by the process, translated by hundreds of conscious and unconscious choices, mediated by the artist and the artist’s equipment and materials - photographs are a “thing” unto themselves – separate and apart from that which existed at the time the image was made. My hope is that the new reality formed by my images may reveal hidden truths to the human condition experienced in urbanity.

Clockwise from top: Plaza Motel, installation view, Edward Hopper Was Here.
Ash, oil, salt: mediums with potent histories come into dialogue with Biblical text and memory.

Burn, soak, scratch: actions which together form a ritualistic labor.

Memory, text, labor: the foundations of thought and process which connect mind and hand.

Tapestries, prayer rugs, relics: imagery evoked through the combination of these components.

My art is about the spirit: how it yearns and mourns and labors, how it is quiet and still and hopes.

I seek a form of making that exists as a palimpsest of sorts, working and reworking itself to form new meanings. Having left behind any form of pictorial representation, I am interested in the vestigial of the act and the presence of my hand that remains after the ritual is accomplished. Through the process of enacting these self-made rituals I am seeking to understand what space exists for ritual and religion within the context of a contemporary art world.
A glass chandelier, perhaps the most opulent manifestation of a functional commodity, was recreated, based on a digital image of an 18th century design. Following manufacture, the entire surface was covered in small squares of cut mirror.

A treadmill is a device on which the user moves in place at various speeds in a self-imposed laborious activity with the intent of attaining a better physique.

These two objects have been connected by a mechanical system that translates rotational motion ninety degrees.

Lit from four sides, the mirrored veneer of the chandelier creates a cosmic barrage of reflections onto the local architecture.

The exposed apparatus reveals the labor that drives this spectacle thus anchoring the spectacle to its source.

**Mechanism for Spectacular Experiences**
blown glass, cut mirror, thermal adhesive, steel, modified treadmill, kinetics
2015
VITAE

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