

mess





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MODA Critical Review

issue 5



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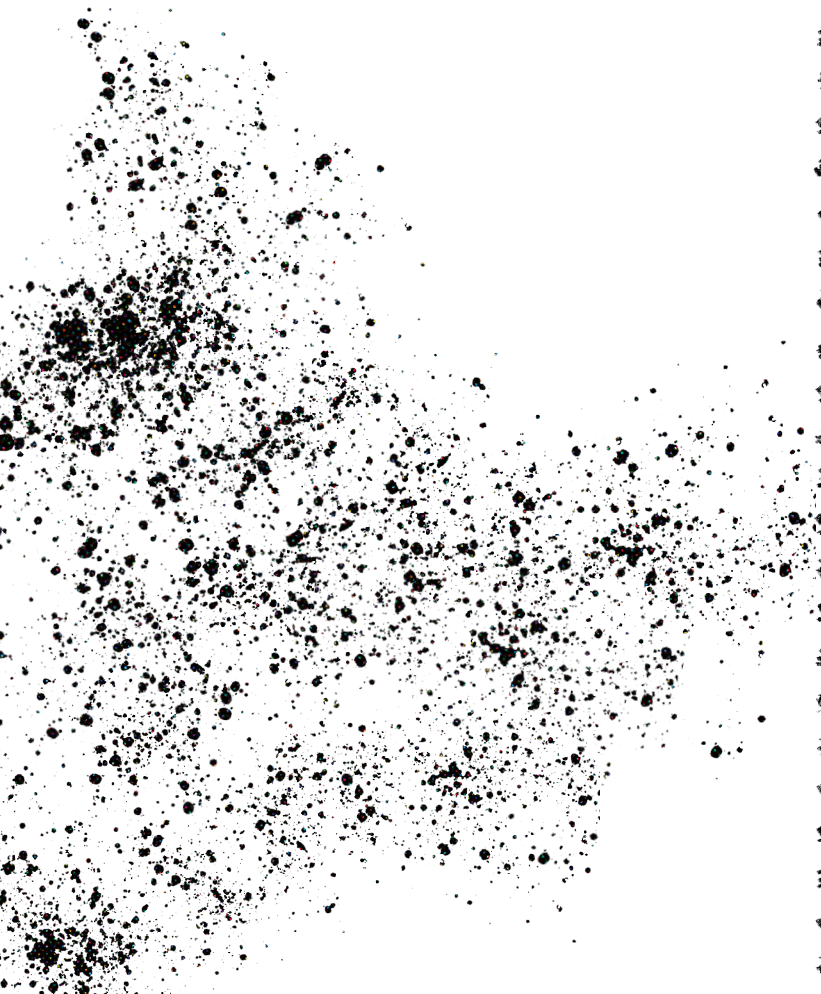
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The *MODA Critical Review* is dedicated to exploring and presenting artistic research, forms of criticism, and creative work beyond the academic format. Edited by students in the MA in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies (MODA) program at Columbia University, each annual issue is organized around a keyword that serves as an origin for a diverse body of contributions.

A familiar yet expansive word, *mess* evokes unruliness, entanglement, complexity, instability, and playfulness. The verb—to mess up, to mess with, to mess around—conjures the transgressive potential to disrupt order or challenge convention. Whether abstract or tangible, *mess* invites reflection on the generative possibilities that emerge from states of disarray. These layered concepts form the framework for this issue of the *MODA Critical Review*.

At first glance, this year's contributions may appear messy, a nonsensical amalgamation of different threads, whether unraveling or bounded up. It is in this diversity of thought, style, and individuals that we believe this year's issue gathers its critical strength.

"I have faith in all the trash I keep" is one of the many one-liners shared by Queens-based artist Anna Pederson, in her interview with Linda Dai. The pair explore mess within the artist's process; messy desks, hoarding, unclear intentions. Kristian Kragelund's *README* also delves into the intricate overlaps and consummation of emotion and technology by compiling an anthology of anonymous notes embedded in computer viruses sourced from online archives and forums. Likewise, spanning both covers and a spread in the middle, Ian Ha's *Combine* are testimonies to the mess of artistic process and research. Creativity is not linear, and Ian shows us this. Instead, it is random, generative, and messy.

Contributors Ridwana Rahman and Sean Michael Muller have been thinking about trash and waste. Their respective *How many times until I stop looking?* and *Whitehill, NY* delve into the ironies and societal constructs presented by the specific contents of trash. While Rahman's mixed media submission documents her own body's relationship to trash, the everyday and social media, Muller focuses on the precarity of trash by inquiring into the intimacy of abandonment and decay.

Rotting food is another material and sensory visualization of decay, one explored by Donna Sanders in *Artistic Decay (and Discovery) in the Short Fiction of Isabel Allende* as a lens to enter Allende's decay of the soul as transformation.

Moving from decay to production across time, and therefore creation, Theodora Bocanegra Lang's *The Juniper Tree: A Brief History of an Unfixable Work* delves into the implications of Jonas's work as an unfixed, constantly evolving art piece as it moves across time, different materiality, and different exhibitional spaces. Similarly, in *Messy Romance: On Kaari Upson's Kiss Paintings from The Larry Project*, Jiayin Flora Song traces a similar intricate construction of a work's lifeline, but one that in its inception already blurs and crosses the boundaries between romance, obsession and reality, as well as past, present, future, and the artist's own fantasy. A similar negotiation between time, memory and reality is found within Willoughby Thom's *REVIEW: Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines*. Through this exhibition review she posits the zine as more than static artifacts located within the plexiglass of the Brooklyn Museum, but as vehicles of collective memory and the everyday to fully understand art history. The artist's zine is therefore an art object. Charlotte Nash conducts a historical excavation of another art-object in her *Mark Bradford's Pickett's Charge: Stratum of Historical Memory*. She replicates the artist's own digging through layers of history and practice to complicate the relationship between material, time, and intention, by equating layers of dirt to those of time within Bradford's history painting-cum-cyclorama.

The notion and materiality of the archive is further complicated by Aidan Chisholm's *Waterbed*, where she centers the waste, the abject, and most specifically, piss. Chisholm explores boundaries of the body within the exhibition white cube space through Shahryar Nashat's *Boyfriend_23.JPG* (2022). Artist Anna Ting Moller also focuses on the not-clean, the porous, and the gross materials of the everyday. Her work ruminates on the slimy, abject materiality of belonging and being in *A Place Where its Thin*.

Sanjana Malhotra reads geotagging as an extension of power and control. In *Geotagging as Myth*, she delves into the politics of data, documentation, and bureaucracy, and their creation and consumption of myths of control in India, as evident in the 'Digital India' archive.

Moving to unclear and heavily mediated narratives of migration, diaspora and asylum seeking, in her article *Special Affects: How is visual storytelling impacting our perceptions of the Refugee Crisis?* Sara Sani Reddy traces the imagery used to depict and characterize refugees in different mediums and media, to understand how our reactions to refugee populations are determined by these different visualizations. With *The Impossibility of Untangling Diasporic Mess*, Christine Stoddard narrows in the focus to her own experience of Diaspora, and the unruly, disordered, unclear, and sometimes impossible, discussions of home, belonging, and ancestry. Her photo essay captures these reflections, and the quotidian of a homeland she just recently entered for the first time.

Finally, Agnese Fanizza brings critique to our positionality as graduate students at Columbia University. In *Being Columbia*, she deliberately confuses theory and personal reflection to highlight the messy politics of being on campus.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to Dr. Leah Werier, Acting Director of MODA, our GSAS student group advisor Lucia Espinera, and Faith Batidzirai and Sonia Sorrentini, who provided invaluable support as Financial Coordinators for the MODA Critical Review. We would also like to thank our wonderful graphic designer, SeoJin Ahn, for collaborating with us in crafting this year's publication. Additionally we wish to acknowledge the generous grants awarded to us by the Department of Art History and Archaeology as well as the Arts and Sciences Graduate Council, which played a pivotal role in bringing *Mess* to fruition. Last but not least we wanted to express profound gratitude to everyone who contributed to and engaged with this year's publication.

Aidan Chisholm

Editor-in-Chief

Aidan is a writer and curator from California based in New York City. Her research involves modes of self-representation and performance against the backdrop of digital capitalism.

A second-year MODA student, Aidan previously studied Art History and English at Dartmouth College.

Christine Chen

Editor-in-Chief

Christine is a second year MODA student and art historian from Sydney based in New York City. Her research focuses on diasporic identity and belonging, and how visual representation can demonumentalize the written form, serving as an alternative knowledge source for marginalized and Indigenous communities to share their narratives.

Christine holds a dual bachelors degree in Law and History from the University of New South Wales.

Bob Chow

Editor-in-Chief

Bob is a second year MODA student from Shanghai based in New York City. His research mainly focuses on East Asian modern and contemporary cinema and media in relation to transnationality, post-colonialism, infrastructure, trauma, and memory.

He earned his BA (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in Art History (with Honor) and Economics, minoring in Cinema and Media Studies. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and once received Dick Wolf Cinema & Media Studies Awards for Best Undergraduate Essay. He is also a cinephile, a freelance film critic, and an independent film producer.

Agnese Fanizza

[b. 2000] is a first-year MODA student and art historian from Washington DC and Rome, Italy. Her research focuses on conditions of in-betweenness, most specifically manifested and elaborated within, across, and through the physical and conceptual materiality of Modernist architectural projects in the mediterranean. By tracing different shades of concrete, she hopes to reveal the intricate, transnational narratives that develop notions of home, land, and belonging.

She has previously earned a First Class joint honors degree in Art History and Management from the University of St. Andrews.

Charlotte Nash

[b. 2000] is a New York based art historian and arts administrator from Abu Dhabi, UAE, currently pursuing her masters in Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies at Columbia University. Her research interests include an application of feminist pedagogy in the study of institutional critique, performance studies, and historical narrative and collective identity construction.

She previously received her bachelor's degree in Performance Studies, art history, and theatrical producing at Tisch School of the Arts at NYU and holds an associates degree in Bel Canto opera performance from Trinity Music College London.

Linda Dai

[b. 2001] is a contemporary art aficionado currently based in New York as a first-year M.A. candidate in the MODA program. She is interested in critical and curatorial themes of space, time, and memory, especially surrounding works that infuse a plethora of materiality and old/new media.

Previously, Linda earned her BA in Media Studies and Politics at Pomona College.

Anna Ting Möller

is an artist living and working in New York City and Stockholm. Möller received an MFA from Columbia University, New York and a BFA from Konstfack University, Stockholm, SE. The artist has a forthcoming solo exhibition which will be held at Galleri Dueer, SE. Möller's work has been exhibited around the world including Liljevalchs, SE; ArkDes, SE; Carl Eldh, SE; ICPNA La Molina, PE; Luan Gallery, CH; Titanik, FI, Gallery Tutu, US; Island Gallery, US, Murmurs, US; Urban Glass, US; and Alexander Berggruen, US. They participated in the 45th Tendencias Biennale in Norway and Supper Club Art Fair, Hong Kong. Möller was the 2023 recipient of the Here and There Collective Studio Grant and is currently an artist in residency at LMCC, Governors Island Studio Program.

The artist's work has been reviewed in Brooklyn Rail, Hyperallergic, Cultbytes, The Daily News, SE; amongst others.

Christine Stoddard

is a writer, artist, filmmaker, and incoming M.S. Documentary candidate transferring from the M.A. Oral History program. Her practice incorporates both fiction and non-fiction storytelling. She produces creative projects, including Quail Bell Magazine, under her studio Quail Bell Press & Productions. In 2023, Brooklyn Magazine named her one of its Top 50 Most Fascinating People for her accomplishments in the arts.

Donna Sanders

completed her BA at Columbia University and is currently an MA candidate in Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She primarily researches religious motifs in literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to her studies, Donna writes plays, stories and essays on a variety of cultural and historical topics.

Ian Ha

was born in Norfolk, Virginia, grew up in Yong-in, South Korea, and currently has a studio practice in New York. Ian navigates the complexities of a contemporary world flooded by fragmented information and overwhelming visual stimuli. He works in painting and printmaking, mounted within non-traditional structures to stage multidimensional spatial illusions. He uses nested shapes such as the spherical wheel and the cutout book cover, and repurposed objects such as the piano hinge. Ian received the Hosan Shin Yong-hee Award (Korea) and the TAKIFUJI Art Award (Japan).

His exhibitions include "The Uncanny" (solo, 2022) at Rabbit & Tiger, Seoul, "Shifts and Echoes" (duo, 2023) at Fragment Gallery, New York, and Thesis Show (group, 2024) at the Lenfester Center for Arts, New York. He received his MFA '24 from Columbia University, New York, and his BFA '22 from Seoul National University, Korea.

Jiayin Flora Song

is a rising second year MODA student from Beijing, China. Her research often focuses on ecocritical, multisensorial, transdisciplinary, and research-based installation art. Informed by her previous education in the culinary arts, she is also interested in the explorations of food in global contemporary art under the themes of identity, place, and migration.

She earned her BA from the University of California, Los Angeles, majoring in Art History and Comparative Literature.

Kristian Kragelund

is a multi-disciplinary artist and a recent MFA graduate of Columbia University. His practice is concerned with infrastructural spaces as sites of social, political and corporate agency, and how power and violence is enacted within the formations of everyday life.

Sanjana Malhotra

is a researcher working at the intersection of organizations, work and technology. Her current work explores the inner workings of India's government, specifically focusing on the use of digital technologies. She is a student in the MA Sociology program at Columbia.

Ridwana Rahman

was born in Portland, Oregon, and is a first year MFA student in the Visual Arts program. She is medium-unspecific in her approach and works with photography, book-making, sculpture, and whatever else is called for in order to fully look at an idea.

She is currently thinking about the repetition of ritual, and the performance of prayer.

Sara Rani Reddy

is a writer and a graduating second-year French Master's student at Columbia University. She was a Stamps Scholar at the University of Notre Dame, earning a B.S. in Chemistry and French in 2021, and was a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Luxembourg from 2021-2022. Sara Rani's research interests include French and Francophone literature; the intersection of French and science; and language acquisition and pedagogy.

Next year, she will begin her MFA in Writing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Sean Michael Muller

is a PhD student in Anthropology at Columbia University whose research focuses on addiction and deindustrialization in the United States. His past work has dealt with the opioid crisis unfolding along upstate New York's rural roads known as 'heroin highway'.

His current research traces how the synthetic opioid fentanyl becomes an object of political anxiety and part of everyday life in contested wastelands, dreamworlds, and frontiers of the Southwestern United States.

Theodora Bocanegra Lang

is a writer from New York and an MA student in the MODA program. She received her BA in Art History from Oberlin College. She most recently worked at Dia Art Foundation on exhibitions with Maren Hassinger, Joan Jonas, and Jo Baer, among others.

Previously, she worked at Gavin Brown's enterprise and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Willoughby Thom

is a New York based writer, curator, and first year M.A. candidate in the MODA Program. Her research focuses on vernacular traditions, specifically looking at the ways in which popular culture, music, and ephemera can be used as a framework for understanding art history.

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The piss might have gone cold, but the heap of yellow fluid-filled sacs seems to exude certain residual warmth. Slabs of worn golden foam insulate the pouches from the concrete gallery floor, cultivating comfort. The malleable components mutually press against each other with a sense of material reciprocity. The plastic semi-transparent bags establish the limits of the urine, while the urine informs the shape of the bags. The bags lean into the foam, which maintains *give*, while that foam lends shape to the bags, which nonetheless retain fluidity to the extent of the plastic skin. The sacs slouch and sag, flopping over the edge of foam onto the floor—intimating spill without a *spill*. If the thin plastic burst or the nozzles unleashed urine, I envision that yellow foam as a tender sponge drinking up fluid.

Shahryar Nashat (b. 1975) presents his collection of urine in *Boyfriend_23. JPEG* (2022), an insistently horizontal, anti-monumental display occupying the queer register of the crevice where floor and wall meet. The Geneva-born, Los Angeles-based artist complicates familiar art historical refrains of abjection by forging a sense of intimacy through urine as a relational tether. The very act of collecting confers affective weight, which is heightened with the understanding that Nashat and his partner, his "boyfriend," co-contributed the urine. The combination of urine—an always-already "impure" heterogeneous substance according to Euro-Western strictures of hygiene weaponized toward non-normative leaky bodies—from Nashat and his partner epitomizes intimacy in materializing inextricable entanglement that eschews the logic of discrete individualism, given the impossibility of discerning between the conflated fluids. This intermingling evokes the fluid exchanges of sensual, erotic encounters during which bodies materially fuse, false boundaries blurring. Urine in particular displaces hegemonic registers of heteronormative reproduction, instead intimating affection, perhaps coupled with loss, without sterilizing but rather reveling in this supposed "impurity" of urine.

Nashat plays upon the Minimalist tactic of serial accumulation through the seemingly uniform units of piss. However, whereas artists such as Donald Judd and Carl Andre outsource labor through industrial materials, Nashat leverages urination as an insistently embodied mode of making resulting in an extreme sort of indexicality. I envision Nashat in conversation with Felix Gonzalez-Torres in denying the sterile aesthetics of Minimalism as supposedly impersonal and "apolitical," instead evoking queer and feminist legacies of performance art that displace the figurative form through documentation, which instead foregrounds bodily

traces. If the plastic bags were to fail as sculptural containers that render the fluids legible, the installation might metamorph into a Post-Minimalist "spill piece"—that is, before evaporation.

Urine complicates the capitalist logic of individual property, evading taxonomic imperatives of provenance. The artwork can be attributed to Nashat, yet the material history of the fluid matter denies determination. The plastic packaging presents urine in discrete theoretically commodifiable units, yet the urine itself complicates capitalist claims of ownership. Do you "own" the fluids that leak from your body? Insofar as bodily fluids evade ontological containment as "possessions," by extension, urine complicates anthropocentric rhetoric of "having" a body as a stable, self-contained and thus scrutable entity. The chemical instability of urine meanwhile renders this installation ephemeral, complicating the exchange value of the art object.

José Esteban Muñoz affords an understanding of ephemera as "traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things," evoking interplay between presence and absence of the material body.¹ In *Boyfriend_23.JPG*, the containers of urine as "specks of things" deny access to the correlated "things"—the bodies themselves. The format of the title as a digital photograph enacts an additional layer of temporal-spatial distance, positing the work as a trace of a trace. According to the exhibition text, this installation "shares its title, *Boyfriend.JPG*, with all the other works in the exhibition because they too describe something that they are not: not a boyfriend but a jpeg; not a presence but its format, that is to say, its absence."² The repetition of the title suggests seriality and iterability that further attest to the instability of "the body" as a fixed legible entity, while complicating the scalar conflation of part (urine) to whole (body). Though perhaps tempting to interpret this installation as an abstract metonymic representation of the body, I would suggest that this fragmented assemblage denies the projection of figurative coherence, instead operating in material excess of hegemonic representational paradigms.

¹ José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 8.

² "Shahryar Nashat: Hounds of Love," Gladstone Gallery, New York, March 17, 2022 – April 23, 2022, <https://www.gladstonegallery.com/exhibition/9400/hounds-of-love/info>.

Nashat's collaborative collection of urine constitutes a queer archival practice premised on "the seemingly trashy, dirty, disgusting, and untidy disorganization of bodies, things, and emotions." Martin Manalansan contends that "mess is a way into a queering of the archive that involves not a cleaning up but rather a spoiling and cluttering of the neat normative configurations and patterns that seek to calcify lives and experiences."³ Aiming not to merely recuperate the "abject" substance through Modernist display tactics, Nashat instead evokes intimacy through the presentation of urine on this seemingly used cushion insert in lieu of a pristine white pedestal that might "purify" the visceral substance. Afterall, as Tim Dean reminds us, "Mainstream audiences may be ready to accept same-sex love—and they definitely are happy to embrace the prospect of gay identity—well before they're ready for the aesthetics or erotics of piss."⁴

Nashat denies the logic of plumbing to render waste out of sight, out of mind—this prone heap weighted by gravity. The pillows of golden effluent instead conjure the restroom as a room in fact premised on *rest*, a room that denies binary fictions of public versus private space, a room of wet potential amongst porous bodies.

³ Martin F. Manalansan, "The 'Stuff' of Archives," *Radical History Review* 2014, no. 120 (2014), 94.

⁴ Tim Dean, "The Art of Piss," *Animal Shelter*, no. 4 (2015): 127.



Driving through Whitehall, the first thing you notice is the mess. Objects that should be inside houses are exposed: electrical wires pulled out of walls, disassembled appliances on plastic folding tables, threadbare blankets thrown over porch railings. Domestic and mechanical debris pile up like geological cross sections in roadcuts carved through the region's mountainous landscape. Stratigraphies of damp wood and cardboard shot through with veins of fleshy pink insulation mimic walls of gray and black mica streaked with red garnet and pink granite. This late industrial messiness evokes popular images of American poverty devoid of the stoic dignity imparted to it in the work of James Agee and Walker Evans' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, or Dorthea Lange's photos of Dust Bowl migrants. Whitehall's excessive materiality is both a metonym for the social imaginary of rural decay and an entry point for critical inquiries that intend to humanize— as though disorder was an inherently inhuman characteristic— these geographies of abandonment; either proof of the town's depleted humanity or evidence of its endurance despite that depletion.

A couch on the lawn or a washing machine in the rain disturbs a class coded expectation that objects and people whose value have been depleted by wear simply disappear. Trash is intended to go somewhere out of sight, not just out the front door. Clean, orderly people send or take their garbage elsewhere. To see Whitehall, a place shaped by precarious and partial opportunities of rural late industrialism— seasonal jobs, scarce resources, and illicit chemical economies— as defined by waste, makes it easier to see those who live there as wasted. Messiness denotes rural worlds where leftovers of an industrial past forms an unruly, unnatural resource. This interpretation is reproduced and politically charged in the popular and academic narratives of ruination and dispossession: Youtube channels devoted to road trips through America's "most depressing small towns," the fantasy construction of a cohesive white working class behind America's new right, and critical work that heroizes creative practice under economic and social duress. Mess is fetishized in these media circuits as both the fraying edge of civilization and the potential of its counter-narratives. Both ways of seeing things reinforces a common sense that rural America is either a place where violence, addiction, and poverty are the natural order of things or somewhere resisting disappearance through the materiality of its destruction. There are, however, good reasons to leave a couch on a front lawn that reflect both a naturalized dehumanization and a political aesthetic.



Some fortunate Americans regard the cost of living in increments of thousands of dollars, some in hundreds, but for those at the precarious edge of American capitalism—where struggle today is never a promise of something better tomorrow—each individual dollar is a serious concern. Getting rid of a couch or mattress costs time and money: a fifteen mile drive, over four dollars for a gallon of gas, plus a disposal fee at the county transfer station one town over from Whitehall. Living where work is often part-time, wages are low, and no public sanitation collection infrastructure exists, it can seem like a waste of scarce resources. Rather than attending to messes as evidence of uncivil disorder or creative potential, scholars should look critically at how a world comes to exist where intimacy with decay is acceptable because the alternative is unaffordable. That a rotting couch or mattress leaning against front steps denotes a certain kind of degraded existence demonstrates a set of normative expectations: an American standard of cleanliness, an appropriate distance between the home you make and the waste you produce, an order of outward appearance that reflects the economic and social value of your life to the people and institutions that make up your world.

Whitehall isn't all exposed mattresses and overturned couches. There are freshly painted homes with thriving gardens across the street from yards where broken pallet wood is used to replace missing siding. But the former doesn't adhere to the expected appearance of social abandonment. Common and critical sense attach to the messiness because it tells a clearer story. It's harder to imagine a place shaped by the waste left by progress could be somewhere that people go on trying to achieve the dream of a normal life and that the mess that describes their less-than-human condition is a product of the same dreams.

Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines

Willoughby Thom

How to make a zine ["fanzines," magazines, self-published texts]. Step one, gather your supplies: paper, scissors, markers, glue, images (from drawings, magazines, newspapers, photographs, etc.), and a copy machine. Step two, use your voice: ask yourself, what are you passionate about? What do you want to tell the world? Step three, collaborate: reach out to your friends and community to contribute art, poetry, essays, music, or photographs. Step four, assemble. Step five, distribute. Leave them on the park bench, at the local record store, send them through the post, hand them out at concerts, protests, or events. Finally, allow your zine to have a life of its own, evolving with time and ephemerality.

Rooted in so-called "outsider" ideas (hence self-publication) the individuality of zines creates an almost lawless medium through which artists and musicians are given space to freely disseminate art and thought. Following the conceptualization of a zine, artists transform materials through diverse and unconventional methods to create visually engaging and accessible works of art. Often created with the help of a Xerox machine, the disorderly and "low" production results in revolutionary nonconformist media. Thus the intrinsic multidisciplinary nature of zines has resulted in a tangled network of unique publications that contribute to art's unique role in shaping community, culture, and communication.

Zines are representative of a lo-fi aesthetic. The term "lo-fi" is short for "low-fidelity," the quality of sound that consists of organic or intentional imperfections that stem from DIY production. But lo-fi is also understood outside the context of music. The lo-fi approach consists of craft-like aesthetics and is often synonymous with the DIY movement. Lo-fi differentiates itself from DIY through its value of innovation rather than in virtuosity, emphasizing boundless experimentation and reinvention, implying limitless possibilities rather than an expected amateur outcome that is associated with a do-it-yourself approach.

Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines (on view from Nov. 17, 2023 to Mar. 31, 2024 at the Brooklyn Museum), organized by Branden W.

Joseph (Frank Gallipoli Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art, Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University), and Drew Sawyer (Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at the Whitney Museum of American Art), is the first comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the history, production, and influence of zines. With nearly a thousand zines on display, the exhibition surveys half a century's worth of archival material.

It is important to note that the show emphasizes that the zine-aesthetic—lo-fi production and distribution—originated with correspondence art, then adopted by the punk movement soon-after. In many ways, it is a nuance of sub-cultural history that is commonly overlooked and/or forgotten. Accordingly, *Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines* provides a necessary platform to those who were (or continue to be) the backbone of contemporary culture; giving credit where credit is long overdue. The exhibition highlights the ways in which marginalized and underrepresented communities use zines to establish control of their own representation, bridging pop-culture, heritage, and history through artistic expression and publication.

The exhibition is organized chronologically, yet thematically, specifically emphasizing zine's interdisciplinary role within communities since the early 1970s. With examples of mail art, punk publications, art books, and pseudo-photo portfolios, The Morris A. and Meyer Schapiro Wing is divided into six distinct sections: beginning with The Correspondence Scene (1970–1980), The Punk Explosion (1975–1990), Queer and Feminist Undergrounds (1987–2000), Subcultural Topologies (1990–2010), Critical Promiscuity (2000–2012), and concluding with A Continuing Legacy (2010–present). Presenting zines from across North America, the exhibition draws connections between disparate yet interrelated movements—geographically, thematically, and temporally—, a highly ambitious undertaking.

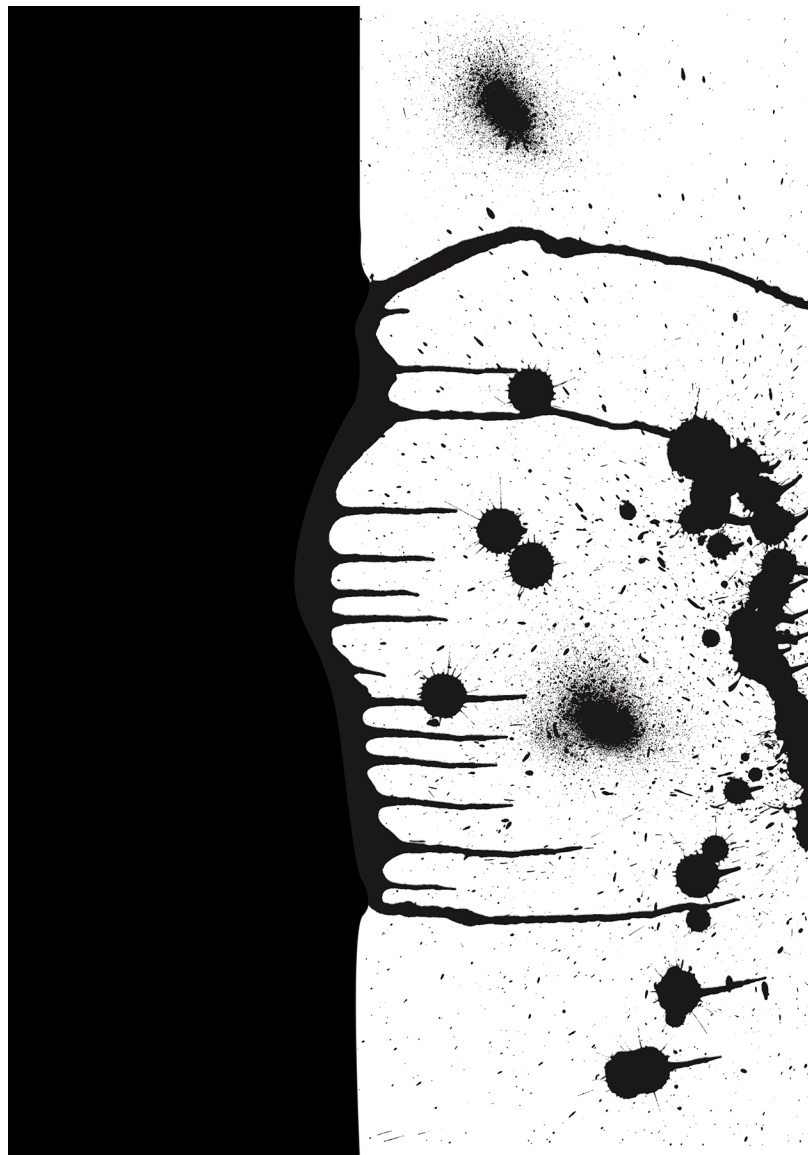
Each gallery (divided into the sections aforementioned) is populated with display cases. Some zines are closed, showing off their while others are opened to allow visitors a peek inside. This invitation to get close to the materials allows immersion into the messy and whimsical world of zines. The objects are brought to life through their display and orientation within the exhibition's distinct timeline. Some highlights include copies of *Homeboy Beautiful*, art from Mike Kelley's art-punk band Destroy All Monsters, photocopy zines by Kathleen Hanna, and works by contemporary creators like Pat McCarthy.

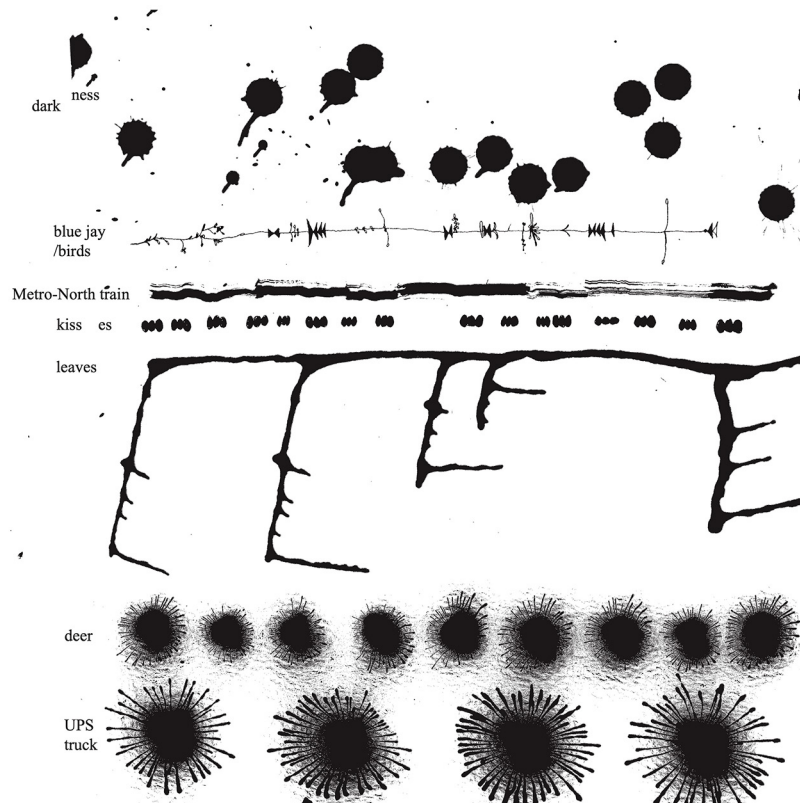
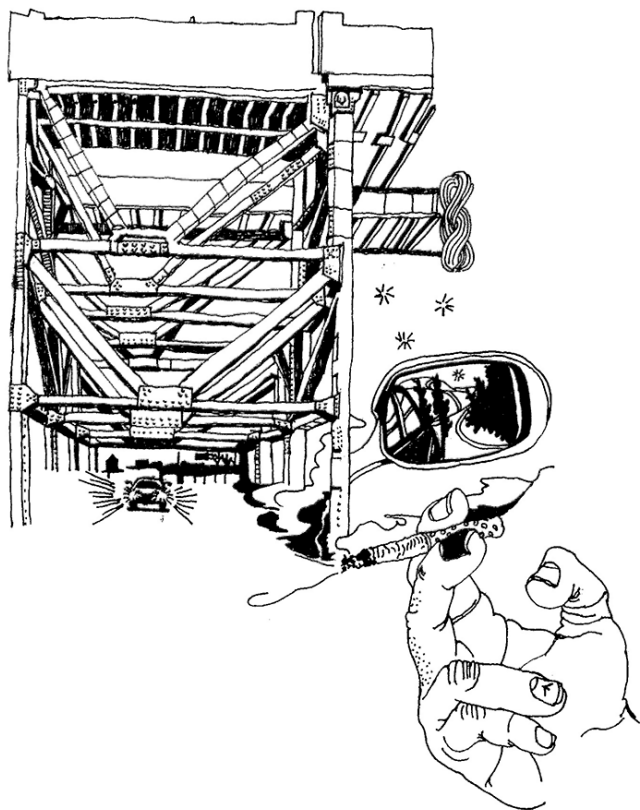
However, to any zine-maker or collector, it can be frustrating to see the zines preserved under plexiglass when they are intended to be interactive, well-loved, and [sometimes] destroyed. Unlike traditional "art", zines are often treated as artifacts rather than art-objects, creating an interesting dilemma when organizing an exhibition within an art institution. Like any historical object, preservation takes precedence over presentation, requiring curators to be creative in display and accessibility. In *Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines*, the combination of zines with audio, video, and photography allowed visitors to feel connected with the objects despite the physical separation. Additionally, the inclusion of a resource library in the final gallery, and the zine exchange stand in the museum lobby, fulfilled the desire to flip-through and engage with the zines presented in the show.

Despite the risk of overwhelming the viewer, the show's sequential arrangement gives structure to the divergent practices and movements of zine making without feeling cluttered. By putting zines and related ephemera in conversation, it gives the publications artistic and historical weight that they might not have otherwise and enables them to claim newfound territory within the art historical canon. In the press release, Joseph notes "that valorizing and including zines makes the history of contemporary art look different—introducing a host of different figures, putting familiar figures into different contexts, and moving marginalized figures to positions of centrality. Far from nostalgic or outmoded, the photocopied and printed zine remains a vibrant means of artistic expression."

Ultimately, zines are more than a pop-culture phenomenon; they are the product of active historiographic experimentation. To understand the complex relationship between society and culture, it necessitates an understanding of "the everyday." The past is not fully understood in the context of historical continuity. Rather, when a specific era or moment is removed from the homogeneous course of history, it sparks a reawakening and recontextualization. In this case, zines are actively being recontextualized and reexamined within the museum, outside traditional channels of reception and distribution, highlighting their undeniable importance within the overall course of social history. Overall, *Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines* brings to light that lo-fi art practices have the power to elicit collective memory as a framework for understanding history.

Ian Ha





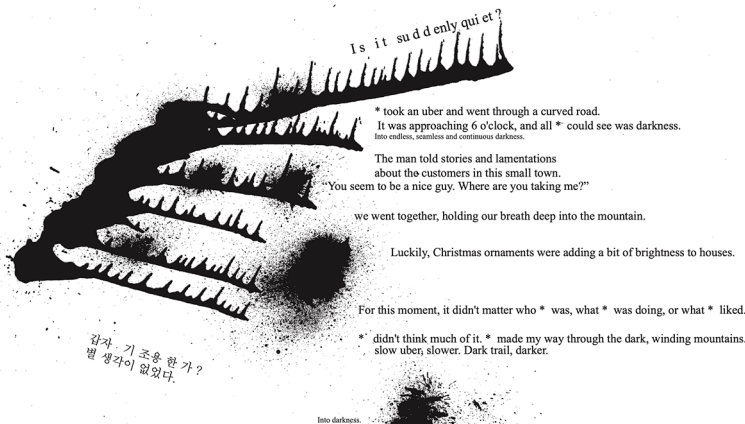
Artistic Decay (and Discovery) in the Short Fiction of Isabel Allende

Donna Sanders

As a rule, the concept of decay is not particularly appealing. It tends to conjure images of rotting food, noxious mold and putrefying bodies which break down in accordance with the eternal cycles of life and death. Across world literature, the decaying form often makes sudden and strange appearances, surfacing at unexpected moments and stubbornly obliging readers to reckon with their own mortality. Weird, inexorable forces of entropy creep through Shakespeare's plays, Poe's verse and Faulkner's novels. They gnaw, indiscriminately, at the rich lovers of gothic romance and the seedy heroes of 19th century serials. More recently, literary decay has taken on a new life in the stories of Isabel Allende, the award-winning Chilean author whose visceral style has effectively redefined the boundaries of Magical Realism. For Allende, decaying minds and souls are not a source of permanent, life-sucking grief. On the contrary: they are a dynamic promise of reinvention, rebirth and transformation. In a world where magic flows freely between all organic forms, the death force can be spontaneously converted into a wellspring of love— and hope can proceed from the depths of total despair and collapse.

Nowhere is this curious paradox more apparent than in the *Cuentos de Eva Luna*, twenty-three vibrant stories huddled under a single frame narrative which depict adventurous lives, gruesome deaths and passionate quests for revenge. Though each plot thrives on a frantically beating pulse, the decadent signs of morbid decline and corruption are everywhere to be found. Sometimes Allende's emphasis on cruel, relentless decay is almost too grotesque for words. Take, for instance, the macabre story called "If You Touched My Heart" (*Si Me Tocaras El Corazón*), in which a callous gangster imprisons his 15-year-old mistress in a dank, lifeless cellar for half a century. As the years elapse, young Hortensia surrenders her humanity and begins to degenerate into a fearful vegetative state— "the yellow dress rot[s] on her body," "silkworms nest in her long hair," and "lichens... grow on [her] skin like pale and fragile flowers."¹ Without any opportunity to interact with other human beings, she gradually forgets how to walk, sing and speak properly. But Hortensia's forty-seven-year sequestration also gives rise to strange and extraordinary feats of adaptation. The young woman may lose her powers of sight, taste and locomotion, but she gains a

¹ Allende, Isabel. "Si Me Tocaras El Corazón." In *Cuentos de Eva Luna*. New York: Penguin Random House, 1999. 83, 84, 85.



superhuman genius for intuition and observation. "Burial in that tomb," as Allende puts it, "sharpened her sense perception and taught her to see the invisible."²

When at last Hortensia is rescued by an outraged crowd of local villagers, the twin processes of generation and destruction do not suddenly leave off, but rather transfer into the orbit of another living object. Amadeo Peralta, the gangster who abandoned his lover to life-long misery, finds himself thoroughly routed and unmoored by her unexpected liberation. "Rejected by his friends and family, transformed into a symbol for all that was... hateful in the world," he begins to experience an eerily familiar series of degradations, ultimately forfeiting his sense of self and retreating into total mental delusion.³ Amadeo breaks down, physically and rationally, as a direct result of the tremendous crime that he visited on poor, lichen-coated Hortensia. Decay, it seems, can be catching.

Other stories in the collection present a similar picture of destruction that evolves and generates new forms. In "Ester Lucero," the bizarre tale of a besotted doctor who cures his secret love with sacred healing rituals, bodily collapse is staved off at the eleventh hour by love and powerful spiritualism. Desperate to rescue young Ester, whose life threatens at every moment to "escap[e] through [her] wound in unbreachable torrents," Dr. Angel Sanchez tries his hand at a magical rite that he once learned from a peculiar old tribesman.⁴ Paradoxically, the performance of the ritual that can interrupt deathly decay requires that Sanchez 'step back' into a state of nature. He must strip naked, abandon all dictates of modern medicine and listen intently to "the internal rhythm flow[ing] from his soul to his feet."⁵ When Ester miraculously recovers her strength, medical officials across the country hail the Doctor as hero and a luminary. Little do they know, invisible forces are slowly atomizing his innermost spirit so that, by the end of the story, he is fully capable of "speak[ing] with the stars in aboriginal tongues."⁶ Sanchez has taken Ester's decay onto himself and, with the help of ancient magic, transformed it into something sage and vital.

Elsewhere, Allende draws a more straightforward line between stages of destruction and renewal. In "Simple María" (María la boba), a young aristocrat descends into prostitution and mental instability after "wander[ing] distractedly onto a railroad crossing and [getting] hit by a freight train."⁷

² Ibid., 85

³ Ibid., 89

⁴ Allende, Isabel. "Ester Lucero." In *Cuentos de Eva Luna*. New York: Penguin Random House, 1999, 132

⁵ Ibid., 136

⁶ Ibid., 137

⁷ Allende, Isabel. "María" In *Cuentos de Eva Luna*. New York: Penguin Random House, 1999, 142

As a result of the accident, María forgets many of the "basic skills" of childhood, but she develops in their place an intense, almost miraculous affinity for quick, embracing love.⁸ Like all of Allende's most indelible characters, María is a mass of rich contradictions. Though her skin grows wrinkled and her memories dissipate, she manages to consistently preserve her spirit from the ever-encroaching forces of decay. Significantly, she dies "with her dignity intact," "dressed in her finest outfit," wearing bright red lipstick.⁹ We might consider whether the simplicity that defines María is rooted, at least partially, in her ability to fend off such elemental, universal forces as despair and deterioration.

Though Allende often depicts decay as a scourge on human bodies, it also crops up time and again in descriptions of place and environment. The countless sufferings experienced by Hortensia, Ester and María are cleverly projected onto the dilapidated houses and withered fields of their declining villages. With the cool precision of a landscape artist, Allende paints garish panoramas dominated by neglected living spaces, overgrown forests, and chthonic, dust-filled mansions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, her characters harken to these fearful spaces with grit and imagination. A restless child hides in her school's abandoned attic, dreaming up stories amidst the "threadbare carpets" and "decapitated statues."¹⁰ A destitute mother, forced to rent out her home to a dissolute liquor company, silently endures the constant odor of gross intoxication.¹¹ Ester Lucero lives in a "little blue house perforated by bullet holes," and plays on a patio "crowded with trash and clutter."¹² Everywhere one looks, the trappings of civilization are slowly giving way to nature's entropic power.

Crucially, however, no one seems to mind this increasingly bold advance of total destruction. Allende does not characterize decay as a constant, desperate enemy that ought to be warded off at all costs. Instead, she shows us versatile protagonists who have befriended death and learned to convert their misery into new beginnings. In order to fully inhabit a magical realist world of invention, fantasy and absurdism, the author's characters vaunt themselves above simple earthly laws of existence and preservation— they must travel to a new worldscape in which illness generates health, putrefaction breeds purity, and things that break down spontaneously recombine. By conquering decay, Allende provides the fuel for an inextinguishable fire of beauty and enchantment.

⁸ Ibid., 142

⁹ Ibid., 140

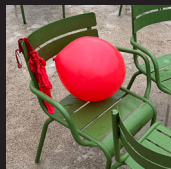
¹⁰ Allende, Isabel. "Cartas de Amor Traicionado." In *Cuentos de Eva Luna*. New York: Penguin Random House, 1999, 251

¹¹ This is a synopsis of Allende's "Clarisa."

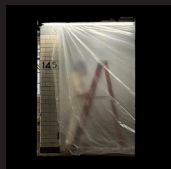
¹² Allende, "Ester Lucero," 130

How many times until I stop looking?

Ridwana Rahman



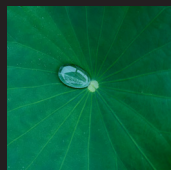
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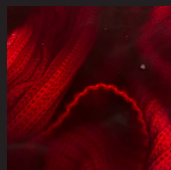
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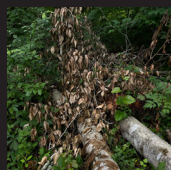
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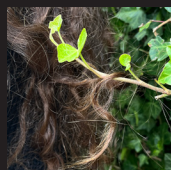
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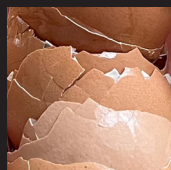
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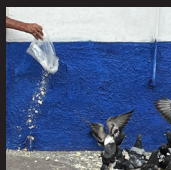
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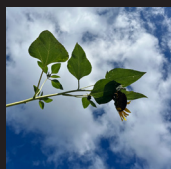
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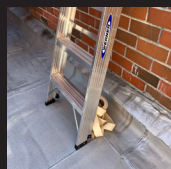
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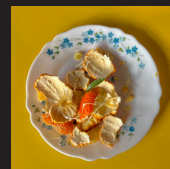
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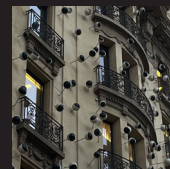
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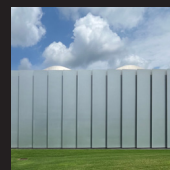
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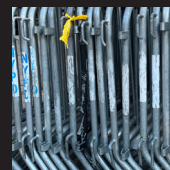
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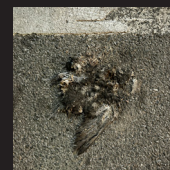
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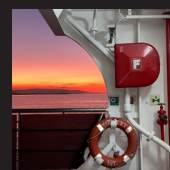
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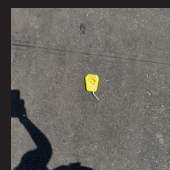
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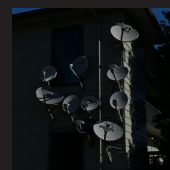
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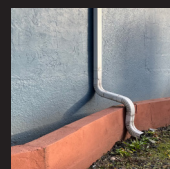
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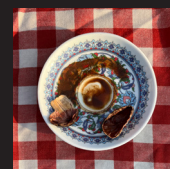
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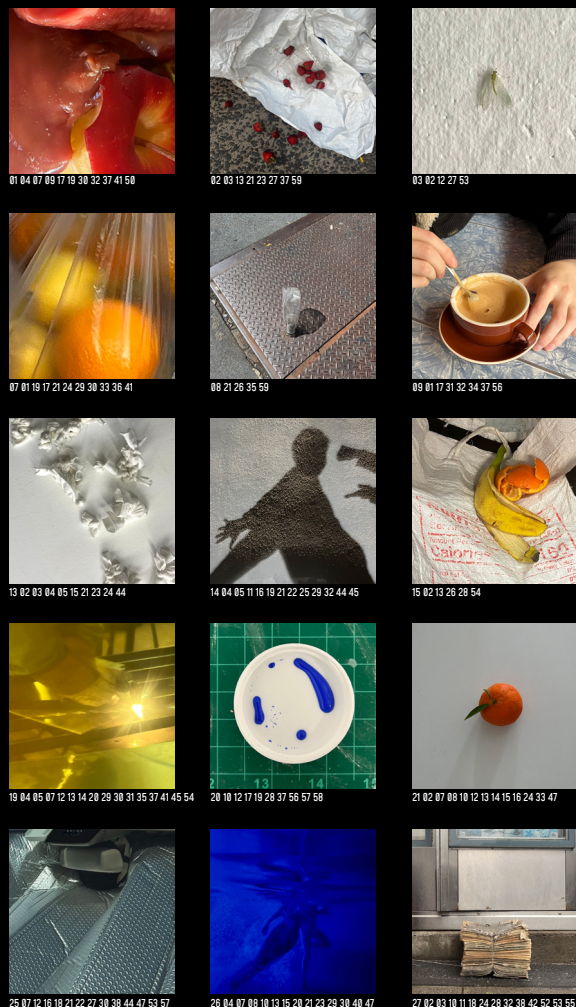
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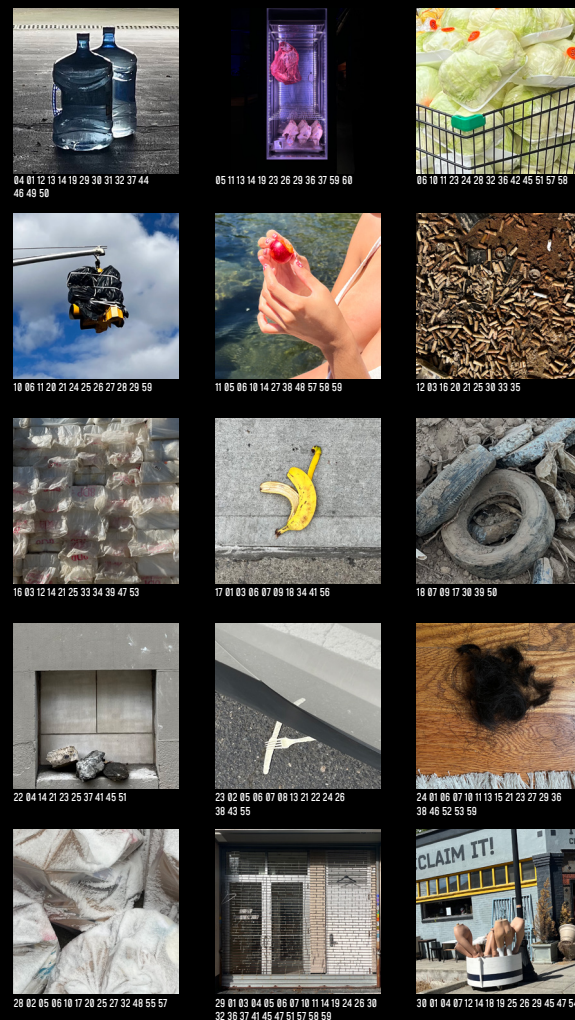
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The trash piled up on the corner of Broadway and 116th performs for me and I indulge it. How long does it take to grow an attachment to something? How much do I love this square of ruined sidewalk? I watch the pavement wilt in real time. I didn't even know it existed when I woke up this morning, and now if I don't take a picture, I'll walk around thinking about it for the rest of the day, for the rest of my life. I'm thinking about taste and repetition. Thinking about what I'm drawn to, for what reason. Thinking

about my own images as archival: the ready-made photograph—I can't get it out of my head. Thinking about the immediacy of phone pictures, the need to photograph something right now, with whatever I have. Thinking about the pre-existing composition and how it will eventually manifest in a physical space, as everything except just a photograph. Thinking about finally knowing myself, knowing what I like, over and over and over again.



How do I take a picture of the human body without centering it? Can an object still perform for an audience, for a camera, without knowing itself? How can I engage with an image, make it my own, without touching? I'm thinking about the casual image—who gets away with it? Thinking about how easy it is to do what I do, how everybody can do it, how everybody does it. Thinking about what differentiates a shared taste from a rip-off. Thinking about how sometimes the only pictures I take seriously from the



non-Stephen Shores of our time are the ones taken with tongues in cheeks. A mirror selfie is more self-aware now than it has ever been; I see a third-person image of the Instagrammer and I scoff. To be immediate in your photographing and posting is to be authentic, I tell myself, is to be effortless, is to be, "I just took this and want to share it and if I barely even care about the picture, how could I care what you think?" Nothing is a failure if it's meant to be, that is the safety net of irony.

Messy Romance: On Kaari Upson's Kiss Paintings from The Larry Project

Flora Song

Twin flame, soul merge, two halves of one whole...

The kiss of a couple in love, as portrayed by Kaari Upson (1970–2021), is passionate, aggressive, and sticky. The artist smashed a heavily impastoed portrait of a woman wet on wet with that of a man, and after she separated the panels, the results are the *Kiss* paintings (2007–2008). The series consists of three oil-on-panel diptychs that materialize the literal and metaphorical merging of two lovers: there is some of her in him, and some of him in her. (Fig. 1)

Romantic as this sounds, there is nothing cute about this love affair. The woman is in fact Upson herself, the man, Larry, a persona largely based on an enigmatic childhood neighbor whom the late artist had forensically researched and borderline stalked. The *Kiss* paintings are a part of Upson's *Larry Project* (2005–2012), a sprawling, multivalent project consisting of graphite drawings, performance videos, and objects alongside the diptychs. (Fig. 2, 3) This expansive project is a compelling and beautifully organized mess, a manifestation of curiosity gone wild. Through this investigation of the *Kiss* paintings, I propose that, by creating a cobweb of desires and myths that transgresses ethical and legal limits, Upson complicates the boundaries of the self in a cautionary tale of the conflation of reality and fantasy.

Larry who?

The story begins in San Bernardino, California, Upson's hometown. Although she had never met this stranger, his reclusive, philandering, and hedonistic stories spiced up the otherwise quiet neighborhood. Returning to her hometown during her MFA studies in 2003, Upson found that the man had vanished, leaving behind the Pandora's box that was his McMansion (modeled after Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion), in which all his personal effects were intact: there were photographs, legal documents, diaries, and notes from therapy sessions. Upson trespassed, collected, and inspected. Her sleuthing was meticulous. Nevertheless, she misplaced one of his journals and found herself filling in the informational

gap in her mind. This was the starting point for the late artist's seven-year-long *Larry Project*. As her imagination ran amok, inquisitiveness morphed into infatuation. Upson (re)constructed her subject and christened him "Larry" to preserve some privacy for the guy amid her airing out the hand-drawn reproductions of Larry's photographs and personal documents, but perhaps this was also to keep his "real" identity to herself. Upson blurs the line between her artistic persona and herself, and this dangerous conflation becomes the pathos of the project embodied by the *Kiss* paintings.

The steps towards the first kiss...

"The natural inclination was to merge him and me as a couple," explained Upson in an interview.¹ The drawings in the project offered some clues as to how the paintings came to be. (Fig. 5, 6) In the form of visualized, flattened, processed information, these hyperrealistic drawings were annotated by Upson in manic all-caps. Through the interpolations, she inserted herself into Larry's life. To bring this imagined merging into the real world, Upson commissioned a court-certified graphologist to conduct a couple's handwriting analysis for her and Larry, almost notarizing this imagined relationship. The unknowing graphologist inferred personality traits from her and Larry's handwriting to validate their compatibility, indulging the make-believe of their romantic status, which was further actualized when Upson hand-traced the written report as a part of the drawings in the project.

Now that a nominal albeit deceitful merging was achieved, the *Kiss* paintings then stand in for the physicality of this union. The process of mashing together their portraits is forceful and erotically charged. The resulting gloppy, painterly amalgamations, especially when displayed in the gallery space, are testimonies to their relationship in the form of a PDA of sorts.

"How to become Larry's type" is a question Upson proposed in a drawing, to which she answered in smaller writing underneath: "or just become him." (Fig. 6) Indeed, in *Kiss* (2007) (Fig. 7), she does become Larry in a way as the artist's representation of self diminishes among the more discernible, darker features of Larry after the "kissing" of the two portraits. Her eyebrows take on the raven black hues of Larry's, and her own slim nose is concealed by the broad contours of those of Larry.

¹ "Kaari Upson & Thomas Lawson, Hammer Exhibit," filmed February 5, 2008 at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFsfFcjQJ9M>.

In Larry's panel, his face is only embellished with the lightness of the evocation of her blond hair. Viewing the diptych from left to right, the transformation is made clear: Upson's self-representation fades into the abyss that is her subject's psyche, and as she embodies the imagined psyche of Larry, she becomes Larry. "I am more him than he is," the artist exclaims in a drawing. (Fig. 6) In this way, the *Kiss* paintings almost become pairs of the artist's self-portraits.

Upson's own piercing blue eyes are the only constant throughout the diptychs, as it appears that Upson had painted Larry's eyes sapphire like hers. The artist looks across the canvases and into his world, while her projection of Larry returns the gaze with her own eyes: it is a mirror image in the hall of mirrors that is the project itself. At what point does the projection end and the image of the artist's self begin? The notion of the artist's self-portrait is then complicated by this instability.

"No matter how much scoping I did... I was no closer to knowing anything truthful [about Larry]," confided the artist.² But she does not need to know everything to become one with Larry; they "don't have to be together to be together," as declared in one of her drawings. (Fig. 5) The mess on the canvases created by separating the "kissed" paintings is indexical to their intertwined lives. In a twisted way, this romance has a happy ending. At some point, Upson's artistic persona has conflated with her true self—we have lost track of the demarcation between her art and herself, and perhaps so had the artist. So many questions arise: where do we draw the line from one version of the self to another? Is there a true representation of the self to begin with? Ultimately, does it matter?

¹ "Kaari Upson & Thomas Lawson, Hammer Exhibit," filmed February 5, 2008 at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFsfFcIQJ9M>.



FIG 1.
Kaari Upson, *Untitled (kiss painting 11)*, 2008.
Oil on panel. 2 panels, 48 x 48 inches each.
Photo credit: Sprüth Magers.



FIG 2.
Kaari Upson, *The Larry Project*, 2005-2012.
Installation View of "Hammer Projects: Kaari Upson" at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA.
November 27, 2007-February 17, 2008.
Photo by Brian Forrest. Photo Credit Hammer Museum.



FIG 3.
Kaari Upson, *The Larry Project*, 2005-2012.
Installation View of "Hammer Projects: Kaari Upson" at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA.
November 27, 2007-February 17, 2008.
Photo by Brian Forrest. Photo credit: Hammer Museum.



FIG 4.
Kaari Upson, Detail of *Untitled (kiss paining 11)*, 2008.
Photo credit: Sprüth Magers.



FIG 5. (left)
FIG 6. (right)

Kaari Upson, Detail of *The Larry Project*, 2005-2012. Installation view of "Hammer Projects: Kaari Upson," part of *Together in Time: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA. March 26-August 20, 2023. Photographed by Flora Song.

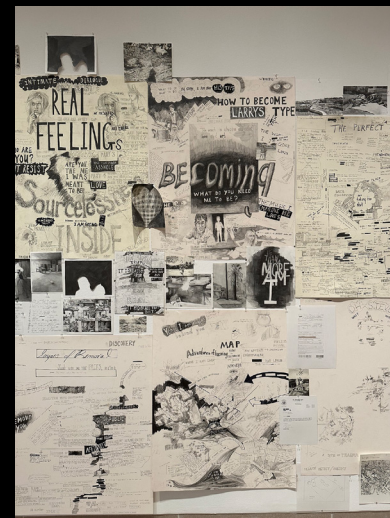


FIG 7.
Kaari Upson, *Kiss*, 2007. Oil on panel. 36 x 24 inches each.
Photo credit: Hammer Museum

The Juniper Tree: A Brief History of an Unfixable Work

Theodora Bocanegra Lang

In 1994, contemporary artist Joan Jonas transformed *The Juniper Tree* from a performance into an installation, fixing it in time and space forever. Incorporating a wide range of material and formal elements, Jonas's works evade totalizing interpretations. They often cannot be entirely grasped from one physical vantage point, let alone an interpretative one. Adding an additional layer of complexity, the works themselves are not constant; Jonas often tweaks and reevaluates her works each time they are shown. They are no more fixed in time and space than she is, still thinking, reorganizing, reinterpreting, and reimagining her past work.

The Juniper Tree (1976/1994), often touted as her first site-specific performance,¹ was commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia as part of her 1976 solo exhibition "Joan Jonas Stage Sets: An Environment and Four Events."² Along with another performance, *Mirage* (1976/2001), *The Juniper Tree* was performed within Jonas's first site-specific installation, *Stage Sets* (1976/2018), also commissioned for the exhibition. By using *Stage Sets* as the flexible and movable set for these performances, Jonas is, from inception, complicating traditional notions of a work of art that exists as a discrete entity, independent to both its maker and other works. The static installation of *Stage Sets* was activated by separate performances, and inversely, the elements of the performances served functions as part of the installation as well.

The Juniper Tree was initially conceived of and performed for children, though it later lost this association. Based on a dark fairytale of the same name, also called "The Almond Tree," the repetition of children's stories throughout history are central to the work.³ Originally a nebulous German folk tale with many versions, it was most notably recorded in writing by the Brothers Grimm in their 1812 book *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales). Before this, the details (even its name) necessarily changed a little bit with each

¹ Jarmusch, Ann. *Suspended in Shadow*. ARTnews, April 1977. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/archives-joan-jonass-first-site-specific-installation-1977-10006/>

² *Joan Jonas Stage Sets*. Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1976. Exhibition brochure.

³ "The Almond Tree," in Grimm, Jacob, et al. *German Popular Tales and Household Stories: Collected by the Brothers Grimm; Newly Translated; with Illustrations by Edward H. Wehnert*. Illustrated by Edward Henry Wehnert, Crosby and Ainsworth; Oliver S. Felt, 1868. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, link. [gale.com/apps/doc/CDJUNJ678044131/NCC0?u=columbiu&sid=gale_marc&xid=9f3ebba5&pg=292](https://www.gale.com/apps/doc/CDJUNJ678044131/NCC0?u=columbiu&sid=gale_marc&xid=9f3ebba5&pg=292). Accessed 8 Jan. 2024. p. 287.

telling. Moving from person to person exclusively by speech, ideas of a fixed and definitive narrative were not as essential as the instructive morals, namely the importance of kindness and family. With new ideas about knowledge production and technologies, the malleable tale of a boy murdered and eaten by his greedy stepmother, coming back to kill her in the form of a bird, is frozen in time. One version becomes the standard to be passed down, rendering the scattered alternate tellings as obsolete or peripheral. Jonas describes the tale as "a story told again and again, mostly by women, and then written down by brothers Grimm... in fact, [it was] the technology of the human voice box handed down."⁴ In this way, something flexible that required the human body and voice transformed into something inanimate and certain.

Similar to the pre-written fable, Jonas's performance changed each time it was performed. Most notably, a key part of the set and props are a suite of drawings on red and white silk. On each red swatch is a white form that resembles an anatomical heart with aorta shooting out, or perhaps the head of a reindeer with antlers. On each white swatch is a red drawing that appears to be a face with a pointed chin and messy mop of hair. As Jonas has said many times, these drawings are not depictions of single things, but instead rely on the interpretation of the viewer.⁵ Over the course of each performance, Jonas draws another of each type. Not new to Jonas's work, there are several other of her performances that incorporate the repetitive recording moment of a drawing, such as *Moving off the Land* (2016), in which each performance produces a gestural blue fish. The drawings made in *The Juniper Tree* differ, however, in that Jonas promptly added them to the set over the course of the performance, to be included ongoingly. Each performance carries with it records of past events, and creates a record of itself. The audience not only witnesses a work but also the creation process as well, a live birth or divination (this is echoed by Jonas giving birth to a rabbit as part of the premiere performance).⁶

Further, the set, performers, actions, and locations were all variable to a certain extent, with Jonas herself as the primary constant. A 1977 poster from a presentation by Danspace, for example, advertises a set by Richard Serra, and lists as the performers Tim Burns, Simone Forti, Pooh Kaye, and Lindzee Smith. The original performers were Mary Klaus, John Erdman, Sheila McLaughlin, Linda Zadikian, and poet Susan Howe, who read the story aloud. Tim Burns is also listed as providing "technical assistance." Part of this is inevitable in any repeated performance: the conditions, people, time, and space will never be

⁴ Jonas, Joan. "The Juniper Tree (1976)." *Joan Jonas: Performance Video Installation, 1968–2000*. Germany, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001. p. 166.

⁵ Clausen, Barbara. "Ways of Drawing," in *Joan Jonas: Next Move in a Mirror World*, edited by Barbara Clausen and Kristin Poor with Kelly Kivland. Dia Art Foundation, 2023. p. 82.

⁶ Jarmusch, Ann. *Suspended in Shadow*. ARTnews, April 1977.

exactly the same. Theater as a medium is designed for this, including parts and elements to be flexibly restaged in the future.

Performance, however, especially experimental feminist performance of the 1970s, is often conceptualized as fixed to the artist's body. The artist herself is part of the medium, and the work restaged without her will never yield the same impact. Not to say that other performers cannot add to the work or perform in inventive ways, but they will be inherently different, they will always be a solution to the problem of the missing primary, the body of the artist. As Jonas points out, "re-enactment" and "re-construction" are two very different things.⁷ Successive performances will never be faithful reenactments; Jonas sees a creative reconstruction as the only option.

The performance solidified in 1978, after Jonas performed *The Juniper Tree* multiple times. She adapted it for a solo performance in her loft, which became the final version. This only further distilled the performance to be intrinsically tied to the artist and her body, though perhaps making the performance itself more flexible. Even with this crystallization, however, the production of new drawings each time obviously still necessitated changing each time, shifting and growing.

Jonas adapted the performance into an installation as part of her 1994 solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In the exhibition catalog, curator Dorine Mignot details the logistic issues of planning a retrospective of a performance artist, leading to the joint solution to adapt five of Jonas's performances into standalone static installations.⁸ Each installation contained the signature ingredients of the performance, developing what is now one of Jonas's most known forms. In lieu of the body of the artist, the installation includes 78 documenting slides of previous performances, shown in succession. She appears as a continuous wispy trace, relying on the now numerous viewers who can see the static work to imagine her body in the included kimono, her hands drawing on the red and white silk with the included pots of red and white paint, resting on the floor with brushes askew. Included as well is a long and short mirror leaning against a wall, on which is painted a quick equation: $9 \times 9 = 81$. As viewers peer into the installation, they are reflected in the work, adding their own bodies into the swirling composition, changing it again for a few seconds or minutes.

⁷ Clausen, Barbara. "A Conversation: Babette Mangolte and Joan Jonas." In *After the Act: The (Re) Presentation of Performance Art*, edited by Nina Krick and Barbara Clausen, 51–65. Vienna: MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, 2006. p. 61.

⁸ Mignot, Dorine. "From Reflection to Revolt." In *Joan Jonas: Works 1968–1994*, edited by Dorine Mignot, 9–12. Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1994. p. 10.

Kristian Kragelund

README

```
;
; an anthology of anonymous notes embedded in computer
; viruses sourced from online archives and forums
;
;
; 10/182
```

Virus title: acurev

```

        db ' --> How Can You Think Freely In The Shadow Of A Church? <-',10,13
Of A Church? <--',10,13
        db ' --> You Cannot Sedate, All The Things You Hate <-',10,13
        db ' --> Your Infected <-',10,13,'$'

bdaymsg db ' ',10,13
        db ' Happy Birthday Christine Moore *kiss* I'll be home',10,13
        db ' In less then a month now... June29th, Can''t wait!!!',10,13,'$'

time dw 0h ; some space for the time
date dw 0h ; some space for the date
dot_dot db "...",0 ; changeing directories
comfile db "*.com",0 ; load up *.com hehe
db 100 dup (90h) ; make it 666 bytes
finished label near ; just a label man
code ends ; end code segment
end start ; end / where to start

; -----> How Can You Think Freely In The Shadow Of A Church? <

```

Executable File · 165 lines (135 loc) · 7.98 KB

Virus title: cabanas

```

; After readin P,ter Sz"n's description about Win32.Cabanas, i realized he'd
; really made a very serious profesional work. So good that he didnt seem to
; miss any internal detail in the virus, as if he had actually written the
; bug himself or as if he was actually me, hehe. Obviously, none of the prior
; onez are true. But, nevertheless, i think it's worth to take his work into
; account even from the VX side of the fence. Really i dunno what's left for
; me to say after such description, so i will simply add my own personal co-
; mentz to P,ter's log. Erm.. btw why dont u join us? heh >8P

```

```

; 1.2. Direct action infection
; AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
; The direct action infection part is surprisingly fast.
; First the virus gets the name_
; After this, the virus calculates_
; Next it searches_
; Then it goes_
; Next the virus calculates_
; Then the virus changes_
; Next the virus hooks_

```

```

;
; 4. Who was Cabanas?
; AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
; Gonzalo Cabanas used to be a daydream believer. We shared several thingz
; in comon, heard same R.E.M music style, wore the same ragged blue jeanz,
; and behaved like kidz everywhere we went together, putin tackz on the tea-
; cher's chair, stealin some classmate's lunch and so on. We even liked the
; same girlz, which explains why we sometimez ended up punchin each other's
; face from time to time. However, u could find us the next day, smoking a-
; round by the skoolyard as if nothin had ever hapened. We were the best
; friendz ever. I know this virus wont return him back to life, nor "will do
; him justice", however, i still wanted to somewhat dedicate this program in
; his honor.
;
;

```

```

;
; 5. Greetz
; AAAAAAAAAA
; The greetz go to:
;
; Gonzo Cabanas ..... Hope to see u somewhere in time.. old pal!
; Murkry ..... Whoa.. i like yer high-tech ideaz budie!
; VirusBuster/29A ..... U're the i-net man pal.. keep doin it!
; Vecna/29A ..... Keep up the good work budie.. see ya!
; l- ..... Did ya ask for some kick-ass lil' creature? X-D
; Int13 ..... Hey pal.. u're also a southamerican rocker! ;)
; Peter/F-Potatoe ..... Yer description rulez.. Wikko's envy shines!
; DV8 (H8), kdkd, etc ... Hey budiez.. now where da hell are u?
; GriYo, Sandy/29A ..... Thx for yer patience heh X-D

```

Executable File · 2638 lines (2269 loc)

Virus title: dogpaw

```

DogPaw.720          000 000 000 000 000 000
;                  000000 80000000 00000000
;                  00000000 00000000 000 000
;                  00000000 00000000 000 000
;
; A dog paw tale
; AAAAAAAAAAAAAA
; Some weekz ago i stole my dady's car to take a short ride around the block
; and i was so nervous that i almost crashed twice: the first time with a
; huge big garbage truck (yea even tho i wear glasez) and the second time
; with a little grandma crossin down the street. Shit.. that was enough for
; the day, i didnt want to kill anybody nor get killed at worst, so i deci-
; ded to go back home. I turned on the radio and started to sing "the side-
; winder sleeps tonight" by R.E.M. Yea i was havin a great time even tho i
; had been about to crash twice. Why did i have to open my mouth! Just when
; i was about to turn right at the next block i heard a suden "crash" follo-
; wed by two "squeeze.." "squeeze.." feelin two "up-and-down's" on the right
; tirez. Shit what da hell was that..? i looked back thru the front mirror
; just to know the answer. On the road i had left behind, there lied a poor
; crushed dog. Ohh shit i crushed a dog! Now from time to time when that
; scene comes to my mind, all i see is that unfortunate squeezed dog wavin
; goodbye with his paw.. the poor dog paw. #8I
;
;
; Greetingz
; AAAAAAAA
; And finally the greetingz go to:
;
; Casio ..... Yer Rusty was kewl.. but throw 'way that ASIC dude!
; Tcp/29A ..... Woow! yer disasembiez rock man.. really rock!
; Spanska ..... Dont get drunk too often ;) greetingz to Elvira..
; Reptile/29A ... Not even a garden full of ganja can stop ya heh #85
; Rilo ..... Confess budie: Rilo Drunkie + Belch = Car crash ;)
; Litquiz ..... Still watin to see that poly of yourz.. #8)

v_mark      equ    'GD'          ;virus mark
v_size_bytes equ    v_end - v_start ;virus size in bytez
b_size_bytes equ    v_size_bytes   ;bufer size in bytez
s_size_bytes equ    100h          ;stack size in bytez
v_size_words equ    (v_size_bytes + 1) / 2 ;virus size in wordz
v_size_paras equ    (v_size_bytes + 15) / 16 ;virus size in paragraphz
v_size_sects equ    (v_size_bytes + 511) / 512 ;virus size in sectorz
v_size_kilos equ    (v_size_bytes + 1023) / 1024 ;virus size in kilobytez
v_size_div_512 equ    v_size_bytes / 512 ;virus size div 512
v_size_mod_512 equ    v_size_bytes \ ;virus size mod 512
                - (512 * v_size_div_512) ;
m_size_bytes equ    v_size_bytes + (b_start \ ;memory size in bytez
                - v_end) + b_size_bytes \ ;
                + s_size_bytes ;
m_size_words equ    (m_size_bytes + 1) / 2 ;memory size in wordz
m_size_paras equ    (m_size_bytes + 15) / 16 ;memory size in paragraphz

.code

```

Executable File · 607 lines (536 loc) · 23 KB

Virus title: HUMGREED

```

write_virus:                ; write the virus to the
call encrypt_decrypt        ; files, by overwriting
                             ; its beginning
                             ;
                             ; How sadistical??
                             ;
                             ;
                             ; must call this meaningless

call fool_scan_for_TridentVirus

                             ; Throw the dice..
                             ;
mov ah,2ch                  ;
int 21h                     ;
cmp dl,50                   ;
ja real_quit                 ;
jmp print                    ;

                             ; no, quitting time, yet..

ExeMask      db      '*.EXE',0      ; tought one, huh?
ComMask      db      '*.COM',0      ; what is this, hm
dot_dot      db      '..',0         ; '..'

Note         db      'That is not dead '
              db      'Which can eternal lie '
              db      'Yet with strange aeons '
              db      'Even death may die '
              db      'Live AfteR DeATH...'
              db      'Do not waste your time '
              db      'Searching For '
              db      'those wasted years! '
              db      'Maria K - Life is limited, love is forever... '
              db      'Open to reality, forever in love...'
sign         db      'Program too big to fit in memory$' ; fake message!
sadistical   db      ' ***HUMAN GREED*** The answer of all evil on earth! '
              db      'Do You Believe? '
              db      'Farwell!....'

end_of_virus:
infernal:
cseg          ends
end

```

Executable File · 233 lines (190 loc) · 7.97 KB

Virus title: Jacky

```
ve_stringz:
veszKernel32      db      'KERNEL32',0
veszGetModuleHandleA db      'GetModuleHandleA',0
veszGetProcAddress db      'GetProcAddress',0
eEXE_filez       db      '*.EXE',0      ;filez to search
veszCreateFileA   db      'CreateFileA',0
veszCreateFileMappingA db      'CreateFileMappingA',0
veszCloseHandle   db      'CloseHandle',0
veszUnmapViewOfFile db      'UnmapViewOfFile',0
veszMapViewOfFile db      'MapViewOfFile',0
veszFindFirstFileA db      'FindFirstFileA',0
veszFindNextFileA db      'FindNextFileA',0
veszFindClose     db      'FindClose',0
veszSetFileAttributesA db      'SetFileAttributesA',0
veszSetFilePointer db      'SetFilePointer',0
veszSetEndOfFile  db      'SetEndOfFile',0
veszSetFileTime   db      'SetFileTime',0
eEndOfFunctionNames db      0

;An epitaph to a good friend of mine (not a "junkie" Pete)

db 'To My d34d fRi3nD c4b4n4s...',CRLF
db ',CRLF
db 'By: j4cKy Qw3rTy / Z9A. ',CRLF
db 'jqw3rty8c',0
```

Virus title: LISA

```
retn
f_ptr: mov     ah, 42h
        xor     cx, cx
        cwd
        int     21h
        retn

db      'love.girl.LISA.forever.666 ' ;
db      '(C) Metal Militia / Immortal Riot '
db      'Sweden 24/12/93 ' ; the Date of finish, christmas eve
db      'Thunderclouds pass the sky, dreams & thoughts '
db      'goes thrue my mind.. winds of love, floods of '
db      'hope, until the day, when you'll be mine!.... '
db      'Dedicated to Lisa Olsson who will always be my passion '
db      'my obsession and my infinite dream. All i ever wanted, '
db      'all i ever asked for. Happy new year, yours Metal..... '

newdir  db      '='
masker  db      '='
greets  db      'Greets to Raver and The Unforgiven/IR' ; greets to my
                                                ; friends

stuff   db      0cdh, 20h, 0 =
e9      db      0e9h ;=
eov equ $
writebuffer dw  ?

dta     db 42 dup (?)
LisaVirus  ENDS
END      Start
```


Virus title: nyliram

```

pload_start:
db      'There's not much left to love',10      ; payload in txt
db      'Too tired today to hate',10             ; payload in txt
db      'I feel the minute of decay',10          ; payload in txt
db      'I'm on my way down now',10              ; payload in txt
db      'I'd like to take you with me',10        ; payload in txt
db      'I'm on my way down...',10               ; payload in txt
db      'I'm on my way down now',10              ; payload in txt
db      'I'd like to take you with me',10        ; payload in txt
db      'I'm on my way down now',10              ; payload in txt
db      'The minute that it's born',10            ; payload in txt
db      'It begins to die',10                     ; payload in txt
db      'I'd love to just give in',10             ; payload in txt
db      'I'd love to live this lie',10            ; payload in txt
db      'I've been to black and back',10          ; payload in txt
db      'I've whited out my name',10              ; payload in txt
db      'A lack of pain, a lack of hope',10        ; payload in txt
db      'A lack of anything to say',10            ; payload in txt
db      'There is no cure for what is killing me',10 ; payload in txt
db      'I'm on my way down',10                   ; payload in txt
db      'I've looked ahead and saw',10            ; payload in txt
db      'A world that's dead',10                  ; payload in txt
db      'I guess that I am too',10                ; payload in txt
db      ' ',10                                    ; payload in txt
db      'I'm On My Way Down Now',10              ; payload in txt
pload_finish  label  near                        ; the end label

```

Executable File · 120 lines (104 loc) · 5.93 KB

Virus title: Phoebe

```

;PHOEBE coded by Opic of the Codebreakers
;PHOEBE is an appending .com infector with DT via a dotdot routine
;infection criteria is met on a modyday once all files that are capable of
;being infected by PHOEBE are, a payload is delivered:
;the monitor will print a message to the screen(in the French) which
;translates to:"Introducing PHOEBE, she was coded in the heart of midwest
;america in the autumn of nineteen ninety-seven by Opic of The Codebreakers"
;along with a text string which will be printed to the printer. Thanx go
;out to:Sp00ky,Arsonic,and Sea4 for which without their help Phoebe whould
;not be what she is today.

new_three      db      0e9h,0,0
filespec       db      '*.com',0
dotdot         db      '.',0
screen         db      "Voila PHOEBE! Elle etait code' dans la coeur de ",10,13
screen2        db      "l'amerique midwest a l'automne, dix-neuf cent",10,13
screen3        db      'quatre-vingt-dix-sept, par Opic des Codebreakers',10,13,'$'
;You have to have the "$" at the end of all the text you want to print

String1len     EQU      EndStr1-String1
String1        db      "*****pHOEBE*****",0dh,0ah
db      'Phoebe: high school knockout, better take our MONDAY to',0dh,0ah
db      'the tuesday prize fighter(You were a cab driver off on',0dh,0ah
db      'the distance),you're a runner or a lover:sacred taylor',0dh,0ah
db      'set our records straight one lost two late,im a little',0dh,0ah
db      'off time so set your ticker to mine:',0dh,0ah
db      'id love to have my halo of social grace recrowned.',0dh,0ah
db      'desert island ect.) home to ill will and',0dh,0ah
db      'misrepresentation. barter with me now mexico, i demand',0dh,0ah
db      'it come bluebeard & red blood-we are life-even in our',0dh,0ah
db      'tied down mishaps. we are life; endure us. dead seven',0dh,0ah
db      'year old run over by a bus while stealing your first',0dh,0ah
db      'and only bicycle; endure. this is life even in my wine',0dh,0ah
db      'glass even in my ever faltering and constant doubt we',0dh,0ah
db      'are here, this is it, endure. even in on our toilet',0dh,0ah
db      'in the morning or in your shitbox or motel, you have',0dh,0ah
db      'made it-rejoice!-the ground will open up on us even',0dh,0ah
db      'before this glass is finished. this year will end for',0dh,0ah
db      'most of us.salt touches the ground, others have we',0dh,0ah
db      'lost quite yet? savagly speared we went down quietly?',0dh,0ah
db      'giving up our youth or even worse our spirit so',0dh,0ah
db      'daintily as a beauty queen shits at midnight? was no',0dh,0ah
db      'one watching? listening? tell me athens: are we',0dh,0ah
db      'christians and lions? have i got my history all wrong?',0dh,0ah
db      'from the first to the last or one year past: "are these",0dh,0ah
db      'the depths of despair so unevenly documented in its',0dh,0ah
db      'text? ".for once athens history repeats itself.tell me',0dh,0ah
db      'what do you think of our football games? are our glory',0dh,0ah
db      'days over? is america doomed with pre-ejaculation? i',0dh,0ah
db      'must know. slap me and tell me im like all the rest',0dh,0ah
db      'athens,id feel so much better if you did.am i a thief',0dh,0ah
db      'stealing red robed memory? am i; train through a',0dh,0ah
db      'tunnel? rocketship blasting off? the washington',0dh,0ah
db      'monument? i bet i am.i am whimpering under your window',0dh,0ah
db      'sill or whispering to your pillowed ear:rejoice! we are',0dh,0ah
db      'famous watchers.sewer of amber letters, lips sewed a',0dh,0ah
db      'thread of truth to your tongue.i named and numbered my',0dh,0ah
db      'system the whole world over,and you?you got flowers and',0dh,0ah
db      'chocolates,like a steel warehouse summer turned calcium',0dh,0ah
db      'to carbon.',0dh,0ah
db      '*****coded/copyrighted:Opic*****Codebreakers,1997*****',0Ch

```

Executable File · 180 lines (155 loc) · 8.23 KB

Virus title: TZ

```
; RIP TerminatorZ
;
; This virus is dedicated to the great TerminatorZ who recently died of an
; overdose. I was, I guess you can say, friends with TZ and nearly ended up
; living with the guy. He had high prospects in both the virus world and in
; his chosen field of expertise, biochemistry, but he got on the drug
; landslide. It's a pity and a waste. We'll miss ya man.
;
; The virus is a com/exe-hdr int Z1 resident infector.
; It displays a message.
;
; compile with a86 and rename the .bin to .com (479 bytes)
;
; Quantum / VLAD
;
org 0
vstart:
mov ax,1801h
int 21h

jmp gooldint

msg db "R","I","P"," ", "","T","e","r","m","i","n","a","t","o","r","Z"
```

Virus title: Unkn-Nmy

```
; This is my very first companion/spawning creation.
; No encryption or destructive routines inside, just pure
; replicationg. Not even a simple priting routine or something,
; i'm just *too* nice! Well, urml.. Enjoy Insane Reality

sheesh:
    jmp     move_on          ; "Companion" it!

db 'Unknown Enemy' ; Virus name
db '(C) Metal Militia/Immortal Riot' ; Author
db 'I''m hurt, machineguns firing behind my back' ; Poem
db 'Never had no chance, no way to do a attack'
db 'Thisone sure is the last time i guess'
db 'Heading for a private deathrow, nothing less'
db 'Blood, quickly pumping out from the vound in the vain'
db 'Damn, this moment makes you sort of go insane'
db 'Close my eyes, had much left to see'
db 'Was my fault, but did they have to do it, gee?'
db 'Promise me, this hit you will remember'
db 'Take one of them down before winter comes in december'
db 'Why that month? Well, i like it very much'
db 'Fresh, cool air, wonders of the snow to touch'
db 'The world is wonderful, what else to say?'
db 'Just remember this shit, cause it happens every day'
; ^^^ - Ohh! I'm impressed (The Unforgiven).

move_on:
    push    ax
    push    es
```

The Impossibility of Untangling Diasporic Mess

Christine Stoddard

For the first 29 years of my life, I ventured to my mother's native El Salvador only in my mind. I had no lived sense of what El Salvador was like prior to its civil war (1979-1992) and, until an artist residency, had no lived experience in the country at all. Diasporic longing finally drove me to my first homecoming in 2018. By the time I came to Laberinto Projects, I was an eager MFA candidate and the first artist to visit in months. The program, led by a Salvadoran professor in Maryland, had paused due to escalating gang violence in El Salvador, which holds the world's highest homicide rates, ten times the global average. Nonetheless, I remained undaunted. Seeking clarity in my diasporic identity was an obsession I thought could only be satiated by setting foot in the Motherland. What I did not expect was that the trip would leave me feeling the impossibility of belonging more than ever. There would always be a gap, an emptiness, a hole in my heart. It would be up to me to make beauty from the hole.

I ventured to El Salvador seeking its pastoral charm and romantic allure, inspired by my mother's tales of natural beauty and cultural heritage. The nostalgic recollections of everyday marvels resonated deeply with me. While she had an immigrant's yearning for "home," mine was a diasporic one: El Salvador was my ancestral, not my literal, home. As the Virginia-born child of a Central American immigrant and a Northeastern American father living in the American South, I often found myself straddling multiple identities, not fully fitting into any one space. This taught me to navigate social dynamics and conform to perceived expectations. However, performing gets exhausting.

Thus, in search of pre-war El Salvador, I turned my camera to the delights of the quotidian.

For me, the vista shows a purity my mother recalls from before the war: dove white clouds, mountains and volcanoes too ancient and divine to be affected by human conflict, and a majestic crater lake whose Mayan name refers to the nearby "Hill of Snakes." Green dominates in—as my culturally Catholic mother would say—God's land. Next comes blue, another allusion to the heavens. I was mesmerized by this seemingly haunted hacienda on the edge of a turquoise-colored crater lake, nestled by volcanoes. It speaks to my pining for this country's beauty and respite from another

age. For the first time in my life, I was looking at the sky from El Salvador, which made me think of my mother's tales of how the sky looked different in the land of her childhood. The sky was bluer; the stars shone brighter – the language of nostalgia.

Whether these statements were true or not, they made me want to visit El Salvador even more. As a girl, that never happened because, as my mother said, El Salvador was no longer the country she once knew. The hole in her heart was for the homeland and era she could never visit again. I longed to know this Eden of her memories. If only the waters from the azure lake could fill the holes we both had in our hearts.



A VIEW FROM THE LABERTINTO PROJECTS' RESIDENCY OVERLOOKING LAKE COATEPEQUE.
PHOTOGRAPH CAPTURED BY THE WRITER.

This photograph also hints at the manmade with its fence and ornate planter. Though the view languishes on wildness, its positioning is distinctly domestic. What the viewer cannot know is what stood behind the photographer. Yet having that knowledge myself brings me distinct diasporic pleasure. For all the ways I cannot be someone born and raised in El Salvador, with all that cultural knowledge that comes from day-to-day life, I can know this: The grand house overlooking Lago de Coatepeque

[Lake Coatepeque] guarded a unique archive of Central American art. This archive stemmed from a collection founded by gallerist Janine Janowski, a French Holocaust survivor, and was shepherded by her daughter, Muriel Hasbun, a Salvadoran photographer whose work comments on the messy layers of the diasporic experience.

Meanwhile, the Laberinto house was gathering dust. This time capsule preserved books, family photos, and furnishings from the time before the war. My craving was at least superficially satisfied; This well-preserved house had afforded me a taste of pre-war El Salvador. The paradox is that capturing this image did not actually capture what I wanted: lived experience. Seeing a house with so many relics from that time was not the same as living then. The hole persisted.



INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LABERINTO HOUSE.
PHOTOGRAPH CAPTURED BY THE WRITER.

For those of us living in diaspora, the longings associated with the Motherland may never fully be quenched, but we can find fragments of our family members' memories.



FOLIAGE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE RESIDENCY PROPERTY.
PHOTOGRAPH CAPTURED BY THE WRITER.

The sun-drenched leaves enticed me into the cloud forest, the name of the local ecosystem, which is often mistakenly called a "rainforest" or "jungle" by non-natives. These verdant plants seemed like my mother's tropical illustrations brought to life, a treasured memory from my childhood. This photograph encapsulates my lifelong yearning finally fulfilled: a cherished invitation embraced.

Photography's core appeal lies in its ability to capture instant moments, allowing us to cherish them regardless of distance or time. However, a diasporic homecoming can never replace the lived experience of our forebears. As a hyphenated American, I can never achieve the embodied knowledge of my Salvadoran ancestors or my mother's childhood experiences. Yet I can embrace my dual heritage as a gift rather than a burden. I can choose to see the blessings of complexity rather than the intersections of my identity as some curse of "not belonging." As an artist and a human of diverse experiences, I am able to animate the stillness in these photographs. And, knowing that I possess unique lenses, I'll continue accepting invitations to view the world through ancestral perspectives.

Special Affects: How Is Visual Storytelling Impacting Public Perceptions of the Refugee Crisis?

Sara Rani Reddy

Visual storytelling has long been a powerful tool to combat racism and judgment historically faced by refugees. Throughout the decades-long refugee crisis from the Middle East and Africa, authors and filmmakers have depicted the struggles of refugees to evoke public sympathy. This paper compares the 2014 French graphic novel *Alpha: Abidjan-Gare du Nord* by Bessora, illustrated by Barroux, and the 2022 Netflix film *The Swimmers*, in order to better understand the influence of visual storytelling on public opinion.

The award-winning graphic novel *Alpha: Abidjan-Gare du Nord* follows a man named Alpha on his journey from the Ivory Coast to Paris to find his wife and son, who left to start their journey of *l'immigration clandestine*¹ six months earlier. Over the course of his perilous voyage, Alpha meets many other refugees. In particular, a Nigerian woman named Abebi weaves in and out of Alpha's life during the journey amid many struggles-- relying on prostitution to make money in refugee camps, suffering physical abuse, and being diagnosed with AIDS-- until her death resulting from an unplanned pregnancy and a complicated delivery.

Barroux depicts the characters' faces as loose sketches, not realist portraits, with rough brushstrokes in watery ink and a sparing use of color. There is often nothing more than a network of dots and oblong curves to represent eyes, noses, and mouths. As a result, the emotions of the characters are not explicitly expressed, calling viewers to actively participate in the narrative, using their own intuition to understand what the characters feel. For example, in the images showing Abebi's labor and death, viewers are led to imagine the anguish and grief she must feel in this context, feelings that Barroux only hints at in his sparse rendering of

¹ French phrase to refer to illegal immigration

her face. Paradoxically for a graphic novel, where narration is reliant on vignettes and imagery, *Alpha's* narrative is developed across its pages and the imaginaries of its readers, who are pushed to imagine the realities of this journey of immigration.

The film, *The Swimmers*, similarly provides a close-up view into the real-life experiences of Sara and Yusra Mardini, sisters from Syria who fled the war in their home country in 2015 to reach Europe. The film portrays their harrowing journey as they rush to make it to Germany before Yusra's 18th birthday. In doing so, the sisters would qualify for a policy that would provide visas for their parents and youngest sister to fly to Germany. While attempting to reach Europe by sea, the engine of the patched-up inflatable boat stalls, and the raft begins to sink under the weight of the refugees piled into it. The two sisters, trained by their father as professional-level swimmers, jump into the water, tie the boat's ropes around themselves, and swim, pulling the boat for three hours in the Aegean Sea until they reach the shores of Greece.

Over the course of the film, viewers are presented with many close-ups of the two young women. Their faces fill the frame, leaving viewers with no choice but to process the Mardini sisters' fear, anger, and determination. Confronted with the beads of sweat on their brows, and the streaks of tears in their eyes, viewers must see them not as a number in a news report but rather as human beings fighting to survive. The film goes on to show how the sisters persisted: Yusra continues her swimming training, qualifying for the Refugee Olympic Team at the 2016 Olympics in Rio, and Sara returns to Greece, working as an activist to help refugees arriving on the shores just as she once did. The movie ends as a triumphant true story of two sisters overcoming incredible odds and accomplishing their goals, ultimately making a difference in the lives of other refugees--those they met on the journey and the people they continue to help in their current endeavors advocating for refugees.

Both the film and the graphic novel aim to incite compassion in their viewers using different techniques. *The Swimmers*, with its confrontational close-up shots emphasizing the physical and psychological states of the sisters, casts Sara and Yusra as outstanding heroes, extraordinary poster children, resilient refugees for the viewer to admire. By contrast, *Alpha* champions ambiguity, illustrating Abebi and Alpha with just enough brushstrokes for viewers to recognize the characters, but leaving abundant room for viewers' own imaginations to project the faces of their loved ones onto the characters' bodies.

However, alongside these heroic and sympathetic representations of refugees, we find innumerable imaginings of the refugee in public discourse that serve to increase suspicion and disapproval of this population, thereby muddying the waters in debates about refugee aid and government policies. For example, in 2016, a string of sexual assaults was committed during New Year's celebrations in Cologne, Germany, reportedly by men of Arab or North African appearance. In response, the French periodical *Charlie Hebdo* published a cartoon mocking the viral 2015 photograph of the body of a two-year-old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi,² washed ashore in Turkey after a failed attempt to reach Greece. The cartoon's caption expressed that, had Alan survived and reached Europe, he would have grown up to be a man who gropes women.³ This image spreads the xenophobic and alarmist belief that all refugees are would-be criminals and therefore do not deserve safe havens-- rhetoric used time and again to dehumanize those seeking asylum. It is imperative to discuss the perspectives and agendas of these visual representations of refugees because "the representation of the refugee is a key component of how we write refugee policy, and how that policy is interpreted, supported and contested."⁴ We must constantly ask ourselves how to reconcile these two perspectives--the artistic and the political--if we are to engage in an unbiased discourse with and about refugees.

Thus, these representations, such as *Alpha: Abdijan-Gard du Nord* and *The Swimmers*, that serve to evoke the viewer's sympathy, raise important questions. Does someone need to be extraordinary like Sara and Yusra to earn sympathy and action, or are we called to action because someone's or anyone's human rights are being violated? What can we do with these representations of lived realities to ensure that that people like Alpha, Abebi, Sara, Yusra, and Alan aren't forced to climb into feeble boats on their way to finding a better and safer life?

² In initial reports, the child was referred to as "Aylan" and his age listed as three. His father and aunt later clarified his name was Alan and that he was two years old.

³ Hume, Tim. "Outrage over Charlie Hebdo Cartoon of Dead Toddler Alan Kurdi as Sex Attacker." CNN, January 14, 2016. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/01/14/europe/france-charlie-hebdo-aylan-kurdi/index.html>.

⁴ Johnson, Heather L. "Click to Donate: Visual Images, Constructing Victims and Imagining the Female Refugee." *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 6 (July 2011): 1015-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.586235>.

Anna Ting Moller





Jump into a pool ~~go swimming~~
 in the same water as the mystics
 The place is thin

You said:
 To have a child
 awakens unhealed wounds
 A child requires so much
 Reconciliation rest in me



A child's heart
A deathly longing
We are grafted (~~orphans~~)
and we had nothing
Losing the only remnant of selves
Fosters a nocturnal settlement
a pretense of assimilation



Sanjana Malhotra

Walking into Room 216 of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, you are confronted with an artwork – an expanse of black with tiny white lettering and figures – ‘Anatomy of an AI System’.¹ Through a detailed visual mapping of the processes and infrastructures that power just a single unit of an Amazon Echo, Kate Crawford and Vladen Joler aim to lay bare the hidden costs and complexities of large scale artificial intelligence. However, this clinically presented “anatomy” disguises the socio-material realities and disorder that underlie the production of data that feeds such systems.

In contemporary ‘Digital India,’ the concept of geotagging emerges as a striking example of creating order out of disorder. Geotagging is the process through which media such as an image or video can be linked to a particular geographic location. Government workers are required to geotag an increasing number of assets and activities, everything from rural housing and roads to community meetings. However, when data generated through this process is used to train AI systems,² both the purpose and impact it serves are not self-evident. In this essay, I use a stylized narration of my observations of everyday state functioning in India to provoke a reflection on the effects of datafication.

Aimed to serve as a check against bureaucratic lethargy and corruption the process of geotagging morphs into a medium of control. Beyond constructing a “map” of locations of these assets, the exercise of geotagging is yet another tool for higher level officials to exercise control over lower level bureaucrats by requiring evidence to be generated at every step. Building upon colonial bureaucracy’s obsession with paper, documentation, stamps, and signatures as proof,³ the new India, presenting itself as ‘Digital India,’ now requires the already overburdened

¹ Kate Crawford and Vladen Joler, *Anatomy of an AI System*, 2018, Digital image file, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

² To learn more about the use of AI by the Government of India’s Ministry of Rural Development, see: Tasmia Ansari, “Govt’s Push for Data Science in Rural Development,” *Analytics India Mag (AIM)*, August 11, 2022, <https://analyticsindiamag.com/govts-push-for-data-science-in-rural-development/>; Sanjana Malhotra, Harsh Nisar, Dibyendu Mishra, and Richa Marwah, “Use of Algorithms in the Public Sector: Decision Support or Control Systems?” Poster presented at ACM Conference on Equity and Access in Algorithms, Mechanisms, and Optimization, George Mason University, Arlington, VA, October 6–9 [2022], <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31019.72481>.

³ Akhil Gupta, *Red tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Matthew S. Hull, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Nayanika Mathur, *Paper tiger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

government workers, responsible for implementing critical national programs, to provide proof in the form of geotagged images. This requirement serves as validation, signalling,

“Yes, I did in fact get that pothole on the road fixed on such and such day and at the designated time.”

Yet this control is unstable and illusory. The reality of India’s administrative landscape stands in stark contrast to the orderly nature of the output produced, veiling the inherent disorder and disconnect between the top-most bureaucratic echelons and the ground-level realities. The digital artefacts generated through geotagging – a combination of visual, spatial and temporal information – serve as a mythical representation of efficiency while masking the ‘failing’ nature of the state,⁴ the underlying disarray, and the disconnection between the governing head and its executing limbs.

The very act of imposing order and attempting to create transparency through geotagged images inadvertently gives rise to new forms of chaos. The implementation of geotagging has transformed bureaucrats into frenzied participants in a high-tech treasure hunt. This chaotic exercise, where government officials, armed with smartphones, traverse the country to tag every conceivable asset, unveils a new layer of bureaucratic entanglement. It’s an ironic twist: a tool meant for simplification breeds a complex web of tasks and reporting. This blurring of lines between reality and constructed perceptions is especially pronounced as these images, collected in the millions, are poised to feed advanced computer-vision algorithms. Once the algorithms are deployed, the architects and producers of these digital narratives are simultaneously their consumers. As Roland Barthes might argue, the line between the creators and believers of these myths becomes indistinct.⁵ For Barthes, myths are not false but rather a distortion of reality, simultaneously true and not true.

In his work *datamugshot*,⁶ artist and creative technologist Karthik KG reflects on Aadhar, India’s biometric-based Unique Identification program. *datamugshot* integrated depth sensors that created a trace of

⁴ Lant Pritchett, “Is India a failing state?: Detours on the four lane highway to modernization,” HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP09-013, John F. Kennedy

⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition in A New Translation*, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

⁶ Karthik KG, “*datamugshot*,” Video of installation, New Delhi: Vadhera Art Gallery, 2017/2019, <https://vimeo.com/227536310>.

the viewer that was then projected onto a screen displaying Twitter (now X) posts about biometric identification.⁷ The interactive installation dealt with ideas of identity, representation and techno-politics of data. While Karthik KG's work interrogates the blurriness of identification data, in the case of geotagging, what are the resulting artefacts a trace of?

The act of geotagging renders infrastructures to mythic status, where the image and its associated spatial and temporal information become disputed.

What then is the objective of this exercise?

When I asked the geotaggers I interviewed why they were doing geotagging or what purpose they thought it served, they expressed a sense of meaninglessness. They did not see any purpose in the act of data collection. They called it:

"data collection for the sake of data collection."

Government workers thus function in a 'data assemblage',⁸ combining not just social, economic and political apparatuses but also technological devices and activities.

Through this assemblage, geotagging data operates as a symbol of knowledge⁹ that produces visibility and meaning for third-parties, in this case, bureaucrats at higher levels. Whether the inferences that are possible through such data are 'true' becomes irrelevant for the data gets transformed into a self-referential sign, which can only then be verified through the collection of more data.¹⁰

⁵ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies: The Complete Edition in A New Translation*, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

⁶ Karthik KG, "datamugshot," Video of installation, New Delhi: Vadhera Art Gallery, 2017/2019, <https://vimeo.com/227536310>.

⁷ For more on Karthik KG's work on personal identification and biometrics, see: Anisha Baid, "On Biometric Data Collection: In Conversation with Karthik KG," *ASAP Art*, September 27, 2022, <https://asapconnect.in/post/475/singlestories/on-biometric-data-collection>.

⁸ Rob Kitchin and Tracey P Lauriault, "Towards Critical Data Studies: Charting and Unpacking Data Assemblages and Their Work," *SSRN*, August 1 2014, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2474112>.

⁹ Klaus Hoeyer, and Sarah Wadmann, "'Meaningless Work': How the Datafication of Health Reconfigures Knowledge about Work and Erodes Professional Judgement" *Economy and Society* 49, no. 3 (2020): 433–54.

¹⁰ See Hoeyer and Wadmann (2020), and Paul M. Leonardi and Jeffrey W. Treem, "Behavioral Visibility: A New Paradigm for Organization Studies in the Age of Digitization, Digitalization, and Datafication" *Organization Studies* no. 41, 12 (2020): 1601–25.



TAKEN IN LOCAL BUREAUCRAT'S OFFICE, SHOWING A GEOTAGGED IMAGE OF A ROAD ON THE COMPUTER MONITOR. PHOTOGRAPH BY SANJANA MALHOTRA (2023).

The upper-level bureaucrats sitting in their Lutyens offices in New Delhi demand geotagged images of rural roads as an additional layer of transparency and a monitoring tool to ensure the maintenance and quality of roads.¹¹ Whether they are aware of the conditions within which these images are constructed and how lower level bureaucrats function is inconsequential. The upper-level bureaucrats, in all likelihood, started off as mid-level bureaucrats themselves, closer to their counterparts now being made to add photos and geotags. However, years of government service within a structured system of hierarchies and transfers to higher and higher levels of power leads them to forget the realities of the everyday life of bureaucracy and the actual steps it takes to implement a government program on the ground. The stark capacity gaps that create the challenges of rural governance are washed over through the creation and consumption of these geotagged images.

¹¹ See Ansari (2022) and Malhotra et al (2022).

The myth-makers become the myth-consumers, having convinced themselves that this image represents the true road condition. Government data warehouses store millions and millions of such images. What better way to use them than as training data for a computer-vision algorithmic model to detect the "true" road condition? Doing so will keep the lower-level bureaucrats who work hand-in-glove with greedy contractors in-check and help improve the maintenance of roads otherwise riddled with potholes, they say. The geotagged image of the road is viewed as the "truth." However, in doing so, the "road" is elevated to the level of myth.

As an image constructed under these peculiar conditions, what can this image of the road actually tell us about the road itself? Going through hundreds of geotagged images of roads myself, I was intrigued by the dichotomy between how the image of the road is perceived and judged as a "good" or "bad" road. The myth is exposed through the contradictions in the characterization of road quality between the computer-vision model developed by technocrats in New Delhi, what I, as a lay-person in the context of road engineering, and the lower level bureaucrat, who is a civil engineer with several years of experience working on roads.

Despite being subliminally aware of the spectacle of governmentality and cycle of mythmaking in which they are engaged, lower-level bureaucrats are like cogs in the government machine and have no choice but to continue to construct these geotagged images. Furthering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's quest to use "technology as a weapon in the war against poverty"¹² and eager to gain brownie-points for "innovation," higher level bureaucrats seek to implement emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning. But for that, we need data, and the process of geotagging provides just the fodder they need.

The archive of 'Digital India' is a storehouse of such images of roads, toilets, homes, schools, hospitals, even cows... All now waiting to be entered into the black-box of Artificial Intelligence only to emerge as new myths altogether.

¹² Hindustan Times News Desk, "India Using Technology as Weapon against Poverty, Says PM Modi," Hindustan Times, November 16, 2022, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-using-technology-as-weapon-against-poverty-says-pm-modi-101668576498374.html>.

postscript.

Artists have been called the "Distant Early Warning system" of social and technological change.¹³ If Crawford and Joler were to 'warn' us about the cycles of myth creation and perpetuation that belie an AI system, what would the anatomy of an AI system look like? What new connections would it reveal [or obscure]?



SCAN TO VIEW 'ANATOMY OF AN AI SYSTEM'

BY KATE CRAWFORD AND VLADEN JOLER



SCAN TO VIEW DATAMUGSHOT

BY KARTHIK KG

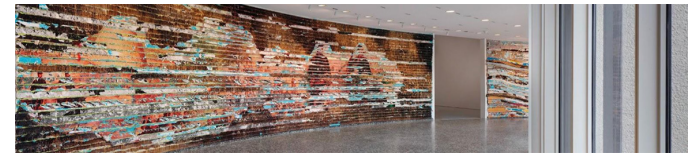
¹³ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT-Press, 2002).

Mark Bradford's *Pickett's Charge*: Stratums of Historical Memory

Charlotte Nash



Mark Bradford, *Pickett's Charge (Battle)*, 2016–17.
Mixed media on canvas, 11 ft. 7 in. x 45 ft. (3.5 x 1.4 m).
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.
Photo: Joshua White.
Work © Mark Bradford



Pickett's Charge, 2017
8 mixed media works
Almost 400 ft long (each 45–50 ft x 12 ft)
Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.

In a central rotunda of Washington D.C.'s Hirshhorn Museum lives an installation work spanning all 360 degrees of sight and a total of around 400 linear feet. What could be mistaken initially for decay, worn and torn by time, is an intricately constructed commission by Mark Bradford. An American visual artist, Bradford's work is "characterized by its layered formal, material, and conceptual complexity,"¹ and often addresses societal structures through a process of reframing and excavation.

"Pickett's Charge" is deceptively complex; layers upon layers of colored paper and prints are cut, torn, and shredded to reveal deeper layers still. Bradford, having created the work on top of eight super-sized printouts of the original "Pickett's Charge," (more on that in a moment) the work comes to clash with our traditional understandings of historical painting and abstraction. Like layers of wheatpaste posters that wear and tear on construction walls around almost every corner in urban landscapes, the work almost calls to its viewer, tempting them to reach out and peel back another layer to reveal what is underneath.

¹ Hauser & Wirth, "Mark Bradford," 2023.

My own knowledge of American history, I will admit, is quite limited, and so I found myself having to go on my own excavation. The title "Pickett's Charge" is taken from the name of a climactic Confederate failed infantry charge against the Union on July 3, 1863, in the Battle of Gettysburg in the American Civil War; a charge that many cite as a major turning point in the war in favor of the Union and the beginning of the 'Lost Cause,'² with the Confederates suffering over 50% casualties.³ Major General George Pickett was one of the losing commanding generals on July 3rd and thus the battle was named "Pickett's Charge."

In 1879, a full 16 years after, french artist Paul Dominique Philippoteaux was commissioned by the National Panorama Company to create a 360° cyclorama of the legendary battle for display in Chicago, where it was presented to the public in 1883 to much acclaim with the title "The Battle of Gettysburg." The work was so popular that three more versions of the massive work were later created. Philippoteaux, despite not being present at the battle, conducted months worth of research including a series of photographic surveys and interviews with survivors of the battle and Union generals to construct his massive composition.

Cycloramas, once a vastly popular form of entertainment and historical presentation. While in its heyday, cycloramas were often described with the same enthusiasm from the public as an IMAX movie experience.⁴ Meant to be as immersive as possible, popular topics included land and sea battles, with most major cities having at least one in the late nineteenth century.⁵ With the passage of time, however, cycloramas decreased in popularity with the rise of new technological developments (particularly the groundbreaking moving picture) as the world moved into the twentieth century. Currently, only around 30 cycloramas still exist

² Reardon, Carol (1997). *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (pdf). Civil War America. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. p. 285.

³ *Operations in North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the Department of the East. June 3 – August 3, 1863 – Reports.* The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Vol. XXVII-XXXIX-I. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁴ Jarvis, Craig (May 2, 2007). "Triangle trio buys massive painting". *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC). The News and Observer Publishing Company. Archived from the original on September 27, 2007.

⁵ Harrison, Nancy (7 August 2011). "Everything Just So: Cycloramas, The North American Tour". *The Chattanoogaogan*. Archived from the original on 19 August 2021.

today. In 2003, the original work, now also known as the "Gettysburg Cyclorama" underwent a massive conservation project before being placed in its current home at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center in Pennsylvania, opening to the public in 2008.

These scenes and stories were once something held dear to the American people; now they likely lay in wait for occasional visitors to gaze upon them. None of this, of course, is evident upon looking at Bradford's abstracted rendition of the historical painting. As I gazed upon the abstracted contemporary take of an outdated medium, it is clear that without the extra bit of effort on my own part, the hidden stories and secrets would have been left under the piles of dirt and time.

The peeling and torn layers of Bradford's *Pickett's Charge* express a practice of historical excavation shaped by the complex social histories of the United States. In preparation for his version, Bradford mirrored Philippoteaux's preparation process; like the artist 130 years before him, he traveled to Charlottesville, walked the fields the soldiers walked, and surveyed the land. He printed out portions of Philippoteaux's work to layer his own overtop before stripping apart layer after layer, working through the complex and layered history of the legacy of the Civil War. With enough distance and generations, history becomes obscured, left only to those who dig at it. It is messy; "Emotionally and physically," Bradford says, "you have to keep at it. The physicalness of that is faith. It's not when the going is good, but when everything is falling apart. You get through that with faith."

Agnese Fanizza

"I am not in space and time, nor do I think space and time; rather, I am of space and time; my body fits itself to them and embraces them"
 - Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*¹

Our bodies take up and embrace space and time, but, within the specific timespace of our university campus, our bodies are defined by who can and cannot be here. Within our gates, bodies have been arrested, infected, and erased, effacing the boundaries between bodies and place. The questions that concern us now, as graduate students at Columbia University, pertain to understanding where we can be if both the space and time of the University we "belong to" keeps telling us that we are not welcome.

This article was born as critique, but has grown into an elaboration of emotion, reflection, and reaction - it is messy because I do not yet know what to think. I embrace this confusion by confessing that I have more questions than answers. By utilizing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the nature, condition, and essence of being, I wish to establish an ongoing, critical yet confused, dialogue between him and myself, on what it means to *be* Columbia. Most importantly, to assert that something must change. In essence, this piece is a reflection on how we be on campus, characterized by a deep feeling of disheartenment, of not knowing my place as an art historian at, within, and from Columbia University.

As matriculated students of the institution we have the "right" to be on campus, but the University is continuously putting up barriers to this right. Our learning is gated, we are fenced into our classrooms and a perfectly curated campus. We are kept within a so-called 'peaceful oasis of the life of the mind,'² but are increasingly confronted with gates, fences, and security guards to keep us away from certain parts of campus.

¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2013. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald Landes. New York: Routledge:141.

² Herman Wouk cited in: Columbia University. 2013. *Columbia University in the City of New York: "A Doubled Magic"*. Joe Turner Lin. Oct 4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cwUcdpUayQ>.

of campus. Just as much as these measures keep us within campus, seemingly isolated from the wider city and real world, they keep us at arms length from the institution and legacy of Columbia. Gates are "unexpectedly" closed for "safety" reasons upon first whispers of a dangerous and threatening peaceful protest. In these situations, a plasticized ID card confirms my status as "CU - Student" by placing a photo that doesn't quite look like me anymore alongside that of the *Alma Mater*, the campus's pride and joy. A simple ID, a piece of plastic, becomes more containing than barbed wire; proving my right to enter and be within the gates, and asserting that I am a part of and complicit with the institution, but also keeping out the unwanted, "intruders."

During these partial closures, there is a fencing off of the *Alma Mater*, the 1904 statue by Daniel Chester French personifying education and Columbia's legacy. Throughout the 20th century she has been painted, stripped, bombed, and healed. *Alma Mater* finds herself in a cathartic identity crisis much like our own; should she embody Columbia's past or future? Is her celebration of education rooted in history or in the modern, present? If even her being is unclear, what should we make of our own? Our 'nurturing mother' is both an attestation to student dissatisfaction and revolt and the University's aim to protect a legacy of "greatness." In literally fencing her off, the University claims that she must be protected over her own students. An inanimate body of stone over students' breathing, protesting bodies. This is not to mention the trash cans left around the Low Library steps April 4th after the organized solidarity protest for AI-Shifa. *Alma Mater* must be protected from certain ideas and positions, and not others; but also must be kept clean and pristine - as if a peaceful protest can only produce trash. Resistance becomes posited as pollution.

Alma has been in a continuous succession of different times and spaces that embrace her unwavering presence. Her own significance has changed, but she remains the "soul" of Columbia. In fact, our being here and being represented by *Alma Mater* ties us directly to the legacy and history of Columbia University. Our bodies 'embrace' this rhetoric and legacy, assimilating, even if unintentionally, a timespace defined by steadfast, preapproved ideas. Those ideas that do not comply with Columbia's are not let in at all. Therefore, rather than speaking of campus as a locational space, the right-now as approximate time, and our bodies belonging to these situationally, Merleau-Ponty's reflection becomes more existential.

As students, working at Columbia University in the spring of 2024, our bodies are molded into the ideas and positions fuelling the institution. There is no way of extricating our bodies from this campus, even when we leave the gates, we remain students of Columbia, even our ID cards tell us so.

The issue is that when the physical space of our learning - our campus - is telling us that we are not welcome and repeatedly validating our exclusion, we have nowhere to go. As being is constituted of our space and time, what does it mean for our space, at this time, to be defined by gates and structures that physically divide us from the rest of the city, the rest of *our* time? That this time and space is no longer ours? That our campus-oasis cannot be so for everyone? This critique becomes as institutional as it is personal, and bodily. We are not in or on Columbia's campus, but we are *of* Columbia, even though Alma has been showing us again and again that she does not want us here. If I am fenced off from the ongoing legacy of the institution, how can I contribute to its future? The condition of being closed in, and off, feels that it is affecting my work. I feel stunted, helpless, and embarrassed of the ID that places me alongside Alma. How can I continue to work on a campus that does not want my freedom of speech or body to approach its longstanding legacy? As it is our bodies that fit into different time-spaces, it feels as if there is no hope for Columbia to fit to our needs as current students. Instead, it is implied that we, our bodies, must adapt to institutional positions and histories. This is the dynamic that makes me feel unstable and insecure as an academic - how can I continue to produce work for a timespace that I do not want to embrace, or even be of? They don't want me but I don't want them either.

I believe that, ultimately, the first surfaces of critique must be our own bodies. We must question our bodies as vehicles of history and indoctrination. How do we unstick our bodies? Our actions? Our thinking? Can our bodies fit into and embrace a space and time that is not gated by Columbia?

My question remains unanswered; how can we be Columbia University? If you have any ideas, please let me know.



Note from the author.

This piece was written before the events following April 17th. Obviously, the feelings of not feeling welcome or feeling Columbia have exacerbated any potential I had imagined. This question is about more than gates, fences, and an outdated statue. I want to thank the brave students in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment because they answer my question. Being Columbia at this time is dependent on those who speak up, out and against. They are rejecting a constraining timespace to build their own and stand up for Gaza. This new tent-based campus, The People's University for Palestine, has created a new space at the heart of a hostile campus, making me believe that there are, in fact, ways to be on campus and be at this institution without remaining silent. Personally, they've given me hope and a whole new campus to learn to be in and of.

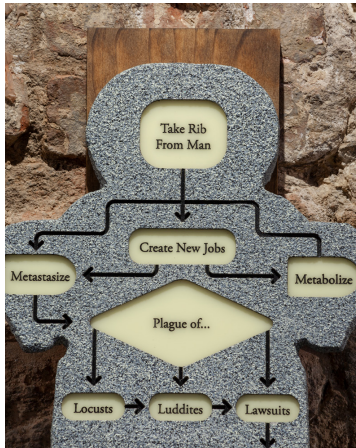
Interview: Anna Pederson

Linda Dai

Anna Pederson (b.1996, Saint Paul, MN)

is a textile and sculptural artist based in Queens. Her work reflects a romantic vision of industry, specifically as it relates to culture, spirituality, and our perception of nature; the relationship between modernization and the Human Spirit. In drafting and fabrication, digital processes are used in tandem with techniques and motifs which engage preindustrial traditions of craft. Subject matter is often sourced from innocuous realms of the internet; stock photography banks, eBay photos, Flickr accounts. Imagery that could exist in a time before consumer technology became so ubiquitously attached to feelings of cynicism and paranoia. In January, Pederson exhibited a new body of work in a duo show with sculptor Radimir Koch in *Secrets to Graceful Living* at Alyssa Davis Gallery.

This interview is transcribed from a conversation with artist Anna Pederson that took place on February 23, 2024 at the ARTXNYC space, where Secrets to Graceful Living was exhibited.



Anna Pederson,
200 Lbs of American Born Flesh, 2023, detail



Radimir Koch & Anna Pederson,
Installation view: *Secrets to Graceful Living*,
Alyssa Davis Gallery, 2024

L To start off, I want to pick your brain about your art-making process. How does your craft come into fruition?

A In terms of materiality and ideality, I often start with a treatment of a material and then make a sample or mock up. Then I tuck it away. Once the subject matter comes along, I'll go back to my impromptu library to find ways to bring it to life.

Pederson pulls out her phone and scrolls through process pictures from her "library."

It could be seeds in a domino resin mold or, even just styrofoam and aluminum, because I'm not going to learn how to solder. I also love peeling cardboard and seeing the corrugated texture underneath. For this show, I remember going to my notebook to brainstorm potential pieces, and the end result just turned into a list of materials.

L How do you come across these materials and their treatments?

A Just through everyday, ephemeral encounters. Like with the cardboard, you know when you take tape off a box and it takes a layer of the box off with it? Especially when it's not all the way peeled off and the corrugation peeking through forms almost like a camo pattern. Things like that spark my interest.

L Going off of that, a lot of your works might use modern materials, but they also incorporate a nostalgic touch. Would you say that's intentional?

A Yeah! That's the thesis of my whole practice, actually. Folk art and craft are really important to me because they imply a humanity that feels absent in certain things being produced today.



Anna Pederson, *Sentries & Kiss Quilt*, 2023

L Do you feel like your practice, to a certain degree, materializes or confronts these modern anxieties? Where else does inspiration come from?

A It's pretty random. I focus more on form and the meaning comes later. It could come from anything. A lot of makeshift objects. I could be walking and see a bucket upside down with something taped to it. There's something accidentally sculptural and charming to me about the act of perceiving structures or objects and appreciating them as sculptural art. Perhaps there is an anxiety embedded in these gestures, but it's not something I am actively trying to address.

L When you mention sculpture as a form that you're interested in, how are you defining the term in your practice?

A In my head, I call it 3D. I'm not so into orienting it through realism or formalism. I'm not trying to make a replica of anything. I love using materials in a way they're not supposed to be used and transforming their shape and form in a playful way.

I almost treat it like an act of bastardization. I believe sculptures should be funny, and being funny is important to me.

L Do you think this ties into your emphasis on craft? Like adding that element of humanity and sensory touch.

A Yeah. It's a messy and imperfect process to be entangled in, but one I consider to be valuable in my practice. If you're making something and have a clean desk, then you're not really getting anything from the process.

I frame it in terms of stale mess versus active mess. Sometimes I'll forget about a project for days at a time and I'll come back and the mess reminds me of what I was thinking about in that moment of creation. It applies to projects online too. The clusters on a computer desktop naturally map your state of mind and trace your thinking from start to finish.

A I never see my work as truly original creations, but more so products of my scavenging. The mess of all the imagery, materials, ideas, and artists that I found and put together.

L Do you feel like that engagement with your surroundings is something you're actively aware of? How do you figure out what's precious to you and what to include or exclude in your archive?

A I definitely identify as a hoarder. I have stuff, like shells or little brooches that I picked up 10 years ago and still haven't used. But, I have faith in all the junk that I keep.

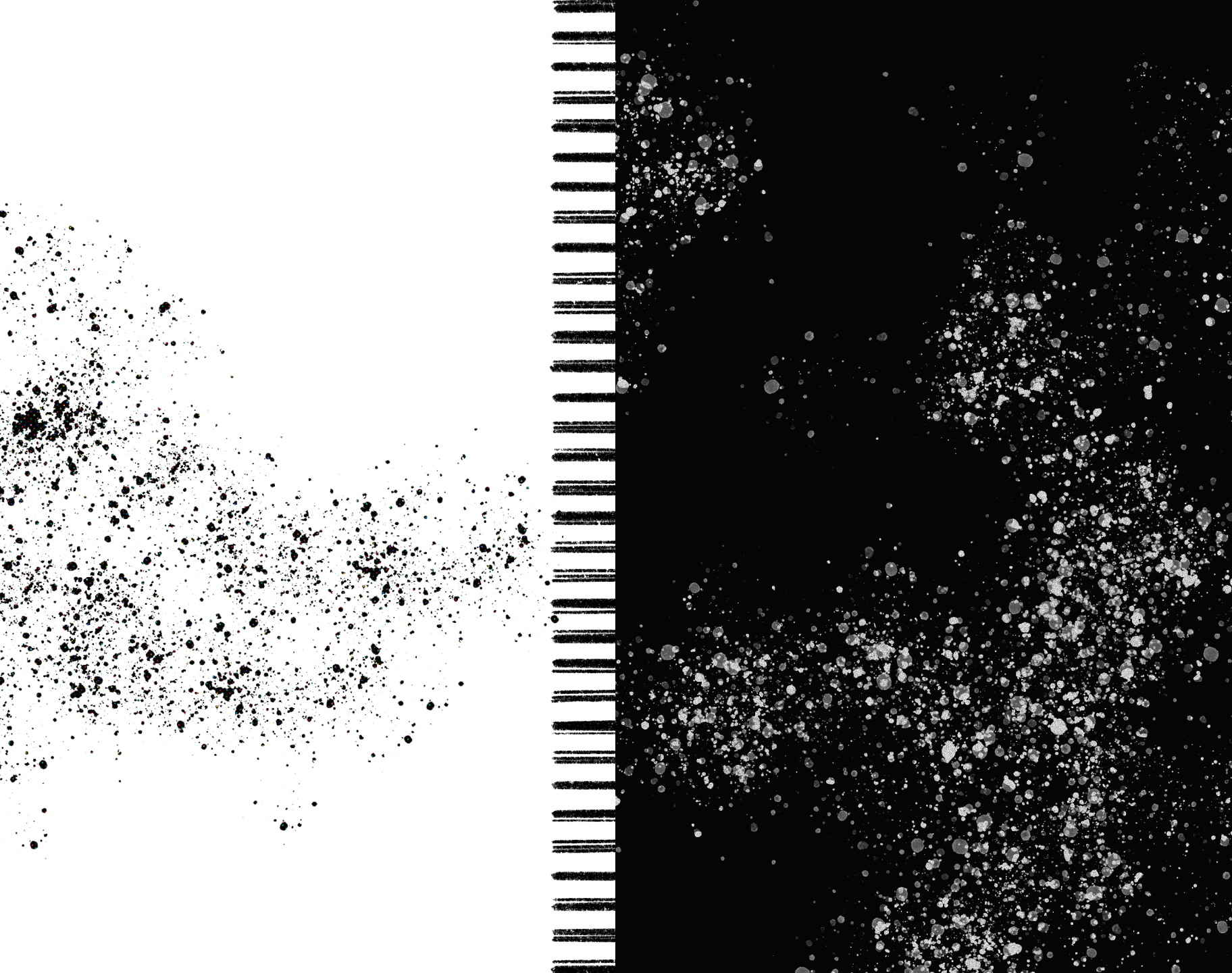
L Is everything just from your physical environment? Where else do you look?

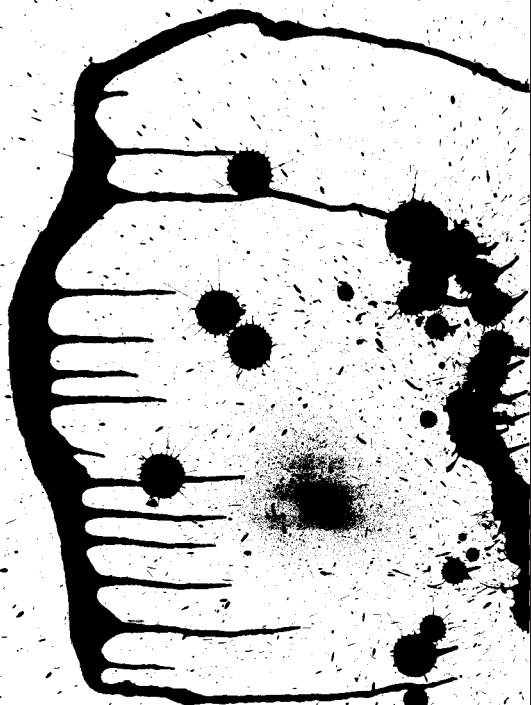
A Ebay. I have a lot of bionicles from Ebay. I love bionicles. Otherwise, mainly the ground that I walk on. I walk dogs for a living right now, so I find a lot of shit on my walks that I just take home. Print stuff is great too. I love church pamphlets, academic illustrations, and medical diagrams.

L Is this sense of serendipity traced in the making of this show as a whole? What do you hope for people to take away from this exhibit?

A Maybe. I think a lot of things did fall together rather inadvertently, for better or for worse. I've heard a couple of people, in reference to the show, say that my work comments on capitalism or industrialism, which could be true from a certain perspective. But I don't want my work to ever just be about one thing.

It's about finding beauty in detritus. It's about making, which is intertwined with multiple things. Art will always start living a life of its own if you let it. Mess will resolve itself, all I have to do is keep looking for ways to create it.





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