
LYNDSAY BLOOM
TANYA BRODSKY
STEFANI BYRD
LUCAS COFFIN
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SHANA DEMASSI
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DOSSIER THALAMUS

MFA

2016

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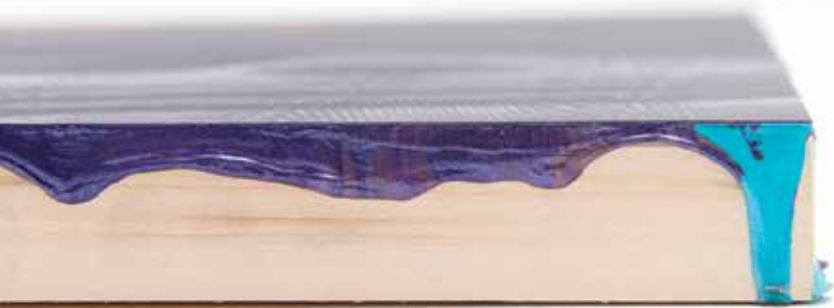
COLLECTIVE MAGPIE

ERIKA OSTRANDER

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Working from photography, Kara Joslyn's paintings engage the modalities of both representation and abstraction. Her palette includes holographic, iridescent, metallic, and optical materials in tandem with black and white. Painting with an airbrush, Joslyn's images mimic, codify, and reflect on the surface to fool the eye.

"The slippage between object, photograph, and painterly depiction is reconstituted in images for which the representational potentiality of the paintings in fact slips away—while one can sense a deeply somatic relationship to process or between ourselves and the subjects, it is difficult to imagine these floating

figures in a room or resting on a surface of some kind in the same way we cannot quite fathom their iridescence. Joslyn's luminously depicted models indeed "invade" her supports much in the way Foucault observes of Magritte's subjects. The empty masks and crumpled or folded sheets of lustrous images are both enigmatic and insistent. There is no human subject. These are images that ask to be themselves, thoughtfully."

— *Beautiful Treason: Adventures in the Art of Transmutation*, Lizzy D. Miller, Catalogue Essay for UCSD thesis exhibition: Kara Joslyn: *No Future*, 2016



ARTISTS BIOS

LYNDSAY BLOOM uses film as medium and content material to produce works that are self-reflective in their study of movement and image. She works mainly by hand-processing 16mm film, a procedure that can be considered obsolete in our digital era. However, by incorporating the hand-made process and its effects, Bloom is also editing the element of time in a poetic manner—not only due to the time-based nature of the medium, but also as a presence of a character in them. This presence can be understood as her own, as the gaze present in the material shot but at the same time as a sort of ghost that haunts the images. Bloom has documented oceanic expeditions (in collaboration with researchers from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography), including experiments with sonars and data collecting technologies. A more recent film installation on volcanic crater lakes in central Mexico, with sound score composed by Caroline Miller, presents images of desiccated lakes in black-and-white and color, positive and negative. Albeit in the present, they have a vintage look, which enhances the sensation of the passage of time and the antiquated process transferred to video.

TANYA BRODSKY has an ongoing concern with materials, the formal elements of everyday objects and our interactions with them. Dialoguing with minimalism and modernity, her sculptures exist in a space of tension between formality and (non-)functionality. In her most recent exploration of support forms that include brightly-colored metal handrails and railings surprisingly protruding from walls and corners, Brodsky uses the shape of the Trzepak as a case-study. The Trzepak is an outdoor device of public use, mandatory in shared public spaces of residential projects in countries such as her native Ukraine and in Poland, used to beat the dust out of carpets and rugs, or to dry clothes. Constructed with steel pipes configured to accommodate human scale, this contraption resembles a minimalist sculpture due to its simple frame form. The artist plays with the

form and scale of the Trzepak, enlarging it, cutting it in half, or scaling it down, potentially so it becomes non-functional (a function that has become outdated with the introduction of vacuum cleaners). In addition, Brodsky adds hanging elements made with textured resin, resembling towels or rugs, to create a contrast with the smooth finish of the steel pipes and to question or understanding of our bodies in space.

Working mostly with video, sound installation, and new media, **STEFANI BYRD**'s work has evolved from a practice focused on public art to a more intimate way of approaching issues of human interaction. While her early work dealt with social experiments in the public sphere, often using humor as a recourse for inclusion and participation, the artist has always considered live performance a crucial aspect of the work. Whether coming from casted performers interacting “live” with the viewers, or digital surrogates responding in real-time, the works question what changes when we interact with one another. Byrd's most recent works, *The Razor's Edge*, 2015–16, and *Cacophony*, 2014–15, focus on breath as a vehicle that captures the essence of a being, and is also a bridge between the outside and internal world. In *Cacophony*, words from news coverage of shootings from the last 10 years, including Sandy Hook in 2012, are removed in an immersive sound installation that includes only the moments when the correspondents take a breath between sentences.

LUCAS COFFIN's video installations have been developed from his previous work in sculpture in which ideas about labor, life, and material, have persisted through his production. Coffin's recent work is informed by his latest experiences as a substitute teacher working with students with developmental disabilities that include language, motor functions, and learning. In his work, he analyzes the methods of the education system adapted for these students with special needs and critically questions the differences and voids in the education system as a whole, which in many instances should

inform one another, as special education follows models of group work and sensory integration. In an installation from 2014–15, a series of videos recorded from inside a spherical educational toy present a chaotic but democratic view of the outside, abstracted through geometric holes or color. These videos are projected onto a wall of a classroom where desks have been modified to be attached to each other in rows; chairs facing in different directions. Ongoing video installations invite the viewer to observe the juxtaposition between the modified objects and the experience brought by the abstract and limited information from the projected images, and question the methods and process of learning.

JENA CUMMISKEY's production represents an ongoing concern with time, memory and its physicality. Working mainly in digital media, she creates videos and installations that question the physical and cognitive presence of the self in the process of creation and how temporality plays a role in the preservation of memory. Cummiskey collects images and footage from creative commons and her own personal digital archives in an effort to understand the relationship between culture and the self. She “quilts” or puts together this information in immersive installations that blur the virtual and the real, as in her interactive installation *Duilt*, from 2012. Questioning the virtual experience of our every-day interactions with technology and ourselves, she created *RE:RE:RE:*, a series of inkjet prints made by scanning the printed image of a screen capture of her computer several times. Her most recent work consists of an installation that includes her personal computer and printouts of all the data contained in it, in an attempt to understand and reconfigure the relationship between her digital and her bodily existences.

SHANA DEMASSI's work in sculpture has explored the relationship of the body and landscape, and ways to abstract the figure into an action. More recently, she has expanded this investigation to large-scale drawing made

with sheets as support using her whole body in motion. The use of this support is connected to the scale of the body, as well as to how as an object, it wraps and shelters the body—the sheet or cover not only as a place of rest of the body, but also an allegory of the shelter as a cave in antiquity, a place where we, in the past, made cave drawings. Thus, these drawings function also as objects—an ongoing relation with sculpture—that are activated through process and corporeal action. The relationship with the material is formal, but also a visceral one since the action of drawing can be considered a performance, albeit personal. The final piece is meant to be a trace of the artist's body, but also a trigger of a muscular memory of our own presence in it.

ANGIE JENNINGS' performance work has many facets. Two of her main concerns are the figure and the gaze. The many characters that she has embodied—ranging from a doll to a witch to a dunce—are studies on non-human, monstrous bodies. She uses performance, her own body, to obtain, or rather lose, human qualities as she considers these magical transformations to symbolize the gaze of the other. Her performance work also incorporates painting. Jennings' most recent paintings include abstract compositions made with the use of ethnic prints, and “yarn painting” in which she drips yarn with paint and other textured materials and adheres it to canvases or textiles. The layered compositions also function as extensions of her personae—they are veils that allow to see only partially and portals to a dimension where the monstrous is the only way to defeat otherness.

KARA JOSLYN is a painter and a self-declared collector of objects and images. Her work is a combination of “old” and a new take on techniques; she has previously produced zines due to her interest in the black and white look of the handmade. In her most recent painting series she uses airbrush to reproduce images from a vintage book on paper sculptures. Nevertheless, her work should not be considered

appropriation—she is interested in DYI in the same way she is on the idea of imprinting or recording memory through image reconstruction. Her works are in direct conversation with the history of painting, going from the Baroque to the Light and Space movement, but simultaneously reject it, challenging the idea of the male genius (the book of paper sculptures was produced by a woman and Joslyn has chosen to study this to subvert hierarchies and categorizations of high and low).

On the other hand, the paintings selected for this exhibition belong to a series in which she scans holograms to capture the different ways light is diffracted and then she paints these effects. The resulting abstractions “drip” to their edges, giving an effect of continuity of the hand that painted them and also point at the continuity of information that keeps unfolding on the different layers of the surface. This extension of time is a reflection on Joslyn’s fixation on time as a continuum—equally ancient and futuristic, and the indexical qualities of materials.

The entity known as **COLLECTIVE MAGPIE** is formed by Tae Hwang & MR Barnadas. Drawing from their individual diasporic identities and experiences, their work as a collective experiments with geography, place, science and technology, often creating public sculptural installations that symbolize liminal spaces of interaction and possibility.

The work developed for this exhibition is a reflection on their experience as students of UCSD’s MFA program, where they applied and were admitted as a collective entity to later be demanded to present their thesis as individuals. The original site for the 2015 MFA group show was University Art Gallery (UAG) at UCSD. Upon the sudden news of the gallery’s permanent closure in its 50th year, Collective Magpie created a shared gesture to acknowledge this last moment. This installation was intended to contain documents and materials from the moment they applied to the program to their graduation certificates, as well as a letter from the Office of Graduate Affairs stating that the exception made in allowing them to

graduate as a collective is not representative of a precedent to be followed. The performative action of documenting their experience and presenting it as an artwork is directly connected to their practice and their concerns on the social and participation, as well as their commitment to working collectively and horizontally, in dialogue with each other but also with the places and institutions they inhabit.

ERIKA OSTRANDER explores process and the content of material through sculptural and installation works that always involve the idea of the traces our body leaves behind. In works such as *Hold My Bones*, the surface has absorbed salt, and this material represents the presence of the body through body fluids such as sweat. These body traces, or remnants are spun literally and metaphorically to create mythologies. Ostrander also considers issues of domesticity and the body in this storytelling. Not only through the bodily traces but also in the tactility of the materials. The artist believes that ephemeral moments leave relics, and these relics remain to tell stories. For example, she has spun a column of hair collected from various sources including a hair salon where she used to work, or friends that have saved it for her. This sculpture represents storytelling through the parts of us that we shed, and thus personal experience becomes a material along with our discarded remnants.

KYLE J. THOMPSON’s work analyzes material transformations, focusing primarily on rocks and their properties. The project “lucette,” inspired by a character in Vladimir Nabokov’s *Ada, or Ardor* who kills herself in the Atlantic Ocean, is an assemblage of chemical reactions, video, 3D renderings, and molecular metaphors. By exploring the molecular composition of a specific rock and superimposing it on the exquisitely-penned story of Lucette, Thompson generates an intricate poetic narrative that weaves together molecular theory with time, fate, chance, the sea, and the impossibility of measuring distance as a subjective and fluctuating phenomenon.

LYNDSAY BLOOM

1. *SEA SOAR*, 2015, Film scored by Caroline Louise Miller, 50 minutes 50 seconds, hand and lab processed 16mm film transferred to HD, color and b/w, sound
2. *KUKA*, 2016, Film in collaboration with Angela Michelle Jennings, score by Fernanda Aoki Navarro, 17 minutes 25 seconds, hand and lab processed 16mm film, color and b/w, sound
3. *AXALAPAZCOS*, 2016, Three-channel video installation in collaboration with Caroline Louise Miller, 5 minute 45 second loops, hand and lab processed 16mm film transferred to HD, color and b/w, sound
4. *AXALAPAZCOS*, 2016

TANYA BRODSKY

1. *Trzepak variations 2 & 3*, 2016, Powder coated steel, Quikrete, resin, 96 x 48 inches and 65 x 96 inches
2. *Trzepak variation 2* (detail)
3. Installation view, thesis exhibition: *Friends & Family*, 2016, Main Gallery, UCSD

STEFANI BYRD

1. *Cacophony (24hr News Cycle)*, 2015, Six Channel Audio, Speakers, Stands, and Overhead Spotlight
2. *The Razor’s Edge No. 1-4*, 2015, Individual HD Videos on Vertically Mounted Monitor
3. *The Razor’s Edge No. 5-8*, 2015, Individual HD Videos on Vertically Mounted Monitor

LUCAS COFFIN

1. *Stay on Track*, 2014, multi media installation
2. *The Winner*, 2016, 00:18:00, Single channel video
3. *Desk #13*, 2014, Found object from a Southern California High School
4. *Dirty Manila*, 2016, 00:28:19, multi media, projection mapped video, installation and live performance

JENA CUMMISKEY

1. *EUYOSU*, 2016, Screenshot, Web-Application
2. *EUYOSU*, 2016, Screenshot, Web-Application

SHANA DEMASSI

3. *still life*, 2015, coyote pelt, leather, desert sand, dimensions variable
2. *deadweight* (detail), 2016, sheet, dirt, snail, grass, 6.5 x 8.5 inches
3. *deadweight*, 2016

ANGIE JENNINGS

1. *Untitled (yellow corner, from the corner series)*, 2014, digital photograph, dimensions variable
2. *Untitled (black painting made from a scrubber, paints and stains found in the Visual Arts Facility garbage)*, 2015, mixed media on canvas, 24 x 20 inches
3. *Untitled (black painting made from styrofoam, paints and stains found in the Visual Arts Facility garbage)*, 2015, mixed media on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

KARA JOSLYN

1. *Mask (geometric solids and variations)*, 2015, acrylic and polymer car paint on panel, 35 x 24 inches
2. *Fold (geometric solids and variations)*, 2015, acrylic and polymer car paint on panel, 14 x 14 inches
3. *Transmission (black)* (detail), 2014, acrylic and polymer car paint, digital print on panel, 24 x 20 inches
4. *Transmission (black)*, 2014

ERIKA OSTRANDER

1. *Do You Feel Closer*, 2015, Performance Documentation
2. *Untitled (Hair Piece)*, 2014, Human hair, size variable
3. *Hold My Bones (Compression 1)*, 2016, pulped paper, lint, burlap, salt, 12 x 24 inches
4. *Hold My Bones (Compression 2)*, 2016, pulped paper, burlap, salt, 3 x 5 feet

MFA RESEARCH AND NEUROESTHETICS

The etymology of “aesthetic”: from German *Ästhetisch* or French *esthétique*, both from Greek *aisthētikos* “sensitive, perceptive,” from *aisthanesthai* “to perceive (by the senses or by the mind), to feel,” from “*awis-dh-yo-*”, from root **au-* “to perceive (as in the word ‘audience’).”

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=aesthetic>

“...the artist is in a sense, a neuroscientist, exploring the potentials and capacities of the brain, though with different tools. How such creations can arouse aesthetic experiences can only be fully understood in neural terms.”

— Semir Zeki, Neuroesthetics at the University College of London

Aesthetics is the perception of feelings or the feelings of perception that flood our entire sensorium, our psychoplasmic tendencies, this means that we can measure the wave length of color, the density of a material, the elasticity of the retinal cone, but we may not be able to capture the feelings the color, or the material, or the “eye of the beholder.” Instead we must consider that aesthetics might not be a bottom-up process driven by neural primitives or a top-down process of high-level abstraction? Abstractions that are being imagined as objectively mapped as neural-correlates. Aesthetic experience is a ping-pong interaction between top-down, an intentional orientation of attention, and the bottom-up perceptual construction. Aesthetics is an embodied dialectical break between neural primitives and meta-neural networks. In other words, because a viewer or audience automatically apply the object-identification as a habit when viewing artwork, an artist has to create work that disturbs this automatic habit in order to engage aesthetic perception. Aesthetics is an interruption of neural-habits that cause primitive and meta-functions to swerve towards other types of synthetic or fabricated neural conditions or connections.

Popularized in English by translations of works of Immanuel Kant and used originally in the classically correct sense “the science which treats of the conditions of sensuous perception.” Kant had tried to correct the term after Alexander Baumgarten had taken it in German to mean “criticism of taste” (1750s), but Baumgarten’s sense attained popularity in English c. 1830s (despite scholarly resistance) and removed the word from any philosophical base. Walter Pater used it (1868) to describe the late 19c. movement that advocated “art for art’s sake,” which further blurred the sense.

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=aesthetic>

MFA training and research focuses on creating new tools that allow the brain and the mind, the primitive and the meta-function, feeling and perception, to become something more than each part can reflect, construct, or project onto, by flooding neural networks with systemic arousals that cannot be fully measured or tested at either end of the spectrum. MFA work is the creation of neural-swerves that dis-locate, re-locate, and locate un-inhabited perceptions and feelings that set off the fossil brain and meta-mind towards new unexpected conditions. Allowing us to sense the potentials and capacities of our blurring neural habits with artwork (a “different tool”) as projections, as holographs of our sensorium, or as a psychoplasmic scanning made material, or as affective perceptions folded out into space before us. These objects, gestures, things, sounds, and visions framed and unframed are then projected and introjected into those viewers who encounter them as “**au-* “to perceive (as in the word ‘audience’).”

— Ricardo Dominguez, Head/less MFA Adviser, Associate Professor, Visual Arts Department, UC San Diego

DOSSIER THALAMUS
MFA 2016

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MCASD, DOWNTOWN
1001 Kettner Blvd. San Diego

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Congratulations to our graduating
MFA students:
Lyndsay Bloom
Tanya Brodsky
Stefani Byrd
Lucas Coffin
Jena Cummiskey
Shana Demassi
Angie Jennings
Kara Joslyn
Collective Magpie
Erika Ostrander
Kyle J. Thompson

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