having happened
2016 ART STUDIO MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

JUNE 3 – 19, 2016
OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, JUNE 3RD, 5 - 8PM
VERGE CENTER FOR THE ARTS, 625 S STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95811
having happened, this year’s Art Studio MFA Thesis Exhibition, presents the work of eight artists engaged in reflecting and reshaping the world around them. Their art links the concrete aspects of everyday life and the material realities of their chosen media with macro issues of time, space, memory, and technology.

Anna Davidson and Angela Willetts utilize living bodies and environments, recording webs of interaction in video, sculpture, and installation. The traces they present are tactile and shifting, invoking our own sense of space and the physical imprints we leave on the world. For Zach Clark, Kristin Hough, and Brett Thomas, the tenuous threads of memory take form in paint, print, and sculpture. Bubbling through the object or image, the subject of recollection is refracted and reformed. This sense of reflection likewise informs Sarah Chan’s videos, which refocus our vision on peripheral spaces and offer dream-like views of common environments. Jeff Mayry and Julian Tan push painting past its traditional limits, utilizing processes that invite chance and change. Color bursts forth from their works’ surfaces, enveloping the viewer in vivid fields of painted form.

As artist Allan Kaprow said of his own seminal “Happenings,” the audience does not simply come to look at things. Rather, “What has been worked out instead is a form that is as open and fluid as the shapes of our everyday experience but does not simply imitate them.” having happened likewise activates our own encounters with the world, inviting us to reexamine the vestiges of our past, the forms of our present, and the intimations of our future.

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

The exhibition catalog for having happened marks the third year of a fruitful collaboration between the Art Studio Masters of Fine Arts students and the Art History Masters of Arts students, under the direction of Bridget Gilman, Ph.D. (Postdoctoral Researcher in Art Studio Program and Davis Lecturer, Department of Art and Art History, Santa Clara University) and Robin Hill (Professor and Graduate Advisor in Art Studio Program). Each artist partnered with an art historian, engaging in an extended dialogue about the artists’ process and practice. The results, eight interpretive essays written by the Art History students, are featured in this catalog alongside the artists’ own statements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
arts.ucdavis.edu/art-studio-graduate-program
arts.ucdavis.edu/art-history-graduate-program

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Layering ticking of clocks come in and out of focus. A drone slowly swells. Julian opens his eyes in bed, looks in mirror, walks over, urinates into toilet. Clock next to bed reads 8:30am. It’s October 1st 2014 - Wednesday.

Julian enters kitchen to start hot water. Walks back to bedroom and sits in the chair. Eyes open and close slowly. (yawns obviously loud)

Julian unplugs his White iPhone 5 from the charging cable next to his bed.

Looks at Lockscreen notifications.

BBC-Japan Mount Ontake volcano: Death toll reaches 47. Damn.

Gmail-No Reply: Your New Student Loan from the U.S. Department of Education Checks calendar - October 13th 2014- no events

Looks into open closet

Pulls out black band shirt. I guess I’ll wear the dirty black levis today.

Pulls a pair of navy low cut socks out from top shelf.

I’ll bring the laptop today, and I should probably read some of Wittgenstein’s remarks on colour too.

Puts Macbook Pro and book in backpack. Returns to kitchen.

Gets Aeropress from drying rack. Turns around to where the kettle is. Opens top shelf and removes a tin of Trader Joe’s medium roast coffee and a litter for Aeropress. Loads press with coffee grounds and pours in hot water. Takes favorite coffee mug purchased in Japan and places press on top. Learning on counter Julian pulls phone out.Unlocks phone clicks on Instagram icon within the social media folder on the home screen.

6 likes

Clicks on the notification tab

Kate holten liked your photo. Id _themaditians liked your photo. Id sashaclark liked your photo. Id krainskychicago liked your photo. Id bootytattoo liked your photo. Id bootytattoo is following you. Id sarararababa liked your photo. Id

Clicks on booty tattoos

Description reads: Девочки С Татуировками ⚪ Только самые горячие ⚪ татуированные девочки! ⚪ засим подписывайся! ⚪

Exactly what I thought I’d see.


Sit down at desk.

Learn my computer is in my bag.

Remove Macbook Pro from backpack and place it on desk. Opens Macbook. i tunes is open, scroll through recently played playlist, selects Glenn Gould - Bach: Goldberg Variations

Plays first track: 1 Bach: Goldberg Variations, BWV 988 - Aria

Stares at screen for a few seconds while deciding what to do. - Opens emails 24 unread from yesterday.

Damn it so many emails, I hate my life

Sips coffee

Re: Arto Reijnders : Drop-in Lecture Jan 22 / Studio Visits Jan 22nd

Looks like I forgot to sign up for a studio visit. Oops.

Finishes Coffee, puts shoes on, returns computer to backpack.

Puts backpacks on back fats to kitchen to put dirty mug in sink.

Picks up bicycle in living room and opens door quietly to not wake roommate. Closes door, hops on bike.

Checks White iPhone 5 on bike.

Returns iphone to pocket.

Pushes up to studio, steps off bike, takes carabiner off belt loop. Unlocks door, enters and parks bike against big roll up door. Opens studio door, flips on lights. Walks straight to the desk. Removes computer and opens google music on chrome.

I should probably pour the concrete into the bags now so they can dry while I paint.

Selects - Miles Davis - Bitches Brew - Pharoah’s Dance

I fucking love this song. I wish I could paint like this.

Phone vibrates. Walks over to see the painting I worked on yesterday. Omg this painting is awful and I have a studio exist tmu.

Notification on phone reads:

NPR - German car-making giant, Volkswagen, announced that “irregularities” may have arisen in roughly 800,000 vehicles. (sept. 18, 2015) What the fuck.

Looks up at painting and sits on upward day 5 gallon orange handle bucket.

I like what’s happening with the bloody marks in the top right center but it feels awkward. Maybe need to mix up a dark purple to match the dark prussian blue in value to add some depth.

Walks over to disposable palette already covered in dry paint.

Hm that’s kinda nice.

Removes palette and places it in a stack of old palettes kept in a folder.

Some green, yellow, orange, a neutral grey.

Mixes Golden Green light fluid acrylic with cadmium yellow, orange, and grey.

I think the angle brush would be good.

Loads brush with as much paint as possible. I want a mess to start at the marks.

Makes a couple marks steps back

Hmmmmmmmmmmm

Walks back over

Just need to clean this up here.

Phone vibrates

Walks to palette

Adds a lot of grey

I don’t want this intense green anymore

Adds a bit of yellow

Yeah that’s good

Changes brush to a long bristled fiber brush.

Create a series of blobby shapes along a broken line

Gonna avoid that shape. Cover this spot

Takes out Gold iPhone 6

Stop right on the edge of this bright blue.

Notification - Gmail - Mrs. Natalie Naugher - 12:32pm - May 1st 2016

I’m horny, lonely and my cam is on!!! Text me Julian Tan/JulianTan

574 212.0157

I wonder what the email looks like.

Opens email: (;;)Exuse me my sexy raft i found yr images on facebook. you are roguy!!

Lol, i’m so rogue.

I may look innocent but i’m a freak in bed. come over. just send me a fllickubby request: the account is Natalie. The account is - http://kodoti.DatingEscape here my photo

Wass i need to save these emails for art.

Photo doesn’t load. Summer.

Looks back up at painting and gets a vision, walks to palette.

Mixes on a new spot on the palette. Adds Alizarin Crimson, cadmium red, a little carbon black. Loads round size 22 round brush. I need a really dark warm red. Walks over to canvas. Stands about 6 feet away and stares for about Seconds

Hmmmm - There some red in the bottom left so the red should stay on the right half of the canvas.

Make marks by holding the very end of the brush to get some wild marks around an area that Needed to be covered up.

Yea thats good.

Get closer in to carefully fill in and clean up gesture. Stare at sculpture in corner of studio for about 5 min.

Walk over to desk.

Man I’m hungry. I don’t want taco bell again.

Damn it I don’t want to ride into downtown.

Need to write a statement for the Verge MFA Thesis show. What should I talk about. Space. I should google Foucault’s essay on otherness.

Searches in the address bar “Heterotopia wiki”

Clicks first link

These are spaces of otherness, which are neither here nor there, that are simultaneously physical and mental, such as the space of a phone call or the moment when you see yourself in the mirror...

Searches LeCorbusier’s drawings because of reference in Utopia section of essay.

Meb they’re okay, whatever.

Closes tab. Opens new tab. Types in “foucault of other spaces”


Opens a video titled: Akin Kuroswaya - Composing Movement

Pauses video. Opens new tab. Types in “igo” into address bar - enter.

Searches “fischli weil - photo” - scrolls down a few pages.

Opens new tab. Types “youtub” hits enter. Scrolls down a few pages.

Clicks SpaceX Barge Landing. WOAH I’M FLYING INCREDIBLE!

Closes tab.
The browser on Julian Tan's computer has a myriad of tabs open at any given time, countless pages of interest often left open until the search engine overloads and quits. What Tan reads, watches, and looks at on the internet is part of his overarching exploration of and concern with how technology relates to art, and what art's future might be in an increasingly technological era. As technology continues to implement its control over us and we willingly exhort our dependence on it, the artist considers how art has changed and how it can continue to adapt future forward. Tan admittedly has no definite answers, but rather is trying to work out possible solutions through his craft.

In particular, Tan grapples with the reasons to paint in today's society and the nebulous future of painting. The artist not only considers this issue for himself, but for other painters as well. Due to these considerations, Tan's paintings reflect a mixture of visual thoughts on canvas. His methods of painting and artistic choices are modes through which he makes thoughts and questions regarding the future of art visually perceptible. He paints in acrylic and works fast in layers, believing both in accidental beauty and the self-critical thought process integral to the work. What is perhaps most striking in Tan's paintings is their emphasis on colors, which range from natural tones to vibrant greens and yellows. Each color is selected deliberately; as the colors overlap they create a sense of a believable space made almost three dimensional through their emergence from a flat surface. This play with shapes, color, and depth creates a sort of trompe l'oeil-effect for viewers, as one tries to determine where one squiggle ends and the other begins, or what an undulating patch of deep purple signifies in the foreground. Tan makes his abstract paintings accessible for the viewer by implementing familiar elements of painting such as vanishing points within these colorful, energetic, and layered compositions.

Tan's sculptures stand in active conversation with his paintings. Almost resembling mobiles, these kinetic sculptures are made of simple materials: wood, canvas, and concrete. The emphasis is on balance: any alteration to the elements' placement could cause the sculpture to topple. These works contain perhaps the most evident visual example of technology's dominance in society and role in art. Strung taut between each sculpture is brightly colored wire, suggesting how technology creates a unifying network. These sculptures and Tan's paintings converge in a dialogue that considers how two old media can in fact be forward thinking.

The conceptual stage is an essential aspect of Tan's process, as he devotes time to thinking about the work, and later uses his hands to quickly construct the concepts he has in his mind. The ideas and the final product are not separate, but rather fused together with equal importance and interdependence. Tan's fast craft and big statements create pieces that emphasize space, balance, and the overriding question of how art can develop in order to remain relevant in a rapidly shifting society.

Visual Perceptions and Future Questions
by Virginia Van Dine
The geographic coordinates of where a species first evolved are what composes its morphology, physiology and behavior. From bacteria to animal, it is the the climate, soil type, water and nutrient availability that compose the form. As humans, we have the unique ability to manipulate our own environment and that of other life forms, even life itself. In my work, I explore this inherent dominion by creating my own unique habitats for other species to possess, which becomes the work. This interspecies collaboration involves chance, experimentation and surprise.

Conversely for other works, I am the art maker, the experimental organism immersed into an ecology for which, I am often ill-adapted, feeling exposed and vulnerable. I am reminded that ultimately nature rules, and I am merely another animal on the food chain. Humbled, I'm inspired by her droughts, glaciers and avalanches that could erase me in seconds.

I use art and science in attempt to gain a deeper understanding of my own elemental composition and my relationship to nature as well as to the fellow inhabitants of planet earth.
Environment dictates existence. Yet, as living beings, we frequently fail to fully recognize our surroundings, let alone engage with them in an exploratory way. Anna Davidson’s work encourages such exploration through purposeful engagement with macro and micro environment. She uses diverse materials that evolve directly from the pool of life such as wood, ice, feathers, fungus, bacteria, insects, and human beings. By using living beings as her medium, Davidson is able to illuminate the fundamental relationship between organism and the space it inhabits.

Bridging the perceived gaps between art and science, Davidson draws from her experiences as a plant scientist. Similar to her scientific work, much of her artwork is at the mercy of the natural world. Her decision to allow living organisms such as fungus to create a temporary home in her novel, hand-made environments produces a form of chance aesthetic. The captivating forms that result are a product of the natural world, causing the viewer to contemplate the beauty of life’s biological processes. In addition to evoking this connection with the natural world, much of Davidson’s work expresses her distress over the state of the environment. Her work conjures images of oil spills, melting glaciers, and disappearing species, forcing the viewer to contemplate his or her impact as an inhabitant of planet Earth.

In her recent work, *Double Negative in Yellow*, Davidson provides a provocative layering of environments through the incorporation of performance and extension of her commentary into the realm of gender politics. Consisting of a large-scale sculpture and a performance via video, *Double Negative in Yellow* features Davidson as the living medium within the acclaimed land artwork *Double Negative* by Michael Heizer. Davidson, donning a vibrant yellow, 1970s-inspired dress and high heels, moves through Heizer’s treacherous earthwork, which consists of two massive trenches dug into opposing mesas in southeastern Nevada. Her action within the space becomes turbulent as she throws rocks at a ten-foot canvas erected on the trenches’ opposite side. The negative space created by Heizer becomes an obstacle between Davidson and her canvas. The resulting performance conveys Davidson’s interaction with a vastly beautiful, yet intimidating landscape, while also framing her as a female artist working in an environment constructed primarily by the hyper-masculine land artists that came before her. While concern with physical environment is a cornerstone of Davidson’s work, *Double Negative in Yellow* goes a step further by addressing a socio-political environment, specifically the gendered tradition of environmental art.

Davidson’s work is simultaneously playful and powerfully reflective. She channels the viewer’s childhood curiosities about the natural world, encouraging limitless experimentation with one’s surrounding environment. Additionally, she encourages the viewer to confront hard-hitting existential questions concerning what it means to be alive in a given space. Ultimately, Davidson’s work reminds the audience of the fundamental relationship between art and science: both were created by humans in order to make sense of their earthly existence.
I seek to create environments that they might become structures of consciousness and moments of experience. In order to produce unexpected results my work is the summation of repeated acts that are often illogical and senseless to become moments where forms affect forms in a vulnerable, pure and un-manipulated state. These nameless images become vital and very much alive and because of this express a paradox that is comprised of human weakness and existential beauty.
Jeff Mayry’s work exudes warmth. It envelops the viewer in a cocoon of inviting, pink abstractions. Mayry’s art is primarily of the subconscious—a combination of drawing, painting, and sculpture created with little premeditation. This lack of planning allows for Mayry’s work to be, in a sense, pure. He explains that his art is comprised of two parts: one being “self-destructive,” and the other full of “tenderness.” These disparate parts balance one another, resulting in work that is both orderly and chaotic.

There is no room for preconceptions when viewing Mayry’s work; it resists categorization. Ink doesn’t necessarily equate to drawing, and oil paint doesn’t necessarily equate to painting. Let go of the societal gendering of pink—it’s not about that. Instead, Mayry draws on pink as a signifier of intimacy. The stringent restrictions on color balance the diversity of material. Ink, paper, gesso, paint, and wood constitute his drawing, painting, and sculpture. The palette unites the otherwise potentially disjointed pieces to create a cohesive body of work. Mayry describes the color pink as “relaxing,” and intends it to provide an inviting environment for viewers. The profusion of pink invokes a sense of humanness with its resemblance to flesh tones.

The works’ pink palette is meant to soothe, yet their sculptural fragmentation disrupts and can cause discomfort. Repetitive application and destruction form the layers of Mayry’s creations. These layers vary in shape, size, texture, and opacity: ranging from rich, thick layers of paint to delicate veils. By employing this process of accumulation, paintings are created over extended periods of time and without a definitive plan. This layering visually represents the dichotomy of self-destruction and tenderness.

Mayry is not afraid to allow contradictions within his work. There are moments of pure form upon expanses of uncontrolled, natural formation. The horseshoe pattern is an example of a repeated form that is in one sense meaningless, yet also acts as a bridge, unifying various elements within the work. His large-scale works on paper and canvas subtly juxtapose fluidity and hard lines. A combination of geometric and organic forms come together to create an environment full of movement. This process continues until works begin to take on a life of their own, only complete once they appear to be pulsating.

The artist’s work is defined by the absence of a premeditated process—rather, he allows repetition, collection, and chance to guide him. This spontaneity results in work dependent on emotion rather than logic. His work is the result of nonsensical and repetitive acts, eventually leading to formation. It is neither planned, nor accidental. It is between states, like sleepwalking.

Mayry’s work is an expression of his subconscious. In a discussion, Mayry reveals, “I want everything to be intuitive.” In this search for unbridled expression, the artist creates art that asks the viewer to find his or her own meaning within his work. His artwork encourages one to view it with the same lack of expectation that Mayry places on his process. It is intended to be felt.
I begin with the impulse to touch. Touch calls forth attention as my body’s surface encounters and must negotiate an other. Then comes holding, wrapping, tracing, wrestling, managing, surrendering. I try to understand each object’s body - its weight and its relationship to gravity, its internal structure. How it rests, how it moves, resists, acquiesces, remembers. A dialogue emerges.

My work exists somewhere between sculpture, performance, installation and video. Proceeding without a plan, various media are used to record and observe the development of a relationship between myself and a material. Some encounters are humorous, pointing to everyday struggles with the laws of physics and the futility of trying to control or connect with things that are not oneself. Some are intimate, and occasionally unsettling. All are moments of unapologetic materiality.

With an increasingly digital and isolated experience of life (and art), the sense of touch, of physically encountering what is outside of myself, is vital to my practice. The materials I choose vary in nature, ranging from “sticky” things that cling, to those that witness and document my body’s movements but remain detached. As my body feels its way toward knowing, tasks and questions are generated and folded back into the work. Using open-ended, experience-based inquiry about objects and subjects I challenge the mind/body and self/other binaries, choosing instead to explore ideas of entanglement and interdependence. Some materials resist, some willingly submit, and some seem to play along. Each records or erases the traces of our engagement in accordance with its nature.
At first glance, the work of artist Angela Willetts may seem difficult to comprehend: a pile of paper, a plastic sack of green dough on the gallery floor, a video of the artist projected onto, into, and through heaps of paper. However, when one takes the time to watch the videos, which show Willetts crafting the objects filling the gallery space, a clear causal relationship emerges.

It is this relationship that Willetts explores in her latest installations. The artist’s interests lie in the process of physical manipulation and the connection between artist and medium. Specifically, Willetts explores the effect of her own body on materials such as paper and salt dough, and the resulting remnants of that process. This body of work began with the manipulation of salt dough, when the artist created temporary sculptures reliant upon the interaction between her body and the dough. Material/Girl stresses the ephemeral nature of the medium and the artist’s creations. As the dough sculptures fall from Willetts’s body within a few seconds, the video remains the only evidence of her relationship to the material. In the gallery, the trace of the artist’s body is no longer visible in the now stagnant dough.

Willetts’s paper remnants, part of her Documents series, illustrate her interest in transcending the traditional use and perceived lifespan of a material. Typically a crumpled and torn sheet of paper would be discarded, no longer able to serve its purpose as a drawing or writing surface. However, for Willetts, these visible signs of bodily manipulation make the piece more valuable. The more crumpled and torn a remnant, the more it reflects the creative act and the relationship between artist and material. Though paper remnants, unlike the dough, are more illustrative of the artist’s role, Willetts does not consider herself dominant over the material. As the video demonstrates, the artist-material relationship is more give-and-take than dominant and submissive. Though one may assume that Willetts is in control of the material, the paper overwhelms her, moving in directions she does not intend and even leaving a physical mark on her body in the form of small, nearly invisible paper cuts. Dominance over the material does not interest Willetts, rather her interests lie in what she terms “co-emergence”: the entanglement of human and non-human objects and materials.

The interactive elements of Willetts’s installation encourage the viewer to form their own relationships with the artist’s sculptural materials. Viewers are encouraged to move and look through the heaps of paper in order to see and hear Willetts’s videos. They are encouraged to touch, feel, and sit on the sack of dough placed on the floor of the gallery, interacting with the material in a way that echoes the artist’s own experiences as illustrated in her videos. The gallery space encourages a dialogue between looking and feeling, creating a multi-sensory experience and enhancing the viewer’s understanding of the materials themselves. The artist’s videos and the audience’s interaction with the same materials provoke larger questions of time, memory, and the remains of physical acts that are at the core of Willetts’s work.
Memory is a strange thing. On occasion it keeps us reeling amongst the intensities of the past. Scientists now believe that our memories are re-written every time we recall them. To this end, I am most fascinated by the interplay of my recollections, the meaning of truth within them and how they synthesize through the organic craft manifest that is my studio practice and skill set. In an ever flowing stream of craft that is stylistically subject to the idiosyncratic conditioning of my life memory, I create sculpture.

I believe that my hands and skill are the vassal that is my expression and that I alone possess the capability to construct, reconstruct and deconstruct both metaphysically and physically my world, story and self. My identity is the root of my being both in temperament and conditioning and I am proud of who I am.
Memory—that strange and fickle process by which information is encoded, stored, and then later retrieved—remains one of the most elusive cerebral functions. Wrought with complexity, we are only beginning to understand the process by which we interpret, store, retain, and recall information and past experiences. Often, memory proves inconsistent as small (and large) details become lost or distorted by our remembering brain; the process by which we construct our histories is guided by an unreliable narrator. It is this process and its idiosyncrasies that inspires and preoccupies Brett Alex Thomas in his studio. His sculpture, far from mere mnemonic device, gives the practice of recollection and reconstruction tangible form.

Thomas's formative years in inner-city Philadelphia inform much of his current body of work. Having immersed himself in East Coast artists' circles and squatter punk culture, Thomas's work evokes the grittiness that characterizes these early years. His sculpture crafts the experience of his recollections through a combination of raw material, ceramics, pre-fabricated objects, as well as hand-cranked kinetic elements. These works are at once deeply personal and yet, feature common elements of the everyday. The mixture of transient personal experience with the instantly recognizable objects that inform our commodity-oriented society creates a metaphor for memory; the individual act of remembering becomes inseparable from the collective memory of consumer culture.

The Mourning Bottle is one such example of Thomas's synthesis of collective and individual memory. A ceramic bottle is perched atop a thin stem and surrounded by narrow strips of wood, encasing the object and securing it in its place. Behind this form, radiating strips of wood create an aureole around the body of the object, infusing the work with a venerable quality—it appears to be an almost holy relic. The pale palette Thomas employs further reinforces this air of consecration. Instilling the work with a sense of purity, elements of lightness are juxtaposed with the roughness of the bottle's surface; the latter looks almost as if it has been put together and taken apart several times. Both elements serve the artist's memory well: the bottles accumulated as a result of having no running water in the Philadelphia squat Thomas frequented, and the fondness with which these memories are recalled and contemplated. As the work's title implies, the act of recollecting can sometimes bring sorrow; the Greek root of the word “nostalgia”—algos—means “pain,” after all. Together, the result is a hallowed depiction of memory as well as a literal representation of the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction that takes place as we try to remember the past.

For Thomas, the act of deconstruction and reconstruction is a recurrent theme. This cycle is at once cathartic as well as symbolic of the artist's own interests regarding memory and identity. Thomas states, “I alone possess the capability to construct, reconstruct, and deconstruct both metaphysically and physically my world, story, and self.” It is through the manipulation and reconstruction of memories that Thomas finds his truth.
The quickness of a gestural hand reactivates what starts as a still image. As the history of the making is never hidden, my paintings strive to hold a tension between minimalism and chaos—gesso, pencil, organic material, latex, enamel and oil paint, and other collaged items, are all allowed to sit on the same surface. A level of un-finish questions the successes and failures of painting in general while still being seduced by paint’s lusciousness. This allows the image to hover between the awkward and the composed. Letting the representative qualities of the image almost fall apart, with the figure seconds away from breaking down into pure abstraction, becomes pivotal. Encasing objects, both physical and 2-dimensional, within a veiled space, shows a multiplicity of attempts to catalog things once experienced. The paintings revel in their confusion, pulling zany color and hidden figures from documentations of the everyday.

Exploring the intersection of nature and culture, and how experiences are fixed by the iconography and idealism of the American landscape, leads me to gather trails of ephemera. These collections of public and private source material are then reinterpreted into paintings, drawings and collages, allowing me to explore notions of memory vs. history in a time when the urge for persistent documentation feels paramount to everyday life.

A viewer’s gaze is moved across a 2-dimensional surface similarly to how a viewer’s movement and framing of the landscape is directed by structures and signage. By following these paths, a tourist can collect on a view they have already seen in printed matter and have what is deemed the pinnacle experience of a specific location. The paintings in turn create a new snapshot, influenced by memory and drawn from photography, weaving together a narrative about the collective consciousness of American travel. The resulting image turns away from replication, morphing the people into characters that inhabit an alien space. The figures and the ground they rest on are unspecific yet relatable.
Kristin Hough’s work deconstructs American tropes of travel, landscape, and individuality by altering the conventional ways of how experiences are documented and communicated. Obscuring recognizable features with paint, Hough calls into question how perception conceals clear meaning and prevents consideration of the unseen components driving American culture and behavior. Her work confronts the viewer with the unsettling contradictions of what it means to be a person in western society. Through color, form, and abstraction, Hough’s paintings reevaluate the aesthetics that conventionally glorify American experiences. Her images of family and friends in nature draw attention to the superficial, commercial staging of such common experiences. Hough’s paintings physically obscure the subjects depicted, leaving them fragmented and lost in an abstracted landscape.

At times, Hough’s paintings embrace vegetal natural forms, while other works focus on artificial means to expose the American narrative. In the process of creating, Hough questions how memory and human ideals transform the reality of a given experience. Her work distorts conventions of “pictured memory” to expose the curated manner of conventional documentation. Parallel to Peter Doig’s style of “found” images reinterpreted through abstraction, Hough’s source materials often come from photographs of individuals posing in tourist destinations or scenic views. Hough reproduces these subjects, but removes their life-like, mimetic qualities, and thus uncovers the deeper meanings and contradictions of the staged originals. The artist’s reproductions leave her viewer confronted with the subject’s material rawness, drawing attention to the psychological and emotional consequences of curated culture through gestural landscapes, obscured forms, and fragmented individuals.

Some of Hough’s paintings approach their subjects through conventional, dramatic staging. These works, such as Foray I, II, and III, depict figures centered in the frame, outwardly facing the viewer. Others, like It Churns I, capture the awkward faults of human poses. The work depicts the figures in between the frames, with the subjects literally falling and fragmented by the door panels of the continuous landscape. By distorting the subjects’ faces through exaggerated body angles or simplified lines, Hough’s strategies refuse the viewer direct access to the figures’ identities, and offer a visual critique of taking memory at face value.

Hough’s abstraction also illuminates the undermining qualities often associated with American commercial aesthetics. The artist plays with the idea of “bad art” in commercial designs by referencing their stylistic clichés, dramatic staging, and vibrant colors. For example, in It Churns I and II, Hough uses collage and paint to apply dried flowers to the doors’ surfaces. Hough’s use of neon pink to obscure the flowers’ natural qualities draws attention to the ways nature is commercialized and domesticated to attract buyers. By confronting the means of cultural imagery, Hough’s work uncovers a raw version of the American experience, appropriating modes of cheerful colors and blank faces to subtly critique the inauthentic narrative. Through these techniques, Hough strives to uncover the driving yet isolating forces behind staged identity.
I align myself with the fluidity of consciousness; shifting from thought to thought, dream states and parallel realities. There is potential in the forgotten moments and endless expanses hidden beyond our field of perception. Familiar and unknowable, the potential of these moments bring forth delight and serendipity when yielding to experience of the everyday, the mundane and the lonesome.

My video work engages with subject matter that is at once a spectacle and a cipher, echoing throughout an event, between visual and psychological space. In a quiet voice, it whispers softly a desire to connect with y-o-u.
Sarah Chan's video work invites the viewer to attach imagined narratives to missed moments, and imbues with meaning the perspectives we typically overlook in our preoccupation with the day-to-day. Her work has an anonymous and voyeuristic quality that captures a truth otherwise lost. By shifting vantage points and drawing out seemingly inconsequential moments and places in time, Chan challenges her viewers to notice the previously unnoticed: subtle movements in nature, background noise, a place of business after hours, or the minute gestures of waiting and commuting. These forgotten moments and sounds are transferred from a recording device, through an invisible interstitial space, and projected in the viewer’s mind. Chan's art is thoughtfully crafted and aesthetically sophisticated, but also unsettling, reminding us of the infinite possibilities and scenarios that happen irrespective of our own lives.

Though her subjects vary greatly, all seem to belong in the same carefully crafted alternate universe, of which Chan is the architect: either the result of her setting out to film with intention or discovering potential within her own extensive archive of collected footage. Her universe is one that runs exactly parallel to the main storyline of our lives, and one that is made visible only through the lens of her omniscient camera. The importance of recording and display technology varies from piece to piece, but remains at the very least a consistent undercurrent. In some of her works, like *Hello from the Foreground and Background* and the *Observable Occurrences* series, natural or manmade materials mimic technological familiarities—like static noise or a glitch on a screen, the film and video equivalents of nothingness. Others, such as *Girl Group*, which includes footage of spectators filming a performance with their smart phones, call into question society’s current obsession with viewing our own experiences through social media and screens rather than observing them firsthand. Chan poignantly shifts attention with her own camera, focusing on the spectators and dramas in the background instead of the intended narrative of the performance. This focus on the alternative narrative is the thread that ties all of her videos together.

For Chan, the means of transmission is always less important than the message conveyed, yet that message is not defined for us. The familiar adage of whether or not the tree falling in the woods makes a sound with no one there to hear it baffles us as children. Though we may now know the scientific explanation, Chan's work satisfies a long-forgotten childlike desire to be privy to a secret world. However, perhaps much like the true explanation of the falling tree, it confuses, unnerves, or disenchants us. Our hopeful expectation of a magical or climactic moment—which we have unconsciously come to expect from film—is disappointed. We are left to imagine our own narrative or to simply stand back and observe, questioning whether we should view the world in this unconventional way or to continue living our lives as before.
I've spent the last year trying to understand a story that is part of me, but wasn't mine. Over the last nine months, I've been responding to the experiences I had, the words I wrote, and the photographs I took in the south of Poland, a place my family is from but no living member of had been to before me. I've wrestled with how I could use these accounts to try to explain and construct a history I was never told about, while accurately understanding and capturing my own encounters with the place. I've been constantly asking: what does it mean to be “from” a place you are a foreigner in. How long do we carry the locational memories and legacies of our kin?

My photos, taken on 120mm film with a Holga camera, have been translated into halftone images for process printing. The process of creating the work becomes a meditative ritual; an image must be deconstructed into it's subtle but unique parts and then printed multiple times for the image to return. For the letterpressed text, each letter must be individually placed and every word must be concentrated on to create a composition. Conceptually, both actions create entities comprised of multiple interdependent parts, referencing the fact that our own histories are collections of moments and we are the product of contexts seen and unseen.

My books and prints are invitations to become active participants in experiencing the work. The books are meant to be touched, opened, pages turned. Their smaller scale all ask for you to get in, spend time, and look closely. Just as anyone telling a story needs an audience to listen, my work requires your interaction to be realized.
I heard a Hungarian couple speaking near a public plaza with a friend, constantly apologizing for their grasp on the language we're not sure compelled me when I awkwardly interrupted to admire them their English was in fact quite beautiful, if I'm any sort of authority. They accept the attempted compliment, explaining they speak a little of four or five languages because on speaks Hungarian. “The closest linguistic sibling to Hungarian is Finnish, on the other side of the continent, and Hungary is a small country without a lot of power.” Of course, none of us were aware within weeks their country would be unable to international headlines.
On the surface, Zach Clark's work may seem simple, but its attention to detail invites close inspection and contemplation. His works appear both familiar and unfamiliar, distant and approachable. Although opposed to placement within a single artistic classification, Clark's work primarily references printed material. While some may see Clark's use of letterpress and printmaking as anachronistic, his techniques purposefully embrace slow, deliberate, and careful decisions where the technical process is almost as important as the end result.

Clark's early works often feature non-representational, single-colored blocks of geometric shapes. This method of colorful abstraction is still present in his current work, yet the overarching theme now centers on the concept of personal memory visualized through books of text and images. Clark's travels to Europe became the catalyst for fully realizing how memory is integral to his works and helped him gain a deeper understanding of his own family history. His recent trip to Poland created a physical connection to a cultural heritage he had only previously known through secondhand transmissions. Photos taken on his Holga camera became the remnants of a firsthand experience; during his travels, Clark deliberately exploited the Holga's shortcomings as a camera.

These seemingly unsuitable images became the basis for Gorale, which is printed on a Risograph, a machine that combines photocopying and offset printing. Although the images and text are taken from his travels, Clark's deliberate abstraction of their contents through layered, single-color printing allows the work to transcend his own personal attachments. The indistinct quality of the images, saturated with ink and coupled with anecdotal text, references the increasingly undistinguishable and blurred associations of trying to recall past experiences. Gorale transforms a particularly individual work into one that appeals to each viewer's own personal and cultural memory. The title references the name of the ethnic group Clark's family belongs to, which comes from the Polish for “Highlander.” Allusions to memory also manifest in the tactile quality of all his works, but particularly with Gorale. Layers of color ink leave inky residue on the skin and also give the pages a tangible weight. Careful and thoughtful deliberation over the paper quality and weight used for the images reflects Clark's anti-white glove philosophy. His books are meant to be held and felt, leaving a physical memory of the works on the skin in addition to the personal memories imprinted in the images.

Teatime also draws upon the Holga's indistinct and blurred pictures. The images allude to the accompanying text describing Clark's international encounters at an English pub in Krakow. This text, driving the narrative of Teatime, juxtaposes Clark's identity as an American with the diverse nationalities he meets in this convergent location. Teatime's acknowledgement of Clark's American identity balances Gorale's connection to his familial cultural memory. Both Teatime and Gorale conceptualize an investigation of memory and cultural identity through deliberately blurred images. In understanding Clarks' own personal history the viewer recalls experiences of their own cultural past.

Printed Memory
by Cristina Urrutia
ART HISTORY ESSAY CREDITS

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

Maizy Enck, mid-twentieth century American painting. Angela Willetts, Remnants
Natalia de la Torre, mid-to-late 20th Century German Art. Jeff Mayry, Sleepwalking
Rachel Brubaker, late-nineteenth and early twentieth century American domestic architecture. Sarah Chan, Static Noises and the Parallel Universe
Cristina Urrutia, Ancient Roman representations of mythology and seventeenth century reception of Antiquity. Zach Clark, Printed Memory
Corrie Hendricks, the nineteenth century Arts & Crafts movement and contemporary conceptions of craft. Anna Davidson, Lived Spaces
Jennifer Gutierrez, early 20th century Mexican art and issues of indigenous representation. Brett Alex Thomas, Crafting Memory: The Sculpture of Brett Alex Thomas
Virginia Van Dine, Baroque architecture, sculpture, and ephemeral art. Julian Tan, Visual Perceptions and Future Questions

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