

NO BURDEN FOR CONTINUITY

**MFA VISUAL ARTS THESIS
EXHIBITION 2018**

**DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS,
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

COUNTERSIGNED, YOURS

* Approximately one fourth of all the emails I've ever written. And Frances Lee's performance, *"a person of consequence,"* 2017.

† Approximately one eighth of all the emails I've ever written; I tend to use "best," though I've heard it annoys people. And *ibid.*

Apologies for my delayed response.*

There is no narrative here, no single thread that runs through each of these eight artists' practices. Neither is there a neat constellation, nor a cleanly networked web. Rather, there is a knotted tangle of bed sheets and plastic orange fencing, of scrim and fruit-of-the-loom underwear, that will neither braid itself into a single rope, nor pull apart into individual pieces. So in what follows, connecting threads loop back upon one another. The natural repetitions of a(n ongoing) conversation. The quoted text [...] at the bottom of the email chain.

Thanks. Thanks again.†

THE IMMINENT END OF THE CYCLE.

What happens when we take off our personas—the costume or uniform of ourselves—in a public space?

There is a bizarreness to **Derek's** tableau-like scenario of an everyday situation—an extravagance to building such a detailed scene of a task, such as waiting for your clothes at the Laundromat.

Waiting for the washing machine to finish its cycle. But a cycle never ends.

In its construction of a tension between the fantastical and the real, it plays with the phenomenological relationship between the viewer and the sculpted

body and between the viewer and the photographed image.

THE UNIFORM.

Frances's work navigates the macro and micro scales of social interaction. It is both frustrated and motivated by the fact that so often social interaction is dominated by anxiety, shame, and discomfort. It implicates the viewer, suggesting these feelings on an individual level, but frames them generically enough to gesture to the larger social sphere, pointing to the ways in which authority and its manifestation in administrative organization determine social interactions on so many levels.

There is a way in which calling the outfits she creates a “uniform” but having them exist only as a “prototype” still makes me think about dozens of people moving about wearing those outfits.

Or like when Doug opens his closet in the morning and it's all green vests and white t-shirts.

THE DAILY COMMUTE.

I remember thinking, as we walked through the big Picasso Guernica show together, does **Zespo's** closet look like that? All Bulls gear and Hi-Vis Camo™? He fanboyed so hard at the one with the guitar and mandolin. Cubism is all over these paintings, too, the way he accounts

for/presents multiple views—front, back, side.

He is interested in how the word “auto” relates to the self, and how the interior of the car remains still (he used the word “still life”) while the world moves around outside it. Views are fragmented and synthesized by mirrors and reflective material. But is the *bump bump* coming from inside or outside?

High-visibility camouflage makes the invisible visible. Matte neon yellow meets the stealth of the graffiti act. And camouflage, in its carefully engineered abstraction, functions alongside Zespo's attempt to let go of figuration through a systematic process of attacking and reattacking his paintings. The best defense, he reminds us, is a good offense.

CEDING CONTROL.

There is a complicated but fluid relationship in **Franny's** work between chance and choice, between the aleatory and the compositional.

It's this idea, this acceptance, that materials will come to you. Part of this is definitely aleatoric, but it's also *faith* in the aleatory.

Her process is rooted in observation of the places around her and the ecosystems that she observes and inhabits. As both observer and

participant—a participant observer—she synthesizes environments rather than building them from scratch.

Franny's calm projections smooth out what might otherwise be a kind of overwhelming and unwieldy display of objects—they become something I can let wash over me.

She isn't re-purposing materials so much as scavenging discarded objects, refusing to accept their status as refuse, or, as she described it, protesting their obsolescence.

I asked, “How do you know when you have too much?” and she said, “When my phone tells me its storage is full.”

I can't remember if she said “I love hoarders” or “I love hoarding” or “I love the idea of hoarding,” though the distinction seems key.

MEDITATIONS ON MEDIATION.

If hoarding is an illness of the home, does it run in the family?

Reflecting upon the collaborative processes that feed his work, **Takashi** described “the moment where one person gives up control.”

He is interested in a communal form of processing, a mediated version of an individual's thinking (through

that of another individual) and a meditative process of thinking through something together. A mutual process of Derrida's countersigning—a cyclical countersignature?

Contemplating the formal qualities of material objects and the histories with which they are imbued.

Takashi archives and elevates the ordinary—enclosing a nonprecious object in a valuable frame, or displaying a cheap knickknack in a curio cabinet.

What does it mean to be outdated?

BANALIZATION.

Chichan's work layers a series of logical-extremes-to-the-point-of-absurdity. It is a banalization of painterliness that still holds on to painterliness in some fashion.

What do we mean by painterly?

It helps to think of Chichan's practice as a fuck-you to the history and fetishization of painting while also holding on to some of the processual aspects of the medium.

Chichan said, “This painting is the most sincere painting I ever made.”

What is the etymology of tongue-in-cheek, anyway? Is it a fellatio joke? He wants to hold on to painting as a strategy for thinking through things,

but also to create and critique a certain type of connoisseurship.

PAINTING AS A PROBLEM, BUT NOT PAINTING PROBLEMS.

Adrienne makes paintings in the dark.

You can see the probing motions in her brush-strokes, the literal probing in the dark—the way her lines are soft and not perfectly straight, kind of unsteady. I find that there’s an ambiguity, though, between certainty and hesitation in her marks. It’s this tension between the urgency to want to document a space and a hesitation to remember exactly what the space looked like.

The evacuated spaces of her paintings invoke a sense of just-having-been-presen.

A silence and paranoiac anticipation of the next moment, as you scan the space and try to sense movement in your peripheral vision. That Gregor Schneider feeling.

PROBING IN THE DARK.

There is an urgency to the way that **Elise** describes her practice, and yet her drawings invite slow and prolonged looking: their representational nature allows for an immediate legibility, but that legibility is offset by detailed rendering and the evidence of the struggle of working with materials that resist and color that fades rapidly.

How do you make a pattern for a creature that you do not know?

There is a sense of imminence, of something about-to-happen. about-to-happen violence.

We see things getting weird, and we’re not sure exactly where it’s going, but we know it’s uneasy, and it might soon turn to the terrifying.

In the space between the dream and the fairytale, the *Froschkönig* ends with the princess throwing the frog against the wall. The frog goes splat and he turns into a prince—I think. Maybe I’m creatively misremembering.[‡] There is this violence that is written out of the Disney version, a feminine power and physical strength. We are in that prefrog throwing moment in Elise’s images.

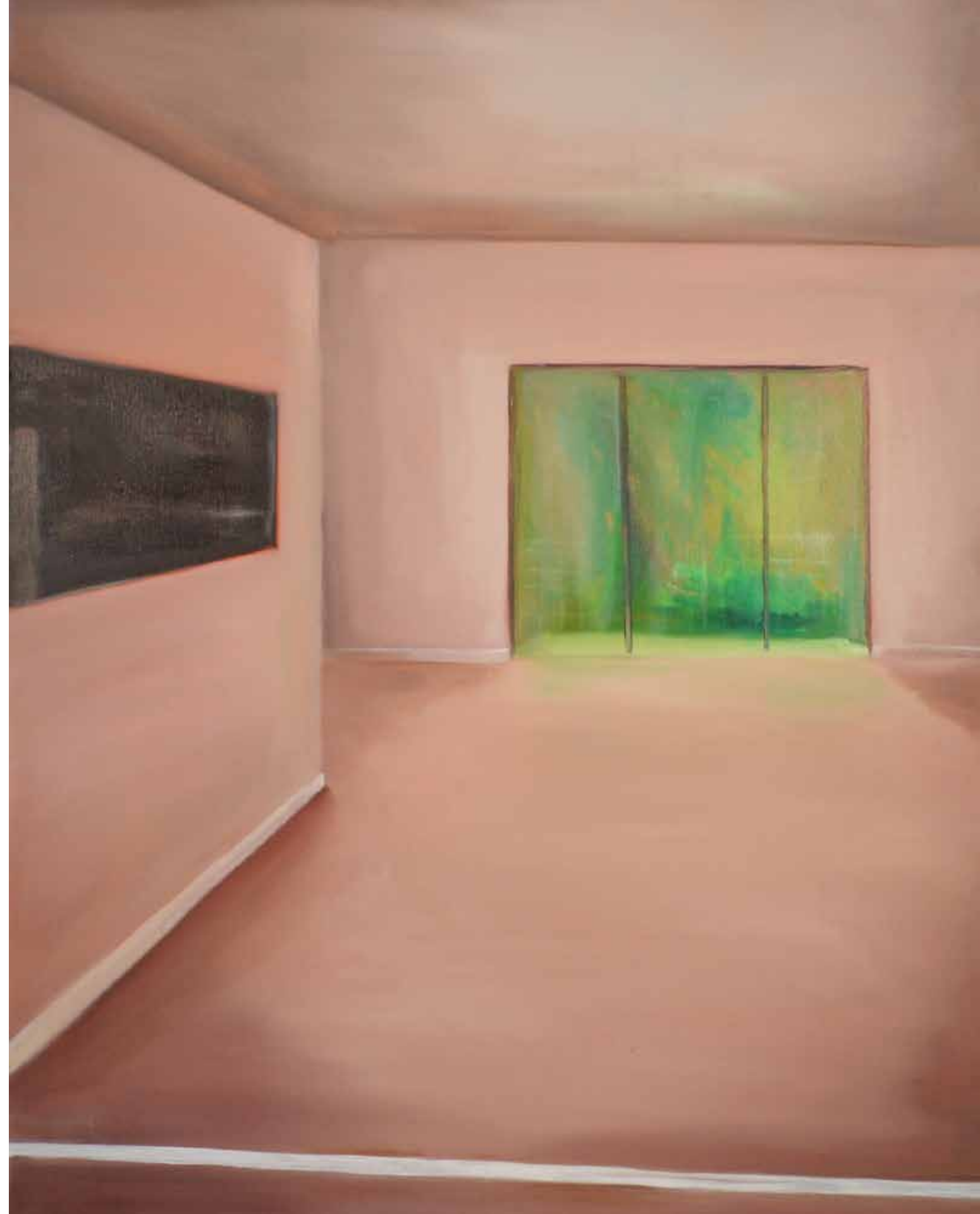
But maybe we are all gearing up to throw the frog, ready to lose our tempers.

—Zsofi Valyi-Nagy and Maggie Borowitz

[‡] My creative misremembering of Bruce Nauman’s “a creative misreading or creative misunderstanding” of Merce Cunningham and John Cage, quoting Coosje van Bruggen’s description of Nauman, cited in a 1986 interview with Chris Dercon, published in *Parkett*, cited in Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (MIT Press, 2003).

ADRIENNE ELYSE MEYERS

Revisitation, 2018. Oil on canvas



Fan blades swing on an angle with
An irregular clacking
A pattern builds
Chiming a remedy for roof collapses
A reproducible beat

And none disturbed by the shouting
Though the sounds fill every room
Though buzzing builds soft saturation

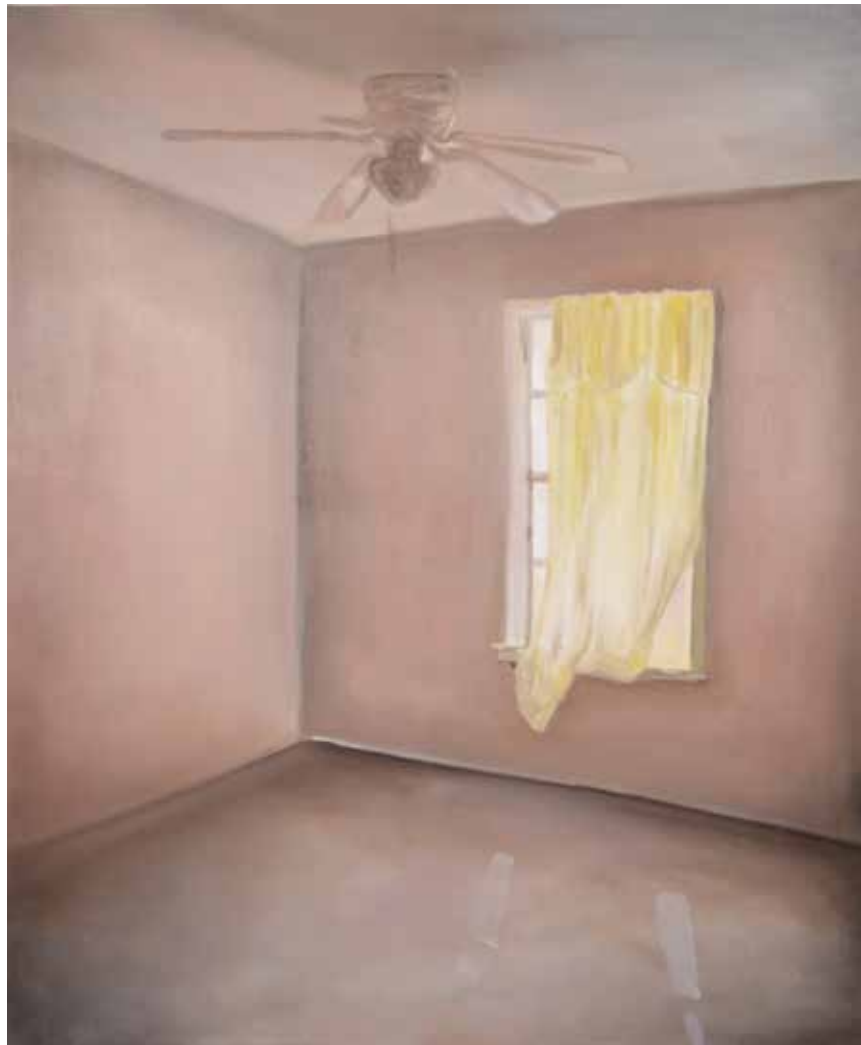
Smell smoke on the fingers though they touched no wreck
Open the door and find no singers
The sounds evacuate upon entrance
The stage forever shifts, with players
Running from your acting audience

Then this will end in
Refusing its own existence
Will shift
Or shift but not dissipate
The sounds of waves that stick inside your ears
The chorus steps away
The beat swells again down the hall
Every room is filled

With glistening invitation, an ideal
Offering an aftermath
Of what we learn to accept

Leaving Creases, 2018. Oil and house paint on canvas





A Reproducible Beat, 2018. Oil on canvas

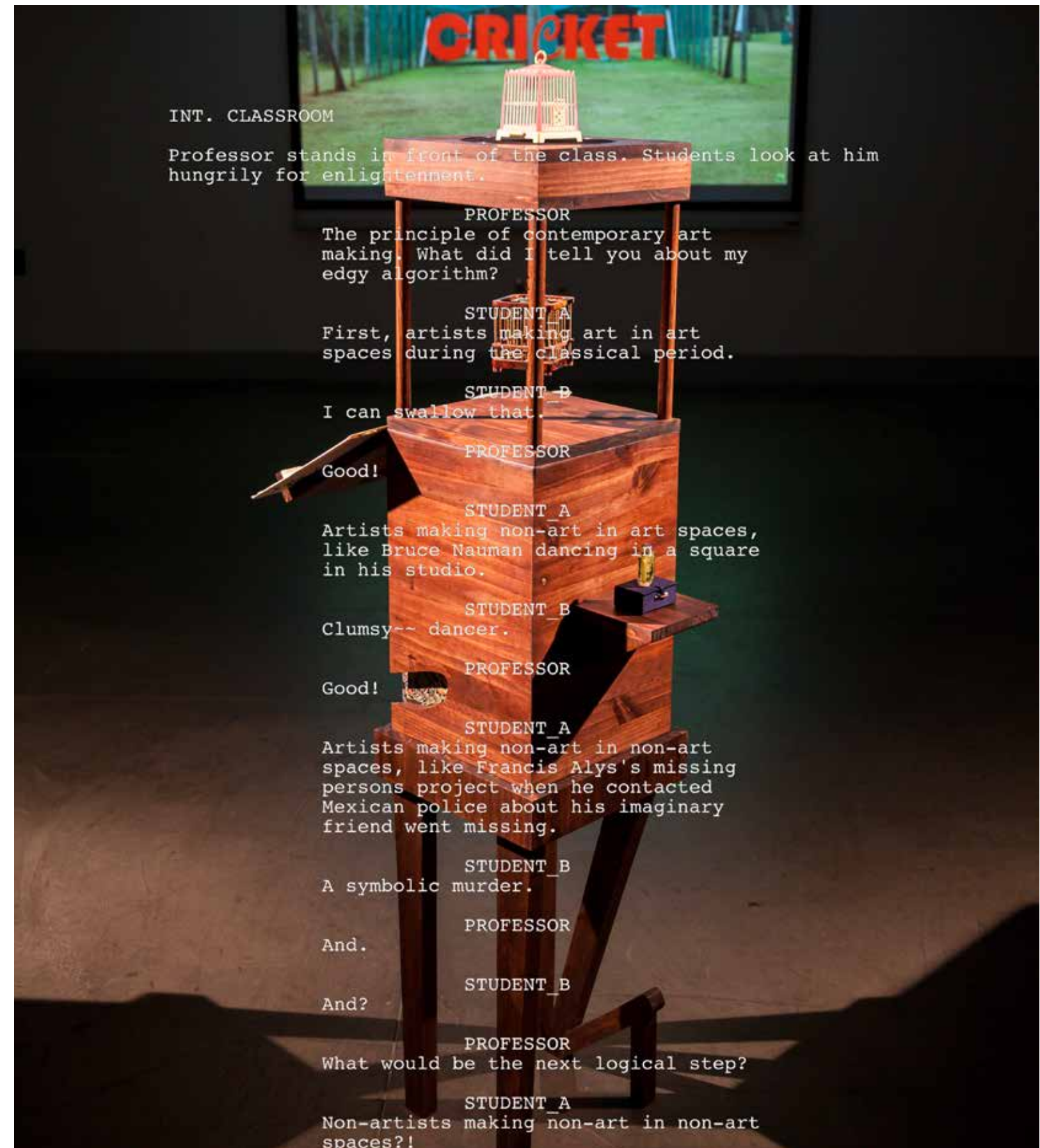


Persistence, 2018. Oil on canvas



None Disturbed, 2018. Oil on canvas

CHICHAN KWONG





Jeremiah froze. “Wait, please don’t hurt me. I’ll give you my money.”

Pussy. Eat some meat. “I don’t want your money,” Chuck’s voice hoarse. “I’m taking... taking *this* washer.”

“Ok, ok,” Jeremiah glanced at the washer—it had a red sticker on it. “Is it possible for you to take another one?”

“No way, I’m attached to it,” Chuck said. Suddenly, the rumbling sound stopped. Two men’s heavy breathing was amplified by the metal bodies around them.

“What, what was that? You’d better not call the cops.”

“No, no. I understand your concern. That’s the audio broke off the loop. We are having problems with—”

“Who the hell are you? You were here two weeks ago, weren’t you? A laundromat has no guard.”

“I am really sorry that you were not informed. This is a gallery. I’m an intern. I apologize for the inconvenience caused by—”

“Enough! You think you’re smart, huh?”
Tiny head. Chuck’s arm started jiggling, the weight of the billy club had set in. “Trying to trick me? This is the same damn laundromat I’ve been coming to for years. There’s no art here, only a Marilyn Monroe workout poster.”

“I do understand how you feel. A famous artist bought this place a week ago and converted it into an installation. If you don’t believe me, see the inside of these objects for yourself,” Jeremiah said.

Chuck bent over to the washer on his right side—a pile of bits and pieces of water damaged text.

“That’s *the Contemporary Art from 1989 Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes.*”

Two hundred dollars fine for damaging the washer. Chuck bent over the left—a red paper, a piece of cheesecloth, coffee beans, a neon yellow porcelain hand, and an oil-stained brown boot.

“A Sumptuous Soup.”

Chuck zipped through the space. Every one of the washers except his had been violated with non-clothes things. His jaw dropped below his bandana before a now-fish-tank—a goldfish swam in backstroke. “Hell no!”

Jeremiah shuffled his glasses. *“Bobby, My Darling.* I feed him through the bleach slot. Look, man, I completely understand. I didn’t get art at all, not until I got this job. As humans, we just have to accept that we won’t know everything. Like why would anyone want a used washer at two o’clock in the morning? But hey, it’s totally cool. We all have our quirks. You can have that one,” Jeremiah pointed to a washer in the corner. “There is just some mud inside. Put on low, it will rinse itself out in seconds.”

Chuck smashed a trash bin with his billy club. “I’m taking my washer. It can suck my pants tonight!”

Jeremiah, shaking, noticed the salt marks on Chuck’s pants. “Let me help you. You need to wash your pants, right? But that one is broken.”

“What do you mean it’s broken? It’s the cleanest.”

“It’s cursed by the artist. All the washers were washers, but now they are only representing the idea of a washer. Art is not functional. That’s why you can eat an apple, but you can’t eat a painting of an apple. All the washers except that one have other objects associated with them. So they don’t have to try as hard to justify themselves as art. They aren’t working because they aren’t turned on.

The No.17, however, without bells and whistles, tried so hard and it stopped working.”The last time Chuck went to an art museum was for his elementary school field trip, but he spent his time complaining about his chaperon instead of paying attention to the priceless Picassos around him.

Chuck raised the billy club over his shoulder. “I will hit you till you start to speak sense.”

Diane would tell Jeremiah to have some lard for his anemia. If Jeremiah could get any paler, he would have been invisible standing against a white wall. “True story, an artist declared a skyscraper as a readymade art object, suddenly the whole building stopped working. People were stuck in the elevators for hours. Others had to smash the automatic door to get out. The building’s electric engineers couldn’t figure it out the source of the power outage. Until they called the architect, who verbally acknowledged that the building indeed was a building, not a work of art, then everything started working again. After that incident, Congress passed a law that made it illegal for a certified artist to claim others’ property as art.”

Jeremiah pulled out his phone.

“Drop it, what do you think you are doing?” Chuck said.

Jeremiah threw down the phone. “I was going to show you the article. Please, I’m not lying.”

Chuck confirmed that the law did have its own Wiki page. *Diane is coming.*

“You said this is a curse, right? And a curse can be lifted like on that building, right? You seem literate in *Art*, what should I do?” Chuck said.

Jeremiah’s blood circulation resumed, a little less pale. “If you insist on taking No.17, to lift the curse, you need to take the washer down the street to the Home Appliance store and quiz the employee to re-define it.”

“Fine,” Chuck put away his billy club. “Hey, Jeremiah, I’m not trying to be difficult with you, but I just don’t think it was a decent thing to do for a rich-ass artist to come in and take over a neighborhood laundromat. Where will the underprivileged folks in this area wash their clothes? Not everyone is as lucky as we are. They don’t have cars. You want them to wash their clothes with their hands? Do you want to wash your clothes with your hands? Go tell your artist, folks are dying on the streets here.”

Jeremiah didn’t know how to refute Chuck with the artist’s statement.

“So you gonna stand there, or come to help me?”

DEREK ERNSTER



Washing Machine (Blue), 2017. Digital photograph



Washing Machine (Green), 2017. Digital photograph



Washing Machine (Magenta), 2017. Digital photograph

ELISE PUTNAM





Our Great White, 2018. Crayon and ink on muslin. Photo Credit: Ellie Hogeman

Dear Kara,

I write to you at a time when white supremacy won a presidency.

An era when heiresses are our princesses of capitalism. Like you, Ms. Walker, I have my own fantastic history. The ivory of my skin has been poached. The gold of my hair mined. My sapphire eyes gouged from my skull to bejewel another's crown. My likeness repackaged into childhood fictions, tales indoctrinated with white superiority. The virtue of society measured upon the preservation of a young white woman. Fictions repeated to the status of truths. Truths to preserve the red of my lips, the white of my skin, the blue of my eyes, and the amber waves of my hair.

With his sword drawn, he awakens me from my slumber. He rapes me politely. And we establish His kingdom. My white knight and I. He, too, is an artist. He decorates my body with pearls of his seed. He animates trees with the pendulumed bodies of my oppressors. He erects monuments of honor.

The story of whiteness is difficult to tell.

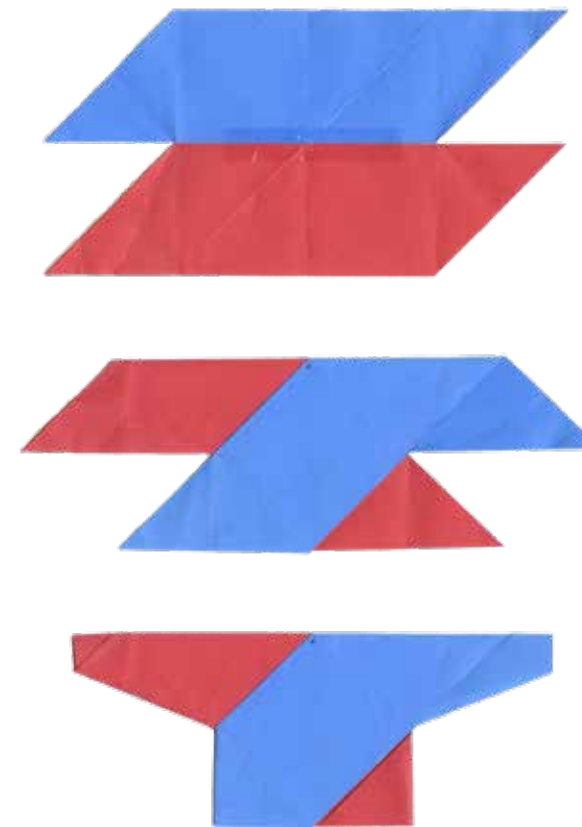
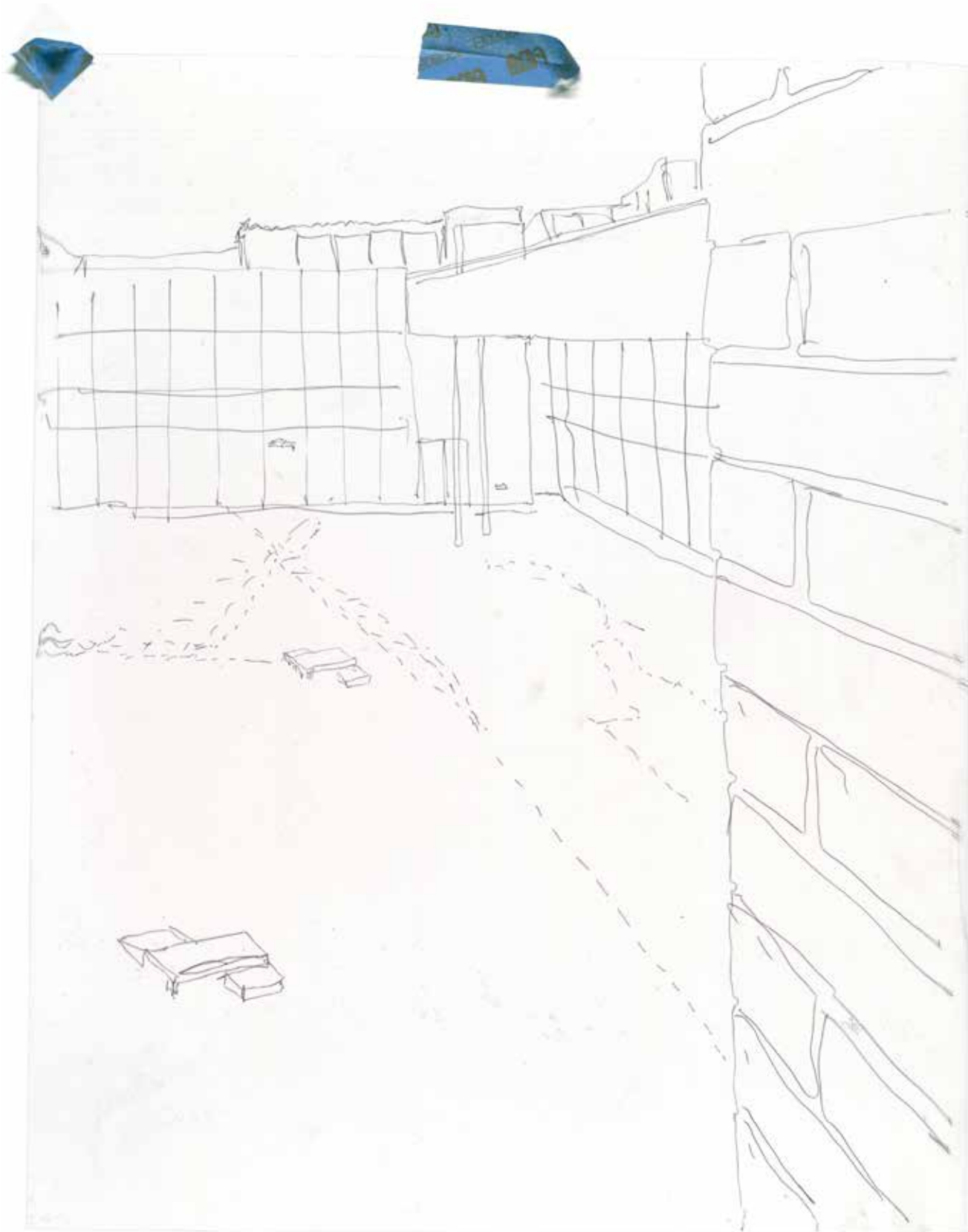
Our truth challenged by alternative truths. Kara, you and I have inherited estates in opposition. You, lynched by your auntie. I, with no name, prematurely anticipate Aryan salute. Can I use my passive as you have used your angry? Can I, too, be a trickster who curates contradictions to conjure controversy? Or am I stricken with offenses beyond reinterpretation.

The white woman must remain passive so as to not align herself with the seductress who acted with serpentine desire. Or maybe I should shed the skin.

Or maybe we should shed the skin.

FRANCES LEE





A uniform represents a social contract. It formally declares participation in a larger social system organized by labor. A uniform calls attention to a person's job as an organizing principle in public society and implies how his or her presence functions in relation to the work or status of others. A uniform expresses social rules or codes of behavior. A uniform is habitually worn. A uniform is a form of bureaucratic control; the use of the outfit makes known systems and procedures that organize people and society.

The Anti-Anxiety Uniform (AAU), is a proposal for a productive set of customs around expressing the discomfort that arises from group conflict. The uniform is the figure and the ground is the small group dynamics. Wearing the uniform presents an image of discomfort, incompatibility and visible social discontinuity that is often hidden through our codes of propriety. What is at stake in identifying a feeling and then managing and manipulating the expression of that feeling of discomfort interpersonally and to a larger public or group?

The expression of anxiety about interpersonal power relationships reveals social hierarchies. The project is an index: gauge, evidence, symptom, token, inventory and record. The artwork formally isolates language, architecture, currency and attire, and builds these material things back up to more directly reveal their service to the social regulation of groups.

A friend calls you bossy.
You are speaking to a second friend, trying to
clarify language around a certain topic.

A third friend overhears and speaks to you in—
private, asking if you feel comfortable with such a
declaration.
You have no opinion.

A fourth friend also tells you in confidence that
she has a feeling of discomfort around how you
were labeled.

The first friend is trying to accommodate you.
In using the word, bossy, she asserts solidarity
with friend number two, who is being challenged
on language.
At the same time, she uses the word to tease you,
signaling that your behavior is OK. Perhaps she is
also warning you.

Friend number one uses a word outside of your
normal vocabulary with each other. The event's
departure from the everyday triggers its
significance and causes the disruption amongst
the friends, who do not feel ownership over the
word and do not know how to categorize it.

Anti-Anxiety Uniform (AAU), 2017-2018



FRANCES MENDES LEVITIN



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AK

opportunities

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3D Mode: Essentials

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2018 2:24 AM	WinZip File	11,057 KB
018 11:35 PM	WinZip File	236 KB
018 11:35 PM	WinZip File	24,670 KB

Text Message

Tue, Feb 20, 8:38 PM

Hi! This is pedro for the curl angel. Are you still at logan?

yes

meet me outside room 204

I'm heading there now, it'll take me like 10-15 min is that ok?

yeah sure

I'm here, outside 204

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Search for listings... tip: search for "seller:yourname@uchicago.edu" to see your listings

Deva curl Angell free

miscellaneous

Posted 5w ago. Price: \$0.00

"Deva curl Angell free " was posted more than 30 days ago, so it does not show up in searches, and will not receive inquiries. It has likely already been sold.

This product was my sister's and I have straight hair. I'd like to avoid throwing it out. Please hit me up if you have use for it :)

Buyer: fraga@uchicago.edu

Hi! I'd love to get the deva if you still have it. When are you around campus? Thanks!

Buyer: savarese@uchicago.edu

Hi! My girlfriend has curly hair and is very interested. Is it still available? Where could I pick it up?

Buyer: barrette@uchicago.edu

Hi! Did you end up throwing this out?

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Our navigation through space is
bombaraded by queues which we must
parse as we move.

When I make art the images are less
important than the ways they get
reflected and refracted in space.
Light is deployed to simulate how
information is put in our path as
we move through space. We must
decide what matters for us and
I suggest that we don't need to feel
this urgency to gaze rapidly to parse
it all. We may slow down, for much
of the content in our path is a bunch
of mirror image clusters.

My project, *a cloud expression*,
demonstrates how one is subject
to the local environment. When
an individual walks into my installations
they are immersed in a scene
of physical and digital information.
The individual is invited to explore
the space and discover interesting
collisions of light on objects.
Light illuminates an otherwise dark
space. One is immersed in an
architecture of images that don't
merely hang on the walls but form
a new architecture of space.



TAKASHI SHALLOW



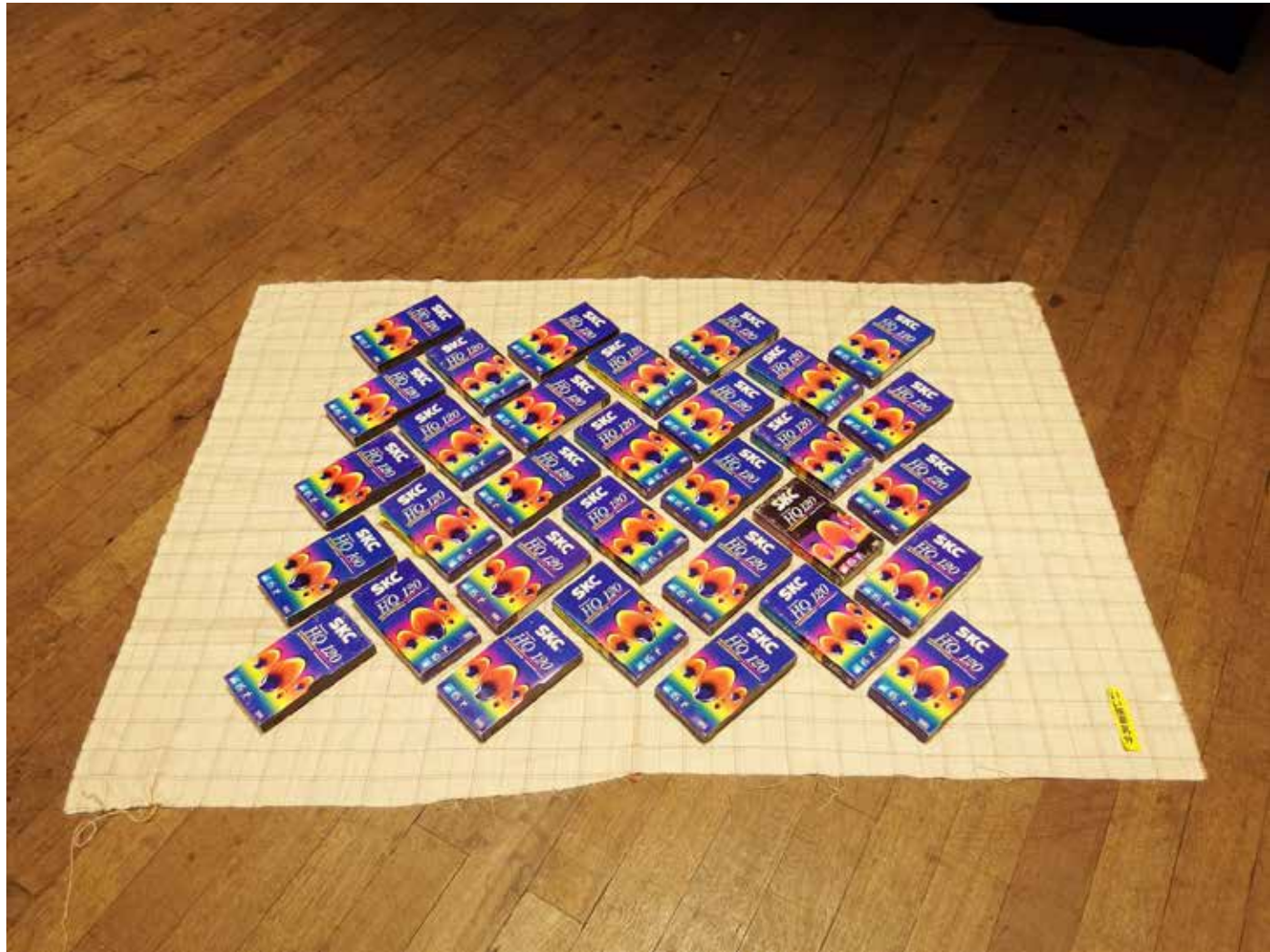
The Treachery of Still and Motion Pictures, 2017



Orientation, 2018



Orientation, 2018



Homesick, 2018



Silver Ratio, 2018

ZESPO





THE PLACE OF PAINTING: TRACKLIST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Me Interesas performed by Noel Torres

Qué Buena 105.1 FM Broadcast

Una Pagina Mas performed by Ezequiel Peña

Lo Que Tú Prefieras performed by Alacranes Musical

Beast of Burden performed by The Rolling Stones

Good Name performed by William Onyeabor

KMT performed by Drake feat. Giggs

Move Your Body performed by Frankie Knuckles

The Food [Live] performed by Common feat. Kanye West

Ya Nada Paso performed by La Maquinaria Norteña

That's the Way (I Like It) performed by KC and the Sunshine Band

I Want Your Love performed by Chic

Birthdays performed by The Cool Kids

Act Like You Know Me (Point Em Out) performed by Three 6 Mafia

Perfection performed by Run-D.M.C.

Something New performed by Cam'ron feat. Hell Rell

Devil In A New Dress performed by Kanye West feat. Rick Ross

Stay Around (Dub '95) performed by Cajmere feat. Terence FM

Track 26 from House Into My World performed by DJ Rampage

First Day Out performed by Tee Grizzley

The Pressure performed by A Tribe Called Quest

Can't Stop Lovin' You performed by Soul Dog

Good Ol' Love performed by Masta Ace

Get on Down performed by DJ Haus

The Sound™ performed by The Mr. Boare Industries House Band

Drive Slow performed by Kanye West feat. Paul Wall & GLC

How We Bullshit performed by Slum Village



Process screen shot of *Late for Still Life*.

World, 2018. Oil on canvas. 14x14 inches



The class of 2018 would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their continued support throughout our time at The University of Chicago:

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& The Logan Center Staff

Kent Lambert, Ben Chandler

& The Logan Media Center

Peter Reese & The Logan Center Shop

Maggie Borowitz & Zsofi Valyi-Nagy

Marcus Warren

The DoVA BA Class of 2017

The DoVA BA Class of 2018

The DoVA Faculty, Associate Faculty,
& Lecturers

The MFA Class of 2017

The MFA Class of 2019

Yesomi Umolu & Alyssa Brubaker

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