Exhibition Dates
May 21–June 28, 2020
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery
Barnsdall Park

Opening Reception
May 17, 2020, 2–5 p.m.

Performance and Literary Presentation
June 13, 2020
Grand Performances
Tanya Aguiñiga
Amir H. Fallah
YoungEun Kim
Elana Mann
Hillary Mushkin
Alison O’Daniel
Vincent Ramos
Steven Reigns
Shizu Saldamando
Roxanne Steinberg
Holly J. Tempo
Mia Doi Todd
Jeffrey Vallance
Lisa Diane Wedgeworth

COLA 2020
Individual Artist Fellows
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Mayor
City of Los Angeles

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Los Angeles City Attorney

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As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’s vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists. Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike. DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking, public art, community arts, performing arts, and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit culturela.org or follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/culturela, Instagram @culture_la, and Twitter @culture_la.

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**Joe Smoke**  
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On behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), I congratulate the 2020 COLA Individual Artist Fellows for receiving this prestigious honor from the City of Los Angeles. The new members of this cohort join the distinguished group of contemporary visual artists, graphic designers, literary artists, musicians, and performing artists who have also received this award since the program’s inception in 1997.

At the height of the “Culture Wars,”1 the city took a stand and doubled down by creating a program to fund new works by contemporary individual artists interested in taking new risks in their practice. The continuation of the program reinforces our city’s commitment to supporting individual artists and the important role they play in driving and shaping the critical cultural dialogue of our time.

Designed to catalyze bold new thinking, the ideas the Fellows put forward in their original application in August, 2018 have no doubt evolved and transformed. Upon receiving and celebrating their award notifications in July, 2019, our Grants Administration Division took the artists through the city’s contracting process. Once executed, each artist engaged their unique creative process, refined concepts, and prepared new work for presentation with great skill, thought, and intent. Nine months later, the artists were finalizing their projects for presentation to the public.

The literary and performing artists are presented by Grand Performances, Downtown LA’s premiere outdoor free performing arts venue. The program’s visual artists are presented in an annual group show, the COLA Visual Arts Exhibition, at the city’s oldest contemporary gallery, DCA’s Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG). The catalogue, designed by a previous COLA Design Fellow, presents works from all the artists with essays detailing their importance and impact. Each of these components combined presents these artists and their work in engaging ways to elicit the best audience experience.

COLA is led by a dedicated team of committed public service leaders who fervently believe that cities must provide access to resources, systems of acknowledgement, and platforms to witness and celebrate artists and the ideas they express. So on their behalf as well, I also thank the 2020 COLA Fellows for sharing the bounty of their creativity, labors, and ideas with the people of Los Angeles and visitors to our great city.

It is our hope this experience serves not only as an official recognition of their important contributions to the cultural life of Los Angeles, but also provides them with new opportunities for advancement and continued recognition.

Danielle Brazell
General Manager

Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles

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1 Coined by James Davidson Hunter, University of Virginia. “Culture Wars” refers to the period in the United States between 1987–1998 when a national dialogue took place about whether government funding for the arts could be used to support artists and exhibitions that were deemed offensive to some members of the public.
Introduction

As we enter a new decade, I am writing to reaffirm the triple-impact of the arts in developing human potential (personal mindfulness, community employment, and social cohesion). Strolling through contemporary visual arts exhibitions, attending artistic performances, and pausing during either to engage with art objects and art-experiences is a health-benefit to one and all.

Unlike sports or religion, arts activities provoke dormant emotional feelings and expand imaginative capabilities. Moreover, according to thousands of humanistic studies, interfacing with complex artworks is one of the best ways to increase your attention-span and deepen your problem-solving abilities; and both of these capabilities are critical elements of multi-dimensional subjective well-being.

Brilliant research about the psychological benefits of making crafts and/or gathering to enjoy them has been amassed for nearly a century in Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. In the Fall of 2019, the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe published a superb multi-national compendium called Health Evidence Synthesis Report Number 67. This manuscript summarizes over 3,000 previously published studies around the basic question, “What evidence is known about the roles of different art forms in improving health and well-being?” This 200-page publication provides an overall mapping (both meta-analysis and meta-synthesis) and connects a vast array of studies with diverse methodologies (such as behavioral observations, clinical records, interviews, neuroimaging, and physiological assessments). It reveals a broad range of art impacts on both mental and physical health in two bundles: a) arts outcomes for health promotion/illness prevention and b) arts outcomes for health management/illness treatment.

One of the primary goals of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is to stimulate and host free activities to benefit regional wellness. Within this task, we vigorously support artists’ jobs and audience experiences. The annual City of Los Angeles (COLA) Individual Artist Fellowship Program offers one of our finest opportunities to survey a spectrum of extremely high-quality regional artworks.

For no more than the cost of a car, bicycle, bus, or subway ride, you can arrive with friends or family at the plaza of Grand Performances in ‘Downtown L.A.’ or the Los Angeles Municipal Arts Gallery in Hollywood to enjoy two showcases presenting the latest creations by the acclaimed artists in this catalog. Please feel encouraged to visit one or both of these forums.

In addition, this catalog is also a free aesthetic object, designed by 2003 COLA Fellow, Garland Kirkpatrick, through which you can exercise eudemonic well-being (sense of meaning, control, autonomy, uniqueness, and related purposes). Copies are available by written request to DCA or at any branch of the L.A. Public Library. For those wanting to participate online, the publication can be viewed at culturela.org and a virtual tour of the visual arts exhibition portion of COLA can be found on the LAMAG website at lamag.org.

No matter how you decide to partake, please enjoy the deep benefits of meditating upon these and other complex contemporary artworks in 2020 and beyond.

Joe Smoke
Grants Administration Division Director

Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles
Introduction

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG) is one of the oldest and longest-running contemporary art galleries in Los Angeles. Located in Barnsdall Park, the gallery has featured exhibitions in the park since the 1950s and in our current building since 1971.

Over the past fifty years, the gallery has shown work from both legends and emerging artists, carving a place for Los Angeles-based artists to be seen, discovered, and celebrated. Sadly, last year, the gallery lost one of our giants, pioneering curator Josine Ianco-Starrels. During her tenure at LAMAG, she established the gallery as a site where underrepresented artists were featured in memorable exhibitions such as Chicanarte and Afro American Abstraction, while younger audiences could see art in her series titled Magical Mystery Tour.

Ianco-Starrels’s tenure marked a time in Los Angeles’s history with limited access to exhibition space at museums and galleries and when minimal national and international attention was placed on the local contemporary art scene, spurring many artists to relocate to New York. The artists who stayed in Los Angeles, however, fostered a new environment that, over decades, has nurtured and supported artists financially, spiritually, and emotionally.

The City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowships, launched in 1997, is one of the few municipal arts programs that continues to directly support artists financially. This year, the gallery is proud to showcase the work of the eleven COLA visual artists who represent the diversity and creativity that the City has come to support.

Over the years, LAMAG has assisted hundreds of COLA fellows and thousands of other artists with refining and presenting new work. Our process in nurturing artists to produce their best work involves a careful balancing of artists’ intentions against public understanding. This process involves critical thinking, endearing hope, some humor, and leaps of faith. In the end, our labor is reflected throughout the mission of the Department of Cultural Affairs and through COLA: a program that permits artists to breathe deeply, take risks, and make new work that stretches their art practice.

Isabelle Lutterodt
Barnsdall Park and Los Angeles Municipal Arts Gallery Director

Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles
Introduction

The City of Los Angeles, through the Department of Cultural Affairs, once again fulfills its mission of supporting three of the most forward-looking yet, L.A.-rooted, artists actively creating work in our vibrant city. As we celebrate these three highly-regarded awardees as COLA artists, we make note of the generations of important and diverse performing and literary artists that have paved the way, as these new awardees continue to represent the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that has come to exemplify Los Angeles. Kudos to dancer and choreographer Roxanne Steinberg, composer and musician Mia Doi Todd, as well as poet and educator Steven Reigns.

Steeped in an ethos of experimentation and rigorous movement research and investigation, Roxanne Steinberg has been a stalwart of contemporary butoh practice and improvisation since 1988 with her beginnings at Body Weather Laboratory in L.A. Performing solo, or in collaboration with fellow artists, most notably her esteemed partner Oguri, she looks to impact her audiences with memories, immediacy, and radical movement. After studying with important butoh master artists like Ushio Amagatsu and Min Tanaka (as well as many notable choreographers), Steinberg opened Body Weather Laboratory at the Electric Lodge in Venice Beach where, as the artist-in-resident, she continues her study and research on the mind, body, connection, and perception.

Native Angeleno Mia Doi Todd also has a rooted connection to butoh study in Japan under legendary artist Kazo Ohno, but has since emerged as one of L.A.’s leading singer-songwriters, composers, musicians, and connectors in the music scene. She always places great importance on fostering multicultural community within a global frame. With the founding of the Frogtown-based music venue, Zebulon, she created a vortex of performance and community celebration that supports a rich and contemporary music scene currently thriving in Los Angeles. Known for being a thoughtful and emotional songwriter, she explores many different themes that span a broad range, from covering Brazilian songs to exploring family and motherhood. As a consummate and singular artist with many recordings and appearances, Mia has performed solo and in collaborations on many great stages around the globe, including the Hollywood Bowl, Circo Voador in Rio de Janeiro, and Amsterdam’s Paradiso. Besides her work as a solo artist, Mia has worked with numerous musicians including Flying Lotus, Jose Gonzalez, Dntel, and Miguel Atwood-Ferguson.

Steven Reigns is a poet, educator, and trailblazer, and was appointed the first Poet Laureate of West Hollywood. Included in over a dozen of his chapbooks, are the notable collections Inheritance and Your Dead Body is My Welcome Mat. Among his many accolades, Reigns is a fourteen-time recipient of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture’s Artist in Residency Grant. He edited My Life is Poetry, showcasing his students’ work from the first-ever autobiographical poetry workshop for LGBT seniors. Reigns has lectured and taught writing workshops around the country to LGBT youth and people living with HIV, and he facilitates the largest LGBTQ book club in the country, the Lambda Lit Book Club. Currently, he is touring The Gay Rub, an exhibition of rubbings from LGBT landmarks, and is at work on a forthcoming collection of poetry entitled Bodiless Powers.

Ben Johnson
Performing Arts Program Director

Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Los Angeles
Visual/Design Artists
Literary/Performing Artists

Panelists

Sandra de la Loza
Daniela Lieja
Edgar Miramontes
Kelsey Nolan
Doris Sung
Kristina Wong
Steven Wong
For 14 years, Tanya Aguiñiga crossed the border from her childhood home in Tijuana, Mexico to attend school in the U.S. As a daily border crosser, migration and the relationship between the United States and Mexico steered Aguiñiga’s life choices. The abuses of migrant rights she witnessed on the border first led Aguiñiga to work with the Border Art Workshop in the 1990s to 2000s. Presenting
art installations around the U.S. and Mexico, the Workshop used art to draw attention to increased migrant deaths due to Operation Gatekeeper during the late 1990s, which militarized the U.S.–Mexico border.

In the last five years, Aguiñiga has been combining her expertise in craft-based practices and community activism to help border communities work through traumas caused by the current political systems in both the U.S. and Mexico.

For her City of Los Angeles (COLA) Fellowship, Aguiñiga has taken inspiration from Aline Barnsdall, a radical feminist in her time, who knew the power of the arts, and valued having them accessible to diverse populations. Her gift to the city of Los Angeles stipulated that the land be used for ‘arts-only purposes’, thus paving the way for the Barnsdall Art Center and establishing a craft-based program open to all, regardless of educational background.

Today, the most vulnerable population—and the group least likely to have access to arts-based education or arts resources—is the Asylum Seeker Community currently integrating themselves into American society. Barnsdall was known for helping her friend Emma Goldman, an anarchist political activist and writer, ease deportation to Russia following the “Red Scare” purges of the 1920s. Aguiñiga feels that in these current times, Barnsdall would be a person that would believe in immigrants’ rights, as well as extending access to the arts to this community.

For her COLA Fellowship, and in the spirit of Aline Barnsdall, Aguiñiga will start a ‘craft (clay)-based’ arts program at an LGBTQ Asylum Seeker Shelter in Tijuana, her hometown. Jardin de Mariposas has asked for Aguiñiga’s help in building a ceramic studio so that its residents can make pieces that will be left in its gardens. By leaving these pieces, the residents’ LGBTQ brothers and sisters that come to the shelter can feel hope and empowerment by encountering ceramic artworks made by those who have made it to safety before them.

The ceramic studio will also serve as a source for art therapy and job training as workshops taught by established and emerging ceramics artists from Tijuana to Los Angeles teach residents various sculptural and functional techniques. The residents may also begin to produce work to be sold at the shelter itself, helping them to access sources of income that are generative and empowering.

Aguiñiga aims to deconstruct the hierarchy of who receives access to arts education—and how they get it. Aguiñiga wants to not only create gallery-based work, but she also aims to create new systems of access to the arts and amplify diverse voices through art support systems. By allowing for a fuller discourse as to whom art serves—and what lenses dictate our understanding of timely societal issues—Aguiñiga hopes to encourage our Los Angeles community to learn more about what happens at the border—only two hours away.

Aguiñiga’s works for the COLA Fellowship exhibition will include documents of how to get involved in helping the Asylum Community. Then Aguiñiga will form a site-specific installation from all communications between her and social workers in Tijuana and the shelter. Other objects created during the project—including photographs, journal entries, and ephemera—will round out the installation.

Drew Tewksbury
Performance Crafting. Felt Me. 2012.
Felt. 5 feet 9 inches. Photo: the artist.

Tierra. 2014.
Nylon, soil, leather, thread, vinyl. 4 x 6 feet.
Photo: the artist / Volume Gallery, Chicago.
Mend. 2015.
Cotton, wool, copper electroplated epoxy clay.
105 x 132 inches. Photo: the artist / Volume Gallery, Chicago.
Reindigenizing the Self, installation view, 2017.
Photo: Volume Gallery, Chicago.
Border Quipu/Quipu Fronterizo, 2016-2018.
Recycled dress, bathing suit straps. Dimensions variable.
Photo: Gina Clyne.
The history of Western portraiture is the history of propaganda. For centuries, rulers and elites commissioned portraits not just to capture their likenesses, but to convey carefully orchestrated messages about themselves, based on everything from their posture and the lilt of their head to their wardrobe and the symbols placed around their image. A sovereign’s hand on a globe stood in for imperial conquest, while books represented knowledge. A dog at one’s feet meant loyalty.
Above all, portraits were meant to project the power, benevolence, or wisdom of their subjects, regardless of veracity.

The paintings of Amir H. Fallah offer an aesthetic and conceptual refutation to this established history of portraiture. The faces of his subjects—when there is a figurative subject at all—are shrouded in patterned fabric that cascades down from their head to their shoulders and arms, every fold and drape realistically rendered to imply sculptural volume. Clashing patterns and heaps of vibrant flora fill his backgrounds with an alluring visual cacophony. His figures are surrounded by an array of evocative objects and symbols, adding layers of meaning to their veiled guise. Instead of coherent narratives, Fallah paints complex and often contradictory depictions. Eschewing straightforward content, his hybrid portraits rely on the viewer to create meaning from their disparate elements.

Fallah's latest paintings do away with the central figure altogether. These large canvases, on the scale of history painting, are filled with images, logos, and patterns pulled from all manner of source material: children's books, Persian miniatures, comics, modernist abstraction. Taken together, they could be considered a kind of expansive self-portrait of the artist, whose own identity reflects a hybridity mirrored in these works.

Born in Iran in 1979 on the eve of the Islamic Revolution, Fallah emigrated with his family first to Turkey, then to Italy, before settling in Virginia in 1987. As a child, he found community in punk music and skateboarding. True to the DIY spirit of these scenes, he founded photocopied art zine *Beautiful/Decay* when he was just 16—a publication that grew into a glossy, high-quality art magazine—before heading west to get his MFA at UCLA.

Pieces of his biography are woven throughout this new work. Images of men in Middle Eastern dress taken from an American textbook vie for space with stylized horses from a Persian miniature, and the gaudy crest of the Shah, Iran’s pre-Revolution ruler, flipped on its head. The logo of the radical animal rights group the Animal Liberation Front—an upraised paw and human fist—is juxtaposed with playful illustrations from a kid’s book: monkey, ostrich, elephant, lion. A faithfully rendered antique map of the world erroneously depicts California—Fallah’s home since 2002—as an island floating off the coast. It is an historical miscalculation that takes on contemporary relevance given our country’s current fractured status. Fallah does away with the rigid notion of singular authenticity. For him, there can be several competing, equally valid authenticities.

Pattern plays an important role in these works, not just as background, but as unifying element. Abstract borders weave in and out of the compositions, recalling the grid as used in publication design, the frames of comic books, and the borders used in Persian miniatures, as much as minimalist painting. They shift from back to front, overlapping painted figures, thereby creating a shallow illusionistic space and uniting the discrete sections.

If historical portraits were meant to convey a unified, coherent theme, sending a clear message about their patrons, Fallah’s layered, maximalist compositions upend that assumption. They are no less carefully composed, but intended to convey a multiplicity of interpretations rather than give a singular narrative. Within patterned panels of these works, Fallah has embedded phrases, like the anarchist motto, “No Gods, No Masters.” Placed in this new context, this slogan takes on a broader connotation, which has significance not only to Fallah’s punk roots, but to the open-ended negotiation of meaning that takes place on the canvas.

Matt Stromberg
A Distorted Reality is Now
A Necessity To Be Free, 2019.
Acrylic on canvas. 15 x 7 feet.
A Flexible History, 2018.
Acrylic on canvas. 6 x 4 feet.

Birth, Cursed, Reversed, 2019.
Acrylic on canvas. 6 x 15 feet.
Delusion And Confusion, 2019.
Acrylic on canvas. 7 x 5 feet.

Acrylic on canvas. 5 x 5 feet.
Acrylic on canvas. 5 x 4 feet.

Acrylic on canvas. 5 x 4 feet.
Brilliant A by YoungEun Kim traces the process of the establishment of international standard pitch to reveal that sound and auditory perception are a result of global history. The decision to standardize the musical note A to 440 Hz is a relatively recent development. From the sixteenth to mid-eighteenth century, the pitch of the A-note was decided rather flexibly, depending on
the composer or the conductor’s preferences. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, standard pitch rose steadily, through ongoing amendments at meetings held in various countries. The most recent determination of A 440Hz was accepted by the International Organization for Standardization in 1955 and is continued to be used today. The rise of the standard pitch has been largely attributed to competition among instrument makers to produce brighter sounds.

YoungEun Kim examines the gradual increase of the pitch’s frequency in relation to cultural and social circumstances that question the objectivity of international standard pitch. Complex shifts caused by enlightenment, industrialism, colonialism, and capitalism have contributed to the revision process of the international standard pitch over decades, ultimately influencing the composition and implementation of sound, auditory perception, and the act of listening.

Kim’s interest in pitch standardization originated from spending her youth experiencing various genres of music in South Korea in the late 20th century, where the geographical context of Far East Asia and Korean culture brought a rapid advancement in audio technology. Looking back on her past where her aural preferences and taste first emerged, Kim developed a curiosity towards the basic conditions of where her auditory perception came from. By tracing the encounters of musical standards of both Western and Korean traditional music, Kim attempted to better understand how her auditory perception was influenced by disparate musical conventions. From this process, her work expands beyond a personal to a universal narrative, exploring how sound and auditory perception have developed historically.

Sound auditory perception is often perceived as inborn and immaterial. In the old-fashioned dichotomy between culture and nature, sound has been more affiliated with nature, and has been misunderstood to relate to a state of permanence. However, sound is a very human-centric idea; it is a term used to define a certain range of frequency of vibration that is sensed by human ears. Therefore, to study sound and auditory perception does not only refer to natural phenomena, but also examines the human sensory system in relation to a historical context.

However, considering the nature and characteristics of sound, one cannot entirely reproduce historical acoustic environments. We can listen to past recordings, but this does not accurately convey the comprehensive auditory context that includes location, time, weather, and audience. Therefore, it is inevitable to carry out the research based on what the sound was for, what the sound was trying to express, and how people responded to it. In other words, to track down the history of sound, one must rely on external factors rather than just the sound itself. In doing so, historical materials on the international standard pitch become an interesting point of departure and guide.

YoungEun Kim’s Brilliant A extracts texts from evidence reports and conference materials from Europe and America and rearranges them into format of meeting minutes. In the conversations on international standard pitch had by musicians, politicians, and scientists, subtle differences in each party’s auditory perspective and sensory engagement are revealed. Alongside the adapted conversations, a monologue is intercut of a Korean violin maker who started to work in the field around the period of the Korean War.

Furthermore, sounds of a string quartet tuning and playing, voices, tuning forks, and audio clips recorded during the process of making a violin converse with the text. Similar to how a single geographic territory can be viewed from different perspectives and scaled in different formats, this narrative around the establishment of international standard pitch provides a unique path to both penetrate and present the history of sound.

Yun MinHwa
Single channel video, stereo & binaural sound, excerpted news articles and essays, aluminum frame, headphones. 12 minutes 6 seconds. Dimensions variable.
Photo: Ruben Diaz.

Horn speakers, speaker stands, amplifier, sound. 4 minute loop. Dimensions variable.
Photo: Jaebum Kim.

$1’s Worth, 2016.
Speakers, monitors, drawings, acoustic foam. Dimensions variable.
Photo: Hyo Jung Ahn.
Sound performance series with percussionists, singers, metronome, walkie-talkies, ladders.
Photo: Jong Hyun Seo.
Room 402, 2011.
Monitor speakers, vibration speakers, various materials for room keeping, usher. 1 hour loop. Photo: Jong Hyun Seo.
Meet me in the vortex.
We can each say with authority what our listening feels like: the sensation of being audience, of communal engagement with sound. When we actively listen together—in order to gather more closely, to translate, to build connections (however ephemeral)—the question arises: what does listening
look like (as Mann’s *A List of the Sounds That Have Reverberated Through My Body* asks)? What shape does listening take? Further still, what does listening do?

Philosopher Gemma Fiumara describes listening as the fundamental openness that makes thinking together possible: however free we may be to speak, we must be able to listen first.¹ Elana Mann’s protest instruments (like finely-crafted questions) create and hold this fundamental openness in a vortex of form, utility, and power.

As a chord derives its precise character from the plurality of voices it contains, each instrument presents the possibility of representing—giving voice to—those who play it. Instruments used in protest present a meaningful distinction between the sound of separate instruments joined together when played, as in an ensemble—and the sound of a single, collective instrument requiring coordinated activation by a group of players.


While protest in itself may require no materials—only a pulsating, social subject—the pressed handprints which surround the massive vortex of Mann’s megaphone speak to the life of an object used to amplify, focus, and resist. This sculpture is one iteration of the ongoing work of revealing the shape of listening, drawing its inspiration from the *Mega-kazoo-horn*, a one-of-a-kind instrument historically used in political actions, now held at the Folk Music Center and Museum in Claremont, CA. Instruments of protest, like political systems themselves, should perhaps always be prototypes, built and re-built in perpetual ad hoc processes that consider the latent histories and possible futures which objects fuse together. In contrast, the other side of protest—the side of power—prefers its designs to be perfectly complete, with inflexible patterns of use, to fix the future in place, to forget the past.

Tuning the sounds produced by these contingent instruments is like cooking a familiar recipe with the ingredients one happens to have on hand: neither planned, nor entirely left to chance.² That is to say, these instruments can’t be played wrongly. Their utility, as symbols or as sound makers, is solidly visible, precise and durable. Anyone can pick them up, turn them around, put them to use. For the participatory sculptures *Hands-up-don’t-shoot-horn* (2015–16) and *histophone* (2014–16), reversibility—moving from listening objects to speaking objects and back again—is an essential feature derived from how they are used by people in the world. In use, the instruments become tools for the articulation of common language, skills, memories and rituals—their generative use in the opera *Unseal Unseam* by composers Sharon Chohi Kim and Micaela Tobin being one stand-out example. The music we make when we play these instruments reveals sound in its most fundamental form: a disturbance that travels. Through the air, the ocean, the floor, bodies, against walls, by way of musical instruments, orchestras, and sculptures; it repeats and reinforces, it leaves remarkable shapes in its wake. Full of metaphors, sound is a natural material for considering the amplification and distribution of power: rhythmic or resonant, harmonic or dissonant, piercingly loud or whisper-silent. As objects to be performed, always already moving into action, these instruments make music possible—allowing for a unique form of virtuosity that modulates between vulnerability and power, where listening finds its form as a mobilization, a vortex.

Luke Fischbeck


histophone, 2016. Plastic, enamel. 5.25 x 13.25 x 5.5 inches. Photo: Ruben Diaz.
The Donald Trump(ed), 2016. 
Bronze, 18k gold. 33 x 12 x 12 inches. 
Photo credit: Ruben Diaz.

#me-too-rattle-battle (F.U.J.M. + S.S.), from the Blame-game Rattle series, 2018. 
Ceramic, wood, glass. 6 x 9 x 16 inches. 
Photo: Michael Underwood.

Ceramic, glass, wood. Photo: the artist.
Hillary Mushkin’s practice has continually explored the uneasy juxtapositions and shifting perspectives of contemporary landscapes: how we see and represent place in our technological moment. In her *Incendiary Traces* series, “an experimental
art, research and media initiative,” she engages 21st century sites of conflict—borders, training camps, military outposts—primarily through drawing. In doing so she explores the visible and invisible realities at play in these contested sites. What does a border look like? How do simulations transform our understanding of reality? Mushkin has often collaborated with colleagues—scholars, artists, writers, theorists, technologists—in order to expand her reach as well as to multiply perspectives. In this process, drawing comes up against multiple methods of observation. The ensuing tensions between ways of seeing and knowing reveal that although observation and surveillance share goals of tracking and exploring a given site, we often see through the lens of what we already know—a perpetual partial blindness.

Recent work, and no doubt contemporary politics, have turned Mushkin’s attention to the 100-mile border zone of the United States, a strip of land in which most of the population lives and in which border law prevails—border patrol maintains the right to stop anyone within this zone. Here, the border is less a boundary than an invisible legal veil overlaying the landscape of American liberty in popular imagination and representation. For this new work, Mushkin brings an archival lens into her examination of borders, juxtaposing earlier 19th century survey practices against this space of 21st century surveillance. Nineteenth century boundary commission reports become the source of a photographic documentary series in which Mushkin investigates the various logics of colonial explorations in the Americas: naturalist engravings of the botany of sites take part in the encyclopedic processes of the enlightenment through which observation equated knowledge; “profiles” of boundaries refer to cross sectional views of the terrain in the landscape, hidden to the eye (yet also provide obvious metaphors for the present day profiling of border policing); maps from a later 1899 International Boundary Commission Atlas, reveal the determined conclusion of such explorations—a seemingly thorough record of a place. These photographic studies of the archive form the backdrop for another “draw in” at a border site (with field geologists from Caltech), which provide an historical counter to the surveillance that takes place in the border zone today. Scientific colleagues drawing at the site will see entirely different forms of information than their 19th century predecessors, based on geological knowledge as well as recording technologies (including drone footage) unknown at the time of earlier expeditions. The atlas similarly is a staid record of questionable authority against mappings made by contemporary drones searching for anomalies, where observation occurs in the intersection of data and surveillance. Mushkin’s project in turn includes ink drawings of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tracking software interfaces. These loose renderings challenge the seeming precision of the digital source. Each system, 19th or 21st century, relies on overlaying invisible structures of power over a site, and it is this similarity that Mushkin’s work explores. Quiet poetic moments are as crucial to the work as theoretical insights. Drawings made in situ undermine established mappings through an insistence on seeing anew. As Mushkin’s work focuses on “political facets of representing landscape,” it reminds us as well that all representation is political and that landscape bears a particular weight of social value and valuing.

Jane McFadden

Selected Exhibitions

2019
- Acciones Territoriales, Museo ExTeresa Arte Actual, Mexico City (group)
- Tunnel Below / Skyjacking Above: Deconstructing the Border, nGbK, Berlin (group)

2017
- Scenic Survey (part of Survey: Art/Act for the Americas, Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA)
- binaries: maps on show, Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA
- Reconnaissance Inside the Panopticon, Places Journal

2016
- "Reconnaissance Inside the Panopticon," Places Journal

Publications

2017
- Hillary Mushkin: Incendiary Traces. Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA

Artist Essays

2018
- “The Disposition of Drones,” Places Journal
- “Reconnaissance Inside the Panopticon,” Places Journal

Education

MFA, University of California, Irvine, CA, 1994
BFA, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, 1991

Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

www.hillarymushkin.com
www.incendiarytraces.org

Untitled (Popsicle Tank) (detail), from the series As We Go On, 2006. Archival inkjet print. 24 x 65 inches.
Radome, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Headquarters, Redondo Beach, CA from the series Incendiary Traces, 2012. Pencil and watercolor on paper. 9 x12 inches.

In 1990, two pieces of legislation crucial to American disability rights activists were passed: the Television Circuitry Decoder Act, which mandated that televisions manufactured for use in the United States be programmed with caption-decoding technology; and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prohibited discrimination against people with...
disabilities in all areas of public life, including the workplace, public transportation, and public spaces. As a publicly funded institution, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG)—host of the City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowship exhibition—holds the ADA in particular regard, enforcing a number of rules and regulations that affect artists presenting work in the space. One such stipulation is that artists contributing works of moving image are asked to submit their artworks well in advance of those made in other mediums so that LAMAG can send them to outside professionals for captioning and audio description services.

Artist and filmmaker Alison O’Daniel, herself hard-of-hearing (HoH), has long utilized captions in her work. However, she typically performs this labor on her own, considering captions to be part of the work itself, rather than just a translation of it. A second cause of reluctance stems from her mistrust of a captioning industry staffed by the hearing. In her experience, captions frequently are guilty of transmitting wrong information—dialogue may be typed out incorrectly, tone misread, curse words censored. Concisely put by artist and writer Jordan Lord, “Captions are an addition that often act as a subtraction.”

O’Daniel’s multimedia installation takes the unreliable caption as its subject. It is comprised of three components: a looped video projection capturing boom operators and sound mixers at work, a large-scale mobile that includes neons based on “blind drawings” of Deaf artist and friend Christine Sun Kim’s arms as she signs ASL, as well as captions and audio descriptions that have been made variously by blind, Deaf, and HoH collaborators. As O’Daniel’s mobile turns, the shadows it casts block out parts of the image, momentarily disappearing and fragmenting the sound workers. The provided audio descriptions and captions may stray from the original source material, though it’s hard to say if this makes them less reliable or more.

Coming together into one fluid, ambient piece, O’Daniel works from the position that the interruptions, blockages, and mistranslations that each of these components wash over each other can be generative. O’Daniel’s work is radical in that it demonstrates how knowledge can be built without full access to information, but also how it can be built through a system of incompletions. She is best known for her longterm, feature-length project *The Tuba Thieves*, which cinematically threads together scenes of pause, silence, and translation: a slew of tuba thefts from Los Angeles public high schools; the premiere of John Cage’s *4’33*” in Woodstock, NY; the final night of performances at San Francisco’s defunct punk club the Deaf Club; alongside scenes with Deaf artists and musicians Christine Sun Kim and Nyke Prince, who sign and drum, respectively. Neither fully Deaf nor hearing, O’Daniel’s personal experience of listening occupies a middle ground wherein gaps in sonic information are inevitable, sometimes solved visually by lipreading or gesture, and sometimes left unsolved. It is in these inaccessible moments that unlikely sources of information are tuned into. When a mobile becomes the only “reliable” source of information, it becomes a soundtrack. When access is blocked, information does not stop being gathered, but rather it becomes accumulated in ways more open to happenstance observations. To quote scholar Amalle Dublon, “Access is improvisatory.”

Talia Heiman


Erasure is not for the weak-stomached. Few are up to the task of witnessing how their own community vanishes and is forgotten. Rather than look away, Vincent Ramos seeks evidence of past lives of Mexican and Mexican Americans in domestic objects as well as in film, music and television. His elaborate installations and performances evoke the lived experiences and memories of
functions as sharp-eyed studies and evocative meditations.

Ramos’s drawings provide an additional dimension to his simultaneously expansive and incisive perspective. His drawings are rigorously studious and yet, they reach more deeply as they attempt to commune with their subjects. The drawing of Mexican American ballad singer Vikki Carr, for example, calls as much attention to her exquisitely rendered features, as it does to the black space that occupies most of the page. Filled with Ramos’s diligent pencil strokes, the space rejects a blank neutrality that privileges the status quo that has historically excluded people of color. Sometimes, Ramos taps into a less straight-faced approach such as in Wonky Honky Tonky Without Donkey in which one drawing is rendered over another. This cross-eyed vision reveals the fertile, sometimes hurtful crunch of dual-tongued biculturality. The bifurcation gives birth to new, simultaneous ways of seeing and being.

In his most recent work, Ramos addresses not only the power of images to evoke the forgotten, but also to erase and forget. In a series of collages consisting largely of magazine advertisements and newspaper clippings, Ramos points out the perniciousness of an American design ethos, firmly anchored at the intersection of art, entertainment and commerce. In Drone View, Ramos juxtaposes four images, each with aerial views of its subjects. In one image, presumably a magazine ad, a woman in a red bathing suit drifts on an inflatable lounger over a sparkling pool. Next to this image, in a still from the series Orange is the New Black, two actresses lay in repose dressed in red jumpsuits in what is supposed to be a detention center for undocumented immigrants. Their compositional similarities are clear, though the reference to the real women currently incarcerated in deplorable conditions is so distant, that only the color of their jumpsuits remains. Ramos’s collages reveal the erasure that is performed when violence is aestheticized. They crystalize the insistent historical amnesia that makes today’s brutal treatment of immigrants possible.

Though much of Ramos’s work addresses the memory and erasure of history and its marginalized people, his recent work casts its eye to the future. He points to the strategies of erasure that currently scrub or distort facts. The present is saturated with images, perhaps more ephemeral than the magazine or newspaper clippings in tchotchkes, record collections and magazines, become rich sites of his research.

For this year’s Frieze LA Art Fair, Ramos tunneled through the Paramount Pictures Studios archives in search of items that he displayed along with his own collection of photographs, drawings and other vintage paraphernalia that show stereotypes of Mexican and Mexican Americans in Hollywood. His installation Wolf Songs for the Dead interrupts racist narratives that have continued to dominate Hollywood. Ramos’s recovery of actors erased from cultural history also offers space for intimate complicity between the viewer and the celebrity. Any person of color can tell you about that flashing instant of recognition when another person of color enters the room. It’s as if Anthony Quinn or Lupe Velez secretly wink at us from the screen. We see Linda Ronstadt as the Mexican American she is, whether she’s posing in roller skates and short shorts, or singing rancheras while wearing a sombrero and folkloric skirts. Ramos holds these complicit instants of seeing and expands them in intricate installations that function as sharp-eyed studies and evocative meditations.
Only the Heads Survive (for ?), 2017.
Mixed media on paper. 10 x 15 inches.
On What I Imagine to be a Vigil Somewhere in America (Study for Unfinished Candle), 2017.
Mixed media on paper. 10 x 15 inches.
TRINI NAMED MAN OF YEAR

DALLAS—Trini Lopez has been honored by his hometown by being named Dallas' Man Of The Year. Trini was presented with his award at a special luncheon held at the Adolphus Hotel while hundreds of his friends and relatives sat applauding.

It was a particularly proud moment for his parents because it was they who demanded that Trini rise above the shunt section of Dallas known as “Little Mexico” where he was born and raised. Trini has done, mostly with the help of his parents. His career began because his father bought him a $12 guitar when he was in his early teens. That guitar led Trini to local Dallas clubs and finally to Reprise Records where he’s had one of their hottest artists and the Man of Year.
Sam (with Flowered Vest), 2017.
Mixed media on paper. 10 x 15 inches.
Reigns is a devoted and deeply studied writer. The poetry that emerges from his devotion is autobiographical, accessible, and emotionally bold. His pages bare and share many uncomfortable and inconvenient truths. Nothing is left unexamined. It’s no wonder that Advocate Magazine fittingly lauded him as a “person to watch.” His voice is careful and crafted, honest and heartfelt, and utterly reliable.
perspectives, insights, and resolutions grant a meaning and purpose to his poetry that genuinely and generously reward the reader.

Reigns’s debut full-length collection, *Your Dead Body is My Welcome Mat*, was published in 2001, when he was just 25 years old. The title—borrowed from a line in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* in which a victim addresses their abuser—sets a startling tone for the book. Comprised of 31 autobiographical pieces of poetry and prose, the work explores and exposes abuses of power—his own, experienced as a young boy, as well as the abuse of others. Though devastating, Reigns transcends the personal to encompass broader issues of struggle, growth, and survivorship. The collection was justly praised by the poet Sapphire as “brutal, honest, and heartbreakingly beautiful…transcending labels while at the same time offering a gift to the communities he represents: youth, gay male and survivor. This book will break your heart, then pick up the pieces and put them back together again.”

*Inheritance*, Reigns’s second collection published in 2010, explores the emotional inheritances from culture and community, lovers and families. The book was widely praised by such stellar poets as Mark Doty, Eileen Myles, and the late Wanda Coleman. The collection showcases Reigns’s poetic versatility, yet it is thematically unified by his drive to say the unsayable, voice the unspoken, write the unwritten. *Inheritance* includes the controversial poem Gaétan Dugas, titled after the French-Canadian flight attendant who was labeled “patient zero” for HIV/AIDS. Reigns questions this mythologizing and reveals the truth about the narrative. Seventeen years later, the patient zero myth was debunked, conferring Reigns as a poet of truth and vision.

In addition to publishing full-length collections, Reigns has also published numerous chapbooks, which are tight in focus, yet diverse in content. The subjects range from first loves, to animals, to lost friendship. He edited the *My Life is Poetry* anthology and *3-Pack-Jack*, a three-book set dedicated to male sexuality and the gay male body. He has also organized public art events during National Poetry Month and regularly conducts readings.

For his COLA Fellowship, Reigns revisits a relationship from his early 20s. This project centers on the intricacies of his vital friendship with Michael Church. Through poems that relate the stories and dynamics of their relationship, Reigns recreates, reexamines, and memorializes his friendship with Church and the devastation of his death due to AIDS. An inter-generational and platonic friendship, Reigns shares their mentor/mentee relationship through stories and anecdotes about the wisdom Church passed on to him, their shared holidays, living with HIV, and the imperfection of memory. Reigns’s words have a measured passion, neither saccharine nor overly sentimental, while still embracing a melancholic tone that conveys their once-in-a-lifetime friendship, as well its loss and aftereffect.

Part of Reigns’s rich writing life-force stems from his commitment to teaching poetry writing in various communities. In the mid-1990s, he spearheaded writing workshops at LGBTQ youth groups, traveling to cities throughout the country, helping connect vulnerable populations to written expression. He also created writing workshop retreats for those living with HIV. For the past 15 years Reigns has taught autobiographical poetry to LGBTQ seniors supported by a grant by the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. He has devoted his time to outreach teaching and advocacy in marginalized, under-represented, and vulnerable communities, working tirelessly to champion outsider voices. Reigns understands how important it is for gay men—for people of all differentness—to share their diverse stories through the written word, which documents lives and normalizes their experiences for the benefit and betterment of ensuing generations.

Richard Blanco
(2013 Inaugural Presidential Poet)
INHERITANCE
POEMS
STEVEN REIGNS

Inheritance, 2011.
Sibling Rivalry Press, Little Rock, AR.
my life is poetry
an anthology of writings by
gay, lesbian, and bisexual seniors.
edited by Steven Reigns
portraits by Jenny Walters
preface by Dorothy Allison

My Life is Poetry, 2008.
Grenadier Press, Los Angeles, CA.

As If Memories Were Not Enough
Poems by Steven Reigns

As if Memories Were Not Enough, 2009.
In the Room
by Steven Reigns

In the Room, 2010.
In 2016 and 2017, the Smithsonian commissioned East LA-based artist Shizu Saldamando to produce two linked installations, *Excavations: Notes on Farewell to Rohwer and Farewell to Honouliuli: Reflections on Manzanar, Rohwer and the Japanese Incarceration in Hawai‘i*. Departures from her much-celebrated portraiture
work, the installations staged paper flower-making workshops modeled, for the first, on funereal practices in Japanese American incarceration camps and, for the second, on lei-making practices by Japanese family businesses in Hawai‘i. The paper? Copies of 1942 incarceration notices and the 2017 Muslim Ban. Together, Saldamando and visitors traced the mid-century logics of incarceration to post-9/11 Islamophobia. This was anti-racist work, the work of preservation and empathic connection and solidarity-forging, and it inhered in the texture of the flower-paper, the experiential texture of the flower-folding.

Note texture throughout Saldamando’s portraiture, too, particularly in the work for the COLA exhibition: the gold ornamentation, the spray-paint accents, the use of wood panel as canvas. Here is texture as visual and atmospheric vernacular, a summoning of the complexities of place, of class and race, gender and sexuality—and a refusal of gallery sterilization by way of decontextualization. If the portraits center, and honor, SoCal communities of color, they also decenter whiteness, a driving impulse across Saldamando’s oeuvre.

How, Saldamando is often asked, do your mixed Japanese and Mexican heritages shape your art? It’s a question that assumes a white center, and one she resists. To call her a Japanese American or Chicxanx or Japanese Chicxanx or mixed race or Latinx or Asian American or Asian-Latinx artist is to risk essentializing her work, risk boiling it down to a token distillate of cultural heritage. The pressure to classify opens contextual avenues, but also potentially closes others. And as emerging from a still white-dominant art world, such a classificatory pressure smacks as anthropological, and Orientalist, at least unconsciously consolidating what is white by further articulating what is not. For Saldamando, some of the work of decentering whiteness is refusing labels.

Her installation work poses incarceration histories as part of an ongoing American racial project we all inherit, not simply as Japanese American legacy. In the portraits Martin’s Cincuentañera (2018), Josué and Tamara (2014), and La Lupe with Mayhem Cap (2019), we find another kind of commitment to complexity. We find the dense and variegated life of SoCal, people captured amidst its hardcore punk scene, queer bars, garage band parties, and party crews, where heritages exist messily in intersection with other frames of identity. In La Gabbi, Leather Papi (2018), Ramiro (2019), and La Sandra (2014), a cast of artist friends are irreducible, celebrated in a fullness of humanity that is not white, does not revolve around an axis of whiteness, does not become meaningful in proximity to our distance from whiteness.

What does it mean, Saldamando’s work asks, if we reject the implicit assumption that art is made for a white body politic, that art is the province of whiteness? A question-as-answer to the exploration of how heritage shapes one’s art. Saldamando’s oeuvre is an interrogation of our broad American racial and racialized and racializing expectations.

Lawrence-Minh Bùi Davis
La Lupe with Mayhem Cap, 2019.
Colored pencil on paper. 32 x 40 inches.
Mixed media on wood panel. 36 x 48 inches.

Martin’s Cincuentañera, 2018.
Mixed media on wood panel. 48 x 72 inches.
Ramiro, 2019.
Oil, mixed media collage on wood. 36 x 48 inches.

La Sandra, 2014.
Colored pencil, mixed media collage on paper. 25 x 32 inches.

Josué and Tamara, 2014.
Colored pencil, spray paint on paper. 25 x 32 inches.
Roxanne Steinberg’s work is rooted in a deep comprehension of the phenomenon of dance and should be appreciated in our contemporary context as embodied knowledge—dancing as a form of knowing. Her body, a vehicle to knowing. Steinberg’s work is refined, subtle, personal, and un-presuming. She balances gentle vulnerability and stark physical presence. She dances presence. Transcending
familiar vocabularies of contemporary dance, her plane of expression uses space, time and movement to bring about a heightened sense of perception and flow of primordial associations. She touches the unknowing through the skin, sinew, cells, and beyond. She trusts the body’s intelligence—its impetus independent from the mind. Yet her reason to dance butts right up against an appreciation of materiality and the connection to the ground and the earth.

Steinberg places her faith both in the impact of the ephemeral and the materiality of things: “buildings, rocks, books, records, paper, cloth, glass… the ‘stuff’ of living.” Recordings of her father speaking, her grandfather’s trunk from his crossing to America, costumes from her mother and great grandmothers. Perhaps that her grandfathers were a cameraman and a tailor explains her obsession with thread? Threads, storytelling and the process of making connects to her physical being, which is expressed in making art. Growing up in Los Angeles, she was motivated by a visceral excitement from the contemporary art scene and the potential to communicate without words. The dialectics of dance interest her particularly within a larger art context.

Although she performs all over the world, within her body is the map of her family’s traces in Los Angeles. Her mother grew up on Hollywood horse trails and backlots and her father’s family left their Rochester jobs as tailor and buttonholer to arrive in Highland Park in 1945. Her parents’ stories of how the city was live within her: the Red Car, jazz clubs, Miracle Mile.

Today, you might see her floating down the street blindfolded or leading a procession of sixty performers, like in Façade of Time, the dance that travelled the Venice streets from the canals to the breakwater. She models the opportunity for interaction in public space. In performances with her partner Oguri and her sister Morleigh Steinberg, pedestrian movements timed with chance actions and a migrating audience transform the streets and plazas to bring back a sense of unity to our commons.

Her bold aesthetic acknowledges and renews the human connection to the land and the spirit. In collaboration with musicians, she improvises with precise movements, contrasted with moments of sheer abandon. As a choreographer she delights in discovery and coincidence. With use of lighting and shadow and an emphasis on sensitivity, she punctuates space, seeing dance as sculpture, which defines space and time. Her dance is at any moment, be it a staged creation, or in artworks such as the sculptures and civic engagements of artist Lauren Bon, a long-time collaborator.

As an artist-in-residence at the Electric Lodge, she continues to offer Body Weather Laboratory workshops with Oguri. She began offering this training in Los Angeles in 1988 with Melinda Ring after the two were inspired by the work of Min Tanaka in Japan. Her practice is this tireless exploration and research of the body in reflection of others and nature: physical muscle and bone training prepare and poise the body to both encompass and reveal layers of feeling, thought and story. This promotes an ongoing engagement with what lies before and beyond the body.

Steinberg uses dance for research and discovery, to reach a point of knowledge. She then breaks that down, destroying what she knows and starts again. This process yields performance that does not force any one meaning or story onto the viewer. “I am compelled to share,” she writes, “nothing is of value if it cannot be the fulcrum for connection with others.”

The body that we all share, this one feeling, thinking, breathing body relating to everything. It contains the infinite—birth, death… Worlds where I cannot go consciously, but ever so lightly, gently, sense a deeper awareness.

—Roxanne Steinberg

Joyce Lu and Boaz Barkan
Façade of Time, 2019.
Photo: Jessica Chappe.

Cold Dream Color, 2010.
Photo: Eoin McLoughlin.

Caddy, Caddy, Caddy, 2009.
Photo: Moshe Hacmon.
Holly Tempo thinks in big pictures, and these landscapes are ritually constructed through the convergence of cultural and aesthetic contexts. Her vision is born from her formal training under Karl Benjamin and Roland Reiss at Claremont Graduate University (formerly The Claremont Graduate School), where she became a painter, and of thoughtful documentarian of the urban environments of Los Angeles where she lives.
From these disparate experiences, Tempo builds a language of abstraction that juxtaposes violence and imagination. To fight erasure of black communities, she uses a formal practice that both exposes and redeems her own precarious status as a black woman abstract painter—a small but growing cohort whose work is often overlooked in favor of more figurative representations of blackness and womanhood.

Like Benjamin, Tempo is a colorist whose work reflects the tensions between street tagging and abatement. Focusing on graffiti as a community vernacular, she abstracts elements of these expressions to explore color fields and content. Like Reiss, Tempo respects the total environment, where she is particularly interested in the responses to this language from other gangs, and from the city that abates but never color matches the surface. These contrasting gestures, textures and colors create a new syntax that Tempo reads like poetry.

Her work highlights how black and brown gangs were formed to protect communities from Jim Crow-sanctioned white militias. In the 1960s, these gangs became activists and revolutionaries who reimagined place with greater equality and liberty. The unfettered capitalism of the 1980s lured these groups into profit over protection and exposed our communities to violence from within and out.

 tempo sees the landscape in all of its layers: cultural, political and geographical and she uses this context to formalize conversations about space through these varying and often contradictory lenses. Her bold color field paintings contain exes, drips, dots and brutalist lines that together offer the viewer a legend with which engagement in the language of the streets becomes more accessible and at the same time more fraught with our complicity in the dynamics of power, race and place.

For decades, street artists have shared narratives of violence, censure, beauty and community found in black and brown communities throughout Los Angeles. Tempo’s relationship to these stories is equally profound. As a professor at Otis College of Art and Design for nearly two decades, she taught painting and focused on the concept of maximalism that celebrates the decorative and excessive, but everyday she drove through neighborhoods afflicted by gentrification, homelessness and black life under siege. These experiences were compounded by the difficulties she faced in being recognized as a painter that abstracted these stories in her work.

Instead of demurring and seeking a greater inclusion, Tempo embraces her double consciousness, using the tools of graffiti to scale up her work. In this way, the drips that represent an engagement with the human body and the consequences of multiple violences more viscerally communicate the blood, sacrifice and ultimate beauty of Tempo’s presence in our communities. Through her ongoing works, Holly Tempo includes us all in the big picture.

jill moniz, phd
Red, Black and Blue, 2018.
Acrylic, marker, spray paint on canvas.
60 x 48 inches. Photo: John Gaylord.

Blue Abatement (Memorial), 2018.
Acrylic, marker, spray paint, gold leaf on canvas.
60 x 60 inches. Photo: John Gaylord.

Yellow Abatement, 2015.
Acrylic, spray paint, silver leaf on canvas.
84 x 60 inches. Photo: John Gaylord.
RIP Javier, 2015.
Acrylic, spray paint, gold leaf on canvas.
60 x 60 inches.
Photo: John Gaylord.
Frustrated Mayans At the Corner Market, 2013.
Acrylic, spray paint, marker, gold leaf on canvas.
60 X 84 inches.
Photo: Robert Sanchez.
Mia Doi Todd’s music is work of subtlety and immense power, gentle at first glance, and then upon exploration, remarkably strong, expansive, even insistent and, more often than not, overpowering in its emotional force. Her remarkable development over a long career of consistent excellence is particularly instructive and illustrative.
She began as a somewhat conventional singer of the popular song, in the sense that she was clearly influenced by folk music and by the indie variety of folk and rock that was often employed in the nineties. And yet, even then, there was the remarkable fact of her voice, which conceals rigor and training beneath an accessible veneer. Todd lands cleanly everywhere, rounds her vowels in a satisfying way, and enunciates with an authoritative perfection. It’s a beautiful instrument, graceful and sophisticated, and even in the context of an indie folk idiom, she seemed and seems now wholly ancient, from another time, recalling Terry Callier or Buffy Sainte-Marie or other singers even more immemorial like Nina Simone or Tim Buckley. Also, even in the early recordings, Todd’s lyrics are arresting, both offhanded and deeply incisive, unpretentious but dramatic, and very, very focused on emotion in song, and the ability of music to render and express feeling in ways that regular language cannot.

Todd’s development since her early albums has moved in startling directions, into instrumental music, into band arrangements, into grappling with and reconfiguring vernaculars, like tropicalia and soul music and reggae and spiritual jazz. The transitional album was the remarkable Cosmic Ocean Ship, of 2011, which somehow managed a sly and sophisticated borrowing from some of Brazilian music’s methodological program without ever sounding reductively Brazilian, without overstepping its borrowing. The album, on which the lyrics are stripped down until they achieve something both emblematic and heavily symbolized and allegorical, retains the deeply personal aspect that seems to undergird Mia Doi Todd’s entire relationship to music, while also seeming spectacularly musical. The songs are “true” but also feel like they have been cleaved from mythology. Also, Cosmic Ocean Ship is much more about groove, about finding a groove and sticking with it. It therefore eschews conventional verse-chorus-verse-chorus songcraft, and stays much closer to a jazz model, a jazz expansionist model.

Since Cosmic Ocean Ship, it seems that there is no idiom Todd cannot crack in some genuine way. She has loaned her voice out to electronic music, to hip hop; she has been remixed by Flying Lotus; she has done a remix herself of the venerable ambient musician Laraaji. She has worked across every genre. And her writing has grown immeasurably. The songs are less self-conscious, less compacted, and there is less need to be an icon at the center of them. While they have a self, they are never selfish. The songs are more outflowing, more comprehensive somehow, more emanating.

And this brings us to her most recent record Music Life, just about finished at the time of this writing. The vocabulary and strategy is similar to the Mia Doi Todd sound since 2011, but at a much more relaxed pace, and, it should be said, a darker, and more worried, even afflicted (on the title song) gaze at the world. Everywhere the sound is perfect, in the pocket. The lyrics, as always, run at some remarkable crosscurrent against the lovely, exceedingly musical surface, with anxiety about sexual assault, environmental degradation, overdose; the songs are about love, but not merely carnal love, but the enormous swelling of agape in the face of grief and growing older.

Mia Doi Todd, with her perfect ear, her restlessness, her superabundant musical compassion, represents a wholly admirable and powerful example of contemporary music, in her ability to continue to change and grow and to incorporate new sounds, all while continuing to uphold a sort of Platonic ideal of music as a form, in which the difficult immensities of human emotions can still be entrapped, described, and deeply felt. She’s as singular a songwriter, and as fine an exemplar of contemporary musicianship, as we are liable to find working today.

Rick Moody
Photo: Jesse Peterson.

Live at Grand Performances, Los Angeles, 2019.
Photo: Farah Sosa.
Tracking at Barefoot Recording, Los Angeles, 2019.
Photo: Jesse Peterson.

Photo: Alisson Louback.

Cosmic Ocean Ship, 2011.
City Zen Music.

I’ve noticed that—for me—Jeffrey Vallance has become a sort of litmus test to discriminate between two kinds of people—those for whom Vallance is a pivotal Los Angeles figure in local and global art history on par with Chris Burden or Mike Kelley, and those to whom he is invisible.
Perhaps unsurprisingly, this breakdown corresponds pretty exactly to the ratio of those people I meet who are interested in creativity and its power to change human minds, and those who are interested in how this power can be monetized and institutionalized. Museums, academia, and supercollectors pay lip service to Vallance’s oeuvre, but nowhere near the degree his reputation among artists, writers, and independent curators warrants.

Strangely (but typically), Jeffrey’s creds—international name recognition, career longevity, a consensus (albeit sometimes grudging and narrow) regarding his art historical significance, a distinctive and influential oeuvre, etc.—are exactly the sort of bona fides from which art stardoms are forged. Blinky the Friendly Hen, a pilgrimage to present the King of Tonga with a pair of XXXL scuba fins, a series of curatorial infiltrations into Las Vegas tourist museums (Liberace, Cranberry World West), extensive charts documenting miraculous images of clowns hidden in the stains on the Shroud of Turin, the once and future curation of Thomas Kinkade (arguably the most successful and despised fine art painter of the late 20th century)—these are just some of the bullet points of a career spent actually challenging boundaries and definitions that more high-profile avant-gardists declare erased by fiat, or just ignore altogether.

As I and others have pointed out before, Jeffrey’s work manages to be profoundly transgressive without being confrontational. That is, his work undermines the cognitive mechanisms of binary polarization—between hip and square, powerful and weak, elitist and populist, those that get it and those that don’t—often with simple acts of Duchampian displacement. His current project—unironically taking up the officially despised but apparently inextinguishable tradition of plein-air painting—places a post-modern conceptual artist in a procedural scenario that is by all standards of the contemporary avant-garde “wrong,” and displays the resulting artifacts in a progressive kunsthalle environment that is equally “inappropriate.”

What this reminds me of—not that this is the artist’s specific intention—is the fact that Impressionist plein-air painting was and remains one of the most radical reimaginings of art in human history, supplanting an elitist, authoritarian, market-driven, narrative academicism with a spontaneous, improvisational, phenomenologically rooted and socially inclusive practice that was as much about truth to materials and unmediated perception as anything from the 1960s—minus the quotation marks and self-award-ed philosophy merit badges.

Recently, friends have wondered to me aloud when the contemporary art world will experience its own “Impressionist moment,” when the stifling dictates of an obsolete oligarchy evaporate and the context of artmaking reconfigures itself so that the market and academy are put in the service of creativity, rather than the other way around. I tell them to be patient. That the conditions have to be just right, the pH levels have to be exact for a phase change to be triggered. I tell them it’s helpful to pay close attention to a litmus test.

Doug Harvey
Spahn Ranch Landscape (Detail of Conceptual Plein Air Installation), 2020.
Oil on panel. 16 x 12 inches.
Courtesy the artist and Tonya Bonakdar Gallery.
Chicken (Gallus gallus domestivus), 2016. Drawing on paper. 22 3/8 x 30 inches.

Umbrella (Skum), 2016. Drawing on paper. 22 x 29 3/4 inches.
Drawing on paper. 23 x 29 inches.
Lisa Diane Wedgeworth is a multi-disciplinary teaching artist and sentient raconteur whose art practice includes painting, digital video and performance art. Wedgeworth’s new series of large-scale monochromatic paintings engage the artist’s penchant for abstract expressionist experimentation and improvisation with organic shapes and geometric forms that become representations of her body. Wedgeworth’s painting technique is comparable to the 1960s Abstract Expressionists.
whose monochrome palettes were characterized by layers of thick gestural brushstrokes and expanses of saturated color fields in the works of Franz Kline and Helen Frankenthaler, and the geometric forms of Norman Lewis.

In the context of Wedgeworth’s cultural production, the psychodynamics of her familial relationships arise, permitting autobiographical narratives to be cast across the picture plane for public consumption. In *Self Portrait as a Triangle with Aura (Daughter, Sister, Mother)*, a black glossy textured triangle is situated in the foreground of the canvas. Behind the heavy form is an array of improvised patterns, impulsive shapes, sinewy lines, sinuous curves, and bold gestural strokes spread on the canvas with thoughtful restraint.

Family life is vital to Wedgeworth’s work, which she reveals in *Self Portrait as a Triangle with Aura (Daughter, Sister, Mother)*. Splashes and layers of paint correspond to psychological renderings linked to her role in the family, as manifestations of energy fields spring from the triangular form. Meanwhile, the performative progressions of black marks on raw canvas expose the vigor of her strokes with handmade tools that supplant the surface.

Triangles play a significant and reoccurring role in Wedgeworth’s œuvre. Understanding the triangle itself as a polygon with three edges and three vertices, it is also the most critical element in *Self Portrait as a Triangle with Aura (Daughter, Sister, Mother)*, primarily linked to her aging mother, her sister living with mental illness, and to her twenty-four-year-old daughter (and recipient of Wedgeworth’s former helicopter parenting style).

The respective planes of the triangle signify Wedgeworth’s bond or position in the family—the right side speaks to her designation as daughter, the left side signifies her role as sister, and the base of the triangle (or allegorically speaking, “the foundation”), characterizes her role as mother. In the context of this fluid family dynamic, Wedgeworth questions her relationship with the triad of womanhood (i.e. self-liberation, accountability, and parental responsibility), leaving her to reckon with the dichotomy of creating a space for herself as an artist while maintaining the responsibility of the family. Wedgeworth tasks viewers to reimagine the aesthetics of her art practice in place of her role as a daughter-sister-mother.

From any point of view, a triangle signifies strength; therefore, in *Self-Portrait as a Slightly Off-Balanced Triangle*, Wedgeworth astutely uses the form as a performance element to play with perception. The long sleek inverted shape—covered with meticulous layers of gesso, black acrylic and oil paint—is soundly textured and stretches from near the top of the canvas to the bottom. Wedgeworth’s intentionality is clear. Though, unbeknownst to the viewer, the triangle is tilted and a little off-kilter, cradled between the notion of “how things that appear as total perfection, are the opposite in reality,” says Wedgeworth. “Perfection” is illusory.

The triangles found in each piece are the singular most steady form in a field of active parts moving together in unison while colliding with drips and blotches of paint. *Self-Portrait as a Slightly Off-Balanced Triangle* reads like a performative narration with an undercurrent of something primitive and sensorial, yet minimalist and powerful. One can feel the emotion and grasp how multiple animated black lines dovetail into nebulous areas of dense color, movement, and unpredictable stains. The erratic abstraction in Wedgeworth’s paintings is reminiscent of the dissonant jazz improvisations of Thelonious Monk and Ornette Coleman, whose compositions pushed the envelope towards tension, nuance and disparate tonalities. Likewise, Wedgeworth uses the canvas to train the viewer’s eye on the distinctions originated from within her action style of painting and œuvre that fuses human relationships, storytelling, and collective memories with the intersection of form and substance—like swaths of paint that settle amorphously somewhere on the picture plane.

Chelle Barbour
Self Portrait as a Triangle with Aura (Daughter Sister Mother) #1, 2018. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 72 x 72 inches. Photo: Aaron Farley / Over the Influence.

Star Tracking, installation view, 2015.
Acrylic and oil on canvas. 72 x 72 inches.
Photo: Wanho Frank Lee.

Sane Sister, Schizo Sister, 2016.
Acrylic and oil on canvas. 72 x 72 inches.
Photo: Gene Ogami / Louis Stern Fine Arts.

Acrylic and oil on canvas. 72 x 72 inches.
Photo: Gene Ogami / Louis Stern Fine Arts.
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