



**2023  
COLA**



The background of the page is a light yellow color with a faint, blue-outlined map of Los Angeles. The map shows the city's streets and geographical features. Overlaid on this map is the text '2023 COLA' in a large, bold, pink font. Below this, the text 'City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs' is written in a smaller, bold, black font. At the bottom, the text 'Independent Master Artist Project' is written in the same large, bold, pink font as the top text.

**2023  
COLA**

**City of Los Angeles  
Department of  
Cultural Affairs**

**Independent  
Master Artist  
Project**



# **2023 COLA IMAP** **City of Los Angeles Independent Master Artist Project**

This catalog accompanies performing arts and literary presentations and an exhibition sponsored by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) featuring its 2023 COLA IMAP recipients.

## **Presentations by Literary and Performing Artists**

Daniel Corral  
Alia Mohamed  
Jasmine Orpilla  
David L. Ulin

**June 10, 2023, 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.**

### **Grand Performances**

350 South Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90071  
213.687.2190  
grandperformances.org

## **Exhibition with Design and Visual Artists**

Patricia Fernández  
Wakana Kimura  
Michael Massenburg  
Duane Paul  
Elyse Pignolet  
Kyungmi Shin

**July 13 to September 16, 2023**

### **Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG)**

Barnsdall Park  
4814 Hollywood Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90027  
323.644.6269  
lamag.org

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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 powerful dialogue, engage LA's residents and visitors, and make certain that 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 grant making, 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.

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# Introductions

The City of Los Angeles Independent Master Artist Project (COLA IMAP) is one of the longest-running programs of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) that supports and highlights the work of our city's established artists. Over the years this program has invested in our city's artists as they explore and question contemporary challenges that we face as a larger community and city through their work. These fellowships have provided an opportunity for these artists to catalyze and advance their work, using their talent to grow as leading practitioners in their fields.

COLA IMAP is a collaborative effort between DCA's Grants Administration Division, its Community Arts Division, and its Marketing, Development, Design, and Digital Research Division. Thanks to the efforts of our staff in all three of these divisions, we are able to present the work of this year's fellows. The program is juried by panels of respected curators and artists—including past grantees—and coordinated by DCA staff. The work of the visual arts grantees is exhibited through the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and that of the literary and performing arts grantees is presented through our community partners. Municipal support for original artists is critically important, and this year's selection of dynamic artists and artworks represents a broad spectrum of approaches and interests.

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, I would like to acknowledge the exemplary COLA IMAP grantees recognized in this catalog. This work will elicit powerful dialogue and enliven our conversations. The arts play a crucial role in shaping human experience, supporting our communal rebuilding, healing, and wellness and also inspiring social change. The City of Los Angeles stands strong in its investment in our city's artists and arts organizations, and we look forward to your continued engagement.

**Daniel Tarica**

General Manager

City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

Over the last eight months, while the thoughtful and talented artists featured in this catalog have been documenting their prior accomplishments and creating new works for spring premieres, I have been thinking about their outcomes as a collection of efforts that testify to the importance of the arts in mental health and community resilience. The vital role of each professional artist in fostering wellness of mind and soul (for themselves as well as for their audiences) is underappreciated. Their work offers a kind of creative therapy that helps remedy the many types of social apathy and animosity that frequently and unfortunately fester. Just like collegial sports, humble spirituality, and progressive volunteerism, the arts give us the good energy to bravely engage with the unknown and practice expansive human capabilities.

Moreover, the arts also do something very special and clever to accomplish this feeling of regeneration. In the form of a fable, artists employ various degrees of trickery to communicate their/our truths. Great artists use bold imagination to transmit their surprises (emotions, expressions, characters, stories, etc.) and beguile us with a special mix of harmony and mystery. This in-and-out-and-back-in creative coding allows us to open, reflect, and embrace a refreshed understanding of both ourselves and others.

In a world of overlapping lessons in connectivity, please take some time to consider the testaments of the creative experts showcased herein. They represent a gold band in the deep and broad spectrum of expressive-therapeutic humanists living among us in the great city of Los Angeles.

In this same regard, I will conclude by gratefully acknowledging the Yaavitam people, the first residents of the ancestral and unceded villages that compose Tovaangar (greater Los Angeles). My colleagues and I at the Department of Cultural Affairs commit our deepest respect to the Yaavitam presence that continues to animate the land, the water, and the full connectedness we enjoy today. We feel privileged that Yaavitam wisdom remains among us through the Gabrieleño, Tongva, Fernandeseño Tataviam, and Ventureño Chumash peoples who carry the Tovaangar story-spirit into our present and future.

**Joe Smoke**

Grants Administration Division Director  
City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs





# 2023 COLA IMAP

## Artists

Daniel Corral

Patricia Fernández

Wakana Kimura

Michael Massenburg

Alia Mohamed

Jasmine Orpilla

Duane Paul

Elyse Pignolet

Kyungmi Shin

David L. Ulin

## 2023 COLA IMAP Panelists

Neel Agrawal  
Michael Datcher  
Michele Jaffe  
Camille Jenkins  
Anna Katz  
Marvella Muro  
Umar Rashid  
Holly J. Tempo



Photo: Grant Mudford

# Daniel Corral

Born 1981, Anchorage, AK  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

MFA, music composition, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 2007  
BM, music with elective studies in business, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, 2004

## Selected Performances

2021 *5 for 40*, Elysian Park, Los Angeles  
2021 *Hodad*, musicforyourinbox.com, Los Angeles  
2020 *Concerto for Having Fun with Elvis on Stage*, REDCAT, Los Angeles  
2019 *Comma*, MATA Festival, The Kitchen, New York  
2018 *Polytope*, LAX Festival, Think Tank Gallery, Los Angeles  
2017 *Circle Limit III*, *Noon to Midnight*, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles  
2017 *Refractions* album release show, Automata, Los Angeles

## Selected Bibliography

Corral, Daniel. "On Polytope." *Xenharmonikon*, January 4, 2022.  
Gedeon, Alexander. "Daniel Corral in Conversation with Alexander Gedeon." *Riting.org*, October 17, 2018.  
Muller, Paul. "The Music of Daniel Corral at REDCAT." *Sequenza 21*, November 22, 2020.

[www.danielcorral.com](http://www.danielcorral.com)

## Protect Your Attention

Attention can be a slippery concept, even for the most dedicated artist or audience member. Perhaps at first it hints at passivity, of simply letting emanations of light or sound enter us. But when attention is insistently foregrounded—as in the prolonged, deliberate, shadowed shot following the protagonist around the sideshow whale in Béla Tarr and Ágnes Hranitzky's film *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000)—attention is revealed to be surprisingly active. To put a perhaps overly fine point on it, as Maria Popova said, quoting Oliver Burkeman, “Your experience of being alive consists of nothing other than the sum of everything to which you pay attention.” Daniel Corral's works live in deep attention.

Another word that serves, to me at least, as an organizing principle for Corral's work came forward while interviewing him. He regularly uses the term *intervention* even when referring to works that other artists might call a composition or a performance. If attention is the key to how you actively construct the world, interventions into our attention are extremely powerful, and his work challenges us in precisely this space.

At a glance Corral's body of work might seem fragmented, but as you turn and admire the landscape of his oeuvre, the power of his interventions to redirect our attention in unexpected ways—specifically to disrupt our expectations and assumed valuation of American and European cultural forms and their history—is the current that weaves throughout.

*Here, a one-hundred-movement music box deluge of “Yesterday,” “A Whole New World,” and others frazzle-chime in Requiem for György Ligeti, dedicated to the composer of some of the most uncompromising music used in Stanley Kubrick's films, including parts of the score for 2001: A Space Odyssey.*

*There, a group of steel guitar pieces for Lou Harrison, a luminary of microtonal musical instrument creation and early proponent of world music, ties in to the complex history of the steel guitar, now a staple of blues and country, as a Hawaiian invention.*

*Over there, Diamond Pulses and Polytope, cutting-edge technological microtonal rhythmic structures made newly accessible on rave gear, with blue, yellow, green, and dancing fingers projected on the wall.*

*Nearby, Hodad, with its sustained minimalist tones, the score dictated by the waves of one of the most famous surf breaks in Southern California (long the property of the US Marine Corps and near the house where Richard Nixon lived).*

*Up here, an avant-garde opera but one based on what is considered to be the worst rock record of all time, the incredibly misleadingly named Concerto for Having Fun with Elvis on Stage.*

*In the distance, bells, chimes, and related tubular objects emerge as a through line in Corral's work, calling back and forth in minimalist extended silence amid Debs Park in Erv Wilson tunings in 4 for 20 and from lone drones out in the suburban grass of a gentrifying park under wildfire smoke in 5 for 40.*

These are all interventions into the audience's deployment of attention. Under close attention, systems of cultural value, such as pop and high art, aren't just the product of a natural order. With sharp, sustained attention, we can see the foundations of whole mediums as products of choices, of history, of place—that society is actively constructed, not passively received, and includes notions of race, of globalism, of industry, of funding, of California, of Los Angeles, of technology, of the United States, and of innumerable other connections throughout the world.

It is worthwhile to note that what I've been calling *attention* Corral formulates perhaps more richly as *presence*, which has a vaster connotation that helps us understand how some of the other aspects of his work fit together. Throughout his art, there is a shared interest in challenging limited Eurocentric ideas of originality by foregrounding his references—the names and ideals of those he builds on, argues with, and has studied under. Additionally, while heady and dedicated to research, he is generous to his audience, deploying theater and humor to engage us and complicate the context of experiencing his pieces. Lastly, with the increasing breadth of his work, it is perhaps inevitable that his creative interventions are growing ever more toward one of the most extravagant and culturally loaded forms of music: opera.

Through Daniel Corral's works, perhaps exemplified by an ocean wave replacing a music staff, he invites us to both protect and activate our attention to truly see the understructures that shape art and society. From the removal of the assumption of the inevitability of these bounds follows the idea that we can change a tuning system, a musical history, and, perhaps most critically, who has their work and perspectives valued in our city. With Corral's new project for COLA, a still-untitled complex amalgamation and expansion of his prior artistic interventions, we'll have an opportunity to notice a new part of the world that we didn't even know we could pay attention to.

—Eron Rauch

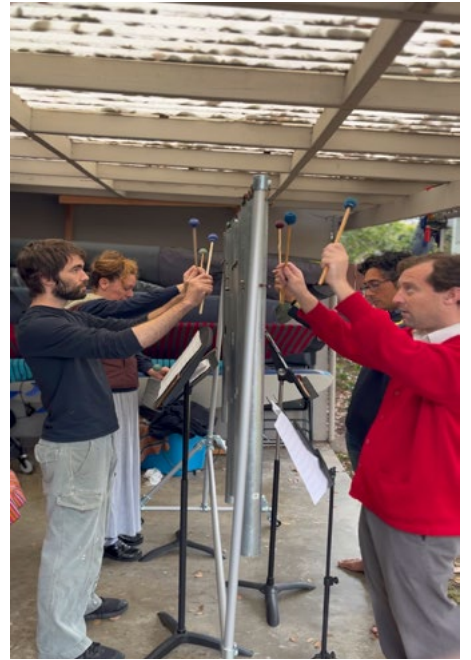




Church organ chimes repurposed into a five-person ensemble for *5 for 40*.  
Photo: Eron Rauch, 2021.

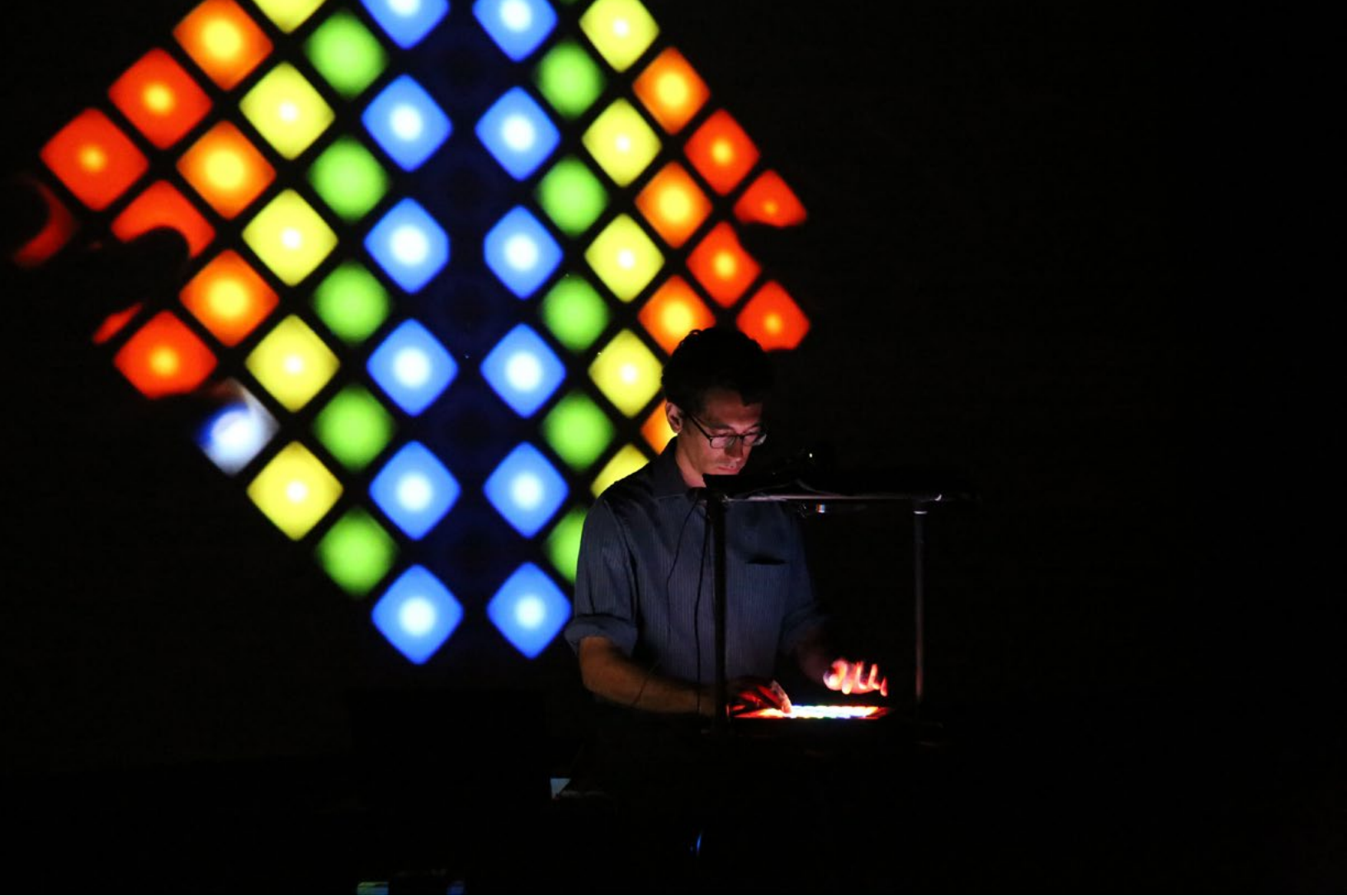


Daniel Corral rehearsing *4 for 20* with Erin Barnes,  
Cory Beers, and Andrew Lessman.  
Photo: Joanna Wallfisch, 2022.

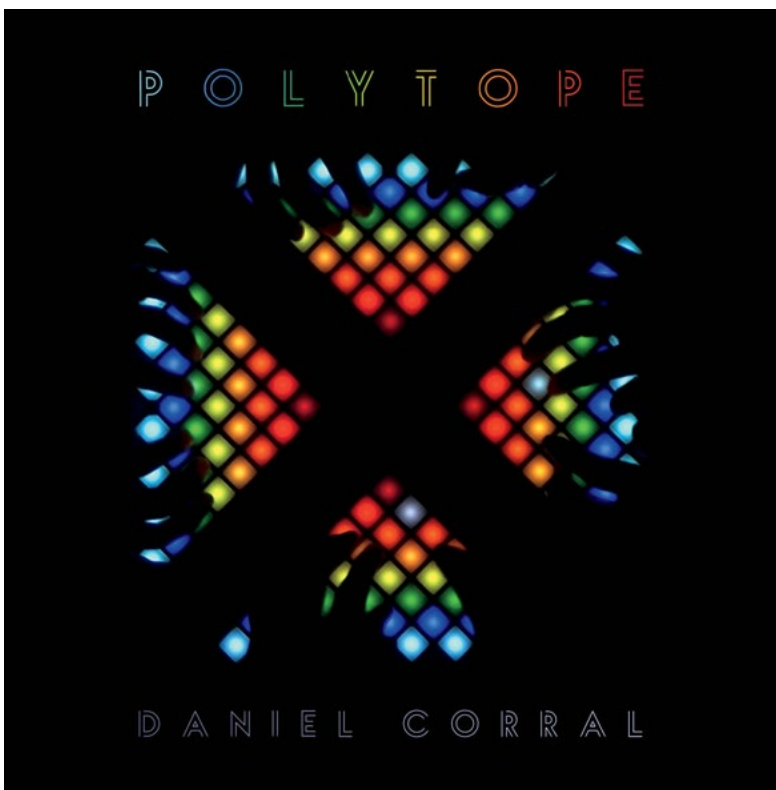


Eikosany Chimes. Photo: Daniel Corral, 2022.





Daniel Corral performing *Comma* at REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2016.  
Photo: Steven Gunther.



Album cover for *Polytope* by Daniel Corral.  
Design: Eron Rauch, 2018.





Daniel Corral, Alexander Gedeon, and the Now Hear Ensemble performing *Concerto for Having Fun with Elvis on Stage*, REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2020.  
Photo: Allen Cordell and Kyle Hazzard.



Daniel Corral performing *Dislike* with Free Reed Conspiracy and Peoples Microphone Camerata at REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2013.  
Photo: Steven Gunther.



Photo: Grant Mudford

# Patricia Fernández

Born 1980, Burgos, Spain

Lives and works in Los Angeles and Joshua Tree, CA

## Education

MFA, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 2010

BFA, University of California, Los Angeles, 2002

## Selected Exhibitions

2021 *Transits*, Whistle, Seoul, South Korea (solo)

2021 *Heartbeats*, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles (solo)

2020 *NOT I: Throwing Voices (1500 BCE–2020 CE)*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (group)

2014 *Paseo de los Melancólicos*, LAXART, Los Angeles (solo)

2012 *Made in L.A. 2012*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (group)

## Selected Grants

2019 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant

2017 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant

## Selected Bibliography

Mizota, Sharon. "Brief but Potent Memory: 'And Yes, I Even Remember You' at Aran Cravey." *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2014.

Morgan, Susan. "The Impermanent Architecture at California-Pacific Triennial." KCET, May 17, 2017.

Simmons-Reid, Jessica. "Patricia Fernández at Commonwealth and Council." *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (Carla)*, January 21, 2021.

Vikram, Anuradha. "Patricia Fernández: Translations of Memory." KCET, May 14, 2014.

[www.patriciafernandez.com](http://www.patriciafernandez.com)

## This Ambivalent Condition

In my late thirties I began to flirt with the idea of becoming a mother. I came face to face with the reality that my knowledge of conception, pregnancy, and childbirth was superficial and based on brief school biology lessons. Despite coming from a privileged background with access to information, I came to understand that our society places a taboo on topics that transcend sex and so radically condition a woman's life.

My first daughter's torturous gestation inaugurated my maternal identity and plunged me into a space of unknown vulnerability, a magnetic field of attraction and repulsion. I lacked references to help me position myself in that complex moment and to operate outside the pressures of the gender stereotypes assigned to these roles. I took refuge in the texts of authors such as Adrienne Rich and Jane Lazarre. Their words helped me put a name to this "exquisite suffering," a mixture of resentment and love that has since defined my existence: a persistent ambivalent condition. I turned to the confessional practices of women writers and artists who use autofiction and autotheory, those spaces between creation and research, to speak of that which is dismissed by the patriarchy as anecdotal and to turn it into a form of resistance. It is from that testimonial perspective, thirsty for affinities, that I write here.

I encountered Patricia Fernández's latest works through an exchange of visits and messages, in which we mixed intellectual and aesthetic concerns with complaints about the sorrows of motherhood. Her practice is often defined as an archaeological exercise in which individual experiences and recollections create space to reflect on collective memories. It is not surprising that, after navigating the radical categorical shift to "motherhood," her work now intimates a confessional impulse—the need to reconstitute memory, now accessed across new registers.

We find geometric motifs in her wood carvings and abstractions of scientific illustrations in her paintings. Her work reflects on the sensations of loss of control over one's own body and psyche that accompany the experiences of pregnancy and motherhood, the vertigo generated by this disintegration of physical boundaries. The cellular sharing that occurs between the two organisms can be a source of rapture and ancestral connection with universal wisdom but also the origin of an unknown stupor and bewilderment. It is an experience that connects you forever with the source of life and death, in which the body affirms itself once again as an archive.

The heteropatriarchal capitalist society turned everything that surrounds motherhood into a private event. Limiting women to a domestic environment to avoid the creation of community has been one of the control mechanisms of this system of establishing binarism and favoring the privileged position of men. Having a child in our context is a solitary exercise, an exercise that also isolates you. Fernández's works emphasize this aspect, which in her case was exacerbated by the pandemic and a retreat to the desert, where the perception of time operates under other logics.

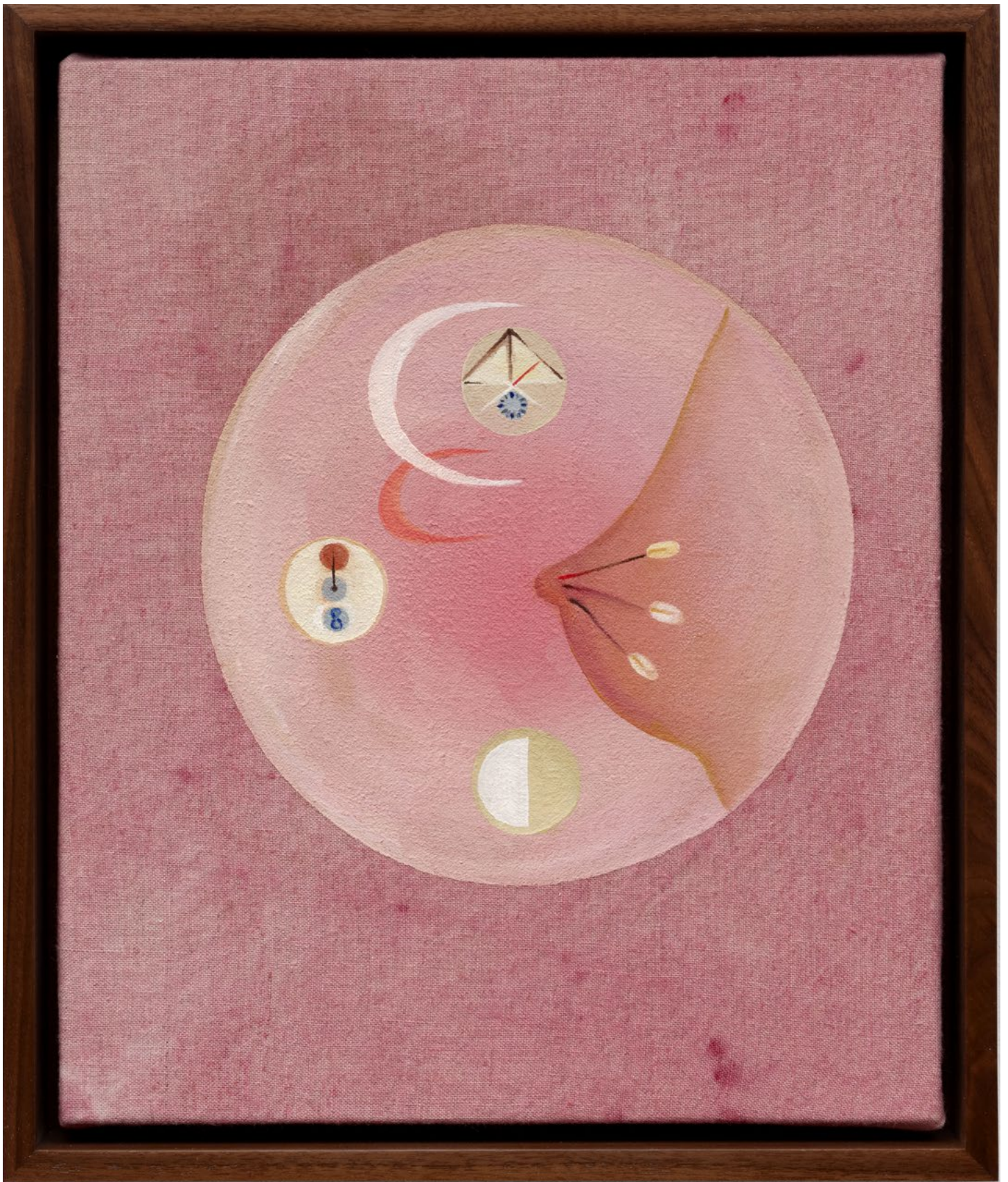
In this environment the artist began experimenting with the cochineal, a parasitic insect that lives in cacti and from whose female a crimson extract is obtained, used as a pigment for the production of, among other products, lipstick. Fernández used this extract to dye her canvases, obtaining a tonal range from purples to pale pinks. Once again she seems to reflect on the untamed and capricious character of the natural and gives a nod to the "feminine."

She also continues with her usual exercise of wood carving, knowledge inherited from her grandfather, but on this occasion the objects change their function—abaci, educational toys, or instruments to measure the dilation of the cervix—and their format as they adapt more or less consciously to a more domestic and portable context, following the inevitable dynamics that arise with the care of an infant. And here there is a variation in the geometric patterns, which become more fractal and refer us to infinity, to life as eternal return, and which connect with ancestral cultures.

Faced with a transformation that happens fast, one can feel the daughter as a threat; the experience of motherhood is alienating, but also it is a unique opportunity to dissolve the ego through the splitting of the self. Fernández's work offers us a gaze that is at once analytical, poetic, and political. The anatomical elements are mixed with symbols, representations of lunar cycles, and geometric structures that allude to the microscopic and the cosmic. These pieces are the atlas of an interstellar journey, the diary of a procession that goes inside. Motherhood is a rocky road but also a source of connection with the world; motherhood runs through us, but it is not a permanent identity. We need to keep building an identity to return to, a support network that allows it, and spaces of self-rehearsal and error that help us navigate this ambivalent condition.

—Maite Muñoz Iglesias





*Three Discs*, 2022. Oil on cochineal-dyed linen with walnut frame, 13¼ x 11¼ x 2¼ inches.  
Photo: Paul Salveson. Image courtesy of Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles and Mexico City.

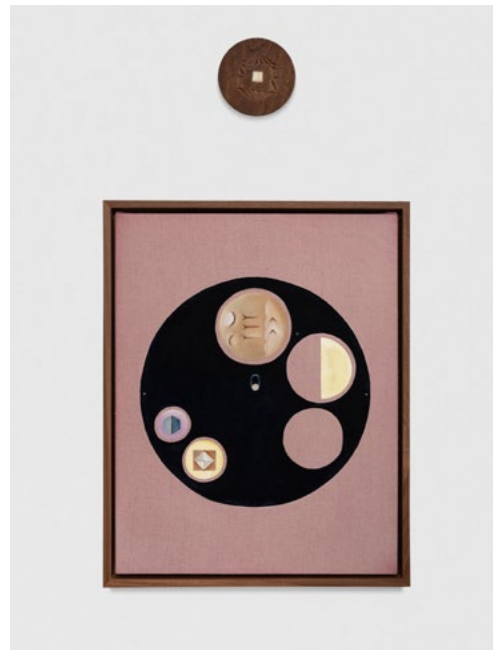




*Visualization for Dilation 9*, 2021. Oil on cochineal-dyed linen with walnut frame; carved walnut and bone, 19¼ x 15¼ x 2¼ inches and 4 (diam.) x ⅜ inches. Image courtesy of Whistle, Seoul.



*Ocular Harmony Disc*, 2021. Carved walnut and maple wood, 12 x 6 x ¾ inches. Image courtesy of Whistle, Seoul.



*Visualization for Dilation 1*, 2021. Oil on cochineal-dyed linen with walnut frame, carved walnut and bone, 19¼ x 15¼ x 2¼ inches and 4 (diam.) x ¾ inches.





*Cups for Spring Equinox*, 2022. Hand-formed ceramic, open edition, approximately 4 x 4 (diam.) inches.  
Photo: Ian James.



Photo: Satoshi Nakashima

# Wakana Kimura

Born 1978, Izu, Shizuoka, Japan  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

MFA, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, 2011  
BFA, oil painting, Tokyo University of the Arts, 2002

## Selected Performances & Exhibitions

- 2022 *IMA, Hinokisoken*, Museum Meiji-Mura, Aichi, Japan (solo)
- 2020 *Invoke*, Udatsu no Kogei Kan Museum, Fukui, Japan (solo)
- 2019 *Echizen Mandala*, Enryoji, Echizen, Fukui, Japan (solo)
- 2019 *Daily Practice*, Nisei Veterans Memorial Center, Kahului, HI (solo)
- 2015 *R.S.V.P. Los Angeles: The Project Series at Pomona*, Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA (group)

## Selected Commissioned Projects

- 2016–23 *Nirvana: Nehane*, 100-year anniversary of the Zenshuji Soto Mission, Los Angeles
- 2017–20 Robertson Recreation Center mural, Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles
- 2013 *Through the Eyes of Artist*, Los Angeles Metro

## Selected Bibliography

McArthur, Meher. "Alternate Realities in the Paintings of Wakana Kimura." *Buddhistdoor Global*, June 10, 2016.

[www.wakanakimura.com](http://www.wakanakimura.com)



## Power and Pattern: The Dynamic Buddhist Paintings of Wakana Kimura

Out of a swirling mass of black ink brushstrokes appears a fearsome blue figure, with bulging eyes and fangs, wielding a sword in one hand and a rope in the other. This is Fudō Myō-ō, “The Immovable One,” a powerful and beloved deity in Japanese Buddhism. One of the five Kings of Mystical Knowledge and the wrathful counterpart of the Cosmic Buddha, Fudō symbolizes firmness of spirit and the determination to destroy evil.

In this new work, *LA Mandala*, as in all her Buddhist paintings, Wakana Kimura portrays Fudō according to iconographic conventions but adds her own youthful, dynamic style. Traditionally Fudō is surrounded by a halo of flames. Here Kimura sends flame-like jets of red pigment stabbing outward into the darkness, where they intersect with delicately drawn gold wave patterns, lotuses, and other traditional Japanese motifs. The overall effect is a tornado-like artistic mash-up, both abstract and figural, Western and Eastern, old and new.

Kimura’s approach undoubtedly arose from an evolution in her own artistic and cultural perspectives while working for more than fifteen years in the United States and recently back in Japan again. After receiving a BFA from the Tokyo University of the Arts, Kimura moved to Los Angeles and entered Otis College of Art and Design, where she studied Western abstraction—focusing on color, tone, and mark making—and earned an MFA in 2011. At the end of her time at Otis, she was searching for something new in her work and turned to Japan’s rich artistic heritage, choosing to incorporate Japanese motifs into her work as her “markings.” Since then many of her larger works have been assemblages of traditional Japanese imagery and patterns, often featuring deities and symbolism drawn from Buddhist iconography.

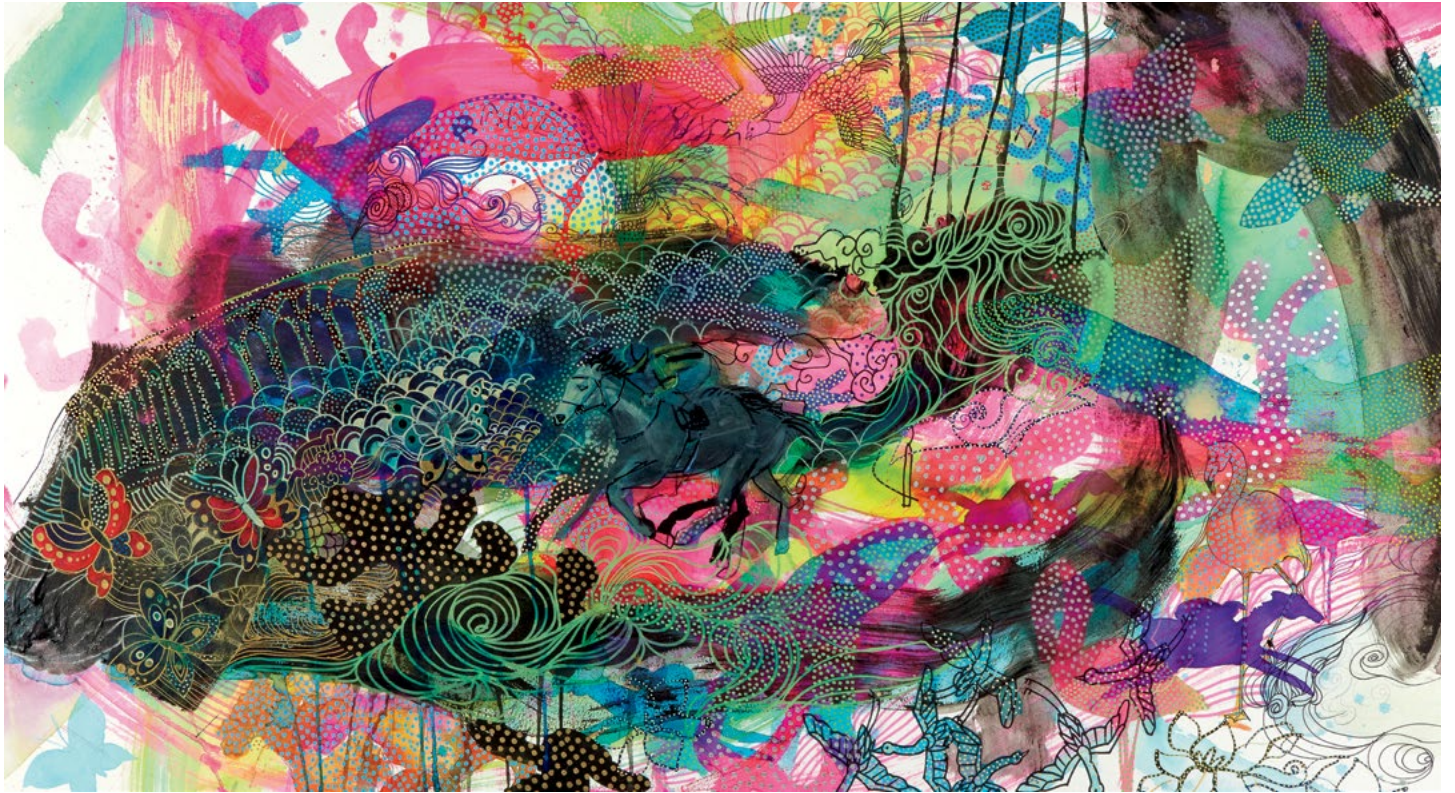
In her 2016 painting *One trifle-beset night, t’was the moon, not I, that saw the pond lotus bloom* (whose title references a poem written by the Japanese Buddhist priest Saigyō [1118–1190] and translated by David McLeod), a Buddhist deity is almost concealed within Kimura’s vividly colored abstraction. At the heart of the four-panel horizontal painting is the bodhisattva Samantabhadra (in Japanese, Fugen) astride an elephant. Fugen is considered by many Buddhists to represent action and practice, while his brother, Manjushri, who rides a lion, represents spiritual insight. Here, amid strong black calligraphic lines and washes of turquoise and lapis pigment, Kimura outlines the details of the elephant, the deity’s robes, and the striations of the lotus petals on his throne with the painstaking precision of ancient Buddhist temple artists. But she covers the creature’s head and legs in tiny dots and embellishes his body with lotus flowers, transforming the elephant and deity into ghostlike elements within an abstract composition.

To create these works, Kimura undergoes a sort of mixed-media meditation. As her ritual tools she uses marker pens and *sumi* ink, watercolor, vinyl, and acrylic on *washi* paper. Beginning at the center of the paper and then working outward, she builds up the image layer by layer. “Each mark has its own unique identity,” she explains, “and each mark interacts with another mark in its own unique way. All of the marks together represent an individual conceptual structure.” Her placement of the various motifs and patterns evolves naturally as the image expands outward from the central sheet in a sort of ripple effect. “As with drops of rain in a pond, each drop forms a concentric circle that joins with another concentric circle. Each mark enables communication and creates conversation.”

Kimura has recently been commissioned by Buddhist temples in Japan and in Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo neighborhood to create paintings for specific ceremonies. She also recently completed a residency at a temple in Echizen, where she produced an installation of a mandala (a pattern representing a perfected Buddhist realm), formed of paintings of deities hung in the main temple hall. In traditional Japanese Buddhist paintings, rules have been strict about size, proportions, and colors in order to ensure that the paintings possess the spiritual power of the Buddhist deities. While adhering to these rules with the firmness of Fudō, Kimura also injects her own energy to conjure dynamic mixed-media work that offers a new take on ancient Asian spiritual imagery.

—Meher McArthur





*Hole of Donut* (Inglewood poster for the MTA), 2013. Watercolor, *sumi* ink, marker, acrylic color, vinyl color on *washi* paper, 22 x 44 inches.





LA MANDALA, 2023 (detail). Watercolor, *sumi* ink, marker, acrylic color, vinyl color on paper, overall: 314 x 102 inches (four panels, 79 x 102 inches each).  
Photo: Satoshi Nakashima.









Above: *NEHAN: Nirvana*, 2023 (detail). Watercolor, *sumi* ink, marker, acrylic color, venial color on *washi* paper, 93 x 96 inches.

Left, top: *One trifle-beset night, t'was the moon, not I, that saw the pond lotus bloom*, 2016 (detail). Watercolor, *sumi* ink, marker, acrylic color, venial color on *washi* paper (Daitoku Roll Machine made in Fukui Prefecture, Japan), 98 x 308 inches (four panels, 98 x 77 inches each).

Left, bottom: *CHARACTER*, 2011 (detail). Watercolor, *sumi* ink, marker, acrylic color, venial color on paper, 396 x 86 inches (nine panels, 44 x 86 inches each).





Photo: Haywood Massenburg

# Michael Massenburg

Born 1979, San Diego  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

Business administration, California State University, Long Beach  
Graphic design, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles

## Selected Exhibitions

- 2022 *Spiritual Nature*, VAMA Gallery, Los Angeles City College (solo)
- 2022 *Dak'Art*, Biennial of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal (group)
- 2019 *Paintlust*, Coagula Curatorial, Los Angeles (two-person)
- 2015 *50 Years and I Still Can't Breathe*, Watts Towers Arts Center, Los Angeles (group)
- 2015 *60 Americans*, Elga Wimmer PCC, New York (group)
- 2014 *Freeway Studies #2: Inside the Quad*, Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (group)
- 2012 *Shared Thread*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles (group)
- 2008 *Now and Then: Michael Massenburg*, M. Hanks Gallery, Santa Monica, CA (solo)

## Selected Bibliography

- Hanks, Eric. *Now and Then: Artwork by Michael Massenburg*. Santa Monica, CA: M. Hanks Gallery, 2008.
- Pitts, Gregory. "Cornerstone." *Artvoices*, Fall 2014, 50–53.
- Vankin, Deborah. "A Watts Towers Mural Faded in Plain Sight. Three Generations of Artists Bring Back Its Zing." *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2021.

[www.michaelmassenburg.com](http://www.michaelmassenburg.com)

## Using the Creative Tool as a Weapon of Agency

The late John Outterbridge, master of assemblage art, stated in 1997: “My work seeks to give meaning to the invisible and the spiritual aspects of our being. Time, memory, personal insights, ethnicity, storytelling, general life practice, faith, heritage, architectural gesture, and histories tend to compose the visual language property of my creative expression.” In a similar manner, the aesthetic multiverse of the painter and collage and assemblage artist Michael Massenburg replicates and extends the vision of his mentor/predecessor. In fact, the late artist and writer Greg Pitts would unapologetically state that as a result of traveling to Colombia, Senegal, and Haiti, Massenburg is truly an “A-Free i Can” artist.

Massenburg’s application of collage as a consistent technique complementing his drawing and painting brings a much-needed spotlight to this historically neglected practice within the canon. In many art history survey texts, collage receives no more than a footnote or perhaps at best a paragraph or a couple of pages and an index entry, with relatively few examples of artworks cited, in contrast to discussions of painting, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture. An example of such a text is *Living with Art* (12th ed., 2019) by Mark Getlein, in which Romare Bearden, collage artist and Spiral collective cofounder, is acknowledged but not Kay Brown, cofounder in 1971 of the collective “Where We At” Black Women Artists Inc. Furthermore, while there have been a few books on creating art using collage as a technique, the African American contribution is rendered invisible or minimized by highlighting mainly Romare Bearden, as evident in *Creative Collage Techniques* (1994) by Nita Leland and Virginia Lee Williams and *Collage Techniques* (1994) by Gerald Broomer. Only in *Black Collagists* (2021) by Teri Henderson is the practice treated with the respect it deserves. The text includes a historical survey essay by Laurie Kanyer that interrogates the commonly held belief that the European modernists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were the inventors of collage; in fact the scholarship of Freya Gowrley is cited, documenting examples of collage works dating back to the late 1500s.

Moonwalking forward, Massenburg’s current work is firmly grounded in several art-making traditions. For example, regarding the appropriation of the figure, *The Blessings* (2022)—a mixed-media work employing painting, drawing, and collage—references his stay in Senegal. The two elder chiefs at the center, surrounded by shapes suggesting people paying tribute while receiving holy attention from such wise individuals, echo the community cry that Black men should be allowed to grow old and impart their wisdom to the next generation. The circular composition is reminiscent of Charles White’s *J’Accuse #5* (1966). Massenburg’s application of color in an atmospheric manner points to the work of Richard Mayhew, and the use of collage reminds one of Romare Bearden’s *The Street* (1975).

The painting and collage work *Spoken Elder* (2022) was similarly inspired by Massenburg’s visit to Colombia. With an elderly woman placed off-center as the main subject, he skillfully invites the viewer to hear with eyes the coffee-skin earth tones and see with ears what a wise woman with cottony salt-and-pepper hair and articulating hand, surrounded by cherry-red and jellybean-green shapes, has to say. The work breathes of grandmother’s love and auntie’s care.

Finally, there is *Haiti Vibe* (2022), a collage, drawing, and painting created following the artist’s visit to the Caribbean country. His immersion in the land of the first Black nation to set itself free from slavery is reflected in his various tangerine and fire hues, with a hint of lemon yellow sprinkled in an overarching manner like a halo over the procession of Black folk standing proud and peaceful. Such an honoring of the culture with shape and color and without a hint of white background as the people stand, unapologetic about who they are and will become, echoes an optimistic Black future. It correlates with the School of AFRICOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists), whose principles and philosophy of making art included positive images, Kool-Aid colors, and filling up the entire pictorial space (*horror vacui*).

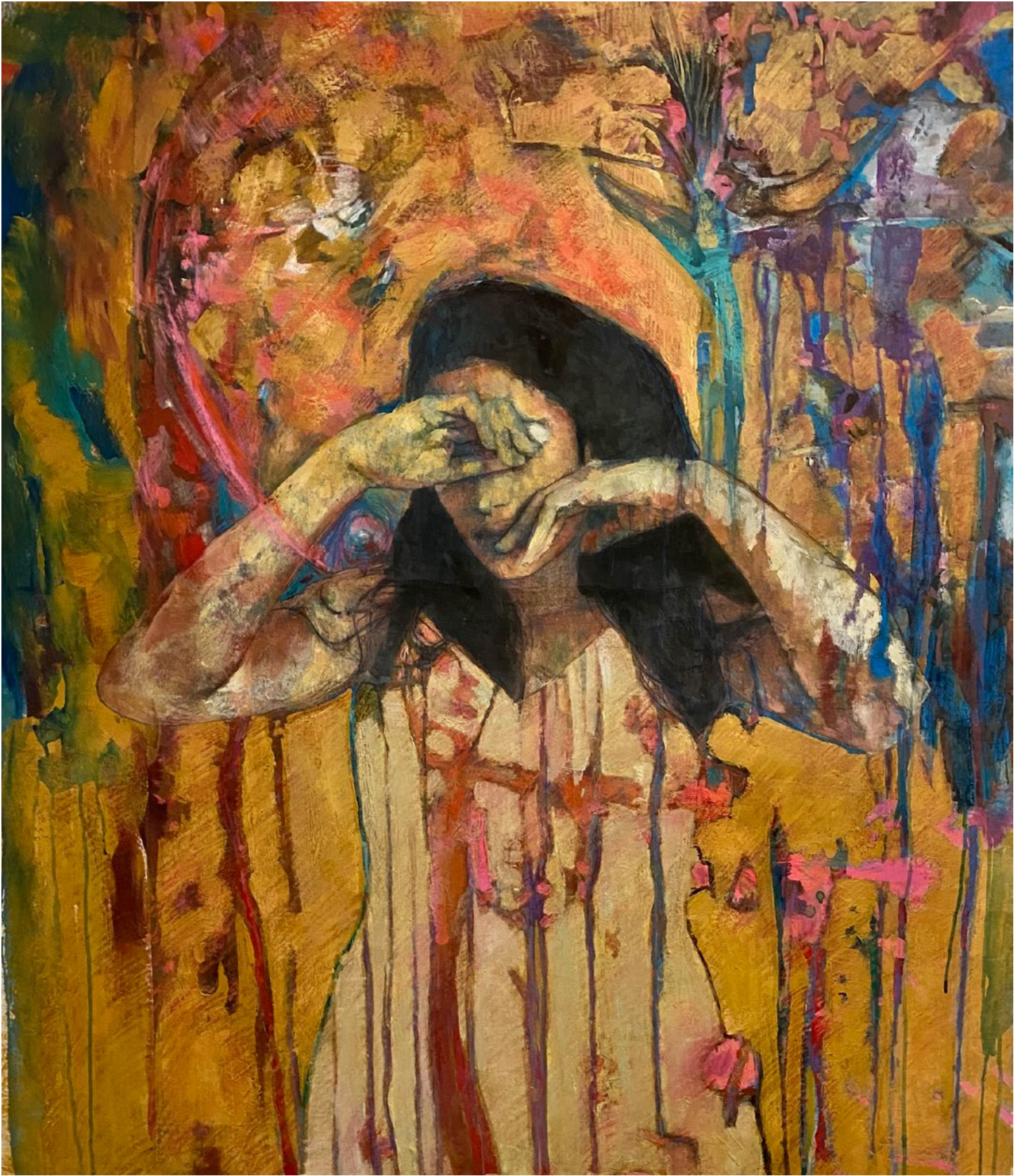
Ultimately Massenburg’s intentionality in subject matter calls for a revolution of values pertaining to the elderly in a Western nation that is obsessed with staying young. It demands a societal internalizing of the fact that *Black lives matter*. Moreover, his proficiency in art materials in Black vernacular throws down and keeps it real like James Brown’s “Say It Loud—I’m Black and I’m Proud” (1968) and “Superbad” (1971).

—Richard Allen May III









Above: *Thoughts over Matter*, 2019. Acrylic and drawing, 48 x 42 inches.

Left, top: *Haiti Rise*, 2023. Acrylic and collage, 48 x 96 inches.

Left, bottom: *The Blessings*, 2022. Painting, drawing, collage, 24 x 30 inches. Photo: Andrew Giorsetto.





Above: *Still I Rise*, 2016. Digital medium, 24 x 24 inches.

Right top: *Haiti Vibe*, 2022. Painting, drawing, collage, 24 x 30 inches. Photo: Andrew Giorsetto.

Right bottom left: *Spoken Elder*, 2022. Painting, drawing, collage, 24 x 30 inches. Photo: Andrew Giorsetto.

Right bottom right: *Morning Dawn*, 2013. Collage, wood stain, and acrylic. 24 x 25 inches. Photo: Salongo Lee.









Photo: Grant Mudford

# Alia Mohamed

Born 1982, Dallas  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

BA, cultural anthropology, University of Texas at Austin, 2004

## Selected Performances

- 2022 *Listen to Music Outside in the Daylight under a Tree*, Los Angeles
- 2022 Performance for Atlas Obscura, home of Tony Duquette, Los Angeles
- 2022 *Dragon Tea Temple*, with Mandala Quartet, Bali, Indonesia
- 2020 *Electric Hamsa*, Teatro Dallas International Performance Festival
- 2020 Meadows World Music Ensemble, Dallas
- 2019 Dita Von Teese's New Year's Eve Gala Show, Orpheum Theatre, Los Angeles

## Selected Bibliography

Satenstein, Liana. "Alia Mohamed Is the Lebanese-American Performance Artist Reviving Belly Dancing Style." *Vogue*, June 24, 2020.

[www.a-i-a.com](http://www.a-i-a.com)

## Arabfuturism in the Eye of a Sorceress

Arabfuturism, writes the scholar Lama Al-Suleiman, is the “idea of actually revising the past in a way that is more imaginative.” For the musician, dancer, composer, and graphic artist Alia Mohamed, that imagination is expressed in multivalent productions that invite audiences into a hypnotic dreamscape, futuristic lands rooted in Middle Eastern music and dance. “I love presenting Arab culture in a way that is entirely new and fresh and authentic,” says the artist. Her productions layer ancient instruments like the doumbek and finger cymbals with the otherworldly sound of the theremin while looping in synth drones and MIDI glitches amid visually stunning video projections, culminating in percussive instrumentation and belly dance. Alia harnesses ancestral rhythms to steer us to an entirely new plane. Her evocative performances subvert tropes about Arab identity and femininity while expressing a profound love of the culture. The fashion designer Hushidar Mortezaie, a frequent collaborator, says, “She walks the plank between the ancient and the future.”

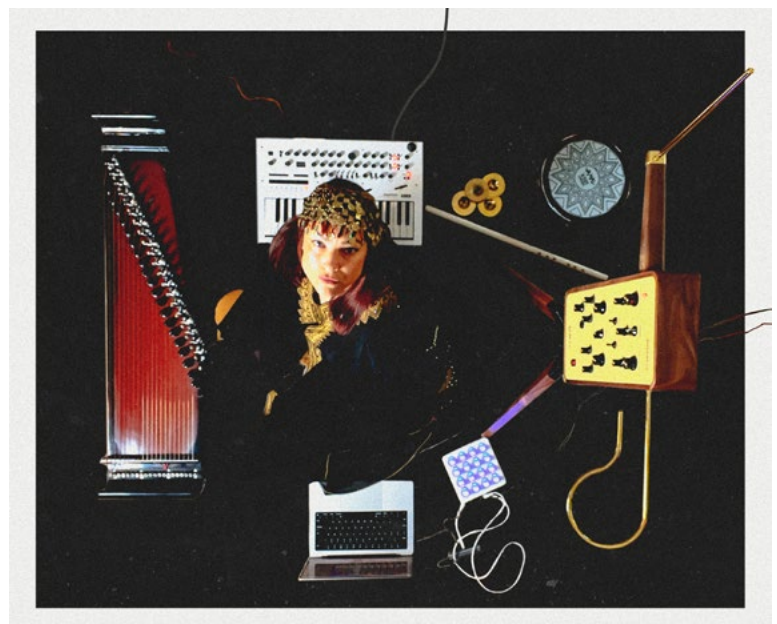
Alia Mohamed grew up in Dallas immersed in the musical traditions of the Middle East. Her father and uncle, Jamal and Buddy Mohamed, are renowned jazz musicians specializing in Arabic percussion, guitar, and classical instruments like the oud and the nay, a flute from Egypt considered to be one of the oldest instruments in the world. Inheriting both her grandmother’s and her father’s record collections, Alia got into deep cuts of Egyptian belly dance music from the 1960s and 1970s, Ethiopian jazz, Alice Coltrane, and more. The psychedelia, experimentation, and improvisation of those decades feature prominently in her work, just as Arabic music became a part of her DNA. Ultimately her artistic work is about codifying that DNA through instrumentation, dance, and graphic art to create a road map to mystical and futuristic realms.

At the University of Texas at Austin, Alia began belly dancing with Zein Al-Jundi, a Syrian singer and dancer. What started out as a hobby flourished into a full-time career, due in large part to Alia’s innate musicality and her joyful style of dance. But whereas her early work offered audiences a glittering return to the 1960s and 1970s, she now explores more ethereal, sometimes darker, always experimental futurescapes.

In her quest to reimagine the music coded in her DNA, Alia has sought out the best musicians to teach her some of the most ancient and innovative instruments in the world. She regularly travels to Indonesia, where she studies kacapi, an acoustic zither, with the Sundanese master musician Ade Suparman. Drawn to the intricate stylings of Egyptian sagat, Alia began training remotely with the Cairo-based Sufi percussionist Hany Morgan. Her love affair with the eerie techno sounds of the theremin, invented in the 1920s and known as the first “synth” instrument, led her to the theremin master Armen Ra. The theremin is considered to be one of the most difficult instruments in the world to play because the player never makes physical contact with the instrument. Notes are mere millimeters apart, and to play them requires strong muscle memory as well as a perfectly tuned ear. Armen Ra attributes Alia’s facility with the theremin to the dexterity of her hand placement as a result of years of belly dance training. He describes her style of playing as something wholly “new and exciting.”

To see Alia carve through the air with her hips, seemingly floating off the ground, and coax what sounds like a human voice out of midair on the theremin with her hands is pure magic. To feel the grounding beats of Arabic percussion layered with the sweet sounds of the nay and the mystical qualities of the kacapi as it’s echoed and distorted in real time is to be enchanted. Alia’s desire is to usher the audience into a trancelike state. To that end, Mortezaie constructs dazzling costumes that literally have Arabic incantations and spells woven into them. Alia rounds off her offerings with large-scale video projections that play with space and time, creating truly sensorial productions. She is a sorceress who couples ancestral knowledge with modern modalities to create multidimensional dreamscapes that celebrate Middle Eastern and global traditions with an esoteric eye to the future.

—Elena Hurst







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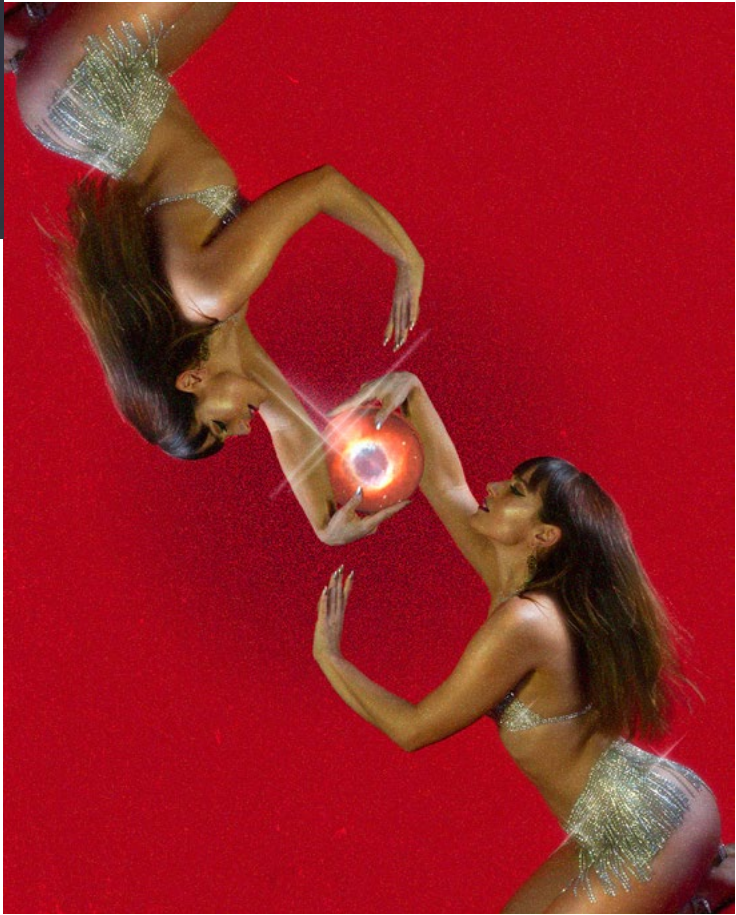


Page 36:  
*Electric Hamsa*, Teatro Dallas International Performance Festival,  
2020. Photo: Hyiat El-Jundi. Collage by Alia.

Page 37:  
Performance in the home of Tony Duquette for Atlas Obscura, 2022.  
Photo: Ian Tilghman.

Above:  
*Lullaby for a Sea Nymph*, 2021. Still from digital video, shot and  
edited by Alia.

Right:  
Collage by Alia, 2018. Photo: Lichiban.







Top: *She Feels, She Knows* by Shivarasa, 2020. Still from digital music video. Directed by Tramaine Townsend, styled by Hushidar Mortezaie, edited and animated by Alia.

Bottom: *Low End Theory*, The Airliner, Los Angeles, 2018. Photo: Mitchel Dumlaol.





Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber

# Jasmine Orpilla

Born Bronx, NY

Lives and works in Los Angeles and abroad

## Education

University of California, Berkeley

## Selected Performances

- 2022 *Benevolent Assimilation (Variation: Oro, Plata, Mata)*, LAX Festival at MOCA, Los Angeles
- 2021 *TALGED, Her Body She Cares for, Her Soul/s (She) Guards*, REDCAT, Los Angeles
- 2020 *SUNGKA: A Civil War, a Civil Marriage*, Human Resources, Los Angeles
- 2019 *Go Home: Where the Heart Is. Feed My Heart. Free My Hate*, Oxy Arts Center, Los Angeles
- 2018 *How Many Years Did We Fight the Beast Together*, REDCAT, Los Angeles

[www.jasmineorpilla.com](http://www.jasmineorpilla.com)

## what we're doing to the land that was previously called home

Jasmine Orpilla laughs, taps her glasses, shrugs, “A callback to Larry Itliong.” She blinks, throws on her cap, points to it. “Carlos Bulosan.” She walks fast, with aim. Eagle Rock mall. We're headed past Wetzels Pretzels, past Chowking and Jollibee. A restaurant owner recognizes us. How can anyone forget Orpilla's wiry, fierce, wondrous energy? She travels with sparks, with acute observational skills, always intimately attuned to her environment. She notices the restaurateur's son doing homework on the table next to the kitchen, a store shut down across the way. Seated, she lays down a concept: the knife. A knife enters, twists, opens, clarifies. A voice, Orpilla's voice, a voice inextricable from its slender body, leans into the blade, hard into the cut. It spills the animal's histories, political and personal. Air is the blood that jets into the audience, her audience, of ancestors. Her studies of the kulintang, the songs of her childhood, the harana serenades, postwar kundiman folk songs, her grandmother's lullabies, are codes of communication in performances that stun the living. But the performances are not for them. They are for the dead, the unattended, the forgotten, for the lands laid waste by the effects of war.

How often do we describe performance as ritual but neglect the requisite of harm and benefit that occurs with true ritual? How often do we use the word *disruption* to mean “a little bit of something different” when our spirits might want union through the body's fire? What help can come to those maimed by war's barbarous erasures of eyes and tongues if we don't risk evisceration, even a little public humiliation, ourselves? What if we, as witnesses of an art act, can't stand its effects? If we must be lulled by explanation, exception, and inclusion?

Orpilla's performances are not necessarily rituals, but they are requests, and they do call up. Her voice, her body, hair, feet, mouth are harrowing instruments of power and retaliation. Her heroes are revolutionaries and poets, with whom she is in psychic conversation. Through object-beings—family-inherited rusted knives, chipped hand-thrown pottery, dresses made of fragile piña, her own hair—her acts are pleas for ancestral forgiveness. They are requests for justice, reverberations of the memory of memories fading as fast as the many languages that she speaks and the land previously named home, once cared for by humans and attendant spirits, die.

An actor, a composer, a singer, a musician, a historian, a dancer, a student of martial arts, Orpilla is a multiple. When she performs, a confluence of forms flow through her with the intelligence and precision of multiple spirits, cultures, and epochs. Her voice pierces, drills, accuses, offends. It contains the high glittering force of one astonished and affronted by life. Her body bends to the will of the multiplicities that course through her. As she embodies, she weaves elements of the nonhuman—like the giant *kapre*, who watched over farmlands in the Philippines for generations—and the human, fragments of speech from revolutionaries whose histories are being erased.

*I who have waited nameless.* Repeated insistently, these words of Carlos Bulosan, poet-activist, are mantras. *Nameless in history / who will remember the hour.* “I'm fighting to keep these names alive.” The names are Carlos Bulosan—laborer, organizer, and poet who fought American racist exploitation of Filipino laborers—and Larry Itliong, or Manong Larry—in Ilokano, Brother Larry—who was also called 7 Fingers, the tough, cigar-smoking labor leader who founded the United Farm Workers alongside Mexican American leaders. Orpilla's family are farmers and soldiers. Her relationship to the politics of labor, to anticolonialism, is very personal, as she sees the struggles against oppression being overshadowed by fascination with material goods like those sold in the shopping mall we're in, like fast food and fast culture. “This is why I ask the ancestors' forgiveness,” Orpilla says. “After all of these grand movements, this is what we have. I'm sorry, ancestors. But this is what I can do with my voice, wielding justice in this sense. I'll hold the knife.”

Justice makes the invisible visible. As Orpilla uses elements of song, speech, and personal relics in her work, she also weaves as an act of closeness to indigenous Filipino culture, a means of keeping people of the diaspora and the present Filipino American generation close. The tapestries in her work contain protective patterns descended from women and shamans in the dream state. These patterns, like the whirlwind, can be found reflected in martial arts and in Orpilla's choreography. They bring harmony to the body. The weaving of languages, of music and sound, of fabrics and histories, of movement in her indefinable performances, feels like a passageway through time for those from the past who are present to those who are preparing for the future. Expressed with her penetrating voice and her dexterous body, Jasmine Orpilla's justice is a reunion of elements spread out over the earth from a land once called home and a radical plea for a reassembling in a form still unknown.

—Asher Hartman





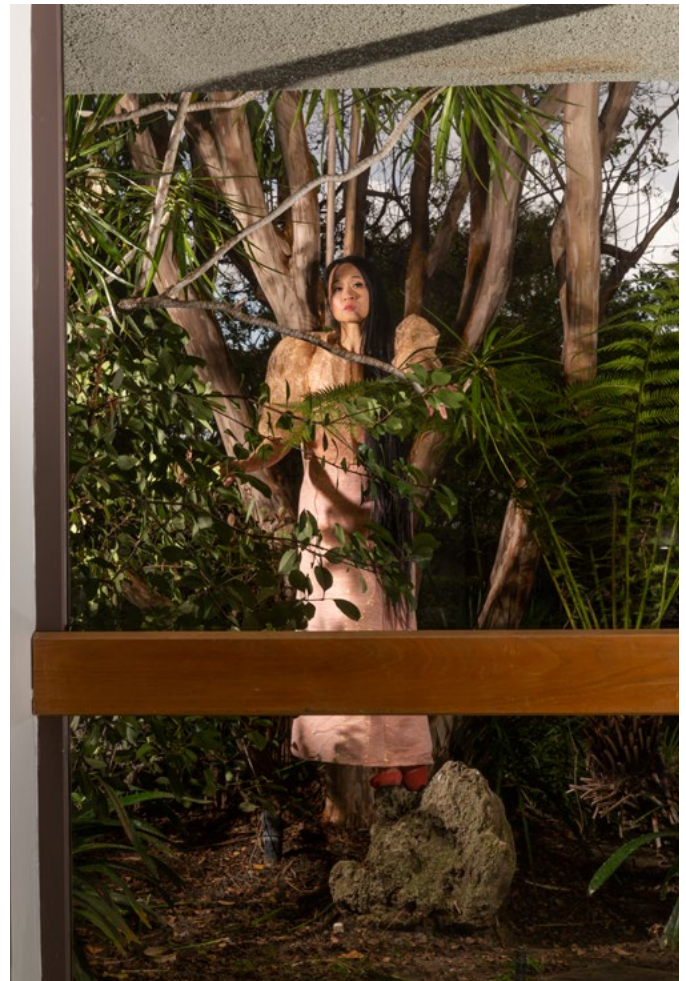
With Apo Lola Paula, 2023.  
Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

Top right: *Natural History #2*, 2023.  
Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

Bottom right: *Natural History #1*, 2023.  
Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

Opposite top: *TALGED, Her Body She Cares for, Her Soul/s (She) Guards*, 2021.  
Kusikus inabel by master weaver Corazon Agosto. Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

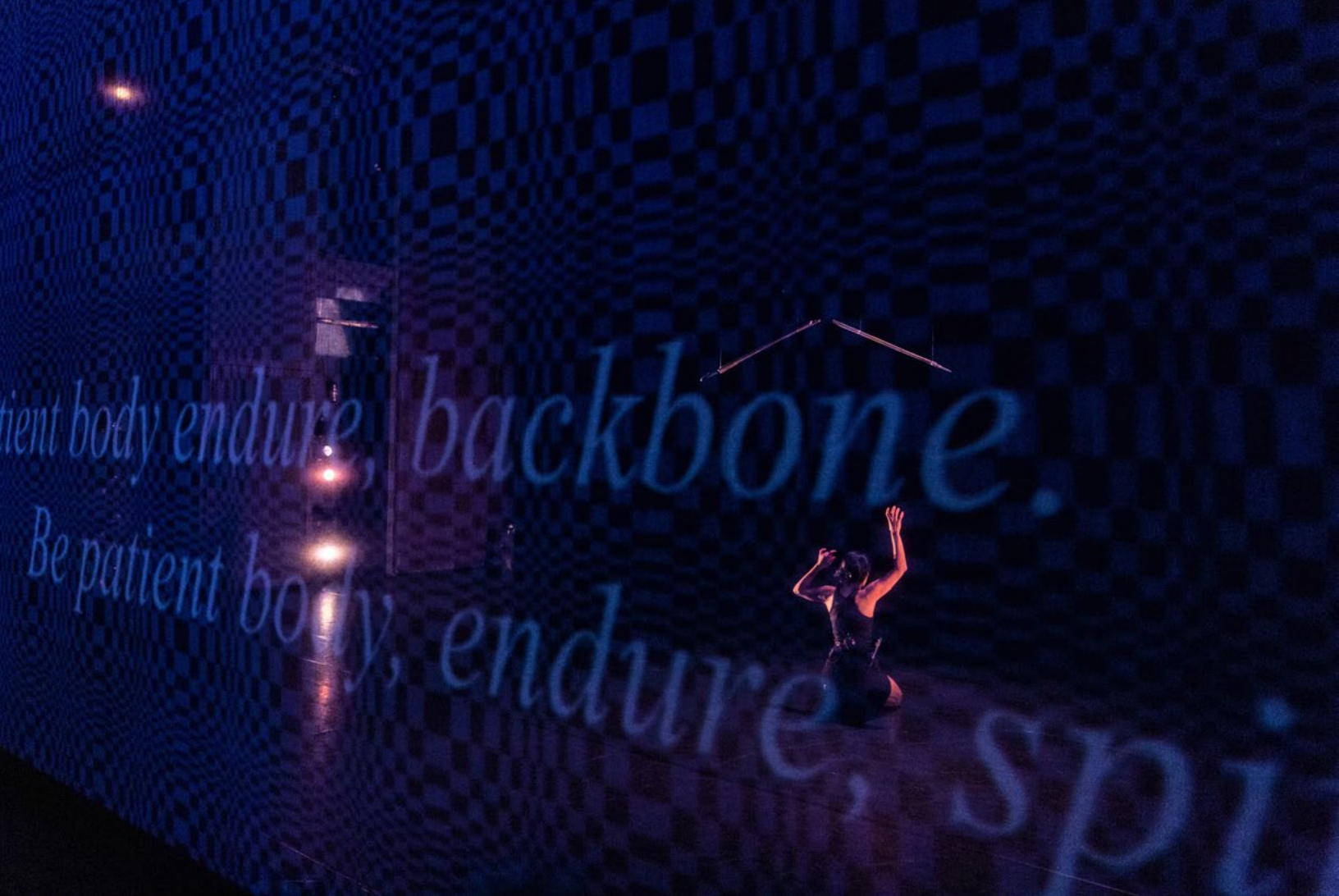
Opposite bottom: *KAPRE*, 2020. Photo: Joe Rodriguez.











Above: *TALGED, Her Body She Cares for, Her Soul/s (She) Guards*, 2021.  
Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

Right: detail of installation for *SUNGKA: A Civil War, a Civil Marriage*, 2020.

Opposite: *Go Home: Where the Heart Is. Feed My Heart. Free My Hate*.  
2019. Photo: Joe Rodriguez.









Photo: Duane Paul

# Duane Paul

Born 1969, Jamaica, West Indies  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

BFA, Parsons School of Design, New York, 1991

## Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2022 *Adornment | Artifact*, Transformative Arts, Los Angeles
- 2022 *process – practice – evolution*, Nan Rae Gallery, Woodbury University, Burbank, CA
- 2022 *The Phoenix Project: Continuing the Dialog from 1992*, Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles
- 2021 Art Share LA
- 2020 *Mojo Rising*, Ronald H. Silverman Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles

## Selected Bibliography

- Davis, Genie. "Diasporgasm at SBC SoLA Gallery." *Art and Cake*, October 23, 2017.
- Pitts, Greg Angaza. "Duane Paul." *Artillery*, November 5, 2013.
- Pogany, Andrew, and Ben Lee Ritchie Handler, eds. Context Issue. *Flaunt*, no. 128 (Summer 2013).
- Pogany, Andrew, and Ben Lee Ritchie Handler. *Good Intentions: Re-imagining Rockwell's Boy Scouts*. Los Angeles: Pacific Stacks, 2013.
- Wagley, Catherine. "The First Black Artists in Los Angeles Group Exhibition." *ArtVoices*, December 2012–January 2013.

[www.duanepaul.com](http://www.duanepaul.com)

## Shaping the Seen: Duane Paul's *Visible/Invisible* Project

Duane Paul's COLA project, the ongoing body of work *Visible/Invisible*, unifies his sculpture and photographic practices in a powerful cultural critique that challenges how and when otherness is observed and truly seen. He disrupts the Black trauma porn of the contemporary art market by using his own image and identity as a Black, male, gay immigrant as an armature from which he confronts aspects of erasure, exploitation, violence, intimacy, and objectification.

Paul questions how constructs of the other remain invisible in plain sight until they are necessary for defining public discourse. When the ignored become visible, they become targets for white supremacist macro- and microaggressions, weaponized against threats to heteronormativity or to obfuscate white guilt. To demonstrate this phenomenon, Paul photographs circumstances of visibility—from the shelters and objects of the unhoused, to LGBTQIA affirmations, to his own body in various states of dress—then layers this imagery with sculptures of his handmade, redacted, and scarified archetypal human forms intricately pieced together to resemble punching bags.

The vision board-like backdrop of these works delineates Paul's exorcism of the Black body to return to an authentic condition of complexity. Influenced by his photographic series *Selfie Imperfect*, his selfies invoke a canonical dark sensuality as he memorializes various experiences to question how physicality expresses knowledge, fears, and performative posturing defined internally and externally. Exploring visual storytelling, he transforms himself into allegory, offering us the chronicles on and under his skin while staring unapologetically at the lens, defying the codification and erasure of the white gaze.

These narratives are given additional physical and psychic dimensions when Paul removes the viewer's ability to use the photographs as human-scaled mirrors. Instead he disassembles the figure with his dimensional fiber sculptures that reference bones, hearts, lungs, intestines, and abstracted limbs with skin stripped away to redact where many stories of Blackness live. Paul is both challenging the viewer to a deeper engagement with the external and internal components of humanity and illuminating the cost of that labor on the body.

In *Visible/Invisible*, Paul makes deliberate scar-like marks on repurposed denim. Sewing stickpins to the fabric conveys impermanence, and these are combined with red and black X's in frayed jute to amplify the geography of fetish and violence that accompanies being seen. The X conjures memories of enslaved people made illiterate by white supremacy and Indigenous leaders using the symbol to sign treaties that tricked them out of their sovereignty. It also symbolizes the refusal of adopted systems and hierarchies by individuals like America's most famous "X," Malcolm X.

Paul uses the punching bag as a metaphor for the barbaric practices that "The Supremacy" engenders on Black, gay, immigrant, and othered bodies. He references the intimate interaction/dance/sport/embrace of boxing, designed to demonstrate skill and dominance exerted through brutal skin-to-skin combat. In 1908, in the first interracial heavyweight championship, Jack Johnson became a Black hero and a threat at the same moment when he defeated Tommy Burns and then, in 1910, pummeled the "great white hope" James J. Jeffries. Paul's red X's denote this byplay between visible and invisible, champion and enemy, which is forged with violence and blood.

Paul pulls back the curtain on this tension and fascination by obscuring the white gaze with a fugitive visual language that subverts concepts and categories of the seen, the known, and the other. In the borderlands he creates, he moves his own and our Black bodies toward an emancipatory cultural infrastructure that refuses the harm of X through the reclamation of its complex beauty.

—jill moniz





Above: *Cameo Tapestry Revolt*, 2023. Photographic sculpture, digital archival photographic print on cold-press Hahnemühle paper, resin, fabric, wood, repurposed denim, 44 x 44 inches.

Opposite top: *X-MARK RIDDLED PUNCHING BAG OBJECT*, 2023. Photographic sculpture, digital archival photographic print on cold-press Hahnemühle paper, resin, fabric, wood, repurposed denim, 26 x 10 x 10 inches (front and back views).

Opposite bottom: *X-MARK BULLET GRAZED PUNCHING BAG (FRONT)*, *(BACK) X-MARK BULLET GRAZED (KILL SHOT) PUNCHING BAG*, 2023. Repurposed denim, bonded nylon thread, canvas, acrylic, resin, raw pigment, steel wire, industrial foam, 20 x 8 x 6 inches.







Tell Me My Hair Is Perfect . . . My Teeth, Like Pearls #UHFI ##selfimperfectduanepaul, 2022-23. Digital photo archival print, 27 x 24 inches.



*Landscape of soil and bone*, 2022–23. Wood, repurposed denim, canvas, acrylic, resin, raw pigment, enamel paint, steel wire, industrial foam, 59 x 27 x 15 inches.





Photo: Grant Mudford

# Elyse Pignolet

Born 1979, Oakland, CA  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

BFA, ceramics, California State University, Long Beach, 2007

## Selected Exhibitions

- 2022 *Conversing in Clay*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (group)
- 2021 *I'm Not Like the Other Girls*, Track 16, Los Angeles, CA (solo)
- 2021 *Space as Presence*, Long Beach Museum of Art, CA (three-person)
- 2020 *Send Her Back!!!*, KDR and Zona Maco, Mexico City (solo)
- 2019 *Art and Activism*, Maui Arts & Culture, HI (group)
- 2019 *You Should Smile More*, Koplin Del Rio, Seattle (solo)

## Selected Bibliography

- Ollman, Leah. "Don't Tell Elyse Pignolet to 'Calm Down': How One Artist Answers Sexism with a Roar." *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 2019.
- Power, Amber. "Elyse Pignolet's Aesthetic Strategies for Intersectional Feminism." *Frieze*, October 18, 2021.

[www.elysepignolet.com](http://www.elysepignolet.com)

## Ornate Power, Feminist Porcelain: Elyse Pignolet

Taking inspiration from historical forms of ceramics production—such as Portuguese tilework, global blue-and-white traditions, and public mosaics—Elyse Pignolet creates elaborate, large-scale installations that speak to contemporary ideas of postcolonial ethnicity, global exchange, and feminist political action. She does so by reanimating, exaggerating, and otherwise mining the medium of china painting, an art form that women spearheaded as a means of deriving income from home-based industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. China painting was a popular amateur American art form in which women decorated premolded vessels, plates, and chargers known as blanks. They were not offered the opportunity to throw, mold, or otherwise sculpt their own pottery.

Using the decorative effects of historical china painting, Pignolet lures viewers with her ornate aesthetics, consciously feminizing her own contributions at different scales: blue-and-white wallpaper, floral patterning, ornamental tile, and extravagant chargers, vases, and plaques that converge into massive wall installations like *Second Sex* (2021), which mimics the shape and grandeur of a public fountain. And what is a fountain, anyway? It is a sight of public splendor, a welcomed repository of water—a place to refresh, rest, and refill, admire, or even make wishes. “Woman,” “Life,” and “Freedom” are emblazoned on one of the large central urns at the center of her mural, but good wishes are not the only messaging Pignolet offers. Look closer, and the text inscribed on her tableware is redolent of male misogyny: “You’re too pretty to be sad,” “Whore,” and “Smile.” Pignolet’s imagery—braided vines, curlicues, floral and faunal patterns that nod to the history of the Arts and Crafts movement—combines beauty with terms of abuse, showcasing the mixed messages to which women are routinely subjected: a barrage, an ongoing and endless onslaught, an epidemic of male slights, taunts, and complimentary put-downs that lurk in the crevices of the female psyche, hard to shake off and harder still to forget. This source material is a way for Pignolet to elevate her own Filipina heritage, reclaiming the spectacular Orientalism of non-white women’s burden as an intersectional, global misogyny. Here she reclaims the epithets about otherness, such as “send her back,” a familiar taunt aimed at women of color, or even embellishes them, as in “exotic as fuck.”

In her acclaimed book *Ornamentalism* (2019), the scholar and gender theorist Anne Anlin Cheng writes on racialized femininity, or what she calls specifically “ornamental personhood,” in which Asian women are demoted not just to the status of objects but to that of surface objects who become expert at hiding their interiority, clad in an imagery as smooth as porcelain surfaces, underscoring the ways in which Western societies consume ornate, pliant Asiatic bodies: as both supple and supplicant, as erotic and ornate, as extravagant, sexualized, and exotic. In the wake of the murders of six Asian American women in the Atlanta area in 2021, Pignolet sought to comment on Asian hate through the prism of memorials and commemoration: “I wanted to reflect on the notion of a monument, creating this installation as a kind of monument to the othering of women.”

Pignolet’s sculpture and installation works intersect with Cheng’s history of resistance, charting the intertwined problems of race, beauty, and gender through raucous displays that are rooted in pointing out artifice, such as *I’m Not Like the Other Girls* (2021), a large-scale installation in which a grouping of blue-and-white vases are painted to look dimensional but are actually flat: images of vessels rather than vessels themselves. Her playful sleight-of-hand between surface and depth is one of many such binaries that appear throughout her newest bodies of work, troubling the waters of femininity, personhood, and public space.

—Jenni Sorkin





Second Sex and Muliebrity Pyramid, 2021. Installation view with ceramic tiles, wood, paint, ceramic sculptures with glazes and gold luster.









Top: *You Should Calm Down*, 2019. Good Girl Bad Girl wallpaper installation with ceramic sculptures.  
Bottom: *Adjust to Injustice*, 2021. Ceramic platter with glazes, 11 x 16 x 1 inches.

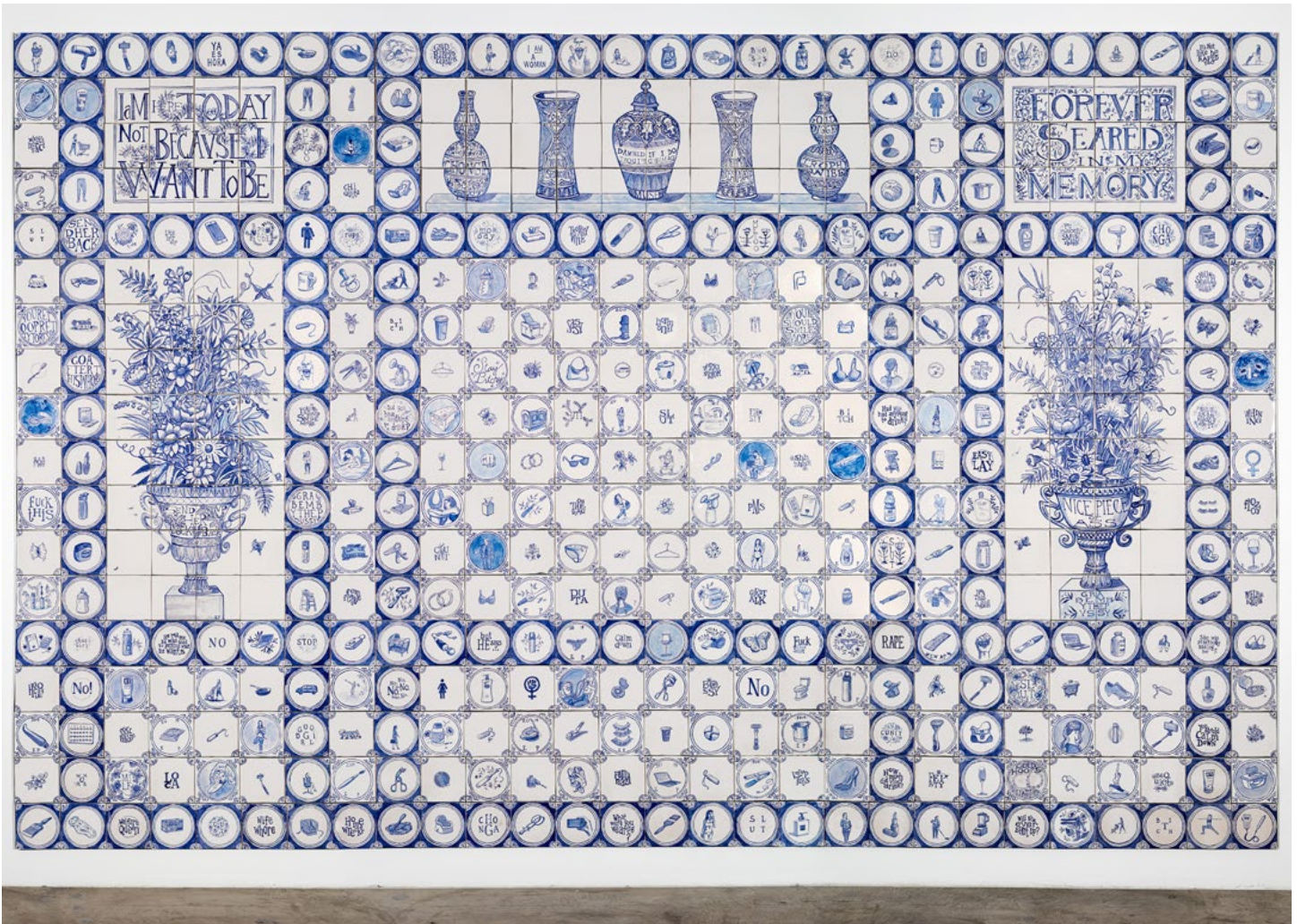




*Hysterical*, 2019. Ceramic plate with glazes, 9 inches diameter.



*Will She Ever Shut Up*, 2019. Ceramic tulipiere with glazes, 11½ x 12 x 3 inches.



*I Am a Woman*, 2019. Ceramic tile installation, 113 x 175 inches.





Photo: Grant Mudford

# Kyungmi Shin

Born 1963, Busan, South Korea  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

1995 MFA, University of California, Berkeley

## Selected Exhibitions

- 2023 *Kyungmi Shin: Monster's appetite*, Various Small Fires, Seoul, South Korea (solo)
- 2023 *Imperfect Paradise*, Barbati Gallery, Venice, Italy (group)
- 2022 *Wonder Women*, curated by Kathy Huang, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles (group)
- 2022 *The Hearing Trumpet*, curated by Danielle Shang, Galerie Marguo, Paris (group)
- 2021 *citizen, not barbarian*, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles (solo)
- 2021 *Photo Flux: Unshuttering LA*, curated by jill moniz, Getty Center, Los Angeles (group)
- 2020 *Father Crosses the Ocean*, curated by Cassandra Coblenz, Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA (solo)

## Selected Bibliography

Bui, Thuy. "Crossing the Ocean: Artist Kyungmi Shin on Tracing Her Roots through Immigration and Colonization." *Getty News & Stories*, December 8, 2021.

Naçi, Silvi. "Kyungmi Shin at Various Small Fires." *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles (Carla)*, December 8, 2021.

Stamberg, Susan. "An Artist Explores What 'Crosses the Ocean' in Porcelain and Painted Collage." *Art Where You Are At*, NPR, November 12, 2020.

Zellen, Jody. "Kyungmi Shin: 'citizen not barbarian,' Juxtaposing Contemporary and Historical Images." *Art Now LA*, December 26, 2021.

[www.kyungmishin.com](http://www.kyungmishin.com)

## Identity, a Process of Becoming

Where have all the natives gone?  
—Natalie Diaz, *Postcolonial Love Poem*

The history of humanity embodies the question of routes. Infinite paths have historically led to encounters with *the other*—be it an individual or a civilization. From the very beginning of our existence, we have defined our identities through exchanges, in an endless journey of shaping and molding. Some encounters have been positive, others disruptive—and from there both a process of structural hierarchies and a counterwave of constant hybridization have shaped the global sociocultural environment that we experience today.

The art of Kyungmi Shin lies in the acknowledgment of this *constant becoming*: her research responds to the need to bring to the surface the constructs defining not only our identity but especially the way we perceive ourselves and others, through processes of proximity and distance. She was the child of Christian ministers in Confucian and Buddhist Korea, then moved with her family to California. After experiencing what she refers to as “double alienation,” first as a Christian Korean and later as an Asian American, the artist came to terms with the idea that there are no absolute values or truths and that every set of views from a culture or a society is, in the end, meaningful only to that specific culture. On both a personal and an existential scale, our own value systems and our feelings of belonging are constructed as well—we *all exist in liminality*.

Through her pictorial process, Shin investigates this reasoning and transforms it into a poetic exploration of the constant flux of migrations and encounters among civilizations throughout time. In Shin’s work there is an ongoing interest in the cultural symbols that resulted from these exchanges. In one of her most recent paintings, *Three Magi* (2022), a painted copy of Andrea Mantegna’s *Adoration of the Magi* (ca. 1495–1505), in the collection of the Getty Museum, is overlaid with a photograph of the artist’s mother and sister, echoing the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. Silver line painting depicts a medieval manuscript border detail that describes a scene of heaven and hell, an angel playing harp on top and hellish flames and a woman being dragged by her hair below. The line painting rises up from a porcelain cup filled with gold coins offered by a Magus to the Christ child, while the Chinese porcelain depicted in the Korean still-life painting (*chaekgeori*) on the right with a lone branch of orange chrysanthemum echoes Mantegna’s porcelain cup.

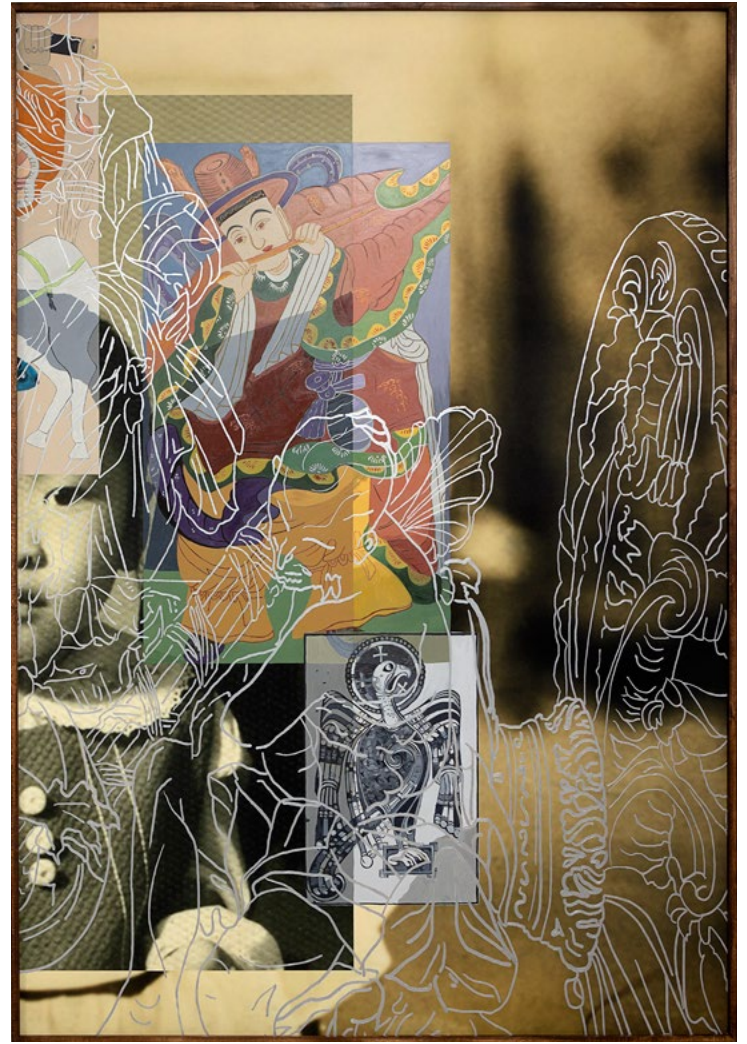
Inspired by her own life, which straddled the gap between being an outsider and needing to belong, the artist researches commonalities and dichotomies that make up our historical, cultural, and symbolic visual repertoires. The thought-provoking juxtaposition is a result of meticulous bibliographic and archival research. Shin’s allegorical narratives highlight the economic and political power structure of the global exchange of cultures, faiths, and goods.

Another important component of Shin’s oeuvre is archival research into personal history, formally rendered through the juxtaposition of old family photographs, as well as an engagement with the very symbols that enhance the intersection between personal and collective paths. The diptych *Soaring Vulture, Noble Eagle, Moaning Dove* (2021), a painted photograph, depicts the artist as a child surrounded by a variety of visual references, including a line painting of a Portuguese royal carriage, medieval manuscript illuminations, and Korean shaman paintings. The diptych is emblematic in portraying how the recognition of the self is inherently connected to a wider narrative: perhaps the division into two parts alludes to something that still needs to be written: “there is more to come in the process of understanding who I am,” it seems to say.

In many of Shin’s works, we are invited to decode visual symbols in a manner that goes beyond logic. These monumental paintings are a welcoming space for the search for alternative narratives that start from a profound awareness of the dialogic and blurred discourse that surrounds identity. Each painting tells important stories of learning, growth, and exploration of both the countless possibilities of existing as individuals and the historical paths that define us as cultural beings. Back in 500 BCE Heraclitus said, “In the same river, we are and we are not”; more recently, Stuart Hall added, “Identity is always a never-completed process of becoming.” Shin invites us to view the complex perspectives in her works and look not only at what shaped us but also at the infinite ways in which we could be defined that are still unwritten.

—Valentina Buzzi









Opposite top left: *Soaring Vulture, Noble Eagle, Moaning Dove*, 2021. Acrylic on archival pigment print, UV laminate, two panels, 87 x 60<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches each.  
Opposite bottom left: *Soaring Vulture, Noble Eagle, Moaning Dove*, 2021 (detail).

Above: *girl with pearl necklace*, 2022. Acrylic on archival pigment print, UV laminate, 43<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 53<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches.





*Loving the Monster*, 2021. Acrylic on archival pigment print, UV laminate, 41 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 41 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches.





*Three Magi*, 2022. Acrylic on archival pigment print, UV laminate, 44 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 49 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches.





Photo: Noah Ulin

# David L. Ulin

Born 1961, New York  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

## Education

BA, English, University of Pennsylvania, 1984

## Selected Publications

- 2016 *Ear to the Ground: A Novel*. Los Angeles: Unnamed Press.
- 2015 *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2012 *Labyrinth: A Novella*. Boston: Gemma Open Door.
- 2010 *The Lost Art of Reading: Why Books Matter in a Distracted Time*. Seattle: Sasquatch.
- 2004 *The Myth of Solid Ground: Earthquakes, Prediction, and the Fault Line between Reason and Faith*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- 2002 Editor. *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*. New York: Library of America.
- 2001 Editor. *Another City: Writing from Los Angeles*. San Francisco: City Lights.

## David L. Ulin: Writing While Walking

David L. Ulin is an essential Los Angeles–based wordsmith who has authored and edited more than a dozen books, including *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*, shortlisted for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay, and *Writing Los Angeles: A Literary Anthology*, which won a California Book Award. He has been the book editor and book critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and has written for the *Atlantic*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *Paris Review*, and the *New York Times*, among many others. A professor at the University of Southern California, he has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Black Mountain Institute, the Lannan Foundation, and Ucross Foundation. Most recently he edited the Library of America’s *Didion: The 1960s & 70s* and *Didion: The 1980s & 90s*, the first two in a three-volume edition of the author’s collected works.

It is such a joy to write about this tremendously gifted writer and thinker’s achievements, but it is Ulin’s eyes and feet that have me most obsessed. We see, but he records in exciting and thoughtful ways who we were, what we’ve become, and what we dream about as Angelenos.

Ulin’s gift, as a former New Yorker, is to travel through our complicated and tremendous metropolis, often on foot, and translate us through his writing. This has allowed us to understand our relationship to Los Angeles through our own contradictions and, more importantly, our possibility as citizens. We dream, but what are we collectively dreaming of? I look to Ulin for answers. He speaks a language that offers complexity while often highlighting our most ridiculous and destructive selves. We can’t help ourselves, and Ulin is there to see it and put it into words.

His narratives look underneath the pavement to uncover a Los Angeles full of longing and ambition. But Ulin does not merely look. His tremendously empathetic eye often zeroes in on the practical Los Angeles, a city in service to the Hollywood sign but also to its working- and middle-class ambitions, to its street performers and lost hopefuls. Buildings breathe, streets pulsate, people feel their way through his narratives. He deploys his wonderful literary ability to investigate not only the powerful and dire truth of our city but also how this gives way to the ridiculous and often authentic ways in which we function as Angelenos. He turns these observations into thoughtfully profound assessments using his gift for language. The results are often breathtaking.

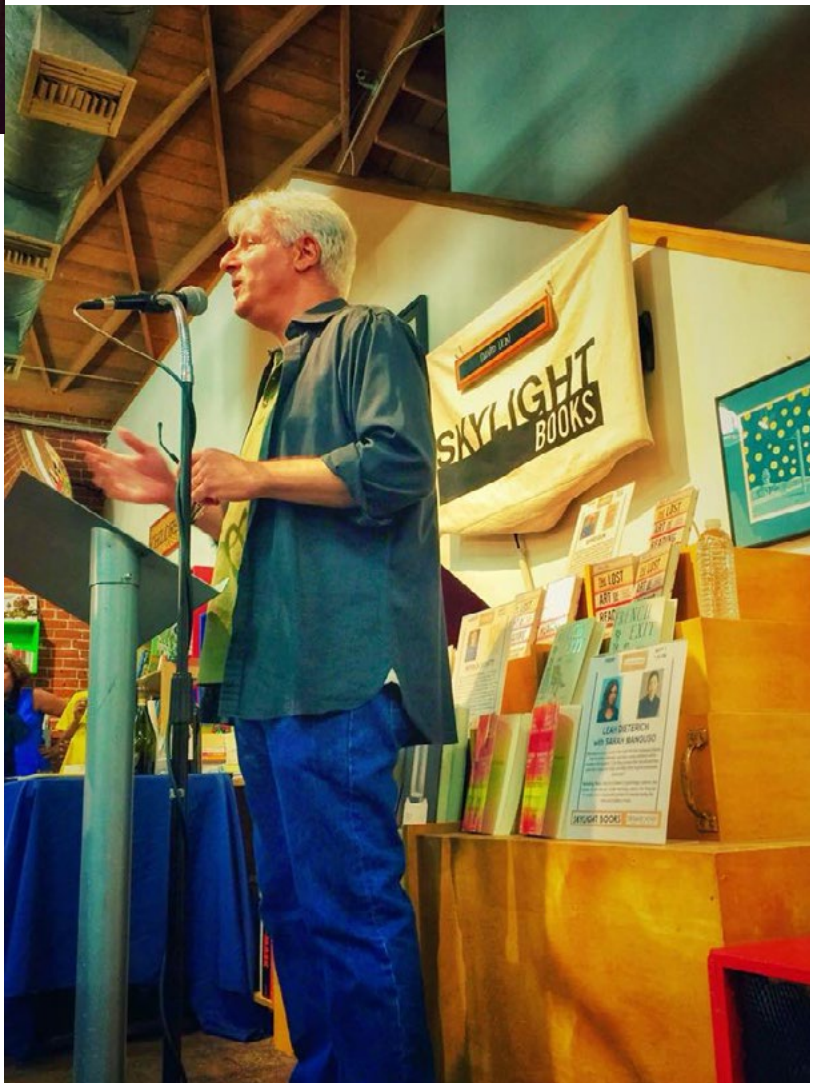
Ulin is a heartfelt writer with a keen and knowing sense of himself. He translates us. He interprets who we might be. He channels our rituals back to us in ways that are insightful. In the many years that I have known him—from rock and roll poet to essay king, to journalistic interpreter, to champion chronicler, to literary historian, to language archaeologist, to anthologist, to producer, to community gatherer, to literary editor, to teacher, to thoughtful father, to adoring husband, to Twitter agitator—he remains, always, a writer of great value and possibility. A literary fortune teller.

—Luis Alfaro





Above: Reading for *Sidewalking*, Fullerton Arboretum, Cal State Fullerton, October 27, 2015.



Right: Launch reading for *The Lost Art of Reading*, Skylight Books, Los Angeles, September 4, 2018.

## Sunday Morning

I can feel the heat closing in, nine-thirty on a Sunday morning in July, next to last Sunday in the month and the streets a silent emptiness, somnolent, no dogs, no walkers, no joggers, like the residue of a neutron bomb. Neutron bomb? No, no, no—far too histrionic, far too loaded, suggestive of something, some act of mass destruction, metaphor. This morning is the opposite, clear and quiet, barely even call of birds. I always listen for the birds in California, old wives' tale, incantation, the earth won't quake while the birds are singing, they must be silent for at least three hours. I woke up tired this morning, or hungover, the two a tandem since our son left. Three days now, she and I in a house with no children, just us, the dog, and the son's cat.

Small animals, yes, they need to be cared for, but neither asks for very much. Food and water, space to sleep and piss and shit. She and I, we ease up when the kids aren't around: smoke weed, go out to eat. It is like a callback, a reminder, flash of how it once was, that first summer we spent together, when she was working in Philadelphia and I was in New York. Back then, I would take the train down for the weekend, walk up from 30th Street Station to her apartment, the heat buzzing, as if the world had been swaddled in wet gauze. I could feel myself push through it with every step, as if I were parting a curtain between this universe and the next one, everything that has ever been and everything that has never been coexisting in overlapping layers, inevitable.

And in spite of myself, that is how I feel this morning, walking when I would rather stay in bed. San Vicente east to Curson, Curson north to Wilshire, then another few blocks, four or five. I walk for exercise, or for what passes in my life as exercise, a mile and a half, two miles, most days. I go to the store, to the bank, to the dry cleaner, all that urban detritus. But walking these streets also helps define for me a sense of place, a sense of what the boundaries are. It's not about adventure, not this morning or most mornings, but rather reassurance, reminding myself of who and where I am. This is why I take the same walks, along the same sidewalks, past the same houses, the same loose cycle of pavement beneath my feet. What changes is not place but time, my internal weather, the constant overlay of repeated movement, each with its own, a different, resonance.

This morning, for instance: I am walking quickly, not noticing much, sweat like a light dust high upon my neckline, in the center of my back. I am tired (have I said that?), sour stomach, too much coffee or not enough. The sidewalks are empty and sunbaked, not even a breath of moisture in the air. It is a heat that puts me in mind of cicadas, although it is clear. At Wilshire, sunlight dapples the trees near the Tar Pits, rendering the grass electric green.

A week or so ago, I read an article about development at Wilshire and Fairfax that lamented the demise of the corner's quiet elegance. I don't know what Wilshire Boulevard the writer was describing, but to me, such words have never described this stretch. The next time I am up here, in the midafternoon on a Monday or a Tuesday, I take a series of photographs to illustrate the point. There is construction, and traffic is down to a single lane crossing Wilshire at Fairfax, where the horns blurt out their own slow symphony: freeway jam.



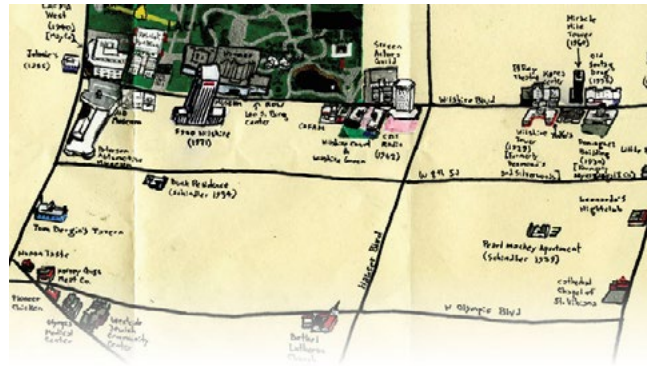
This is another reason I walk in the neighborhood, to remind myself. This morning, nine-forty-five now, the office towers along Wilshire are silent, still as silhouettes against the sun. There is a sense neither of expectation nor of abandonment but rather of being, as if they are only monoliths. And I am walking fast, thinking I am hungry. I watch as my sneakers, black Chuck Taylor high-tops, cycle one foot into the other and then again. The moment flickers, and it passes. I watch as sun speckles into shadow and back to light.

Sometimes when I am walking, I lose momentum, although it is not exactly accurate to say I get tired. I feel the heat settle like a layer of perspiration, as if I haven't showered for a day or two. That's how I felt when I set out this morning, or how I thought I felt. But the more I walk, the more I have the sense that we are at the end of a run. Partly, that's because there are no kids in the house, which means I don't have anything to live up to, no one to betray or disappoint. Partly, it has to do with the fact that I have no plans today, no responsibility.

Later, after we are home again, she will take a nap. By then it is the afternoon, and I am reading on the couch in the living room, fan blowing a light breeze across my legs. As I lie there, the cat stretches out across my lap, turned away from me, tail swishing at my face. I do not like cats, I am allergic to them, but I do not brush him off. We've been living together for three months now, and I let him sit for about ten minutes, before he moves down to my feet.

When I started to write this essay, that's what I thought it would be about, that was the image in my mind. A quiet Sunday, air heated and heavy behind the closed windows and drawn curtains of the living room. Sometimes it becomes so hot here it is all I can do to keep my clothes on, I cannot sit or focus on a thing. Sometimes it becomes so hot outside I wish the apocalypse would arrive already, that I might be spared the discomfort, the weight and burden, of my physical self. Sometimes, however, it is just the opposite, so still and silent it is as if time has stopped. It hasn't, of course; it always starts up again, moving too quickly, but for the moment anyway I get a glimmer of how it would be to live without thinking, without worrying or judging, in what let's call the ever-present now.

—David L. Ulin



# SIDEWALKING

*Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*

DAVID L. ULIN



DAVID L.  
ULIN

# Labyrinth

G e m m a O p e n D o o r



Above: Cover, *Sidewalking: Coming to Terms with Los Angeles*. Published 2015 by University of California Press.

Left: Cover, *Labyrinth*. Published 2012 by Gemma Open Door.



# COLA History, 2018–2023

## 2023 COLA IMAP Artists

Daniel Corral  
Patricia Fernández  
Wakana Kimura  
Michael Massenburg  
Alia Mohamed  
Jasmine Orpilla  
Duane Paul  
Elyse Pignolet  
Kyungmi Shin  
David L. Ulin

## 2022 COLA Artists

Najite Agindotan  
Nancy Baker Cahill  
Sharon Louise Barnes  
Suchi Branfman  
Shonda Buchanan  
Jibz Cameron  
York Chang  
Danny Jauregui  
Yoshie Sakai

## 2021 COLA Artists

Neel Agrawal  
Noel Alumit  
Edgar Arceneaux  
Maura Brewer  
Nao Bustamante  
Jedediah Caesar  
Neha Choksi  
Michael Datcher  
Sarah Elgart  
Lia Halloran  
Phung Huynh  
Farrah Karapetian  
Ruben Ochoa  
Umar Rashid

## 2020 COLA Artists

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  
Lis Diane Wedgeworth

## 2019 COLA Artists

Juan Capistrán  
Enrique Castrejon  
Kim Fisher  
Katie Grinnan  
Sabrina Gschwandtner  
Alice Könitz  
Olga Koumoundouros  
Suzanne Lummis  
Aleida Rodríguez  
Sandy Rodriguez  
Stephanie Taylor  
Dwight Tribble  
Peter Wu  
Jenny Yurshansky

## 2018 COLA Artists

Dave Hullfish Bailey  
Guillermo Bert  
Terry Braunstein  
Cassils  
Sandra de la Loza  
Michelle Dizon  
Tim Durfee  
June Edmonds  
d. Sabela grimes  
Peter J. Harris  
Michele O'Marah  
Julie Shafer  
Doris Sung  
Kristina Wong

### **2023 COLA IMAP Panelists**

Neel Agrawal  
Michael Datcher  
Michele Jaffe  
Camille Jenkins  
Anna Katz  
Marvella Muro  
Umar Rashid  
Holly J. Tempo

### **2022 COLA Panelists**

Taylor Renee Aldridge  
Amanda Fletcher  
Ana Iwataki  
Alec Mapa  
Vincent Ramos  
Aandrea Stang  
Mia Doi Todd  
Lisa Diane Wedgeworth

### **2021 COLA Panelists**

Betty Avila  
Leanna Bremond  
Cassandra Coblentz  
Sabrina Gschwandtner  
Suzanne Lummis  
Diana Nawi  
Kamran V

### **2020 COLA Panelists**

Sandra de la Loza  
Daniela Lieja  
Edgar Miramontes  
Kelsey Nolan  
Doris Sung  
Kristina Wong  
Steven Wong

### **2019 COLA Panelists**

Bryan Barcena  
Meryl Friedman  
Joel Garcia  
Mar Hollingsworth  
Ciara Moloney  
Jesus A. Reyes  
Andreen Soley  
Whitney Weston

### **2018 COLA Panelists**

Gloria Enedina Alvarez  
Marcella Guerrero  
Edward Hayes  
Ben Johnson  
Isabelle Lutterodt  
Paul Outlaw  
Sally Shore  
Emily Zaiden



## 2023 COLA IMAP Acknowledgments

DCA would especially like to thank the following DCA employees for their dedicated work toward making this year's COLA IMAP initiative engaging, educational, and entertaining:

**Joe Smoke, Ben Espinosa, and Brenda Slaughter Reynolds** from DCA's Grants Administration Division;

**Rosie Lee Hooks and Jamie Costa** from DCA's Community Arts Division;

and

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