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ARTICLES:
Jordan Strafer, "PUNCHLINE"

IN THE GALLERY

JANUARY 19TH 2022

BY MAXWELL PAPARELLA

Peak Heaven Love Forever (2021) is the video at the center of Jordan Strafer's exhibition *PUNCHLINE*, now on view at Participant Inc. Based on a true story of a small family aboard a chartered flight from London to Miami, it encloses baleful emotional deprivation within the trappings of material wealth. Here and elsewhere, Strafer deals with autobiography as something other than only a paradox of identity, dwelling on the excruciating moment of experience and creating an account devoid of shame or sentiment.

A young woman (Cammisa Buerhaus) and a man who might be her father (Alexandro Segade) are attended to by a stewardess (Marti Wilkerson). Another man, who might also be her father (Jim Fletcher), is mostly asleep, perhaps semi-vegetative, breathing via a tracheostomy and ventilator. Their faces, framed by the airplane's ovular windows, are marked variously by sunburn, cosmetic surgery, a patchy beard, and a papulous rash—the young woman's, which progresses across her body in the course of the flight. For the moment, they are suspended in transit's stasis, though a sense of personal history marks each of them. Their troubled thoughts play out on wincing eyes, flared nostrils, and fretted fingers. They do not speak.

This tone is broken twice. For a while, the three waking characters lip sync to The Mamas & The Papas' "Dedicated to the One I Love." Illuminated by a tight spotlight, each is animated but remains unexpressive. There is also a scene of wishful fantasy, a massacre, photographed partly as a first-person shooter, which results in tray tables smeared with viscera and the release of oxygen masks from the overhead compartments. The loop point of the 19-minute-long video seems to come between two dolly shots down the center aisle, a resetting of the scene.

In the back room of the gallery, eleven works on paper expand upon the video, notably featuring Shari Lewis's hand puppet Lambchop. Several make use of airport beads, the medium used to provide ultra-reflective runway surfaces, which here sit dull and languid until activated by a camera's flash. In one image, a plane sits on the tarmac, its staircase extended, an ambulance parked outside, gurney at the ready. The scene recalls another in *SOS* (also 2021), which was on view over the summer at the New Museum. The sick man in that video, to whose eyes false tears are applied, even wears a swatch of the same hospital gown as *Peak Heaven*'s patient. Crucially, illness is not a metaphor, but a persistent state of affairs.

The figurines Strafer has previously cast in her work are typically miniature, sometimes the subject of manipulation by large, aged hands. Here, life-sized dummies and mannequins are the soft targets for a woman's retribution, her handgun's laser sight finding their distended faces one by one. There is something of Greer Lankton's gaunt dolls and Todd Haynes's lacerated Barbies in the bloodline. Likewise, the outrageous make-up and masks recall Harmony Korine's *Trash Humpers* (2009) or the videos of Ryan Trecartin, although Strafer's action is mostly subdued, rather than manic.

This is the artist's first solo exhibition, following last year's web-based project, *No Bag*, hosted by Participant After Dark (the gallery's pandemic-ready virtual program). With a greasy or gangrenous hand for a cursor, the visitor probes a collection of vessels and baubles for recordings, drawings, jokes, and user surveys (89% of respondents have agreed that "Opting out should be free and legal"). *Peak Heaven* represents both an increase in production value and a narrowing of scope for Strafer, who continues to fabricate scenes of trial and trauma with a caustic absurdity. Interposing the opiate of self-distraction and the catharsis of self-annihilation, she maintains the righteousness of both.

Jordan Strafer: PUNCHLINE *is on view at Participant Inc. through February 20.*

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JORDAN STRAFER: MAD-LIBBING FOR TRUTH

by Joppe Ugaleg

Jacques Derrida once wrote that there is no form of testimony that does not at least implicitly bear the structure of literature. Literature, in this context, is not a genre, but a way, the possibility of literature. In the grotesque and directly humorous video works of Jordan Strafer, based artist Jordan Strafer, authoritative accounts of the artist's own lived (and often traumatic) experiences are unsettled and perverted only to allow for more difficult emotional truths to rise to the surface, played out via hectoid and heartbreaking scenarios, cosmic observations and (self-)deprecating confessions. Strafer's work, in his own words, is not spending "I" has reached a new kind of sovereignty in aesthetic representation. Strafer entertains the opposite, its total sabotaging – most recently with his film DEAR HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER (2021), a true story of trivial and tortuous artist's transatlantic arrivalcrew from London to Miami, currently showing as part of her first institutional solo exhibition at EARTDUNKART INC in New York.

Joppe Ugaleg: *"Put two fingers in your mouth and tell me a terrible story", a new line from the last showpiece "PURCHLINE", is, as per description for what your files had like: strange, terrible stories; the terrible as a narrative mode. Can I ask, why are your stories so terrible?*

Jordan Strafer: I think there's a humour in this mode that comes from over-identifying with the terrible. Most of the stories I tell are somehow based in autobiography, or the idea of truth or memory of what happened, or a feeling based on something from my life. I feel that if it's about me, as a subject, I have the obligation to implicate myself, to make myself a way. It also functions as a way for me to distance myself from the story and create room for humour. I'm not saying I'm a good person, I'm just saying I'm a person who has had a lot of stories that I can't be ashamed. I want people to feel something – and maybe that's bad.

JU: Do you have nightmares or vivid dreams? Where do you develop your narrative structure from?

JS: *One element of my writing practice is recording voice memos of my dreams almost every morning. Most of the writing is based on these recordings with accompanied and transcribed text, so yes, a lot of it literally comes from nightmares. Even the "PURCHLINE" text, two fingers in your mouth and tell me a terrible story, came directly from one of those memos.*

JU: Being myself an active paranoiacar, i sleepwalking, night terrors, hallucinations and the like – I recognize a very particular atmosphere in your work. More inebriatedly, it emulates strategies such as being trapped, claustrophobia, and the uncanny. Nightmares are a kind of dream, but, in the second film, the nightmare are an an existence where nothing can possibly happen because they're stuck in a vacuum – but here, the film gives space to that dream-like feeling being caught in a loop, structurally speaking, or stylistically every time. What is your relationship to psychoanalysis, or that line of aesthetics in art and cinema?

JS: *Although I don't feel equipped at all as a scholar of psychoanalytic theory, I do find it useful as someone who makes images to recognize that everything is symbolic. In Lacan's writing, for example, the breast might not be literally the mother's breast, but a symbol. When I started making lines based work in undergrad I was drawn to Bruce Nauman's Wax Wrist(2) and Kitchen Door (to their analysis of symbols that are centred around the mother family) nor can basically talk about everything through it.*

JU: What has your ascent to narrative filmmaking been like?

JS: Towards the end of my undergraduate studies, I started making very sinister performance videos in which I would dress up in a suit and tie and sit in front of a camera, just sitting and holding it, doing some action like getting my belly button pierced or answering the phone very simple gestures, very little editing. When I went to Bard College, I was in the film and video department, where I realized, "I'm out of my league!" Most of these people know so much about filmmaking, and I felt like an imposter there, not knowing the first thing about the craft. I felt like I was in a lab, I felt like I was in a laboratory, I felt like I was in a place where much more than traditional film. But I wanted to – needed to – start teaching myself, so while I was at school, I started choosing scenes from movies and re-making them piece by piece. One of these was a pre-credit scene from Tarkovsky's The Mirror (1975), which I slowly re-performed and made into a three-channel video with my dad and a baby doll, the scene was really simple, a hypnotist "curing" a stuttering teenager. That was the first time I took a pre-existing script and Mad-Libbed it so that it fit into my life. From there, I did my rendition of a scene from Bergman's Persona (1966), a scene from Antonioni's The Passenger (1975), and one from Ingmar Bergman's Fanny and Alexander (1982), they were good exercises simply in terms of learning how to edit, how to ask people how to move in front of a camera, how to put things together, how to incorporate sound, practicing what being feels like, what cutting on the action even is. I just did it from cooping.

JU: Indeed, there is something very brash, an almost child-like narrative force in your work: calming stories for the sake of the story. It reminded me of the Danish author Suzo Gleason, who sees cold that book the mirror of reality, sheltered it, acted as the best answer, and put it back together. Taking this brash, calming mode a narrative often housed in the manner of Hollywood nonfiction comes

JS: But it might also be the most effective way to convey a truth. There are so many things that could be "the truth" of a story, including simply the subjective feeling that same from it. I feel like I'm a very sensitive person and I'm constantly absorbing information, I'm a very sponge kind of fiction. I love anything that is "based on a true story". I remember, years ago, watching an Oprah episode about someone who wrote a book about their drug addiction, but it had become apparent that the book was riddled with falsehoods, that the person had fictionalized their life. Memoir as a form, more so than autobiography, implies something deeply subjective, where the truth is not necessarily factual. I'm interested in that. Why would I choose the form of art if it had to be strictly factual? I would have done something else!

DOCUMENTING TRUTH WITHOUT ARTIFICE IS ESSENTIALLY, ARGUABLY, A FORM OF VIOLENCE, HOLDING A CAMERA IN FRONT OF SOMEONE AND ASKING THEM TO GIVE TRUTHFUL TESTIMONY — IT'S POINTING AND SHOOTING.

Weirdly, one way to tell a story that feels less violent to the subject is to add artifice. So while I'm making the work, I separate myself internally, and do not actively think of it as something that same from my story. I do when I'm planning it, but while making it, it is no longer mine – it's abstracted out into the story, it's the piece. But my recent work – other than the Danish one – is very, very personal, and I'm very, very, very, very, very, very nervous. I was in an actual an ambulance with my dad and his husband and a flight attendant and two paramedics, and we were actually nerved-outs: oddly, it feels good that I'm able to turn memories and painful things into material, but I don't want to make it about me, and I don't very hard so that it's not. My hope for it is that it's a contribution of some kind, that it gives someone something to feel or think about. That's the actual relief for me: it's giving a memory a purpose.

JU: In your film DOG, you have this prosthetic hand that literally comes down from the sky to turn on the sound of an ambulance, or to adjust the posture of the protagonist dial when she's lying on the beach. You make the force of your directorial intervention really clear; it really is like playing with reality, like you're playing with dolls. Why have you stuck with dolls?

JS: I guess I like dolls because they are informed of forming a particular identity – they're just poses in a play, and this feels refreshing.

JS: And that means a lot to me, because by relieving them of their identity they can be more terrible, and anyone is implicated in that, it would be unfair just to me. The dolls can become a projection surface, as they often are in society: dolls are used by law enforcement to explain what happened to victims of sexual assault, dolls are used by kids to tell stories. I remember playing with dolls as a kid and just cutting off their heads – I'm sure these and our bardeau are normal! I drive them in the pool, they'd their throughout Dolls lend themselves to both horrifying and imagination.

JU: Is truth important to you?

JS: I may be cynical. I am fond of the topics of truth, love, justice, and freedom, because I think they're terrible, but I don't think they actually exist. I'm fond of them because I think it don't think that there is such a thing as truth. I want to engage with it anyway: that often, an emotional truth, conveying a feeling, is one of the only ways to touch on truth. truly.

JORDAN STRAFER is a Brooklyn-based video artist. Her solo exhibition "PLANCHERE" at EARTDUNKART in New York is on view until 20 February 2022.

JEFFRE LEVIS VIG is a critic, curator, and contributing editor to Spike.

JORDAN STRAFER | JOPPE UGALEG | PARTICIPANT INC | VIDEO ART | PSYCHOANALYSIS | DOLLS

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CULT OF DOMESTICITY

The private is public, the personal, political: the stuff that fills our "home sweet home", accents a group show in Graz, is loaded with baggage from the world outside.

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Crypto-widows promise nothing short of utopia – but how do the realities of the NFT art market stand up to this enthusiasm? Domenico Quaranta takes three optimistic claims to task, all without losing sight of the promising potential that remains amidst the contradiction.

VIDEOS

LO-FI HOME MIX

For the February installment of Spike's ongoing collaboration with Lizzie Exposition, Hong Kong-based writer and curator Cheng Qi swims through the data flow of Shung-Tao Chen's heuristologically tinged reflexes.

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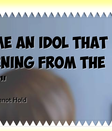

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"OUR IDENTITY COULD BECOME AN IDOL THAT WE SCULPT ANEW EACH MORNING FROM THE DIGITAL CLAY"

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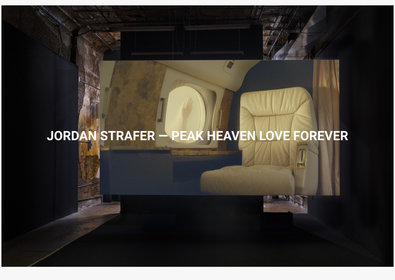


JORDAN STRAFER — PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER

I usually depict violence being done to a femme character by a masculine character. In ***Peak Heaven***, *the femme character that essentially plays me is the violent one. I've always had some element of violence in my work but in a very fake way. I don't want to make art that shows what I want the world to be like; I want to make art that reflects how I feel it is. Violence is everywhere, all the time, even in family structures where people supposedly love each other.* — Jordan Strafer*

Strafer's new video work—***PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER***—is part of the artist's current **Participant Inc** show ***PUNCHLINE*** and will stream during the first week of February on **Renaissance TV**, an online platform and production fund created by the **Renaissance Society** at the University of Chicago and dedicated to the moving image.

The **Renaissance TV** presentation will conclude with an online conversation between Strafer, Sohrab Mohebbi, and Alexandro Segade. See links below for details.

JORDAN STRAFER—*PUNCHLINE*

Through February 20

Participant Inc

253 East Houston Street, New York City

JORDAN STRAFER—*PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* stream

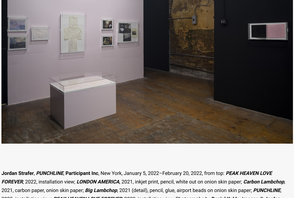
Renaissance TV

February 1–6

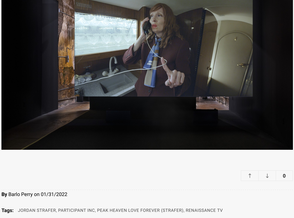
JORDAN STRAFER, SOHRAB MOHEBBI, and ALEXANDRO SEGADE IN CONVERSATION

February 6

"A Cruel Joke: Jordan Strafer Interviewed by Simon Wu," *Bomb*, January 21, 2022, online.



Jordan Strafer, ***PUNCHLINE*** **Participant Inc**, New York, January 5, 2022–February 20, 2022, from top: ***PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER***, 2022, installation view; ***LONDON AMERICA***, 2021, inkjet print, pencil, white out on onion skin paper, ***Carbon Lambchop***, 2021, carbon paper, onion skin paper; ***Big Lambchop***, 2021 (detail), pencil, glue, airport beads on onion skin paper; ***PUNCHLINE***, 2022, installation view; ***PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER***, 2022, installation view. Photographs by **Daniel Kukla**. Images © **Jordan Strafer**, courtesy of the artist and **Participant Inc**.



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By Barlo Perry on 01/31/2022

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People across the art community highlight artists on Foundwork

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Michael Lee and Alison Lewis

Sharon Lockett
Lauren Mortman
Lauren Mortman and Ashley Cummings
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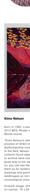
Kina Nelson

Born 1984 in Cape Town, South Africa. Lives and works in Boston, MA. BFA, Rhode Island School of Design; Provincetown, MA, 2019

"Kina Nelson's ethereally dreamlike photographs are the product of their observation and practice—photography, painting, and meditation. Nelson's work has been shown at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; and Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art. Nelson's work is in public and private collections in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Nelson's photographs are characterized by a dreamlike quality, and the photographer's practice is intuitive between the realms of dreamscape and photography that recommended the artist to the Provincetown Fellowship, which Nelson attended in 2019.

Artwork Image: Untitled#0001 (02) 2018, Acrylic, Nylon thread on Kodak Ektar 100 film



Tsuyoshi Ozawa

Tsuyoshi Ozawa's public, creative, and historical working in the fields of global modern and contemporary art, with particular focus on the intersections between the expression of art and society, particularly with regard to histories of internationalism, post-colonialism, and Afrofutur.

Tsuyoshi Ozawa, the inaugural Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Fellow, will also organize a talk or other analogous for Alex Gino's Stonewall, 2019, and the Julia Alexander Curtain or Alexa Cathcart. Alex has curated exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the Hammer Museum, the Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Zach Hill

Born 1977 in Rochester, New York. Lives and works in Portland, Maine. Photographer, 2014 BFA University of Rochester; 2016 MFA Rhode Island School of Design; Invitation of A.I.R. Energy, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

"Since Surfaces, Zach graduated grad and was in LCD Soundsystem and Hella Mega, Brooklyn's Hella Mega. Hill's work has been shown in Brooklyn, Providence, and Portland, Maine. Hill's photographs are characterized by a focus on the process of a project, which is evidenced in the photographs of Hill's work, which

Meredith Bloudwine

Born 1960 in Greenville, SC. Lives and works in Greenville, SC.

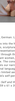
1984 BFA from College of Art, Atlanta, GA.

"Bloudwine's works are powerful because they combine a deep understanding of the medium with a lyrical, lighthearted approach to a difficult and grim subject. Her work is about the tension between beauty and ugliness. Maintaining their innocence and abstract quality, her figures are at the same time grotesque and quickly move through the fascinated and a conflicted response to what they represent. Bloudwine's work is Rembrandtian flipping for her subjects and hoping they don't bite her face off. Her work is fun to look at."

Artwork Image: Octopus Moon, 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 84 in.

Tina Swanhamber

Tina Swanhamber is a comic artist and illustrator based in Berlin, Germany. She focuses on the impact of the human condition on the environment and environments and cities in ruins. Her work has appeared in Vice, Kueperz, other magazines international group shows including The Whitechapel Gallery, Museum of Modern Art, Berlin, Kunstverein Ludwigshafen, Kunstverein Bad Homburg, Galerie Wolfgang Gmyrek, and other venues. She is the author of the graphic novel Pyrenaica, and other publications and has contributed to the Vice and Kueperz, and other publications. She is also the founder of the Zine Fest, an international network for zine-making and artists Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, London, Paris, and Vienna.



Ivonne Thein

Born 1973 in Berlin, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

"Ivonne Thein delves into the human body with her expressive paintings. Her figures are rendered in impressionistic, non-representational, and fluid strokes, with a palette of muted colors. Her work explores the emotional complexity of human relationships, sometimes focusing on the intimacy of a couple, sometimes the dynamics of a family, and sometimes the friction between beauty and the banal language we usually use to describe it. Thein's work is in many international collections and displays prestigious awards."

Artwork Image: Untitled (Kiss), 2018. Oil on canvas. 39.4 x 31.5 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Vivian Liddell

Born 1974 in Belgrade, Tennessee. Lives and works in Athens, Georgia.

"Vivian Liddell's work explores the human body with her expressive figures. Her figures are rendered in impressionistic, non-representational, and fluid strokes, with a palette of muted colors. Her work explores the emotional complexity of human relationships, sometimes focusing on the intimacy of a couple, sometimes the dynamics of a family, and sometimes the friction between beauty and the banal language we usually use to describe it. Liddell's work is in many international collections and displays prestigious awards."

Artwork Image: Untitled, 2018. Oil on canvas. 36 x 48 in.

Richard Jonathan Nelson

Born 1950 in Hayward, Georgia. Lives and works in San Francisco, California.

"Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California.

"In his chronicles, Nelson mixes collages, Richard Jonathan Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California. Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California. Fragmenting each other, Digital collage and painting combine to create a dreamlike, hallucinatory environment. Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California. Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California. Nelson's work is in the collections of the Arts San Francisco, California

Evelyn Hayes

Born 1957 | Lives and works in San Francisco, CA

Hayes's work is rooted in the tradition of Conceptual Art, but her practice has evolved to include performance, video, photography, and graphic design. Her work is concerned with the ephemeral and the transitory, and with the ways in which our memories, feelings, and perceptions are formed and reformed by the passage of time. Hayes's work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Venice Biennale, where she represented Ireland in 1997. She has been the recipient of many awards and fellowships, including the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Residency, and the Arts Council of Ireland Bursary Award.

Artwork Image: Emily Dickinson (Red), 2005. Oil pastel on paper, 11 × 11 in.

Bill Brunken

Born 1957 | Lives and works in Rochester, NY

Brunken's work has been exhibited at venues such as the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, the Kitchen in New York, and Photo Alliance in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Photography, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Rochester Institute of Technology, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. He is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Illinois Arts Council, the Ohio Arts Council, the Kansas City Art Institute Visiting Artists Program, the Photographic Resource Center, and the Center for Creative Photography.

Artwork Image: Fire Place Brick, 2019. Oil on canvas board, 12 × 16 in.

Carlos Fernandez

Born 1966 | Lives and works in Richmond, CA

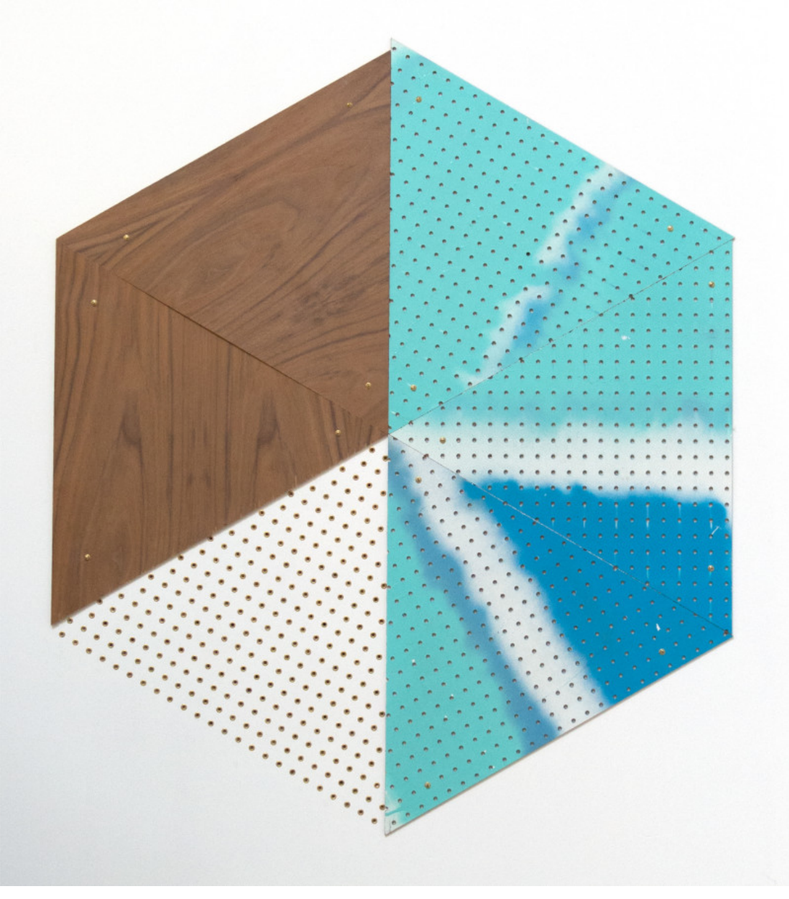
Carlos Fernandez's work has been in the Bay Area for 25 years, and has been exhibited at Gallery Paule Anglim, Gallery Wagner, and other galleries and museums in the Bay Area. Fernandez, artist self-taught, has been exhibited in Europe, Asia, and throughout the United States

Yesse Mandale

Born 1977 in Taipei, Japan. Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Yesse Mandale's Graduate University School of the Arts, New York, New York.

"I am particularly drawn to the sole aesthetic nature of the Japanese Tea Ceremony, the ritualistic and the mundane of physical labour. Metaphor, Mandale's work, is a mirror of the ceremony, a reflection of the pure world, exact, unsparing, from beginning to end. Mandale's work is a reflection of the ceremony, a reflection of the Beauty he arrives, Mandale's Beauty arrives, Mandale's Beauty is the ceremony, Mandale's work is the ceremony, Mandale's work is the ceremony, Mandale's work



Brant Ritter

Born Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

1999 MFA, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. BA, Architecture, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA.

"Brant Ritter's constructions and drawings The Perfect is the Enemy of the Good occupy a place where the precisely made parts fail to line up, their meticulous execution belying organizational failure; the work of a novice apprentice who hopes that a dazzling presentation will distract from their imprecision. In the series Slide, what appear to be carefully placed marks are uniformly smeared, glitch aesthetics elevated to controlled process; we recognize a part of a face, fingerprints in an effort to restore a lost order."

Artwork Image: *Perfect is the Enemy of the Good, No. 4, hexagon*, 2018. Plywood, pegboard, brass ferrules, paint. 54 x 48 x 1/4 in.

Holly Fischer

Born 1976, Missoula, Montana. Lives and works in Raleigh, North Carolina.

2004 MFA, University of Texas—Austin; 1999 BA, Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina.

"Holly Fischer's ceramic works quote the labial, folded geometries of anemones and shellfish but squeezed through a baroque distortion algorithm, their menacing tendrils peeking out between floridly ornamental petals. Like Ken Price's work, the hard glazed surfaces become sensuous, soft and fluid; both imbued with and apart from the natural world."

Artwork Image: *Odalisque*, 2016. Ceramic. 31 x 20 x 18 in. Coil constructed from white earthenware.

Dameon Lester

Born 1973, Concord, North Carolina. Lives and works in Austin, Texas.

2000 MFA, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 1995 BFA, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

"Dameon Lester abstracts geologic and glacial peculiarities, complex topographies approximated as mesh polysurfaces; reduced, simplified till they resemble the micro-crystals that make up the macro-phenomenon. These shards are further complicated in their material construction, color and texture; dark and light, shiny and matte, paper and plywood, their individual faces failing to join in a complete whole. The works are at once familiar, from their post-minimalist precedents to the consistency of their digital origins, but difficult to read."

Artwork Image: *Mass Balance*, 2016. Abatron wood epoxy, acrylic paint, Aqua resin, brad nails, fiberglass tape, matte varnish, MDF, primer, plywood, repurposed vintage printing press paper (from the Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX), Talas Jade 403 PVA adhesive. 78 x 43 x 39 in.

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