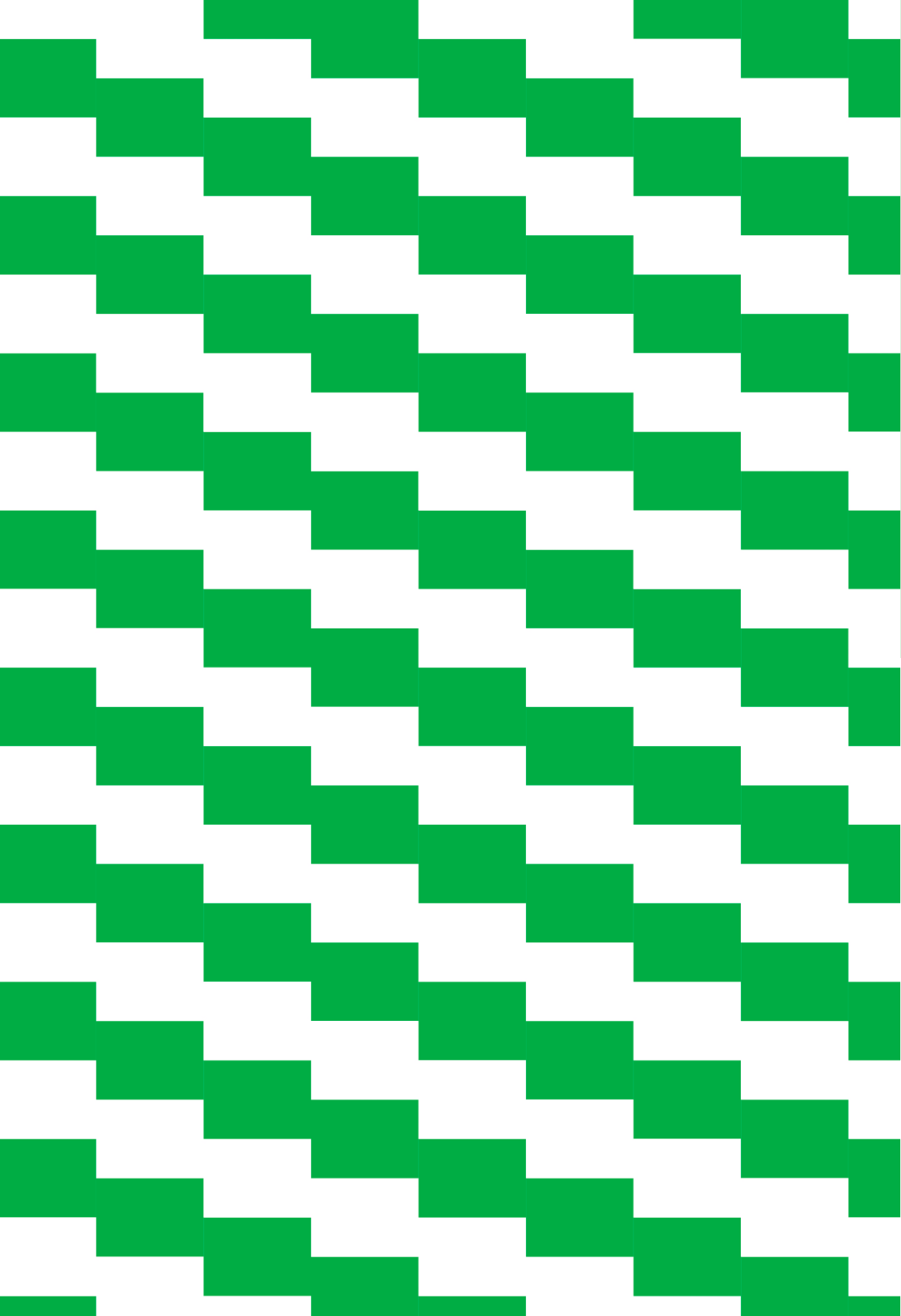


FIVE  
MINUTES



FIVE  
MINUTES

2016  
2017

# Interviews with Artists by MFA Candidates

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## EDITOR IN CHIEF

Laura Hughes

## CO-EDITORS

Natalie Wood

Alexander Wurts

## MFA INTERVIEWERS

Lee Asahina, Aaron Björk, Leah Howell, Laura Hughes, Ron Linn, Daniel Miller, Amanda Keathley, Stephen Milner, Neal Moignard, Mary Margaret Morgan, Stephanie Parnes, Aja Segapeli, Kayla Thompson, Esther Weng, Jen Vaughn, Natalie Wood, Alexander Wurts

## DESIGN & TYPOGRAPHY

Bijan Berahimi and Christine Shen for FISK

## ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Wendy Heldmann, Public Programming Director  
Christopher Michlig, Director of Graduate Studies,  
Associate Professor

## SPECIAL THANKS

Carla Bengtson, Department of Art Head and  
Ann Swindells Chair

This publication is made in part by the Ballinger  
Family Memorial Fund.

Published by CORE Press

Printed by Oregon Web Press

[fivemin.org](http://fivemin.org)

[art.uoregon.edu](http://art.uoregon.edu)

# CONTENTS

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION	04
RUBY NERI	06
STEPHANIE SYJUCO	14
BENJAMIN LEVY	22
JOHN DIVOLA	28
SAM MOYER	34
RUBA KATRIB	40
WILLIAM WYLIE	48
BENJAMIN BRATTON	56
MARIANNE FAIRBANKS	64
JULIA BRADSHAW	70
GABRIELLE JENNINGS	76
MICHELLE GRABNER	82
NORA NORANJO MORSE	88
JEREMY BAILEY	94
ERKKI HUHTAMO	100
KATIE HERZOG	108
BOBBI WOODS	116
SANDOW BIRK	122
JULIE YORK, TIM BERG, & REBEKAH MYERS	128
MK GUTH	138
ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES	146

This marks the third edition of *5 Minutes*, a limited run print publication of quick, informal conversations between graduate students and visitors to the Art Department at the University of Oregon. The MFA program at UO prides itself on interdisciplinarity, as such we invite a wide range of artists representing some of the most innovative and influential work being done today to lecture on their work and ideas. Conversations between students and visitors often cross pollinate media and conceptual concerns, while raising questions relevant to artists at the beginning of their careers. We disseminate our conversations in print to engage the University at-large and communities beyond Eugene, Oregon.

Each interview is generally conducted just before the visitor gives a lecture, although sometimes at lunch or after a studio visit. The interviewers select the artists/curators/scholars they are most interested in talking to and are encouraged to research their work and draft questions. We invite one other grad to be present for the interview to record, and help promote a relaxed conversational tone. Then, the interviewer transcribes and introduces their interview for the publication. This creates a wide diversity between the tone and character of each entry, in hopes of communicating something about the personality of the student and interviewee. *5 Minutes* serves to capture one year of the graduate program at University of Oregon: who was here? What were our concerns?

Questions represented here range from very specific inquiries about a visitor's work, to curiosity about that person's life and breakfast choices. Often the conversation is intimate and covers the practicalities of living as an artist: because this is what we want to know about, and

## EDITOR'S

many of our visitors: Stephanie Syjuco, Sam Moyer, Jeremy Bailey, and Michelle Grabner, for example are eager to make this transparent for art students. Questions about time spent in the studio sometimes turn to kids' school schedules, or managing day jobs and teaching schedules. In particular, this week, I've been thinking about how Michelle Grabner procrastinates just like I do.

It is important to note that in 2016-17 *5 Minutes* has been in its second year as an entirely grad-run initiative, each year the team managing the publication shifts as the graduate cohort shifts. I have been so honored to take on the job of editor-in-chief after Chelsea Couch, who spearheaded the project and solidified its future in 2015-16. I was incredibly lucky to have worked with Natalie Wood and Alexander Wurts as co-editors, whose contribution made this year's publication possible. Thank you to all the interviewers and guests for making time for *5 Minutes*, especially the first-year MFA candidates who jumped in early on without much knowing what they were in for. To Bijan Berahimi and Christine Shen of FISK for their beautiful design work on this volume. And the biggest thanks to Graduate Director (and *5 Minutes* founder), Christopher Michlig, and Public Programming Director, Wendy Heldmann for their generous support, guidance, and communication throughout the year.

## INTRODUCTION

KAYLA THOMPSON  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

RUBY  
NERI

08

# Ruby Neri

09

Ruby Neri's visit was the very first of the term, it was my very first month as a graduate student, and I had volunteered for the first interview. Being new to the campus, I had to find a quiet corner to have our interview take place and the lonely hallway that was suggested to me turned out to be a dimly lit, high traffic area. Her responses were interjected by vending machine noises, which were removed from the transcript but still sourced a distraction. The second problem that presented itself was in the form of a sudden ear infection, so during the interview I was holding my head in one hand and holding the recorder with the other. Ruby might have been taken aback from the fact that her interviewer's face was melting—

Ruby's recent exhibition at the David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles, entitled *Slaves and Humans*, was the main point of discussion for both my interview and her lecture. It featured large ceramic vessels painted with caricatures of women like one might find graffitied on the walls of a seedy underpass. Blonde haired, blue eyed women in promiscuous poses, more naked than nude. This show raised a lot of questions for me: why painted on the vessels? What is being questioned or commented upon about gender? What is the take away? I was hoping to have some issues cleared up in our discussion.

## FOREWORD

**Kayla Thompson:** Starting out with some easy questions, what is a typical day in the studio for you?

**Rubi Neri:** A typical day in the studio. Right now I'm split up between a few different places where I make my work. I made the majority of the larger ceramics at Long Beach State in their ceramic program because I don't have a kiln that big. Usually I drop my daughter off at school at 8 and then I go—generally I'll just go to my studio in Highland Park, which has a small electric kiln that I can use. I make a lot of work there, and I've been in that studio for about ten years, and that's a long time, and it's close to my house. It's about a mile and a half, it's really quiet, it's on the back side of the street. But sometimes I'll go, after dropping my daughter off at school, I'll go to Long Beach and I'll spend the day there. I'm not really making work there but I fire my work there. It's really complicated because I make larger ceramics and I can't accommodate that at my studio in LA, so I'll make a lot of bigger ceramics there but then I'll truck them. But if I am just making work that can fit in my kiln at my studio— it's just incredibly quiet, relaxing time in my studio alone, which is nice. But I share my space with a few other people, my husband, and two other artists, but they are in the front, so we all have our individual spaces. But, studio time is really kind of a selfish time: Being alone and focused, and quiet, and it's my favorite thing. Living in LA, you drive a lot, so it's nice to be really close to where I live.

**KT:** This relates to the next question: How do you go about planning a show? Are you making the work and then they fit into a theme or do you have a theme that you explore through the work? And I'm sure

part of the planning probably has to do with transportation.

**RN:** The majority of transportation for specific projects such as a show would be supplied by the gallery so I don't really have to worry about that. It's in their best interest to pick it up.

But show to show, it's a pretty specific thought process. I can't really describe it. I work really organically and what I do has become refined to the point where I work primarily in clay and within that realm. With the show that I just had this summer, I really wanted to do pots, which I'd never done before. There are things like that that come out of other projects before it, it's always growing in this organic way, like feeding off of what had happened previously. I never really made pots before. I was doing multiple tableaux, multiple object oriented pieces, lots of objects within one piece, and I wanted to get back into singular objects, which a pot basically is, and figurative pieces. My previous show was rather removed, sort of stoic and based on really iconic forms. I didn't really want it to be so removed. I wanted make a really personal show and statement. I wanted to do something that I had never done before. I think that these pots, the context is sort of odd and a challenge for me, and that was intriguing.

I really go from show to show. I think about the space and what things are going to look like in that space, so it's sort of site specific. I think about pedestals in that space. A lot of times the people that I work with in the gallery have input, and I listen to that, it doesn't drive the work so much, but it is defiantly a thought in my mind. About what other work

looks like in that space. It has a lot to do with the space, the work that I made just previously, and my interest at that time. I think because I was making my work in Long Beach, that is far from where I live and the drive is stressful, I felt kinda crazy, and the work has this intensity, but it's a real personal intensity and I don't think I really ever accessed that in my work before, so much. And I think that shows and I wanted it to show.

KT: The next question kind of leads into that. I would like to ask a couple of questions pointed at your show *Slaves and Humans*. Could you first tell us a little bit about the show?

RN: Yeah that show— Like I said it's really personal, but I don't really know specifically how it is so personal. My husband was like, 'Whoa! It's like really sexual and blatant.' But I was like, Oh really? I didn't really realize it was so crazy. The imagery is really intense, female imagery. I didn't really understand how crazy that was, female sexuality, it seems like once I made that work, it was like, Whoa.

It seems really different too, in terms of being a woman, and being straight, and married, and making that imagery—cause you know, woman are portrayed all the time in artwork or whatever. Sometimes I am just so intuitively working, I'm not conscious. But I mean, I was, but I just wanted to go with it and not really think about that because I felt that I really wanted the show to be personal but it's not really a sexuality so much that I was trying to portray but like a craziness, or like a crazy female element. I felt like things were really out of control in my life, I felt really far away from working there, was really removed for me, and there was a lot going on in my personal life that was really kinda intense

and being a mom, and living in LA where you drive a lot, and just being really busy, trying to make ends meet financially.

I mean the pot is— I didn't really want it to be like 'oh, a vessel.' This archaic image or functional thing throughout millennia, or you know, utilitarian. I wanted it to be a carrier for my imagery in a sense, like a canvas, and not have to think about the conceptual element of the form. I wanted a structure in which to work other ideas out on. So a pot was really a strong object for me to choose. Obviously with clay, it's really difficult to do anything that's going to threaten gravity, it's really problematic. Structurally, it's really easy to make these things. I come out of painting, I went into sculpture and object making, and then I'm finally making ceramics. It's sort of this long process, so I feel that this work speaks to all of those mediums for me. The pots are like canvases and that's literally how I paint, they are very much about painting. So I felt that was a big thing and I just wanted to be a really positive insane sort of intensity. I wanted the imagery to be portraying how I felt, and I think it was successful there.

KT: What is the ideal reaction on the part of the viewer to confronting these sexually charged forms?

RN: I don't really know, I don't really care. I don't really care what people think. A lot of people were really into it, you know, but it is not like this sort of feminist overarching critique that I was trying to portray at all, it was, again, it was coming from a really personal place. I know that a lot of people thought that they were really funny, and that was fine for me. I just think that it was, a sort of posi-

tive portrayal of female— I mean they are all really relaxed with the way they are and they are really comfortable in their skin, although it is like super craziness. I feel like they are really confident figures, and so they are not really holding back on anything. But I don't really know what people—I have no idea what people think of them at all.

KT: It's kinda more about getting something out rather than—

RN: I don't really— care. [Laughing] That seems really irresponsible.

KT: All of the figures represented in that show seem to be Caucasian, blue-eyed blondes and generally all of the same body type. Do you have a specific motive or agenda behind that?

RN: No, it's funny though because you know my daughter is blonde and blue eyed and incredibly uber white because my husband is Swedish. I don't really know but I think about that a lot with her — but then I really love the colors, the contrasts specifically, but I mean I can't really play off on that. I think that they are typical female portrayals, the blonde bimbo or whatever. It isn't literally that, it is very much a color choice because I love yellow and I use yellow a lot in my paintings. It has a real big pallet choice, but it has a lot to do with my daughter strangely enough, because she is so blond. And it's funny because I worry a lot about her because in LA I have to put sunscreen on her every day, it's kinda crazy, but she's incredibly fair and her skin is really sensitive to the light. She gets freckles like crazy in the summer, I think about that a lot. She seems like a fish out of water in the environment in LA, it's too intense for this

Northern European type. So I'm constantly conscious of that.

It's definitely not about woman being literally blonde bimbos or what have you, it's more of a pallet choice. I would get really tired, I would use a lot of pinks and oranges, and reds and I think I just sort of would like to mix it up a little. But it was repetitive, I wanted it to be a tight pallet so that it's fairly repetitive.

KT: We are running out of time, so if you could real quickly: What is your relationship to or opinion of sloppy craft?

RN: Of what?

KT: Sloppy craft. It's like intentionally badly drawn figures or how your thrown cylinder forms are in place of body parts—

RN: Oh so it's sort of like lo-fi? like —

KT: Yeah it's a whole movement —

RN: Yeah for me I think that's sort of the 90's. I think there are a whole bunch of languages that people use in art and yeah that's one of them that has come to. It's sort of like the appropriation of outsider art. It's definitely like accessible to the public. It kind of goes back to [Jean] Dubuffet and that was a huge movement as well, at that point. You know, of childlike drawings, and artwork, and finding the inner child within you, or sort of basic instincts — But there was definitely a whole previous movement of that so I don't think that — I think in artwork, people are appropriating things all the time, in a variety of ways. I've never heard of sloppy craft, that term, but those figures I make with the cylinders, the badly thrown cylinders, it was like how you

know, when you drive by an automotive shop and they weld muffler-people, it's sort of like the equivalent of that but in ceramic. I was thinking I was making these figures out of old badly thrown pots, or what have you, it's sort of like a way of re-using clay. Those were, literally, my unsuccessful forms, you know. I'm accessing a lot of other things in my work as well, like pop art and bay-area funk, and traditional ceramic stuff. There is just so much involved as artists that we are using, literally, all the time, especially with the digital age, people are looking at things everywhere around the world, everything like looks the same basically, it's kind of insane.

KT: Cool, well thank you so much, I'm looking forward to your lecture.

what people

think.



JEN VAUGHN  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

STEPHANIE  
SYJUCO

JEN VAUGHN | IN CONVERSATION  
WITH STEPHANIE SYJUCO

16

17

# Stephanie Syjuco

We welcomed Stephanie Syjuco with typical Oregon weather— blustery winds filled with intermittent rain and bits of sunshine fighting for attention. As we sat down to talk about her work I couldn't help but think about the similar dualities present in her prolific art and social practice. Her work is approachable and fun, yet loaded with heavy content, political undertones, and direct inquiries into our cultural climate. The complexities of the conversations her work is manifesting are reflections of what can only be described as a truly authentic, thoughtful, and generous human being. The following conversation was only one of many that she generously shared throughout the few days spent in Eugene.

## FOREWORD

**Jennifer Vaughn:** To start us off, I was wondering what kind of work you made in graduate school.

**Stephanie Syjuco:** Oh, interesting. Wow. Okay, so I guess over ten years ago now it was mostly sculpture. I went in making objects and interestingly I think it was related to the things that I am doing now but I feel obviously more simplified. You know, it was earlier on in the process and it took me a while to jump to the space where I was less trying to make things about a subject and more making things that activated subjects.

**JV:** Interesting, great. So now, much of your work aims to open up conversations. And, those conversations surround some pretty heavy topics. You have consumerism, capitalism, colonialism, and globalization— I am curious about how you use such heavy topics but you manifest them in a really approachable and kind of playful way for the viewer. Can you talk about the role of fun in your work?

**SS:** [Laughing] That's a great question. Well, it probably harkens back to when I was an undergrad student in the early 90's. What was really popular in the art schools at the time was what is now dubbed "identity politics" work. Which was very serious, very political, and also really timely. I mean those issues, you know, still haven't gone away, they are things that we are dealing with today, but I am more interested in how people can come to those ideas almost through a back-door process where they are least expecting it, or maybe it's couched in something unexpected. Then that way it can actually trigger a new way to think about the topic as opposed to giving them what they expect.

**JV:** Right, or giving them a prescribed—

**SS:** —way to feel. Exactly. Or way to think about it. So, even though I do think humor, or maybe a kind of disjunctive coming together of disparate things happens in my work to take it into a different direction. I am hoping that the politics is still embedded in there somehow.

**JV:** Yeah, definitely. In many of your pieces you, or you and your collaborators, are producing an enormous amount of objects. What happens if those aren't for sale, where do all of these objects end up? Do you ever experience a sense of conflict about having been a producer of so many commodities?

**SS:** Oh yeah. That's a great question too. I think because I have a sculpture background I can't seem to get the object out of the work. And so, especially if you are working with issues of factory production or even the idea of an individual, artisanal, one-off type of fabrication to make something in scale is almost to tell the world that there's still something important about "stuff." With social practice, which is interesting, everyone always assumes that for someone who works in a social practice manner things are sort of dematerialized or it's all about the kind of interrelationships. I feel like the production of the objects become a kind of a Trojan horse towards more abstract ideas. So it's the making of them, the commitment to the process, and the commitment to the real estate that it takes for them to exist in the world— it is important. But you are right, there are problematics around it because at the same time then there is the burden of the thing, whether it gets sold or given away or distributed. In many cases for my projects it's a case by case

basis where if it seems to make sense that it gets put out into the world in a free manner, then it gets disbursed. Or, if it makes better sense to have it pay back in some way then it goes back into a commodity system.

**JV:** Do you ever hold onto objects just because of a personal connection to them? Do you store work?

**SS:** Uh...I used to.

[Laughter]

**SS:** The more one makes the more one realizes one can't do that. But, it's hard. There are a lot of souvenirs of the projects that get floated around too, and I am actually pleasantly surprised that I do stumble upon them in different places and with different people.

**JV:** Interesting, that's cool. So, in your collaboration with other artists and makers what are some of the ways in which you have approached collaboration? What have you learned from collaboration? Upsides, downsides?

**SS:** Well, there are different levels of collaboration. I think we use that term pretty loosely. There is collaboration in the true sense in that you are coming together with another artist or group of people and collectively producing a project from the ground up. And then there's also the term collaboration as it's used when an artist utilizes other people within their projects. And so whether then those people become participants versus collaborators I think there is actually a kind of fine distinction between it. But, to use it loosely, I guess the pluses about it is that there is a kind of loss of individual authorship

which I really like. I think it's nice sometimes to be able to create a platform and then have other people actually fill in the content because I actually don't think that I am necessarily the best repository of the content in many cases.

**JV:** That's interesting. And you are also providing agency for people—maybe?

**SS:** Potentially, yeah. I mean, agency is one way to think about it. And another word is platform or podium, or inadvertent spotlight.

**JV:** Right.

**JV:** In your more recent projects like *Empire/Other*, you are moving more technologically in your work and you are working with really well know art institutions. Can you talk about the experience of shifting away from the DIY-craft aesthetic and into more technologically generated work?

**SS:** Yeah. So I guess with the early pieces, especially coming from a traditional sculpture background where I was usually responsible for the crafting of the thing, and now into the more recent works in which there is this kind of jump into either 3D technologies or digital processes, I feel like what ties those together is still that there is a set of tools that one employs in each type of discipline, whether it is a craft based, object based, or in the digital arena. What links them together for me actually is that they go back and forth so easily. The analog to the digital and back to the analog to the digital. They actually do it every day.

**JV:** Right.

**SS:** You know, so what's fascinating is that the hybridization of those processes is actually more physically internalized than it is mentally internalized in the sense that we do most of our research online now and then we use that research to actually fashion tools or things in our lives. We still hold hand skill sets and then we have this very complicated way that we process information and even create datasets or networks or ways to facilitate the handmade. So actually, I've been surprised at how fluid it's been if one stops making the distinctions.

**JV:** Right, that's a good point. Even in our everyday lives we are shifting back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

**SS:** Uh-huh. Exactly. I don't think it really takes away from the idea of being a tactile producer. And oddly enough, 3D modeling is just one other form of sculpture.

**JV:** You have a very prolific career. You have a studio practice, you're an educator, you collaborate and manage bigger social projects—how do you balance everything?

**SS:** [Laughing] Yeah, that's a really good practical question. I think it goes in phases. For two years I was on a really long artist residency track so I didn't really have an apartment. I did a lot of traveling and I did a lot of projects that were not in the US. And then coming back and switching gears I have been a professor at UC Berkeley for the last three years in a committed way, which means that I have to be around more often. So because of that I have figured out ways in which the university can now house or support some of the projects that I might have done outside and individually. And, I think it's just—it's not easy,

that's for sure. And I know that for my production level as the years go forward I have to make more choices because the field actually opens up more—it actually doesn't close down. I just have to be better at timing.

**JV:** Okay, to finish off our interview I want to know at the end of the day, what do you look forward to? How do you unwind?

**SS:** [Laughter] That's hilarious. Oh gosh, usually a couple hours of surfing the internet.

**JV:** Yeah?

**SS:** Yeah, there's something about that processing, you know? So whether you are just skipping around you are kind of following up on ideas that you might have been generating during the daytime, maybe some reference points, maybe some things to research in the future, or that funny thing that you stumbled across. So I've found that it's literally just hours of this weird vortex of browsing online.

**JV:** Yeah—just like the rest of us.

**SS:** That's it. I know, there is nothing that special about it I guess. [Laughing]

**JV:** It's just the unplugging, the mental unplugging.

**SS:** Not really though, it's not unplugging.

**JV:** Right.

**SS:** It's surfing. It's like taking in everything actually rather than just a couple things. I don't know—

JV: Maybe it's that spread, maybe it almost becomes something like biofeedback.

SS: Who knows?

JV: A rhythm of information.

SS: Well, it's a dream state. You can look at whatever you want to look at and follow up on the most obscure or pop culture things that you want. And then somehow it comes back around again, which is weird. I used to bemoan that time spent as wasted time and now I see it as actually a processing moment. It's actually really useful.

JV: Great, thanks so much for chatting with us.

# The analog to the digital and back to the analog to the digital.

RON LINN  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

BENJAMIN  
LEVY

RON LINN IN CONVERSATION  
WITH BENJAMIN LEVY

24

25

# Benjamin Levy

Benjamin Levy is a printmaker, curator and critic. He is currently serving as Assistant Curator at the Henry Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. A Baltimore native, a 2009 MICA graduate, and formerly a curator at the Baltimore Museum of Art, working with their Prints and Works on Paper Collection. I was interested in interviewing him about his dual roles as artist and curator, whether he viewed them as parallel practices, and where he situated himself today in the art community. Benjamin Levy and I met in my empty classroom just after teaching a drawing class. Sitting among the empty easels and tables, we had a quick discussion about printmaking, curation, social media, and the piece he wished was his.

## FOREWORD

Ron Linn: Welcome! My first question is, coming from a printmaking background, how do your roles as an artist and a curator relate to one another and how are they different?

Benjamin Levy: Well, my printmaking background is also a little bit specialized, in that I was trained as a collaborative printmaker, what some refer to as a master printer. Less people self identify as that than are given that title— When I went museum-side I realized that all of those skills and all of the sort of training I had in collaborating were really a lot more transferable than I thought. So working with artists, whether they're living or dead, and sort of taking all that I learned about really really just analyzing their process, their materials, their techniques, their concepts, whatever it be; and sort of working with that to be able to express that to a larger audience. It just kind of went from actually creating work with them in a print shop situation to doing various sorts of museum things, whether it be research or writing or exhibitions—

RL: Yeah, that's great! Going along from that, how do you normally interact with artists as a curator? What are they like, maybe—I don't know if there's a standard way—

BL: [laughter]

RL: Because sometimes you are working with people who are living and sometimes you are working with people who are dead. Is there, maybe— what is the crux of that interaction?

BL: I would say—and really what has been interesting in making the translation, and the thing that I really kind of hold very dear and especially in hindsight realize what was so

formative in the development of my thinking as—whatever I am—is that solid foundation in critiquing. And that was one of the sort of bigger differences I started to notice when I was around more art historians than artists was just the sort of different way, especially at first, they have of responding to work. And so my critique brain sort of clicks in, and I'm reverse engineering it a little. I'm trying to separate out, you know, the intention versus what actually is in front of me, and sort of weighing those against each other—versus what some of my art history colleagues were trained in, more in an analysis of, of you know— and not in a bad way, but taking it at face value that this thing exists, in this time, in this space, that it was made in this time by this person and sort of putting it in that broader context. And so I'm able to take that more focused, you know, critique, kind of reaching back through, into the studio, through your hand into your brain—hopefully—

RL: [laughter]

BL: And then sort of taking those broader concepts, and you know, zooming out from that.

RL: Totally, that's great. Going off of that, what is maybe the best, or worst, or most memorable experience you've had in working with an artist?

BL: Hmmm. I mean, at this early point in my career, I've probably had more, kind of, whole process exposure in the print shop, in my experience involved in collaborative print projects and publications because—I think probably the most, profound thing, and it's a small thing, but sort of speaks volumes, is that, working with an artist, and translating

their work, their process, from a medium that they're more used to and sort of translating that, and getting to see a distillation of that artist, is real exciting and the most sort of rewarding experience from that is when the artist comes full circle and says, "Oh my God, this is going to change the way I think about my work," because of the changing of those variables, that are sometimes very mundane and very, just, an ends to a means—a means to an end—

[laughter]

—and that's going to change, because they've had this other perspective, because they've translated their own work and are seeing it in a slightly different (way).

RL: Great, I like that. So, as students, as we are preparing for these interviews, we're supposed to research our artists—

BL: What'd you find?

RL: And that's the thing—

BL: Probably not much.

RL: I found your Tumblr [laughter] and so I wanted to ask how you feel about the curatorial role of platforms in social media, like Instagram and Tumblr, and how that relates to your role as a curator in an institution?

BL: Is everyone a curator?

RL: Or maybe it's something totally different?

BL: I would definitely say I don't get as upset about it as other people. Also, I feel like curators take many forms, and self-identifying

as a works on paper curator is its own sort of thing. Curator is the word that's used in America, but the English word for the profession is Keeper, which a lot of people like, and there definitely is some quaintness to it from our perspective. But I see the role of the curator as multifold, because there is a sort of, on the contemporary side, working with artists helping to realize their vision, and more of what you could reduce to the picking and choosing of things, but then there's this whole other side of it, which is that scholarly, art-historical bit, and for me, seeing those stories that, at least in my area of expertise, stories that have been told throughout the last five and a half centuries that get at the human condition, artists responding to similar things in their own way and seeing those connections throughout history. So I would put that on the other axis of, you know, responding to and picking and putting together interesting visual tales.

RL: I like that response, and I kind of feel the same way, and maybe my next question leads off of that: What is limiting or liberating in working for an institution in a curatorial sense, in compiling visual information.

BL: The thing that I find most—and it's a comfort, and some days I can read that as negative comfort, and sometimes as a really wonderful comfort, is that both institutions that I've worked for, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and now the Henry Art Gallery, are both around a century old, and I take great pride in continuing those legacies. And there's a real stability that's comforting, that they're, you know, with the growth of a collection, there's decades and decades and decades of people's visions, and of people's voices, in shaping those collections, and many times

therefore shaping an institution and that's really kind of nice to be able to lean on them, metaphorically, or literally, in terms of recent forebears. But then that's also a really heavy bill. And that's that someone in thirty years might be looking back on my time in the institution and there's that responsibility. And so that's one thing that I find myself most useful or most validated in those larger institutions with that history, because it's someone to talk to, like a crazy person, in the vault.

RL: You're kind of stepping into the stream of history...

BL: Yeah.

RL: One more question, going off of that: if you could pick piece of artwork, either from the collection or that you have worked with recently, to own, what would it be?

BL: Phew. Oh boy. Let's see, well the Henry's current collection that I work with is 26,000 (pieces); the Baltimore Museum of Art's prints, just the work on paper collection that I worked with, is 65,000 things—so just one thing. I would say, Rembrandt's St. Jerome in a Darkened Chamber. Please fact check me on the title.

RL: We'll run that through the fact checker. Fact Checker: *St. Jerome in a Dark Chamber*. close!

BL: I would pick a print, not only because that's my personal passion, but also because of the inherent community in multiples, that there are others that might be equally drawn to this, and there's that link to them. St. Jerome seems to be a favorite of printmakers; he translated the Bible and he's very studious,

though I missed that day at Hebrew School, but I'm down with him now.

RL: [laughter]

BL: And Rembrandt's a cool guy. The print itself—to describe this in your audio, it's not huge and it's almost entirely black. And thinking that Rembrandt was only working with line, that he's depicting a very studious, time consuming subject and figure in similar way, and it shows in the buildup of him working on it. You almost can't see anything when you first see it, but the longer you sit, all these sorts of things start emerging. In a discussion in a class once it came around to discussing Dürer's St. Jerome, which is another masterwork of print history, and the discussion came around to that the Dürer was understood outward-in, that all the information was there, and every detail was given to you, and the Rembrandt's understanding was more inside-out, that it was more emotional, that you were given almost nothing, but that sense of air and space and darkness and light, or lack thereof, and then it started to emerge later, and I thought that was really beautiful. So that's what I'd pick this second.

# A means

# to an end.

DANIEL MILLER  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

JOHN  
DIVOLA

DANIEL MILLER IN CONVERSATION  
WITH JOHN DIVOLA

30

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

# John Divola

31

10-27-2016



John Divola is an extremely well known photographer. His work is smart. I was nervous about interviewing him because I didn't want him to think I'm not smart. This was a silly concern as he was very genuine and let me restructure my overly complicated questions as we spoke.

## FOREWORD

**Daniel Miller:** So, the first question I have is: can you tell me a little about your process. Are there steps that you take that are premeditated, experimental, or is it something else entirely?

**John Divola:** Well, since all of my bodies of work are not identical the process is different for different bodies of work. Usually the process, I mean most things for me come out of observation in some way, so sometimes I'm working on one project and during the process of that project I make an observation, which leads me to believe that another kind approach might have potential. And so then I will go out and I will experiment with that approach and try a few images. The beauty of photography is that it only takes a 60th of a second commitment so there's really no reason not to give things a try. It's a medium that affords great latitude and flexibility in terms of testing ideas and testing the potential of observations and then once I have a sense that something has potential then it's a matter of just setting up a process of engagement that will maximize kinda the probability that I'll get something that interests me and in the process of looking at things I've done I've slightly —accommodate or modify my approach to maximize that potential.

**DM:** You talked about it a little bit this morning but I've been reading about your use of the Gigapan, a robotic camera mount. Does new technology change the way in which you approach work?

**JD:** Yeah absolutely. The point I started out, which was the late 1960's early 1970's, there really hadn't been much of an advancement in photography for probably for 30 years at least for people like me. Because only, during

that period of time color had been evolved, but for the longest time it was very very expensive and only commercial photographers could use it. So, I started out in black and white photography and then really fairly early in my career color became available to folks like me. So that's a total change right? That's the capacity to add this whole new realm within photographic representation so I've gone back and forth between black and white and color because of that. And then the tools themselves and then of course you have the evolution into digital technology and so I'm very interested in— I see photography as a primarily technological activity or the use of technology towards the end of representation or expression. So, I'm interested when there's new technology that I can use where the technology is far enough along or easy enough to understand that I'm not just bogged down in coping with the technology that there's a point where it becomes kind of intuitive enough that you can be expressive. But there's a lot of technology that I'm really really interested in but it's very very difficult technology at this stage and the level of engagement with the software and the software is expensive. So technology just sort of comes to a point where it becomes useable for a person like me.

**DM:** In the monograph, John Divola: As Far As I Could Get, put together by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art you talk about the notion of agency in terms of marks that have been in made in a space. Through your participation are you interested in generating a visual dialogue with future visitors of that space, and if so how?

**JD:** No, I'm completely uninterested in somebody actually walking into the space. I'm un-

interested in turning the spaces I'm in into artworks. And indeed were you to walk into one of the spaces it would look nothing like my photographs because sometimes the paint is wet when I photograph. In the early work I use electronic flash and that's not there when you would walk into the space. And so there's nothing about the marking that is intended to be installation in any sense. If I'm ever marking inside of the space it's because I'm doing it for a set of photographs so I don't have that expectation.

DM: In relation to the Theodore Street images, you say that these places, "had a personality and sense of place and readable history of action, a history of who lived there and the kinds of things they left behind..." Do you feel that temporality is ambiguous or that the past, present, and future resonate equally?

JD: I'm not sure what that question means... what do you mean by the temporality?

DM: So people come into these spaces and make marks, then you come into the same place and make your marks. After you leave someone will probably make more marks. Do you see those when you go into the space as just one "thing" or is it "I saw these marks and I made mine there will be marks afterwards in this place.... You were talking before about how you're not in dialogue with what's in the future or anything. Does any of that matter to you at all?

JD: It doesn't matter to me what happens when people subsequently come into the space. I'm interested that I'm generating an imprint or artifact of my engagement of being there. I'm interested that the place has

a specificity to it and that specificity— this is going to be a very long answer—

It's like if you look at what modernism does to painting— I'm sorry not just modernism but the invention of photography, you get the invention of photo and painting becomes less and less about representation because photography does that so beautifully and efficiently and painting becomes more and more about gesture and abstraction especially through modernism and becomes less and less representational and more and more reductive to gesture and abstraction. My activity is very hybridic between photography and traditional kinds of aspirations of painting, or the modernist aspirations of painting. So I'm interested in gesture and abstraction but I'm also interested in specificity and representation. So I'm interested that this place has specificity. It's like a specific place on earth, with a specific vocabulary, architectural vocab and a specific history of people that preceded me into the space. It's also inscribed with gestures. If I paint a swirl on the wall with paint that's a gesture but if somebody kicked a hole in the wall that's a gesture too. So there's layers of gestures, some are mine and some are others. So I'm dealing with this kind of weird middle ground between gesture and abstraction and specificity and I'm interested in that confusion.

DM: Here's the last one, a little more straightforward: Are there any books or authors that have had lasting influence or meaning to your practice?

JD: Books or authors— I read a lot of science fiction when I was a kid and then I was into the college level existentialism and then the kind of user-friendly Zen-Buddhist stuff. So there's

not a specific author that I would point to. There's art theory people I like. I liked Rosalind Krauss there for a while but there's not one author I could point to.

DM: Well, thank you!

There's layers

of gestures.

ALEXANDER WURTS  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

SAM  
MOYER

ALEXANDER WURTS IN CONVERSATION  
WITH SAM MOYER

# Sam Moyer

36

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

37

11-03-2016

Sam Moyer is really cool. She likes baseball and wears cool hats. She's makes cool stuff and is really famous for it. I was nervous to interview her, but she is also super friendly and nice. I really like how honest she is about her life and art. I told her I really liked her hat, and she gave it to me. That was surprising but I decided to keep it and I still wear it sometimes. I told her I'd give it back to her when I moved to New York, so I'll hold onto it until then.

## FOREWORD

**Alexander Wurts:** What's your ideal breakfast?

**Sam Moyer:** Breakfast is my favorite meal, and sometimes I eat two breakfasts, because I start off with one and I fail and I quit halfway through and I start a new one. Eggs I think are the most perfect food in the world, so if I had to choose just one thing it would be two poached eggs on toast. That's it.

**AW:** Do you have any routines or habits that help you make your work?

**SM:** No, and I'm always seeking them. I ask everyone if they do, and I'm jealous of anyone that has a routine. [Sigh] No, but if you have any suggestions—

[Laughter]

**AW:** You don't have any? I find that hard to believe.

**SM:** No, I really am a systemless person. I don't even do things in the same order every morning. I'm trying now to start to have some systems in my life, or order, but no—there is no system. There is a to-do list usually, a bunch of stuff I need to get done. But usually it's like, 'I feel weird, how do I solve feeling weird?' and it's like problem solving my way through the day. There's no predictable day.

**AW:** Do you think it's still important for young artists to move to a big city? What city and why?

**SM:** Well—yes, I do. I think that moving to New York was the best thing that I could have done, because it was hard and it pushed me. I always could barely afford my studio, and

that made me work a ton, because I'm full of guilt and stuff like that. And I think that just being in the mix, gets a lot more done than not being there. You can't help but be influenced, and you can't help but be a participant to some degree. Community is very important to me, I really thrive having friends as artists and having people around me. So I say yes.

I think people would disagree, because everything is accessible now. Just in the ten years that I've done my time in New York, things have changed, you guys can know so much more about what's going on there without being there— but it's still different. It's still being outside. New York is this great place where you can show up and they literally give you free beer to look at art. It just feels like the type of place where if you're there long enough, something will happen. So, yeah, I think people should participate, but it's not for everybody. So I can't declare that it. That it is the solution, but it's what worked for me.

**AW:** What advice would you give yourself when you were first starting out?

**SM:** Oh my god, just to not take myself so seriously. Just calm down, and try to have fun. And just make as much as possible. Just keep going. All of the paralysis, and fear—that feeling that you're just not good enough or not fast enough or not doing the right thing, it's all nonsense. Maybe it's all necessary, it might all be necessary for navigating the path to figuring out how to get it done, I'm not sure. Necessary pain.

**AW:** Ok one more, this is a fun one. Who's your ultimate art baseball team? So—

**SM:** How many players do I pick?

**AW:** All of them and what position would they play?

**SM:** Ah man, That's really hard.

**AW:** It's going to be great.

**SM:** This is something I need to think about for a really long time. I think I'd want my pitcher to be Jasper Johns. Because he just really knows himself so well. He has that control, but then his control can go to lack of control, which is what you need in a pitcher. I think my shortstop would be—who's someone really fast? Oh, like Peter Voulkos, someone who just kinda gets in there and kills it. Maybe Pollock would be a really good shortstop. Someone that just has no fear.

Uh, let's see— This is going to take forever.

**AW:** That's fine!

[laughter]

**SM:** Outfield have people who are really chill and take their time, but really hit it when they need to so I would say Lynda Benglis, Virginia Overton. All the women are doing the outfield because they're getting it done. Um—I need one more. This is hard. There's so many positions!

God! Who's the catcher? Who's the one that controls it all and communicates with the pitcher? Maybe the catcher is Rauschenberg, and the pitcher is Johns, and they have this kind of contentious, serious relationship where they have to talk to each other in secret. I'm going to put Kippenberger

on second base. Nah, you know what? Kippenberger can be outfield. And then— God, everyone is old and dead. Except for Lynda and Virginia.

[laughter]

**AW:** Imagine them all alive.

**SM:** I'm going to make Roni Horn the manager. She's going to manage this lot, because she could. I am going to make David Smith first base, because he's just going to be on it [snaps fingers]. No one's going to get past him.

Let's see, I got Third Base— Third baseman— Gober! Robert Gober is Third Base.

**AW:** Yeah, cool.

**SM:** Well, that's the field. I mean, I don't know, there could be like a million. [laughing]

**AW:** Do you feel good about this team?

**SM:** It's pretty weird team. It doesn't have enough women on it. It's kind of an, on the spot team. There no young people on it, except for Virginia. I forgot the young people.

**AW:** Ok. On the spot. First draft.

**SM:** First draft. I've already forgotten everyone I've picked.

**AW:** It's okay. We have it on tape. I'll write it down for you and you can revise it.

[laughter]

**SM:** Thank you.

**AW:** Thank you.

# I really am a systemless person.

STEPHANIE PARNES  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

RUBA  
KATRIB

STEPHANIE PARNES IN CONVERSATION  
WITH RUBA KATRIB

4 2

4 3

# Ruba Katrib

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

11-10-2016

As an artist at the beginning of my career, and focused mainly on developing my studio practice, I was excited to talk with Ruba Katrib about the exhibition side of art-making. Exhibiting outside of an academic institution is still somewhat of a mystery to me and hearing about Ruba's experience creating innovative shows at the Sculpture Center in New York, shed some light for me on some important elements of putting together a show. Particularly helpful was her description of the collaborative process that occurs between the curator and the artists. I got a sense of Ruba as someone intellectually rigorous, mining the past for unexpected connections to the present as a strategy for presenting new works. She seems to have a playful and loose style of curating, which comes through in the way she speaks. I enjoyed our conversation and came away from it with a bit more of an understanding of the curatorial process, though as Ruba stressed, there are many methods and ideas about curating out there.

## FOREWORD

**Stephanie Parnes:** What question or questions have you been particularly excited about investigating in your curatorial practice? Whether it relates to materials, particular artforms or the space of the Sculpture Center?

**Ruba Katrib:** I guess I've been working a lot with looking at different historical moments and finding parallels to the present. I feel like I've just gotten off a big chunk of research on early 20th century entertainment, like cartoons for Puddle, pothole, portal, and Disney and also the circus as an early 20th century mode of congregation, like gathering and entertainment and the particular audience-performer relationships that came through that. Or even surrealist practices and finding relationships between often early 20th century, because it's really this second industrial revolution, machine age and third industrial revolution right now with technology, and looking at different ways artists responded or dealt with shifting ideas around production, technology, product, object and thinking of all those things in relation to contemporary practices. So it really is a way to relate or ground what is happening now with different moments in time. And having a little bit of hindsight into what's happening in the present. And also thinking of different historic artistic strategies for dealing with changes and new technologies.

**SP:** Yeah. That sort of leads me into one of my other questions which is, how do you see the physical and the virtual interacting, or artists using both physical and virtual spaces or materials?

**RK:** Yeah. That's a tricky relationship to make because I feel like a lot of artists that are ac-

tively dealing with the — Basically, I don't really believe in the virtual, so [laughs].

**SP:** Yeah. Could you talk about that? That's really interesting.

**RK:** Yeah, I think that's sort of underlying everything. And that's also why it's been interesting to look at historic moments or examples and see that there is this sort of logic contained in practices or ideas from a century ago to now. But I don't know. I think everything is really grounded in a material realm and the virtual is just a mechanism for the material. There's like the aesthetic of the virtual and then there's the mechanism of the virtual and I think these are really different things and artists deal with them differently, but I feel like the virtual is always in relation to the material and that there is this relationship that's hard to separate out. So, I guess there is an impact between one another. They're in strict dialogue, so I feel like it's hard to separate the virtual as a non-material space.

**SP:** I was thinking, there was a piece in *The Eccentrics* — it was a video piece of a cartoon man.

**RK:** Yeah, Sanya Kantarovsky video.

**SP:** That was a really interesting piece. I was reading about it. It was talking about how the video touches itself.

**RK:** Mm-hmm. Yeah and it's projected onto a painting of this guy, this character, and so it's really interesting to see in person because it does create this strange effect where you can't really tell what is what. And, you know, the video is speaking to its condition as a video in some way. Yeah, that's an interest-

ing work because it does kind of take it literally into a more physical, three-dimensional space of a painting and the video interacting with that. And that's also acknowledging the room and the architecture and that gets us into a conversation where this moving image is grounded into a space.

SP: And you spoke a little bit about the uniqueness of the Sculpture Center's space.

RK: Mm-hmm

SP: I wonder if you could talk a bit about how your experience working in that space has affected the way you see the role of the gallery.

RK: Yeah. I think interesting architecture is a challenge, but it's also really exciting. I think for me, it's been interesting, these impulses in huge warehouse buildings, similar to what we have which is this brick building with really tall ceilings. I think there are certain artistic impulses, or any impulse, of how to react to that. It's been interesting to work with those impulses, but evolve them into the next level or resist those impulses, but it's always in reaction to the space. Whether it's trying to fill it or empty it or divide it or expose it. So, there's just a lot of different ways of dealing with it and you just have this volume of space around everything that has to be considered. And it's interesting to work with artists to come up with different strategies for dealing with that.

SP: I'd love to hear a bit about your experience with collaboration. Particularly when creating shows where artists create work specifically for an exhibition. How do you allow for that spontaneity and experimentation while also creating a cohesive environment?

RK: I guess I would just say that I'm lucky, but I don't think [laughs] that's just it, because I'll have a set plan and a certain idea of a show and I like to leave space for something unexpected to come through. And by the end of it it isn't really that unexpected—I mean, sometimes there are things that are very unknown until the last moment, but there's a certain involvement or conversation that makes it so that there's a psychic space for whatever that thing is within the show. And I think that's something that's been really interesting. Like, my floorplans are really rough always. I make them, but I just draw weird blobs in pencil on a piece of paper. And it's not like I'm trying to simulate the environment to exactly know what it is. I feel like there's something interesting in terms of working with the real space, but also the imagined space, and not over-determining it by knowing the exact dimensions of everything and how it's going to fit. There are things you have to know, exactly how something's going to fit, but there is space, usually for something that may operate in a different way. So, I think it's coming from that conversation, in that room that's created, that the show end up feeling cohesive still. And making sense even though there's unknown elements.

SP: And so, imaging a large part of your time is spent working with the artists during installation?

RK: It's usually leading up. There's a lot of conversation and help and discussion leading up to the installation. And at the installation, there are some things that are happening on site, but by the time we get to installation everything's pretty set. And then, of course, I'm on the site for the installation and figuring that out. And like I said, there's

a floor plan, so there's an idea of how everything goes, but of course things can change during that process. I feel like it's good to be kind of flexible in that moment.

SP: Yeah. Have you had experiences with artists that want more definite planning, versus others who really want to leave a lot open until the last minute?

RK: Sometimes, but most want to wait 'til the last minute.

[laughing]

SP: Yeah, maybe that's an artist thing.

RK: There are some that are super organized, but yeah. But it really depends on their work. I've done shows with artists who really need to know the exact measurements because they're making something to the space, so then of course they're going to get into a lot more specifics than others. And sometimes artists need help figuring that out. So sometimes we'll help deal with a lot of the technical elements.

SP: How do you deal with disagreements with artists? Or do you deal with a lot of disagreements about display, about exhibition decisions? How do you work through those?

RK: Yeah, I mean really every artist is so different. It's funny. It feels kind of schizophrenic because I'm embedded in a personality and work approach for a while with an artist. Then the show's done or over and then it's the next person, and they have a totally different style of working and dealing with things. But, in terms of disagreement, I think everything is really a conversation, so I haven't really had

too many experiences where there's total opposition from either side. It's really always thinking through reasons why or why not and eventually finding some kind of, either common ground or one approach is more persuasive than the other. For group shows I generally have to oversee the whole in a different way, because I'm managing several artists, so have the big picture in mind. That's usually where more boundaries have to be created. And then for solo exhibitions it really is a more intimate working process with an artist, and getting into their zone— their working process and their ideas of how they imagine what their show is. I'm participating in that vision more than in a group show in which I have to be conscientious of this artist's space and that artist's space, and how these works relate, and what conversation's coming up or not coming up, depending. And in some of the group shows, artists get really involved and they want to get in it, but as a curator I have to be conscientious of everyone and everything that's happening. Sometimes people have an idea of something that makes sense, but don't really understand why it doesn't maybe actually make sense based on the whole picture of the show.

SP: Is there anything you wish that artists understood better about the role of a curator?

RK: I think curators are so different, actually, that there are many different approaches and styles and working methodologies. And some artists don't like making new work and don't like the unknown, and some do, you know. But I think artists are pretty savvy to what curating is now, but I think maybe less of what a certain translation to the public means. I think there's the show and the space, and the curators are responsible to

# I don't really

# believe in



the artist, the institution and the public. So I think the institution-artist relationship, artists understand, but maybe not this third tier of how people come in and what they do and how they look at things and how they move, what they're going to understand or not understand, what's legible, not legible. That's a side of it that I feel like I'm most often explaining, like a reasoning behind why I think we should do something a certain way.

SP: Yeah, you were talking earlier about artists often having trouble thinking outside of their studios.

RK: Yeah. The exhibition space is such a different context, that things that may work in the studio don't work in that space or vice versa. It's interesting to think about. Often I go to MFA programs and no one has any titles for their work.

[laughing]

RK: Which is sort of an interesting thing.

SP: Does that bug you? [laughs]

RK: No, it's telling. Maybe there shouldn't be at that time, but it's just interesting that that part of it maybe doesn't seem as important. Where, in the space of the institution, the title is really important. That's important information. So many people are reading or looking for or trying to understand what that is, but it seems like an extra step that's unnecessary in a school, maybe.

[laughing]

SP: Yeah, titles are often the last thing. How do you feel about untitled works?

RK: I think that's fine. You know, it depends. But I don't have a stance against untitled.

SP: Thank you so much.

RK: Okay. Cool. 5 Minutes, thank you.

the virtual

world, so.

STEPHEN MILNER  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

WILLIAM  
WYLIE

STEPHEN MILNER IN CONVERSATION  
WITH WILLIAM WYLIE

William  
Wylie

50

51

William Wylie's fifteen minute single channel video was in the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's Scrimmage exhibition, a group show that was curated around the great American football tradition. Personally, the American football is completely foreign to me and during game days at the University of Oregon I try to avoid the city of Eugene entirely. Standing in front of the largest piece in the show, William Wylie's video projection, I started to surprise myself. I was completely entranced by the subtle revelations of a small town prairie high school football team. The stark tall grass landscape cloaked in blue gold light imbued a poetics into a seemingly uninteresting football practice. William Wylie's masterful composition, framing and uncut audio recordings of the practice made me feel invisible and yet fully present in this small close-knit community of young adults during a football practice that flowed from a routine day to one that might have been the most important practice of their lives.

## FOREWORD

**Stephen Milner:** I'm going to start off with— if you read Christian's [Patterson] interview this is my question I love to ask — If you were stranded on a island for the rest of your life and could only listen to one album what would it be?

**William Wylie:** I did see that question. So in a sense, I'm prepared for that [laughter]. Sitting there, reading that, I thought to myself, 'What would mine be?' I think it would be Blood on the Tracks by Bob Dylan.

**SM:** Okay.

**WW:** That's the one that I think has a range of narrative that could keep me interested. I do a lot of reading and I think that there are great stories in that and you can come back and find something fresh in it. Besides the fantastic music.

**SM:** Right. I like that —

**WW:** —and he's a nobel laureate. Despite the fact that he has apparently told them that he's not going to show up because he has a conflict on the date. But nobody can figure out what he's doing that day. He doesn't have a concert.

[laughter]

**SM:** Can you tell me what initially attracts you to a certain place or space. Are there any specific qualities conceptually or aesthetically?

**WW:** Yeah, yeah, I'm usually interested in the human history of a place. Sometimes that's very subtle, such as I've done some projects on rivers and you might think that

it's more about the natural aspect of it, but it's really more about the human interaction with it. Sometimes that's a future interaction, I'm thinking about what might change in a place. But I really like deep history, so I'm photographing Pompeii now. Pompeii has, no pun intended, such a strata of history from its pre-vesuvius to all of its excavations afterwards and the way all of that changes everyday through entropy. So that's really the bottom line of what draws me to a particular place and I'll talk about it my talk tonight. I'm also looking for how time is represented in a place. So change, history, how change is represented through that history.

**SM:** So you seem to move back and forth from photography and video and in the exhibition Scrimmage currently on display at the JSMA you have a video projection from Prairie Football. I was wondering if you could speak about your decision to use the different formats and how you treat still photography and video differently? It is also one of your only projects in color, could you talk about that as well?

**WW:** Okay, okay. First I'll talk about the photo and video aspect. I think that they do very different things and I was for many years a straight photographer and did not do video. I had the opportunity to do a commission based on my still photography, to make films about a landscape. But they actually put the caveat on it that they did not want the camera to move. They wanted me to setup the film shots like a still photographer, and that really gave me a clear sense of what my work could do incorporated with time. So, that started me doing a number of things, a number of projects after that commission. I incorporated both still photography and video. My

Carrara work was that way, my Kansas work is that way and I am doing a little bit of that with Pompeii. You could almost say that the Prairie work was started as a video work, was conceived of as a film and is much longer than what's in the show here. Its destined to be a feature length if I can ever get around to it. These are all like chapters, so this is a chapter that is here. But I also did still photography around that project and I'm going to show a little bit of that tonight.

The color thing is interesting because I felt like the video work had to be in color—always. Even in my Carrara videos, you'll see some of those tonight, are in color. There is something about that media that demands a sense of the immediate to reality, reality is a loose word but—I like black and white in my still photography because of the suspension of that. I'm really interested in the survival of form and in still photography you are so capable of that but sometimes color breaks that down because you move through the space into the real. I'm all about the real, but I want that little bit of distance. That little bit of distance that black and white does. And I will say that even the Carrara work I photographed all of the quarries and blocks in black and white but I did the series of portraits of the workers—but to separate them from the place I photographed them in color. That book has a center section of color portraits surrounded by black and white.

**SM:** Yeah, interesting. And that brings me into my next question about your books. So you've published a total of five books so far?

**WW:** Published four. I have a fifth one, which is going to be actually a series of film stills. The book is going to be based on sixty to

seventy film stills from the Prairie movie. So that's the one that's coming out next fall.

**SM:** Okay, So I am curious to how do you treat the photographic book and the exhibition space differently? Do you prefer one more than the other?

**WW:** Well I love books. One, because you get to edit the sequence and it becomes much more of an extended project. Rarely do you get the opportunity to have an exhibition where you have so many pictures. I'm really a project's guy. In Carrara I spent seven years on, Route 36 I spent four years, Pompeii I've been at it for about four years—and because of my returning and returning, I have a lot of work that's related to those things. The book gives me the opportunity to make these connections in a much broader way.

I also kind of think of my work as private viewing type things. That's what I love about the book—someone can sit down and really spend time—myself included. If you go to a museum and you're standing in front of something in a museum, you get impatient sometimes. Even if it's a kind of thing that makes your knees buckle as your standing in front of it you pretty soon are like well, 'I better move on to the next piece now.' Whereas with a book, you don't find yourself doing that, at least I don't. I could stare at the same picture in a book— I even have one of those little library book easels on my large table at home and if I like something in a book I'll set it up that way and every day turn the page to see the next relationship. By the way, I don't do that with my own work.

[laughter]

But with somebody else's book because I saw value in the way the sequencing works in the photography. Which lent itself to my way of thinking about film by the way. I put how two books when I was first commissioned to do that film and when they told me the parameters of the project I really looked at it as a series of pages in a book. So I made five ten minute films of the landscape with no camera movement. Basically just found places where things unfolded in front of it and I worked subtly, and each time it shifted one thing to the next—I could have used that little app where it's like, "bloop" [laughter]. Because it just kind of transformed into a different one and it really felt like it was turning the page.

**SM:** Yeah. The exhibition seemed so fleeting compared to a book format—

**WW:** Yes, yes.

**SM:** —where you can flip forever. Definitely treating them differently, so it's interesting to see.

**WW:** And I work with my students with books a lot. I don't teach film and video but it's very nice to get start thinking about the next level of editing. You edit when you take a photograph, you edit when look at your proof and your contact sheets, and then actually edit in another fashion as opposed to just, 'Here's my favorite pictures or here's the ones that I think are best.' but, 'These two go together or this one by itself and then you turn the page I want you to think—' That's such a more complex way of thinking.

**SM:** So your lecture tonight is called Site As Archive, and I was wondering how you work the idea of an archive, especially with

a photographic practice that can possibly blur between the practice of a documentary (whatever that term may mean to you) in photography. I am curious about how you navigate that term or do you even identify with it?

**WW:** I do, I embrace that term documentary. I don't like the simplistic definition of it, which is where you get into trouble when you might say, 'Oh your work seems really documentary' or 'you do documentary photography' that is usually where I tend to recoil just a little bit. It's a standard answer to this question but I definitely more appreciate Walker Evans' sense of a documentary style because it's very much straightforward and based on the thing front of me but I feel like I try and move away from that in that thinking about things that are on a more conceptual level. I'm interested in time and the layers of time. Often times when we think about the documentary practice it's the representation of the thing itself, which is there, you can't escape that in photography. At least in straightforward photography. But I'm looking for layers and something a little bit deeper with that. And I will say that my work can get blurred there a lot because of the style I use.

What was the first part of the question? That was great—

**SM:** So the idea of an archive—

**WW:** Archive.

**SM:** —especially with a photographic process.

**WW:** Right.

**SM:** Do you layout the book? And how you

# I'm interested

# in time

do your research. It's very archive based. I don't know if there are specific photographers or maybe artists that work within the archive that you—

**WW:** Well not work within the archive because one of things I think of with my general practice is that I'm archiving. This lends itself to your documentary question. Is building an archive but also looking at site as an archive itself. When I go into Carrara or Pompeii is maybe a better example. As I mentioned there is the whole history of that and there is a history of photography and Pompeii. And there is a way victorian audiences versus 1950's people would have looked at photographs of Pompeii, and my work references all of that. And then tries to add to that catalog. Which is another nice thing about the book that you can make that connection too that often times in a gallery you can't, or in a museum you can't.

and layers

of time.

NEAL MOIGNARD  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

BENJAMIN  
BRATTON

NEAL MOIGNARD IN CONVERSATION  
WITH BENJAMIN BRATTON

58

59

# Benjamin Bratton

Benjamin Bratton is a forward-looking thinker. We sat for a discussion and I asked him a few questions. I wanted to talk to him because I find speculating about the possible futures of humanity and its uses of technology an interesting strategy to better understand the present. He shared several of his ideas with me.

## FOREWORD

**Neal Moignard:** So my first question is why do you think there is yet to be a formal field of software and philosophy established, when software has expressed a philosophy inherently since the beginning? Was a Word document really that innocuous 20 years ago?

**Benjamin Bratton:** So is the question open bracket why isn't there a field of software and philosophy close bracket?

**NM:** Yes.

**BB:** Two answers to the question. One, there is, and though not as explicitly organized as it could be, but increasingly more so. Maybe also in terms of the academy a shift in the way that software came in at a particular point. And I maybe speak with an art and design context. If you look at things like the software studies series that my, the stack book was published in that is a good example of this. There is a philosophical investigation of software—at least—to the beginnings of—really to the beginnings of software. You could come couple angles on this as well—

Another one is that— You might take at a certain point. Let's say, I mention this in the book. There's a certain moment where theory with a capital T sort of may have run out steam, as Latour says in the academy, at some sort of point maybe in the mid nineties where kids who wanted to investigate the basic semblance of how the world works shifted from reading continental philosophy and arguing about language and text and construction, and started using software. There's a way in which software took the place of theory as a way of asking direct unadulterated questions about the nature of things and how they had been made to work. They became

kind of practical constructions as well.

But there's other, I mean, the history and relationship between software and philosophy is certainly an interesting one. I'm sort of thinking back to Leibniz and I don't know, the bi-letter alphabet from which the transpositions of alpha-numeric languages into 0s and 1s, is Leibniz codifies, you know, centuries before calculating machines based on his fascination with the I Ching and other kinds of binary systems as well. So the basic logic of 0s and 1s comes out of a philosophical investigation of this as well. And this relationship between software and philosophy sort of continues. AI is a good example of this as well. Artificial Intelligence is something that largely was invented philosophically and conceptually before it had been invented. And still there's a feedback between these in both ways. Like, we are to make matter perform something that appears like intelligence in different sorts of way, what are the philosophical implications of that on the one hand, and there are, you know, people from Turing, on forward who are conceptualizing the possibility of different forms of AI as essentially philosophical problems, so we have gone back in different sorts of ways. But I'll put it this way.

**NM:** Sure.

**BB:** I think one of the things that's difficult let's say for the humanities, I mean has been, less so- there's a whole field of digital humanities and I think any good humanities department now there's lots of people that work on software and digital systems, I don't think it's even novel anymore— but was that, out of the phenomenological tradition they made this— to pick on say, Heidegger for example, there

was always a strong distinction between language in its essential metaphysical form, and technology in its essential form. That language and technology were fundamentally different things, and that the mode towards the resistance to technology as a way of being for Heidegger was a way to go deeper into language, and poetry as well.

Well software is a weird thing in this way. In that it is a technology that is constructed linguistically. That is read, that has a syntax, that has a grammar, that has a linguistic structure so that it is a technology that is linguistic. And unlike other kinds of languages, you can put software in a machine and it will do things that correspond to the semantic content of the language. This is not true of say, serbo Croatian. You can't put Serbo-Croatian on a chip and have it do things that correspond to the semantics of that language, it is a technology that is linguistic. And then the converse is true as well, that in the history of languages it's perhaps strangely unique in for that it's constructed in relationship to its kinds of executable instrumentality. Where it may denote things it may connote things, it may describe things, it may even have a kind of logics of category and set and action and agency and conditionality like other kinds of languages but unlike natural languages it's actually executable. Friedrich Kittler, has this line that that to be a truly cosmopolitan person you need to know one natural language and one artificial language. And I think that's probably due.

**NM:** Do you think software would change in its form and function if it weren't predominantly based in English?

**BB:** It's not predominantly based in English.

**NM:** Do you think— ok. So. —what language do you think is coming out? The language of programming, or if it's structured in a linguistic tradition?

**BB:** It kind of is, I mean it's not exactly like natural languages obviously, right? It has, it uses mathematics as part of its core syntax in ways which natural languages don't usually. It's able to perform feats of recursion and nested recursion in ways in which natural language doesn't. So I don't mean to say that it is exactly like a natural language, but that it is a kind of language. And I think it, maybe what it might demonstrate is that that there is a broader scope of languages that we might want to identify. Of which, therefore, the human spoken and written languages, we can see them as more of a wider continuum. There's obviously feedback into natural language. Some people claim that there are local cultures of code. I can't, but there are some people claim that they can look at C code, or actually, you can look at Java code and basically tell whether it was written in Russia, or China, or the United States, based on the cultural traditions of what you would invoke under certain circumstances, that there's an accent almost to the uses of such things. But I think that in the United State we— in terms of art history in relationship to the internet and to some of the other arts and computer sciences there's a tendency to maybe overstate how central our experience in relationship to some of these things. I mean the country in the world with by far the most internet users in the world is China and will be for quite a lot of time. Most of the code that exists in the world is executing in relationship to commands that are essentially not initiated by humans. Most of the traffic on the internet is already nonhuman, generated in and of itself.

# There's

**NM:** So if there's a short circuit now between people expressing their philosophy through continental philosophy and through traditions of philosophy to it now coming directly to software, it's clear that—

**BB:** —it's both, it's both. Yeah.

I mean I think you see a lot of people for who it's not one or the other. It's a conjunction of those things in different ways. I'm just saying that at a certain point where software, also, particularly within Art and Design, where software became a way of doing philosophy. That purely a kind of readerly writerly mode, there's a different relationship to the textual production this way. Yeah.

**NM:** So if you— if it's affecting our psychology to be interacting with this software that expresses a philosophy, is it because we are interacting directly with philosophies without knowing it? With different cultural philosophies? Do you think that within software there is a cultural exchange that is invisible to us that is maybe more powerful than what is conveyed through those (textual) mediums?

**BB:** I think probably, I think that's certainly true, but maybe how that works is maybe quite different within the stack, within the software. There's ways in which I think the lower you get in the stack, we may posit— can kind of investigate, that the lower that you get in the software stack the less that the specific kinds of cultural traditions may impact the structure, may operate in much slower or much longer scope.

But if you take it all the way higher, to the level of the graphical interface for example, the construction of an ideological framework for

how it is that one might use a computer, for the way that a computer might use you, is an inevitable structure. Look at it this way, any of the chips in the phones we have here are complete Turing machines that could, given enough time and energy could calculate almost any problem that you could transpose into a logical equation. But who would— I mean, but we don't want to transpose any problem into a logical equation, you want to do very specific things, you want to make a phone call, you want to look up something, you want to see a picture. There are series of use cases of things that us, the primates, want to do with these machines. So I'm of the opinion generally that computation was more discovered than invented as a general principle. That algorithmic reason is something that's part of how matter has conjugated itself over a longer period of time. But, at the level of the graphical user interface, all the things that you could possibly do with this machine are reduced and then reduced again and again and again into this kind of synthetic diagram of a range of possibilities. Like a map. A good map of a city is not one in which it has an actual 1 to 1 representation of everything that is in the city. It excludes 99.9% of everything that is in the city, and what's left is just this schematic remainder that allows you to make heuristic decisions about your pathway through it. And in that reduction, in that subtraction of 99.9% of what's in the city there are direct and sometimes violent ideological choices that are made.

It's the same thing with the graphical user interface. You construct a very narrow band of all the things that it's possible to do with this computer in the interface. But unlike a map as a diagram, with the interface, it's not

# obviously feedback



just describing things that go on, that could go on, “here’s things that you could do with this machine, here’s what you could do if this machine is connected to the internet” and all the rest of the things, but these are diagrams that when clicked actually cause the thing to happen that they are representing. So within a history of the diagram, the graphical user interface is unique in this regard. In the history of the image it is unique in this regard, as opposed to being a completely representation construct. So in terms of the Berger Ways of Seeing argument, what’s shown and what’s not shown and how it’s represented and what the politics of representation are with the interface are all there, as they are with any cartographic or representational logic, but they are doubled by the fact that, not only this is a representational mechanism, it’s an instrumental device as well, that it does the thing that it represents. Do you follow? A picture of a bomb in a painting may have a representational dynamic to it, but an icon of a bomb that when clicked caused bombs to happen in the world is a very different kind of image. So what gets reduced, and what it is that this process of computation is asked to do, and how it is that this vast infrastructural network is exposed to human users one interface at a time, there are without a doubt, 1000%, a strong impact of both latent and manifest cultural traditions and what it is that we assume that one might want to do with it.

**NM:** That spread through use value too—

**BB:** That is spread through use value?

**NM:** Yeah, that the ideology spreads because interfaces are useful to people, not because they perform an aesthetic function neces-

sarily, but because they actually change the way that people will live their lives or conduct their activities.

**BB:** Possibly, or I mean, maybe at the level of the computer there may be a conflation between expression and utility and an instrumentalization of expression in different sorts of ways. I don’t— it depends on— even if you’ve got software that is organized predominantly around the consumption of information or the organization of information, or the production of information, you know, I think it may combine and interweave some of those distinctions between work and play, autonomy and capture, and those other sorts of heuristics, in ways that are complex. You know, some people make pictures for a living.

**NM:** Thank you very much.

in natural

language.

LEE ASAHINA  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

MARIANNE  
FAIRBANKS

LEE ASAHINA IN CONVERSATION  
WITH MARIANNE FAIRBANKS

66

67

# Marianne Fairbanks

The weekend before I interviewed Marianne Fairbanks, primarily a fibers artist, I took a two-day weaving class in which I made the world's most boring scarf. As someone whose headphones end up in a intricate knot everyday, I was intimidated by the sheer amount of yarn involved in such a small project. The only aspect of weaving that didn't seem daunting to me was the instruction sheet that included a simple grid drawing indicating the pattern. I was excited to learn that Fairbanks uses these instructions (drafts) as a jumping-off point and a source of inspiration in her work. As a painter, I was also struck by her wall-works that use tape as their material, a preparatory material in painting, the tape felt very related to both drafting and a sense of open-endedness. It's hard not to be excited to talk to someone who wants to break the rules a bit and who rocks an enchanting hue of purple-silver hair.

## FOREWORD

**Lee Asahina:** How did you come to art and specifically textiles?

Marianne Fairbanks: Well, I loved art in high school and somehow was lucky enough to be accepted to art school at the University of Michigan. And you know, I think like any undergrad, I didn't really know what I was gonna do. I took my first fibers class there with Sherrie (sic) Smith and it was, I don't know, when you connect with a process, with a material. From then on I knew and I took every class in fibers that they had from then on. I feel really lucky because I came to it in my second year of college and just stuck with it. So, I have my BFA in fibers and my MFA in fibers and material studies. I don't know, I'm a process geek, I guess. I love textiles.

**LA:** My second question is: I watched the video on your website where you're talking about impractical weaving suggestions—you're talking about instructions and saying they're not always productive, I'm curious how they come into play in your own work. Do you have to use them?

**MF:** Instructions?

**LA:** Yeah.

**MF:** So, in weaving, the instructions are drafts, right? So you read these patterns that are drafted for you. You know there's classic patterns, and once you know them, you don't have to use the pattern but, for more sophisticated ones, yes, you go back to that pattern. You know, there's like standards that are distributed through books, but I think in this instruction way that I'm talking about I like this idea that, you know, it's the shared knowledge. People came up with it and decided to

distribute that pattern they invented. I don't really know what other form has that—I guess all other disciplines probably had it whether it was sharing a glaze recipe or something, but the dissemination of it was quite interesting to me. And then I couldn't help but think about, well, I was thinking about the Sol LeWitt instructions, once everyone had those instructions, everyone could go do it. So just trying to figure out the relationship between those two forms maybe.

**LA:** Yeah, so a follow-up question: Do you think you can make instructions subversive? Maybe that isn't a good question—

**MF:** Yeah, I think it is subversive. Sol LeWitt, what I love about his work is he's saying; here's this thing, any draftsman can do it—it's the idea that's contained in the piece of paper that has the instructions.

**LA:** Yeah.

**MF:** And it's in the execution when it comes to life. With my work, I made these these things called wall weavings, I haven't done it yet, because I'm still learning the process, but the dream would be that I could send them as instructions. And say here's these rolls of tape I use, here's how I use it, figure it out. Like I said, I haven't done it, but I like that idea that I don't have to have my hands on every part of my process, even though I like it [laughs]. It's a freedom to say, oh look, someone else can do this, my work can live beyond me in another place; or someone could buy the instructions and make it in their house.

**LA:** Yeah, that's great. So thinking about that same body of work, I'm really attracted to the

neon. I'm curious, does that have a specific cultural reference or— ?

**MF:** Yeah, I've been coming to terms with what my obsession with neon is, and I think it's two-fold. Growing up in the 80's [laughing], I would go into stores with my mom, and she'd be like 'Ohh, my nose hurts, that color is so bright!' [laughing]. I don't know where that saying went or why I even remember it, but I remember being visually kind of oppressed by the colors [laughing], the neon colors of that time. So, maybe it's like a nostalgic thing for me a little bit, but I think it's also— I use it very strategically. So if I think like what's gonna grab your attention and what's gonna shout in your face and refuse to be seen, it's neon. Neon pink and fluorescent pink and all these bright colors are used for safety, for construction. So, I'm trying to adapt those languages that are in your face to take this thing that's normally [high voice] soft, textile and make it big, make it more aggressive. So I feel like I'm using it more strategically. For me it's really a new palette, because I'm used to using like natural dyes [laughing]. So the things that are available in those (neon) palettes are also really different, like plastic and nylons, so kind of coming to terms with those materials too and how to use them.

**LA:** Last question: is there anything that you've been listening to or watching or reading that's informing your practice?

**MF:** I'm reading Kafka on the Shore by Murakami. I don't know if it's directly influencing my practice, but I love the magical realism— I can't give a direct line. I also, as I mentioned, I'm obsessed with Buckminster Fuller, so I was watching a video on the geodesic dome, how they were built. I just, I don't

know why, but I'm obsessed with that era of architecture, and, specifically how those geometries were used, specifically, pentagons and hexagons.

**LA:** Cool! Thank you.

# It's in the execution when it comes to life.

ESTHER WENG  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

JULIA  
BRADSHAW

ESTHER WENG IN CONVERSATION  
WITH JULIA BRADSHAW

72

73

# Julia Bradshaw

British-born artist Julia Bradshaw examines a variety of subjects such as her social environment, communication, and the medium of photography. She is currently an assistant professor at Oregon State University and has contributed writings to numerous art and photography publications. Despite the dogged earnestness in her work, one can also find humour and idiosyncrasies in the way that Bradshaw translates and interprets her own experiences and ideas through the languages of photography, video, and performance. As an immigrant artist myself, I was interested in hearing about how Bradshaw's own inter-cultural experiences has influenced her artistic practice and the way she chooses to communicate with her viewers. Arriving early to our scheduled meeting, Bradshaw and I met unexpectedly in a dark corner of the building right outside of classroom 197. She had gotten a bit lost in the labyrinth of Lawrence Hall and by chance stumbled upon the exact location where I was planning on holding our interview. The door exposed us to a sun-lit classroom and we naturally sat ourselves beneath a skylight for our 5 Minutes conversation.

## FOREWORD

**Esther Weng:** How would you describe yourself in 30 seconds to a random stranger you just met while waiting in line at the grocery store? I can time you if you'd like.

**Julia Bradshaw:** Okay!

**EW:** Okay. Go!

**JB:** Pragmatic, artist, educator, likes being outside, newly activist—prefers to keep the rest to myself.

**EW:** Having been a photographer since the age of seven, how has the transformation of the technology of photography affected the way you make your work?

**JB:** I don't think it's actually got anything to do with technology—it's more to do with attitude and exposure to artists and photographers—because I am pretty technology agnostic. For example, starting at the age of seven and helping my dad in the dark room, I mimicked how he took photographs. So I took pictures of family and landscapes, and quite frankly, I have no desire to do that more than outside of doing that. Only when I was older and exposed to photographers who made work that required you to think about it that I actually became interested in photography. So I've been making photographs for a long time, but it was only in my mid-twenties that I actually became interested in photography as a medium. And I think that technology question is just off the table for me.

**EW:** And in your work you use both darkroom as well as digital techniques—

**JB:** Yeah, I like playing with both techniques, and I think first about the idea then

I think second about how I want to realize it. And I think a lot of people think like that, so I wouldn't put myself in a box in one particular category.

**EW:** Could you speak to abstraction and how you want it to function in your work?

**JB:** Yeah, and this is something that's interesting to me right now because the work is becoming increasingly abstract, and as I said in the beginning in my 30 second description, I'm very pragmatic and very direct, and then all of a sudden to be working in a way that is abstract without necessarily any meaning is completely foreign to me. So I am curious as to why I'm working that way. As usual, I'm not the only person working in that way. There are a lot of photographers now who are making, as what I would describe, as "flat photography"—there is no illusion of depth, or they're making pictures that do have depth but they appear flat. And, that interests me as to why photographers are doing that— I'm not the only one. So, that's the part of abstraction that interests me now. I'd say I don't particularly look at abstract paintings; a lot of the source references that I talk about when I talk about the most recent work are paintings or movements, but—

**EW:** There seems to be a reference to minimalist paintings.

**JB:** Right. Minimalist paintings, the Bauhaus, shape, form, and line, the basics of drawing and painting. And, I like that I can do that with photography, that I'm not stuck with photographing what's already there, that I can maybe stretch what a photograph is.

**EW:** And you talk about photography as raw material sometimes.

**JB:** Right. And seeing the photograph as a raw material that I can make endless iterations of—and I don't think I'm actually going to make endless iterations of what I'm actually doing right now, I think I'm very close to stopping. But it was a very interesting thing that I could explore for a while.

**EW:** You have described some of your works as “silly” and “ridiculous”, and there is definitely humor in a number of your projects, in particular the videos, even when the subject seems like a serious one. Could you speak to that a little bit?

**JB:** It was a surprise to me that I have made work that's humorous, because I don't consider myself funny. I think in reality, I think most people who use humor are actually deadly earnest, and I'm deadly earnest about what I'm doing. So that was a surprise to me. It was really after about, I'd say four or five pieces, that I said, 'Oh, hey my work's got humor in it,' and everybody was like, 'duh!'

[Laughter]

**JB:** So it's now lost its sense of humor—I don't know if you've noticed, it lost its sense of humor when I moved to Oregon. I need to find my sense of humor in the work again. Because it pops out, it's natural. I don't know if I'd want to do it deliberately, because it really just pops out when I do it, so it's not a forced humor in that respect. But because of it, I've started to look at artists who do use humor in their work, and sometimes you can say something that's really difficult or tough in a very light way, but I'm hoping that somebody's ac-

tually going to think about something pretty serious so I suck them in through the humor. So, I'm deadly serious all the time.

**EW:** The final question is going to be a slightly serious one. You mentioned earlier that you define yourself as a new activist.

**JB:** Right.

**EW:** So you were born in Manchester, England and have spent nine years living and working in Germany before moving to the US. In the past you have done projects about traveling, being a foreigner, and borders. Could you speak to how your own experience as an immigrant, perhaps in light of the recent political events, has affected you as an artist and what you want to communicate to your viewers?

**JB:** Yeah, I'm going to talk about that a little today, in that I'm going to show an early work that I did called “I am English. I am English.” Or I'm going to talk about it, which, the reason I did that is partly because people mimic my accent all the time, but partly also is that I've decided to come to the conclusion that I was a benign foreigner, and I call myself a benign foreigner now. And by doing that I'm making work in that vein, is that I want to show the difference about how kind of ridiculous it is that birthplace or culture should make a difference. Why am I the lucky foreigner, as opposed to somebody from one of those seven countries, for example. So I think I can say something serious by taking on the role in being a benign foreigner, but just making people think, 'Why does she get the golden straw?'

[I see] the  
photograph as  
a raw material  
that I can  
make endless  
iterations of.

NATALIE WOOD  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

GABRIELLE  
JENNINGS

NATALIE WOOD IN CONVERSATION  
WITH GABRIELLE JENNINGS

# Gabrielle Jennings

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

7

7  
9

02-07-2017



What happens when you Goggle “Abstract Video?” This question was posed to me in the preface of Gabrielle Jennings’ book *Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art*. Kate Mondloch, who wrote the forward, “took the bait” and so did I. Psychedelic YouTube videos of swirling underwater colors, something that looks like deep space, and stock footage websites with more trippy colors and amorphous forms are the results. Then there was a Wikipedia page on Video Abstracts, which is probably the most opposite thing of abstract video I can think of.

As a video and multimedia artist, Jennings saw a gap in the research of new media art and sought to fill it. Squashed in the middle of all the results I’m not looking for is Jennings’ book, a concise collection of essays that far better articulate what abstract video is than the all-knowing Google can.

While in a café, sitting diagonally across the table from me, Jennings spoke about her recent book, her art practice and teaching career. She thoughtfully paused after each question I posed, carefully describing how these different elements intersect and inform each other. Since our conversation I have been thinking quite a bit about how much information can be contained in a single image, something she has investigated. Can you glean everything you need to in one image to understand all of *Vertigo*? or *Blade Runner*? or *Pee Wee’s Big Adventure*? These may not be the films Jennings was investigating, but it’s what she led me to keep thinking about.

## FOREWORD

**Natalie Wood:** What is a typical day in your studio like?

**Gabrielle Jennings:** I don’t know if there is a typical day.

**NW:** It varies?

**GJ:** Yeah. Sometimes I’m in the studio for a very specific reason. Between family life and teaching, I have to either schedule time or I have to pop in there—I have a home studio luckily. I have to pop in there for an hour and be methodical about what is it I need to get done.

And really, studio time often has a lot to do with thinking time and doesn’t need to happen in the studio. It can happen in the library or on a walk. I wouldn’t call my practice post studio but I do work in a lot different ways. Sometimes I am editing on the computer and that doesn’t need to happen in the studio. It can happen on the couch. So, I wouldn’t say that there is a typically way.

**NW:** In a couple of your series such as *Film Stills*, *Figure/Ground* and *Vogue Drawings* you are using found and appropriated imagery from films and magazines then redacting or reducing down details. Can you talk about your reasoning for this reductive process?

**GJ:** I’m trying to think of work I am doing now and how that might relate— Yes, I was really trying to see if it is possible to capture the entirety of a film and the entirety of what that film might mean or stand for in one image. And whether one still from that film might do it. Might conceptually, formally and in terms of some kind of color scheme or composition, might actually be able to communicate a lot

what the narrative is about. So that was a kind of a—what did you call it?

**NW:** Reductive process.

**GJ:** Reductive process. It was. But I was also distilling. Can one image stand for many? I think when you are working in the moving image you might be distilling or reducing but in a different way because we’re not talking about making into one necessarily.

I was trying to think about current work that I’m doing and whether it is working in the same way. I am not sure that it is because I am making video sculptures, these abstract sculptures and projecting bits of appropriated images onto them. It is a different kind of reduction, maybe.

**NW:** I see a connection between your painted *Film Stills*, the motion study videos and recreation of *Lumière* films. There seems to be an investigating of video frame-by-frame. Can you talk about this and what connections there are for you working between different mediums?

**GJ:** Again, it is really about seeing what can be encapsulated in one frame and one image. Whether it is photographic or video or painted. What can one image do. It’s really, ultimately, about representation. I’m trying again to think about how I am doing that with current work even though I don’t think that was your question.

**NW:** That’s okay.

**GJ:** I’m making these drawings and watercolors right now that are taken from photographs from the Internet. They’re not neces-

sarily appropriated from media but photos that you would just find on the internet. If you searched something like “leak” or “spill” or “tear” what kinds of images do you get? Can those maybe not have to do with the action, but have to do with an image that might encapsulates movement just by how it represents.

**NW:** In putting together your recent book *Abstract Video*, did it cause you to rethink your approach to making video or have an affect on your work? If so, how?

**GJ:** I think it did. I am probably only now realizing it because it’s been over a year now, maybe two, and it really made me focus on what abstraction might look like and how that might be playing out in my work. I had never really worked literally formally in an abstract way and yet I sort of think I was doing that in how I was dealing with time or how I might be reenacting something and editing it in a nonlinear way. I also really learned a lot about what’s out there and was able to see historical threads in ways that I hadn’t before and how my work might be connected to those. That’s not necessarily about abstraction but how genres might be playing themselves out in my work.

**NW:** I read online that as a child you attended one of the first magnet schools in LA, which focused on alternative forms of education. In the trailer for your film *Moderately and Melodiously* you are “exploring the relationship between teaching and learning.” As a professor, how do you view your role as an educator and how has that influenced your art practice?

**GJ:** I think it’s really everything. It’s really

important for artists to be teaching. It keeps me on my toes. I have to constantly be engaging with the world and with contemporary art even though it feels impossible to try to keep up with what is going on. But I also have to refer to history and understand connections between then and now in various media. My students and colleagues teach me something every week.

**NW:** If you could go back in time and meet yourself as a graduate student, what do you wish you could tell her?

**GJ:** I actually tell this to my graduate students all the time: Forge relationships with each other – I wish I had done that more. Stay in touch. Form crit groups where you get together once a month and crit each other’s work. Or one person’s work, with 12 people, over a year and you each get a chance. If you don’t do that you might feel isolated. It is difficult and unusual to have so many people looking at your work all the time. That’s one thing.

The other thing would be to give yourself permission to do whatever it is that makes you happy.

**NW:** That’s good advice.

# It is really about seeing what can be encapsulated in one frame and one image.

MANDY KEATHLEY  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

MICHELLE  
GRABNER

MANDY KEATHLEY IN CONVERSATION  
WITH MICHELLE GRABNER

8

# Michelle Grabner

8  
5

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

02-09-2017

I had the opportunity to meet with Michelle Grabner in my studio for our conversation. I was particularly interested in interviewing Grabner after my experience with her curatorial work on the Portland Biennial last summer. Like many others, I have often been impressed by Grabner's ability to traverse a variety of artistic roles with such agility, particularly the roles of maker, writer, and curator. What struck me most about our conversation was how genuine, good humored, and humble she had been, despite all her success in the art world.

## FOREWORD

**Mandy Keathley:** What is the most meaningful book or film you've read or watched recently?

**Michelle Grabner:** As a matter of fact, I left my phone behind at home on this trip. So I read cover to cover Roxane Gay's new novel. She has not written a novel before and it's called *Difficult Women*. It's a bunch of short stories of fiction, but sometimes magic surrealism. So thinking about issues around women, thinking of issues around language, what kind of language she's using, thinking about what is truth and what is fiction, and thinking about race, who are these characters and thinking about the author who is African American. So all these things beautifully co-mingle in art. It's a novel, this is not essayist. I literally just finished it yesterday on multiple planes to get here. I'm still trying to work through it because it hit on everything I'm thinking about right now.

**MK:** Yeah! That all sounds very relevant to what I'm thinking about too.

**MG:** That's one answer. Can I give you another answer? And that is an exhibition that gave me chills and still gives me chills when I think about it. It's the Mark Leckey show at MOMA PS1.

**MK:** Oh! I saw that show in December.

**MG:** Yes! It's melting my mind because the issues of authorship, of originality, of truth, of narrative structure, of autobiography, how it has hit on all these things we are thinking about here and now. So it's not a reflection of how we've been thinking about authorship. But how we are thinking about authorship. So every value system that you think you know

has been turned on it's head somewhere in that show. I walked out of there a little nauseous. Not because the work is bad but because it was so disorienting, disorienting in relation to the world we live in. It's still blowing my mind.

**MK:** Thank you! That's a great answer. Here's my second question. It goes without saying that you are an interdisciplinary artist, but do you have a favorite medium, one that flows from you or feels most natural to you? That could be visual art or writing.

**MG:** I think that the language that I wrestle with is painting. And thinking about abstraction and ideas of representation. Because it wants to claim so much authority and I want to know how I can break that authority. And it often breaks me.

**MK:** You are described as an artist, writer, and curator. I similarly feel drawn to several distinct roles. Can you speak to the challenges of juggling these different professional roles, and perhaps offer some advice to the rest of us?

**MG:** Right, right. My advice would be that all of us are able to do all those things. Some of us can do one thing really, really well. If you know that about oneself, one shouldn't try to take on these other things. It really is a kind of brain construction. Sometimes we call it multitasking. First thing to know is that you don't do these things to be strategic. You do them because you want to learn and come to understand the field that you're working in. Curating has me think about things that I don't think about in the studio, writing has me deal with ideas that I don't necessarily deal with when I'm considering painting and

or pattern or repetition. I do these things so that I can be the best possible teacher, so that when I walk into a studio that deals with ceramics, or a studio that deals with narrative construction, that I'm able to contribute in some way. But the fact is, that's just the by-product of someone who is curious about the cultural world that we live in.

**MK:** Is one of these roles currently taking precedence over another or are they all fairly equal?

**MG:** Oh, very good question. Yes, I wish they were equal. Because if they were all equal they would be pattern and routine. So right now I am working on a large international exhibition, that will be a triennial in Cleveland. It's a real big budget production and I'm the co-artistic director along with Jens Hoffmann. We're at a critical point where a lot of decisions are being made. And the semester just started at school so I'm there as well, and I have a load of interesting essays I'm writing. So I have not been in the studio but my show in New York, an exhibition at James Cohen Gallery, came down after two months. So, if the question is do they happen all at once? No. It hurts when comes in waves. But I think the best answer to that is that I've learned to be able to procrastinate well. So when an essay is due, [laughing] I am very productive in the studio. And when I'm working through something in the studio I may find myself scheming an exhibition. So I know how to be productively distracted or use procrastination to be productive. [laughing]

**MK:** Amazing!

**MG:** I know. It's scary.

**MK:** You recently curated the Portland Biennial, which I was able to attend, and felt like was a huge success. Can you talk about your experience with this particular biennial?

**MG:** So, the Portland Biennial was a state-wide biennial and the northwest was new to me. I had not been to the northwest before. I learned a lot about regionalism, and how important regionalism can be, given the current context that we're living in, and that, regionalism here is something that has been longstanding and fortified on a daily basis. And it has its limitations, but the experience working through the Portland Biennial had me think about locality, regionalism, and what worldliness can be. And that as an artist one has to be able to work through and navigate all three of those positions, from the local to the worldly. It took coming to a place like Portland or the Northwest, that is a rare place in the world that fortifies itself around the idea of regionalism. I would say you are exempt from that here at the University. Eugene is a university town and the university gets to be a framework of academia and it has its own kind of relationship to the locality or the universal. Portland really values it to the point where it can be way too precious. It helped me think through where one is, where one chooses to be, the politics of the place, and how coming away from that, it can be the only thing. You have to be highly attentive to being in a place that really values and fortifies the local in every breath, and still be able to see the outside world.

# Regionalism here is something that has been longstanding and fortified on a daily basis.

AJA SEGAPPELI IN  
CONVERSATION WITH

NORA NARANJO  
MORSE

AJA SEGAPPELI IN CONVERSATION  
WITH NORA NARANJO MORSE

Nora

Naranjo

Morse

9

91

Nora was one of the most humble people I've met. She was quiet and extremely thoughtful with each response, but was incredibly engaged, asking us several questions about our own work during the rainy trek from her hotel to Lawrence Hall. It was her tenderness and a strong sense of family within her work that had me interested. I related to a few of her projects on a very personal level, and wanted to know more about that. My favorite thing about meeting her was the fact that she gave everyone hugs at the end.

## FOREWORD

**Aja Segapeli:** Ok, first question. What is your typical breakfast?

**Nora Naranjo Morse:** Um—Coffee.

**AS:** Just coffee?

**NNM:** Yeah. I'm not a breakfast person. I can't—it's too much for me.

**AS:** Coffee is great though.

**NNM:** And water!

**Laura Hughes:** That's important!

**AS:** Speaking of food, I'm really interested in the Eat Good Blog and the Food Memories series. How did the blog come about?

**NNM:** On the way over we were talking about [points to Laura]—that's why I asked about memories. I remember growing up and I had to walk to school and back. And it took me about two hours. By the time I got home—especially in the winter, I'd walk through the house, and the first thing I'd smell would be my mother's cooking. She was a very good cook. And there was something very grounding about that—and to smell beans or chili cooking was like, "Oh, I'd made this long trek. Its waiting for me and everything is okay". Whatever had happened to me in school or however I navigated my day, I came home to that. And that was very important to me. I think that's where all of that started.

**AS:** That's lovely. I love your writing about your mother specifically in the blog as well as the what's included in Mothers and Daughters: Stories in Clay because they read as simultaneously pragmatic and tender. Her

presence feels quite strong throughout your work and I am curious about how your relationship with her effects your work, especially over time.

**NNM:** Hmm— My mother was a typical pueblo woman. She made pottery. And in our culture we use pottery for utilitarian and ceremonial vessels, so that was sort of her focus, but she was also raising many children. I have six sisters and three brothers, but there were always people coming in at any given time to our household, she would bring them in. She was very maternal and she fed people. That was the way she showed love. You could come in at any hour and she'd say, "Sit down and eat. I'll feed you." And there was always something good in the refrigerator to eat. It was very exotic food like there would be intestine soup (which sounds very out-of-the-box) it's not like chicken noodle soup, but it was very nurturing because it was warm, and it was healing in a way. I think those are very important things for me.

That's why I got so excited hearing about your experiments with food [points to Laura]. I think creating with food is an art form. And I think people are finding that out. Also, the fact that she made the vessels that she cooked in, that was really important. It opened up the idea that both were art. I started seeing that art was everything, and I think I still carry that with me.

**AS:** That's great! So, you are well known for your ceramic pieces especially the Always Becoming project—

**NNM:** Right.

**AS:** —but in some of your more recent works,

you utilize recycled material. I was wondering if you might talk about this transition?

**NNM:** I think the reason that I got into that was because I went to the place that for centuries we have been going to gather clay. And I went there one day by myself and I gathered my clay and walked over the little hill. In the valley I could see that my village, Santa Clara, had started using that valley as a dumping site. That was very shocking to me. So, I wanted to see what people were throwing away. I wanted to investigate that incredible visual juxtaposition of the sacred sight of clay gathering—and then this dump, and that they were in such close-proximity. I wanted to see what was going on.

**AS:** Sort of expanding on that—you work across multiple mediums, in addition to trying out film, podcast, collaboration, and the blog. What is like to work in so many different ways? How do you process ideas?

**NNM:** Usually I get inspired like seeing the clay site and the dump. That's pretty—I mean it's very monumental to me, because it brings up all kinds of questions right? Like what are you consuming? What are you discarding. We have a tradition at home where you didn't throw anything away. Like I remember when I was a little girl, my mother was driving us through town. Somebody in front of us had stopped and some wood fell out. And I was all fifteen and awkward and my mother told us, "go get the wood". And it was like, "No! It's too embarrassing. Somebody might see me." I felt that but I couldn't articulate that because it wasn't even in the equation of our relationship, so I got out and collected the wood. And every time I see wood by the side of the road, I'll get out and collect it.

So, you're asking how I'm influenced by my mother. It's even simple things like that I'm taking that tenant of not wasting and looking around my environment and see what my resources are, and how I could use them. Plus, the older that I get the braver I get. Now because time seems to be more urgent as you get older. And there's so much more to do before you can't, I think that's become even more of a pressing thing for me. Like I wanna know how to do that or I wanna make a statement in another medium that reaches more people. If you make a film, a lot more people will see it. That's intriguing to me. Plus, the medium is so plastic. You can do a lot of things with those images. It's very playful. I like it very much.

**AS:** Last question(s). Part one: What are you currently reading?

**NNM:** Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*. I just got through reading *The Martian*. I picked that book because it's so out-of-the-box. I'm usually reading something that has social content but that was just frivolous.

**AS:** Part two: What book do you always go back to?

**NNM:** My Aunt Pablita Velarde wrote this book in the early sixties, and she was the first Native woman that I had ever heard of in my tiny little world that had written a book. It was basically printed as a children's book with all these Santa Clara short stories and she illustrated it. I still have that book. I would scribble in it like I was pretending that I could write that too. So now I still look at that book and read those stories. I also look at those scribbles, because they were the beginning of the sense that I could do something like that

too. I could write a book too. So I'd go back to that. The book is called *Old Father Storyteller*.

**AS:** Thank you so much! That was great!

**NNM:** Oh that was easy! I was a little nervous.

# I started seeing that

# art was everything.



ALEXANDER WURTS  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

JEREMY  
BAILEY

ALEXANDER WURTS IN CONVERSATION  
WITH JEREMY BAILEY

# Jeremy Bailey

9

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF ART

97

02-23-2017

Jeremy Bailey is a Famous New Media Artist, and is very cool. He likes to eat oatmeal for breakfast. He wears short-shorts and talks funny. I like him a lot. It was surreal to meet him because I'd watched so many videos of him, but he's not as different in person as you might think. He also has a cool podcast you should listen to, where he talks about cool ideas around contemporary art practice.

*Good Point Podcast* is created by Jeremy Bailey with Rafaël Rozendaal. In episode 19 - The Studio, the hosts discuss Jeremy's visit to Eugene.

## FOREWORD

**Alexander Wurts:** What's it like to be Famous New Media Artist Jeremy Bailey?

**Jeremy Bailey:** I think my thesis is really that is what we all feel like. Usually, when I speak, I'll announce myself as a famous new media artist, but then I'll announce that everyone in the audience is one as well. We live in this moment where we have access to this thing called the internet, and to technologies that allow us to express ourselves endlessly, but we rarely acknowledge that. It's a platform that goes under recognized for its revolutionary potential. We're already living in this amazing moment. I know there are trolls and evil too [laughter] but I don't know, I think it's pretty exciting.

**AW:** Maybe you've already answered this but— how do we get famous?

**JB:** I think we all already are famous. It's just the way that fame is fragmented now is different. So, it used to be that it was one in twenty million. A television network might hire you as an actor, and you would be on one of the four channels, and you'd be broadcast, and that's how you'd get famous.

And then as different tools have become available, the same channels that were only available to a few have become available to many. But in so doing, all kinds of niches emerged. So Warhol always said that we're going to have fifteen minutes of fame, but he didn't realize that we'd want that everyday.

So we're living in this time where maybe for you it's ten people that you're famous for, but for you it's a thousand, but we have this— we all operate in both good and bad ways, as these little mini-celebrities. We live in there

era of branded narcissism that way—but I'm not entirely negative about it. I'm actually more of a fence-sitter. I think I can be used for really awesome good, empowering marginalized voices, and other times it can be used to bully others, right. We all have this incredible power in our hands. And usually an audience. My mom's a big fan.

[laughter]

**AW:** How do you think about your persona as an artist?

**JB:** For me, I always talk about performing normal. So, I've just taken things that are true about me, and exaggerated them a little bit. It gives me permission to do things, that otherwise I couldn't. This is one of the things that I think is really interesting in terms of persona is that often times our personalities are not things we choose. They're kind of imposed on us by others. I think as a young person growing up, I felt like a lot of the choices were made by peers and I just happen to end up in class with them. Like, 'Okay, you're that guy' and, 'Oh really, I thought I was this other thing' [laughter]. Persona, for me, early on, unlocked this magical thing for me. If I'm in this outfit, I can still be me but I can exaggerate certain things, I can change things. It's a very powerful feeling to be able to change who you are. And people are ok with it, because ah it's just temporary, 'we'll let him have his moment' kind of thing. [laughing].

There's less and less distinction for me between the two, after I realized that potential exists in me everyday as well. Early on it was certainly a tool that allowed me to explore my identity.

**AW:** What's a typical studio day look like for you?

**JB:** Well, I'm an unconventional artist, or failed artist, in that my typical studio day involves going to work nine to five, as a software director. Then I get home and I typically will work from six to nine thirty, that's my cut off time, on artist practice work. Then one day a week, plus the weekend, I'll usually also spend entirely— Sometimes I'll get up at seven thirty in the morning to do European meetings, and I'll do those until around nine. It's really boring stuff [laughter]. I structure my day around a job. But that job has a lot of flexibility. So, sometimes I'll be away for a few weeks. Like, I'm away for three weeks right now, traveling. Other times I'll be just doing the nine to five thing. So, it's a really pedantic life. A lot of emailing, a lot of programming, coming up with ideas in the bathtub. That's where I do most of my thinking. Because my studio is my home and I would say it's actually more like my laptop. That's where I spend most of my time, I really started out making work for the internet. So, the idea of a physical studio never really made sense to me. So, my studio is in my pocket, on my phone, and on my laptop on my couch.

**AW:** Can you talk about your day job and how that affects your practice?

**JB:** Yeah so even though I am a failed artist, my day job sustains and becomes the material I feed off of for my night job as an artist. Because I work in software, it's a culture of innovation. My role as a famous new media artist, by day trying to sincerely innovate, and by night—and by the way, I work at a really boring software company. We make accounting software. The CEO of Intuit, which is the

biggest accounting software company in the world, is this huge champion for innovation, most people don't know this. He's in every business book. I don't think anyone thinks of Steve Jobs, and then thinks, 'Oh yeah, that Quicken company!' [laughter]

But anyway, regardless, it's because it's something that people hate. In that job, I syphon off a lot of practices, methodologies, and I use that as material for satirical production by night and unpack it as an artist. So, recently that's taken form of like, I started an accelerator, where I'm giving money to other artists to transform their practices into start-ups. They are like little businesses. They're really all failed start-ups, none of them make any money, but we're trying desperately [laughter]. But in that futility there's a performance, and there something I think there in terms of like of how we all invest so much in these companies that are using these frameworks built on mining hope and struggle. Which I think is fundamental to me. I have a background in sociology—sorry if this is rambling. That's gonna get in, in the text. Sorry if this is rambling [laughter] confusing. This guy makes no sense— but power relationships are really interesting to me.

In the 1960's it would have been the Rolling Stones that were leading the cultural ideology shift, or maybe like John Cage or something. Today, we're like who's doing interesting things? Oh yeah Google! Oh Elon Musk! Those are our heroes. So, I think it's interesting to look at what frameworks those people are using that we're captivated by, and to misuse them. Sorry long answer.

**AW:** No that's perfect. You build your own tools, how do think about those? How do you

go about deciding what tools to build? To use and misuse?

**JB:** I guess because a lot of my work ends up being like shitty software, the tools are really like demonstrations that allow me to talk about something else. In a lot of ways they're a little bit like artifice, because the tool itself becomes the content of the conversation. So, I might make a tool for painting, but it's really to talk about the VR Market or to talk about political strife or struggle. So, I think of it as the medium is the message. As a good Canadian would, a fellow of Marshall McLuhan.

**AW:** What advice would you give yourself when you were just starting out?

**JB:** That's great. Stop, stop, don't do it.

[laughter]

**JB:** I think the advice I would give myself—that's your one cliché question isn't it?

**AW:** Mhm.

**JB:** The advice I would give myself is don't be too hard on yourself. Everyone's struggling, and you're going to struggle for a long time, and that's part of the fun of it actually, accepting failure. I think I did that pretty early on, and it's been really good for me. In general, just having an attitude that if it's not fun, if fucking up is stressful, then get out of the game. Especially if you're working with technology, because it's prone to failure on a regular basis. I don't think I've ever performed or done something where I didn't have a least one stressful moment, where something failed or went wrong. Just learning to embrace that, and enjoy it for what is, which is absurd and futile.

# I always talk about

# performing normal.

AARON BJÖRK  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

ERKKI  
HUHTAMO

102

103

Erkki

Huhtamo

Two compelling topics I have come back to after researching and spending time with Erkki Huhtamo are: his research on the idea of topos, and his in-depth historical analysis, where by he often links past and present. He describes topos as “recurring discursive concepts, visual or audio, that can be traced cross-historically, and to various extents, cross-culturally.” This is useful for visual artists, as one may mine these historical tropes, bringing embedded knowledge as a platform for speaking visual languages. It gives the artist a tool to harness the power of these media logics at which the artist may disrupt, engage, compare, contrast or ignore in their practice. The second notable topic is that through media archeology we find many of the media spectacles of today have analogs in history, shedding light on the fact that human behavior remains constant even as technology evolves.

## FOREWORD

**Aaron Björk:** When regarding historical media, it seems the technology of the device was just as important as what it was displaying. In contrast to the way screen based devices today are very accepting of a wide range of media. Could you talk about the connection between media and the devices they are played on?

**Erkki Huhtamo:** When media studies is normally—lets say film studies, photo history was about looking at photos. What media archeology brings is a new emphasis on materiality. Marshall McLuhan, one of the founders of media studies had the famous slogan “medium is the message” makes the basic point. Friedrich Kittler, one of the founders of media archeology, made a strong case for taking writing surfaces, taking tracings on the phonograph cylinder, taking computer software into account. And I do agree. Materialities of media do play an important role, but I do not believe they are always the determining factor. So my way of thinking about media archeology is more complex. There are also so called discursive elements so we imagine things, fantasize about things, we fear about things, and these things of the mind get connected in complex ways with the materialities of the media. So I do think we need to understand the infrastructures, we also need to understand the ways of the mind. And by combining these things and tracing them back to certain contexts we can grasp the historical logic behind media culture.

**AB:** I’ve noticed people sitting on the floor in museums while watching video works. For example Doug Aitken’s Electric Earth, and Ryoji Ikeda’s Test Patterns and Hito Steyerl’s Factory of the Sun. Are you aware of any his-

torical precedent (besides the living room) to consuming media this way?

**EH:** Yes, I do think that when we look at the ways how media work is presented in terms of positioning of the screens, we can talk about topoi. In my way of thinking, a screen can become a topos in different ways. This means a kind of received idea that travels in culture. For example: when we think about works where the screens actually hung on the ceiling and the audience is supposed to sit or lie down on the floor. Obviously these things feel new and unprecedented for many exhibition goers because that is not the customary way of how the screen is positioned. But when we do an archeological of the screen or screenological analysis, we do find that this idea has been preceded by many earlier ideas. In my new book, for example, I talk about ideas from the 1930s of applications where people are hanging in hammocks and the movies are projected on the ceilings. But we also have to go much further back and look at the fantasies about the sky as a screen. So this means the sky has a kind of display surface. This is a huge history that actually goes back to classical times already.

So topos archeological perspective gives us a way of actually linking these things in many cases to much longer historical trajectories and showing that what seems to be new is often camouflaged ideas that have existed much earlier. This could also be applied to the idea of vertical screens. The verticality of the screen seems to be at odds with the panoramic thinking, but it has its own archeology that I don’t have time to detail here.

**AB:** What can the history of stereoscopy tell us about the future of virtual reality?

**EH:** Virtual reality became a fad around 1990 or so. What we are experiencing now we can call the second wave of virtual reality. Around 1990 I became very interested in this topic and that was also an inspiration behind my work in media archeology. I was inspired, like many others. People were talking about ontological ruptures where something radically different was appearing by virtual reality. I wasn't convinced by this, so I started looking at earlier manifestations of inversion.

One of them was a victorian interest in stereoscopy, which is often missing from the histories of photography. It was a mass movement, millions of these stereo cards were sold and it had huge numbers of viewers, so it became to be aesthetically questionable. And so people who wrote the history of photography from the point of view of art of photography felt that it should be excluded. Of course from a media archaeological point of view, this is a misjudgment—stereoscopy is highly important. So what happened with victorian stereoscopy is not so easy to summarize quickly, but many of the cards were about virtual traveling. This was a way of seeing and being present at different locations around the planet. So the idea of fantasy worlds were not quite widely spread. Virtual reality could probably learn something from those experiences. First of all I do think that seeing virtual reality as a form of telepresence is sufficient—it is definitely going to be one application. I'm much more interested in using virtual reality in exploring other dimensions, going much further than just a representation of the sense of being just there. And I think this is a point where we can really learn from artists, artists who did not use head mounted displays, but artists like Marcel Duchamp—his way of exploring the

fourth dimension by his own means. Or later artists who really tried to push the boundaries of the perspectival representation. So there is a lesson to learn and I think the important point is not to be stuck with the typical topoi of virtual reality which seems to be the case. So people take received ideas and don't act enough to produce original content. That is what I see happening in many of the current virtual reality applications. I still want to see a really astonishing thing that I have not encountered during my media archeology studies.

**AB:** In a hypermediated world, how do you make sense of writing a book for 10 years? Do you get distracted or frustrated as technology evolves? Or do you find things over that span of time to be void?

**EH:** I am old enough to have grown up in the universe of the book, that was the main channel of information, enlightenment, and imagination when I was younger. Obviously I do work with new technology in many ways, I do believe in the book and I'm actually interested in seeing recent signs of a backlash to digital reading culture. Many people seem to be making a case for the importance of the book and going back to reading things on paper instead of just downloading these files on their readers or iPads. Books are a historical phenomenon and we can imagine a time when the time of the book is over. This of course what Marshall McLuhan was talking about in the sixties in his famous book called the Gutenberg Galaxy. I do not really believe in the "Dead Media" that Bruce Sterling used to write and talk about. For me, media really never dies but they do get mixed with each other. There are also interesting revivals and comebacks. Ideas come and they go again.

Personally I don't see the book disappearing and I do find it important to write things. Also in a modified linear format, I am not interested in completely applying my type of writing to the hypertextual format of the internet even though there can be alternative forms, and these alternative forms can combine and rise on another level.

**AB:** When I saw a greek ceramic vessel, it made me wonder how the artist felt that it was on display in a museum. Maybe it was not his prime example of his best work. As an archeologist, do you give particular notice to how the artist who made the object/film would feel about your inquiry?

**EH:** The very important aspect of the media archeology that I practice is to try to put us back in time behind the eyes and into the minds of those people who created all kinds of objects and ideas of the time. Also we understand that this is never fully possible because we inhabit a different time and place. There is always a negotiation or dialog between these kinds of positions. For media archeology, it is a negotiation between different moments of time because I'm interested in the way things change and how they keep on appearing and disappearing. There is a strong tendency among certain scholars and traditional art historians to impose a certain kind of judgement from another period on issues. A good example now that you talk about greek objects would be to look at the greek sculpture which became a model for neoclassicism and an important element was the whiteness. So aesthetical systems were built on the idea that these sculptures were white. From a media archeology point of view we should of course take into account that many, or perhaps all of them were origi-

nally polychrome. So they were colored and only the effect of time wiped away that color. So if we look at that kind of greek sculpture that has bright colors, perhaps playing with issues about life-likeness qualities of these objects, it is obviously at odds with many of the statements of neoclassicism which represented an appreciation of a certain time. So in the same way I think that the media archeology needs to do its best to look at things not from a perspective of the later appreciation, for example what media culture of the 20th century is. So we have to go first and foremost, back in time and understand that perception of culture changes—it's a historical category. Walter Benjamin, I think understood really well in his time. We have to go back and try to see the culture with the eyes of those other moments, those lost and forgotten subjects. And when we do that, only then we should start building bridges with these different moments of time and I think that this is the way how the present and past and even the futures can be interrelated with each other.

**AB:** In your Vertical Cinema Lecture at IFFR (International Film Festival Rotterdam), you discussed the vertical vs. horizontal screen, why not just use square?

**EH:** The question about the shape of the screen is a tough one. Lev Manovich many years ago tried to come up with a classification of different kind of screens and one of these screens he called a classical screen which would be a stretched rectangular shape. He was saying there is a logic between the typical cinema screen, the typical tv screen, and typical frame of Renaissance era painting. Unfortunately as much as I appreciate Lev as a scholar, this is a completely

# I'm interested in

# using virtual reality

misguided statement, because there is nothing we can call a typical screen shape. These things are always determined through complicated historical conditions. The screen does not have to be vertical, does not have to be horizontal, does not have to be square. It can be oval, it can be round and we can find examples of all of these. What is difficult is to find is all the contributing factors behind these decisions. This is a very long discussion but if we think of square framing or round framing in the context of early television culture, we can possibly say that there are many explanations that have to be taken into account. One of them has to do with the typical framing of magic lantern slides in the nineteenth-century, which was often round. So many people had seen visual media in the form of magic lantern projections, they were familiar with round picture framing. So the fact that the early imagination about the television screen in popular scientific magazines from the teens or 1920s were very often round. Also it had to do with the idea of miniature portrait paintings which were also in round frames. And the pictures on the tv screen were understood to be small and the smallness had to do with the state of the technology. Mechanical televisions or early cathode ray tubes only showed a small picture. Sometimes these pictures were represented as round but other times people started framing them. Round led easily to square framing in those times. But we can say that technological development, social and cultural needs coincided with each other and led to changes. One of these changes was the introduction of movies on the television screen which would obviously not work on a round framing. Round framing would be fine for a talking head because it matches the shape of the human head, so there are always

many of these kinds of elements. In the end, these issues become extremely complicated as there is nothing typical and nothing self-evident at all in the culture of screens understood in the history of framing pictures.

in exploring

other dimensions.

LAURA HUGHES  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

KATIE  
HERZOG

110

111

# Katie Herzog



## Two things to know about my interview with Katie Herzog:

1. Katie was driving through town on the way to her show, *Research*, at *Private Places* in Portland, and was very kind to stop and give some studio visits and sit for a 5 Minutes interview. I spent an afternoon looking through her work online, took a page full of notes— then totally broke with 5 Minutes protocol: I did not write out five to seven succinct questions, I did not e-mail said non-existent questions to Natalie Wood to be reviewed, nor did I schedule someone to sit with us and record the interview. I figured, I'm the editor, I've sat in and recorded a lot of these, I can take some liberties. The result was multi-part, rambling questions with some false starts. Ill-advised, but Katie was very patient.

2. I was also lucky to have a studio visit with Katie immediately before our interview. I don't remember everything: I remember we talked about the specificity of library furniture and the color yellow. And we connected about one piece, a book, I was right in the middle of and unsure about. She emphatically encouraged me to keep going, and helped me to see a new potential. I'm still working on it, and still thinking about what she said. Thank you Katie.

**Laura Hughes:** So after looking at your work online, I noticed that there seems to be very diverse strategies for making a painting and diverse materials. I wanted to start by asking what is a typical day in the studio like for you, but I'm interested specifically in how you allow yourself to make these wild shifts?

**Katie Herzog:** Yeah, well, I've painted for a very long time and I've always felt like the practice is very close to my understanding and moving through the world. So a lot of times I did not know necessarily what I was wanting, it was important for me to be open and kind of explore ideas through the process, and so I almost think of it as a surrogate brain or something. I'm kind of representing these things, these stories, and then maybe even five years later I'll look at my painting and understand them in a way or something? And so in that regard I started to really build my understanding of epistemology.

I was in library school, I was working in libraries, I started to really become interested in how knowledge is built and the politics surrounding knowledge economies from this feminist perspective. Whose knowledge is important? What is personal knowledge? So these are all things that started to kind of become interesting to me as a researcher. It began in painting and then continued to play out through painting, so I still feel like I'm very invested in working through ideas of information and economy and gender and sexuality through these knowledge systems. This is how I keep things interesting for myself too, I am constantly thinking of things as ideas that are reflecting what's going on in the world.

Like you said I definitely do not have one mode that I churn out, and so that's been a

real point of contention for me throughout my schooling and professional life — there are a couple of reasons for that I think, that kind of goes back to this idea of knowledge, people kind of want to know what they're being presented with, it makes them kind of uncomfortable, they want to be able to categorize things. So it kind of challenges that but it also challenges the commercial model a little bit because you know as far as being a "commercially viable" artist, at least what I've been told, is that it's easier to have a certain look or style, you know? Like a brand. And so this particular way of working doesn't fit into that, and so is sort of outsider a little bit? — that's not quite the right word. But I've always pushed against these painting tropes, for me it was a real way of addressing— or this kind of practice in anti-beauty for a long time for me that was really important, and I was sort of relating it to gender and sexuality and femininity and what it means to be a person in the world and have to deal with these ideas of beauty. I was also showing my work in public libraries and I was interested in taking my work outside the gallery system to see what happens when it becomes this— when it's in this space that is free, and it's in this space of ideas, of free ideas. I was working as a reference librarian at the time, and showing my work in the same library, and curating shows in the library. You know, I have a big painting that's permanently displayed above the circulation desk. I was just thinking through these ideas at the time.

So my practice and my way of working has really evolved, it was all sort of along the path, and now I am working in series. A few years ago I made a series that's technically a painting installation, it's 48 portraits and it was inspired by Gerhard Richter's 48 portraits

of men of letters that he did in 1972 for the Venice Biennale. Then twenty years after that there was an artist named Gottfried Helvine that did 48 portraits of famous women, that was in response to Richter's original work, and then twenty years after that was 2012 and it took me a few years to research but I made 48 portraits of transmen and women of letters. So that was a new way of working for me because that was 48 portraits, and I happened to have a two month old child at the time. So I kind of set myself up, because I knew I'd be so sleep deprived and physically taxed I wanted to have something I could work on and crank out without making a lot of decisions along the way. So then I had another kid, and I did that again where I had this series of works that I just kind of cranked out. So for me having kids really changed a lot because I really honed in on ideas and I didn't have a lot of time to rip up paintings and dick around. So since then, my son is four and my daughter's two, I've really been working in a very different way. So the work I'm showing that opens tomorrow night is a series, so yeah it's just changed recently in the last few years, but also the longer I work the more you can see themes evolve. When you are working for years in this arena of not knowing then eventually it evolves into patterns that you can learn from, so I think that's where I'm at now.

LH: Sure, sure. Cool. You touched on a lot of things I wanted to ask about, so maybe I'll ask about your work that's sort of organizing information like, Senate Bill 48 and The Periodic Table that was in Baltimore. I guess you've talked about already, and it seems parallel to the librarian life. Can you talk about that more? Is there something more aside from a strategy for producing work while you are busy?

KH: So you are interested in the idea or organizing information in different ways? I don't know if I'm clear on the question?

LH: Yeah, so you've talked about it already in terms of making work when you don't have a lot of time for making decisions. But it also seems really clearly parallel to organizing information as a librarian might—

KH: Okay.

LH: Is it uhhh.. I guess is it parallel in a way that is very intentionally about organizing information through painting?

KH: Well I guess what I meant is I work in series as a way of fleshing out an idea. I still feel like— but the paintings I was making before, that in my mind are still an entire idea fleshed out in one painting. So I don't know how that translates into categories or organizing—

LH: Okay, so the answer is no, maybe. You don't see painting as a way of organizing information?

KH: Yeah no I don't. So what interests me in how information is organized is the power structures are involved and language. So for instance I did this painting that was called Melvil's Rib, and it was like Melvil Dewey, like of the Dewey Decimal system, like his rib. And that title was taken from a women librarianship conference that was in the early '70s at Rutgers University, and the painting is almost like a gestural stroke you know? And it's like one rib, and its like almost abstract you know? So that represents this idea of feminism and knowledge and history and all these other things, so that's where my inter-

est in information and organizing categories comes from.

LH: Sure yeah. Sorry that was an unorganized question!

KH: No yeah that's okay, I just wanted to be clear.

LH: So this is kind of along the lines of what you were talking about, the particular kind of power of claiming something with paint that seems present—

KH: Yeah! Well there's the power of representation and then there is the action of putting a mark down or of ripping something up or destroying something or not whatever. So I've always really been really interested in thinking about painting and what it is and what it's doing and stuff, and so a lot of people think of painting as a pictorial practice or as a picture, you know? And that's not how I think of it. I think most painters would think of it as a record of action, and you know it's not a performance but I think that's one reason why painters— well I'll just speak for myself, I really get a lot out of talking with other painters or other people who have an understanding of processes because it's not necessarily something to be read as a picture and so I've found there's a disconnect there but I think as a painter you have to be able to address that because you are presented with that on such a large scale. So recently I'm working with encaustic paint so the building process of that is really inherent to the concept.

LH: Yeah.

KH: Yeah.

LH: Okay, maybe taking a left turn. Interior spaces in your paintings, there is one from a while ago called Mother and Daughter, which I wish I could see in person, and you have some paintings of interiors of libraries. Could you talk about how you think about interiors in paintings? Some of those spaces are really handled very differently—

KH: Mhmm.

LH: Do you think about interiors a lot? We were talking about library furniture earlier.

KH: Yeah, I guess the thing that comes to mind is just thinking about how a painting in itself has the opportunity of being this interior dialogue or a narrative of the interior of my mind, or a history or something. It's almost like an inherent possibility of interiority [laughing] I don't know. So and also a stage, I imagine some of the paintings like Mother and Daughter or Library Wedding or Today the Library was Ripped a New Asshole is about the interior as a stage kind of or an arena for narrative. So I guess that's kind of how I think about it.

LH: Okay one more, I was reading about the Molesworth institute which sounds really interesting. So I wanted to ask you about that, as well as knowledge alongside humor which is present in your work as well.

KH: There's so much to talk about there, for instance right now I'm serving on the board of a library advocacy foundation and I've worked as a library worker for a long time. So I've always kind of wandered and struggled and wondered about this idea of social practice and felt a little skeptical of the idea of aestheticizing social work and so as a

# I am constantly

# thinking of things

civic employee I was always very clear about these two roles being separate, but I was also concerned about painting and the history of painting not being democratic enough! So I had this really interesting conversation with a former professor, Ernie Silva, who disagreed and said 'I think painting is extremely democratic because everyone can look at a painting and have an opinion about it' you know? Of course except for people who are blind. And I didn't really think about it like that. I used to be really anxious about painting's role— or I mean just as someone who's dealing with painting as a modality for my ideas I wanted to make sure it wasn't a closed system. Anyway so [laughing] repeat your question because I feel like I got a little bit lost.

LH: History and humor, but I also asked about the Molesworth Institute.

KH: Yeah! So the Molesworth Institute was started by Norman Stevens, and then I think there are 87 fellows. I became a fellow when I did a show at Circus Gallery in 2008 that was called Librariana and I think Norman actually coined the term 'librariana' because he had collected—he had amassed the largest collection of librarianiana in the world, which was like ephemera about libraries so there was you know spoons and plates and pamphlets and you know all that type of stuff. So he had a collection of hundreds of thousands of library post cards and things like that. So my show librarianiana was about paintings of libraries, and so we met after that and he made me a fellow of the Institute and we became friends and we're still friends and it's his birthday tomorrow and he lives in Connecticut—so anyway he made me director, I think it was in 2011, and I have since awarded some

fellowships. So it's actually an absurdist organization and it's really steeped in secrecy and disguise, people are always like 'what's the Molesworth Institute?' and he'd always come back with some humorous response that didn't really answer the question you know? But he also has these fellows who are library workers that are making this type of work about libraries it's like this very specific group and mode of production. So it was kind of perfect for me at the time because that defined my practice and it was also just really fun to learn about. There's a book Archives from the Research of the Molesworth Institute, it's a collection of his essays and so they'd be humorous essays about cats and libraries—or I don't know how to describe it really. So library humor is one of his areas of expertise, and so some of the Molesworth fellows write books about library humor [laughing] It's pretty nerdy but it's also kind of special.

LH: Yeah, that's super interesting.

KH: I email you a reading list if you're interested.

LH: Yeah sure! That'd be great. Well did Lee and Mary ask about breakfast in their interview?

KH: No. I don't know I wasn't there.

LH: Oh you weren't there! Okay I'll ask, what is your ideal breakfast?

KH: Oh okay, my idea breakfast— well my husband has been making pancakes for me and my kids lately and it is really awesome. So for me that is just this recent thing where he makes pancakes and my kids are like 'I want

more maple syrup! And honey!' [laughing] It's like not calm and nice, it's not like a fun experience but it's just this wonderful insanity. So right now being away from home— if you asked me when I was there I'd say my idea breakfast would be by myself in a prison cell or something you know because it's just so stressful.

[laughing]

KH: But now that I'm away from them I'm like yeah, pancakes specifically made by him. Who doesn't like pancakes!

as ideas that

are reflecting.

LEE ASAHINA & MARY MARGARET MORGAN IN CONVERSATION WITH

BOBBI WOODS

118

119

# Bobbi Woods

Mary and I were lucky enough to meet Bobbi (and Mark Verabioff) last year when they had a show at Ditch Projects. I think we both appreciate the humor in Bobbi's work that absolutely translates to her being a great person to hang out with. I asked her the question about eBay because she has an incredible personal style as well as a great and playful eye that's apparent in her work.

## FOREWORD

**Lee Asahina:** My first question is a question people have probably asked you a billion times, but, can you talk about how text operates in your work?

**Bobbi Woods:** I can [laughing] I think it operates in a way, like it oscillates between being form and being language. Ways that isolating a given phrase can, let me think of an example—

**LA:** What about the one that says “Whiffs”

**BW:** Totally, that one has like different levels and layers of operating; as form, these bulbous, cartoon forms that have a little phallic, vaginal, pinky, squishy thing to them and “whiffs” as a little bit of smell, or a hint of meaning. So, I think that the text can operate between being a form and being language. And then it can be abstracted from its advertising context so it doesn't create concise, clear meaning and creates more contemplative space for what that thing can be. I feel like that space can be austere and flat or it can be super open. Whiffs could be smell or physical or a hint as in an idea or meaning of the word that's barely there.

**LA:** What's the best thing you've ever purchased from eBay or a thrift store?

**BW:** Work-related?

**LA:** It can be anything.

**BW:** The list is long. Hmm, the best? Well I finally bought some rainboots— living in Oregon.

**LA:** Are they the plaid ones?

**BW:** No, I looked at those and was super tempted. They're just like yay high and have Tortoise shell buckle, sort of like a riding boot. So those were exciting, accepting I live in Portland, I got properly outfitted. I got a vintage Gucci shirt the other day for no money at all, but I also find good posters there too.

**LA:** Have you ever found a poster you were so excited to find?

**BW:** Yeah, recently, I got one that says “Pussy Talk,” and I was very excited. It's sort of this weird genre of porn. It's a vibe I'd never quite encountered. I really like this idea of women having a voice in the midst of the exploitation genre. To contemplate what pussy talk could be, if it's like a physical sound or literally if it could speak and talk about feminism and feeling and agency. This movie positioning it as having this was interesting.

**LA:** That's funny. I'll pass the baton.

**Mary Margaret Morgan:** Wait, did you watch the movie?

**BW:** I rarely, if ever, watch the movies. Pussy Talk, I could just tell it's vibe by its time, its year, by reading a bit about it. Sometimes I'll read about a movie and see what's up with it. Because there are instances where, especially if it involves representations of women and a genre that was really steeped and contrived; I'm really curious to read about what it was doing in culture at that moment. Pussy Talk, I haven't seen it, but I'm curious to. And then the poster though, I left the tape on, like half of it so it just say PS— I almost said PTSD [laughing], “PSST” and “Talk,” and the rest of it has tape, so it has this double meaning. To answer your question, I rarely see the movies,

I just like it as a language and to take it out of that realm in the way that the poster still has this precarious relationship to time and desire and seduction: something that has happened so you get the poster for it, something that's gonna happen so you can't wait or you dread it. So it has the "any-space" kind of whatever vibe that I like. It's a stable, stubborn, autonomous object.

**MM:** My question is, what are you gonna do for the next four years? [laughter] But my question is also: you've been in Portland for minute, has your work changed? I feel like there's a vibe in LA that was working with these materials? How has it changed?

**BW:** That's such an interesting question, I think about that a lot. Yeah my environment isn't quite so steeped in the entertainment business as in L.A. where it's this whole inner mechanism. It's like living inside the gears in the clock. It's changed because my life has changed. I think teaching has changed the work. Also, being in Portland and away from L.A. has shifted my observations about my relationship to the materials and to advertising, I have some distance. It becomes a more psychological approach rather than topographical.

# Space can be austere and flat or it can be super open.

LAURA HUGHES  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

SANDOW  
BIRK

1 2 4

1 2 5

# Sandow Birk

Sadow Birk lectured in connection with his show, *Sadow Birk: American Qu'ran*, at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, on campus. I visited the exhibition earlier that day and could already feel a buzz about Sadow's presence on campus. The Museum was busier than I had ever seen it before and I ran into some students, who had been encouraged to attend for some extra credit.

The big lecture hall in Lawrence Hall was packed, actual standing room only. I sat in the nosebleeds with some other grads and art professor, Jack Ryan, who was going to dinner with Sadow later and wondered about what to talk about. I gave him the tip that they both take their little kids rolling around skate parks, and Jack was surprised that Sadow has kids too. Possibly because he produces these really intense multi-year projects (this is addressed pretty quickly in the interview).

Even more notable was the reaction from the students in class the next week, and even some students the following term. There was a palpable energy in the room when it got to the Q&A session after the lecture. Someone asked a question about skill, and Sadow gave an answer about not caring too much about how accomplished he may or may not be as a painter. It is about the idea, and he just goes ahead and makes the paintings, because they need to be paintings. The students in my foundational 3D design class were crazy about this, it is maybe something they needed to hear — to just go ahead and make.

## FOREWORD

**Laura Hughes:** So one question we often ask is 'What is a typical day in the studio like for you?' I imagine you spend a lot of time lost in these very complex drawings, and doing research, and planning these large projects. So I want to ask the typical studio day question but I'm wondering in particular if there is anything we might be surprised to know about your daily practice?

**Sadow Birk:** Well I'm in a weird place because I've got little kids, I have a three year old and a seven year old. Most of my career I didn't have kids, so there was a lot more time. So we're in a struggling stage where we are trying to figure out how to keep working with kids around, because I work in the same place we live in, a loft. And my whole twenty year career I lived alone in a loft and I worked late at night and wake up and make, and work around the clock and just pick away at things, but now it's like the kids are so like a time-sucking whirlpool that it's really hard to find time to work. Even when I'm painting they're like ramming their cars into you [laughing]. So something might have to change, not enough work is getting done [laughing].

But normally our kids get up early, like five, and both of them go to school now so we can get them to school by like eight. And then usually I go to the beach, that's my normal thing. So it's like a fifteen minute drive to the beach and I try to go surfing and if there's no waves I'll just read the paper and have some coffee or something. Be home by like ten or eleven and work till I pick up the kids at like three. And then the kids take up all the way till like eight, and then usually from like eight until eleven I can work again.

**LH:** Yeah, yeah. I'd say most of our faculty here newly have little kids also. So we see a lot of people in a similar situation [laughing].

**SB:** My wife is an artist also and she has a studio separate, but it's like a fifteen minute drive away, so it's a commitment to go all the way over there and come back— it's crazy having kids, it really interrupts things.

**LH:** Okay, well I'd like to ask a couple very specific questions about American Qur'an. I went back to the show today, it's beautiful. I mean this is pretty obvious but has anything evolved how you think of the project now that it's done, or has anything evolved in the reception of the project in the past several months considering what's happening around us in the country?

**SB:** You mean evolved in my own thinking about it? And what other people think?

**LH:** Yeah yeah, kind of reflecting back—

**SB:** Unfortunately, no. The sad thing about the project— in retrospect the sad thing was, you know ten years ago when I started it and I was working on it people were saying 'Oh! This is so timely, it's so important, it's so concerned about Islam.' And then ten years go by and it's exactly the same thing. So to think nothing has really changed in ten years, and it's probably even gotten worse, I'd say it's just really depressing. I mean I thought things were getting worse up until November, but now— yeah it's a little bit depressing. I mean I'm glad it's here, this is the best showing of it it's ever had here at the Schnitzer and it looks fantastic and people are seeing it and they've really hyped it up a lot, and organized events around it and bringing people in. All



that's fantastic. But on the other hand I wish I could say that there's some visible proof that something is getting better but I can't say that phrase.

**LH:** Yeah, it was very busy today, a lot of my former and current students were there and people seemed really engaged with it. So it's good that it's here and being seen—

**SB:** Yeah and it seems like the latest news in the last couple days is that it seems like it's going to carry on and travel further.

**LH:** Oh great, that's amazing.

**SB:** Yeah the more people see it the better.

**LH:** Totally yeah. So you did a lot of research for the project, was there anything you were surprised to learn about the Qur'an talking to people all over the world, or as you were transcribing it?

**SB:** Oh yeah, yeah every single day it was interesting. The Qur'an is fascinating and I mean I'm not a religious person. My parents tried to make me go to church when I was a little kid but I resisted. But I mean the very first surprising thing about the Qur'an is how remarkably familiar it is, it's almost identical to the Bible. It's just the same stories told again, or discussed in a different way or something. And then on top of that the Qur'an not only as a religious message but as a historic book it's fascinating because you know it's more recent than the Bible, so they know a lot more facts about it. They know where they were when Muhammad was speaking, and what was happening that day and so there's more stuff that you can look up. And you know those places still exist, so like

when people go to Jerusalem to visit Jesus sites, it still exists and you can Google them and you can learn about them and you can learn about events that were happening at the time, and record keeping was better. It's a really fascinating thing, so every day working on it I'd just learn more and more and more. It was endlessly interesting.

**LH:** Okay I'm going to ask one more question about it and this is a really detailed question, but I was wondering particularly in the Sura 2-3 section there are all these objects that break the frame, and there are throughout, but there seems to be these really particular things. Like a clipboard, a cooler, a bucket— there seem to be a lot of ways you're able to have fun with the format of an Illuminated Manuscript.

**SB:** Yeah it's so complex it's hard to think of how to explain it. The Qur'an as a book, it's not narrative, it's collected sermons in a way. And they are not in the sequence that they were revealed to Muhammad, which is sort of an interesting thing. So it's not really necessary to read the Qur'an from the first page to the last, you can sort of read it from starting at any point. Each chapter sort of stands on its own and because of that I didn't begin at the first page, I began in the middle and I jumped around. And so the chapter that you're talking about wasn't one of the earliest ones I did, but the earliest ones I did I tried to be really faithful to the historic Qur'an format that's existed for a thousand years with the borders and the decoration and the verses all marked with the little gold stars and things. And then after years and years of working in that format I started to break away from it and put things down and just tried to make the pages more graphically interesting.

**LH:** Yeah that makes a lot of sense the way that it's displayed, you can sort of jump in at any point.

**SB:** Yeah.

**LH:** Do you have anything going on that are in the seeds of development? Anything you are sort of thinking about now or researching?

**SB:** Yeah, I've actually got a lot of things going on right now. Normally I sort of have one main project, but right now I've been working on a series of drawings that's sort of ongoing about a series of imaginary monuments to historical documents. So that's sort of on going. And at the same time my wife's doing a mural for a public swimming pool in LA, we're like working on it right now painting it, so we get to work on that sometimes.

And then we just started working together on a big woodblock print, that's just going to be this massive woodblock print [laughing] and I don't know if it's a very good idea, it's in the early stages [laughing]. I've worked throughout my career with this printer in San Francisco named Paul Mallowney, and he contacted me and said 'ah I've got some time, we should do a big woodblock print, do you have any ideas?' And I said well I sort of have this half-finished idea of doing like a procession of left-wing Americans and right-wing Americans throughout American history. And he was like Oh that's a good idea, so I kind of came up with this sketch of it and then he's working on how to do it, and right now we're just about to start carving it in wood blocks because right now it looks like it's going to be about forty-five feet long.

**LH:** Whoa!

**SB:** Yeah so it's going to be like this massive wood-block print— and I'm not sure. You know, at the beginning you're not sure if it's going to be good or not. So that's like three things that are going on.

**LH:** Wow

**SB:** And I also have a painting on the wall at home going on that's about race, different races in America. All kinds of things.

**LH:** Okay I think I'll just finish up with one last fun one. So you mentioned that you still surf, are you still skating? And if so do you have any favorite skate parks?

**SB:** You know I don't really skate, really. When I was young I used to, but then I fell and I got hurt. I really am a better surfer than a skater, I'm really worried about hurting myself so that it would end my surfing career. I'm really worried about my knees and things, so I've really laid off the skating and mostly I go surfing and I try to surf like four days a week. Now I have little kids and we go to the skate park and I roll around with them. Well my girl is seven, and she actually has a skateboarding class at school which is super cool.

**LH:** Oh man, amazing.

**SB:** Yeah [laughing] I know Portland is famous for skating, like Burnside and stuff. But now I'm really risk-averse and careful.

# The Qur'an

# is fascinating.

LEAH HOWELL  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

JULIE YORK, TIM BERG,  
& REBEKAH MYERS

130

# Julie York, Tim Berg, & Rebekah Myers

131

I was lucky to interview three great artists for 5 Minutes! Our conversation took place on a Friday, as part of a full afternoon of activities hosted by the Ceramics department and the Visiting Artist Lecture series. Prior to the interview I was able to see Tim Berg and Rebekah Myers' artist talk. I was curious about Myers Berg Studios; the studio practice they share in Claremont, CA. We talked a bit about how they value the collaborative process. I am intrigued by Tim and Rebekah's highly refined forms, polished surfaces, range of scale and presentation. Their installation work, comprised of iconic forms and imagery is incredibly seductive and precise, critiquing the value of objects in contemporary culture. Also previous to our interview, I attended Julie York's lecture and demonstration for mold making techniques. This was an incredibly valuable experience for myself and the many sculpture and ceramics students that were present. Julie brought her own molds and tools all the way from her studio in Vancouver, BC. Her joining of technology and porcelain yield a deep investigation into material, form and process. I was excited to learn more about how Julie works within the scope of modern craft and about her relationship to architecture and display.

## FOREWORD

**Leah Howell:** I thought one question to start with that would apply to all of you is; How do traditional methods of making, historical reference, and technology intersect in your work?

**Julie York:** Well, I think all of those things affect everything, right? I don't think we can help but look to the past, it's there. It's an interesting place that we can mine. I talked about that project that I did; White on White where it directly relates to this question in terms of how can we look at history through the lenses of digital technology. So looking at the work of people who make work by hand under the influence of 3d printing or through CAD, and so I think there can be really interesting intersections between all of those different kinds of tools and technologies, as well as histories.

**Tim Berg:** I guess the question got me thinking about an anthology I was reading about Marcel Duchamp and when he made his Boite-ene-valise which had miniature versions of all of his pieces. What was interesting to me about that was his description of making his little model urinal, this was the quintessential kind of thing we look at in terms of thinking about the ready-made and found objects as works of art and it took him no time to make that [the original], except to put R. Mutt on it, but then in recreating it, he had all these troubles working with the plaster, or I think it was paper maché actually. I think it took him a few months to get a reproduction that he was actually happy with so there was this version of time and craft. I just thought that was so interesting that the small thing took so much effort and figuring out.

**JY:** Isn't that the way with ceramics [laughter].

**TB:** Yeah— and I guess I think about that in our work sometimes, in that we spend a lot of time making a big sculpture, but then we spend more time making the little souvenirs— spending time sanding each individual one until they're perfectly smooth. It almost doesn't translate in the same way because you think of the souvenir as the cheap take away but actually there is more time and effort invested in that small thing than the monumental thing that's seen as being more valuable.

**LH:** So, this kind of leads in to my next question that could be for all of you, in talking about your monumental pieces (Tim and Rebekah) and Julie, your work that's in the White Box gallery right now are these Miniature Monuments. So I was thinking both about iconic imagery and the monument and some of your re-imagining of the icons of the ceramic art world. How are you thinking about sentimentality or thoughts around these issues?

**JY:** I'm not.

**Rebekah Myers:** No [laughter]. I think a lot of people respond to it in that way, but I don't think we necessarily want to imbue our work with that sentimentality.

**LH:** Well, I'm even just thinking of collection, and these objects and there is something about making these cases for these objects and keeping them safe— there's something there— you know earlier we talked a little bit about nostalgia and that made me think about that. Maybe that goes further into the sentimentality of the "collection"?

**TB:** I mean, I guess I would use the word preciousness— more like we think a lot about preciousness and one of the ironic things about our work is that we spend so much time making really pristine surfaces. So we think of objects, especially in ceramics we think of the object as being precious or fragile, but the most fragile part of our work is just the surface and there's kind of this interesting relationship to notions of superficiality that the surface is the thing we care the most about and that that's imbedded in the work, and in the way that we have to wrap our things in fleece because it's soft and doesn't mar the surface.

**JY:** It's an interesting parallel to contemporary culture and how we see ourselves. People are concerned more with the external rather than the internal.

**TB:** That's one parallel that's easily drawn, especially having moved ten years ago to Southern California, where it's the center of Hollywood culture and people think of it as being a very superficial place—sorry I think I got off on a tangent. But I think there are different levels of preciousness, but sometimes the object itself is a lot of the work. It's just the surface having this preciousness and we're protecting these lucky charms because of what they represent but also because we're protecting the surface because that's the thing that's going to mar, fade, chip—

**RM:**—and gold luster.

**JY:** What do you do when one of those big pieces gets scratched?

**RM:** You can sand it down, or buff it, repaint it.

**JY:** We all make work like this don't we?

**TB:** Unfortunately—

[laughter]

**RM:** I don't know, I think that the sentimentality is something that a collector brings to the objects when they add it to the other items that they're collecting.

**LH:** Yeah, it's not the maker, but it's the collector adding that.

**RM:** For us yes, I think so.

**TB:** If we felt sentimental about the objects it would be hard to part with them. I like to see them leave and go to someone else.

**JY:** I think that it's much more interesting to make them, than have them ya know? I think as a maker I'm more interested in the ideas around making, figuring out ideas through making and once that's done it doesn't seem as important to me anymore. So I guess I'm more sentimental about the process rather than the product.

**LH:** I have a question for you, Julie. There is a strong element of composition in your work, in the way that things are positioned, particularly in reference to each other, to maybe a background or a surface that they're sitting on, so if you could talk about how you think about composition and how you approach it.

**JY:** I think that the formalist aspects of my work are truly important and I think that the body of work that you're mainly referring to sounds like the Reflectionnoitcelfer series and yeah that work was the most spiritual

work I've made if I'm honest. It was a body of work I made to mourn my mother's passing. I was really interested in the real and the ethereal and the way that something moves from a physical form into a more ethereal kind of form. So that was the object versus the mirrored reflection. And for that work I wanted everything just to be perfect. The composition really came out of achieving a visual sense of balance so that things felt really peaceful, really tranquil. I really looked a lot at dutch still life painting believe it or not, even though the work does not reflect that in any way. I also looked at japanese aesthetics and their sense of composition within gardens and architecture. So yeah, it's interesting with those works—something I was talking about with you today—those objects can be moved around forever and ever. I probably made 500 pieces, but only used eight. It's that fact that when you actually glue them down that they become finished. It took me hours to really figure out that composition and that really happens in an intuitive way and realizing where balance lies.

**LH:** Rebekah and Tim, titling seems to be a very integral aspect of your work and also language. In your lecture you had several quotes from literature that tied in with each series. So you can talk about that more if you'd like, but my original question is, which comes first: the work or the title? And how do you come up with those titles. But you don't have to give away any secrets though either—

**TB:** There are no secrets—

**RM:** No—there's no secrets. Usually the title comes second and we often like to choose an idiom or some other sort of saying and maybe we'll use it exactly as is or we'll kind

of turn it around a little bit. We'll have a whole exhibition with several works so the titles work together or play off one another.

**TB:** We like ellipses and the incomplete idiom. I think this is reflected in our work as this idea of disappearance or what's missing, so we want to the viewer or reader to complete the thing. Like the last piece that we showed in our lecture, Now you see it, we want people to think "now you don't." I've always thought (since undergrad) a lot about titling. I was exposed to some specific artists whose titling was very important in their work, in expanding the content. And not in the way that you want to get to the title or the didactic first, but that after you see the piece and then you read the title, it elicits more and I think that's always something we're striving for.

**RM:** Definitely.

**LH:** Julie, a lot of your work seems to be based on geometry, angles, line and structure, so I'm curious if architecture informs these shapes for you?

**JY:** Yes, very much so. My work shifts every five years, so this is a new body of work that I started working on about a year and a half ago when I was on sabbatical. I start making work in a place of unknowing. I don't know what I'm doing and I don't want to know. It's through the process of making that I start to understand more things. The older I get, the more I know and it's less fun. I think as a result once I know a lot about the work then I want to stop. I was making a body of work and felt like the questions were being answered so I started to think about new work to make and it didn't really start from the perspective

# The older

# I get

of architecture, it started more around the context of where do I see the work living and what do I make this work for? So, thinking about the hierarchy within art and who gets to see art?

I started thinking about making art that could operate in a public spectrum and I was also thinking about how I make work for the gallery, for the white cube so I started making drawings that were architectural drawings of gallery spaces. That's where the reference to architecture came and I was really interested in making work that reflected 2D images, but also this illusion of 3D perspective and so I've been working with these drawings. Basically I built the context into the work itself. As I've moved forward, I've started to contextualize art within that space that I created. All of my work centers around this idea of visual perception and distortion or perceiving things with some sort of perceptual handicap. I think the work really vacillates between two and three dimensional spaces.

I spent some time in Japan on two occasions. I was at Shigaraki and the architecture there was amazing and I was very inspired by a lot of architects and started to look at these drawings. I have them cut on a water-jet cutter and in looking at the parts and looking at the reference to architecture and how I could take those fragments and start to create three dimensional sculptures that could then become public projects. That's where the Miniature Monuments series comes from. The work definitely reflects architecture. I'm curious with the miniature models, more than public sculpture and how difficult that is. I'm really interested in how the notion of scale can be implied through the language of the form so I'm actually quite happy with those

being miniature monuments and how they apply a relationship with being monumental and to scale. But architecture is definitely a starting point for the work.

**LH:** Tim and Rebekah, If you had to sum up your approach to collaboration in 5 words what comes to mind?

**TB:** I guess Partnership in one word—uhhh—yeah.

**RM:** That's a lot of pressure— uhhh— Respect.

**TB:** Trust.

**LH:** Three words is good too!

**TB:** Three words might be enough [laughter].

**LH:** Julie, I was mentioning geometry, structure and architecture, but then you also have the Lens series that is more about these rounded, bodily forms that are very distorted. How are you thinking about abstraction and using material to abstract?

**JY:** I think all of those forms are representational in that that they exist in our culture and are recognizable for either what their function is or maybe symbols for larger subjects. What I find interesting is taking those representational forms and abstracting them through reductive process like these guys [Tim and Rebekah], sanding work for hours and days and years, taking away some of the characteristics of the form through the removal of information. But then the abstraction happens through the space that it's contextualized in. That made the leap for future bodies of work in that I could change the

read of familiar objects. Through the device of the lens or the reductive process I could change things so that our perception or understanding of things shifts through how we view them.

**LH:** So my next question for Tim and Rebekah— Your sculptures of melting popsicles, or half eaten popsicles and ice cream bars and blocks of ice cream are coated in a very luscious, seemingly melting, shiny surface and you've talked in the last few minutes about this perfected shiny surface. This makes me wonder how you're thinking about materiality and desire. There's this attraction to shine—

**TB:** It's not even an attraction to shine—well yeah we're attracted to shiny things, but we're also just attracted to stuff. We're like most people, we like stuff and it takes a lot of control to not fill our house and our lives with all of the beautiful things that exist. Also we can't afford it, but yeah I think as makers we're drawn to stuff and we want to create that same sense of desire in the viewer. The common photo we see on Instagram of people with our work is of them pretending to lick it or getting really close to it in a way that makes us nervous but is also exactly what we want from the viewer. We want that sense of desire.

**JY:** Just not too close

**RM:** I also think that the highly refined surface, you also see it a lot in things that are termed "high-end", like cars, jewelry, furniture, like lacquered—

**JY:** —nail polish

**RM:** —nail polish—so it kind of alludes to that sort of thing too.

**LH:** Speaking of desire and consumption— this is a really hard question for all of you: Chocolate or vanilla and why?

**TB:** I will always go chocolate. Yeah—the darker the better.

**JY:** Neither.

All: Gasp!

**TB:** Neither? Are you a strawberry person?

**JY:** Vinegar!

[laughter]

**TB:** You like pickles?

**JY:** —pickles—

**TB:** I like pickles too.

**RM:** I don't like making choices like that—I think both.

**LH:** A twist?

**RM:** Yeah or neither—I mean I kind of like fruit flavored things also.

**JY:** We're very particular people.

[laughter]

**RM:** Salt!

**JY:** Yes salt! Salt and vinegar—

# the more I

# know and

RM: —potato chips! All the way—all the way.

JY: Rebekah, I knew we would get along well!

RM: Potato chips are on top above everything!

LH: Well that settles that! Thank you guys!!!

it's

less fun.

NATALIE WOOD  
IN CONVERSATION WITH

MK  
GUTH

140

MK  
Guth

141

I had the privilege of attending one of MK Guth's Dinner to Plan a Revolution the night before our interview. After first driving to the wrong place, I arrived late with a cat patterned Pyrex bowl, as we were each instructed to bring our own dishes. MK greeted me kindly and generously shared her homemade soup and salad with the group. I sat at a long picnic style table and was able to have a focused conversation with professors and fellow graduate students about areas we would like to see change in. It was a great opportunity to experience an artist's work before hearing her lecture the following day.

For our interview, we found an empty windowless classroom with sterile tables, bright green plastic chairs and florescent lighting. It was quite the contrast to the warm setting we had just been in. It was great to chat further with MK and hear more about the ideas behind her performances and past projects. I hope to one day see one of her braid performances and the objects that are meant to be installed with her dinners. And MK, if you end up starting that line of obsolete cookies, I want to know about it!

## FOREWORD

**Natalie Wood:** My first question is, what artists and writers are your current influences?

**MK Guth:** In the last several years I've been really looking at artists, scores, and compositions in all different forms. I look at lot at fluxus artists like Dick Higgins. I'm also looking at the construction pieces like Yoko Ono or Alison Knowles. I look at lot at people like Daniel Sperry and people working in food. I look at this moment, this moment in time. Susana Worth is someone that I started reading this last year that I find interesting. I've been looking at Pierre Huyghe over the last several years and that's a contemporary artist, someone that is living and making right now. He's somebody that I find really inspirational.

**NW:** My next question is about the dinner last night. Last night you hosted a Dinner to Plan a Revolution. I'm curious about the background on these dinners, how they came to be, and what are your goals with the project?

**MG:** The dinner projects come out of a shift in making for me. I was working doing interactive projects that mounted objects or installations or drawings, photos, or videos. These came really out of an interest in using objects and texts to instigate interactions, and to create for the audience three different potential experiences.

Traditionally when you come to Dinner to Plan a Revolution, it sits on a shelf and there is objects that go with it, and the book, and other texts. So your first experience with it is really a viewing experience like you'd to a painting or any still life. Then there is that potential of imagining activating it, so that in-between

space, something that's a little bit different that just looking but actually the process of imagining an interaction and participating in your own way, your own creation. And then there's the manifestation of these various different dinners or instructional pieces. And for me, they are about kind of creating a platform in which the audience starts to determine the outcome of the piece. I'm really interested in sites of congeniality, ritualistic sites. Ways of bringing people together so that they can slow down and be in conversation around a topic.

Every one of the dinner pieces is based in research. And that research is kind of like going down a rabbit hole and I let myself go down that rabbit hole. I'll start at one point and it might take me through— like these started out with Niki Giovanni poems and an interest in her poetry which then lead me to looking at activists which lead me to looking at the history of revolution. I have a Sociology major so I'm interested in these things anyway.

And out of that became the idea to do a dinner, to just hang out with people and talk about change. And when we talk about epic change we use the term revolution. But for me revolution is 'eh,' it's just a worn out term that doesn't really mean what it used to mean. So I like the idea of using something that was bankrupt to breathe life into it. And if that life is just sitting with a group of people at a table and having a conversation about the places where they felt they needed to claim agency or evolve or shift. Then that would be a good start because really making a change starts with having an interest and talking about it and speech acts.

**NW:** That leads nicely into my next ques-



tion. I was looking at your website and saw that many of your projects are also interactive performances that depend on audience participation –

**MG:** Oh no, that hasn't be updated [laughter].

**NW:** Ok [laughter] so, I don't know, you can tell me how this connects to your current work. I was thinking about, with the audience participation, how you manage expectations for the end result. Is there an idea of where you want to end up or are you open minded about where it goes?

**MG:** Sure, I always have an idea of where I want to end up. But you're interacting with a group of people, your autonomy is shot out the door. So the best I can do is to set some conditions in which these events, these interactions, this participatory project or performances occur. Right? But then when other people come into play in the sandbox all different kinds of things can happen.

I guess my biggest expectations, my hope is that people can engage these projects as a way of exploring meaning or finding meaning. Because any other form of outcome—when other people are engaging the project all different types of things can shift. Every one of the dinners—that you guys experienced last night—has been utterly different. That's okay. There's things that connect them all. They're all sitting around a table, they're all eating potato leek soup, there's usually too much cheese—haven't figured that one out yet [laughter]. In one way or another people are talking about things that they care about or things that might frustrate them. But how that comes about and how that manifests has been different every time. Even the way that

people read the lyrics to that song has shifted a little. The outcomes are really more in the realm of meaning and exploring meaning that it is in any tangible outcome.

**NW:** I noticed that you have repeated the braid performance a number of times—

**MG:** So many times.

**NW:** And at different times.

**MG:** Seriously, I could do that for the rest of my life. Just like Red Shoe Delivery Service. We could have never stopped. Once you go down a path that's where people want you to stay.

**NW:** Yeah. I'm curious about, you've talked about the dinners changing, are there specific ways in which the braid performance has changed over time and specific experiences that have differed based on the places that you have done it?

**MG:** I think it's not just the places but it's the themes. If it's on my body, if it's off my body, who's performing it, location. All those things affect it so every one of them has been different.

One of the things about doing these types of projects is that you have to take into consideration, you're designing a stage in which people are going to participate. And you have to design it in such a way that people realize, for me, that they don't necessarily realize that they are participating in something. So they lose a sense of that. They can stay in the space and engage it or talk to you. Each one of these iterations of the braid project uses different devices in which to entice

people to participate in one way or another. So that might be the furniture that's at the Park Avenue Armory. Right? It might be the uniforms like at Yerba Buena. Or the team of braiders behind me at CIC. So there, there is a long table, so people can come, like an interview and sit and talk with me while this team of people perform the labor of weaving their braids in. They differ because of the thematic qualities. They differ because of the conditions are unique to each site and the populations that come to them are unique. The World Financial Center is completely different than Park Avenue Armory or something like Yerba Buena. So they shift every time.

I'm trying to think about how to give you more information on that, because I think I am so deep into them. For me, each one of these, is creating a stage that people will be willing to be both viewer and performer in. Every situation has been a different challenge.

The CIC, which is the most recent—that's not up on the website—that's four braids coming off the back of my head and eight people braiding behind me. And the piece was called Fireworks Astronaut Deep Pool Venus, and the show The Memory Palace so the piece was revolved around memory. People we asked to write a memory and insert it into the braid. It was done in the lobby of this art center and all these different populations are coming in at time. Kids, groups, there was a refugee group. And they are all experiencing it in a different way. I was told ahead of time that this might be the case. So I wanted it to be something where, they could see something happening but they could also be one-on-one in a conversation with me if they wanted to. I think that, in some ways, made it

easier. Because sometimes that type of content, asking people to write down memories can be emotional, which is really different than a wish, or a regret even, or an aspiration.

**NW:** That's great.

**MG:** That was a meandering kind of answering. Sorry about that. Good luck on transcribing! [laughing]

**NW:** No, it's good. I have two more questions. I noticed many references to fairy tales and fantasy in your work with the Princess on the Tongue series, the braids like Rapunzel, and mermaids in the Allegories for Possible Hopes and Fears. What is your relationship to and interest in fairy tales?

**MG:** I just have an interest in mythic representations. I studied a lot of that when I was in undergrad. I studied folklore and fables and myths. For me, I like how they are reflecting back on us. You know, they are telling us something about ourselves, about agency, power, identity. And yet they are these amazingly collapsed systems that we can never really enter. You can never be as miraculous as superwoman and you really come up to these representations and yet throughout time these things have existed as tales to explain the world to us. Some of them are about being heroic, some of them are cautionary. They're devices that I like to use and try to update so they might have vitality, because they tend to be universal. They're told in different ways with different characters in all nationalities and they're narratives, and we respond to narratives. Even in our own lives, we explain our lives as narratives.

**NW:** Okay, my last question is: If you could

Once you go

down a path that's

be anything instead of an artist what would you be?

**MG:** I've had two choices there. In the beginning I would have been a researcher. I enjoy research. My work is connected to it and emerges out of it. I studied sociology for a reason. More recently I think I would like to be a chef. I like to cook. I like to cook things that other people don't like to cook. Like cookies that nobody wants to futz with anymore because the molds aren't being made anymore. Kind of out of date things that people have lost interest in. I joke about it a lot. I'm like, you know if this doesn't work out, I'm going to start a line of obsolete cookies. That's what it is gonna be. So I would probably say one or the other.

**NW:** That's awesome. Thank you.

**MG:** Thank you.

where people want

you to stay.

## RUBY NERI

Ruby Neri (b. 1970, San Francisco) has participated in numerous exhibitions, including most recently *Villa of Mysteries*, Los Angeles Museum of Art (2016); *Napa Valley Collects*, Napa Valley Museum, Yountville, California (2016); *NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015); *Fertile Ground: Art and Community in California*, Oakland Museum of California in collaboration with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2014); *The Oracle*, The Underground Museum, Los Angeles (2014); *Energy That is All Around: Mission School*, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, and San Francisco Art Institute (2013-14); *The Possible*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California (2014); *Busted*, High Line Art, New York (2013); and *Made in L.A. 2012*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2012). Neri lives and works in Los Angeles.

## STEPHANIE SYJUCO

Born in the Philippines, Syjucó received her MFA from Stanford University and BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. She is the recipient of a 2014 Guggenheim Fellowship Award and a 2009 Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Award. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally, and included in exhibitions at MoMA/P.S.1, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, ZKM Center for Art and Technology, the California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art, The 12th Havana Bienal, The 2015 Asian Art Biennial (Taiwan), among others. A long-time educator, she has taught at Stanford University, The California College of the Arts, The San Francisco Art Institute, Carnegie Mellon University, and most recently joined the faculty at the University of Califor-

nia at Berkeley in January 2014 as an Assistant Professor in Sculpture. She lives and works in Oakland, California.

## BENJAMIN LEVY

Benjamin Levy is a curator, print scholar, and printmaker. He is currently the Assistant Curator of Collections and Academic Programs at the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington. Previously he was in the Prints, Drawings & Photographs Department at the Baltimore Museum of Art. While in Baltimore he co-directed the Baltimore Fair for Contemporary Prints and was a contributor to *Bmore Art* magazine. A graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art in Printmaking and Book Arts, he trained as a collaborative master printer. He is a contributor for *Art in Print*, sits on the board of the Tamarind Institute of Lithography, and is currently involved with a catalog and traveling exhibition of the work of Stanley William Hayter and his workshop, the Atelier 17.

## JOHN DIVOLA

John Divola is a contemporary visual artist who works in photography, describing himself as exploring the landscape by looking for the edge between the abstract and the specific. Although the physical subjects that Divola photographs range from buildings to landscapes to objects in the studio, his concerns are conceptual: they challenge the boundaries between fiction and reality, as well as the limitations of art to describe life. Divola is from Southern California, and his imagery often reflects that locale by including urban Los Angeles or the nearby ocean, mountains, and desert. He currently lives and works in Riverside, CA. Divola has taught photography and art at numerous institutions including California Institute of the Arts (1978-1988), and since 1988 he has been a Professor of Art at the University of California, Riverside.

## SAM MOYER

Sam Moyer has exhibited her work at The Drawing Center (New York, NY), The Bass Museum (Miami, FL), University of Albany Art Museum (Albany, NY), The Public Art Fund (New York, NY), White Flag Projects and The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (St. Louis, MO), LAND (Los Angeles, CA), Tensta Konsthall (Stockholm, SW), Cleopatra's Greenpoint (Brooklyn, NY), and Société (Berlin, DE). She has also participated in "Greater New York" and "Between Spaces" at PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens. Exhibitions of her work have also been shown at Rachel Uffner Gallery, Galerie Rodolphe Janssen (Brussels, BE), Venus over Manhattan (New York, NY), Autocenter (Berlin, GE), and Artists Space (New York, NY) among other venues. She received her BFA from the Corcoran College of Art and Design and her MFA from Yale. She lives and works in Brooklyn.

## RUBA KATRIB

Ruba Katrib is curator at Sculpture Center in Long Island City, New York, where she has produced the group shows *The Eccentrics* (2015), *Puddle, Pothole, Portal* (2014) (co-curated with artist Camille Henrot), *Better Homes* (2013) and *A Disagreeable Object* (2012). Recent solo shows include exhibitions with Rochelle Goldberg (2016), Anthea Hamilton, Gabriel Sierra, Magali Reus, Michael E. Smith and Erika Verzutti (all 2015). Katrib's previous post was as associate curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), North Miami, she organized several acclaimed solo and group exhibitions.

## WILLIAM WYLIE

William Wylie's photographs and videos have been shown both nationally and internationally. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art,

National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Art, and Yale University Art Museum, among others. He has published four books of his work: *Riverwalk* (University Press of Colorado, 2000), *Stillwater* (Nazraeli Press, 2002), *Carrara* (Center for American Places, 2009), and *Route 36* (Flood Editions, 2010) and has his fifth title, *Prairie*, scheduled for publication Fall 2017. His awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005, a VMFA Professional Fellowship in 2011 and the Yale Museum's Doran / LeWitt Fellowship in 2012 and 2014. He lives in Charlottesville where he teaches photography at the University of Virginia.

## BENJAMIN BRATTON

Benjamin H. Bratton's work spans Philosophy, Art, Design and Computer Science. He is Professor of Visual Arts and Director of the Center for Design and Geopolitics at the University of California, San Diego. He recently founded the school's new Speculative Design undergraduate major. He is also a Professor of Digital Design at The European Graduate School and Visiting Faculty at SCL\_Arc (The Southern California Institute of Architecture). Marianne Fairbanks Marianne Fairbanks is a visual artist, designer, curator and Assistant Professor of Design Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Fibers and Material Studies and her BFA from the University of Michigan in Fibers. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues including The Museum of Art and Design, NY, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, The Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, and Museum London, Ontario. Fairbanks is a founding member of Mess Hall, an experimental cultural space in Chicago, and

# UNIVERSITY

# OF OREGON

co-founder of Noon Solar, a small business that made wearable solar technology to charge personal electronics. For 10 years she was part of the collaborative art group, JAM. Additionally, she is conducting collaborative research with a chemist to create a solar textile.

### MARIANNE FAIRBANKS

Marianne Fairbanks is a visual artist, designer, curator and Assistant Professor of Design Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Fibers and Material Studies and her BFA from the University of Michigan in Fibers. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues including The Museum of Art and Design, NY, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, The Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, and Museum London, Ontario. Fairbanks is a founding member of Mess Hall, an experimental cultural space in Chicago, and co-founder of Noon Solar, a small business that made wearable solar technology to charge personal electronics. For 10 years she was part of the collaborative art group, JAM. Additionally, she is conducting collaborative research with a chemist to create a solar textile.

### JULIA BRADSHAW

Julia Bradshaw is Assistant Professor of Photography and New Media Communications at Oregon State University. British-born she spent nine years living and working in Munich, Germany prior to moving to the United States. These international moves, second-language and cultural experiences are often the fodder for her artworks. Her creative projects make use of photography and video to problem-solve and comment on issues of the everyday; such as language, social-issues, or being an artist.

### GABRIELLE JENNINGS

Gabrielle Jennings is a multi-media artist and Associate Professor teaching in the Graduate Art program at the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena. Jennings' visual work blends media critique with the autobiographical, often appropriating from television and magazines. Most recently, Jennings' solo show Country Roads in Los Angeles, paired the back to the land movement of the 1970's, with television shows from the same era like Little House on the Prairie and Green Acres. Jennings has edited a collection of essays for University of California Press Abstract Video: The Moving Image in Contemporary Art. This groundbreaking volume includes a diverse set of essays centered around the question of abstraction in the moving image arts. Jennings has been artist in residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin and 200 Gertrude Street Artist Spaces, Melbourne and has been honored with support from such organizations as the Art Matters Fellowship, Philip Morris Kunstförderung, and the Samsung Faculty Enrichment Grant.

### MICHELLE GRABNER

Michelle Grabner is an artist and writer. She is the Crown Family Professor of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has also taught at The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Cranbrook Academy of Art; Yale Norfolk; Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts - Bard College; Yale University School of Art; the University of Pennsylvania; and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine. Her work is represented in New York City by James Cohan Gallery. In the Midwest she is represented by the Green gallery, Milwaukee. She co-curated the 2014 Whitney Biennial and the 2016 Portland Biennial.

### NORA NARANJO MORSE

Nora Naranjo Morse is a sculptor, writer, and producer of video films that look at the continuing social changes within Pueblo Indian culture. An artist best known for her work with clay and organic materials, she has been trained in the Pueblo clay work tradition of the Southwest. Her installation exhibits and large-scale public art speak to environmental, cultural, and social practice issues. Beyond New Mexico, her work can be seen at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C. She studied at the College of Santa Fe, where she received her B.A. degree in 1980, and is the recipient of an honorary degree from Skidmore College. In 2014 Naranjo Morse was awarded a Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Artist fellowship. She is the author of two books: a poetry collection, *Mud Woman: Poems from the Clay*, and a children's book, *Kaa Povi*.

### JEREMY BAILEY

Jeremy Bailey is a Toronto-based, self-proclaimed Famous New Media Artist. "Since the early noughties Bailey has ploughed a compelling, and often hilarious, road through the various developments of digital communications technologies." (Morgan Quaintance, *Rhizome*) Bailey has performed and exhibited all over the world, from bathrooms in Buffalo to museums in Moscow.

### ERKKI HUHTAMO

Erkki Huhtamo is known as a founding figure of media archaeology. He has published extensively on media culture and media arts, lectured worldwide, given stage performances, curated exhibitions, and directed TV programs. He is a professor at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Departments

of Design Media Arts, and Film, Television, and Digital Media. His most recent book is *Illusions in Motion. Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (The MIT Press, 2013).

### KATIE HERZOG

Katie Herzog lives and works in Los Angeles. She has participated in residencies at Bblackboxx, in Basel, Switzerland, the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada, Program Initiative for Art and Architecture Collaborations in Berlin, Germany, and Ox-Bow in Saugatuck, Michigan. She has received an ARC Grant, and the Florence Leif Award For Excellence In Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her exhibitions in Los Angeles have been held at Monte Vista Projects, Night Gallery, Autonomie, Actual Size Gallery, and Circus Gallery among others, as well as at numerous public and commercial venues across California. She has also shown work at venues in England, Philadelphia, Illinois, Canada and Mexico, including a solo presentation at NADA NY with Klowden Mann in 2015. Herzog received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2001, and her MFA from the University of California, San Diego in 2005, with additional study at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and Columbia University. She serves as the Director of the Molesworth Institute, and is a Board Director for Monterey County Free Libraries.

### BOBBI WOODS

Bobbi Woods was born in St. Louis, Missouri. She earned a BA in photography from Columbia College, Chicago, a BFA and an MFA from the ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, in 2004 and 2008, and studied at Stuedelschule, Frankfurt/Main, Germany. In 2015, Woods participated in The Manifest Destiny Billboard Project presented by LAND (Tucson, AZ),

a two-person exhibition with Brian Kennon at Fourteen30 Contemporary (Portland, OR.), and an exhibition at Ditch Projects (Springfield, OR.) with Mark Verabioff. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, most recently at Pepin Moore, Los Angeles; Loudhailer Gallery, Los Angeles; Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland; Infernoesque, Berlin; Derek Eller, New York; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York; White Columns, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice, France. Bobbi Woods lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and in Portland, OR.

### **SANDOW BIRK**

Sadow Birk is a graduate of the Otis College of Art and Design. His work largely concerns itself with issues pertinent to the politics of contemporary life and he borrows liberally from art history for his work's compositional and conceptual framework. Birk works across media, and his projects are often expansive in scope, taking on great works of literature, religion, and law. His quest is for subjects that are challenging and germane to cogent political topics and have included urban violence, graffiti, the war in Iraq, prison growth, water rights in California, manifest destiny, morbid disease in America, surfing, and skateboarding. Single-handedly creating a hand-transcribed and illuminated manuscript of the Holy Qur'an since 2001, Birk's American Qur'an is a consideration of the holy text against the backdrop of scenes from contemporary American life.

### **JULIE YORK**

Julie York is an artist who works in traditional craft materials using non-traditional approaches. She is one of many recognized makers currently redefining the use of ceramics. York received the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, the In-

dependence Foundation Fellowship and many Creative Production Grants from the Canada Council for the Arts. Her work has been included in numerous shows nationally and internationally including shows in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, and Vancouver. Her work has been included in many permanent and private collections including The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and The Racine Art Museum, Wisconsin. York is an Associate Professor of Audain School of Visual Arts at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver Canada. She received her BFA from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design and her MFA from New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. Subsequently, she has held fellowships and residencies at Shigaraki, Japan, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, The Clay Studio, Philadelphia, and International Ceramic Research Centre, Denmark.

### **TIM BERG & REBEKAH MYERS**

Tim Berg and Rebekah Myers are a studio art collaborative based in Claremont, California. Berg and Myers have participated in multiple solo exhibitions including On the Bright Side... at Falconer Gallery at Grinnell College in Grinnell, IA (2016), Site Unseen at the American Museum of Ceramic Art in Pomona, CA (2014); Honest to Goodness at Santa Barbara City College (2014); An embarrassment of riches at Dean Project Gallery in New York, NY (2013); and As Luck Would Have It at Nääs Konstantverk Galleri in Göteborg, Sweden (2009). Over the years Berg and Myers have also participated in numerous group exhibitions in the US, Mexico, South Korea, Qatar and Kuwait. Their work is included in many private and public collections including The Betty Woodman Collection at the University of Colorado and the Biedermann Museum in Germany. Berg addi-

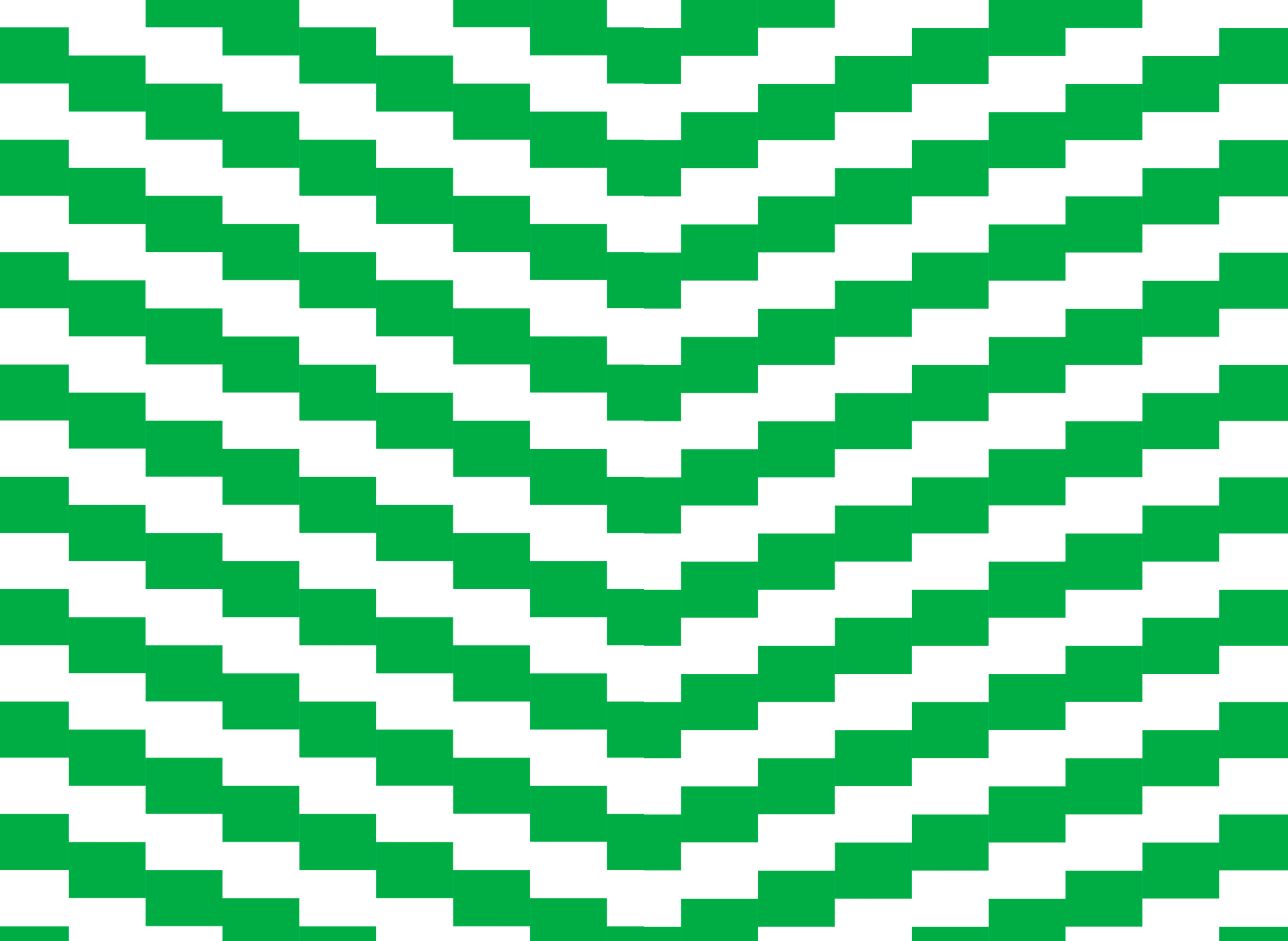
tionally works as an Associate Professor of Art at Pitzer College in Claremont, California.

### **MK GUTH**

An alumna of the New York University graduate school of fine arts, MK Guth has exhibited her work internationally at numerous museums, galleries and festivals including, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, The Melbourne International Arts Festival, Nottdance Festival, England, The Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Boise Art Museum, Gallery-Pfeister, Gudhjem Denmark, Franklin Parrasch Gallery NYC, Cristin Tierney, NYC, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, PDX, Swiss Institute, NYC, White Columns, NYC, The Frye Art Museum, and The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington. Guth is a founding member of the RED SHOEDELIVERY SERVICE, a collaborative performance project with artists Molly Dilworth and Cris Moss. She is the recipient of several awards including, the Betty Bowen Special Recognition Award, administered by The Seattle Art Museum, and a Ford Family Foundation Fellowship.

# ARTIST

# BIOGRAPHIES



Ruby Neri  
Stephanie Syjuco  
Benjamin Levy  
John Divola  
Sam Moyer  
Ruba Katrib  
William Wylie  
Benjamin Bratton  
Marianne Fairbanks  
Julia Bradshaw  
Gabrielle Jennings  
Michelle Grabner  
Nora Noranjo Morse  
Jeremy Bailey  
Erkki Huhtamo  
Katie Herzog  
Bobbi Woods  
Sandow Birk  
Julie York, Tim Berg  $\Sigma$ ,  
Rebekah Meyers  
MK Guth

2016  
2017