2017 MFA GRADUATE EXHIBITION

**EMBODIED**
Morgan Campbell
Ziya Lin
Nurgul Rodriguez
Elmira Sarreshtehdari

**Urban Salvage Sculpture**
Greg Robb

**Chaotic/Neutral**
Brandon Hearty
EMBODIED
August 11 - September 24, 2017
Nickle Galleries, located in the Taylor Family Digital Library

Urban Salvage Sculpture
August 7 - September 1, 2017
The Little Gallery, located on the 6 floor, Art Building, UCalgary

Chaotic/Neutral
August 15 - September 5, 2017
EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society (2005 10 Ave SW)

Organized by the Department of Art, University of Calgary

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and Agni

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
When we welcomed this cohort to our department two years ago, it was with anticipation about how they would the department, how they would change us. That’s what new students do, especially graduate students. They enter into the midst of an apparently stable, steady and fixed structure of courses and requirements and create change. They bring ideas, uncertainty, passion, preoccupations, media, materials and material handling that might not have come together in just such a way before. They ask committee members to look at work they might not have seen before, and they ask supervisors to read things they might not have read before. We respond in turn by feigning familiarity, quelling uncertainty by associating their work with comfortable frameworks and precedents. They come to classes as teaching assistants and spread change farther and deeper into our program. The three exhibitions of this cohort are the culmination of the ways they have changed us.

We think of creative work, the making of art, as research: especially so for graduate students. Certainly, these artists have read critical theory and their creative work has been informed by research. There are echoes of this in their artist statements: feminism and the domestic sphere, gender performativity, eco-criticism, diasporic subjectivity, affect and the unconscious, mythic narrative and mental health. But there is a reverse process that is equally important. Research is also informed by practice, by the handling of materials, the knowledge that comes only from making. They have taken the “enigmatic step” of creative research, “joining hand, eye and mind in a process of material thinking”. The accomplishment of their material thinking is not in connecting, associating or illustrating a representation with a concept or theory. It is not just in making issues visible. The accomplishment is performative: as research, art embodies new knowledge and brings it into our midst in visceral and affective ways.

The starting point for us as viewers is in sensing their thinking with materials: the smell of car tires, the fractured acoustics of porcelain paper, the gestural play of kitsch and colour, the perceptual gap between an app and what’s on the wall before us, the anxiety of repetitive, bodily gestures, the insight and complicity of passing through a palisade of paper. These are sensory, welcome changes.

Brian Rusted, Head
Department of Art

Starring Nova Gina as the John Deere Cowboy
Oil paint on wood panel, 48" diameter
In my creative research practice, I aim to investigate my body as a site of inscribed social meanings and identities. In *One-Man Show*, I style myself into different gender-bending characters to emphasize the constructed nature and performativity of gender expression. With each new theatrical characterization of myself, I undercut perceived categories of stable gender binaries. My cataloguing of selves opens up an imaginative space of play to explore my relationship with gender norms, identity, and queer subjectivities. The works in the series were inspired by my own hypothetical imagination of how these characters would cause disruption to gendered roles and ideals within suburbia: the culture which cultivated my own sense of normativity.

Using camp aesthetics, I emphasize the bodily stylizations of gender. Specifically, the use of exaggerated makeup, over-the-top costumes, and artificially coloured beards suggests an excessive impersonation of gender rather than a natural way of being. Instead, I aim to frame the signifiers of gender as artificial, fluid, and malleable. As well, I explore camp’s subversive potential against gender norms through experimentation with kitschy framing ornamentation and spot-lighting that enhances the irony and playfulness of the characters. By invading the space with installation elements, I am putting viewers “in the spotlight” for their own level of comfort. I hope to force a confrontation and reflection of one’s perception of gender normativity.

Through this process of performative embodiment and gender role-playing, I have the ability to redefine myself in ways that do not require strict adherence to my biologically assigned gender. The characters in my works become vehicles for my own curiosities about gender. Ultimately, dismantling normative gender shatters personal identity into an array of immense possibilities: an idea that is simultaneously daunting and liberating.
Featuring Venus Envy as the Minivan Maiden
Oil paint on wood panel, 48" diameter
Presenting Farrah Moan as the Middle School Valentine’s Day Dance Chaperone
Oil paint on wood panel, 48” diameter
Tamed III (detail)
charcoal pencil, Xuan paper, 37" x 7.8'
In my MFA program, my artistic practice has revolved around female subjectivity, examining the issues and dilemmas that contemporary Chinese women face.

_Tamed III_ is a rejection of the prevailing stereotype and prejudice in Chinese society that women’s lives should be family-oriented, and women are supposed to take the main responsibility of homemaking. This body of work consists of fifteen small drawings on over life-sized scrolls of Xuan paper, suspended from the ceiling of gallery. It is composed of two components, an outer ring of ten scrolls and an inner ring of five scrolls.

The ten scrolls comprise a ring with an opening on the outside. These scrolls are the embodiment of women, while the drawings depict ten different pictures of the restrained conditions of women. The specific composition suggests a discourse in that women voluntarily form a community, they rise up in a collaborated way to collectively confront the issues. By leaving an entrance to enable viewers to walk into the ring, I hope that they would see a meeting of a women’s group merge, and have a sense that he or she is invited to engage in this conversation.

In the inner part, five drawings of reconstructed kitchenware are displayed. These kitchen utensils are reconfigured and transformed to the tools and weapons: a cutting board is bound to an axe handle, so that the board could be as functional as the blade of axe; a spatula is jointed with a handle of a sword, so the piece is transformed into a dagger; four vertically parallel bamboo-weaving winnowing pans are tied together, constituting a stretcher; a wok is bound with a long handle, composing a manual tool which looks like a shovel; two ladles are in conjunction with a meat fork and a sabre handle, they form a trident. In these drawings, the kitchen utensils retain associations with women’s domestic labour, they are empowered by acquiring menacing qualities, so the result is an evocation of women’s complaint of the imbalanced home obligations, and their appeals and fight for equal rights.
Tamed III (installation view)
charcoal pencil, Xuan paper, 37” x 7.8’
In a new land... Belonging (detail)
Porcelain paper clay, fired Cone 6-8
In the year 2000, I moved to San Francisco, California. Here, I witnessed the dominance of diversity, cross-culturalisation, and multiculturalism. To fit in socially, I didn’t have to change my Turkish name to an English one; however, I had to study the English language, sample Western foods, go to potlucks, and learn how to live as an individual. I migrated to Canada and re-evaluated my existence amidst the displacement or/and replacement of my surroundings. I felt there was a contradiction, and a confusion using a multilanguage system in my home and the use of one official language outside of my home. Dualism has inspired me to create text based art work that provokes thought surrounding the relationship between art and language.

The use of “official language” as composition presents expression of the struggle of the migrants with legal documentations. Immigration processes require legal forms to be filled, applied, submitted, certified, translated, and confirmed by migrants. I wanted to reflect relationships and interactions between individuals and institutions. In addition, the installation *In a new land... Belonging*, contradicts the public and private sphere, that are central to my experience as an artist journeying between cultures and languages. Images and text can be viewed simply in English, like the official conditions, while the sculpture shoulders serve as symbols of emotions. However, their groupings connect the intimacy of memories specific to each side of the space, forcing the audience to be participants of opposition.

The application of imagery, whether traditionally hand painted, hand-made tablets or porcelain shoulders, speaks also of individuals’ diasporic conditions (Cohen, 2008). As the world moves towards greater globalization, technology forces nationalities and cultures to merge. At the same time, these merged cultures are called as diasporas and also are known as universal concerns for some modern and/or developing countries in the twenty first century (Král, 2009).
In a new land... Be longing
porcelain paper clay, unglazed, slip-slab construction, slip casting, fired Cone 6-8, stainless steel
In a new land… Belonging

porcelain paper clay, unglazed, slip-slab construction, slip casting, fired Cone 6-8, stainless steel
Slightly Chronophobic
wood panels, mylar, 28” x 20” x 15” video: 9:23
Elmira Sarreshtehdari

*Chrono-*

“We conceive of time before we conceive of its parts”

Maurice Merleau- Ponty

My artistic practice is mainly concerned with time, duration, temporality and the human psyche in the contemporary era. Within these two installation pieces, *Temporal Horizon* and *Slightly Chronophobic*, I conceptualize temporality of the human being by using dichotomies of mind and body, time and space, still and motion, absence and presence, emotion and anxiety, viewer and embodiment.

The sense of time anxiety as a global issue for the contemporary time is something that most people around the world more or less are experiencing. As Lawrence J. Hatab argues, modern technologies and communication systems have produced a remarkable acceleration in the pace of life: “more can be packed into shorter stretches of time, more can be spread faster and farther, more can be known sooner, more can be done sooner” (Hatab n.d.). This phenomenon creates a sense of disembodiment, wherein the brain is unable to rest and exists separately from the body; I address this phenomenon as Chronophobia or anxiety of time (Lee 2004).

My creative research practice addresses questions such as: How does the temporality of contemporary life impact the human psyche? How much anxiety is being experienced by its influence? How does the body reflect these emotions? I developed these research questions based on an examination of my unconscious and conscious behaviors through performative video and audio recordings, drawing, and installation within two years of MFA program.

Apart from my fascination with the fragile, vulnerable and changeable nature of the body, I believe that mind and body coexist and, therefore, any impact on one of them reflects on the other; with reference to this idea, I intend to visualize my subject matter, the way in which the body’s habitual behaviors result from the human mind’s reactions to a sense of anxiety. Chrono- is inviting the spectators to interact with its components and to create a dialogue between habit and anxiety by activating an emotional and visceral response within the viewer.
Temporal Horizon (installation detail)
laminated rice paper
Temporal Horizon (still)
HD video, 27:06
Greg Robb
Urban Salvage Sculpture

My work, Urban Salvage Sculpture, examines the ways in which people use and dispose of materials in the urban environment. In particular, I am questioning the valuation of wood, steel, and rubber tires once their primary functions have ended and they are deemed no longer useful. By investigating this practice through the rescue and revitalization of these materials, I am creating a new paradigm. I am repurposing zero or negative value materials into fine art objects by challenging entrenched value systems, planned obsolescence and commercial advertising.

My intention is to bring a critical view of humanity’s wasteful practices into perspective and to explain what making artwork from salvaged materials means to me. I believe that our awareness and our sensibility to the world in which we live has strong effects on the choices and decisions that we make including the consumption and disposal of materials. I believe that all humans are connected and we are all grounded on one earth. When I make artwork, I am striving to connect with my fellow man. I want to share what I think and feel through the artwork. The expression of vitality that I present is an attempt to uplift the viewer and to share with them the experience that I have had in the making of the work. I hope that the connections that I make with the materials also come through to the viewer and they can experience these materials in new ways.

<< Renewel Post
wood with crackle paint finish, 46” x 12” x 12”
Black Hole
rubber tires, nails, black paint, 10' x 30'
Antediluvians
linocut, 15” x 22”
Brandon Hearty
_Chaotic/Neutral_

Since 2013, my artistic research has centered on analyzing the connections between escapism and mental health. Using symbols and characters that relate to different sub-cultural groups, _Chaotic/Neutral_ fuses traditional print media with innovative augmented-reality (AR) technology to expand a dialogue about the spaces (real, and virtual) we choose to inhabit. The LayAR app, which can be downloaded by mobile users to view the exhibition, pairs the printed works with animations that map onto the surface of the prints, breathing life into the otherwise static forms hanging on the wall.

The allegory that plays out in the linocut prints and carved wooden reliefs projects layers of meaning into a small handful of simple symbols. Geometric forms that allude to the worlds of both spirituality and role-play gaming provide the setting for a struggle between two animal characters who are not known to be natural enemies, while a third looks on and delivers apparently indecipherable commentary. By leaving the explicit details of this struggle a mystery, the work invites viewers to explore the conceptual space inhabited by these characters in order to determine (or invent) the source of the conflict.
Ensign Bearer
wood, paint 48” x 48”
Eternal Struggle
linocut, 22” x 30”