

Cannibalism in the New World





MexiCali Biennial 2013:

Cannibalism in the New World

The MexiCali Biennial is a dynamic platform for creating new channels of communication between artists and audiences in the US and Mexico. VPAM is proud to host the third MexiCali Biennial from January 19 to April 13, 2013, and this project will include the work of 26 artists and collectives working in a variety of media, from sculpture and performance to video and painting.

The first MexiCali Biennial took place in 2006 at La Casa de Tia Tina in Mexicali, Mexico and Chavez Studios in East Los Angeles. The second MexiCali Biennial took place three years after the first, and was held in four different locations spanning two years and two countries, and the third Biennial is scheduled for early 2013 and will engage with the subject of cannibalism.

The cannibal is a creature that threatens the collapse of identity and ethics, and instills anarchy in the social order. Cannibalism in the New World was one of the central rationales for colonialism, but MexiCali also proposes it as a path forward towards a new model for avant garde practice. Cannibalism can open up radical new spaces in art for bodies and their environmental interactions, and push against the oppressive pressure of hegemonic Western cultural systems. These transformative possibilities can change our relationship with art, and perhaps the world itself.

Curated by:

Ed Gomez, Luis G. Hernandez and Amy Pederson

Participating Artists:

Fred Alvarado, Natalia Anciso, Marycarmen Arroyo Macias, Ana Baranda, Juan Bastardo, Sergio Bromberg, Helen Cahng, Matthew Carter, Carolyn Castaño, Enrique Castrejon, Tony de los Reyes, Map Conception: Deborah Diehl & Arzu Arda Kosar, Dino Dinco and Rafa Esparza, Veronica Duarte, Roni Feldman, Kio Griffith & Carmina Escobar, Zoë Gruni, HELL- (0) featuring: Michael Dee, Martin Durazo and Ichiro Irie, Daniel Lara, Candice Lin, Juan Luna-Avin, Matt MacFarland, Dominic Paul Miller, Flavia Monteiro, Nancy Popp, Peter Bo Rappmund, Christopher Reynolds, Cindy Santos Bravo, and Fidelius X, Rebecca Hernandez, Los Nuevos Maevans

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According to Romanian philosopher Catalin Avramescu, the cannibal is a scholarly creature, a thought experiment that interrogates identity on the verge of collapse, posits an ethics without morals, and instills anarchy into the social order. In the West, “the cannibal is the messenger of disorder, the proof that moral chaos has descended upon us, human nature at its worst, the unusable atom of an impossible social order.” Cannibalism in the New World, whether real or imagined, was one of the central moral rationales for colonialism, and it is no accident that the etymological and sociological origins of the cannibal coincide with the discovery of the Americas.

Historically, utopic tendencies in Western modernism have had a forward thrust, projecting into an imaginary space of the future and driven by the forces of technology. By contrast, the Latin American avant garde project of the last century frequently looked to the past, with the seeds of utopia located not in the technological future, but in the purity of the pre-Colombian and autochthonous past. However, these locations are equally phantasmic. The dependence on either trajectory for a post-colonial artistic practice fails because of this historical myopia, a short-sightedness that can only superficially resolve the conflicts inherent within the production of international contemporary art in any location other than the West. This MexiCali Biennial proposes cannibalism as a strategy for the production of a Latin and North American avant garde in the present.

There is no need to draw a line between actual and symbolic anthropophagy; they are part of the same system of meaning. Through ingestion, digestion, and subsumation, the cannibal bridges the gap between political science and moral philosophy, nature and civilization, north and south, east and west, the self and the other. Beyond the boundaries of civilization is an inverted world where all laws are challenged, “...the limit

beyond which evil nature becomes visible, whence it came and whither it was summoned to return.”

We take as our inspiration the Brazilian Tropicália movement and its anthropophagous tendencies, particularly the work of Hélio Oiticica. Developed in the effervescent cultural climate of the late 1950s, and checked by the military regime of 1968 and the “black years” of institutional violence that followed, Oiticica’s practice opened up radical new spaces in art for bodies and their environmental interactions. These methods of individual and collective production pushed against an aesthetic experience produced by hegemonic cultural and artistic systems, and moved towards a transformation of the world itself. This urgency in regards to transforming the system of



art was part of a cultural and political strategy of opposition to forms of oppression within Brazilian life. It was more than just a move towards a plural, open subjectivity, and encompassed ideas of violence, appropriation, and a post-colonial Latin

American artistic production burdened by the vocabularies of international contemporary art. The transformative possibilities of the experimental in art were predicated on changing our relationship with art and the world itself. These goals are shared by the MexiCali Biennial. Against the reversible world and objectified ideas. Made into cadavers.

Dr. Amy Pederson

Curators: Ed Gomez, Amy Pederson & Luis G. Hernandez

1. Catalin Avramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism* (Princeton, NY: Princeton UP) 2009.
2. Justin E.H. Smith and Catalin Avramescu, “The Raw and the Cooked: Interview with Catalin Avramescu,” *Cabinet* 39 (Fall 2010).
3. Avramescu: 8.
4. Catherine David, “Hélio Oiticica: Brazil Experiment” in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom: Lygia Clark, Gego, Mathias Goeritz, Helio Oiticica, and Mira Schendel* (Los Angeles, CA: MOCA) 2000.
5. Oswaldo de Andrade, *Manifesto Antropofago* (1928).



Fred Alvarado

Resides in Oakland, CA - United States

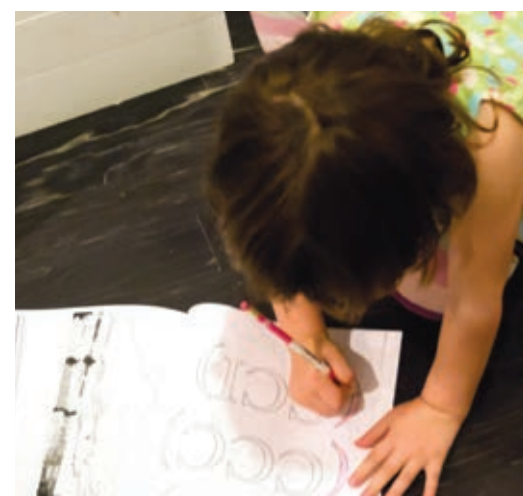
This work is in part a record of the artist's travels along the California corridors, and in part a meditation on the state as the location of many parallels and contradictions.

It is a place of extremes, but also the locus of dreams, both El Dorado and the ultimate westward terminus of manifest destiny. Sound, images and interactive drawings are brought together in order to create a fragmented yet collective history of place.



Opening Night Performance
The Farmeros; A Coloring Book & Video
The People Movers, 2012

ASP CCC CCI CIM CIW
CMF CMC CRC CEN
COR LAC SAC SOL CAL
SATF CCWF CSV FCTF
DVIF SP HDSP ISP SQ
KVCD MOC D NK CD DD



Natalia Anciso

Resides in Oakland, CA - United States

This installation, roughly translated as “chatting with the gossips,” takes place in the kitchen, the heart of the home and a safe place of retreat from the world. Anciso reconfigures vernacular arts like paño arte, handkerchief art believed to have emerged from Chicano prisoners in the 1940s, and the huipil, embroidered Mayan textiles worn by indigenous women in Southern and Central America, in order to tell stories of contemporary life along La Frontera.



Platicando con las Comarades, 2012

“Chatting with the gossips”
watercolor and pen on fabric, table, chairs, and plastic sheeting



Marycarmen Arroyo Macias

Resides in Mexicali, Mexico

Holy communion is a cannibal act: Take this and eat it, for this is my body which is given for you. The Words of Institution echo those of Christ at the Last Supper, and are repeated at every consecration of bread and wine.

Painted here in blood, the artist invokes this phrase in order to address modern economic concerns: the sacrifice of nature in favor of economic growth, the privileging of untrammelled development over humane working conditions, and the loss of happiness and love in the face of obligation and debt.

Tomad y Comed, 2012
blood on wall

"Tomad y comed,
este es mi cuerpo
que será entregado
por vosotros..."

Ana Baranda

Resides in North Carolina- United States

In this project, Baranda appropriates materials and objects that belonged to her parents, and references their connection to gendered labor through textiles.

Baranda dissects and reassembles a woman's apron and a man's security guard uniform, with her resulting cannibal creations bringing to mind hard questions about the capitalization of marginalization.

Jorge's Holiday, 2012

thread, cotton, and silk napkins on dress shirt

Echale Ganas, 2012

thread on repurposed uniform

I've Been Meaning To Tell Something, 2012

thread, cotton, and silk, napkins on dress pants



Juan Bastardo

Resides in Guadalajara, Mexico

This work takes its title from the 1967 film starring Katherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, and Sidney Poitier as a racially ineligible suitor.

Here, Bastardo reimagines this narrative as one where the expected guest does not eat, but is eaten instead.

This twist is made even more frightening by evidence that “dinner” has escaped, and questions are raised about the sovereignty between men and beasts.



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, 2012



Sergio Bromberg

Resides in Santa Monica, CA - United States

Welcome to the MexiCali Biennial Approach the stainless steel and place your face and right hand in openings.

Bienvenido a la Bienal Mexicali Acerquese al acero inoxidable de control y coloque su cara y la mano derecha en las aberturas.



Checkpoint with stainless steel, 2012
Punto de Control con Acero Inoxidable, 2012



Helen Cahng

Resides in Los Angeles, CA - United States

By grafting a body part on to the wall, Cahng has anthropomorphized the architecture of the gallery space.

This solitary ear allows spectators to eavesdrop on their neighbors, and calls our attention to the surveillance which has become a constant condition of everyday life.



A Saucy Fool, 2012
plaster, speaker, and microphone



Matthew Carter

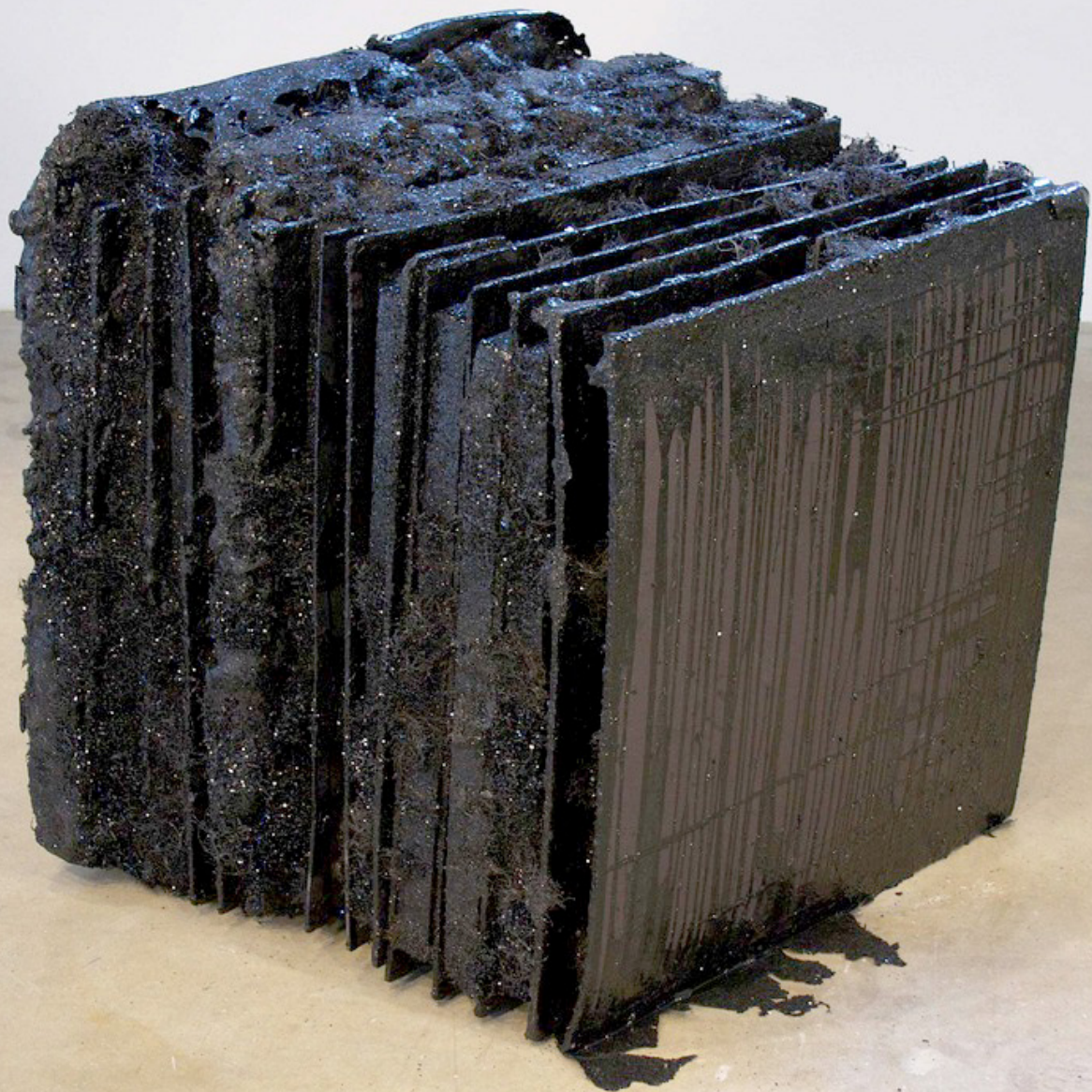
Resides in Los Angeles, CA - United States

This sculpture is the literal manifestation of a quote by Zak Bagans, a supernatural investigator and reality television personality on the Travel Channel show Ghost Adventures.

The premise of this show is to prove the existence of ghosts through a series of overnight investigations in supposedly haunted places. Bagans and his team proceed to patronize and bully the ghosts, with their own over-the-top showmanship compensating for the obvious lack of genuine paranormal activity being recorded.

Bagans's militaristic and authoritarian style allows viewers to feel a shared sense of victory over death and the unknown. Carter makes Bagans's language concrete and uses his hyperbole as a template for producing material form.

Five Stacks of Death, Dread and Darkness, 2012
mixed media



Carolyn Castano

Resides in Los Angeles, CA - United States

This video addresses perceptions of Latin American women in news and entertainment through a simulated newscast exploring gender and popular notions of Latina femininity.



El Reporte Feminil/ The Female Report, 2012
Video, 12:10 minutes



Miss Narco-trafficking
from a small town.

Enrique Castrejon

Resides in Los Angeles, CA - United States

Castrejon's images are literally cannibalistic, composed as they are by collaged slices and microtomes of digital and print images.

These pieces are further dissected and reconnected by precise yet abstract measurements and mapping.

Shapes become units and images become numbers as graphic imagery is transformed into geometric and quantified drawings through measurement and calculations.

After Death: Smiling and Measurements (Red Skull), 2009
collage, glue, pigmented ink on paper

Calculated Revenge: Evidence, 2011
collage, glue, pigmented ink on paper

Lick, 2011
collage, glue, pigmented ink on paper

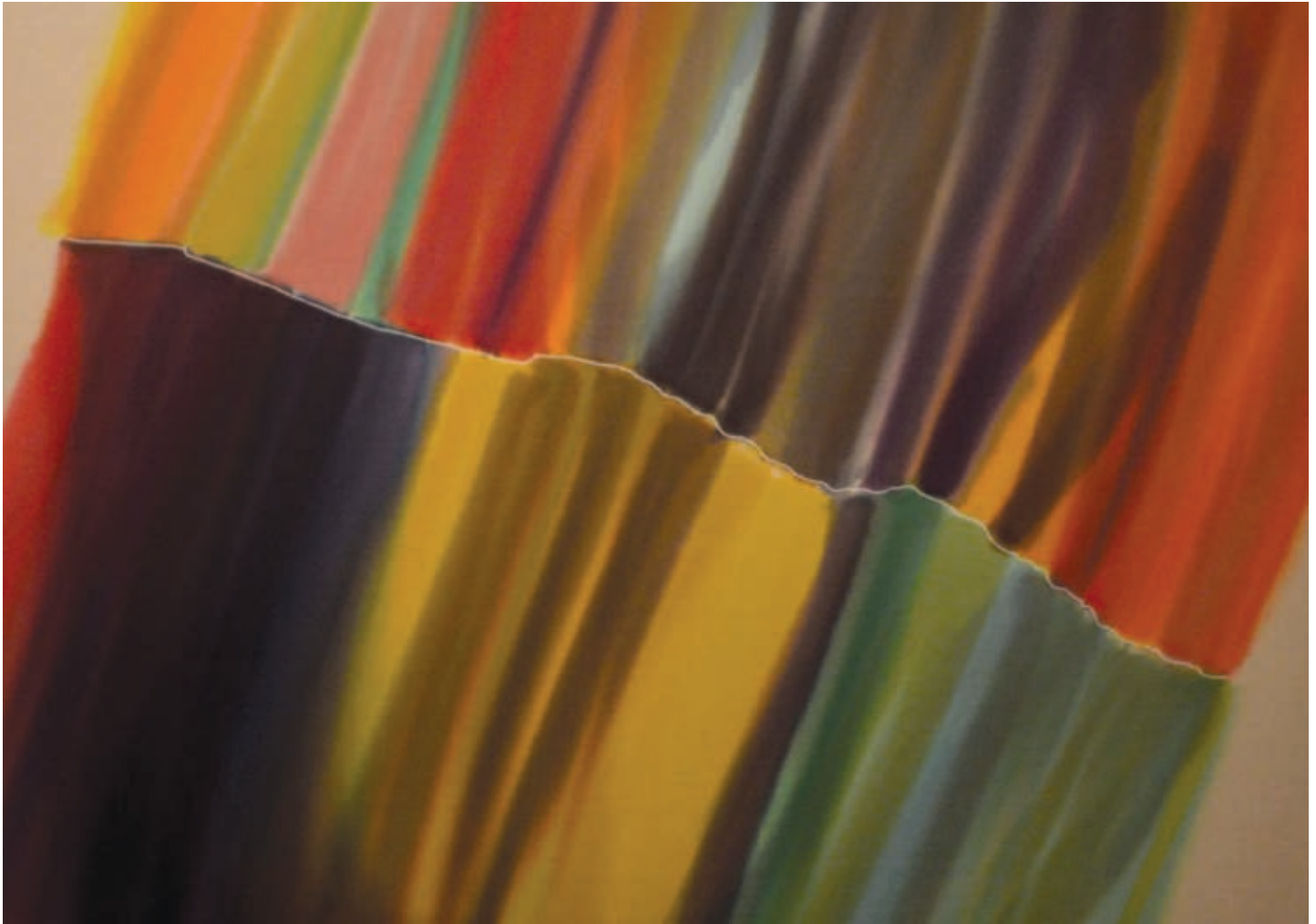


Tony de los Reyes

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

De Los Reyes's Border Series paintings combine two types of "order": abstract painting with the border that separates Mexico and the United States. Here, raw linen is saturated with multiple layers of fabric dyes to create pervasive areas of color. These colors form oppositions through their encounter, or blend to make subtle atmospheres of colored space. Superimposed on these are singular, thin lines of oil paint that refer explicitly to specific, delineated spaces on the U.S.-Mexican border. This push and pull of "landscape" and "border," which is inherent in mapping, also happens to be the most significant occupation of abstract painting.

Border Theory, 2012
(second compression / destellos espectrales)
dye and oil on linen



Deborah Diehl & Arzu Arda Kosar

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

Since their inception, maps have been a means by which to order the universe, to issue calls to adventure, and to negotiate anxieties. Stitched together from the pages of the once ubiquitous Thomas Guide, this map of Los Angeles is marked by locations of comfort and fear by its spectator/participants.



Map Conception, 2012
interactive map



Dino Dinco & Rafa Esparza

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

This collaborative and interactive project features a custom-made paleta cart from which the artists distribute paletas de sangre, or blood popsicles. The cart is branded with a logo adapted from the famous confectionary brand La Michoacana, which itself was recently renamed and rebranded by its parent company in order to aggressively distance itself from the well-known narco-cartel, La Familia Michoacana. As the audience consumes the art, they themselves become implicated in the bi-national flood of violence and murder brought about by the drug trade which is so prevalent in Mexico and California.

Paletas de Sangre, 2012

palatero cart and freezer unit, edible popsicles

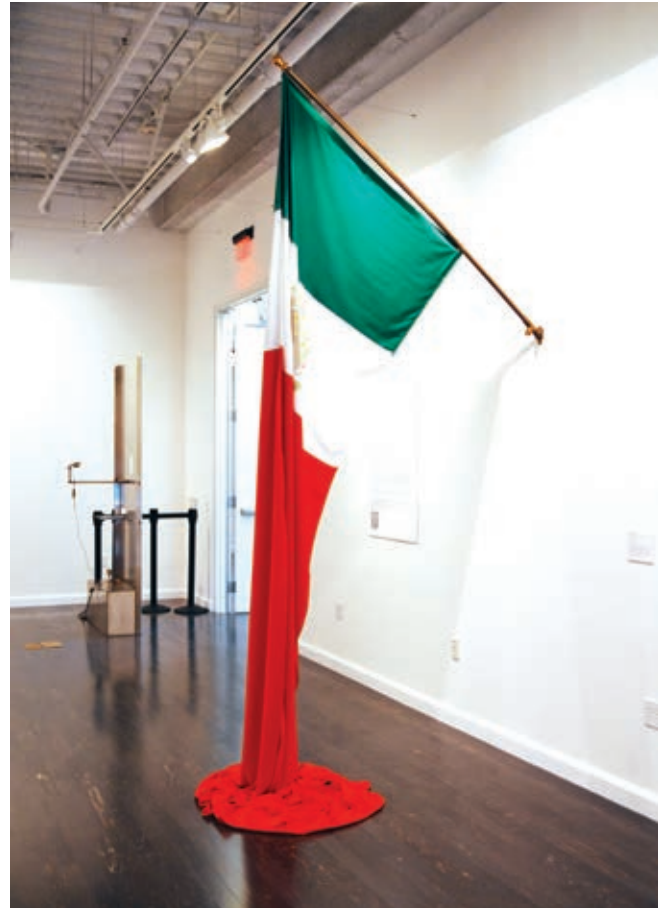


Veronica Duarte

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

Red Flag is emblematic of the narco violence taking place in Mexico, bloodshed that is often overlooked by North Americans in favor of other, higher profile wars overseas. The artist feels that Mexico's proximity is what fosters this myopia, and so she created Red Flag/ Bandera Roja as a delayed warning to those who have not yet been sensitized to the realities of violence taking place in their neighboring country south of the border. The work is intended to alert us to our interdependence and our hybridity with the hope and goal of working towards peace.

Red Flag/Bandera Roja, 2013
hand-painted fabric and flag pole





Michael Dee, Martin Durazo & Ichiro Irie

Resides in Los Angeles, CA & Tujunga Canyon, CA

Developed out of jam sessions in Los Angeles and video projects in Mexico City, HELL-(O) is a music and performance project between three artists and other collaborators who share an affinity for punk, drone metal, and other forms of experimental music. They play moody, bone crushing cords and thunderous drums that will inspire dancers to move in slow, dark, and provocative actions, and for the audience to share in their own contemplative space.



HELLO-(O), 2012

G&L bass guitar in case (29 year old, hand-made bass guitar) and guitar stand; Cloud sculpture-melted plastic; T-shirts: 10x10" prints

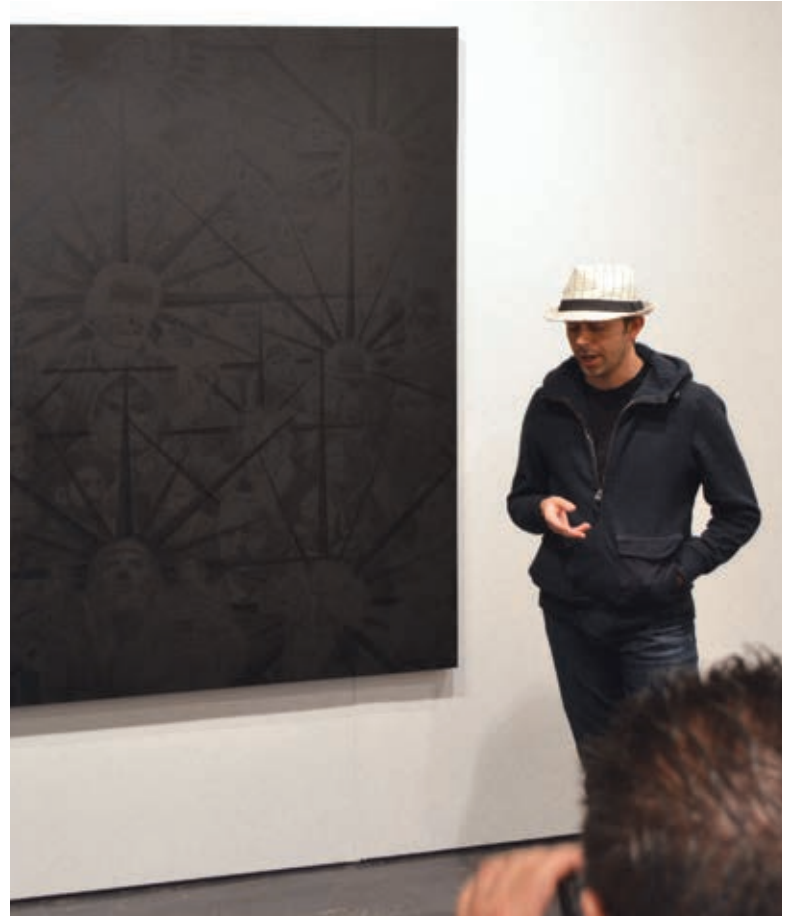


Roni Feldman

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

Anchored by Christopher Columbus, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Aldous Huxley, these are portraits of seekers. Among them are visionaries, scientists, adventurers and lost souls; these are explorers of all frontiers — psychological, geographical, physical, spiritual, and psychedelic. The stories they represent are a mix of miraculous discoveries and bloody conquests, the layers of richly stratified histories underlying this, the New World.

The New World, 2012
varnish and acrylic airbrushed on canvas





Kio Griffith & Carmina Escobar

Resides in Los Angeles, CA & Mexico City, Cuernavaca

This is a collaborative and documentary project engaged with the abstraction and transformation of language into sound. Since June 2012, the artists met weekly for twenty minutes at a time for fifty weeks total with the goal of composing musical pieces through spoken and written word, and using the voice as an instrument.

Because of distance (Los Angeles—Mexico City), information was exchanged through free Internet communication services such as Skype, chat, text messaging, and audio recording freeware. This material, over 1000 minutes of sound, was taken on the road and the composition will be actualized onsite at the Biennial's opening reception, where Griffith and Escobar will manipulate the findings of their traveling sound baggage into an improvised performance that marks the end of the documentation.

Devouring Tongues/Lenguas Devoradoras, 2012
documentation of vocal sound performance



Zoé Gruni

Resides in Florence, Italy, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil & Los Angeles, CA

Gruni reflects on cannibalism as a ritual practice located within the indigenous world, and as the source of many rich fantasies for the West. This custom is a fount of fear and fantasy for the colonizers, and is still present in the collective imagination of contemporary Western society. The cannibal is the figure that best embodies the relationship between anxiety and power. When eaten, the body is eliminated and the soul of the other assimilated completely.



Cannibal, 2009
hemp, iron, foam, and sawdust



Rebecca Hernandez

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

This site-specific piece is set in different locations of the Vincent Price Art Museum. Two dancers travel from the ledges of the right side of the museum continuing to the benches in the lobby and ending with the stairs on the left side of the building. The choreographic process of this piece involves structured improvisation, pedestrian movement, audience response and public intervention.



Daniel Lara

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

The mobile and pervasive technologies surrounding us are never completely benevolent, and this work explores the side of technology that pushes us to devour our awareness. This performance- based work centers on an interactive jacket, equipped with wireless electronic sensors. Lara predicts that in the future, our bodily sensors will be damaged or inadequate, and he intends for this jacket to become a tool to help people to navigate through life.

We Will Definitely Get the Awareness We Seek, 2010
clothing with electronics and sensors, video





Candice Lin

Resides in Los Angeles, CA

Lin produced this video while in residency in rural Brazil. The formal quality of the work was shaped by the privation of artistic materials in her location, while the content was formed by the rich political and social histories of postcolonial Brazil. This narrative centers around the caboclo, a transgendered character of mixed indigenous Brazilian and European heritage who is taken by the military from the forest into the village. At play here is the sharp- toothed anxiety that comes from blurred boundaries, whether the categories are racial, sexual, geographical, or representational.

Whole New Animal, 2012

stop motion animation, found footage and video, 19:58 minutes



Los Nuevos Maevans

Resides in Guadalajara, MX

Los Nuevos Maevans is a performance project that originated in early 2008 consisting of a hardcore punk band that plays in the underground music circuit.

Los Nuevos Maevans' performance are a parody that responds to the rituals of laden claims, demands, and proclamations that arise from punk aesthetics (and/or a derivative of the genre), reflecting part of the generational outlook of a young, middle class sector.

Los Nuevos Maevans appropriate the soundtracks of their puberty and adolescence through cult bands such as Masacre 68 and Solución Mortal, icons of Mexico's punk movement. The shows that were originally organized by members of the group are now occasionally arranged by invited external producers. Conscious or not of the nature of the project, these staged playback concerts (never played live) confront the audience in a confusing and ironic way.

Los Nuevos Maevans, 2013

Guillermo Estrada Cosío, Aron Leon, Cristian Franco Martín & Jonathan Lee Vázquez



Christopher Reynolds

Resides in Los Angeles, CA- United States

This video documents a performance in which the artist actively tastes squid ink on paper by following directions laid out by Brillat-Savarin, the famous French epicure and gastronome.

The three tasting actions Reynolds completes are spication, rotation, and verrition, and their visual impact is enhanced by the squid ink's umami qualities. Umami, it is said, is the only taste that seasons the taster, and some side effects include swelling of the tongue and over production of saliva.

Chromatherapy is a type of treatment in which color is used to physically alter a person's energy or mood. Drawing from chromatherapy theory, Reynolds's Appetite Apparatus is painted a specific shade of pink, known as Baker-Miller pink, that has a scientifically-documented calming effect. After fifteen minutes of exposure to this particular color, one's appetite becomes sup-pressed. The artist has included pink-tinted glasses that further enhance the effect.

Reynolds posits food consumption as inherently political. Nutrition is a biological necessity, but it is also something that is culturally defined and socially engaged. This installation locates us before the meal, and hints at the violence necessary to ensure its production, as well as questioning the sovereignty between humans and animals within the food chain.



Attempting to Capture Taste (Spication, Rotation, Verrition), 2012
HD video documentation of performance, 9:00 minutes



Cindy Santos Bravo

Resides in San Diego, CA- United States

This sculpture references the extreme footwear trend called botas picudas that began in central Mexico and quickly spread nationwide.

Associated with ranchero or cowboy party culture, these boots are worn for dances performed to an indigenous style of electronic dance music called tribal.

The music is thought to have led to the boots, and the length of points was pushed by competition between ranches and dance crews. Worn exclusively by men, the longest of these boots are more sculptural than functional and this is how the artist has approached them, with six individual boots making up a spiral topped with crown of quetzal feathers.

Terrestrial, 2012
fabric, sequins, feathers, and wood





Dominic Paul Miller

Resides in San Diego, CA- United States

The image in this piece documents the corner of Avenida Santa Maria in Tijuana, Baja California (2735 22400), the site of a now-shuttered maquiladora. The work itself has migrated northwards from this point, both as a representational depiction of this real location (which is in itself a non-place to most of the world), and as a nomadic and temporary public sculpture containing a portion of space itself. At the same time, all of the spaces included here are rendered inaccessible, either through physical or sociopolitical constraints; the presence of this art object results in the displacement of the environment it depicts.

Migrant enclosure, factory discipline for the silent worker, 2012
mixed media



Fidelius X

Resides in Long Beach, CA- United States

This memorial serves as a reminder of the many deaths have occurred in the deserts between Mexico and the United States, but also of the transnational politics that caused them. Like a true memento mori, Fidelius warns us that whether we lead lives of love or hate, we all die in the end.



Flavia Monteiro

Resides in Los Angeles, CA- United States

Skin is a permeable membrane, a porous border that is the province of both exchanges and limitations. Made of layers of unsupported acrylic paint, this is a skinned painting that takes on the qualities of human skin for allegorical purposes. At play are ideas of absorption and dissolution as they portend to art and life.



Arrancando o Couro/ Tearing the Leather, 2012



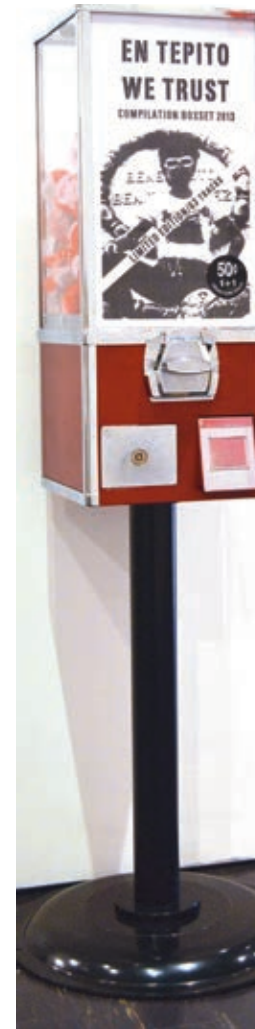
Juan Luna-Alvin

Resides in San Francisco, CA-United States

This is an interactive sculpture that takes music piracy as its theme. Inside the capsules are buttons and links to box sets of music pertaining to Mexico and California bootlegged from the artist's own collection. Luna-Avin's intention is not to make a profit, but to expand his audience, and to explore the ways music sharing relates to history, memory, cultural identity, and social habits. Please insert two quarters to receive a toy capsule.



Two Labels Needed, 2012



Matt MacFarland

Resides in Los Angeles, CA- United States

This work references the hand-painted signs commonly found in Mexico that depict cartoon characters eagerly and cheerfully engaged in autosarcophagy (the eating of one's own flesh) and cannibalism. Located in the uncanny overlap between humor and horror, MacFarland's work calls into the question the self-indulgent fantasies that animals will voluntarily comply with human appetites, and that we coexist in harmony.



Stakelation 2012-2013



Nancy Popp

Resides in Los Angeles CA- United States

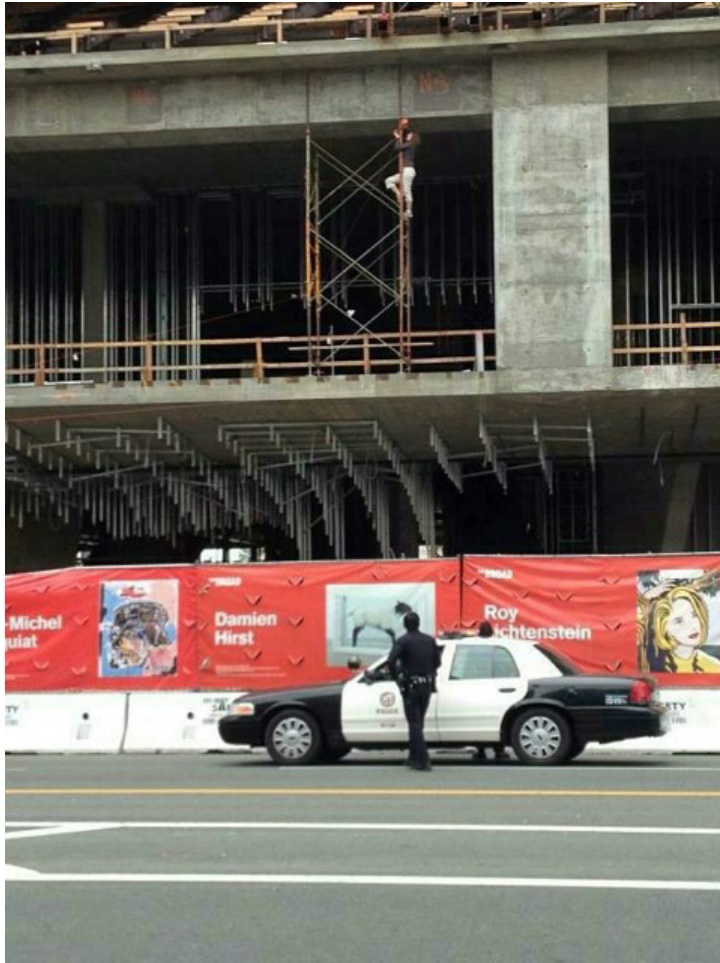
In this public intervention, Popp traces her movements through, around, and over a building in an unfinished state of construction. She scales the structure using only the strength of her body, thus infiltrating and reinserting corporeality into a proscribed yet incomplete architectural space.

The insertion of the body into an as-of-yet secured space as a way to reclaim and upend its hierarchies is a cannibalism of the modernist fetishization of architecture and the political power buildings can embody.

These values can be upended and transformed by the act of disrupting the grid, emptying out its guts and exposing Street climbing performance the entrails of the construction by the insertion and agency of an organic body claiming space.



Untitled (Street Performance)/Concept Drawing, 2013
Avenida de la Reforma/Calle Pedro F.
Perez y Ramirez, Mexicali, Mexico



Peter Bo Rappmund

Resides in Laguna Beach CA- United States

In this work, the artist follows the Mexico-U.S. frontier for nearly 2000 miles from the Gulf Coast to the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, Bo Rappmund navigates a site rife with tragedy, violence, and dramatic natural beauty.

To the south, failed attempts to cross the desert result in mass graves of dead bodies, and any markers of this loss crumble into anonymity under the uncompromising force of the sun. To the north, small American flags inscribed with anti-immigrant messages dot the landscape.



Tectonics, 2012

blue-ray video, 60:00 minutes

