2026 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION
SFSU SCHOOL OF ART

IF THIS WORLD WERE MINE

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IF THIS WORLD WERE MINE

If this world were mine, I'd place at your feet
All that I own; you've been so good to me
If this world were mine

I'd give you the flowers, the birds, and the bees
For with your love inside me, that would be all I need
If this world were mine
I'd give you anything[1]

Taking its title from Tyrone Davis's 1969 song, *If This World Were Mine*, the exhibition opens as a love letter—an ode to lovers, kin, and the world itself, or rather, to worlds therein. Like Davis's lyrics, it carries with it a cadence of desire that dwells in the space of unrequited love—an entry point into the sensuous and interconnected worlds the artists have constructed. Through this potentialized yearning, the song offers the space to inhabit love as a worldmaking praxis, and the exhibition as alternative worlds, both inhabited and imagined. At the heart of the song, the conditional—*if*—emerges as a subtle disruption, inviting us to read outside of the borders of this world, to occupy the liminal and interstitial spaces of the in-between, of the unrequited, and the yet to come.

As a mode of worldmaking, these layered and superimposed worlds, potentialized by creativity and collaboration, recall Donna Haraway's concept of worlding—a reciprocal exchange with more-than-human kin and a state of becoming—as well as Indigenous worldviews that center transformation and relationality as foundational to all life. Within these interstitial spaces, and worlds within worlds, we are also reminded of Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the borderlands, and the ways in which liminality and interbeing are experienced both physically and affectively, giving way to endless orientations and ways of being.

Working across painting, photography, printmaking, textile, ceramics, and mixed-media installation, their work urges us to play, to dream, to make, to feel, to remember, to reconfigure, to reckon, and ultimately, to be in relation, inviting us to inhabit many worlds—and ourselves as multitudes. These worlds, bent to the artists' whims and desires, offer alternative epistemologies located in the personal and collective, embodied and lived, and that which is otherwise overlooked or undervalued. Across their multivalent practices, the artists share in an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial vision, a commitment to worlding and worldmaking, that, if not explicitly articulated, is gestured through their deep engagement with family archives, intergenerational histories, personal memories, and a sense of wonder that centers lived experience, kinship, and relationality.

In Mónica Crystal Ocegueda's practice, mixed-media works and photographic installations come together as a love letter to her family, recounting the story of her parents' union across borders and her mother's migration to California. Across her works, Ocegueda brings together personal ephemera, domestic objects, and organic materialities, including soil and hay, to immerse us in her home/world. By tending to the complexities of her mother's experience, she also addresses her own, surfacing intergenerational parallels shaped by migration, cultural fracture, and racism.

1 Excerpts from Tyrone Davis's, *If This World Were Mine*, 1969. The essays in this catalogue were written in close conversation and collaboration with the artists.

Working in a similar vein, Mary Lou Grace Robison revisits her grandmother's belongings, as well as family and personal archives—including her father's photographs—to mine the affective and nostalgic residues of intergenerational mementos. Across her compositions, carefully blended brushstrokes create hazy surfaces that capture the indeterminacy of grief, addiction, nostalgia, and recovery. By translating these objects into paintings, she processes her own memories and traumas, utilizing each panel as a repository for healing.

Where Ocegueda and Robison reinscribe family archives and personal belongings, England Hidalgo delves into colonial histories, archives, and collections to critically question the narratives and aesthetic framings that have shaped constructions of the "other." Working across sculpture, installation, and drawing, he seeks to redress harm by employing alternative forms of representation—from reworking anthropological photographs from the Philippines to recording soundscapes—as anti-colonial strategies that disrupt the colonial gaze. Through his work, he also engages in activism by initiating conversations about repatriation to facilitate the return of Bontoc artifacts.

Attuning to his local environment, Brennan Lynch's playful ceramics draw inspiration from the natural and built environments of San Francisco—shaped by his time living in the city while pursuing his MFA—as well as the visual and countercultures of his hometown, Santa Cruz. Through his work, the artist translates the city's rhythms, colors, and natural sequences into biomorphic vessels and intricate patterns. As the artist explains, this process of translation becomes a grounding and balancing act, mediated by clay and the possibilities of form.

Working through similar sensibilities, Evie Hidysmith conducts deep, careful research into her environment, and the beings and objects that surround her, forging material kinship with loved ones across space and time. While working primarily with fiber and textile-based practices, she extends into other mediums—including ceramics, video, drawing, writing, and music—to create interactive works that invite viewers to touch, feel, and become enlivened. For her, this practice of material kinship and live research disrupts linear time, allowing for affective relationships that persist beyond the boundaries of our perceived realities.

Through her own practice of live research and kinship-building, Camila Michaliszyn explores relationality between bodies and worlds, moving outside of colonial systems of classifications and narrow understandings of the human to explore kinship among humans, plants, animals, and minerals. Working with found materials, organic matter, and kinetic systems, she creates surreal multimedia worlds, inhabited by hybrid interspecies that invite us to think more expansively about energy and spirit. In doing so, she draws on paradigms of Western science and Indigenous cosmology, surfacing tension points and apertures that reveal their interconnections.

Embedded within these frameworks, the works also meet us with notes of grief marked by a dissonant sense of loss, yearning, the unsettling feeling that something remains out of reach or is yet to come. These themes are captured by the recurrent allusions to death, transformation, and unrequited desires, including those of reuniting with loved ones, healing generational traumas, returning what has been lost or stolen, or feeling more connected with our surroundings.

Through these registers of grief, the exhibition confronts us with the state of the world today, urging us to notice, to organize, and to remain sensitized to the incomprehensible violence that defines this moment—fueled by entangled structures of coloniality and imperialism. These entanglements manifest through ecological destruction and extraction, driven by imperial interests, and the ongoing genocides, militarized interventions, and blockades abroad—in Palestine, Sudan, Congo, Iran, Lebanon, Venezuela, and Cuba, among countless others. Meanwhile, here at home, we face the atrocities of ICE's rampant campaigns, heightened censorship and surveillance, and ongoing cuts to social services and DEI programs that are vital to the ecosystem and well-being of our communities.

From these interconnected and painful realities, *If This World Were Mine* centers joy and grief, transformation and healing, reminding us of the iterative nature of life cycles and the expansive potential of family, kinship, and relationality. In this way, the artists invite us to inhabit deeper, build collectively, and possess otherwise—within and through uncertainty—taking up the conditional *if* as a site of possibility. As the exhibition suggests, this is a praxis of unmaking and remaking the world—and holding ourselves and each other through this becoming.

ENGLAND HIDALGO

Working across media, England Hidalgo mobilizes installation, photography, drawing, and sculpture to reckon with colonial histories by turning the gaze back onto institutional archives, anthropological accounts, and ethnographic records. Through his work, Hidalgo exposes the racist logics that dictate collecting practices, museological displays, and constructions of identity and belonging—particularly in the Philippines and its diaspora. Across his works, his practice is sustained by careful and committed research and an ethics of care that takes shape through reimagination and counter-histories—what he describes as a process of *defamiliarization*.

For his thesis, Hidalgo bridges dialogues across various archives and collections in the United States that represent the Philippines, looking closely at the ethnographic studies of the American anthropologists, Albert Jenks and Alfred Kroeber, and the photographic archives of Dean Worcester—currently housed at the Museum of Anthropological Archeology at the University of Michigan. He also engages with colonial stereograph cards and their circulation within the United States, among other popular source material from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including *National Geographic*.

In works like *Portrait of Agpawan*, Hidalgo reconstructs a photographic diptych by Worcester, depicting a young Indigenous boy named Agpawan, from the northern highlands of the Philippines. In the original photographs, Agpawan appears in contrasting dress and different geographies: in the first image, he wears a loincloth and holds a spear, standing before a thatched structure, while in the second image, he is shown wearing a suit and tie, positioned among trees with a wooden dwelling in the background. Meant to capture Agpawan's "assimilation," the diptych operates as a device of colonial temporality, in which the young boy has been stripped of his culture and homeland in a narrative of progress that renders him legible within Western imaginaries.

Working with lithographic crayon, Hidalgo reconstructs the photographic sequence, staying close to the original while removing Agpawan from the image. Instead, he leaves markers of his presence through the interplay between Indigenous and colonial objects, namely the loincloth and spear, and the suit and tie. Through his absence, Hidalgo denies the viewers access to Agpawan, protecting him from the colonial gaze while inviting us to interrogate the erasure that the original photo enacted. Embedded within each frame, he also includes LED signage that reads "before" and "after." While capturing the violence of assimilation, the signage also illuminates how photography, advertisement, and mass media helped construct colonial narratives of civility and otherness through circulation—the same apparatuses that continue to perpetuate essentializing representations of the Philippines within today's global circuits.

Building on these interventions, Hidalgo turns the gaze to local museum collections, bringing to bear questions of ownership and repatriation through his engagement with the Oceania Collection at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, which contains over 150 Indigenous objects from the northern Philippines. In *These Cultural Objects are Indigenous to their Land of Origin, Therefore, They Do Not Need to Have Lineal Descendants to be Repatriated, Stop Playing.*, he repurposes two found shipping crates intended for the return of a Bontoc axe and shield currently in the Cantor's collection.

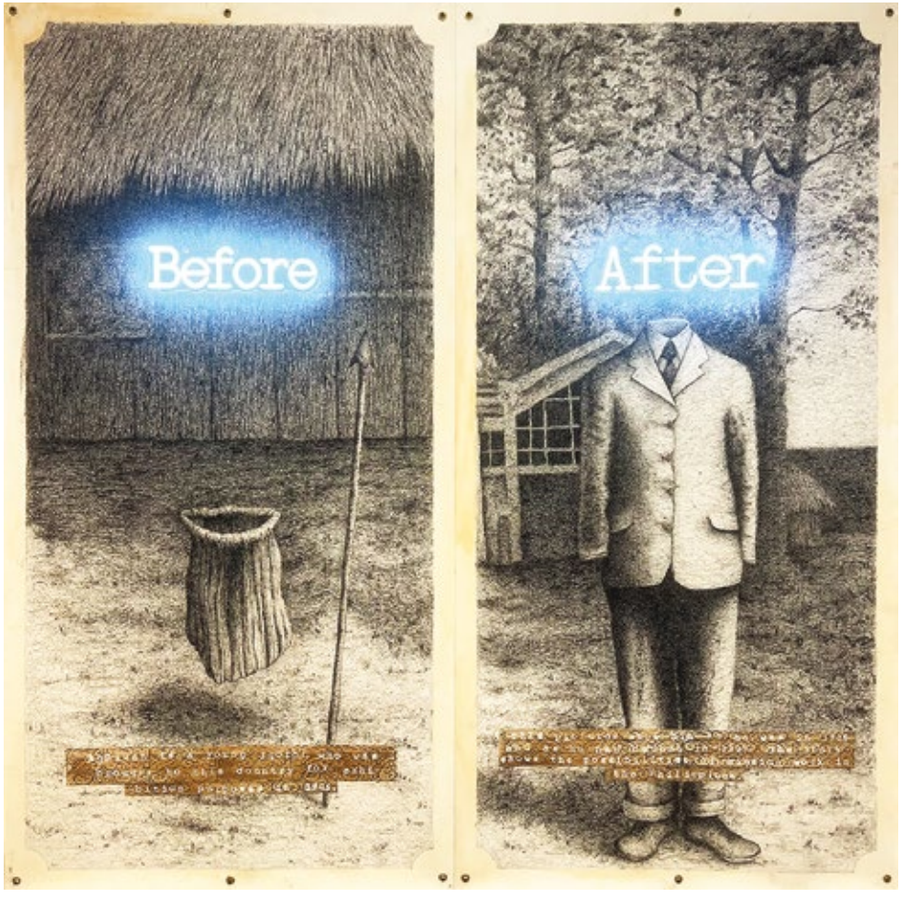
Playing on the logistics of acquisition, transportation, and storage that structure museum collecting, the crates stand in for mechanisms of capture and containment—giving shape to the museum's holding practices and the contested provenance of the Bontoc artifacts.

From within the boxes, Hidalgo has placed motion-activated MP3 players that play audio that he recorded during a visit to the northern Philippines, transforming their confinement into portals back home. More broadly, references to transportation and immobility—indexed by the crates—also evoke both historical and contemporary routes shaped by colonial and imperial histories, from networks of exchange, trade, and commerce, to migratory pathways forged by economic instability, labor export programs, and ecological urgencies—including Hidalgo's own migration journey from the Philippines to the United States.[1]

Building on his strategic deployment of absence, Hidalgo accompanies the work with a text describing the two objects, leaving the viewer to imagine the axe and shield. As Hidalgo has noted, "This work was inspired by my visit to one of the galleries of Cantor Arts Center, where they had their display cases covered in cloth and will remain concealed from the public until Cantor Arts Center obtains permission from Native American lineal descendants through NAGPRA or the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act."

Moving beyond strategies of counter-representation or *defamiliarization*, Hidalgo engages in direct activism and decolonial action by initiating a proposal for the repatriation of the Bontoc artifacts while mediating conversations between the Cantor and the Bontoc Museum at St. Vincent Elementary School in Bontoc, Philippines. Yet, as his title reveals, these conversations—undergirded by extensive bureaucracy and faulty bylaws—make repatriation a vexed process, laying bare the colonial structures that continue to govern claims to stewardship. Nonetheless, as he asserts, *These Cultural Objects are Indigenous to their Land of Origin, Therefore, They Do Not Need to Have Lineal Descendants to be Repatriated, Stop Playing.*

1 Jeremaiah M. Opiniano and Alvin P. Ang, *"The Philippines' Landmark Labor Export and Development Policy Enters the Next Generation,"* Migration Policy Institute, January 3, 2024, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/philippines-migration-next-generation-ofws



Portrait of Agpawan, 2025

Lithographic crayon, acrylic, rice paper, custom LED, and watercolor paper

84 × 84 in.

To My Colonizers, Fuck You and Fuck You Too!, 2026

Laser ink and acrylic on dried polymer emulsion, wood, bolts and hooks

72 × 66 × 60 in.

These Cultural Objects are Indigenous to their Land of Origin, Therefore They Do Not Need to Have Lineal Descendants to be Repatriated, Stop Playing, 2025

Found wooden shipping crates, motion-activated mp3 players, field recordings, aluminum, ink and paper

Dimensions variable

EVIE HIDYSMITH

Evie Hidysmith is a weaver of media. Rooted in fiber and textile-based practice, she encompasses ceramics, video, music, and found and organic matter. For the artist—who is also a skilled writer, composer, and singer—weaving emerges as a fiber-based method that takes shape across affective and conceptual registers, deployed as a mode of live research, entanglement, and kinship-building.

In Hidysmith's works, materials and objects are treated as collaborators—understood as agential and enlivened mediums that mediate affective relations through the residues of memory, labor, and sociality. Through these layers, materiality becomes an index of both personal relationships as well as larger systems, shaped by economic, political, and social matters. Drawing on Kris Dittel and Clementine Edwards's edited collection on material kinship and Sophia Lemos's work on live research, Hidysmith asks, "How can we collaborate and co-create with materials as kin, and with lost loved ones through material?"[1]

For her thesis, the artist welcomes us into a sensuous world of interwoven materials, inviting viewers to move past passive spectatorship and the conventions of the white cube through sensory activation and playful engagement. Upon entering the gallery, an expansive ceramic knit hangs on the back wall, while an interactive textile table occupies the center of the room. Made of found and repurposed materials—including wool roving, climbing rope, textile swatches, and remnants of her grandmother's embroidered tablecloths—the work is stitched together with conductive thread that activates through touch. As viewers engage with the textile, different audio tracks fade in and out at varying volumes, depending on the intensity of touch, while corresponding to a video that plays on the adjacent wall. Mirroring the construction of the

1 See *The Material Kinship Reader: Material Beyond Extraction and Kinship Beyond the Nuclear Family*, edited by Kris Dittel and Clementine Edwards (Netherlands: Onamatopee, 2022)

textile table, the video itself is made from found and repurposed footage, interlacing snippets of her grandfather's home videos—featuring her mother and four siblings as children—with footage from a GoPro that the artist found buried at Smith River, in Northern California. Overlaid with an audio track composed by the artist, the video captures the river's aqueous visualities, giving form to memories that flow between strangers, family, rocks, and water—woven into a shared continuum.

In line with this kind of participatory and sensory engagement, Hidysmith also centers collaboration as part of her process, inviting friends, peers, community members, and more-than-human kin to partake in the construction of her works. Such is the case for her larger-than-life ceramic knit that figures prominently in the thesis and is made of over 6,000 ceramic loops. For this work, the artist invited participants to contribute by forming individual loops that were later interlocked and fired—a labor-intensive process that unfolded over the span of several weeks, evoking the durational community-driven practice of quiltmaking. In other works, Hidysmith collaborated with local termites, translating termite trails across San Francisco into charcoal rubbings to create a termite language that is made visible through the apertures of the ceramic knit. While the rubbings appear as abstract figurations, they signify a secret exchange preserved between the artist and the termites. Allusions to language and language-making are further picked up by the artist's interactive textile books and the circulation of a zine that accompanies her thesis, in which poetic prose unfolds through anecdotes, memories, and personal musings. Across these works, language surfaces as a form of kinship-building through exchange, communication, and affective relationality.

Where Did You Go, 2026

Found footage from a GoPro found in the riverbank of the Smith River (2015), and my grandfather's home videos of my mother and her four siblings (1969). Original sound.

Duration: 5min, 43 sec

At the core of Hidysmith's practice, there is also a sense of loss and grief that is defined by the inevitability of frayed relations—marked by death, distance, and time. As the artist notes, "My materials are from people whose presence I grieve —a great-grandmother who died before I was born, a neighbor who was evicted and had to move away, my dad who I've only seen twice in the last ten years. Relating to these objects as kin...allows me to collaborate with these lost loved ones, defying linear time to strengthen connection." While building connection through material kinship, Hidysmith reorients our understanding of time and space, revealing the ways in which renewed relations can emerge and be sustained through rupture.

Through her collaborative practice, centered on live research and material kinship, Hidysmith leaves us with lingering questions that continue to rub against one another to generate new weavings: "What happens when one piece of a system unravels? How much pressure can a structure endure before it breaks? How can we transform broken pieces to create new meaning? What kind of connection is possible when we redefine time as nonlinear and material as kin?"

Together at the Table (detail), 2026

Raw wool roving & objects from lost loved ones

4 × 8 ft.

I Still Want You To Be Warm, 2025

Glazed Ceramic

4 × 4 ft.

Through the Branches (detail), 2024

Recycled yarn, kettle chip bags

6 × 5 ft.

BRENNAN LYNCH

Driven by an ethos of curiosity, observation, and play, Brennan Lynch sculpts geometric biomorphic vessels that unveil a world of complex patterns and embodied geometries. Trained as a commercial potter, Lynch's approach to ceramics is informed by seriality, repetition, and utility, providing a critical foundation upon which he builds and experiments.

For his thesis, Lynch draws inspiration from nature, architecture, and San Francisco's built environment, tapping into the city's rhythms and colors to give form to his experience of this new landscape. For the artist, who was born and raised in Santa Cruz, coming to San Francisco to pursue his MFA marked a moment of layered transitions and personal growth. Throughout this journey, clay has served as a grounding medium, helping him achieve balance while exploring new forms and experiences. In this sense, ceramics emerges not only as a formal practice but as an embodied pursuit—a dialogue between body and clay that is negotiated through gesture, resistance, and emotion. As Lynch notes, "I became less interested in utility and more captivated by the visual and emotional experience that form and surface alone can create."

Throughout his works, there is no distinction between exacting math and imagination. While some vessels are constructed through the repetition of geometric shapes, others take on more intricate arrangements. In these works, patterns emerge through complex webs of intersecting lines and constellating points, creating vibrational surfaces that are echoed in the form and armature of the vessel. Where some lines might appear straight, others subtly meander on the surface, creating the illusion of movement through parabolic curves that evoke optical illusions and psychedelic patterns.

This nod to Op art opens to other sources of influence that inform his practice, including psychedelic visualities, the Mission School of the 1990s—which drew inspiration from graffiti and the Funk Art Movement—and the skate and surf cultures of the Bay Area and Santa Cruz.[1] These influences are further emphasized by Lynch's use of pastels and contrasting hues, his deployment of undulating and bulbous forms, and his engagement with repetition and seriality. Together, the formal and embodied qualities of his vessels resist fixed orientations and foreclosed forms, inviting the viewer to dwell in disorientation as a way to engage with wonder and play.

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1 I am indebted to the MFA students, who made the connection to graffiti and the Funk Art Movement during a workshop of Lynch's work in our MFA Writing and Research course this Spring.

Working at the threshold of geometry and organicism, his vessels also mirror the entangled relationship between math and the natural world, where structural patterns, symmetry, and sequences form the foundation of all life. Here we can think of the ways Fibonacci spirals show up in botany and the cosmos, or the tessellating patterns of honeycombs, botanical structures, and geologic formations. These biomorphic associations are further articulated by the symbiotic relationship between form and pattern, and the vibrational energy that they produce, reminding us of the oscillations of optical illusions, frequencies in nature, and the rhythmic contractions of the body.

Moving across these registers, the scale of Lynch's works underscores their inherent relationship to architecture, nature, and bodies—and interactions with the built environment. They evoke fungal formations, tree trunks, and the undulations of waves while also recalling public sculptures, fountains, and posts. This comes to include the ramps, banks, and bowls of skate parks—once seen as markers of civil disobedience in public space that are now integral to the built environment—imbuing urban landscapes with renewed possibility.

Boing, 2026
Ceramic
7 × 7 × 18 in.

Triangulation Situation, 2026

Ceramic

20 × 11 × 11 in.

You Thought It, Not Me, 2026

Ceramic

10 × 10 × 22 in.

CAMILA MICHALISZYN

Working across disciplines and media, Camila Michaliszyn creates wondrous worlds where bodies, plants, animals, and minerals come together in fluid arrangements, blurring the boundaries between corporeal beings and more-than-human kin. In her installations, found objects and organic matter—including porcelain fragments, glass, bones, driftwood, wires, shells, moss, and kelp—morph into one another, giving way to interspecies beings animated by kinetic and interactive systems that mirror sounds and movements found in nature. Drawing closely on posthuman feminist theories, scientific inquiry, and Indigenous cosmologies, Michaliszyn's works give shape to relational worlds and the spirit-energies that animate them.

For her thesis, she continues to expand on this body of work while exploring processes such as biomimicry, metamorphosis, and the pareidolia effect—a cognitive phenomenon where one perceives recognizable figures from ambiguous visual stimuli and patterns.[1] Informed by her childhood memories of growing up on a farm and playing in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil—where being immersed in the biodiversity of the forest helped shape her attunement to the world and co-existence with nature—she collects materials from nearby surroundings and natural environments, approaching walking as a form of embodied research. Embedded within this process, she engages with various Indigenous cosmologies, including that of the Yanomami, which centers the forest and the spirits that inhabit it as living entities within a worldview of interdependence and interconnection.[2] Through these relational reframings, she invites viewers to interact and engage with her pieces, cultivating curiosity and wonder as anti-colonial sensibilities that incite other ways of knowing and being in the world.

1 Merriam-Webster, "pareidolia," accessed March 2026.

2 The Yanomami territories of the Amazon extend from Northern Brazil to Southern Venezuela. See Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman, trans. Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013)— a text that the artist thinks closely with.*

On the primary wall of the gallery, Michaliszyn presents the viewer with an intricate kinetic sculpture made of seventy-two strings and pulley systems, coming together in a dense web of lines. Activated by viewer participation, the work gradually reveals a face that ripples across the surface through undulating movements as viewers pull and manipulate the strings—mimicking the pareidolia effect. In other instances, critters come alive, flapping their wings as viewers pull the strings that emanate from their bodies. Picking up on these mechanisms, other works are animated by motorized systems carefully engineered by the artist. Such is the case in works where bones and ceramics are pieced together to resemble hybrid orchid-insects, moving in wave-like motions through concealed motors. More recently, Michaliszyn has also become interested in kinetic systems that are activated by imperceptible energies, including magnetic fields. This can be observed through fungal formations—constructed from sea urchin shells and driftwood—that emerge from the ground and hover in space, giving way to a mystical field. Seen from above, the work creates the surreal impression that the fungi are not only animate, but also afloat.

By utilizing strings, pulleys, and magnets, Michaliszyn foregrounds participation as a mode of co-existence and interdependence, inviting viewers to be active participants in the kinship-building process. Embedded within these very dynamics, she also prompts us to interrogate our complicity in systems of control, extraction, and ecological destruction, exposing the fragile boundary between care and violence—and the desensitization that structures our daily lives and our relationship to the world. Moving between these complex dynamics, she turns the lens onto herself: "Extracting an object from where it belongs is always a complex act. It forces me to

question my role as a human, as an immigrant, and as an artist. In the studio, these fragments perform in unfamiliar environments: some resist, refusing domestication; some collapse; some adapt with surprising grace. In these moments, I feel myself shifting roles of power—colonizer, caretaker, witness, owner, interbeing."

For the artist, these morphologies and interactive kinetic systems—often only attributed to biology and physics—invite us to reflect on the slippage between energy and spirit, foregrounding intersections across different onto-epistemologies while proposing more capacious understandings of animation that move beyond colonial worldviews and Western paradigms of scientific inquiry. As she goes on to observe, "Across many cosmologies and ecological systems, beings transform not to escape life but to remain in relation with it...These gestures reveal metamorphosis as a relational technology and the urge to become one—an ongoing negotiation between environments, bodies, and stories."

Seduction and Deception, 2025
Leaves and wood print
18 × 24 in.

Metamorphosis V, 2025

Installation

Assorted rocks, dehydrated kelp callus, branches, feathers, moss, animal bones, abalone shells, chimes, wood, metal, and motor-driven mechanism

Dimensions vary

Pangea, 2026

Driftwood and porcelain

12 × 5 in.

MÓNICA CRYSTAL OCEGUEDA

While trained as a photographer, Mónica Crystal Ocegueda works across printmaking, sculpture, and installation to capture stories of belonging and intergenerational Chicana experiences at the intersection of migration, split geographies, and language. For her thesis, *No Te Olvides De Tu Cultura*, Ocegueda reclaims her childhood home as a space for healing and belonging. Throughout the gallery, impressions of white doilies crocheted by her mother come together alongside family photos, letters, and other affectual and domestic objects—carefully replicated and handcrafted by the artist—including soil and hay sourced from her hometown of Turlock, to recreate scenes from her childhood and life growing up in California's Central Valley.

In *Fotos y Recuerdos*, the artist traces her parents' love story in a photo wall that unfolds through careful placements and intentional proximities. Beginning with photos from their youth, she pairs the images with letters that were written on the back and exchanged while they were living apart. At the time, her mother was living in Atotonilco El Alto, Jalisco, México, while her father was working in the fields of California, returning to his hometown of Atotonilco El Alto in the summers. These letters, written over the span of a year, peer through the sepia transparencies of the original photos, casting a nostalgic filter that preserves the intimacy of their exchanges.

While Ocegueda foregrounds her parents' union, she centers her mother's experience after marrying and migrating from Jalisco to California—a journey marked by isolation and hardship, from mistreatment by her in-laws to working in fields and canneries, managing the home, and facing racism in the public sphere. Tending to these tensions, the artist revisits her mother's experience alongside her own, exploring parallels between growing up in the Central Valley and relocating to San Francisco to pursue her MFA. Across these geographic and affectual mappings, she interrogates ideas of belonging and place, dwelling in the in-between spaces produced by migration and irreconcilable constructions of identity.

At the center of the gallery, Ocegueda invites us to gather around a replica of her childhood dining table paired with two paisley-upholstered chairs, modeled after her mother's set. The installation is accompanied by an audio recording from Ocegueda's thirty-second birthday, capturing her family singing her *Las Mañanitas*—the traditional Mexican birthday song—while gathered around the table. As the artist points out, this recording, and others like it, have provided her solace while living in San Francisco, serving as a tender reminder of family and memories of home.

Extending from the table, deep browns permeate the gallery through photos, frames, and shelves, further enriched by the presence of soil that disrupts the sterility of the white cube. Through these interventions, the artist's use of color is both personal and political. As she notes, brown—evident in the objects that adorn her childhood home—becomes a symbol of Mexican identity and culture.

Working from this domestic visuality, brown also encompasses her racialized experience growing up as a Chicana in the Central Valley, where Chicanx and Latinx communities comprise a significant portion of the population.[1] In this context, brown serves as a racial and ethnic marker shaped by ongoing histories of migration, labor, and class inequities, as racism and discrimination continue to shape everyday life.[2] At the same time, brown does not connote a universal experience or embodiment, revealing how colorism and anti-Blackness permeate Latinx and Chicanx communities. In today's climate, brownness continues to accrue hyper-visibility, as brown and Black communities are subjected to heightened surveillance, deportation, and detention by ICE.

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1 "Stanislaus County, CA" DATA USA, accessed February 25, 2026. https://datausa.io/profile/geo/stanislaus-county-ca

2 My deployment of "brown" is informed by José Esteban Muñoz posthumous work, The Sense of Brown edited by Joshua Chambers-Letson and Tavia Nyong'o (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

Building on these themes, Ocegueda plays with perception and distortion, pushing the boundaries of photography to create optical illusions while using mirrors to invite reflection and forge relationality, seen in works like *Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá*, and *Todo Lo Que Brilla Es De Oro*. The presence of gold also builds on these frameworks, shuttling between perceptions of wealth and prosperity and notions of inauthenticity and illegitimacy. Despite growing up in a modest home, the illusion of gold—and the memory of believing her family was wealthy—indexes generations of hard work and pride.

Through the reclamation of her childhood home and her mother's experience, Ocegueda's work builds on a lineage of Chicana feminist practices that question gendered labor and reclaim the home space as a site of remembrance, healing, and self-determination. In this way, her practice engages with what the artist-scholar Amalia Mesa-Bains calls *domesticana*—an aesthetic strategy and feminist intervention, rooted in domestic sensibilities, that disrupts dominant American culture and machismo to center Chicana experiences.[1]

Culminating with *Speak English*, the artist leaves us with a handwritten letter addressed to her family, answering her mother's call, *no te olvides de tu cultura*. The letter serves as a gesture of gratitude, reflection, and personal commitment—to uphold her culture, to heal intergenerational traumas, and stay true to herself as the most radical act of belonging. As Ocegueda notes, "There is power in knowing who you are. Once you know that, there's nobody who can take that away from you." Decidedly written in Spanish, the letter holds a sense of opacity, preserving this intimate moment between the artist and her family, while recalling the letters exchanged between her parents. Through her resilience, she comes full circle, embodying the phrase engraved onto her childhood mirror at the entrance, reflected to the viewer—*They tried to bury us, but they did not know we were seeds*.

1 See Amalia Mesa-Bains, "Domesticana: the sensibility of Chicana rasquache." Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies (Los Angeles, CA) 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 157-167

Fotos Y Recuerdos, 2026

Mixed media photography

Photo transparency paper, polycarbonate, and semimatte photo paper

11 × 8.5 in.

Todo Lo Que Brilla Es De Oro, 2026
Mixed media photography installation
Mother's rosary and objects made from photo matte paper and wood
Varied sizes

Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá, 2026
Installation
Wood and mirrors
60 × 100 in.

MARY LOU GRACE ROBISON

Working primarily as a painter, Mary Lou Grace Robison's practice unfolds at the intersection of mediums, drawing on photography, family archives, and writing to explore how childhood memories become entangled with her experience of domestic abuse, addiction, and recovery—and her ongoing commitment to finding herself amid these ruptures. Composed as vignettes, these works afford the viewer a mediated glimpse into the artist's process, evoking a deep sense of nostalgia and longing that is underscored by her use of muted hues, earthen tones, and the wistful energy captured by layered and dense textures of paint.

Born in California and raised in Texas, references to ranching culture figure prominently in the artist's work, textured by memories of her grandmother's ranch in California and cowgirl culture. For her thesis, *I Don't Even Ride Horses*, Robison revisits her grandmother's archive after her passing in 2022, and the belongings that she inherited. Alongside these heirlooms—which include a vast collection of objects such as film photographs, medallions, bells, ribbons, horse saddles, figurines, weathervanes, and miscellaneous hardware—she also turns to other family ephemera, including her father's photographs and her own personal collection of objects from childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.

Working across these intergenerational archives, Robison carefully homes in on objects and fragments, creating moments of close looking and pause that operate as narrative devices—akin to film stills—that capture the affective weight of layered memories and intergenerational histories. References to ranch life can be gleaned through the recurrent figure of horses, cowgirl boots, open landscapes, and rooster weathervanes—a wind vane found atop houses and barns that references Christian folklore, standing as a symbol of vigilance, repentance, and piety.[1] Drawing on Christian symbolism, she continuously returns to the image of a nail, creating a series of paintings that repeat the image in different monochromatic tones, as if marking time. Painted from a photo taken by her father, the nail serves as a metaphor for devotion, control, and compliance—themes that resonate with different periods of the artist's life and states of being.

For Robison, repetition and replication are a practice of affectual research—an obsession of sorts—that comes from sitting with her objects and attuning to them so closely, so intimately, that they are understood beyond their objecthood and reworked into new significations. As she points out, "The materiality of each object, the rust on the horseshoes, the stains on the gelatin silver prints, or the lingering smell of the barn our saddles sat in for over thirty years, captivated me." Throughout her works, she holds onto these affectual and nostalgic residues while superimposing them with her own experiences, utilizing each panel in her painting practice as a repository for protection and healing.

1 Judson D. Hale Sr., "Folklore of Cocks, Cockcrows, and Weathercocks," *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, https://www.farmersalmanac.com/why-are-roosters-on-weathervanes

Working with these objects has helped the artist revisit the past, serving as a compass for finding herself in the aftermath of tumultuous periods, from leaving an abusive relationship to bearing witness to intergenerational histories and cycles, and the ways in which these inheritances manifest in her own life. In this process, she moves between feelings of abandonment, confinement, and self-determination by locating herself in transformation. If the image of the nail serves as a symbol of compliance, then the artist counters these narratives with the presence of horses—riding alone or in herds—to gesture toward hope, freedom, and possibility, both for herself and her family.

Across her compositions, carefully blended brushstrokes create hazy surfaces that capture this indeterminacy, giving texture to grief, nostalgia, and the ongoing process of recovery, forgiveness, and healing. These blurred scenes mark layered temporalities and their lasting imprints, embodied in *What if this is the whole point, just to lay here*—a large-scale painting that serves as an anchor in the thesis. As the artist notes, the imprint in the grass confronts the viewer with presence and absence, and the lingering question of who might have lain in the grass—or what memories the grass itself might hold. For the artist, this composition speaks to surrender, by holding loss and trauma as generative forces that make transformation possible and give way to the imprints of life. As she puts it, "Isn't that the whole point? To live and experience life, whether it be these traumatic or life-altering experiences or the simplest moments of lying in a field of dead grass for so long that your body's imprint is left behind."

Memory Collection, 2025
Oil on wood panel
8 × 8 in. each

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail, 2025
Oil on wood panel
8 × 8 in. each

What if this is the whole point, just to lay here, 2026
Oil on canvas
48 × 109 in.

ARTISTS

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IN-GALLERY ARTIST TALKS

Brennan Lynch & Evie Hidysmith
Thursday April 30, 12:10pm and 12:30pm

Mary Lou Grace Robison & Mónica Crystal Ocegueda
Thursday May 7, 12:10pm and 12:30pm

England Hidalgo & Camila Michaliszyn
Thursday May 14, 12:10pm and 12:30pm

ESSAYS BY

Lesdi C. Goussen Robleto

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GALLERY DIRECTOR

Sharon E. Bliss

FACULTY DESIGN ADVISOR

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Adrian Nunez Menera
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Amanda Swoboda

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

San Francisco State University's Master of Fine Arts program in Art provides a dynamic interdisciplinary environment within which students are encouraged to develop their creative practice as professional artists. The School of Art has facilities for printmaking, painting and drawing, sculpture, photography, textiles, digital media and emerging technology, and ceramics. MFA students have access to all of the School of Art facilities as well as individual and communal MFA studio workspaces. Our faculty are distinguished and professionally active artists and art historians. Students work closely with a graduate advisor/mentor to chart their individual path through the program, including studio seminars, critiques, and individually supervised tutorials. Coursework and seminars in art history and other academic fields complement studio courses, and students are encouraged to develop rigorous research and writing skills to enrich their art practice. All students are provided with individual studio spaces, and there are opportunities for teaching, either as a teaching assistant or instructor of record. Our vibrant visiting artist and exhibition programs introduce students to artists in the Bay Area and beyond, connecting students to the local art community. The MFA degree culminates with a written thesis report and a thesis exhibition in which student exhibit an original body of work.

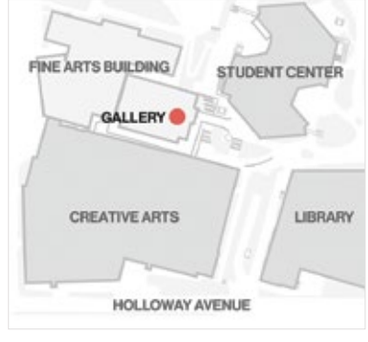
IF THIS WORLD WERE MINE

APRIL 24 – MAY 14, 2026

Opening Reception
Friday April 24, 5:00–8:00pm

Saturday Reception
May 9, 12:00–4:00pm

Gallery Hours
Tuesday–Friday, 12:00–4:00pm



SFSU FINE ARTS GALLERY

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