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ALL TEXTS BY SOFÍA CÓRDOVA

*Here comes your ghost again
But that's not unusual
It's just that the moon is full
And you happened to call
And here I sit
Hand on the telephone
Hearing a voice I'd known...
Heading straight for a fall*

—Joan Baez, *Diamonds and Rust* (which is better as a Judas Priest cover tbh)

INTRODUCTION

Like Joan getting an annoying phone call from Bob Dylan, we find ourselves with the ghost of time itself, a constant presence ringing us all our lives (duh) but the holy is both banal and must be uttered again and again to remind ourselves, to enter mantra mode. Remind ourselves that when we're 'with it' we are accepting of what we are given, not in resignation but in understanding of what must be done, of the third path that we must carve, together. Together through struggle, through fire, yes, then we wait. For the magma to cool and harden and become earth, soft and shifting under our little feet. From that meandering path we can reject the straight line and walk instead a desire path, feeling perhaps where a little – or big – animal has walked before us, walking the lane without really seeing it. Trusting the ordinary and its wonders. There is family here, of all types, of all species, from human to algae, sometimes we are left out of the frame of their picture, sometimes we leave them out. There is struggle with whatever identity actually is, the parts that without ever being spoken aloud glommed onto skin like barnacles, understood by piecing together memory artifacts (images, videos, YouTube). There are also the histories one teaches oneself, the distance from which can be both isolating and also a great teacher. Lastly and really importantly, humor is here as a utility knife, needed to cut flesh from bone, sinew from nerve, needed to make fire from kindling, needed to survive.

In mid-January of 2024 I met with the seven artists you will 'meet' in the coming pages to talk about their art. My only prompt for them was to communicate to me the most essential drop-seed-heart at the center of the work, accounting for waves of death to the author, waves of death in our world. In writing about each artist's work I will introduce words of their own uttering, as we explain 'what the work wants to do' (a near impossible task but we attempt it anyhow) together. What I saw, what they saw; we find a third way.

Though the path may meander, I eschew here alphabetization and its order instead moving spatially through to meet each work where I found them at the:

beach,

bathroom,

graveyard,

bower,

hearth, stove/apothecary, laboratory.

JAKE SHAPIRO

Waves move us through. "True emotions come into our lives but we know it will end, what we don't know is for how long, or when the next will come." Water is met here in different stages, rough, propulsive, and into *deep and quiet*, a calming eddy, a loop current that just is. Bringing in the people, all the people, even when we don't all feel good about entering the white-noise space of rough surf or the cast concrete around the pool. Just being.

The wave sets up the parameters for language; a wave can push you out of danger or suck you beneath or just hold you aloft, floating, indifferent.

"A pool can both be deep and quiet, a refuge from the chaos at the top"

The wave can cause damage and invert this equation, chaos is tumbling through darkness not knowing which way is up. Disorientation engulfs the diver. Senses glitch out.

Breathing in and out calmly to watch the bubbles go up, which way is up? Equilibrium prevents the bends.

Break the surface and eyes sting from a sunset or a sunrise greeting us back up. All we know is that it is right before, the moment of our emergence remains underwater, out of the rhythm of the story told. Out of time, time to catch our breath.

The wave's words become less aqueous now, "A way to get at duration. This ONE song, this ONE dance. The river is moving and this WILL end, but the river will not."

Yepp, you never step in the same river twice.

On its way back to sea the wave resumes its life as part of a whole. A body of work and water that wishes to remain boundless.



John Fisher Stole My Future Memories, 2024

Paper pulp, acrylic, chalk pastel

46 × 68 in



The Quietness Of A Public Pool, 2023

Paper pulp and acrylic

46 × 71 in



This Is A Day, A Week, A Month, A Year, This Is A Lifetime, 2024

Paper pulp, acrylic on canvas

46 × 68 in

AJ SERRANO

Water from the rain hits the reservoir, moves through a processing plant, tank, flows down a pipe, on demand when the spigot turns, hot or cold,

when the urinal flushes, gasps to suck down water.

To relax, to cruise, to empty one's body, to lay waste. The porcelain so cool underfoot, so cool under cheek, so cool underhand. But let us always remember that it was born in the melting fire of desire, of the volcano, of the earth, of the kiln and the people of the kiln.

"[There is] a naturalness between clay and queerness. It's around all the time even though we don't see it." It's true what you've heard, ceramics predate the columbian exchange and so just like queer life, it has been here as long as we as a people have and long before colonial impulses to compress and condemn that which is sacred.

Blue and white urinals of pulpy porno, recalling the back pages of the Village Voice, hard bodies, soft bodies, bodies bodies bodies, surreptitiously eyeing one another, a knowingness that can't be spoken aloud.

Indigenous technology hardened by imperial intervention so shiny and new.

"I wasn't taught queer history, I had to teach myself. I imagine these ceramics will outlive me and teach queerness beyond me." The idea of the ghost returns as a sage time traveler, one that still sees the sense in using a urinal, in checking out who's there to check out. The recycled clay used here loops into itself, checks itself out, *hmm, looking good, yess*. It's an adaptation like so many, so that we may live, so that we may live so that we may see our way through and out from under the distorted power that has attempted to drown/bury us. An earth (so, clay) that needs us to understand desire so that we may return to the fold and take care and not forget our prayer or ofrenda.

A public space for private acts is another word for temple for reverence for bathing the body in the blood or cum of christ. Was that too much? I sincerely hope so.

Many were lost but we remember that beneath the tile, the beach.



DADDIES #3, 2024

Ceramics

12 × 10 in



STRAPPED, 2024

Ceramics

8 × 8 in



DADDIES #4, 2024

Ceramics

8 x 12 in

JONATHON BOUT

Once the thing within (sometimes called a soul, sometimes called an ancestor, sometimes called a story, sometimes called a yellow butterfly passing by) leaves the body it can go anywhere really, into any one, any thing.

The butterfly, the memory being becomes bone white, the way one might describe the color of ghosts, transparency drawing, little fingers of porcelain wrap around furniture. "Looking at the past and ancestry and feeling for gaps." Because of time, because of distance and because of denial and selective memory and erasure there are indeed gaps. Not little ones either. Fjords, chasms, fissures into the core of the earth, hotter than any sun.

Photographic drawings, the object in/is the object itself, how it will be played, how it will be read, how it will become a scroll is a question for those who might have the secret knowledge exodus to understand. Sculpture and drawing and photographs together become a family room haunted by ectoplasm, spirit photography, family album, images tethered together to tell a story that in the end is likely untrue.

A spectre that "Overtakes yet supports" and don't we all, if we're lucky, have one or two of those haunting us. That part maybe is a little more true, if we can invoke the impossibility of 'truth.'

"To make space I can walk into, both unkempt and left [in the past] but where something else grows within it." To open up that room and peer into the furnishings of history and gaze upon a little banana plant, the offspring of a bigger one that shielded it from the sun but no longer, it has been uprooted. Only the little plant remains; "Plants are resilient yet can appear dormant, they contain information."

"These things I can respectfully connect to."

There is something missing, a clue, but isn't there always? A legibility that is lent to only some? I think though if we spent the time we'd find it too, the ineffable connects us in a way that blood can't.



Untethered, 2023 (detail)

Porcelain, wood, bamboo

60 × 24 × 24 in



ABOVE

Who Holds This All Together, 2024

Graphite, wood, porcelain

27 × 37 in

RIGHT

An Atlantic Distance Apart, 2024

Wood, porcelain, paper, mixed media

96 × 36 × 24 in



LEAH KORANSKY

Maybe after drowning [being wet] and getting buried [in dry earth] we get lucky and come back as a bird.

Collecting stones and shiny things and making photographs and little mounds of earth and organic matter but like, *IN* the CAMERA. The things we ignore everyday are arranged by a meddlesome little victorian scientist, Anna Atkins with busy little hands. Little little little if only we became interested in our smallness. "These words that come to mind: curiosity and the natural world, not in a sublime way but slow looking."

The "natural world" – terminology that in itself fails to place us correctly and carefully within "nature" itself is here presented as a balm and through scattered set ups becomes a dissection of the world in the artist studio.

Artist's studios have this really particular history of once being a space that faced outward (as in a gold or blacksmith, for example) which then turned in (painters, for example). A rotating stage and don't we all sometimes tire of the rain leaking in when all we want is to contemplate the world out there? (but bring it in here.)

"Awe, emotion, wonder" (as a livable estate) "our emotions lead us into ways of being."

Abstraction in a photograph becomes a new way of seeing the light going through a distance of glass and plastic, the room becomes the camera, the world becomes the camera.

Hues of pale pink and deep black, conservationists, romantic poets staring at a glacial peak.

A naming of the world too, though to name must remain gentle so it doesn't become glass cutting the rosebud, colonial thinking.

"I'm trying to get to it without getting to it."



The Color of Shadows, July 21, 2023, 4:12 PM, 2023

Archival pigment print

32 × 24 in





Think of Me as a Place, 2023

Archival pigment print mounted to birch panel,
sawhorses, petals, twigs, crystallized calcium
carbonate, redwood leaves, plaster casts, fossil,
glass, plexiglass, gouache

36 × 48 × 29 in

(detail view at left)

CHELSEA AMÉRICA TORRES

That little spot of land is going to need a fireplace, a center to warm things up.

Soup and milk and tennis shoes. Silver gelatin prints in a book, self-portraits in domestic settings, real spaces we might say, lived-in by a family we won't see and this is fine but I'm really curious about movement when staring at solidity, as in, that's a question I have when I look at a picture.

The space is always shifted by the camera, by the action. Vanity is eroded by the film object.

The use of film makes the physical work more difficult to produce; a deliberate obstacle. Black and white these days of phone image slurry extends the performance into the darkroom when it is one body doing all the work. One body doing all the work.

There is "A sense of captivity in these, someone not fully autonomous, like a child... There is also humor." Cheese wedge chairs undercut, a joke about cheese and bodily function and cutting is made somewhere by one of three children, off-screen. (Question for Chelsea; is this ok, Chelsea? If you don't want me to mention your kids specifically, I can omit). "Sometimes the installation becomes the space."

The video performance does something else entirely even as the visual cues and markers to us at first read the same... she is witnessing herself. At times in disbelief. I learn the artist has those three children that live off-screen and one doesn't need to have children to understand but it might help: The seeking for escape through any aperture, f22, f8, f1.4, even as it is a love like no other.

"Using my body [in the work, vs actors] as to not make others get uncomfortable," but I suspect something here *is* about her specifically and I'm not bothered by this, I'm taken in by it. A bubble hidden in a shirt atop a breast bursts with milk, uncontained, spilling forth into a bowl of Froot Loops. The implements of daily home life here so abstracted that they signal peril. And it is the wildest of tragicomedies, that of daily life, this wet body bursting forth from under the tiles.

The domesticated female body is burbling, bubbling, boiling, drowning, animated by something else, falling out.

And still, who is gonna take care of that pile of laundry?



Banana Romantic, 2023

35mm Silver Gelatin Print

8 × 10 in



There's No Place Like Home, 2023

Medium format color photograph

16 × 20 in



Mousewife, 2023

Video Installation

Photo credit: Daniela Tinoco

After a Poem by Dana Koster

Mousewife

*She cooks and cleans and bites
her tongue. Then, at night,
she eats her young.*

LUCÍA MORENO NAVA

And how many *have* fallen out before us is always maybe not *the* question but a question.

Often asked of mothers or grandmothers or *mamás y papás y abuelas y abuelos que preparan algo en la olla sobre el fuego o en un ensero moderno who prepare something in the pot over the fire or in more modern equipment, whichever is to be found, these practices move through time, don't they?*

A naming of "Traditions and cultures, of what surrounds me," done here so nonchalantly as to propose the ordinary in healing, the aluminum pot over a gas stove, the little ceramic mug spinning in hand.

"Brewing home remedy, *ajeno**, even as we joke, it still works," a little like the projectors, three channels looping, hands getting in, grabbing little stems and leaves, repeating, the shortest little loop, like picking off the lint of a sweater on the way out the door. Not an overwrought story of immigration told as such for a white audience that could never understand (although the least they should do is try very hard to understand).

On the floor a layer on top of a layer on top of a layer of the idea of a home. *Artemisia absinthium* thus named for the goddess Artemis, watcher of childbirth but also of keeping to yourself.

A reserve, not sharing it all, not letting it allllll out for the people. I did always think busting out of our father's head makes a lot more sense (like Athena) but some of us are born to hunt among the weeds not make war.

It felt like a better boost when the past became pixelated, the effects are practical but serve as protective armature, who do we let in? Who do we let out? An archive of migration and borders emerges as so commonplace as to be pushed into a "normal" homespace shape, a sort of VHS gift.

"The image is gone when they're off."

It's all very brief so you might never figure it out and yet always, stories (which are people, really) are swirling all around, not saying what you think you believe you understand.

*[wormwood]



lo que nos sana / that which heals us, 2024 (video still)

Three projector video installation.

Duration: 6 min., 30 sec.





LEFT & ABOVE

back and forth / pa'delante y pa'tras, 2024

Video still from family archive
and video still of looped video.

Dimensions variable

MORGANN NIETO

A studio that faces inwards, as in inside the body, that feels like a lab, carpeting, beakers, the sound: breathing and bubbling.

"Systems, repetition of care and alarming symptoms, what holds other things, the packet of plastic hot dogs come in," snug in there, tenderly single use. "The implied relationship of holding and care but disposable." Care and disease and the real-life humming of being disabled, of disability in the background, in the sub-bass of the abled world which concerns itself with treble notes, floating at the surface, rarely looking down the ladder its created.

"Seeing through the world of the abled and being read into it," a bifurcated sense of self, no ownership of either, disidentification. The big question that arises when our bodies look like one thing (any one thing) and within conceals another.

Here the work seeks to move away from work that is practical and into work that is "useless," a refusal in place, Bartleby the Scrivener as Melville and Odell remind us, holding up a gentle hand to the stream of life as 'they' want it and creating a pause for the flow to consider itself, to consider going backwards. (Perhaps to where it all began, in the ocean)

Here too is felt the demand of working INSIDE a space, ugh such a drag, rejecting the infrastructure in lieu of an air filter that blows up a balloon, pop! A tank of dead algae that otherwise wants to live. An academy, a society, a wall of nonsense rises all around.

Mat weaving learned online. Not in some ancestral dream place or in the practical space of the earthen home but maybe they're honestly the same thing to us on this end of the sun flare and sunburst. "Getting to my identity by YouTube video."

"My health is not my own," she says because she cares for her father. What a mantra for us all to consider in a world where for decades all that has mattered is 'the self.' Rejects self-care, *thank god*.

Scattered all around is strong sculpture, a failure of process speaks loudly to the failure of systems TO care. The approach shows what is missing.

A proposal is put forth quite seriously among the experiments and the exuberance, one that advances the network as all we really have.



Dirt Nap, 2024

Soil, water, grass seed, mosquito netting,
monofilament, thread, bugs, sunlight

11 × 7 × 6 in



Petate, 2022

Hand cut, off-loom woven aluminum can strips,
plastic bottle, packaging tape

16 × 18 × 3 in



The Purpose Of A System Is What It Does, 2024 (detail)

Glass, distilled water, Chlorella Vulgaris, airline tubing, plywood, plastic, ceramic, LED panel lights, air pumps, air stones, clamps, tape, Aranet4 CO₂ meter, extension cords, nutrient mixture, salt

Dimensions variable

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 program introduces 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 students exhibit an original body of work.

SO
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APRIL 26 – MAY 16, 2024

OPENING RECEPTION

April 26, 5:00–8:00pm

SATURDAY RECEPTION

May 11, 1:00–3:00pm

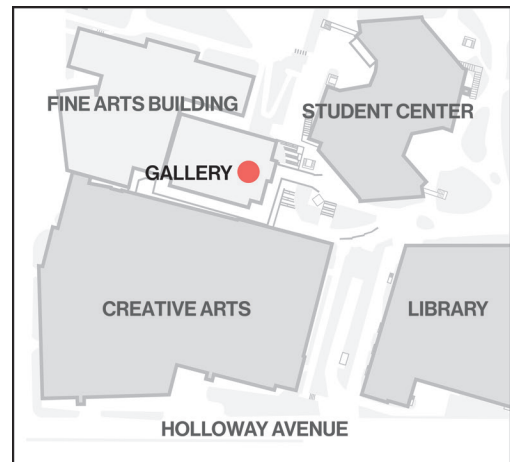
Regular gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 12:00–4:00pm

Saturday hours: April 27 & May 11

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