

alt esc | vol 1



Alt Esc is a curatorial platform, digital magazine and a subcultural archive. Our mission is to celebrate the subcultural art communities that foster emerging artists. We seek to celebrate artists who are experimenting with new technologies and innovative ideas. We are interested in individuals and collectives who are community oriented and do not cater their practices to capital ideologies. We seek to connect rising artists with new opportunities through a publication and curating exhibitions, while honoring and sharing their current achievements with a broader audience. We are content makers and archivists. Using the studio visit as a model for a narrative, we hope to uncover and share new artistic practices and trends. Started in 2016 by Alison Sirico and Irina V Makarova.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark, sleeveless dress, is looking upwards. She is positioned in the lower center of the frame, with her hands clasped together in front of her. Above her is a bright, glowing V-shaped light fixture that dominates the upper half of the image. The background is a solid, dark blue color. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

NITEMIND

Nitemind is a collective of artists, engineers, designers and visionaries recognized by most for their contributions to NYC night life. Some projects are contracted as corporate opportunities. Others manifest in the underground art world. They balance function with design equally through engineering and aesthetics. We sat down with Michael Potvin and Steven Grisé to discuss their most recent endeavors, from simulating fire to the importance and benefits of being part of a vibrant arts community.

Is surveillance a common theme in your work?

Michael: It has been a small part. We've used security and surveillance cameras before, but more as an aesthetic element.

How did you guys meet and start working together? How long have you been collaborating?

Steven: We met each other at SxSW in 2011

Michael: Our 5 year anniversary just came up. We accidentally had a romantic dinner.

Steven: My girlfriend was going out to dinner, and I prepared this really nice

meal.

Michael: And I ended up at the house...

Steven: And I was like "If you're not going to be home I'm going to call Mike"...Yeah, we met at SxSW.

Michael: Just randomly.

Steven: I was doing visuals there, and I had this whole VCR and colorizer and cameras recording and televisions. I was walking around with suitcases of analog gear. Doing visuals for whoever would have me at their showcase.

Michael: We were both living up in Massachusetts at the time, and then shortly after SxSW, we were hanging out in Boston a lot. We kind of let each

other know that we both love video work. I got down to New York in June, and Steve was talking about coming down for August. Steve was looking for spaces, and I was subletting. He was coming, staying and crashing. We lived here (in the studio) for 2-3 years.

Steven: It use to be dual use space, and then that ended.

Michael: The typical Williamsburg story. We were lucky enough to keep the space. We were clever about the transition.

What materials do you use?

Michael: We work mostly with things that create light, LEDS, laser beams, projectors and television sets. Then we control them with our own software. We use open source libraries, just connect them together, run Arduino, Processing, OpenCv, or openFrameworks. It's hard to believe that people are developing these things. They are free and non - corporate. And there is a whole community of people just willing to help you. So if you don't know what you are doing, just go on a forum.

You have an engineering degree from Boston University. How did you end up here? How did you start making art?

Michael: People asked me to. A typical engineer path is you go on to work for a military subcontractor after you graduate college. Being a hippie, or not a hippie, whatever you want to define me as, a passive conscious objector...whatever the word is, that path wasn't my vibe at all. I always had art friends who were doing different projects. I was a musician for a long time. Music is a collaborative practice. So I similarly started working collaboratively with artists. Part of being an engineer is figuring out how to accomplish anything. My friends came to me asking, "How do I make this work? How do you make a 4 layer print with no registration technology?"

Do you have any themes that are constant throughout your work? Before you said surveillance wasn't necessarily one of them. Do you have any repeating concepts you find yourself continuously coming back to?

Michael: Repetition. Parallel lines. We might have an installation where there are 48 parallel lines doing different things. Or there is some action that is happening as a visual image continuously. Generative algorithms and making algorithms that simulate natural processes.

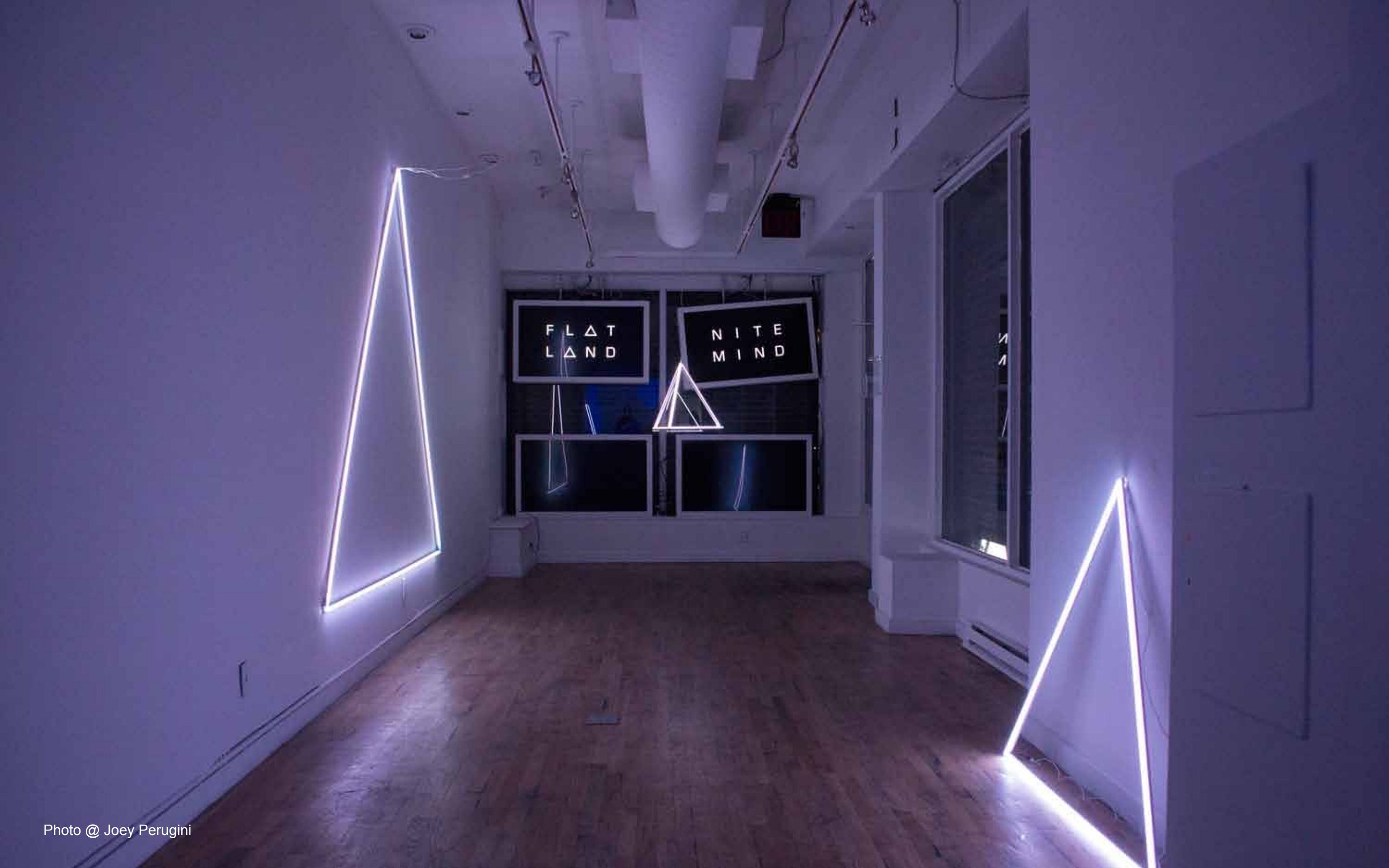


Photo @ Joey Perugini

How do you utilize natural processes in your work?

Fire is the one we keep referring back to. We made an algorithm that simulates fire last year for Korakrit Arunanondchai. He had a solo show at Palais de Tokyo this past year and we made a bunch of algorithms for him. He wanted everything to be inspired by nature. We could have just made a loop of fire but we didn't make a loop. Instead we did some research on how fire works. That's the scientific engineer in me. We discovered it works through the combustion of sparks and spontaneous generation from heat. Convection. So we simulated those parameters, and it looked great. We fired the thing up and it looked fired up. We were working with our friend Alex (Thunderhorse) who's a talented videographer.

We worked on another piece for Korakrit that was a simulation of a synapse in the brain, which was actually inspired by a job that I did for a medical company. It was for a medical exhibit, and we had designed a 3D brain, which was clear and it had all these LEDs inside of it. In the exhibit you could select a brain disorder on a series of buttons: schizophrenia, mood swings, sheer excitement, etc. The people who wanted the exhibit didn't know what that should look like, but they loved it.

Do you prefer to have your work in nightlife urban environments rather than in a white wall gallery?

Steven: I think it depends on the work to be honest.

Michael: Depends on the day you are asking.

Steven: Some of it doesn't really translate to a gallery showcase.

Michael: Also depends on the gallery. Even though we have a whitewall gallery...But even Stream is an experiment for us. Stream is a tiny storefront gallery. It is not your typical space. It's on the street in Bushwick where you can watch the train go by above.

Do people reach out to you about collaborations or do they transpire more naturally? And who would you want to collaborate with in the future?

Michael: Mostly naturally. Say Juliana Huxtable, she hung out at Steel Drums and was a really big supporter of the club. We always welcomed her there and now we see her say at Happyfun Hideaway across the street and let her know that we are working on something new. I get super excited about research for artwork, so I spend hours on my lap-



top, reading things, viewing open source software, researching new technology and exploring what is possible. When I see my friends or acquaintance I let them know “I’ve been messing with this thing, and it has your name all over it.” With the Juliana project at MoMa we did most recently, we had been contemplating for months and were playing with different concepts. Initially the idea we discussed was the animated avatar and we ended up making a laser portrait of Juliana.

How do you balance the corporate and the non corporate opportunities?

Steven: It’s important to sustain the corporate jobs so that we can continue the oddball and weirdo installation pieces. That’s for our heart. The corporate jobs keep the lights on.

Michael: The collective is growing. Now we have people running code, fabricators, installation artists, concept artists and studio managers - all of which are our friends.

Steve: It’s a very friendly operation.

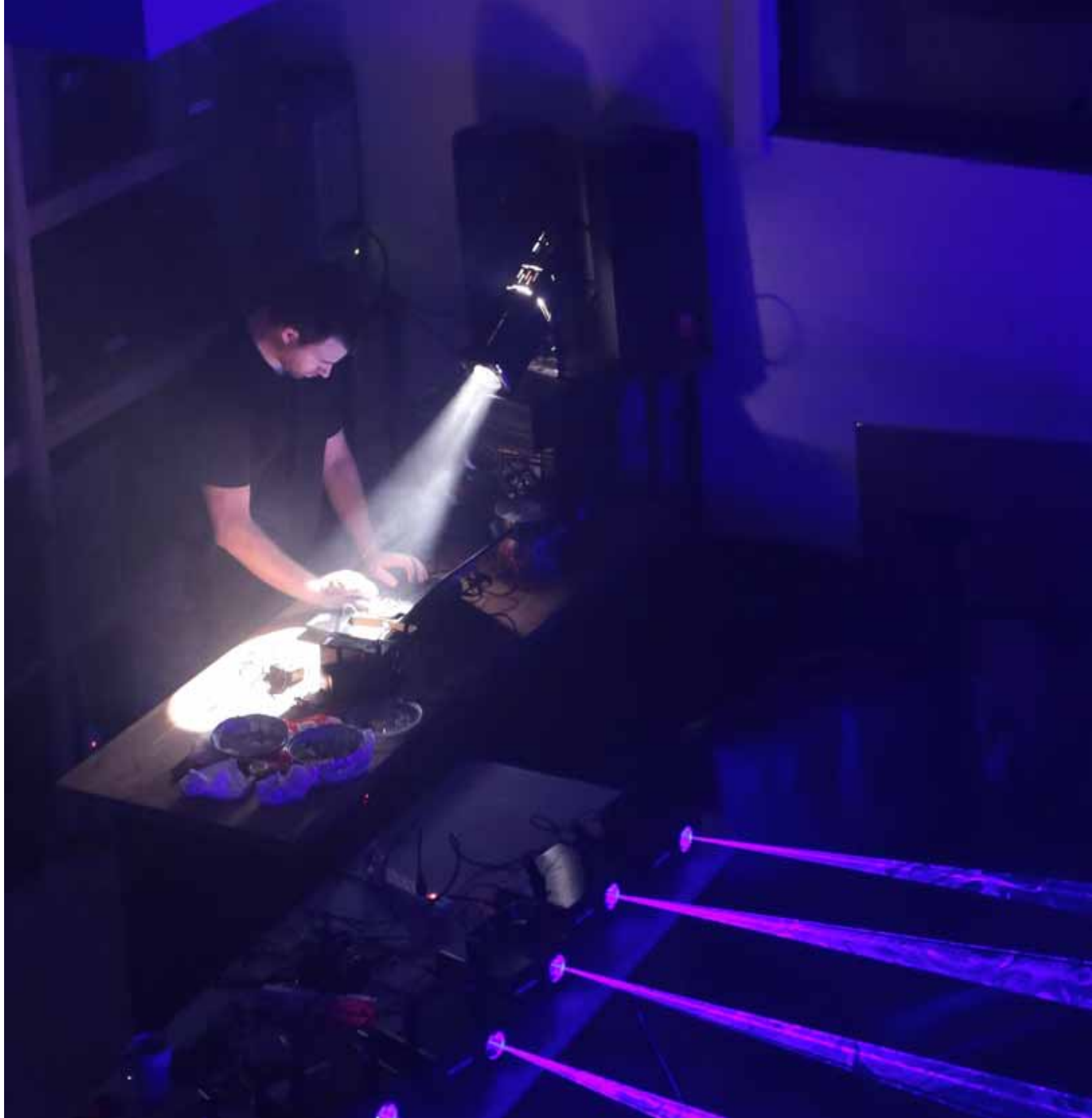
Michael: That is why we are working on getting more jobs, so we can expand the team and bring on more people. It’s always all about the people.

What are you listening to right now?

Michael: A metronome which is often just a drum machine. Hard beats and minimal techno which also acts as a metronome.

Music that my friends make.

Brian Sweeney’s blog called ‘Listen to This’.



AUTHORITY FIGURE

Directors, Monica Mirabile and Sarah Kinlaw, discuss their latest collaboration, **Authority Figure**, an immersive choreography and psychologic experiment that provokes consideration to the power dynamics and obedient relationships that govern daily lives.

What is Authority Figure?

Sarah: Authority Figure is a huge choreography and installation project, in which we explore the variety of ways we feel, interpret, and relate to power and authority.

Monica: It's about obedient relationships, which is subsequently about authority. It's about power dynamics.

Is your goal in this performance to target many different types of power relationships?

Sarah: We can't touch upon every single type of power relationship individually, but we broadened the project to expand upon many types of these relationships.

Monica: There are multiple ways in which we experience things. And we each experience them in specific ways. I experience authority relationships as a woman, as a woman who runs a business, as a woman in a performance duo, as a bartender. There are so many

aspects of my life in which I step back and ask myself, "How am I going to position myself to get what I want out of this, and how will this work out for everyone else?" It's about community. It's about how everyone has that same story - as a musician, as a girl, as a boy, as a child, as a mother, as an employer, as an employee. We all have these dynamics embedded in our lives. There was a multiplicity in the construction of the performance because it was a collaboration between twenty five people, and each individual brought their own personal experiences.

Do you think of this work as political?

Monica: Yes, I mean, I don't think it has the ability to do things like change legislation. And I don't even think it is as diverse as I would prefer it to be. It's hard to convey all the fucked up things that happen in America because of who you are economically, racially... I don't think it's really digging deep enough into those sorts of things I think we need to change.

How has it been managing over 100 dancers?

Monica: I think, at least for me, the managerial part is not easy, but we have some help. We have Christine Tran (Dis-cwoman, Witches of Bushwick) who has been overseeing certain parts of it, and Gina Chiapetta is a godsend!

Has the theme affected the way you've been directing?

Sarah: I was clear early on that I don't claim to know more or understand more about these themes or concepts than anybody else. Also, just because we are directing doesn't mean we can control anyone. Because of this understanding, there is a sensitivity to the project as a whole where I do not completely assert myself in the same way one would in a traditional setting where it is scripted and you have your talent and your actors who have their roles...it's not like that at all.

Monica: Structuring a rehearsal, you have to maintain a director's role. People want to be told what to do, and I've definitely been thinking a lot about how to engage a group of dancers in a way that is personal while also maintaining a structure that everyone can fall into. No one knows how to dance here. Well, I take that back, everyone knows how

to dance! They just don't study dance.

There is a lot of darkness in this piece. There is a lot of pain and suffering that is very visible, and that is very much on purpose. When you talk about trauma, it is usually transfixed in authority and obedience. When you trigger this, you bring out darkness to process, and you hope that everyone gains power and agency from it. We aren't paying anyone. Everyone wants to be here because they want to be here. When you ask someone to be strong, they have to make that decision.

Do you want people to know your personal experiences in dealing with these constructs?

Sarah: I don't think that I have any personal desire for the audience to know my stories and separate them from anyone else's. I think this a community and this is a story of a community. This is not necessarily my or Monica's personal narrative. It is a conversation that is thematic and overarching rather than individual.

Monica: There are specific stories to be told, to be shared. Without giving too much away, there is a series of vignettes that are more specific. They are abstract in movements but they begin as portraits, and it is fairly clear what



Photo @ Signe Pierce

is happening. There are a series of stories woven in because you can't have empathy for something if you have no bearing to.

What do you ultimately want people to take with them when they walk away from the performance?

Monica: The desire for this project to touch people and create feeling is something that has come up a lot in interviews in general. "What is the aim here? How do you want people to leave?" We've said it many times. We can't force a feeling or an agenda, but we can create a platform for a feeling, for a consideration, and you can create an environment where people can form opinions. No one is going to walk through with the same reaction.

Sarah: We all see things happening that are the result of people obeying orders without questioning them and sometimes the outcome is scary and sometimes the human component is missing, the consideration and the sympathy... that is another reason why this is such a broad concept and such a varied show in terms of performances.

How did you guys start working together? Was it through the Strict Governing Hands Piece?

Monica: We wanted to work on a project together that was collaborative piece with opera singing and with choreography. It was supposed to be a small project and then it spiraled.

Sarah: Put a couple cocktails in us, and it just spiraled.

How does voice fold into the dance?

Sarah: Some voice components are composed in terms of song with sound happening behind it. There are other voice components that are more like organic noises as a result of something in tandem with how the physical note might sound when you hit it. There is a marriage between the physicality and the tone. Also spoken word is incorporated. Colin Self is incorporating words.

Monica: It's so exciting to include the vocal element. We held auditions. We had an open call on social media and then we had the auditioners come in, and we asked them if they wanted to sing. Sarah directed. It was very American Idol.

Were you sitting in a line, at the same table, like judges on the show?

Monica: Yeah at a makeshift table, with

two little stands and a piece of plywood and a wooden sheet over it. I don't sing and I have never experienced anything like this. They came in and sang, and these incredible voices came out. Both of us cried several times from just 16 bars. It's really powerful to incorporate voice into intimate performances. I'm very excited about it.

And the score of musicians is pretty impressive... How did you start working with Caroline Polachek?

Sarah: I was in Ramona Lisa with her. It was a touring project, and she would play these ambient soundscapes to warm up and stretch to, and I really loved it. So I started talking to her specifically for this kind of music. It fit so well.

Monica: A lot of the musicians created pretty abstracts sounds. Do you know SOPHIE? It's more fragmented sounds, more environmental - it's like the sound of a balloon rubbing against and wooden floor and popping in a box. Ian's is very much like that and so is Dan's, actually. When you walk through the performance, you aren't going to hear music that you would listen to on your apple music pad. They were composed specifically for the piece, like a cinematic score. There's only one real song, and that is by Hot Sugar. After listening to all of these abstract things, it's nice to hear a beat. One that you can count on.

How does the architecture of the Knockdown Center play into the piece?

Monica: We grabbed a map and created a theme based on a route throughout the space. You can't fight the Knockdown. It's 50,000 square feet. We thought it was big, and then we realized it was much bigger. Every time we turned around it was much bigger!

Sarah: We keep finding rooms!

Monica: We didn't use all of it, but we tried to use a lot of it. Get ready to walk!
Sarah: Maybe we should send an email about footwear?



Photo @ Signe Pierce

JAMES BOUCHE





James Bouché is an artist living and working in Baltimore, Maryland. We visited him at his studio in Baltimore. We were fans of his work before the visit. He produces commanding and ominous objects which accentuate texture, form, and negative space, in addition to being a bold exploration of material. We were excited to learn that he finds inspiration in death metal typography, bondage pants, and *The Lord of The Rings*.

What is your relationship with color?

I admittedly don't have a strong connection to color. I'm colorblind and I think that, growing up, instead of getting frustrated I learned to not really take notice. I generally don't remember objects by their colors.

As a colorblind person how do you differentiate between the various nuances of colors? What draws you towards monochrome?

Working in black and white comes really naturally to me. I think that what I lack with tonal sensitivity, my eyes make up with understanding value. I heard once that colorblind artists generally gravitate toward printmaking and sculpture and I feel that. Only recently have I started thinking about using color. I think that black/grey became too much of a crutch for me and I wanted to step out of my comfort zone a little. Just one color at a time though. Blue just seemed like a good place to start and I think red will be next. When picking the shade I've been asking friends to find me the most basic "blue" they can. I know a color expert would say that's impossible but for right now it's fine.

You use very "masculine" materials such as concrete, chains, sportswear, etc...what is your relationship with these materials and

your draw to working with them?

Actually, I wouldn't describe my work as "masculine". I understand the associations but I don't like assigning a gender to objects and materials. I think "aggressive" or "dominating" are words that can sometimes be used when people talk about traditional ideas of masculinity. To be honest I spend just as much time at Joann Fabrics as I do Home Depot. I like that relationship and I like that employees from both stores have no idea what I'm talking about when I try to describe what I'm doing.

What are the themes that you embrace most?

Is Magic the Gathering a theme? Lord of the Rings?

Absolutely! Does architecture play an important role in your work?
You have such an astute sense of space!

Thank you haha. Architecture has and will probably always play a big part in my work. In the past it's been mostly representational but I currently try to treat space as a medium. I really enjoy the process of building and like controlling the way my work is looked at. Creating architecture is such a subtly aggressive act.

What are the upcoming pieces that you are working on and what can we expect in the future?

I'm working on some collaborative projects right now and lining up a couple shows in the fall. Too early to say too much though ;)

Who would you want to collaborate with if given the chance?

Right now, Robert Morris.

What music are you listening to right now?

LeAnn Rimes, My Chemical Romance, Celine Dion.



The image shows a collection of abstract art pieces by April Camlin on a white tiled floor. In the upper left, a rectangular piece features a black and white geometric pattern of nested, slightly offset squares. To its right, a white rectangular block stands vertically. In the center, a semi-circular piece with a black and white diagonal striped pattern is propped against the white block. On the right side, a large, complex piece with a black and white wavy, concentric line pattern is laid out. The text 'APRIL CAMLIN' is printed in the lower-left area of the image.

APRIL CAMLIN

April Camlin is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Baltimore, Maryland. We visited her in her studio where she explained how her work evolved from embroidering band flyers back in 2010.

How did you get into embroidery?

I was doing it since I was very young. My grandmother was a painter and a seamstress. She taught me at an early age how to sew and cross-stitch. I always knew I was interested in making art and I was never connected to painting. Embroidery felt like the type of mark making that was more intuitive and more comfortable to me. I started working with an embroidery machine 6 months ago because I wanted to work larger. With hand embroidery you spend 2 months on a piece that is 15 x 15 inches and the embroidery machine really opened up a new way for me to think about making work and the kind of imagery I can work with.

Where does this imagery come from?

The patterns are a symptom of the grid. There is only a certain amount of stitches that look good to me that can be made on a grid. I also just really like the vibration of the lines. I started messing around with patterns, interrupt them, and the way the lines were meshing and merging and interacting was very exciting to me. I am working with different geometric shapes and the interruption is the most important to me: setting up a system and then interrupting it.

Do you like a certain way to have your work shown?

It's hard because I feel like with textiles, you always wonder how much of the material you want to be the focus because it has such a pre-existing context. It is so ubiquitous in our lives. I present it more in a traditional form in a frame on wall because I am connecting to it in the same way that someone presents it as a painting. But I also like installation work. I did a show in Miami in December where I did a big installation that was very challenging. I painted and I haven't painted in a decade!

The images looked really crazy! Would you want to do more installation pieces?

I have never done anything like that and I like working in installation because there is so much problem solving. We had three days to install that and it was very intense. There was no air conditioning and no plumbing. It was a satellite fair during Miami Basel called the Artist Run Fair. Everyone got a room in this dilapidated motel and everyone got to do what they wanted to do. You don't always get that freedom in a space so that was very cool.

Do you like to work independently or to collaborate?

I am very much solo and I feel bad because people have asked me to collaborate but I am interested in trying it someday. It would have to be the right person. In general I am a solitary person.

Do you have an idea of what the work will look like or does it grow?

Yes and no. I consider it to be a half of vocabulary of patterns and I am holding them in my mind as I am working but I prefer to work intuitively and let the piece develop as it is. Especially since the idea of interruption interest me so much and I feel like there could be these unintended consequences when you let things develop organically that wouldn't be as exciting if you had everything planned ahead of time. And there is definitely a bit of appropriation with the machine embroidery because I have to think a lot about the imagery since I have to run it through the program. It has been good for me because it made me think a lot about mapping things but I definitely generally like to wing it. Labor is a very integral element in my practice and I think about it all the time. I think these techniques allow me to work more intuitively. Working at a slow speed allows me to map the image out as I go.

Who are some artists you would like to show with?

At Spring/Break fair I saw this artist called Christian Little whose work I really liked. I am showing in September with Edie Fake and it definitely feels like a dream come true because his work is just a mazing and I think we approach our ideas aesthetically very similarly. A lot of art that I look like or am influ-

enced by is more traditional and historical textiles without being appropriative and being respectful.

Are you thinking about feminism when making this art?

I think its impossible not to think about it. When you are working with a material that has a lot of pre-existent content it is very important to be aware of that history. History of textiles is very intense when you think about the industrial revolution and the repercussions of human rights and certainly the patriarchal structure of imposing this women's work or women perpetuating a craft and advancing it and making it amazing and it being viewed as lesser than because of that. It's hard because I often times want to distance my gender from any kind of work that I do but I think its also important to be open and be aware. I don't think my work is overtly feministic but I think it's impossible for a woman not to be a feminist.

How has your work evolved?

I have been making this kind of work for the past three years. I used to embroider band flyers back in 2010 and that's how it all started. I used to be a lot more connected to the music scene. Now I feel locked in and very good about my aesthetic and I feel very good about the work that I am making right now but I don't want to keep making the same thing and am excited to experiment. I definitely want to experiment with the embroidery machine and monochromatic tones. I am very sensitive to color and am interested in bringing in more silvers and paler colors. I started this white on white piece and I like how the textures became so much more important. I am thinking about bring painting back into my practice and I am thinking of how to go about that, maybe using dyes.

What music do you listen to?

Mostly audio books and podcasts. I listen to fantasy and sci-fi audiobooks, and Democracy Now, Radio Lab and This American Life, all the classics. I guess I like to listen to a lot of repetitive and meditative music that gets me in the zone to do a lot of stitching, like Kraftwerk. Manuel Gttsching's album "E2-E4", it's so good, it's just like an hour of this music phrase.





ALEX CASSO

Alex Casso is a painter living and working in New York City. We took a trip to his studio in the Financial District where we had a conversation that spanned the gamut, discussing the *raison d'être* behind his use of iconography to explaining how he overcame a slightly uncomfortable, yet illuminating, experience with Vaginal Davis. He recently participated in the "Magic Flute" performance with Ms. Davis.

You use a lot of patterns in your work, what do they mean?

I fell in love with a pattern in Kyoto and now it represents my wife for me. Whereas this was a pattern that was in my kitchen when I was a kid. My ex-girlfriend's bed sheets are underneath this painting so it's me literally wiping away the past. When I first painted these bed sheets I saw myself as the cat in the painting and there were these circular gestural marks that I thought represented me as well and she was the pattern. I lived with it for a long time and then I painted it away for me to move on. Then I painted the wolf on top, which became a symbol of my own progression and my own power. But it's not the lone wolf, don't mistake it. The idea of a lone wolf is not a real thing. Wolves are very social and they take care of their families, they are

very loyal animals that have hierarchies. They are all about the pack.

You use symbolism as a way to build narratives then?

I have always drawn this way where I would pull images from different places and put them together on the same page. I don't know why and I don't know if it's my job to know why either. I believe that everyone's highest calling is to be creative. And if it's a higher calling, I don't know if it has anything to do with me personally other than the thing that it is express through.

So what is your role as an artist?

To do what I'm told. For you, these images become associations, they become a word game and you start having your own experience with them





and your own reactions. It can be up, down, left, right. For me, I know they come from a source of love and attachment and they mean positive things. Even if I paint them in anger, that's just the flip side of love.

Ah, so destiny comes in! Did you experience catharsis? Is it complete now?

Yes, it is complete now. You asked me about wolves and something inside of me tightens...

Sorry for asking then, but why do you paint wolves?

The easiest reason to respond is that my dad wears a wolf ring and there was a period of time when we were homeless and that was a moment in my life where tomorrow didn't matter at all. I decided at a young age that I wasn't going to let that moment stop me. So the wolves became an intuition for me and a shape that told me which directions to paint the brushstrokes in. I see them as abstractions; they add up to a wolf, they are not a wolf. For me painting wolves is a way to reflect on this experience which still informs very much how I exist. And also, the answer that everyone hates is because I like to paint them.

Do you ever sit back and think this is done?

Yeah and I have found that it is sincere in that moment. One thing that I think a lot of people struggle with is that we hold ourselves to promises that a younger version of ourselves made and we become discontent because we hold on to this thing that no longer reflects reality. Hopefully you continue to grow. Like when people say, "never change", that's the worst thing to say to someone.

So time is an important factor in your work?

Whenever I teach my drawing class, I teach that it is only about three things: time, quality and energy. All we have is time, except when we go to sleep; it's a difference sense of time. I am talking about both mechanical and subjective time.

You recently did a performance with Vaginal Davis at New York University for the production of "The Magic Flute." How was that?

Ms. Davis and I have been friends for seven years. She asked me to participate in the "Magic Flute" with her, Susanne Sachsse, and their CHEAP Kol-

lectiv. Jonathan Berger, the gallery's director, brought them from Berlin and they did this whole production of it. Jesse Bransford and his students did the sets. The characters were all distorted and most of it had to do with Isis. Jamie Stewart from Xiu Xiu did the musical score. Michele Auder filmed it and the film is coming out in June. Jackie Shemesh did the lights. I played Prince Tamino. So the audience walks into this room and I'm naked on a table and I only had three lines. I was told that the only thing I needed to do was get in shape. So for six months I was a lean, green machine and then I found out that the magic flute means there is a dildo that is going in my ass.

Surprise!

The weird thing is that I identify as a heterosexual man, but I always thought I was open-minded. It's easy to say that but the moment you have to do things, the moment I had to stick a dildo in my ass, I started thinking about an audience that I didn't know interpreting me in some way. When you can feel the edges of the invisible box you live in, it is a really thrilling experience. You have a choice to stay in the box or go out of the box. So I decided to do it. The dildo didn't fit. We tried. I had to go to meetings about how to fit this dildo in my ass. Then they came up with the idea of pulling a wick out of my ass.

For three times a night for six nights, not including the rehearsal or the filming, I had to get a bee waxed wick up my ass and then get it pulled out. I felt like it was karma because I objectified so many of my partners. I want to go to the grave haggard, chew me up and spit me out life, I don't want to go the grave as a person who tiptoed.

Who would you want to collaborate with?

Brancusi. We would probably clash but for my viewing pleasure.

What are you listening to?

"Plain Gold Ring" by Nina Simone. Kurt Vile. "Danny Says" by the Ramones. "Life is Gone Down Low" by the Lijadu Sister.





JONATHAN CHECLER

Jonathan Checler is a French-American interdisciplinary artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. He produces artwork that explores the human relationship to a degenerating nature. In his artistic practice, he employs both technology and the human body. His curiosity leads him to new artistic processes, in which he is mostly self-taught. He emphasizes that all knowledge is on the internet, we should not be afraid to learn, and that tutorials are available for the mass distribution of knowledge. He exhibited at our inaugural exhibition at Stream Gallery, NY.

How did you end up in New York and making art?

When I was 18 I dropped out of high school to go to theater school in Paris. I graduated 4 years later and my forte was stage directing but by the age of 22 no one would produce my plays and I kind of gave up and started painting. When I was 25 and painting in my apartment I decided to take art a step further so I moved to New York, got my GED and went to college to take art classes.

So the theater world really helped with this. Do you like to build environments?

Theater is most definitely part of the foundation of my art. I like to conceive my art work with the same closeness that exists in theater with the audience. I did a couple of art performances in New York and they always had a dramatic aspect. In 2012 The Violent Fluffers did a performance titled "Dance:Body." Originally inspired by 80's sci-fi movies, I was wrapped with spandex fabric and stapled to a wall like a structure.

Did you feel transformed?

Yeah, it felt like a shelter. It had a really comfortable feeling, this idea of being wrapped up. And having full trust in my partner who was stapling me.

Does the body play a big role in your work?

A body in the flesh is more interesting. It is beautiful and fragile.

How did you move from painting to digital work?

It's a 10 plus year process of learning and disappointment. Like everything, the more you work on something the more you realize that you are not as good at it, so each time that I would hit that point I would experiment with another art medium. I went from painting to sculpture, from analog photography to art performance, and then from digital photography to video projection in the last few years.

Where did you pick up your tech skills?

The internet. Every problem I came across (software/programming issue, projector set up, technical specs) there was someone before me that had the same problem, solved it and for the good of the community posted the solution to Youtube, blogs and forums. Once I got rid of my fear of not understanding technical stuff, it became pretty easy.

What themes do you use in your work?

Nature. I like human nature in it's most primal ways. It is in human nature to eat, fear, reproduce and idealize nature. In my photographic series "The nature of this" I use pornography imagery to demonstrate that our society enforces a concept of sexuality that is removed from it's nature.

You recently had work up at Superchief Gallery. How was that?

I did a video installation, a multi-surface sculpture like a praying totem onto which I projected on the surfaces a mix of porn footage, mid 90's pop culture movies and westerns. I was comparing the imagery of ultra sexualized females

to “invincible”/emotionless alpha males. Outlining a new monument for moral guideline. I like to glitch the video footage by modifying the Hex and ASCII code. Computers don’t see images, they just see 0’s and 1’s (binary code). So when you look behind and change a few of them that is when it glitches. You can also add all the letters of the alphabet. I would go to Missed Connection site on Craigslist, copy my favorite one and paste it into the ASCII code of the image to glitch.

We are so happy to hear that Missed Connections are being used for creative purposes.

Oh a lot of people are. Now there a lot of posts that are written by artists. I find so many beautiful essays on Craigslist, apology letters and short novels.

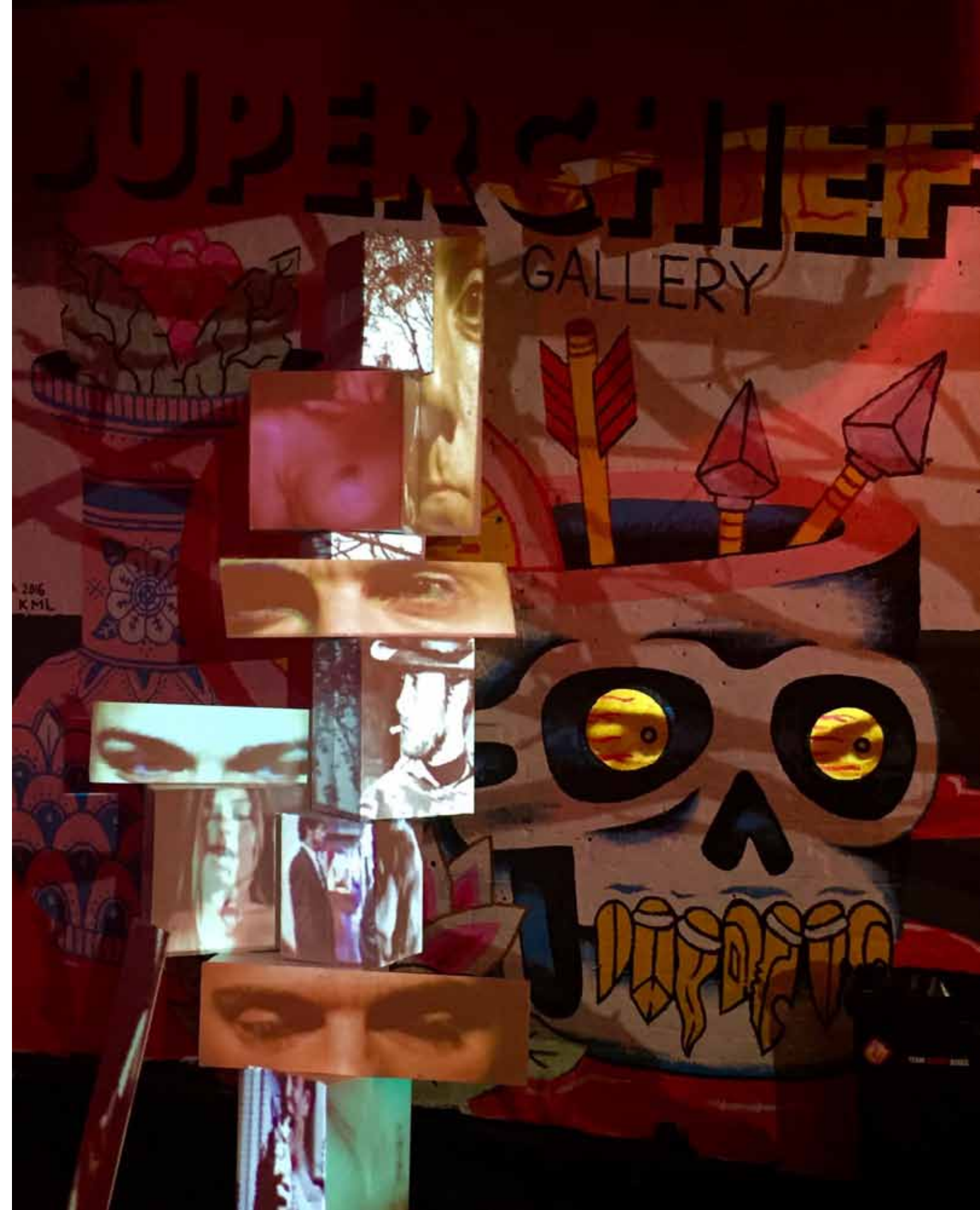
That’s so weird that Craigslist can be used as a platform for art. So do you want people to know the text of the work?

The text is for me personally. I used a bunch of material like the first chapter of the Mormon Bible, surrealist poems, amateur short stories. When I show these works I will show the image and the text.

I love the idea of the Bible and the code coexisting in a parallel realm because which one takes us closer to God?

The belief is that God is all knowledge and all knowledge is on the Internet. It’s a general and global consciousness. I find it fascinating that people on Youtube will still have a pedagogical inclination to share knowledge, from plumbing quick fix tutorials to clinical cyst removal video.

What separates us from this global collection?
Us being able to physically touch someone.



KATIE DUFFY



Baltimore - based video artist **Katie Duffy** treads the thin line between art and design challenging the concept of where one ends and the other begins. Using video, technology, and the virtual space of the internet as mediums, her work challenges and defies the many questions that have been imposed by art school.

What materials do you love to work with most?

I love the idea of video as an actual material and I wanted to come up with some ways of working with some things that I love about video, so something that looks like it's a screen, something that really gives you that polished feel. Basically I am trying to figure out how video can become a sculpture, a thing, a 3-D object.

I make a lot of net art and I am trying to approach the browser as an actual space but it is not a space and it will never be a space. Virtual reality will never actually be a reality. There is so much weird stuff in the vague area and for me it comes out as playful and fun. I think a lot of artists will exist in this zone and put a lot of sinister commentary, which I'm totally down with, and I think it's interesting. Breaking stuff and using things wrong is kind of what I think of my practice.

How do you feel about being an artist versus a designer?

When I make designs or website work the same aesthetic comes through but it's more like you have to consider that audience. Here in order to make your own stuff and for it to be genuine you have to distance yourself from it while at the same time considering what the space is. When you are a designer your audience has to be everybody and you have to burn everything down to its most fundamental forms because it's about translation. With art you do not have to be so direct with it. I am a person who exists in the slashes - designer / developer / artist. That's where I want to be; I want to be in that grey zone.

There is a thing in design that I miss in the studio and that it is so collaborative because it is so client facing.

How do you choose collaborators?

Right now I have an online gallery called Browseras.com. So I'll see a piece that I like and I'll give it insidious notions. One of the online collaborations is with CiCi Wu, she is a New York-based Chinese artist who is kind of like myself, very interdisciplinary. The piece itself heavily referenced Chinese films of her childhood. For this piece we took a physical installation of CiCi's and translated it into a digital browser based installation.

Another is with Nick Primo, we build these works in conjunction. I taught Nick a bit about video and he taught me about woodworking. So we ended up with this thing that looks like a weird offspring between our two practices. That takes away the loneliness of being an artist.

Are you in conversation with anyone who does body mods? They are pioneering out of garages.

I really need to get on that. It is interesting because it's like where do we draw the line at that. I have a friend who has a split tongue but then you sort of cross the threshold where it is not accepted by society but what's the difference and then enhancing your body. People have always been trying to live

forever. I should probably start reaching out to them. What's the difference between me covering my legs in tattoos and them modifying their body?

Do you have a technology or biology background?

I started my adult life as a social worker. Then after school I realized it wasn't for me, I wasn't cut out for it. I was always into tech and being creative with it. The other part of it was that I was always an athlete, I was a crazy soccer player and had a constant awareness of my body as a vehicle. Being a female athlete and pushing your body to perform in a certain way and then having people thinking that they can just comment on it developed the interest in biological forms because I do not have a background in science. I think it comes from this hypersensitivity in reacting to your body. I am also really interested in feminist and queer theory and body politics.

Do you think physical galleries will ever be replaced by virtual galleries?

This is such an interesting question because I don't think anyone has gotten it right yet. Are we supposed to go back to 90s virtual reality experiences? In my opinion this clamshell, browser

based experience can never emulate going and seeing physical work. It's a shame because I love net art and I love browser based pieces but they never come across correctly in the gallery because they are meant to be viewed alone. Then they are not getting their due justice and being shown alongside a painting and they are not taken as seriously.

How did you get into art making?

I painted forever in undergrad and then I got really fascinated by technology and video. Having an understanding of where things come from makes you realize that you can start breaking them. I think our role as artists in terms of technology is how to use it wrong. What happens when you give somebody the power to use an object who doesn't know how to use it?

What new and interesting thing will happen? The Sony Portapak, the first commercially available video machine came in a little pack, the video camera was meant for consumer based but what artists started doing with them was totally wrong. Video has totally evolved from there. We wouldn't have video on the Internet and video as journalism if we never gave that technology in the hands of artists.

Our role as artists is to push the form. The difference between science and fine art is that in science you are expected to fail and your ideas come from failure. As artists we need to embrace failure a lot more.

Do you find that more and more girls are getting more comfortable using technology?

I am happy you said that. I have always been a painter and then I started running with a bunch of boys who did video art and I was like "I can do that and I can do it better than you". But I have noticed there aren't a lot of girls doing this stuff, which is why it has been my mission for the past few years learning to code. It's a total boys club and I feel it's so inaccessible to women. My number one thing is to bring more women to this conversation. I just got a grant to do the "hack the patriarchy" hackaton, where you don't just code but make a curriculum.

So I am thinking of the female artists, but they are afraid because they have been low-key actively discouraged to do that kind of work and experiment in that way their entire lives. There is a book "Technologies and Intuition" that talks about however you want to embody femininity is up to you and this feminine idea of approaching technology as a mysticism is really fascinating.





JAMES MOORE





James Moore is an interdisciplinary artist working in Long Island City, New York. We visited him at his studio residency at The Artha Project where we learned more about his participation in Spring/Break (2016), in addition to his interests in high performance motorcycles, entomology, and extraterrestrial conspiracy theories.

Why are you combining LED lights with body parts?

The concept was inspired through motorcycle riding. While riding my bike on the freeway, I recognized how the nervous system in the body is comparable to the roads inside a city. The concept of cyber casting was conceived through wanting to create an electric light stream inside the body.

Can you tell us about your Spring/Break show that you were a part of??

For Spring/ Break, I created an alien autopsy room that was inspired by underground military bases. Since the people who worked in these facilities are getting older, they no longer want to hold on to this information and have been relinquishing the secrets of these facilities. As a result, more information about these stations is being disposed.

How did the waiver play into the installation?

The waiver simulated a psychological state of the otherness of the space in relation to everything else happening, socially and architecturally at Spring Break, a totally different zone of experience. By signing off your rights, it allowed the sculpture to psychically infiltrate. You then expected something to happen as you passed behind the curtains. The same feeling is generated when you walk into a haunted house.

Have you ever had an extraterrestrial run in?

I had this insane UFO sighting in Long Island last summer. It was really crazy. It was right in my field of vision.

How did you know it was alien?

It looked like it could be some crazy high tech government drone, but it was

so futuristic looking. I have never seen anything like it before. It had these LED lights on the parameter of the craft. It was probably 20-30 feet long. It was flying down the beach silently and was moving along a vector line. It seemed like it wasn't flying but being strung along a digital track.

Did this inspire your work?

This body of work comes out of that kind of uncertainty - not knowing if the unidentified flying object is a government product or an actual alien UFO, or maybe a complicated in between like a drone that utilizes extraterrestrial technology. I'm fascinated by that mysticism. The stories live somewhere between the fiction of the imagination and our technological realities.

Where do your icons come from? What Kind of Moth is that?

That is a death's-head hawkmoth which is the one from the Silence of the Lambs. The hawkmoth sneaks into the beehive and releases a fragrance inside the hive which masks its identity, so the hive doesn't recognize the intruder. Then the moth steals all their honey. This body of work is about illuminating and exposing secrets. I include iconography without trying to overload the viewer, and I leave it up

to the audience to look deeper into the symbols.

Who is the woman in your drawings? Is she the same woman? Why a girl?

I illustrate this character with the "God" symbol on her forehead as a metaphor of government-alien technology transfer - the trade between testing on humans for an exchange in technology. It's been speculated that LEDs and certain spacecraft materials manifested from this kind of alien information transfer. This character is the genome byproduct of this transfer. She's simultaneously primordial and digital. She's simultaneously a cyborg entity and an ancient being.

What are the continuous themes throughout your work?

Aggression, spirituality, and finding a deity inside the computer. Also, transcending fear. Much of my work comes from my experience of riding motorcycles and transcending different phases of fear. As you pass through barriers you gain different perceptions of reality that lead you to a higher state of being. I also think about the prominence of the military and fear people experience from advancements in technology. I think about what information is

shared with the population and what is withheld; the power of propaganda, and how corporations play a major role in how society is shaped.

Are you afraid of the future? Are you pro or against singularity?

I'm excited about the future, and in helping create it. My goal is to give people psychological tools to best deal with the future, and the singularity (if that happens,) as it comes.

Do you have favorite Sci-fi movies?

The Thing, Rubber's Lover, Akira, Ghost in the Shell...

What do you look forward to making and learning about in the future?

I want to look further into astrophysics theories and multiverse theories. I want to make more performance art pieces with my motorcycle. I've done video performance with my bike before, but I would love to do a performance in real time so the audience can experience the first hand power of the machine.

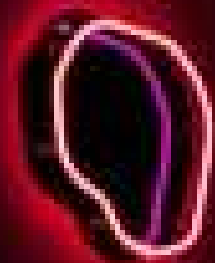
In that way it's a real physical manifestation. A lot of people can experience art on instagram now, which is valid,

but creating something visual where you have to be there, first hand, to experience it is more of what I've been working towards. That's why I'm interested in installation art and motorcycle performance. First hand, in the flesh - there's a deficit of that right now.

Last question, have you ever been to Roswell?

No, but I want to go.





ESTHER RUIZ

Esther Ruiz is an interdisciplinary artist working in Brooklyn, New York. Using concrete and neon tubes, she creates symmetrical sculptures that resemble intergalactic souvenirs. We sat down with Esther in her studio at the Williamsburgh Library where we discovered how her day job at a neon sign factory transformed her artistic practice. She seems to be everywhere recently, participating in both DIY artist-run galleries and established art institutions.

What attracts you most about working with neon and concrete and how did you get into working mainly with these materials?

I started working with neon by chance really, I started working at Lite Brite Neon in 2011, and since day one, I knew I'd someday use neon in my work. It made sense though, because I was already working with fluorescent plexiglas. And I started using concrete as soon as I moved to New York, not really sure why but I guess being surrounded by it in the city drew me to understand it more intimately. Five years later, I still find both neon and concrete fascinating. Neon blows my mind, electrified gas in a glass tube?! Just amazing. I like that it's relatively old technology but it has really changed, and everything is still all hand made!

How do you source your material?

I collect things that attract me, plastics, geodes, minerals, metals, trash, coins, toys etc. etc.

What artists would you want to collaborate with, if any? Which artists in your sphere are you looking at now?

I would love to collaborate with Jim Drain, Anne Vieux, Isamu Noguchi, Lee





Ufan, James Turrell, Tom Sachs, Keith Sonnier. . . I'm constantly looking at a lot of art. . . love Ian Cooper, Henry Gunderson, Alex Dacorte, Jayson Musson, Ann Green Kelly. . .

Describe your creative process.

Well, I'm sort of working on a few "bodies of work" at the moment and they all require different processes. The smaller concrete/neon pieces come together by laying out all of the materials I accumulate and seeing what works together. Then I build disposable molds, pour the cement and sink the other materials.

What environments do you like to exhibit in (particularly in reference to light spaces)?

Well who doesn't love a clean, bright, white box, that's really my preference, to have control of a space and transform it. I'd also love to do more outdoor work in the future. . . maybe in the desert. . .

What projects are coming up for you?

Well, I have a solo show in Marfa, Texas this summer and a show at BAM in the fall. As well as a group show at Underdonk in Bushwick in May and another group show at the Islip Art Museum. It's been a very exciting year!

What music are you listening to right now?
TECHNO!

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