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MILLS

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2012



THE LAST SHOW ON EARTH

Mills College 2012 MFA Exhibition

Susanna Corcoran, Madelyn Covey, Matthew Gottschalk, Samuel Levi Jones, Michael Koehle, Jocelyn Meggait, Michael Mersereau, Seth Murchison, Camilla Newhagen, Tressa Pack, Kent Rodriguez Segura, Sofia Sharpe

Exhibition Dates: April 28–May 27, 2012

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 28, 6:00 pm–9:00 pm

Closing Panel Discussion: Saturday, May 26, 2012, 4:00 pm–5:30 pm

Oakland, CA—March 28, 2012. The Mills College Art Museum announces *The Last Show On Earth*, the thesis exhibition for the 2012 Master of Fine Arts degree recipients, on view April 28–May 27, 2012.

The Last Show On Earth, the culmination of two years of study by a promising group of emerging artists, alludes to both predictions of an imminent global apocalypse and the smaller cataclysm of the completion of graduate school. The body of work presented is a testament to the artists' short but prolific lives as graduate students.

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Through her painting, video and crochet work, **Madelyn Covey** explores the connection between metaphorical extensions of the body as well as tangible extensions of the body, and how they express one's identity. She is interested in the intersection of the medical with the magical, and the power of transformation. **Kent Rodriguez Segura** addresses the collective memory of people living under present day Mexican narcoterrorismo. Through observation and the collection of stories from family, friends and people he encounters during trips to Central Mexico, Segura constructs a visual reinterpretation of how these people navigate the social, physical and psychological Mexican landscape today.

Seth Murchison creates outlines for events, projects and activities designed for friends and his community. These include elements of art history, theater, food or film and rely on participation to create content and direction. **Jocelyn Meggait** presents *Free: A Utopian Project*, a socially interactive installation in which all objects are offered for free with one small caveat— consider the object's past, present and future economic and ecological presence.

Matthew Gottschalk creates stand-ins, decoys, props and doppelgangers for art. His studio is a stage where he plays many roles, some tragic and others heroic; such as the saint, the demon, the genius and the idiot. **Michael Mersereau** investigates the formal and mythological aspects of cinema, dissecting critical parts such as sound and image and revealing new meaning through time and structure.

Sofia Sharpe re-purposes tools and hardware as nonfunctional, aesthetic objects. By discarding the idea of their intended function she explores their ability to play with imagination. **Camilla Newhagen** stacks objects in a way that emulates a natural process—a geological layering of strata. Using clothing as a historical and a cultural layering of strata, challenges gravity and documents the growing structure, exposing its own possibility of collapse.

The act of blurring fact and fiction is inherent in being a photographer. **Tressa Pack** explores this duality in her images by revealing her photographic tools within otherwise impersonal landscapes. **Samuel Levi Jones** is interested in power structures and specifically how decisions are made in giving various forms of public recognition.

By intervening in the commonplace, **Susanna Corcoran** creates temporary situations to photograph. Her work reveals the gap between one's memory of an experience and what actually happened. **Michael Koehle** uses existing medium or technology, such as photography, video or medical imaging, in a new way to reveal an unseen depth and complexity in seemingly mundane objects.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The Last Show On Earth Opening Reception

Saturday, April 28, 2012 6:00 pm-9:00 pm

Location: Mills College Art Museum

Free shuttle service provided between West Oakland Bart and Mills College from 5:30-9:30pm. Visit mcam.mills.edu for schedule.

Join the MFA graduate class of 2012 as they celebrate the opening of their thesis exhibition, *The Last Show On Earth*. Refreshments provided by Gerard's Paella. Music by The Local Honey Swing Band.

The Last Show On Earth Closing Panel Discussion

Saturday, May 26, 2012 4:00-5:30 pm

Location: Danforth Hall, Mills College

A conversation with the MFA artists, moderated by Mills Visiting Assistant Professor, Stephanie Ellis.

Image: Jocelyn Meggait, Free: A Utopian Project, 2012

About the Mills College Art Museum

Founded in 1925, The Mills College Art Museum is a forum for exploring art and ideas and a laboratory for contemporary art practices. Through innovative exhibitions, programs, and collections, the museum engages and inspires the intellectual and creative life of the Mills community as well as the diverse audiences of the Bay Area and beyond. For more information, visit <http://mcam.mills.edu>

About Mills College

Nestled in the foothills of Oakland, California, Mills College is a nationally renowned, independent liberal arts college offering a dynamic progressive education that fosters leadership, social responsibility, and creativity to over 950 undergraduate women and more than 600 graduate women and men. The College ranks as one of the Best 373 Colleges in the country and one of the greenest colleges in the nation by The Princeton Review. U.S. News & World Report ranked Mills one of the top-tier regional universities in the country and second among colleges and universities in the West in its "Great Schools, Great Prices" category. For more information, visit <http://www.mills.edu>

For more information and images, contact Maysoun Wazwaz at 510.430.3340 or mwazwaz@mills.edu. Museum hours are Tuesday-Sunday 11 am–4 pm and Wednesday 11 am–7:30 pm. Admission is FREE for all exhibitions and programs unless noted.

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THE LAST SHOW ON EARTH

Dr. Stephanie Hanor, Director, Mills College Art Museum

The culmination of a two-year graduate program can feel like an apocalyptic experience—the end of an intense period of experimentation, critique, inevitable frustration and often some profound revelations. Through their thesis exhibition, the twelve students of the 2012 Mills College MFA class in Studio Art showcase projects and bodies of work that demonstrate their individual responses to this concentrated period of development as artists.

While diverse in their use of media and subject matter, several themes thread throughout the exhibition. Issues of identity, for example, permeate several of the artists' work as they examine issues of power, politics, and representation. Using volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* from the early 1970s, **Samuel Levi Jones** explores depictions, or lack thereof, of race in American history. Working with minimalist-influenced installations of simple black color-blocks, Jones subtly demonstrates how few African-Americans were included in this ubiquitous reference guide. His black-on-black portraits of 48 famous African-Americans, printed on handmade paper made from encyclopedias, have a powerful ghostly appearance as each face emerges from its background.

The notion of a trace of physical human presence can be seen in **Kent Rodriguez Segura's** work as well. On visits to family and friends in Central Mexico, Segura became interested in capturing the shadows of individuals who have disappeared or been kidnapped as a result of Mexico's narco-terrorism. In Segura's work what remains are messages written in wheat-paste, outlines of bodies created from sugar or soil, or cabbages that sprout with new life. Together these works serve as a metaphor for the experience of migration, disappearance, and renewal that is central to Mexican collective memory and experience. This idea of disappearance and transformation of the body is central to **Madelyn Covey's** work. Her drawings, paintings, sculptural installations, and videos, speak to a heartfelt engagement with lives that are typically ignored. Covey examines and celebrates the lives of disabled friends, often depicting the medical equipment that transforms their bodies into something verging on superhuman. This sense of enhancing one's physical reality is brought to a different conclusion in Covey's body of work that focuses on fantasy depictions of action heroes and superpowers.

Two of the artists' work is very much grounded in community. **Seth Murchison** creates opportunities for group participation, whether it be communal meals, story-telling through found images, or competitive movie-watching. Acting as a host, Murchison introduces situations that invite creative involvement. **Jocelyn Meggait** collects free objects off of Craigslist, encouraging viewers to take items and reflect on the circumstances of how those objects came to them. Embedded in the project is a complicated narrative of the economy of exchange as well as the clever and sometimes moving stories of the physical objects themselves and the reasons for their disposal.

Both **Matthew Gottschalk** and **Michael Mersereau** create works that rethink the way narrative structures are typically created. Gottschalk's sculptures, paintings, and installations are an idiosyncratic examination of contemporary politics, celebrity, and current events, including the deaths of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and pop star Michael Jackson. In a related video, Gottschalk navigates his own work in the form of a puppet, using his studio and the museum as a stage for telling a story through unusual juxtapositions of reality and fantasy. Mersereau appropriates and deconstructs films to reveal the powerful relationship between sound, image, and time. In *Foley Replacement For Suspiria*, Mersereau recorded an entirely new score for Dario Argento's classic 1970s Italian horror film *Suspiria* from the ambient sounds at physical locations that correspond to each scene. In shifting the expected emotional relationship between sound and image, particularly in the horror genre, Mersereau draws the viewer's awareness to the construction of the film's pacing, structure, and graphic look.

The transformation of common, everyday objects serves as a source of inspiration for **Sofia Sharpe**. In large-scale sculptural accumulations, Sharpe repurposes hardware items—ladders, saw horses, washers, and fasteners—into compelling visual landscapes that remove the functionality of the individual parts. She animates these objects, both literally through related video and figuratively, creating a world of play and unexpected dimensions. Similarly, **Michael Koehle** transforms simple items, such as a chair in his studio, an electric toothbrush, or a piece of lead, through various digital processes, including medical imaging technology. Although diverse in subject matter and process, Koehle's digital prints abstract the object such that each image is a trace or map of the original, leaving an intriguing ghost of an object for the viewer to decipher.

This idea of traces is echoed in **Susanna Corcoran's** photographs in which she uses straight photography to capture gaps in perception. Beautiful in their use of color and composition, Corcoran's images straddle reality and pure abstraction. Real physical substances and locations meld into worlds that appear both universal and microscopic in scope. The blurring of fact and fiction inherent to photography is explored in a different way through **Tressa Pack's** work. Professional studio lights and photography backdrops become anthropomorphic protagonists in Pack's large images. Set in the lush and moody landscapes of wooded areas or foggy fields, her photographs convey an affinity for 19th-century Romantic painting.

Camilla Newhagen works across mediums, creating works that engage ideas as seemingly diverse as portraiture, performance, gravity, and geological layering. Yet, her projects intersect through a sensitive use of materials and actions. Clothing plays an important role in her pieces, both as a stand-in for an individual and as a way of marking space and time: layers of clothing are stacked in a confined space, individual pieces are photographed as they are thrown one-by-one into a pile, or are propped up by a structure constructed from scrap wood. These simple actions serve as visual experiments in the relation between time and the human body.

Each of these twelve artists has been committed to a process of intellectual, visual, and technical discovery. While getting to their thesis exhibition may have felt at times like they were working on the last show on earth, I look forward to seeing where their experience at Mills takes each of them.

SUSANNA CORCORAN

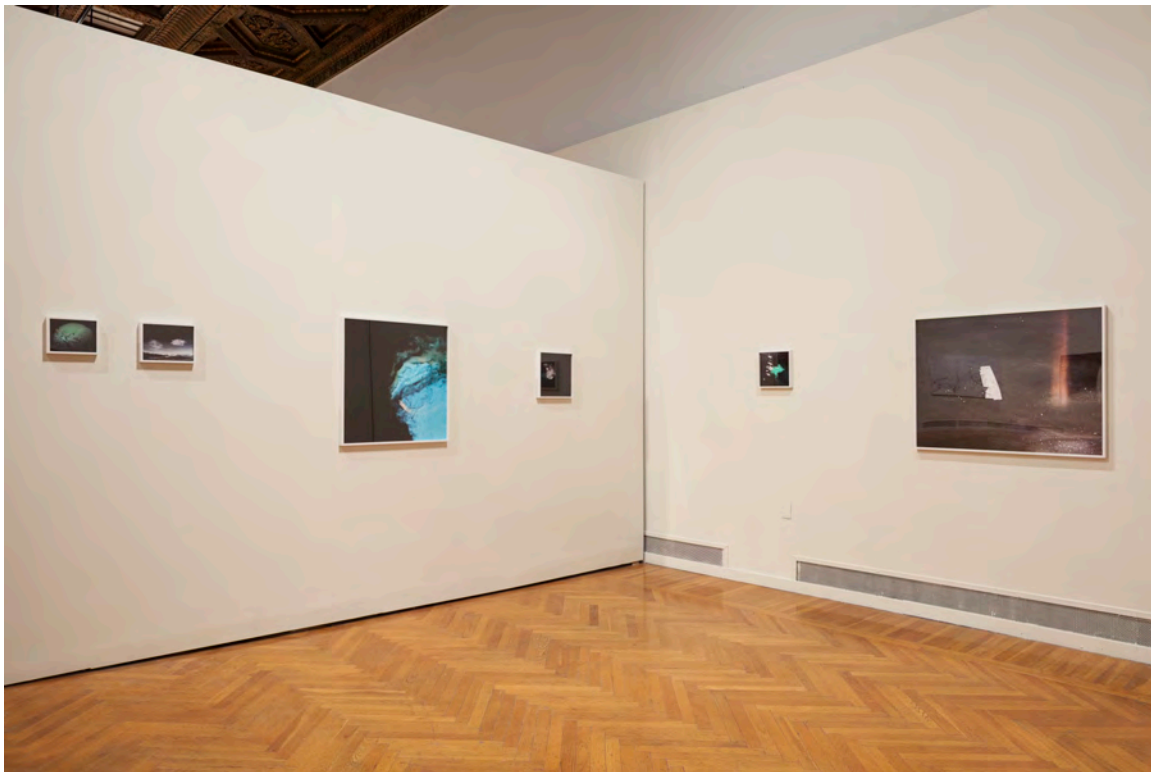
Artist Statement

An alien burst of pink milk blends with reflections of clouds on the surface of a mountain lake. Footprints carve craters in the gravel shore. For a moment, the landscape appears unfamiliar and chaotic.

I create temporary situations to be photographed by intervening in the commonplace. I photograph to discover what I didn't see -- to reveal the gap between my conscious experience and the fleeting, nearly imperceptible moments that I wasn't cognizant of. My photographs depict a floating, apparitional realm between absence and presence that is at once, devastating and miraculous.

These altered landscapes function as both a metaphor for human psychology, and as a reflection of the precariousness of our inextricable relationship to the natural world.

The camera's memory—the photographs—becomes the permanent record of the event, replacing my memory of the experience I thought I was recording. These new “memories” become their own entities that take new visual forms, and exist quite separately from the events that produced them.



MADELYN COVEY

Artist Statement

I make paintings, video, and sculpture about people who creatively demonstrate an aspect of their identity through their body. My subjects come from the ingenious adaptations my friends with disabilities use, and the sub-culture of cosplay (fan costumes), both with an emphasis on the homemade. In my work, I depict both physical extensions of the body, such as assistive tools or medical equipment, and fancifully imagined emanations from the body. I use crocheted yarn, which appears to grow out of a person's body, to animate colorful swirls, rays, and floral motifs externalizing a character's inner emotional power. These bodily augmentations sometimes overlap, extending the medical into the magical by animating and transforming things that might otherwise be abject. My primary interests are in considering the non-standard body, and celebrating the wonder of veering away from the norm. I approach these issues using tropes borrowed from Japanese anime and manga, which use static imagery (comics) and moving images (cartoons), to explore different aspects of the same story. Similarly, I am interested in how painting and video can address transformation, compassion and friendship in different, complimentary ways.



MATTHEW GOTTSCHALK

Artist Statement

My work mirrors the spectacle of everyday life. I make objects that are anthropomorphic, sympathetic, nonsensical, narcissistic, sad, funny, profound and sometimes just plain stupid. I take my subjects from the world that I know and group them to create what may appear to be random narratives, but can also reflect certain untold personal and social emotions. Through handcrafted and time-based mediums I source images of powerful figures and events from political and popular culture, and rearrange them to see how the different scenarios and people define and reflect my own character. I am interested in how we project our identities and in turn replicate each other's personas. I am playful in my craft and interested in the creation of myths and stories, and how societies, cultures and histories are shaped by these factors.



Installation view.

SAMUEL LEVI JONES

Artist Statement

My most recent body of work is rooted in the act of tearing down a set of 1972 Encyclopedia Britannica. I set upon the task of slicing out portraits and ripping out pages from volumes to find specific images of identity. The process was an act of disrupting the power within the system of knowledge. Chopping up and tearing out pages of the text was a mental, physical, and visual way of grappling with the material.

This process served as the purpose of creating a new means of working. I have traditionally been an image-maker and have relied upon the camera, but through this process found that working with the material from the encyclopedia is similar to working with the lens. Both involve shifting and framing. My 48 Portraits (Underexposed) involved found and scanned images, which have been manipulated and reprinted on handmade paper that I recycled from the encyclopedia. It took 60 pages to make a sheet for a single portrait. I chose to print images of 24 black men and 24 black women who were not but could have been shown in the encyclopedia in the given year.

736 Portraits was an equally hands-on act of reversing the role of representation within the encyclopedia. I sliced out figures that were formally represented by portraits within the pages, both white and African American. The former have been turned to face the wall, with only the black of the mounting material visible.



MICHAEL KOEHLE

Artist Statement

Our perception of reality is limited by our senses. What we think is fixed, what we rely on to identify the objects around us, is actually changeable and is dependent on the method of observation. What is solid can be transparent, what is invisible can be imaged, dimensional surfaces can become flat, time and space can be exchanged.

In my practice, I take an existing medium or technology, often something with industrial applications such as medical imaging or three dimensional scanning, and apply it in an unconventional way to reveal an unseen depth and complexity in the seemingly mundane. I isolate or blend the attributes of an object, such as its weight, volume, surface, or the space and time it occupies, to gain an understanding of how these facets are attached to its identity. I dust objects with a fiber optic light, I scatter x-rays with lead, I digitally strip an object of its skin, and write video software that confuses space with time.



JOCELYN MEGGAIT

Artist Statement

My latest project has me obsessively collecting objects through non-traditional means, primarily the Craigslist “Free” section. The project started through procuring alternative art materials for personal use—caches of jigsaw puzzle pieces and microfilm became sculpture—but eventually I became entranced by the stories, stories of the object’s life and the process of collecting. I view each original Craigslist ad as a poetic story about an object and compile them into books, together with my own images and thoughts on the process - I believe every object has a story.

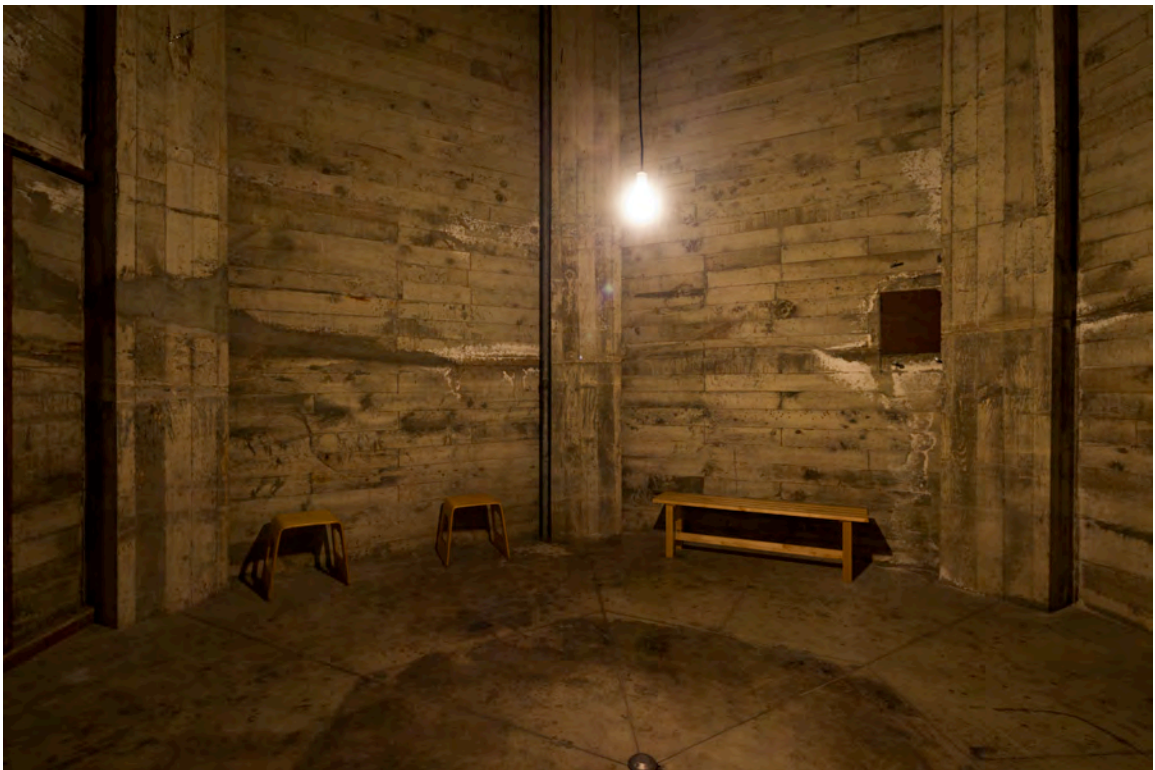
This abundance has made me free wealthy and, in order to support my collecting addiction and to give back, I compose the gleaned objects into free, socially interactive installations. I consider myself a conduit of things from one to another benefactor and call myself the Proprietor of Free: A Utopian Project, with an awareness of the political, economic and ecological issues loaded into this designation. Some of the objects I obtain are left intact, others I transform into objects d’art, and others I procure knowing some creative mind will have a use for them—I believe there is something for everyone. My only request is for participants to consider the possibility of economies that bypass monetary exchange, as well as the past, present and future ecological and economic, nostalgic and sentimental value of things and how their past effects our present and future.



MICHAEL MERSEREAU

Artist Statement

I analyze the structure of cinema and how it informs our world by highlighting the forms of production and removing key components that enable narrative. I Use film as the tool to study our psychological perceptions of the world, using sights and sounds from the terrifying to the absurd. I have re-staged the reverse projection of the classic Hollywood driving scene, turned cinema into pure light, and replaced the foley with matching environmental sounds. Exposing the mechanics of production in film opens the gap between the real world and the cinematic.



SETH MURCHISON

Artist Statement

My work is founded in my relationship to my hometown of Camp Meeker, CA. It is a small community in western Sonoma County that was established as the first Park and Recreation district of the nation in 1931. There, I am a publicly elected official and my combined role as artist and district director allow me to propose projects, ideas and events. Most of these have involved elements of food, music, film, art history, performance or presentation and are designed to be inclusive and accessible at the level a participant deems fit. The idea behind each event is to avoid the exclusivity and hyperbole often associated with art and politics. At their core, art and politics are about connecting people, ideas, desires and needs. Yet, too often, viewers and citizens feel estranged or disenfranchised. These events account for the lowest common denominator, while maintaining room for various levels of sophistication to develop. Inherent in each, are opportunities to provide content and establish the direction an event takes. In this way, I am aiming for a grassroots model of politics as the foundation for my art practice.



CAMILLA NEWHAGEN

Artist Statement

Lives leave a residue. Objects accrue and deposit into strata then get upturned and tossed into the air only to fall, pile up and solidify into layers once again.

I borrow clothing and accessories from the drawers and closets of my family, friends and people I barely know. I unsettle and re-imagine these worn materials – shaped and hardened by histories both personal and collective. I sort and stack. I bundle and prop. I toss and dump. Gravity is my nemesis and my partner.

I populate my studio with contingent and tenuous structures. I mark their muffled permutations in photographs. I am absorbed by the dynamic of mutation however sudden or glacial.



TRESSA PACK

Artist Statement

A photographic image is simultaneously a map of the maker's aesthetic decisions and a record of what was once in front of the camera. These aesthetic decisions of the maker betray a kind of fiction - they are implications of a narrative that are sometimes personal, and sometimes cultural. I am interested in the integral seam between the mechanical trace of the camera and the fictions within them.

In my most recent series, I expose the tools of photographic fiction (lights, stands, silks, clamps, power packs . . .) in an impassive landscape. The landscapes vary, as does the placement and organization of the equipment. However, in each image the lights denote the presence of an absent subject, as well as the presence of the maker. The quiet, unresponsive landscapes are an equal subject to the lights. Shot in remote locations on overcast days, the landscapes imply an ambiguous set of narrative parameters. Easily anthropomorphized, the lights seem to be an extension of myself where I could naturally be found in a reality divorced from this one. Within the mute landscape it is the lights that offer us a place - a fiction, to reside in.



KENT RODRIGUEZ SEGURA

Artist Statement

The collective consciousness of the Mexican people is the focus of my recent work. Inspired by stories collected from family and friends, I construct installations that give presence to their experiences related to narco-violence, disappearance, migration, and rebirth. I bring forth the materials of the land—soil, sugar, and cabbages—as a means to give material witness to these events. I use the international migration patterns of monarch butterflies as a metaphor for the cyclical movement of Mexican labor across the US–Mexican border. I recreate outlined of bodies from sifted soil and sugar, recognizing the disappeared and murdered that are now part of the land. I use materials to create text, hidden in plain sight, which is exposed over time through natural cycles of rain, wind, and soil. Amongst hardship lays a field of wounded cabbages that have been halved and left to rot. Yet, a flowering cabbage bloom endures, proving that hope remains through nature's process of renewal.



SOFIA SHARPE

Artist Statement

With the diverse and surprisingly colorful forms of tools and hardware, we are often presented with a mysterious contraption, comprised of features that have been dictated by utility. What happens when the intended function is removed and we see an object that is open to interpretation? The intriguing physical qualities allow these objects to be played with outside of their usual function.

For this body of work I re-purposed my own tools and hardware in nonfunctional, aesthetic arrangements and installations as a way to investigate how one engages with play. By discarding the idea of their intended function I expose the object's ability to act freely with one's imagination. Children are more inclined to uninhibited approaches of investigation and creativity, which tends to diminish as we get older. Over the years we learn more, and we accumulate more possessions along with acquiring all the factual information that applies to an object. With this volume of information our spontaneous curiosity begins to atrophy. I am interested in redirecting knowledge of an object's use of the utility to new categories of logic and their poetic, playful possibilities.



ART REVIEW

The Last Show on Earth: Mills College MFA Show

By [Kristin Farr](#) | May 09, 2012

Upon walking through the doors of the Mills College Art Museum, all I could say was, "YES!" Piles of junk, painted walls, and big sculptures greeted me, and it was clear that this year's crop of artists would maintain the legacy of the solid work we covered at Mills' MFA shows in 2009 and last year. The museum is grand and calls for art that measures up and fills the space, and the newly minted 2012 grads did their job. Their exhibition is titled **The Last Show on Earth**, and if it actually was, that would be OK by me.

I was on a mission to select a few favorites, but narrowing was a challenge. The mini solo exhibits gelled perfectly as one show, each artist in conversation with the next. Jocelyn Maggait's *Free: A Utopian Project* was the aforementioned pile of junk, which is what it looked like at first glance. This makeshift store of objects was culled from the free section on Craigslist, then curated and stacked together in poignant, aesthetically pleasing piles of handled objects, many of which had a creative bent. The artist

invited her audience to take something home and consider the history of the object. I scored a plastic hot dog bun for my fake food collection and wondered how many children or animals had slobbered on it since 1987, which was the production date stamped on the bottom.

Sofia Sharpe's work focused on tools of the trade, highlighting their colorful beauty and playfulness as objects in both painting and sculptural form. Tressa Pack also isolated her tools, anthropomorphizing lamps and photo equipment by staging them outdoors, crowded together around unseen subjects. Her photos were arresting and mysterious and I felt like I could walk right into the largest one.

This group of artists experimented with video like it was a new toy; nearly every artist used it in distinct and clever ways. Camilla Newhagen, creator of the tallest piece in the show (an enormous, clothing-strewn sculpture), made stop-motion videos of clothes being tossed into a heap. Side-by-side, the two monitors looked like perfectly framed digital paintings. Newhagen is an elegant problem solver dealing with the fragility of structures built by accumulation.

I love stop-motion animation and was happy to see it used more than once. Madelyn Covey made a video of a woman oozing red yarn that is crocheted into curly strands as it exits her body. I appreciated Covey's unapologetic overuse of yarn, which has experienced a boost of importance in contemporary art with yarn bombing regularly making the news. Covey even crocheted covers for the headphones playing acoustic guitar soundtracks for her videos. Her large knitted (or crocheted -- I can't tell the difference) *Talisman* looked like a crazy butterfly, boldly towing the line between art and craft, begging to be critiqued with its kindergarten colors. Her art references the body and growth over time, and her medium is part of the message.

Samuel Levi Jones investigates "how decisions are made in giving various forms of public recognition," and created portraits of important figures printed in black ink on black paper made from recycled encyclopedia pages. The absence of color in his stunning full-wall installations spoke volumes.

Michael Mersereau's video installation seemed simple at first -- a film shot through the windshield of a car. But then I realized the passing street view was not what it seemed, and the rearview mirror wasn't telling the truth. The composition and cinematic quality of the installation was strikingly similar to the shadowy paintings I remember Mersereau making as an undergrad (I happen to know because we used to be neighbors).

Matthew Gottschalk made a video installed at ankle height on a pleasantly color-blocked pastel wall. There was a crafty puppet in the video and it was fun to see it in real life after rounding the corner into Gottschalk's installation space, which also housed a sculpture of a deceased dignitary, and a comic book full of blank dialogue bubbles. The narrative was puzzling and I decided to keep it that way.

With its dreamy campus full of grassy meadows, tree-lined streets, squirrels, and swimming pools, Mills churns out high-quality batches of Masters of Fine Art who all seem to make fresh and positive work. Many artists I've interviewed have mentioned a need to shake their grad school restrictions out of their heads as if they need to undo a brainwashing. But I suspect it's different for the students at Mills. They seem to grow and develop exactly as they need to, then hit the ground running, with momentum, straight out of the gate. When they graduate, I picture them hugging and crying like kids boarding the buses home from the best summer camp ever.

Photos won't do this exhibit justice; it needs to be seen, heard, and physically experienced, so catch it before it closes on May 27th. It is **The Last Show on Earth** and time is running out.

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ART REVIEW | MAY 09, 2012

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You had me at rainbow yarn. By Kristin Farr



NOISE POP | MAY 08, 2012

[May 2012](#)

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East Bay Express

ARTS & CULTURE » VISUAL ART

May 23, 2012

'The Last Show on Earth' More Hopeful Than Apocalyptic

Graduate show at Mills College offers a guide through these perilous times.

By Obi Kaufmann

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There is something in the air and we can't lay all the blame on the ancient Mayans. Apocalyptic prophecies aside, the year 2012 has found us rudderless. Without direction, our young artists emerge from graduate school treading water in a dangerous and trackless sea. How does an inspired emerging artist combat the spiraling fractures of this contemporary pluralism? The current graduate show at Mills College offers a navigational guide through this perilous time. Twelve artists, all incredibly varied in talent and style, come together and pull off a brilliantly coherent show.

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Although the name of the show may be daunting, the exhibit represents a clear zenith of culture. In the words of Dr. Stephanie Hanor, director of the Mills College Art Museum, "The culmination of a two-year graduate program can feel like an apocalyptic experience." The twelve graduating students each present decidedly realized themes, manifested in impeccably focused art pieces. These themes revolve around four central ideas: personal identity, communal history, consumerist culture, and the nature of perception.

The point is illustrated by the work of four students in particular: Madelyn Covey, Kent Rodriguez Segura, Jocelyn Meggait, and Michael Mersereau. Covey uses yarn and painting (the only paintings in the exhibit) to address issues of the human body and its transcendence. In his installation, Segura uses rotting cabbage as part of a metaphor of disappearance and renewal. Meggait amassed a huge collection of free stuff via Craigslist and presents it as a complicated narrative of exchange. She encourages viewers to take items and reflect on their stories and why they were disposed. Mersereau's piece is located up a flight of stairs in the tower above the gallery, and should not to be missed. By incorporating elemental environmental cues — a single light bulb, an eerie soundtrack, and an isolated location — he manages a fun and successful Zen-bleakness.

The graduating students in this exhibit are faced with a conundrum: How do you begin a career with what has been called "The Last Show on Earth"? Perhaps the title of the show was a distraction itself — it wasn't called "The Last *Art* Show on Earth." Perhaps these emerging artists are collectively describing a new course of art in general. Only by announcing the end of something can we get on with the beginning of the next.

The Last Show on Earth runs through May 27 at Mills College Art Museum (500 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland). Panel discussion at Danforth Lecture Hall with the artists, moderated by Mills visiting assistant professor Stephanie Ellis, on Saturday, May 26, at 4 p.m. 510-430-2164 or MCAM.Mills.edu

Related Events

[The Last Show On Earth, Mills College 2012 MFA Exhibition @ Mills College Art Museum](#)
Through May 27