

## ***Notions of Place***

### **Curatorial Statement**

*Notions of Place* will examine what it means to inhabit a complexity of different spaces that may be physical realities or imagined environments. They proffer metaphors of exchange between nature and human action, drawing on dreams, memories, and the spaces in between, disintegrating commonly held social views that have acted as fences around our homes. The artists will be responsive to the diverse community that makes up San Pedro, while also keeping in mind the importance that it is home to the largest port of international traffic in the US. Filtered through social, cultural, and geo-political frames, the artists explore relationships and systems of the urban, suburban, exurban, and rural landscape. Their responses will ultimately transcend the singular city to reflect what one might call the Covid pandemic migration as well. As a whole society shifts its notion of home, so its idea of place transforms too.

Each of the artists in the exhibition articulate different facets of what we call place. In it one can feel safe: a home, or a country can be a refuge holding our values and dreams in safe harbor. Or it can be defined by a border or a wall holding us back from a new life. In ways that are both spiritual and physical, *Notions of Place* explores the contours of the artist's experience of the world. Each of the artists in the exhibition articulate different facets of what we call place. In it one can feel safe: a home, or a country can be a refuge holding our values and dreams in safe harbor. Or it can be defined by a border or a wall holding us back from a new life. In ways that are both spiritual and physical, *Notions of Place* explores the contours of the artist's experience of the world.

- Lauren Kasmer, Curator

### **Featuring work by:**

Hilary Baker  
Joyce Dallal  
Natalie M Godinez  
Kio Griffith  
Flora Kao  
Lauren Kasmer  
LaRissa Rogers  
Jenny Yurshansky  
HK Zamani

### **Hilary Baker**

*Birch Slice Paintings, 2022*

Acrylic on white birch and Aspen wood

Dimensions variable

The birch slice paintings are reminiscent of the souvenirs travelers once purchased as mementos of their road trips. These "souvenir" portraits document local life in rural California. The narrative that runs through them is the story of my community, the small town of Ojai, California. The birch slices depict both the rural and industrial landscape, as well as the resident wildlife whose habitats shrink as the landscape inevitably changes. My concern is that the landscape is leaving us, and we are running the risk of losing our humanity

in the process. If we retain our appreciation of our place in the natural world, the efforts to preserve our history enhances our lives. Hilary Baker's paintings document California's rural landscape through depictions of its solitary structures and native wildlife.

### **Biography**

Baker received her BA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her MFA from the Otis Art Institute. She has exhibited throughout the United States and internationally, including The Skulptur Projekt München, Germany and the Institut Franco-Americain, France, and has been awarded residencies at the Pont-Aven School of Art, the Ucross Foundation, Art Omi, Yaddo, and MacDowell. Her paintings have been featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, *L.A. Weekly*, *Art and Cake*, *Artillery* and *New American Paintings*. Her work is included in numerous public collections, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, the Crocker Museum, Broad Art Foundation, Temple University, and the University of Southern California.

As a curator, she co-organized the exhibitions, *Sexy: Sensual Abstraction in California, 1950's -1990's* and *Blind Courier: 9 Artists and Their Notions of Place*. She lives and works in Ojai, California, in the shadow of the Topatopa mountains.

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## **Joyce Dallal**

Joyce Dallal and Lauren Kasmer

*Homesītē*, 1992 – Present

Installation

Dimensions variable

*Homesītē* is an ongoing artwork by Joyce Dallal & Lauren Kasmer about the city of Los Angeles as one's home. The piece was created in the early 1990's and has been displayed throughout Los Angeles County in retail and public spaces, museums, and galleries over the last 30 years. The installation consists of a series of structures emblematic of the landscape and architecture of Los Angeles that display objects, tableaus, and stories contributed by residents reflecting where we live and where we came from.

In 2009 the project expanded to include the *Homesītē* Exchanges, where the definition of home was widened to include how we define ourselves through what we wear and what we eat. The *Homesītē* Recipe Exchange focuses on the connection between food and home, and is an opportunity to share a recipe, memory, or story about a dish that means home to you.

### **Biography**

Joyce Dallal is a Los Angeles based artist, mother, grandmother, and teacher. She is the recipient of several grants and fellowships, among them an NEA Regional Arts Fellowship in Photography, a Brody Arts Fellowship, and a City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowship. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, and her public art projects have been commissioned by the City of Pasadena, and the Los Angeles International Airport, Public Libraries, Community Redevelopment Agency, and Department of Cultural Affairs. She received her MFA from USC and is recently retired from El Camino College in Southern California.

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**Natalie M. Godinez**

*Aquí es donde soñamos / This is where we dream, 2023*  
Cotton bandanas, cotton muslin, hand embroidery, relief print  
60 in x 30 in

The border is a place full of possibilities, somewhere where people come to look for better opportunities or with the hope of crossing to el otro lado (the other side). Many people grow up in this place with the looming presence of militarization, enforcement, and barriers. The borderlands are where people thrive and dream regardless of the oppressive systems around them. This piece aims to illustrate the feeling of growing up on the border in Tijuana and how it is similar to migrating and having a continued sense of in-betweenness. The artist's mother tongue is emphasized but underlined by English, now the language that dominates a lot of her daily life, the language her daughter is growing up in. The snails carry their home like we carry our culture, with symbols of growth throughout. Watchful eyes represent a sense of surveillance, both literal and figurative.

**Artist Statement**

Godinez's work explores her experience as a transborder dweller and immigrant mother. She uses written language, visual metaphors, collaboration, and process-oriented art mediums. Through the work, she reflects on her role as a cultural maker and keeper and on all her dual identities. She is both an immigrant and citizen, Mexican and Mexican-American, mother and artist, educator and leader. Her work aims to be a tool for conversations about shared experiences, the possibilities of our imaginations, and our desires to create change in the world.

**Biography**

Natalie M Godinez (she/her/ella) is a Los Angeles-based artist, educator, and community advocate raised in Tijuana, México. Godinez explores memories, identity, and relationships to places and language through textiles, printmaking, and collaboration.

Godinez collaborates with AMBOS Project (Art Made Between Opposite Sides), a platform for bi-national artists to speak on border issues, where she has performed in artist interventions, has led education projects, and has coordinated humanitarian aid efforts. Currently, she works doing advocacy, arts education, and cultural organizing at Self Help Graphics and Art. Godinez holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Design from San Diego State University.

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**Kio Griffith**

*The Third Rail*, 2023  
Video Projection  
Dimensions variable

Navigating parent care during COVID altered my trajectory in such unexpectedly diverse ways, my sensors derailed and everything had to be relearned. The floating points that connect the parent to the child by way of universal truth required reevaluating. Where I landed on the anniversary of the ending of the Pacific War in 2020 was a motherless home with hints of an accident that would inevitably change her functioning lifestyle. The reverberations from this event placed myself on an indeterminable orbit, one that seems to trigger sequences of bifurcations and un-come-at-able noumenons. The performative semaphores of *The Third Rail* hint at the psychophysics of yearning and detachment, tracing shadows of an unascertainable time.

**Biography**

Kio Griffith is an interdisciplinary artist, independent curator, educator and arts writer working across themes of social issues, geopolitics and migrating cultures, through multimodal, craft and technology-based works including graphic design, sound and video, performance, coding, text, installation and publishing. He has exhibited internationally in the UK, Japan, Germany, Croatia, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Turkey, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and the U.S. Most notable are the 2016 Aichi Triennale in Nagoya, Japan, and Open Site 2018 at Tokyo Arts And Space. His current projects include co-founder at OOTE 41221 project space, co-founder of Transit Republic, an arts and socio-anthropological publication, and Genzou, an intercultural photographic journal. Griffith was selected as Emerging Curator at LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) for the 2017 exhibition, *The Ecstasy Of Mary Shelley*. As arts editor, he contributes reviews for Fabrik, Artscape and Art Bridge Institute. Griffith has lectured at Art Center College of Design, UC Santa Barbara and CalState Los Angeles. He is currently graphic designer for Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara and associate professor at Tama Art University. Griffith's work is in private and museum collections including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He has been awarded Santa Monica Artist Fellowship for 2022-2023.

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## **Flora Kao**

*Coastline: Nike Missile Site, 2023*

Oil rubbing on canvas

6' x 9'

*Coastline: White Point, 2023*

Oil rubbing on canvas

6' x 18'

Flora Kao's new installations explore transcendence and rebirth after a heartbreaking season of grief and isolation. Persevering through catastrophic loss and change, Kao's earth rubbing series records the topography of gardens and beaches where the artist sought solace during intense emotional turmoil. *Coastline* features oversize rubbings of White Point Beach in San Pedro, exploring touch, bodily knowledge, memory, mapping, and the meaning of place.

*Prayer Tree, 2020*

Salvaged silk and olive branches

7' x 2' x 4'

Giving new life to the amputated limbs of a neighbor's olive tree, *Prayer Tree* responds to the tumultuous cries of Black Lives Matter. Each branch is tied with fluttering silk prayer leaves in a rainbow of skin tones.

### **Artist Statement**

Flora Kao's art examines the human impulse to order and preserve in the face of the unknown and uncontrollable. In mapping presence and absence, Kao meditates on memory, mortality, displacement, and decay. Hovering between restraint and collapse, her installations seek to anchor moments of intense emotion through repeated action.

Kao's work investigates the psychological potential of constructed space, playing with the malleability of meaning and visual slippage. Each installation is a drawing in space, built from a multitude of repeating marks. Her large-scale rubbings of ruined houses capture the visual residue of failure and forgotten dreams. In obsessively overlaying street grids, Kao creates an expansive topography where data dissipates into dark void. Her installations of sewn moss and plants in flight serve as desperate attempts to preserve the transient beauty of nature. In crocheting a mile of vinyl tubing, Kao translates the trauma of witnessing indescribable suffering into a stark and haunting memorial.

Kao's installations translate personal loss and delight into transformative experience. Her art responds to contemporary dislocation from environment. In constructing unexpected sensory encounters with the organic and handmade, she hopes to challenge assumed knowledge and rote experience of space. Kao wants the viewer to pause, savor, and reflect upon the moment of encounter. Through such moments of poetic beauty, the viewer gains a heightened awareness of one's body in space.

### **Biography**

Working in installation, painting, photography, and video, artist Flora Kao explores the poetics of human relationship with environment. Examining architecture and technology, Kao transforms everyday structures into systems of beauty. In Los Angeles, Kao has exhibited solo at Grand Central Art Center, Pasadena

Museum of California Art, Commonwealth and Council, Gallery 825, Art-merge LAB, HAUS Gallery, the LA Art Show, and the UC Irvine University Art Gallery. Kao's work has also been featured at Soulangh Cultural Center in Tainan, Museum of Contemporary Art in Beijing, Infernoesque in Berlin, Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco, Emily Harvey Foundation in New York, and at various Southern California venues including El Segundo Museum of Art, Torrance Art Museum, Irvine Fine Arts Center, City of Brea Art Gallery, National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, Culver Center for the Arts, LAXART, Durden and Ray, See Line Gallery, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Beacon Arts Building, West LA College, Cerritos College, Cypress College, California State University Los Angeles, California State University Long Beach, and La Sierra University. Kao holds a MFA from UC Irvine in Studio Art, a BFA in Painting from Otis College of Art and Design, and a BA in Environmental Science and Public Policy from Harvard College. Kao's work can be viewed on her website.

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**Lauren Kasmer**

*Notions of Place, 2023*

Installation

Dimensions variable

The *Notions of Place* installation by Lauren Kasmer creates an invitation to inhabit an area within the Angels Gate Cultural Center Gallery. Works from the *Momenta* series, a solo exhibition online and *Equipoise*, an installation with live streamed activations, composed as pandemic responses, are now newly recreated and include the poetic non-narrative video *Mount II*, the wool rug *Assemblage* and the *Fallen Oak Leaves* repurposed couch. All incorporate her series of photographs and live action captures of the remains of her home fire and the environments ravaged after the most recent Southern California wildfires. Other elements include meditation rugs composed from her digitally printed textiles that were remaindered from the wearable art that previously appeared in each of her installations/performance projects over the last ten years. The bulky wearables, created especially for this exhibition, are composed of upcycled vintage remnants of her mother's fashion design clothing line. In casual performances, Kasmer will activate the *Notions of Place* installation by inviting any gallery visitor to adorn themselves in the aforementioned wearables and partake of foods that reflect her birthplace and heritage.

*Mount II, 2023*

Video

The title of Lauren Kasmer's video, *Mount II*, refers specifically to the surmounting or overcoming of an obstacle as well as to the geologic formation, mountain.

*Mount* is a poetically charged, non-narrative video intended for exhibition in the context of a multi-media gallery installation, as it is here in the *Notions of Place* exhibition. It is a visually layered piece that reflects on a devastating fire that engulfed Kasmer's home, destroying much of her artwork and family heirlooms and literally altering her past and present. Additionally, the artwork reflects upon the wildfires that have ravaged California. With cinematography shot in environments still in formation the piece also is a reflection of the overall climatic impact of man upon nature, along with the imperative that humans must develop an essential respect for the natural world or perish. Through the use of female actors and models in the natural settings throughout California one can sense that the artist suggests that the feminine or receptive mode of existence is potentially a route to a global healing.

As our collective and personal lives are continuously impacted by external elements the artist finds that the connection to nature becomes the grounding vehicle for healing and new growth. What grows from ash is an inspiration for personal recovery, creativity and seeds new ideas, stories, and explorations. A force majeure causes one to reach for beauty, contemplation and a return to an internal Eden.

For the *Notions of Place* installation, the film was further enhanced by a renewed composition that incorporates both found and created terrestrial and extraterrestrial sounds. Embedded in the soundtrack are the frequencies of pulsing of stars, the playing of tuning forks, the captured recordings of meadows, mountains and desert caves of California as well as human vocals.



### **Artist Statement**

Lauren Kasmer is a multi-disciplinary artist who works with a range of media and modalities. Her realizations are usually presented as an installation centered around a poetic video with a sound composition, with photographs applied to a variety of materials, and usually accompanied by live events that can be social and or public participatory engagements. Her practice is centered on an accumulation and layering of inquiries to create anew, a method to constantly reimagine and rework pieces from past collections so that the work continuously travels back and forth through time. The rejection of anchoring her art to a specific time period holds a great deal of respect for origins yet represents the ongoing nature of creation which is to continuously evolve. Kasmer also independently curates and originates shows for traditional exhibition spaces as well as in festival, non-profit and alternative spaces.

### **Biography**

Lauren Kasmer has worked extensively in photography, textiles, installation and video. She has also curated shows in galleries and in multiple alternative spaces. She incorporates her photographs into digitally printed sensuous wearable art that acts as an element in each of her installation/performance projects and video works over the last ten years.

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## **LaRissa Rogers**

*Sites of Remembrance and Notations for Locating Home, 2023*

Tiles comprised of soil from childhood homes, archival photos

73 x 41 x 11.5 inches

*Sites of Remembrance and Notations for Locating Home* juxtapose personal and familial imagery with historical – to articulate diasporic distance and placemaking to those distanced from their homeland. The images construct a fractured narrative that cannot be entirely understood due to the destruction of ancestral knowledge and the gaps in the archive. The imagery becomes a form of rememory acknowledging the interconnectedness of Black and Asian communities and histories.

### **Artist Statement**

Rogers' work looks at the intersections of culture, identity, and embedded forms of colonization expressed through perception and psyche. Combining aspects of memory, history, and personal experience, she expands and complicates the capaciousness of blackness by challenging the politics of hybridity, authenticity, and visibility as an Afro-Asian woman. Often asking the question, who and what survives? She simultaneously engages violence and care as co-constructive forces that structure Black life. By using materials that reference colonial histories Rogers re-contextualizes them to grapple with the entanglements of belonging and fugitivity, beauty and horror, life and death, opacity and transparency, care and resistance.

Often using performance, sculpture, video, and installation as methods of address, Rogers contends with the systems of commodification, representation, and female-identified subjectivity as shaped by the experience of diaspora. The body becomes an archive and vessel for collective memory and reimagining, while temporality provides pathways for de-colonial futures and alternative possibilities for Black and Asian people to exist.

### **Biography**

LaRissa Rogers (b. 1996) is a Black and Korean interdisciplinary artist raised in Ruckersville, VA. She is currently based between Virginia and Los Angeles. She holds a BFA in Painting and Printmaking and BIS in International Fashion Buying from Virginia Commonwealth University. Rogers has exhibited and performed in institutions such as Frieze Seoul (Korea), Documenta 15 (Germany), Fields Projects (NY), M+B Gallery (CA), 1708 Gallery (VA), Second Street Gallery (VA), Black Ground (Colombia), W Doha (Qatar), The Fronte Arte Cultura (CA), LACE (CA), Grand Central Art Center (CA), and the Museum of Contemporary Art (VA) among others. She received the Visual Arts fellowship at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (2022) and the Black Artists and Designers Guild Creative Futures Grant (2022). Rogers attended the BEMIS Center of Contemporary Art Residency (2022), Black Spatial Relics Residency (2022), and SOMA (2019), among others. Rogers is currently pursuing her MFA in New Genres at the University of California Los Angeles.

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## **Jenny Yurshansky**

*Blacklisted: A Planted Allegory (Memoriam)*, 2015

Digitally printed polyester voile, fan, nails

59" x 88" x 5"

*Memoriam* features a hanging draped piece of fabric. Embedded within the material is a photograph that documents the last day of the artist's attempt to create an invasive plant asylum. The image printed on the fabric records the moment just after shutting off all of the grow lights. All that can be seen are the corporeal water stains left behind on the shielding screen and the faintly visible impressions of the plants that lie just beyond. These are the last echoes of the living matter that formed the substance of the works in the exhibition before everything was cast away. This indexical 'Veronica's Veil' is the same size as the original scrim and functions as a memento mori for the entire project.

### **Artist Statement**

Jenny Yurshansky's practice is deeply informed by being a refugee, born stateless to parents fleeing from Soviet-era Moldova. Through a research-based approach, she explores the trauma of displacement, interrogating notions of belonging and otherness within the frames of landscape, historical documents, and social constructs. Formally, this manifests as absence, loss, or erasure. Her long-term projects form intertwined narratives and span the mediums of sculpture, photography, installation, and writing.

### **Biography**

In 2023 Yurshansky's solo exhibition "Rinsing the Bones" will open at 18th Street Art Center. The Center for Art and Craft has also selected her to participate in their inaugural Teaching Artist Cohort. In 2022 she had a solo exhibition at American Jewish University, "There Were No Roses There," for which she also received an Emergency Grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Art. In 2021 she was commissioned to create new work for which the group exhibition was titled "We are all guests here." at Bridge Projects. That year she was also the inaugural Alumni Artist in Residence at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. Numerous institutions have invited her across Los Angeles to host community-based workshops, lectures, and artist walkthroughs, including MOCA, Wende Museum, Skirball Museum, Bridge Projects, Armory Center for the Arts, Oceanside Museum of Art, Barnsdall Art Center, Heart of Los Angeles, Beverly Hills City Arts Programs, Lancaster Museum of Art and History, Fulcrum Arts, UCLA, Art Center, California Institute of the Arts, Cal State Fullerton, Pitzer College, Otis College, Chapman University, and American Jewish University. Her recognitions include being awarded the City of Los Angeles Artist Fellowship in 2019.

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**HK Zamani**

*House of Veneer, 2008-2016*

Digital Print on Vinyl

96" x 144"

*Flying Dome for Flash Animation, 2008*

Fabric, armature, hardware

18" x 36"

*Excerpt from catalog essay by Tim Christian for **House of Veneer**:*

Taking as his point of departure the iconic Geodesic Dome, as designed by the 20th Century visionary R. Buckminster Fuller, Zamani embarked on an exploration of the failure of utopian ideals. The very use of veneer in the production of the work speaks volumes about the state of the world today. A veneer is merely a finish, an image, even a reproduction of the real intended to fool the eye and lead the beholder into a state of ignorant pleasure. The veneer has no depth, no weight and no future. It is in point of fact a lie. The image of the dome in elegant decay strikes the viewer like a blow: "What does this mean?" "This is not what I know to be true." It laid waste to the hope instilled within architecture as object and subject of our salvation. What came to be a symbol of the triumph of the Modern era (despite its journey from hippie to genius) suddenly falls apart. The fabric is tattered and torn, the framework is splintered and broken, and the very essence of the image begins to fade into memory leaving the viewer not with a shining reflection of our moral and intellectual superiority, but rather a dissolving memory, a small sense of loss, nostalgia for what we never knew we didn't have. We have stumbled, with the artist, upon the ephemeralization of the icon itself.

**Biography**

HK Zamani (b. 1958, Tehran-Iran) studied Studio Arts and Design at California State University, Dominguez Hills and El Camino Community College. He received his Master's of Fine Art in Painting from Claremont Graduate University. Selected regional exhibitions include Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Lancaster Museum of Art and History, A+D Museum, PRJCTLA, LA Louver, Municipal Gallery at Barnsdall. He has also exhibited nationally and internationally in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, London, Berlin, Prague, Seoul, Saigon, and Bangkok. He is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and founder of PØST, an alternative exhibition space in Los Angeles (1995-2018), where more than five hundred exhibits were hosted. He has taught at University of California Los Angeles, University of California Santa Barbara, California State University at Long Beach, California State University at Dominguez Hills, Woodbury University, and been a Visiting Artist at numerous national and international institutions. He is a recipient of The City of Los Angeles Individual Master Artist Project (COLA-IMAP) and California Community Foundation grants, and his work is in the collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Berkeley Museum of Art, and Lancaster Museum of Art and History.

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