

FOAF

Here | There

Brooke Didonato, Aitor Lajarin-Encina,
Victor Machado, Carmen Mardonez, Cherish Marquez

Here/There explores liminality after a period of cloistered domesticity. Selected artists examine the quiet breaks in awareness that have made the barriers between adjacent realities and our lived experiences blur. These slips have begun to creep into our perception in new ways over the past year, breaking up what has for many been a rather monotonous period of forced routine and seclusion.

Some of the artists in *Here/There* allow us to glimpse into the void between what is recognized and familiar and something entirely strange. Brooke Didonato's photographs are at once graceful and unnerving, capturing displaced bodies in stark interior spaces. Torsos slip languidly from ceilings and a pair of legs juts out from cabinetry. Her images give viewers the sense they have inadvertently witnessed a glitch in the matrix and an unfortunate someone caught in its cross hairs. Victor Machado's mark making renders vaguely familiar shapes ultimately incomprehensible. The decided flatness of his simple compositions on untreated canvas trick the eye into fading in and out of spacial awareness and recognition, as we try to locate ourselves in relation to them. Though their origins are humble, Carmen Mardonez's sculptural pillows transform into new entities under her hands. They are somewhere between having form and being formless, oddities that at once attracts and repel.

Two other artists in the exhibition take us into entirely adjacent planes. Aitor Lajarin-Encina's tongue in cheek work for *Here/There* presents an exhibition within an exhibition, allowing the FOAF co-directors to curate other artists into a painted space. We are forced then, to occupy two worlds at once, as we view the exhibition in the artist's world while still physically occupying our own. Cherish Marquez has crafted an equally multifarious desert dream-scape. Using the symbol of the yucca plant, she encourages rumination, transformation, healing, and rebirth through the screen.

Brooke Didonato

After studying photojournalism at Kent State University, Didonato developed a body of personal work questioning the notion of realism induced by the photographic medium. Her images propose scenes of everyday life distorted by visual anomalies and bathed in a pastel universe that evokes the American dream of the fifties. Extreme landscapes—corn fields and cacti, a drainage pipe and a lonely desert—as well as domestic spaces, stand in for the subconscious mind. The pictures become fantastic as environments hide or subsume the human figures.

Currently based out of Texas, Didonato's work is part of the Southeastern Museum of Photography's permanent collection. Her work has also been exhibited internationally, most recently at the KINDL Centre for Contemporary Art in Berlin and the Delphian Gallery in London.

Aitor Lajarin Encina

Aitor Lajarin Encina conceives of his paintings, videos, and installations as narrative displays that situate the viewer in a position of estrangement, perplexity, and curiosity in order to open space for subsequent moments of reflection and introspection. Through his work, he presents gags, vignettes, or situations that portray everyday scenes infused with a surreal, tragicomic atmosphere. The narrative is open, unwrapped, and unveiled.

The different formal and iconographic elements, color, shapes, textures, elements, characters, objects, and spaces are organized as very balanced ecosystems in which the relationships between the elements create concentration, intensity, and a multiplicity of possible meanings available to the viewer. The narrative elements are suspended in an equilibrium of uncertainty, encouraging the viewer to project meanings and resonances onto them through her/his own subjectivity. The artist's work is a meeting point, an invitation, for he and the audience to play together and explore shared speculative territories of thinking and emotion. It is a space for voluptuous sensorial derivations and analytical or philosophical digressions around and about our contemporary life conditions.

Lajarin Encina is currently a professor of painting at Colorado State University and a co-founder of the DXIX project house in Venice, California. The artist has exhibited at Directions Gallery, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, PPL Projects, Fort Collins, CO, the Artnueve gallery, Murcia, Spain, La Luz De La Nevera gallery, Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, Mexico, Instituto de las Artes y la Cultura, Puebla, Mexico, curated by Michael Murillo, the Palma Dotze gallery, Barcelona, Spain, the MA Studio Beijing, China, the Harvard Art Museum in Massachusetts and others. He was additionally a 2015 Facebook Artist in residence.

Victor Machado

Victor Machado is an artist and curator from Denver, Colorado who specializes in painting, drawing, digital, and installation. His work examines societal and cultural forces that influence rates of mental illness. Machado is a current resident at RedLine, the former curator of Melon Gallery, and a founding member of artist collective The Foundation for Plaques.

Currently, his favorite pastel is an unnamed shade of baby blue.

Carmen Mardonez

Before she even menstruated for the first time, Carmen Mendoza had already been taught how to sew, knit, and embroider. She had to develop the necessary skills to become a caring wife and mother, though no one asked her if that was her plan. As a woman, her entrails have always been governed by others. When the artist unplannedly became a mother, all the rebellion against this rigid conservative and religious education irremediably exploded. Mardonez refused to become what she was trained for. Her artistic work then became another way of expressing resistance.

In Mardonez's current work, she explores ways of deconstructing traditional embroidery to allow for less patterned, more experimental techniques, where color and relief are more important than mimesis and practical domestic use. The artist embroiders on bed sheets and pillows, radically intimate spaces that store memories of dreams, exploration and discovery. These objects have also witnessed the materialized, embodied repression, byproduct of centuries of indoctrination we have experienced as women through history. They also accompany our restless nights, when the horrors and the injustices do not give us truce. But even more importantly, bed sheets are the space of our wildest dreams, utopias of liberation and sisterhood.

Mardonez currently lives in California, and has exhibited at such places as SoLA Gallery, TAG Gallery, and Brea Gallery in Los Angeles, Hastings College in Nevada, the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach.

Cherish Marquez

Cherish Marquez is from a very small town called Sierra Blanca, TX, a place that has been a significant inspiration to the artist's work. As a third-generation native of Sierra Blanca, Texas, the artist's body has been exposed to several personal and political atrocities.

Sierra Blanca is located 16 miles from the Mexico border, which means she came into constant contact with border agents for most of her life. She was held under a government power structure that had the control to search your car, your body, and land. She started her artistic journey with a BA in Fine Art, with a focus on photography, which she felt brought her closer to the world. She took a break to work in non-profits and then found herself immersed in the art world again. She started to create digital landscapes and her practice has evolved into avant-garde games. She uses her practice as social activism. She experiments primarily with video games and interactive media that exist in similar spaces within her alternate universe. Her art would not exist without the accompaniment of human contact.

Marquez has shown in galleries in the past, such as RedLine Contemporary Art Center and Leon Gallery in Colorado. She completed her MFA in Emergent Digital Practices at the University of Denver and is currently a resident at Redline Contemporary Art Center.

Gallery Guide

Cherish Marquez
Voices of the Desert: Yucca
2021
3D Animation/Video

The desert contains voices that have a story to tell. Stories of trauma. Stories of healing. Stories of surviving. The yucca was used to make medicine. It has air-cleansing properties. It was used to construct clothing. The yucca leaf is a symbol of protection and known as the “sword of survival”. The seed pods fall to the ground without the guarantee of life but will find a way to continue living through the harsh conditions of this seemingly lifeless land.

Price upon Request

Victor Machado
Full Cartoon
2021
Oil pastel on canvas

\$2,500.00

Carmen Mardonez
Paula
2019
Memory foam pillow

\$400.00

Aitor Lajarin Encina
There's a Bunny In My Parking Spot
2021
Exhibition on canvas with acrylic and mixed media

\$1000.00

Carmen Mardonez
Chascona
2020
Memory foam pillow, embroidery thread

\$400.00

Brooke Didonato
Brief Encounters from “Nothing to Write Home About” series
2021
Digital print

\$2,000.00

Brooke Didonato
Secrets Out from “Nothing to Write Home About” series
2021
Digital print

\$2,000.00

Brooke Didonato
Everything but the kitchen sink from “Nothing to Write Home About” series
2021
Digital print

\$2,000.00

Brooke Didonato
Two Truths and a Lie from “Nothing to Write Home About” series
2021
Digital print

\$2,000.00

Victor Machado
Summer Burial 2
2021
Oil pastel on canvas

\$2,000.00

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Friend of a Friend Gallery
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