



**Reviews by Class Art160:  
Art Criticism for a Changing World**

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### Protection of Hearts



As I examine the top portion of the painting, I notice the lack of vegetation in the environment of the painting. There are around five noticeable trees/ cactus plants; all with distinct shapes and sizes. It is clear that the environment of the painting appears to be in a deserted location, in the scorching heat. The hint of the bright sunlight highlights the top of the tree that is on the left side of the house; indicating that the environment is humid, and could possibly be in the desert. The clear sky highlights the distinct colors and patterns of the house. Mustard, forest green, gray, as well as brick patterns are scattered throughout the house. Moreover, the house appears to have three separate forms of shutters and windows. While taking these observations into consideration, it may be a form of evidence that the house has been abandoned. Although the house has separate color schemes and shutters, it is conjoined together. Thus, I'm assuming that the house is one entity, rather than three separate houses. The hints

of light and dark brown underneath the house indicates that the Earth is quite dry, and lifeless. However, underneath the house and ground, there is an abundance of life in the depths of the painting. The cream, chestnut, and turquoise colors blend into one another, similar to the depths of an ocean. Abstract shapes, that appear to be rectangular, connect throughout the entirety of the painting. Within the rectangular shapes are abstract lines, or black dots. In addition, some of the rectangular figures in the cream and chestnut portion of the painting have a white border around them, yet, at the turquoise portion, there appears to be either a slight black border or none at all.

Furthermore, five thick branches/roots stem from the house. The dark black roots appear to be covering three, large abstract figures. Unlike the rectangular figures, the three large abstract figures have white web-like lines stemming from a smaller oval figure within each figure. The smaller oval shape has a turquoise border, and appears to be filled in with a textured chestnut and/or creme color. It appears as though the three abstract figures are the center of attention of the painting, as they are designed in a distinct manner compared to the other figures within the painting. Similarly, the root of the canvas (similar color to the border of the painting) appears to be showing through the three abstract figures, in a manner that may indicate that the painting has been slightly cut into those specific locations.

My sensory responses to the artwork stem from my connection to my family and home. My initial response to the artwork was noticeable in an emotional manner. Specifically, the roots/branches that stem from the house reminded me how the root of my home reaches deep down into the foundation of love that I feel at home. The roots remind me of the love and dedication my parents gave to me throughout my childhood, and how I was protected by them. The three abstract figures that are protected by the branches/roots remind me of my siblings and I; and as though we are being shielded from the harsh world/environment around us. As I previously mentioned, the environment of the artwork appears to be lifeless and dull, and the roots appear to be a form of protection. Thus, as I gaze at the painting, I'm reminded of feeling safe and taken care of.

However, from an intellectual standpoint, I look at the three abstract figures as the basic needs of life (food, water, and shelter). I associate the turquoise color with the basic needs of life, specifically, water. Although the environment of the painting appears to be lacking life, my intellectual thoughts grasp the roots are searching for the basic needs of survival. Moreover, I associate the three abstract figures in the center of the painting as the human heart, due to the fact that the roots are surrounding/protecting it. As I examine the cream, chestnut, and turquoise paint that blend into one another, my thoughts shift to the various layers of the earth's crust; which are also the root of human existence as well as survival. The clear blue sky as well as the house depend on the structure and formality of the three distinct layers of Earth, and I was reminded of how the structure of Earth is our support system for life as well. Essentially, my emotional and intellectual responses to the painting unite, in terms of protection and safety.

## Worth Ryder Exhibition

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### Installation View

On the left: Fei Pan, *Alternative Hypothesis of Science #01\_6 ways of moon gazing*, 2021. New media installation: video, metal, PLA, mirror, eyepiece, finderscope. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.  
On the right: Fei Pan, *Alternative Hypothesis of Science #03\_ Stories that have nothing to do with time*, 2021. New media installation: Frames, moving images, code, sound. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

It is a truly amazing experience visiting the Worth Ryder Gallery at UC Berkeley. Not knowing that the art practice department has such a precious space reserved for the work of our brilliant artists, this visit has been mindblowing. Most of the time when I go to an exhibition, I would subconsciously expect an open space with a fancy, modern interior as part of the experience, or it could very possibly be that I have not gone to enough exhibitions. But this tiny little room semi-hidden in the art practice building had much more to offer than some of the fancy galleries I was expecting.

Going in without a clue about what was being exhibited and whose work those were. The immediate expectation from this is that I would first pay attention to the work itself and probably contemplate or derive a very subjective and personal understanding of some of the arts. Therefore, when I first saw Fei Pan's installation *Alternative Hypothesis of Science #01\_6 ways*

*of moon gazing* right next to the entrance place I simply gravitated towards the telescope-looking device trying to figure out what was the function of it and probably what were we supposed to see

through this device. But my exploration trying to see something through the device was an inevitable failure, although the installed device was a great metaphor for the actual astronomical telescope, encompassing the changes of the light path through mirrors and scopes, the actual moon-viewing remains impossible or actually irrelevant in this particular scenario. Because the message has started to sink in through such failure. As I walked over this first device and saw her other installations such as *Alternative Hypothesis of Science #03\_ Stories that have nothing to do with time*. At a personal level, this installation spoke to me in an immersive way. As a film studies major, the constantly looping soundwave in the frame and the sound of the corresponding signals presented a sense of perpetuity, like photos that eternally capture an indexical moment in life or like films and videos that are capable of indefinitely repeating a recorded moment or sequence. These are all privileges enabled through innovation and the development of technologies. But photos die right after the moment of the pressed shutter, it is a medium destined to capture a living moment yet all living moment passes. Thus, when Pan's installation puts the digital sound waves in the center of the frame where we would initially be expecting a painting or when the telescope fails to let you gaze at the moon, it is not an inevitable failure but an illustration of another medium – the technology itself. Just like those that have enabled photography and film, it is through these technologies that we are now capable of capturing a certain passage of time. But do these fundamental technologies that enabled such capture to have anything to do with time, with those so-called living moments that inevitably pass? Pan's amazing installations present the vital discourse between technology, innovation, and our lives. It makes you contemplate the relationships between innovations and the transformation it brings to our society. Although technology and innovations have occupied a significant proportion of our time, our relationship towards those technologies leaves a great mediating space and would always differ in perspectives as an individual or as a collective. But it is nevertheless vitally important to realize how much transformation we are experiencing and to take a closer look at the fundamentals that are transforming us.

Pan's ingenious installation is definitely a must-see piece in Worth Ryder Galleries but there are so many more brilliant artworks that are as great and worth seeing. This is definitely a more than rewarding experience and Worth Ryder is a more than definitely worth-going gallery that I'd wish to visit every once in a while.

**Samuel Wildman**  
Katherin Velazquez

Samuel Wildman has a series of sculptures in *Optimal Conditions* named *A Small Domestic Crisis*. On one of the walls, closer to the ceiling, a vertical sizeable stainless steel sink had two compartments in the color silver.



Samuel Wildman, *A Small Domestic Crisis: Sink and Nightlight*, 2021. Stainless steel sink, electrical box, outlet, night light, joint compound. Dimensions Variable. Photograph: Katherin Velazquez

One compartment had metal covering it, and the other sink compartment had a rainbow on a cloud night light inside the garbage disposal. In its entirety, it is a very clean household appliance that is common among houses connected to pipelines, with a childlike nightlight inside of the garbage disposal but instead of the sink being inside a countertop, it is inside the wall. This sculpture resonated with me since I immediately made a story in my head related to domestic violence due to the name of the series being a domestic crisis. The artwork creates a striking atmosphere for me because, in the dim light of the gallery, the nightlight is the object that stands out the most on the wall, especially since there are only two objects in this sculpture, the details of the nightlight stick out. There are only four colors: red, yellow, orange, and blue, instead of the seven colors rainbows usually have. The cloud has six lumps with a blue outline around its shape. The nightlight placement inside the garbage disposal

made me wonder if that meant trying to dispose of the object entailing the crisis. Usually, nightlights are for children, which hints at childhood and vulnerability. The choice of what type of sink material can also determine another story around vulnerability. The decision for a stainless steel sink instead of a glass or porcelain sink, which are fragile materials, can imply that the owner of the nightlight had to be a strong person in a crisis.

When I read the PDF with the artist's statement, the sculptures were related to single homes in the United States, where the government "reinforces gender norms and racial divides" (Wildman, 2022, P.38). Knowing this information and why the artist created the sculptures drew me into the initial sculpture I saw when entering the gallery.



Samuel Wildman, *A Small Domestic Crisis: Air Filter and Half n Half*, 2021. Air filter, led flame bulb, ceramic tile, porcelain repair epoxy, 24"x30"x52". Photograph: Katherin Velazquez

The first sculpture I saw was the air filter on a pole and half n half on tiles in the shape of an island. The first thing I noticed was that the air filter is attached to a skinny pole so that it almost looks like it is in a shape of a flag. I noticed this object first because it was not on the tiles and aligned with my eyes, while I had to look down to see the other objects. The next object was the LED light candle

that gave off an orange light like the sun. The color of the sun, being a mix of warm tones, creates that type of environment, and so does the LED light candle. The following two objects are the white tiles in a wavy structure on the floor and the clover half n half that is cows milk. The half n half is laid down on the tiles horizontally instead of being upright. Before reading the statement, I first thought the domestic crisis was simple; it just meant spilled milk. After knowing that it represents a crisis in a nuclear family, I tied it into the other work by Samuel Wildman of the sink and nightlight by relating it to childhood and that if a kid spilled milk, then their parents might get frustrated hence the crisis. The white tiles in a wavy structure could resemble the white milk spilled onto the floor, making the milk and tiles part of a story.

## **The Deconstruction of A Single-Family Home: Review of Samuel Wildman**



## Madisyn Schweitzer

Showcasing the works of seven first-year MFA students at the University of California, Berkeley, the *Optimal Conditions* exhibition employs mediums of live performance, media, light, color, and abstraction to manifest a transcendental experience for its viewers. Offering discussion on contemporary issues, artists featured in this show approach the troubles of reality through an eccentric lens, ultimately reconfiguring our perceptions through a strategically structured yet open display. Taking a particular look at the work of Samuel Wildman, the exhibition features sculptures from his *A Small Domestic Crisis*, 2021 series, all centering around the idealization and toil within single-family homes. With pieces such as *Air Filter and Half and Half* and *Xmas Tree and Toilet Paper*, the Portland-based artist takes familiar domestic objects and recomposes them into unusual combinations, challenging their initial state or purpose. Using ceramic tile, various light fixtures, and even a chair, Wildman provides dynamic commentary on the effects of home on the self as well as the extension of energy needed to maintain the household system literally and figuratively.

As the first of Samuel Wildman's works that audiences encounter, *Air Filter and Half and Half* welcomes viewers with both a unique composition of mundane belongings as well as appealing aesthetics that capture one's curious eye. Constructed on a base of white ceramic tile, this piece features an empty Clover Half and Half carton, a warm-toned LED light fixture, and an air filter positioned in the form of a waving flag. Placed relatively low to the ground, this sculpture forces audiences to look down upon it and, due to its minimalist design, really inspect the piece to find applicable meaning. With the tile base in the shape of a puddle of spilled liquid, it draws a connection between the askew carton and its presumed contents. Analyzing the positioning of the air filter on the thin rod triggers recollections of the 1969 moon landing and the image of Buzz Aldrin placing the American Flag into the moon's surface. Given Wildman's location in the United States, this arrangement is comprehensible, especially given the U.S.'s pride in flying their iconic national colors. The addition of the flickering LED light, arguably the much-needed touch of the work, makes *Air Filter and Half and Half* more than a construction of randomized objects. Featured in a relatively dark room, the ambient light draws audiences in, finding a sense of comfort and warmth in the piece while amplifying the uncomplicated color palette. In collaboration with other sculptures in the *A Small Domestic Crisis* series, connections to the home space become evident; however, the meaning in this sculpture alone is unclear. One may suspect the idea of the domestic as a claimed territory or simply an arrangement of household items feeding into the series as a whole.

Viewing the *A Small Domestic Crisis* series as a collective within the *Optimal Conditions* exhibition is a contemplative and fascinating experience. As Samuel Wildman can transport us into a contorted view of reality through his relatively minimalistic yet conceptually complex works, we can better reflect on our own lives within the domestic space. By obscuring the familiar through his anomalistic compositions, the idea of home as a labor-intensive environment becomes exposed, revealing the inner workings of people, governance, and societal influence playing into this highly common familial construct. Contrasting heavily from surrounding artists, such as Irma Yuliana Barbosa's *tenura means tenderness* which evoked a sense of vexing uneasiness, this collection provided

a sense of distorted comfort that is welcoming to the eyes and intriguing to the mind. As explained in his artist statement, Wildman explores the aspects of domestic living, both good and bad, through the materials of the home, internal and external. Whether it's the comfort caused by warm LEDs or the inattention of a used milk carton, a conversation is evoked around what goes into developing the single-family household and how it isn't a simple display of correctness. Drawing from issues such as the housing crisis or the manipulation of domestic living to “reinforce gender norms and racial divides,” these pieces tell the story of everyday people in a manner that ultimately alters reality to reveal a sense of truth. How this truth is understood is individual to each viewer's experience and cannot be universalized amongst an audience. By disclosing an aspect of their identity concerning the domestic space, Wildman can drive his concept through the observer's reality.

**Gericault De La Rose's *In Between***

Hannah M. Brooks



Gericault De La Rose, *In Between*, 2022. Performance and installation: plywood, wax, fabric. 1'1" run time.  
Image courtesy of Hannah M. Brooks.

Within the walls of the Worth Ryder Gallery, seven artists explored the liminality of spaces through *Optimal Conditions*. UC Berkeley's Art Practice program held its first year MFA show from January 26th to February 17, 2022, including performance works held on selected dates by two of the participants. One of which, Gericault De La Rose, explored the site of sacred ritual through a ceremonial self transcendence, as well as reclamation of a realized iconography in the deconstruction

and reimagining of conventional cultural practices. Her performance “In Between” is a measured ceremony that casts the artist’s body in wax, a relic that is preserved for later reverence or perhaps irreverent consideration. The process-based work summons an audience to consider both time, space, and certainly one’s place within both those subjectivities.

Gericault De La Rose’s altar appeared as the fleshy heart of the exhibition space, beguiling visitors from the entrance with sumptuous silken drapery and the formalized arrangement seen in theaters or churches; signifying a particular gravity of the occasion. The scene’s weight is underscored by the heavy transept of wood, lined in lustrous pink runners that run off the edges down to the floor. Intersecting with a delineated center, the cross functioned both as a stage for the artist and her artifact, as well as a literal viewing platform. Reminiscent of a pew, this seat is possibly even the viewing bench found commonly in galleries; expressed the duality of perception employed. Melting pots filled with dark pink, almost red wax were placed at the termination points of the horizontal axis, while a larger silver basin crowned the head. There is a dialogue, perhaps even a critique, within the handling of these ubiquitous spiritual symbols. Behind this arrangement, the backdrop was most dramatically hung. A luxuriously gathered, balloon-style curtain of dark mauve overlaid a lighter rose, rouged drape; again evoking a stage curtain as the material reflected the spotlighting and enhanced the shadows of the darkened gallery. These visual quotations suggest the setting was contrived for a large assembly, either for entertainment or adoration.

Gericault De La Rose’s installation was conceived as a physical recording to be deciphered by viewers throughout the show’s run, yet the performance was an origin story for the relics. During which, the artist began with a white wax-cast effigy. Painstakingly by hand, she deconstructed this traditional craft material to create the basis of a new form. Reverently, on her knees, she tended to the liquidation of the inherited, material fabric of the past. Reverberating off the walls of the empty, silent

gallery throughout her performance played a recording of the sound of her footsteps. The audio illustrates the passing of time, during which the artist labors to dismantle a pre-established design. Adopting the venerable detritus she attempts to construct fresh shapes modeled after her form. Aided by an attendant or companion, they work to embellish Gericault's body in the artist's admixture. Reclined, but by no means relaxed, in a relief pose that evokes a sculptural contrapposto, the artist supervises this work carefully. The mixing, melting and careful tending of wax suggest alchemy of creation, as the transformative nature of heat is applied to elements that then evolve repeatedly to discover new states of cognizance.

Process-driven by illustrating varied spatial construction, the work bids audience confrontation. They must consider the object within time as well as how the site functions to exist in space. Elements of the design, such as the remnants of activity and the drama of the scene, allude to the importance of the body's relationship to consecrated spaces. Duality reemerges through the visual division of the artist's body during the performance, the use of a second figure, treatment of materials, and even the axis itself creating a liminal space of transition. The wax contains a multiplicity when isolated as pieces, distilled in fluid, and then adhered in both forms collaging the skin of the artist's body.

Gericault De La Rose and her assistant are both barefooted, donning sinuous lengths of glossy locks accentuated by shifting slip garments and the voluminous veil scrim. These organic motifs underscore the human body as a subject, or as the artist herself states "an amulet". The title of her piece suggests a transition space of simultaneous, incongruent or converging truths inherent in human myth. Deterioration of outmoded or austere human conditions can be achieved within flexible conceptions of collaboratively reimagined traditions. The artist here encourages viewers to digest and repurpose experience in pursuit of finding deeper appreciation among a more representative society.

Vivianne Champagne  
**Fashion as Sculpture**

Eniola Fakile's work is an interesting use of sculptural and installation methodologies while intersecting it with ideas of wearable art. She makes use of space, shape, material, and color through her work in

order to bring about cultural messages surrounding identity, complexities of relationships, and the intangible self. She uses colorful fabrics with compelling textures: fabrics and surfaces resembling velvets, silks, and plastics, layered with decorative pieces like cigarettes, button eyes, and paper butterflies. These expressive and lively details are used to say things about characteristics and about people. Although she previously created work that discussed people's relationships to the world around them and themselves, she now is focusing on her own selfhood and working to understand herself through her art, and this is suggested in this work.

Her work displayed within the gallery consisted of several individual yet similar sculptural pieces that tried to pull from these ideas. Most of them used similar techniques, having the base layers of the sculpture be a more typical but still noticeable fabric or material, usually in a clothing form, and then layering it with unconventional and eye-catching details, like the cigarettes or button eyes. All of the sculptures were closely arranged, like a maze and as if speaking to each other, and working together as part of a collection. They all worked as personas communicating through vibrant, charismatic, and enigmatic imagery, with the context or meaning of some being more legible than others. These personas seemed to be articulating these inner identities of various facets of herself or different relationships she has with others and how these might relate to the world.

Eniola has a background in photography for her undergraduate degree, but now focuses on designing sculptural works that incorporate fashion, which she uses to express her conceptual ideas in fascinating and deep ways, which attempt to better understand herself.

The conceptual context she is portraying shows through all of her pieces, but notably through one, titled Mom, that is part of her larger group of works displayed in the gallery. This particular piece is able to display these messages of individuality and inner complexities through not only the figure's slumped shape and posture to depict the sense of fatigue that comes with motherhood, but also the use of detail and imagery that is pervasive in the piece. The fabrics used are velvety, and in brooding colors, echoing the tone of the posture. The flowers sprouting from the head and the arms signify the concept of femininity that is also tied with the experience of motherhood, and the numerous button eyes that cover the figure seem to reference the idea of moms being able to see everything, or have "eyes in the back of their heads." This commentary on motherhood is interesting through the lens of sculpture and fashion. These details touch on concepts and feelings of exhaustion expressed through posture, and gratitude expressed through flowers. Whoever "mom" is to her, seeing every small detail throughout this individual sculpture can tell us a lot about Eniola's own life experiences with motherhood, and presumably, how it shaped her.

There is a wonderful expression of emotion in this piece, and it describes a specific relationship or character in her life, whether internal or external. Using clothing to do this, especially such colorful and textured clothing, is such a beautiful method. Clothing has always been used by individuals to express themselves, their individuality, and their personality. Eniola has chosen to use unusual fashion as a vessel to showcase those very things about people and herself, but on a deeper level. The use of material in this work stands out, and it's a magnificent expression of her conceptual interests and an exploration of herself, done through tangible and outwardly expressive sculptures, which are clothed in memorable personality while exploring the idea of the individual.

### **Review: Juniper Harrower in *Optimal Conditions***

Emily Nguyen

In Juniper Harrower's works about Joshua trees, diverse media are utilized to complexify a generally declensionist narrative surrounding the trees' history in order to cultivate attention and care towards their plight. *Disrupted Symbiosis*, 2022, is a series of paintings that illustrate the interactions between human and nonhuman species with climate change as the unifying backdrop. Two visually similar paintings feature the cross section of a desert; the composition largely dominated by abstract underground patterns of swirled turquoise, brown, tan, black, and white paint in intricate webs that complement the sprawling roots of photorealistic Joshua trees above ground. In one painting a house displaces trees from their roots, in the other the passage of the sun tracks the death of the trees. Organic holes in the paint echo cell shapes, created by threads of ink bridging one side of the paint gap to the other; underneath, printed ink imitates the delicate pattern created by ink above. The right-most painting centers dark, receding silhouettes of Joshua trees with long, splayed roots emerging from apocalyptic clouds of gray smoke as the foremost tree is eaten by flames. The faint outline of the sun near the blackened tree's right branches echoes the orange heat of the flame.

In all three pieces, the compositional focus on roots which writhe helplessly despite various stories of above ground death instigate a need to investigate that which is hidden. A suggestion to look below the surface at what tethers and nourishes beliefs, both within oneself and concerning external narratives about the constantly changing conditions "above ground." The bleak truth of various threats to Joshua trees is brought to life through augmented reality video, showing changes in the landscapes over time and emphasizing the element of narrative. Thus, symbolic destruction of the trees above ground suggests the bleak possibility of the dissolution of a unifying narrative from whence individual leaves, or interpretations, sprout. A tangled mess of rooted beliefs which no longer can find commonality with each other are left behind, and are forced to clash—until either conditions change enough that a new tree can grow, or all die. On a more literal note, the web-like structures of the soilscape created by string and paint patterns in the first two paintings illustrate a sentiment of vital tension; that rather than a hierarchical relationship, each organism in the ecosystem is equally important in upholding the life-sustaining structures for all. While the use of an acrylic pour technique creates fragile web-like patterns of paint which reflect the delicacy of the Joshua tree ecosystem, the materiality of such a choice is also noteworthy. The notoriously bad reputation of acrylic paints for being toxic to the environment is disrupted and brought to attention by the use of directly extracted materials from the Joshua trees themselves, such as Joshua tree seed oil and Joshua tree charcoal.

In the installation *Pioneer Species*, 2022, the wooden framework of a house guards a piece of the desert landscape; light emanates from its center to shine on the rocky sand below and softly illuminates digital prints of Joshua trees wrapped around the front of the wooden scaffold. A couple of potted plants, a lamp, and a dead Joshua tree lie on the sand which one must crouch down to see. To me, this common act of curiosity and the resulting demystification represents how behind the possibility of life in the desert that Joshua trees have managed to master, behind the divine light which shines from this home that also served a dual purpose as a temple of God in the era of manifest destiny, is a man-made construction of the landscape and a harmful anthropocentric need to conquer. The specific temporal and spatial setting of this piece is contrasted by the video animation *Joshua Tree Death Dance*, 2022, wherein the sound of slow guitar plucks rise to an urgent crescendo of several instruments as three Joshua trees floating on a black background die; their branches withering and falling to the ground one by one before the wall projection fades to black. This video, a sort of permanent mirage, is isolated in a liminal black space and gives one answer as to what the death of this species may sound like. While it references similar themes to *Pioneer Species*, in terms of settler colonialist beliefs which harm the Joshua trees, the decontextualization of the trees' death from a landscape stands out as a way to connect



the evolution of the Joshua tree species from past to present; if every tree is thought to be something akin to a cell in the evolving “organism” of the whole species, this work seems an homage to the trees which died in completely different environmental contexts and are no longer relevant to the current evolution of the species. Harrower’s works tell stories which deftly move through time periods and ever-changing environmental conditions to create a newfound recognition and appreciation for Joshua trees in the viewer.

## **Transcending Time**

Andromeda



Eniola Fakile, *Mom*, 2022. Installation: Mixed Media, paper, plastic, cloth. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the reviewer.

The *Optimal Conditions* exhibit is about transcending time and space, creating a distortion that makes the viewer's thoughts shift looking at the art pieces and performances.

A mixed media array of pink and colorful statue-like pieces, titled *Mom*, by Eniola Fakile, caught my eye. This part of the exhibit really matches the theme of transcending time. Linking the

Victorian era, 1830s-1900s, and the more modern era. It feels as if you are both in an 18th century ballroom and a new age teenager's room. The next piece that caught my eye was a dress, near the front center. The items it was made out of help create a corset looking piece, which reminds me of a Victorian style. The items seemed to be something that one could find in a junk drawer around the house. Which is the modern aspect I saw when I walked into the exhibit.

The other statue figures are posed across the room, like they are in the middle of a party. One is a completely green creature just off to the side. While another is sitting down with one leg sticking out made out of a multitude of items, like an old shirt and pants, with flowers and leaves blooming out of the holes where the head and arms should be. On the wall is an outline of a man made out of colorful pastel balls with colorful butterflies sticking out. In the corner is the body of a mannequin wearing a dress made with cigarettes with tattered cloth for arms. One thing that all these items have in common is the fact that they are made of found items. This is where I think the prefix *trans-* can come into double meaning. The objects are *transformed* to make new statues while also *transporting* time and space by using semi-common items to create a scene that is neither the past, present, or future but a merging of different periods. The prefix *trans-* means "across." This installation is going across time while also carrying across a feeling of whimsy with its use of transformed items.

You will have to go through all of the statues, and actually work your way around the piece to see every detail. In the center is a curled outline of a body, emitting blue light. It makes me question where the title, *Mom*, comes from. A lot of the items seem to be found in a home, especially the older looking pieces of clothing. The way the body is curled up, in the center surrounded by these items, makes it seem like the items around the body are a source of comfort. For a lot of people, a mother is someone that brings them comfort.

This section of the exhibit was a great way to start off the journey through the rest of the gallery because it helped set the tone. This installation is very whimsical, all the statues are like their own person. The clothing they were or the items they are made out of gives them their own personality. You have to interact with the pieces and come close, but not too close, to see what each statue was made out of. Then, in this maze of people-like creatures, you see a curled-up outline of a person, seemingly resting on a bed made of lights. This person felt more like the person seeking comfort than the mother that gives it. It really felt like I was looking into a world that was familiar and has happened before but at the same time has not. A true unique experience.

Corey Hegel

Professor Al-An deSouza

ART 160

February 22, 2022

*Joshua Tree Death Dance*, by Juniper Harrower

Optimal Conditions Exhibit, Worth Ryder Art Gallery, January 26, 2022 to February 17, 2022

My response to the encounter I had with this artwork using video as the medium was curiosity and intrigue followed by a sense of anxiety (Harrower, Juniper, 2021, fig. 1). At first glance, I was entertained by dancing trees. Three Joshua trees are lit up in green and blue color tones against a black background. The trees are under spotlights on a darkened stage. They resemble human bodies with the trunks as the body, the branches as the limbs, and the leaves as the hands. The trees move to the background music arranged and performed by Jacob Harrower. The music is reminiscent of the soundtracks of old western movies. It is both dramatic, yet somber at the same time. The song is instrumental with no vocals, deliberate in pace with anticipation that never climaxes. The leaves begin to fall from the trees followed by the branches. The movements of the figures and music are one, creating an eerie, but intimate slow dance. Upon closer examination and watching the video a few times, I discovered that the trees are not dancing as their trunks are affixed to the ground. They are helpless as they see their hands and limbs slowly fall off one by one. Once the trunk is bare, the screen fades to black, and the music eventually cuts off without the traditional ending of a song. For a short video under three minutes with just trees being displayed, it is strong storytelling. It represents the slow death of Joshua trees, like in the work's title. Experiencing the video shown from a projector in person, instead of remotely on a computer monitor had an emotional impact. I felt as though I was watching a film in class about something from the past. It brought a sense of doom, that it may already be far too late to reverse the damage caused by human activities including deforestation and burning fossil fuels, which has led to rising temperatures and the destabilization of our global ecosystem.

Harrower's previous work has also focused on the coalescence of art and environmental science to bring attention to how climate change has deleterious effects on trees and vegetation in general. It is the artist's perspective that unless we address global warming caused by human activity and abrogate our practices, we will all implode in the same manner as the three trees that are depicted in her art. The visual arts have been used throughout human history to communicate and educate. As an artist, ecologist, and Director of Art and Science Initiative at University of California, Santa Cruz, Harrower uses her art in our contemporary culture as a political language to elucidate the environmental crisis. She uses multimedia platforms to showcase her scientific research showing that Joshua trees will not survive in hotter elevations. Mediums she uses for her work include painting, video, and curated exhibits with the consistent theme of how human actions affect the ecosystem. In her artist statement, she explains that the death of Joshua trees is directly linked with the concept of conquering lands and its inhabitants from the colonization during the Old Wild West to the continued modern day environmental devastation of these lands and beyond.

*Joshua Tree Death Dance* is thought-provoking and intended to be studied and analyzed.

Art in most cases is open to interpretation, but this work is clear in its meaning. In the current state of affairs where scientists are shunned and silenced for political reasons, art is being utilized to combat misinformation in both social and mainstream media to seek environmental justice.

What is at stake is the survival of the human species as well as all living organisms in our ecological community. Harrower's video mirrors society today as we are all doing the death dance. The slow loss of leaves and branches from the trees is a metaphor for the earth losing forests and animals to extinction. The stripped tree trunks are what we are, having stripped ourselves of natural resources, continuing our destructive path to make the earth inhabitable in the not-so-distant future with our carbon footprint. The experience of this encounter made me feel Hollow, but hopeful that we can still take meaningful action. It oddly brought back random memories of outdoor education and other trips that I took to local forests

during my childhood. My mind swirled with fears of what the world would be like once we are all finished dancing like those figures in the video. It brought out a strong desire to take the initiative to do my part and come up with ideas on how we can still save the Joshua trees, the planet, and ourselves in the process.

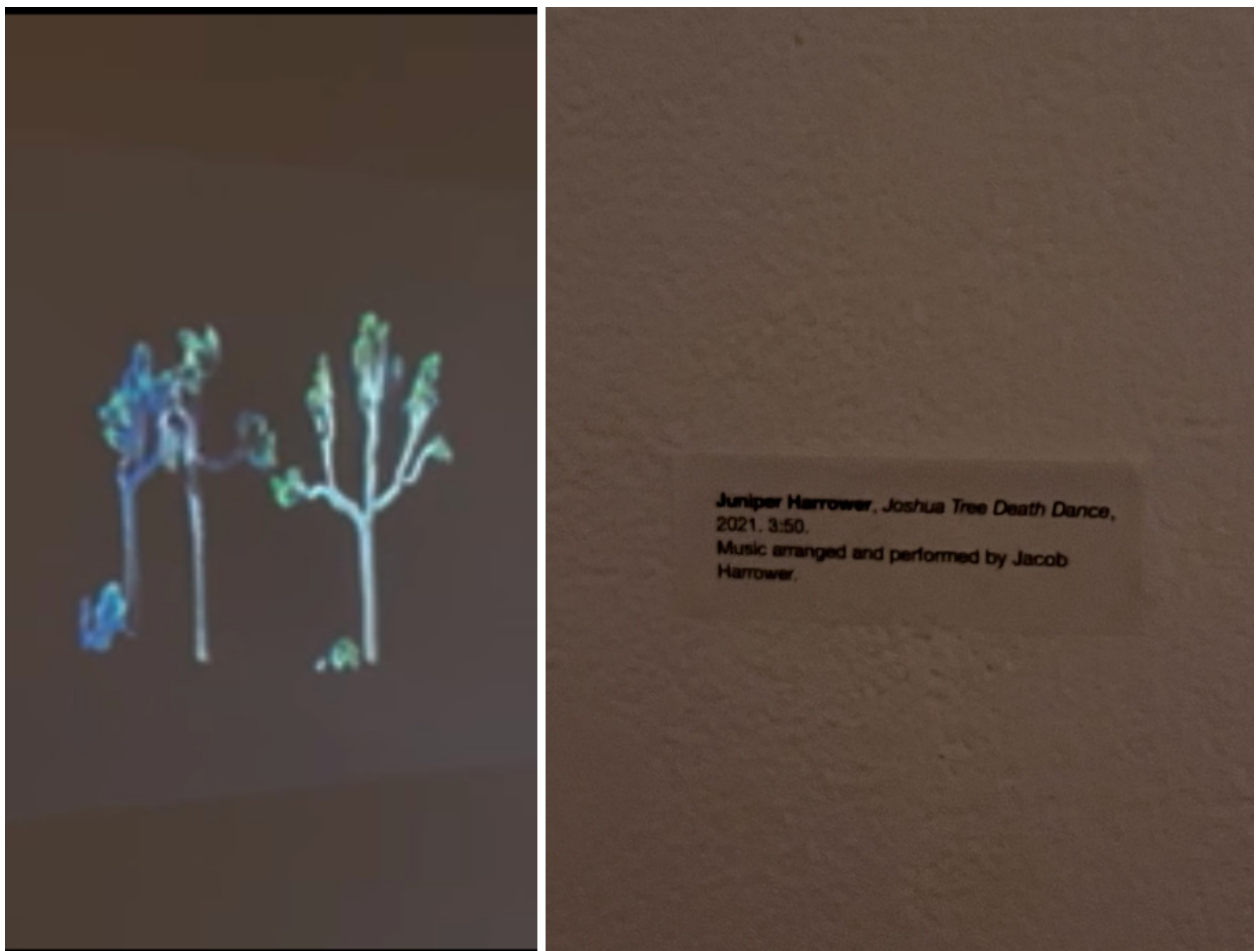


Fig. 1-2: *Joshua Tree Death Dance*, by Juniper Harrower, 2021

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## **First Year MFA Live Performances**

Shinnosuke Yasuda

*Optimal Conditions*, the First Year MFA Show at Worth Ryder Art Gallery

I personally experienced an exhibition at the same gallery two months ago. as a senior undergraduate art student. The first impression I had of seeing the exhibition this time was that the designs of the exhibited works were more sophisticated than those of our exhibitions. After seeing each work, I found some of them were using their body itself as a part of the work. I saw a live nude performance Irma Yuliana Barbosa was doing, and De La Rose's work where she had written texts on her back of the body by making it irritated. Those are the types of works that I hesitate to imitate. I thought those were impressive even from the sights of beginner art critiques and could be a trigger for them considering what the work means. My third impression, by seeing the works carefully and considering the concepts, is that they have deep academic research behind them. We can get a better understanding about their research by visiting the website of the exhibition. For example, it tells us Fei Pan is a type of media artist who explores between science and art, especially about waves, and applying mathematical techniques like the Fourier transform to her work.

Irma Yuliana Barbosa created the live performance art in which she imitated a male goat. According to her artist statement, she did that to question the gender roles and labor enmeshed in the



process of making the recipe of Birria. Birria is a Mexican traditional meal made with lamb, and her parents are working for a lamb farmer. I thought it was interesting that she performed as a male goat although she is at least biologically female. The difference in gender gives us a pause point of thinking and lets us realize that she was trying to claim questions about gender. If she was biologically male, we wouldn't suspect that there was meaning in the gender of the goat she was acting and missed the opportunity to think about it. It is the opposite from the culture of theater because basically female animals were acted by actresses, so there was an irony that she was not the perfect person to play the part of a male goat, but better than perfect to tell the sexual concepts thanks to the difference in biological genders.

Another outstanding point I looked at is the materials she used. She wears clothes and accessories made from goats' body parts such as the fur, horns and bones. It was easy for us to understand that she was pretending to be a goat. There is a cup of milk and a chunk of meat on the floor around her. Meat and milk are the symbolic items provided from goats and we eat, but I think she shouldn't have put the milk in because it is the item which makes us associate with female goats and that can confuse us. I understand that she wanted to give us the opportunity to think about the goat farmer, but I still wonder if she needed to put the concept about genders because it may be too messy and conflicting to each other. I like each of the concepts itself. I can see her background with goats and figure out that she is familiar with that field. I like that she is using cinnamon to give us a sense of smell. Some kinds of herbs including cinnamon can be used to remove the smell of goat meat when people cook birria. It fits to her motto that she cherishes how people's memories are composed. I wrote this critique focusing on Barbosa's work, but the other works at the exhibition were also thoughtful and fun to explore. Reading the long Artist Statement on the website helps me understand what they wanted. Since they are first year MFA students, I look forward to keeping in touch with their

works in the near future. I'd like to keep an eye on how they will create other works by keeping and updating their concepts and motto as an artist.

## Optimal Conditions

Abyssinia Salazar Gibson



(left) Eniola Fakile, *Tom* 2021. Mixed Media

(right) Gericault De La Rose, *In between*, 2022. Plywood, wax, fabric

When I visited the Worth-Ryder gallery I was filled with emotion, I didn't expect to be affected so greatly by all of the pieces featured in the "Optimal Conditions" exhibit on the UC Berkeley campus. Each piece provided a certain effect for me and I longed to stay in the gallery to find out how much more they could affect me; I am going to individually describe my experience and state the questions that arose when viewing a few specific pieces. Walking in, I was faced on my right with multiple figures made from different materials, a series by Eniola Fakile. This called me in a strong sense so I decided to save the beginning of the exhibit for the final portion of my visit. As I made my way to the back I was faced with a piece using the Joshua tree as its center point. Making your way around and back you are standing next to a large flesh-toned piece with shades of pink, red, and beige.

This piece, *In Between* by Gericault De la Rose brought my thoughts to a feminine place, thinking about what it means to identify as a woman and how vast, beautiful, and messy that process can be. I found the use of materials particularly interesting because of their contrast, we see silky pink sheets draping above a surface covered in red wax, breaking the status quo of the silk aspect above it immediately. As a whole I viewed the piece as the inside of a human, the draped fabric resembled intestines and different folds and pockets in the skin, and the wax resembles the blood that the human is made of and how essentially everything is mixed and thrown about inside of our bodies. This view of the inner body was followed by depictions of male bodies, a rough contrast from the soft colors present in *In Between* that felt like these bodies rose up from the dead. After this, I made my way to the series that caught my attention so greatly, *Tyler* and *Tom* by Eniola Fakile. Starting at *Tom*, a large figure standing at about 5feet 6 inches covered in green felt-like material, resembling a sock or sock bunny.

This figure encouraged me to walk very close to it and take in the details, how the material looks, and what that communicates to me. The figure was something that made me feel a bit uneasy, considering its similar size to myself and its human-like qualities, making it hard to move closer. When I was up close with *Tom* they conveyed a feeling of innocence and embarrassment they feel when being watched by an audience. Right in front of *Tom*, was *Tyler* another figure that was completely different from *Tom* but still provided me with a sense of humanness, unsettling me deep inside. In contrast with *Tom*, *Tyler* was made from rough materials, and materials sourced from the earth or made to look like they were. Viewing the exhibit as a whole, with all figures present felt alive, it created a sense of community. I found this material combination to be exhilarating, it made me feel as if I dug this human form up in the middle of a forest, it made me wonder what this figure story is, and what the plants are used to convey. Additionally, I wonder if the placement of these figures is meaningful, and do they interact with each other? The figure's features seem to compliment and contrast each other when viewed together.

Adrian Garcia

Juniper Harrower  
in  
“Optimal Conditions”  
At Worth Ryder Art Gallery

Walking into the barely lit Worth Ryder Gallery in their most recent show, “Optimal Conditions” I am first confronted with the faintly pink and violet hue of the room. It’s moody, but in a comforting way. I feel like I just stepped into an after-hours party. But then I begin to notice the installations of the various artists there. Some involve coding to create images, others are full sculptural set ups, one was a little bit of both, involving a cell phone and a telescope. As I walked further into the gallery and interacted with, or observed the various works I finally reached an installation which took up the entire rear of the gallery. The artist, Juniper Harrower, had created a small world in and of itself. What I saw first were the series of small mixed media paintings on the right wall. The first painting featuring a full Joshua Tree seemingly suspended in mid-air. The roots fully exposed as behind it a wall of grey clouds serve as a backdrop upon which multiple full scale shadows of the tree were tattooed. Both ominous and beautiful at once I stood a very long while in front of this painting. Listening as well as looking, though not with an expectation of audible noise. What I was “listening” for, was what the painting was telling me about its meaning for being there on that wall. Assuming it was a commentary on climate change perhaps, or the wild plant life of the desert in some capacity. I moved on to the second painting. This one was of a house in the desert with a pastel blue sky behind it and two or three Joshua Trees going right

through the house. Once again the viewer can see the roots of these trees, but this time we can see them going down into the soil in a view that calls comparison to an ant farm. Deep in this underground soil which takes up  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the entire vertical composition we can see the layers of the earth. Here we can see intricate multimedia work. It seems parts of the “diagram” are sewn and leave pockets exposed wherein we can see “into” the painting. The cast shadows deep within these pockets confirming this. The depiction of the soil underneath the house is again quite arresting, and a little frightening. It looks like diseased earth. The artist, it seems is clearly commenting on some type of climate endangerment. Perhaps of the Joshua trees specifically. This made a little more clear with the last painting in succession on the wall. We see again this “ant farm” view. This time, two Joshua trees, no house. More diseased earth roots. It looks like mold growth. The whites and browns swirling together in a dead sea beneath the surface.

Moving on to a dividing wall behind these paintings I see a wall sized video installation. This is an animation in which my inclinations were confirmed. In watching the video play, I see three Joshua Trees in a completely black background. Like the desert late at night. The trees fully illuminated but dying right before our eyes. Limbs falling to the ground as they slowly slump toward the earth. Though I still don't know the context at this point I do know for certain the artist is concerned with the sustained life of the Joshua Trees. A third and final accompaniment to this installation, I see first sand strewn into the corner of the gallery. A light or lamp of some sort is illuminating a curtained canopy of some sort. Like the skeleton frame of a house. Complete with a triangular peak atop. On the “curtain” of this structure we see 3 more Joshuas. They seem to be fully matured, no diseased roots visible on them. Perhaps these 3 are meant to signal hope for the Joshuas. Signaling there's still time to defend them maybe.

This multipart installation was deeply captivating. I was drawn in by the skillful and hauntingly beautiful paintings, but as I spent more time with the installation, the deeper meaning revealing itself to me, I was moved. Maybe to action, but at the very least to attention. I've been made aware of a crisis, and walking away from the gallery and this show, the only question is what will I do now?

