

Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think



November 2 - December 8, 2019

Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think

Featuring works by
Victor Ali, Natalie Baxter,
Jessica Caldas, Deja Echols,
Hector Rene Membreno-Canales, Mark Menjivar,
Jason Reed, Ricder Ricardo, Corrina Sephora,
Darryl DeAngelo Terrell, and Paul Weiner

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Athens Institsute for Contemporary Art
Curated by Arlette Hernandez

ATHICA: Athens Institute for Contemporary Art is an independent, non-profit gallery promoting and supporting innovative contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, education, and events.

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Curator’s Statement

The America of today is a place of triggering moments. It is a place where a sputtering motorcycle in Times Square drives entire crowds into panicked running, a place where popped balloons at state fairs send mothers and children and young couples scattering in an attempt to escape. It is a place where loud banging stops an entire pride parade as someone yells “Run!” and others tear down barricades to escape the threat of a mass shooting. The America of today is a place of fear, and whether we realize it or not, none of us feel safe.

In 2017, the year for which the most complete data set is available, 39,773 people died from gun-related injuries, the highest figure since 1968.[1] Several of these deaths occurred in public spaces with mass shootings occurring in churches, music festivals, and hospitals, ultimately claiming the lives of 346 people.[2] The number of mass shooting victims remains just as high in 2019, and what is even more staggering is the total count, referenced in the article by German Lopez and Kavya Sukumar’s article of October 29, 2019, which begins: “After Sandy Hook, we said never again. And then we let 2,271 mass shootings happen.”[3]

It is hard to look at these figures without thinking that something has gone terribly wrong. Indeed, the exhibition borrows its title from this very realization—that is, the realization that our relationship to guns has morphed in the past few decades, as the initial infatuation gives way to a constant fear of violence. At its core, *Losing Control* is about this anxiety and the ways our unchecked gun culture has spilled into our daily lives. Through the works of eleven artists, the exhibition engages conversations surrounding cycles of violence and the loss of safe spaces, as it also turns a critical eye to the histories and systems that have led us to our current moment.

America’s infatuation with guns is not a recent phenomenon. Rather, it goes back to the country’s very founding. Open any history textbook and you will see how guns punctuate every chapter, beginning with “the British are coming” and the countless conflicts that followed, up through Westward expansion and the displacement of Native American populations, while lasting through the enslavement of entire generations and the division of the country to televised wars and public murders. Each of these chapters has shaped America’s culture of violence by “br[inging] guns into the home [and] making them part of the domestic environment and an unquestioned member of the American family.”[4]

With its overwhelming presence in history and popular culture, guns have become national symbols. To be precise, they have become a cornerstone of American myth, image, and identity. Examining our

our relationship to guns and the American flag, Paul Owen Weiner investigates the symbols that remain so integral to our national identity. From a distance, two of his works in this exhibition, *The Man without a Country* and *Morgan Kemper*, appear as shiny black slates. But upon further inspection, the canvases begin to reveal stars and stripes. By shrouding the American flag in darkness, Weiner not only forces us to reckon with the death lurking behind this symbol, but within our brief state of disorientation, he also asks us to re-examine our relationship to the physical object and the legacies it carries.

Similarly, *Copycat* examines national identity through the lens of gun culture and consumerism. Studying and replicating receipts with purchases, *Copycat* gathers items such as the human targets and auxiliary mounting materials that were purchased by the Aurora, Colorado theater shooter. Through his installation and sculpture, Weiner addresses the ease with which preparatory materials are bought for a mass shooting while also exploring the responsibility of the businesses that distribute these materials. With his ambitious installation, Weiner forces us to reckon with the cycle of violence to which we have grown numb.

The notion lurks behind Hector Rene Membreno-Canales' series *Hegemony or Survival*. Many of the works in the series reference significant moments and traditions from the history of European art. Take for example, *The Creation of US*, which revisits and revises the iconic imagery of Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*. Against a black background, two hands, each sleeved in the olive-beige of military camouflage, stretch out toward the other. With seeming hesitation, the hand on the left extends a single finger, just barely touching the hand on the right whose fingers wrap delicately around a grenade. There is a sense of inheritance embedded within the photograph. It is as if the hand on the left is being handed a legacy which it must continue to carry forward. Although unstated, this legacy is one we continue to confront as we come to truly understand the violence upon which this country was founded.

An Army veteran who served in the Iraq war, Membreno-Canales uses his experiences to explore official histories, American patriotism, and the Military-Industrial complex. Works like *The Creation of the US* and *Pieta* speak directly to the effects of war and violence. Similarly, the four still lives in this exhibition, each titled *Nature Morte*, look critically at the connection between violence, wealth, conquest, and death. Indeed, *Nature Morte* recalls the vanitas tradition whose subsequent paintings reminded viewers of their mortality. Each still life pairs decadent objects like golden chalices and dense blocks of cheese with mementos of war like a gas mask or long magazine cartridges. Despite evoking a genre whose very essence is death, there is something quite unsettling about the presence of weapons in these images. Perhaps it is because they function not just as reminders of death, but more pointedly, reminders of destruction. At the same time, these weapons are in striking contrast to the luxurious items that surround them, ultimately reminding us of the cost of national wealth. The *Nature Morte*'s remind us that our luxuries, and indeed our lives, are wholly enmeshed in violence.

It is this notion of recurrent and interlinked violence that undergirds much of Mark Menjivar's work with the non-profit organization, Texas After Violence Project (TAVP). Through his work with TAVP, Menjivar gained access to the archives of men executed in Texas, including the full contents of David Lee Powell's prison cell. Spending 32 years on death row for the murder of a police officer, Powell is often seen as an atypical offender, especially in relation to other capital murder defendants. In several respects, Powell's future had seemed bright, having graduated from high school a year early with the title of valedictorian and voted "most likely to succeed" amongst his peers. After enrolling in an honors program in college, Powell fell victim to drug addiction, a suffering that was only exacerbated by his nascent struggles with mental illness.

Tracing Powell's erratic thoughts and linking together the contents he left behind, Menjivar's *DLP Wall* considers the cycle of violence inherent to the prison system. Indeed, gun culture has bred a state of constant policing that limits and constrains those who deviate from an arbitrary norm before finally punishing them. An important part of this work is the understanding that Powell was sentenced to capital punishment as a result of a murder he committed. This eye-for-an-eye mentality has long undergirded social systems of justice, an idea examined by Michel Foucault in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish*. Indeed, societies have long functioned with the understanding punishment should "reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal." [5] As Powell approached his 2010 execution date, several groups rallied for the nullification of his capital punishment, arguing that the purpose of the prison system is to rehabilitate, not eradicate. Ultimately, *DLP Wall* reminds us that behind our justice system is cyclical violence.

While gun culture consumes much of our society, these works presented by Menjivar, Membreno-Canales, and Weiner challenge us to broaden our understanding of gun culture. Indeed, gun culture goes beyond the understanding that guns are foundational to our national identity. American gun culture functions as the support for a cyclical violence that shapes our lives and the very ways we move through the world.

This cycle of violence is most apparent in its intersection with race. For so much of the country's history, guns were intimately linked to social order and control, especially as it relates to the regulation of black, brown, and indigenous bodies. This history has not disappeared. Instead, it continues to manifest itself in the ways that people of color are subjected to violence. *Everytown's* report on gun violence in America claims gun violence as the leading cause of death for Black children and teens. [6] This targeted violence persists into adulthood as Black males are 15 times more likely than their white counterparts to be shot and injured in assaults involving guns. [7] Black women, too, are vulnerable to gun violence, especially at the hands of an intimate partner. In fact, Black women are twice as likely to be fatally shot by an intimate partner as non-Hispanic white women. [8]

Indeed, histories of racial violence have contributed to a necropolitical discourse, which not only determines who lives, but also who dies. Quite keenly, these histories have produced a disposition in our culture, which Henry Giroux calls “the politics of disposability”:

A new politics now governs American policy, one that I call the politics of disposability. It is a politics in which the unproductive (the poor, weak and racially marginalized) are considered useless and therefore expendable; a politics in which entire populations are considered disposable, unnecessary burdens on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves.[9]

While the context of Giroux’s quote is specific to the neglect experienced by Black communities and impoverished neighborhoods during Hurricane Katrina, his theory carries weight in the present moment. Histories of dehumanization, eradication, and regulation on the basis of race have rendered disposable contemporary black and brown subjects, making them much more susceptible to gun violence.

This vulnerability is central to Deja Echols’ series, *Black Voices in White Spaces (Vol. II)*, whose three wooden panels are charged with raw emotion and visceral pain. Across three panels, Echols renders young black men as victims of violence, bearing deep gashes, stigmata-like punctures, and fresh bullet wounds. In what is perhaps the most striking panel, we see the contorted expression of a young man whose limp arm remains in the tight grasp of another man’s hand. The tension of this touch only magnifies when we notice the gun in the man’s other hand, which has just fired into the young man’s chest. Depicting the brief moments between when the trigger is pulled and the bullet enters the flesh, Echols underscores the vulnerability of young Black men.

Despite the brutality of these scenes, Echols renders the men with such delicacy, capturing fine details like the tense muscles around her subject’s mouth as he tries not to wince. Her delicacy is only underscored by her choice of medium: layered graphite and charcoal. Not only does the simplicity of the medium force us to fully engage with the panels, so too does it evoke a sense of fragility, for even the slightest contact can smudge the surface, eroding and erasing these young men. Indeed, the threat of disposability follows these men throughout.

Darryl DeAngelo Terrell’s conceptual installations speak directly to the vulnerability and fragility behind Echols’ work. Yet, while Echols focuses on violence in the present moment, Terrell focuses on violence after the fact. Collecting a total of 18 prayers from Black mothers asking God for protection over their children, the selected three-page prayer from *In Your Name...* captures the fear Black parents often feel in sending their children out into a world that does not welcome them. For Terrell, this project is deeply personal. He writes: “It was December 4, 2006 (the day of the Jena Six), when I learned that I was black. Being born in this skin, it never came to my mind that my skin was hated. This is the day I

asked my mother why are black people hated. I remember I could hear my mother praying that night, praying for my protection, for God to place his shield over me so that no harm would be done to me.”

This fear, this anxiety of Black well-being is at the core of *Before You Leave the House*. Captured on the delicate surface of 20 vellum sheets are the advice, suggestions, expressions, questions, and affirmations that parents share with their children before saying goodbye to them for the day. The transparency of these vellum sheets speak to the relative weakness these words hold in relation to the reality of living as a Black person in America. These words, as powerful as they are, often fail to protect Black children. The strength of a parents’ love and wisdom can only provide so much safety in a world that harms and polices black bodies.

Jason Reed reevaluates the notion of borders and westward expansion through a collection of works from his project *The Place Where Flags Wave*. Sourcing images from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection archives hosted on Flickr, Reed collages images of politicians and camouflaged men with pictures of assorted rifles and handguns. Together, these images construct an understanding of the brutal reality at the border.

Among the sourced images is one that shows a plastic barricade that has been spray painted with an arrow and the word “Mexico,” a hastily-drawn smiley face in the center of the “O.” Like many of the images in these collages, this one is especially isolating. Yet, just as Reed’s collages reveal the militarization of the border, so too do they reveal its irony. It is significant that this single, small barricade is both handmade and the sum of cheap plastic and pigments, for the nature of it reinforces the artificiality of the border. Together, these collages question the notion of the border, especially one whose boundaries have changed through the centuries. Reed recalls the violent histories of Westward expansion, which displaced and slaughtered masses of non-European, non-white people.

Although a contested term, safe spaces remain an important topic in the conversation of gun violence. While churches and schools once served as safe places where people could escape violence, or at the very least not fear it, the function of these spaces has shifted radically over the past decades. Through her installations, Jessica Caldas tackles the very topic of this shift. Across four works, Caldas explores the threat of gun violence in churches, schools, movie theaters, and within the home. Her panels blend bold brushstrokes with repetitive, circular line work, muted shades, and the visible drip pattern of watercolor paint. These details create an emotional depth whose immediacy is underscored by the physical object placed in front of it. From school desks and movie theater seats to church pews and kitchen chairs, each object is a relic to the stories it tells. Their function invites us to sit and absorb the stories each panel tells, like the tightly clasped hands in *Congregate* that stretch up toward the sky to pray for safety.

Also concerned with the loss of safe spaces, Ricder Ricardo's *Caras* series investigates what it means to live with the constant threat of violence. With downcast or closed eyes, subtly furrowed brows, and pensive expressions, the subjects of each portrait appear to be in mourning. What they mourn is unclear, but there is an overwhelming sense of violence in the portraits as our eyes move past the exquisitely rendered faces to the thick drops of paint that drip down toward the edges of the unstretched canvas. With much of the gun violence conversation resting upon impersonal statistics, *Caras* underscores the fact that before anything else, gun violence affects people. In the broadest sense of the word, it is a human rights issue. Indeed, Ricardo calls us to mourn the people and spaces we have lost, but his model of mourning is rooted in communion. Standing before these six portraits, we feel as if we are part of a community and this collective strength is exactly what we need in this moment.

From cycles of violence to the politics of disposability and a subsequent loss of safe spaces, many of the works in *Losing Control* focus on the effects of gun violence. However, the exhibition also takes important stock of the ways artists not only bring awareness to the conversation, but also reframe it and move it forward.

Victor Ali's works in the exhibition emphasize distortion in both a cultural and aesthetic context. In the two renditions of *We Are (Not) Machines*, Ali reworks stock images of people, pixelating their bodies and placing targets over their faces. Ultimately, these subjects are reduced to the same function and condition as the string of undiscernible code that surrounds them. Yet, it is important to note that they live within a liminal space as cyborg-esque figures. Hence, the double meaning of the image text: WE ARE MACHINES/WE ARE NOT MACHINES.

Through this in-between-ness, Ali challenges us to find our voice. There is something both prescriptive and affirming about his prints. They simultaneously show us the skewed reality of our culture while also leaving room for hope. Like Ricder Ricardo, Ali references community, giving particular emphasis to the digital culture at the reach of our fingertips. For Ali, technology, especially as it pertains to gun violence, is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, technology can reduce our humanity, as violence becomes little more than click-bait and looping video. But on the other hand, technology can truly unite us, creating a network for the exchange of information and the democratization of knowledge. His works challenge us to think critical about the way we use technology and the role we play in conversations about gun violence.

Since 2015, Natalie Baxter has been creating hand-sewn guns as a part of her *Warm Guns* series, which critically examines the relationship between guns, gender, and violence. The phallic associations of pistols have long been discussed, with guns often functioning as intermediaries between power and internalized fears of femininity and perceived weakness, or as Jacques Lacan argues, the fear of castration.

In an article for *Esquire*, Stephen Marche brings our attention to the firearms company Bushmaster, which “pulled an ad after [the shooting at] Newtown that said, ‘Consider your man card reissued.’”[10] Indeed, guns have often been linked to gender stereotypes and notions of virility and manhood.

Challenging this history, Baxter covers the familiar shapes of handguns, rifles, and semi-automatic weapons with vibrant colors, bold patterns, and ornamental details varying from pink satin to gold fringe and glittering sequins. Hard edges and lines give way to the soft shapes as the barrel of an erect gun morphs into a flaccid, droopy appendage. Through this physical and metaphorical softness, Baxter turns guns inside-out and empties them of their power. We both admire these sculptures for their beautiful designs while also being stirred to laughter as we confront their impotence. This playfulness is an important part of Baxter's work, for it empowers us to question power while also creating more space in which to continue the conversation.

Exploring communal loss and transformation, Corrina Sephora's *Blood of the Earth* series finds alternative realities for these weapons. Like Natalie Baxter, Sephora subverts the meaning of guns, simultaneously dissecting its internal structures and reshaping its physical exterior to create new objects. The final product are sculptures like *Flourish*, which transforms a deadly assault rifle into a cluster of flowers whose untamed weeds stretch out in renewed life.

Sephora's sculptures are marked by a fantastic duality. When we first encounter these objects, we are immediately struck by fear as our eyes register only the familiar shape of the barrel, trigger, and handle. Yet, as we continue to observe these works, the unrecognizable details give space for reflecting. By making guns into aesthetic objects, Sephora neutralizes their threat and leaves us to reconsider the meaning of these weapons. As a metal artist, her practice is deeply physical and this constant movement and force marks all of her work. It is important that her sculptures are made from recycled guns, for her work then becomes a symbolic re-subjugation that treats these weapons with the same violence behind their creation, function, and use. In several respects, Sephora's work is about examining cyclical violence as much as it is about placing an end to it.

Through painting, print, photography, conceptual installations, and sculpture, each of the artists in *Losing Control* carry forward the conversation of gun violence in America. None of this work is done in isolation. Rather, these artists work alongside an ever-unfolding history, constantly looking back to the past as a way to shape the present, and indeed, the future.

—Arlette Hernandez, Curator
November 2019

About the Curator

Arlette Hernandez is a recent graduate and emerging museum professional. For the past year, she has worked on exhibitions at local museums and art galleries in Northeast Florida. Hernandez is currently the Emily K. Rafferty intern in museum administration at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

[1] John Gramlich, "What the Data Says about Guns Deaths in the U.S.," Fact Tank, Pew Research Center, August 16, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/16/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>.

[2] "Gun Violence Archive 2017," Gun Violence Archive, October 28, 2019, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>

[3] German Lopez and Kavya Sukumar, "Mass Shootings since Sandy Hook, in One Map," Vox Media, October 28, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/a/mass-shootings-america-sandy-hook-gun-violence>

[4] Michael A. Bellesiles, "The Origins of Gun Culture in the United States, 1760-1865," The Journal of American History, 83, no. 2 (1996): 455, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2944942>

[5] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 55.

[6] "Gun Violence in America," Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, April 4, 2019, https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-america/?source=etno_ETRHomepage&utm_source=et_n_&utm_medium=_o&utm_campaign=ETRHomepage&refcode=ETRHomepage

[7] Ibid.



Hector Rene Membreno-Canales
Detail
Creation of US (2014)
Digital Photo Print, 12in x 18in

Victor Ali
Jacksonville, Florida

Artist Statement

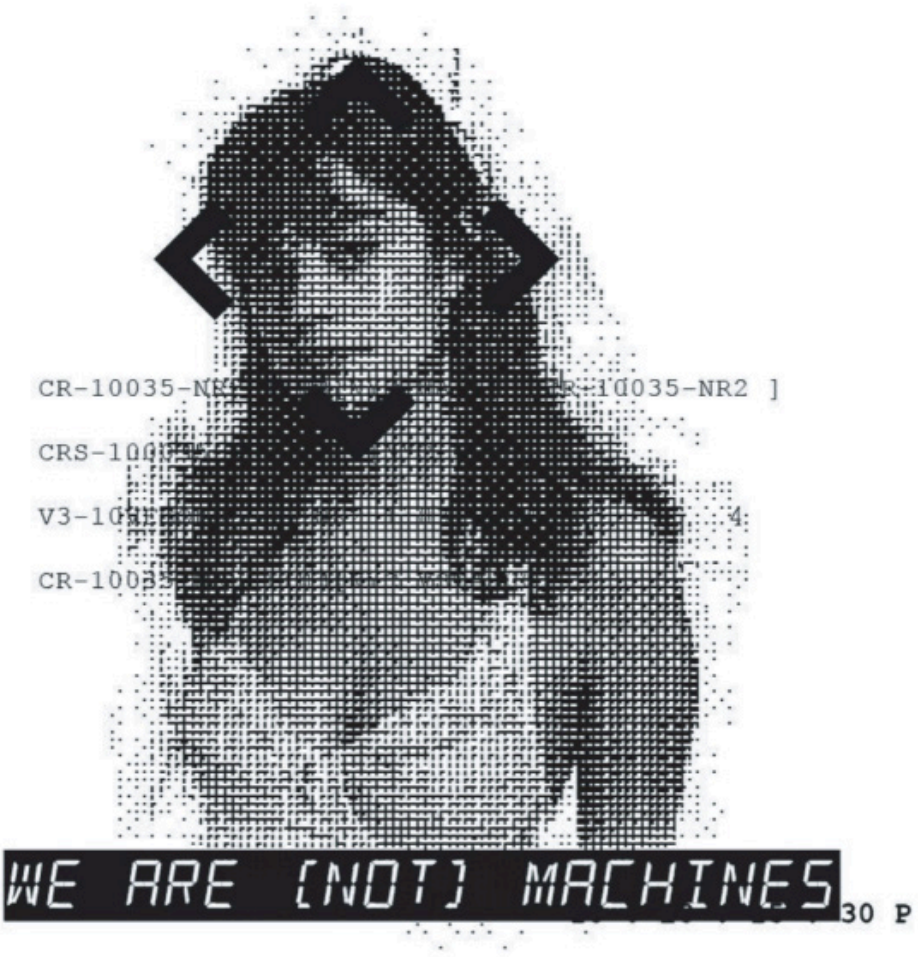
My work comments on cultural events, personal psychological occurrences, societal conventions and conditioning, and technological advancement. I limit the elements in the composition, using only the essential ingredients to tell the story. My portraits are typically drawn in charcoal, graphite, paint, ink, or spray paint juxtaposed against graphic elements like mouse type, big bold shapes, and large type. I use very little color and a lot of sketchy, draft-quality lines to make the image look organic and hand-made.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

Because my work comments on cultural events, personal psychological occurrences, societal conventions and conditioning, I feel like it fits in well with group think and governmental oppression. I like to visualize things that I notice within our society and things that I experience in daily life and news, but present the ideas in a subtle way. These things are also tied into the way humans operate biologically and psychologically, which I throughly enjoy thinking about.

Artist Biography

Victor Ali is a freelance artist who resides in Jacksonville, Florida. Graduating from the university in the city, Victor received his Bachelors in Fine Arts at the University of North Florida (UNF). His works have been primarily 2-D. However, he has recently expanded to doing 3-D work with metal, plaster, wood and ceramics. Victor’s artwork has been displayed throughout Jacksonville, Florida. Recently, he exhibited artwork in the local popular barber shop called “Hollywood Cuts” in downtown Jacksonville. He also recently initiated and managed an exhibition in “Beer 30” in San Marco in Jacksonville with two other artists. He was recently featured in an article in *Void* magazine, where he was interviewed about his work, inspirations, motivations, style, and process.



We Are (Not) Machines (2018)
Digital, ink on BFK paper, 24in x 24in, \$250

We Are (not) Machines II (2018)
Digital print, Ink on BFK paper, 18in x 18in,\$250

Just A Cog (2018),
Digital Print, 20in x 20 in, \$70

Natalie Baxter
Ridgewood, New York

Artist Statement

My work explores concepts of place-identity, nostalgic americana, and gender stereotypes while playfully pushing controversial issues that have become points of division in today’s social and political landscape. Through approachable work, I unpack topics such as the debate over gun control, masculine aggression and gender biases, the virtual rise of hate speech, as well as exploring expressions and swaying feelings of American patriotism.

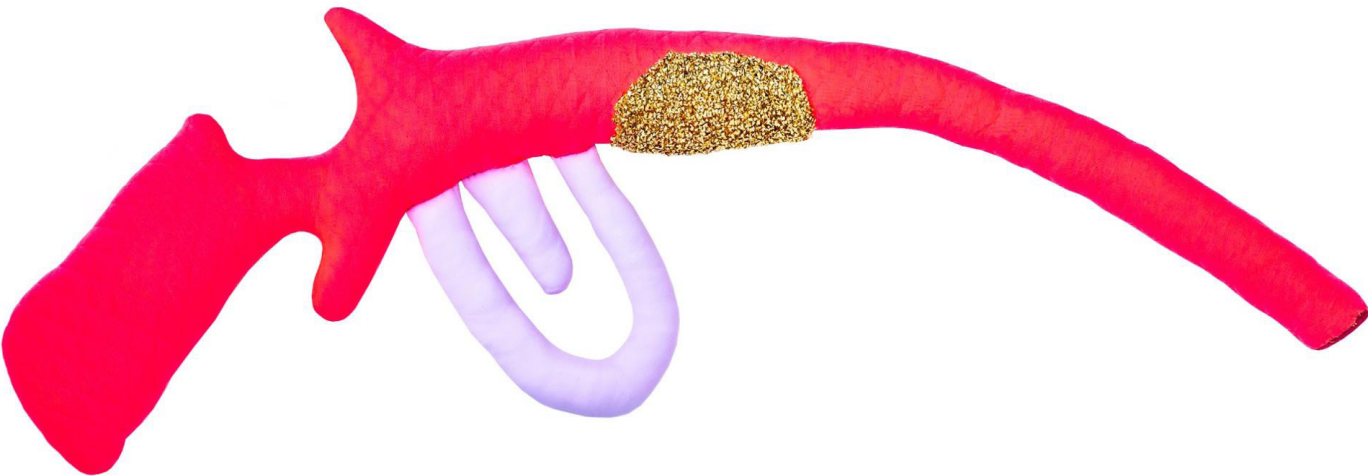
I work with a variety of mixed media and found objects, but predominantly with fabric. Using quilting and sewing techniques passed down to me from my maternal grandmother, I create soft sculptures and quilted wall hangings that subvert recognizable objects into something familiar in shape alone.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

My series *Warm Gun* explores America’s complicated relationship to guns and the role that gender and masculinity play in gun culture.

Artist Biography

Natalie Baxter (b. 1985, Kentucky) received an MFA from the University of Kentucky in 2012 and a BA in Fine Art from the University of the South in Sewanee, TN in 2007. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and museums internationally with recent solo exhibitions at The Elijah Wheat Showroom (Brooklyn, NY), Next to Nothing Gallery (New York, NY), Cunsthaus (Tampa, FL), and Institute 193 (Lexington, KY). Press for Baxter’s work includes *The New York Times*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Guardian*, *Vogue Italia* and *Bomb Magazine*. She currently lives and works in New York, New York..



Patty (2018)
Fabric & polyfill, 10in x 30in, \$350

Tina (2018)
Fabric and polyfill, 6in x 8in, \$200

Dear Derringer (2017)
6in x 6in x 2in, Fabric and polyfill, \$200

Not The Time (2017)
Fabric and polyfill, 23in x 10in,\$400

Rosies (2018)
Fabric and polyfill, 8in x 16in, \$250

Leanna (2018)
Fabric and polyfill, 8in x 17in, \$300

Susan (2018)
Fabric and polyfill, 40in x 17in, \$500

Pookie (2018)
Fabric and polyfill, 5in x 8in, \$200

Jessica Caldas
High Springs, Florida

Artist Statement

In general, my work revolves around relationships between people and community stories within the context of larger social issues. I have always been interested in the silence around such stories caused by stigma, and the ways that stigma perpetuates violence and othering. My practice strives for conversation and confrontation. I seek to make these experiences accessible, while still honest, and without sensationalization. Doing so creates space for empathy, action, and change. My work incorporates drawing, collage, mixed media, sculpture, installation, performance, and more. I have found that I am most successful with mixed media, immersive, installations, where various mediums work in layers to create a bodily experience mirroring the complexities of the issues I am interested in.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

In 2018 I was asked to create a wall piece after a mass shooting for a small gallery. I schedule the work to be done about a month later and within that time two more shootings occurred in the US. It’s not shocking any more, but quite depressing to know that work about gun violence, at this point in US policy, will never be untimely. For the work then, I began researching the history of gun rights, the second amendment, gun policy, the NRA and more. It’s shocking how little people know or understand the history and development of this particular history and it is my goal to engage people in that history more deeply, while examining the actual stories and lives affected by the policies that currently stand. I also hope to encourage people to take direct action through advocacy work, which anyone can engage in, to change the path this issue moves through.

Artist Biography

Jessica Caldas is a Florida/Atlanta based artist, advocate, and activist. Her work deals with connecting personal and community narratives to larger themes and social issues. She also lobbies for legislation to protect sexual assault survivors. Caldas has participated in numerous emerging artist residencies and is currently a 2018-2020 *Creative Project* Resident. Caldas has been awarded numerous honors, including being named as *Creative Loafing’s* Best of ATL Artist for 2016 and 2015. She has shown work nationally, internationally, and throughout the city of Atlanta at various galleries and through several public art programs. Her work has been featured at *Burnaway*, *ArtsAtl*, *Creative Loafing Atlanta*, *Atlanta Magazine*, *Simply Buckhead*, and more. Caldas received her Masters of Fine Arts degree at Georgia State University in 2019 and received her BFA in printmaking from the University of Georgia in 2012. She lives in High Springs, FL.

Five Women (2019)
Mixed media on panel plus
object, 24in x 4in plus chair
space, \$1000

Congregate (2019)
Mixed media on panel plus object
24in x 48in plus chair space
\$1000

At Their Backs (2019)
Mixed media on panel plus object
24in x 48in plus chair space
\$1000

In the Dark (2019)
Mixed media on panel plus object
24in x 48in plus chair space
\$1000



Detail
Five Women (2019)

Deja Echols
Jacksonville, Florida

Artist Statement

Representation matters. Without representation, how can I, as an artist, spark hope into those who are underrepresented? This is the central focus of my work. For far too long I have stood on the sidelines and complained about the lack of representation of minorities. Now is the time to raise my voice and bring awareness to the injustices of American society.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

This series reflects the impact of gun violence in the black community. Seeing the violent deaths of innocent Black boys and men has created this rift between the police and the black community for years. As long as the system remains corrupt there will continue to be black bodies laid on the pavement. This reality should not sit well with the viewer, instead it should invoke resistance and a need for change.

Artist Biography

Deja N. Echols is currently attending the University of North Florida, majoring in fine arts and psychology. She plans to attend Florida State University, where she will study art therapy. Her work focuses on black representation and the various struggles within American society. Most recently, Deja attended the 6-week art Italy Study Abroad Program, where she gained experience curating impromptu art exhibitions and guerilla printmaking. Recently, Deja was the President of the UNF Print Guild 2018.

Currently, Deja is participating in the annual FSCJ Blocktober Fest 2019. She is working on a 4ft by 8ft woodblock that will later be printed on fabric using a steamroller.



One of Three Panels

Black Voices In White Spaces (vol. II) (2019)
Three panels. Graphite and spray paint on
Arnhem 1618 mounted on MDF, 22in x 30in

Hector Rene Membreno-Canales
Andover, Massachusetts

Artist Statement

While using the Post 9/11 GI Bill I was introduced to ideas surrounding institutional power structures, particularly ones found throughout the history of art, e.g., the Church, the State, diplomats, statesmen, businessmen, etc. I began to collaborate with other veteran-artists, combining their personal history, our shared histories, and their personal belongings (iconography) from service. This project became a marriage of shared interests and biographies.

The process of making these photos is a group effort. We share experiences that are intimately familiar to us yet foreign to many around us, especially for those of us who were recently home from deployment. It is important for me to make work around that experience with people who understand it. The method of juxtaposing motifs and narratives from the History of Art with contemporary military-culture is a vehicle to look at American Patriotism through the luxury and burden of time. This is both an aesthetic and critical decision as painting and photography have been manipulated, historically, to perpetuate idealized narratives of political “Truths.”

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

My work is frequently described as ambivalent, for being either a celebration and critique of so-called, American Exceptionalism, when more often than not, it is the viewers implicit bias that inform how it’s read. As a US Army Iraq veteran, Latinx-Honduran immigrant, and practicing artist, I have complicated feelings about my government, my military, and my politics. What I do know is that being a proud veteran does not require me to underwrite American foreign policy as it’s written.

Artist Biography

Hector René Membreno-Canales was born in San Pedro Sula, Honduras and raised in Allentown Pennsylvania. He’s served more than 10 years in the U.S. Army as a Press Officer with several international posts including Iraq, El Salvador, and Poland. He continues to work as an educator, photographer, and visual artist. He is a contributor at the Military News & Culture site *Task & Purpose*, and faculty member of the Art Department. at Phillips-Academy, Andover.

After serving in Iraq he used the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill to move to New York City and study Photography at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) and earned his MFA from the Department of Art and Art History at Hunter College, The City University of New York. As a student, Hector was an intern at Stephen Mallon Films, Magnum Foundation, The Museum of Modern Art, and Hank Willis-Thomas’ Studio.

Creation of US (2014)
Digital Photo Print, 12in x 18in
[Inquire for Price](#)

Pieta (2014)
Digital Photo Print, 12in x 18in
[Inquire for Price](#)

Nature Morte 1 (2014)
Digital Photo Print, 16in x 24 in
[Inquire for Price](#)

Nature Morte 2 (2014)
Digital Photo Print, 16in x 24 in
[Inquire for Price](#)

Nature Morte 3 (2014)
Digital Photo Print
16in x 24in, [Inquire for Price](#)

Nature Morte 4 (2014)
Digital Photo Print,
16in x 24in, [Inquire for Price](#)



Mark Menjivar
San Antonio, TX

Artist Statement

DLP Wall is an installation created from the contents of the cell of David Lee Powell who was executed by the State of Texas in 2010 after 32 years on death row. Menjivar, in partnership with the Texas After Violence Project, is the caretaker of the final contents of David’s cell and activates them in ways to engage the public in meaningful dialogue about capital punishment.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

In the execution of David Lee Powell we see a continued cycle of violence that is deeply rooted in an eye-for-an-eye ideology. This violence extends the waves of trauma that ripple out into our communities.

Artist Biography

Mark Menjivar is a San Antonio based artist and Assistant Professor in the School of Art and Design at Texas State University. His work explores diverse subjects through photography, archives, oral history and objects. He holds a BA in Social Work from Baylor University and an MFA in Social Practice from Portland State University.

Mark has engaged in projects at venues including the Rothko Chapel, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, The Houston Center for Photography, The San Antonio Museum of Art, The Puerto Rican Museum of Art and Culture, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum and the Krannert Art Museum.

Mark’s work has been featured by *Artforum*, *TED*, *NPR*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Village Voice*, *Gastronomica*, *National Geographic*, *Orion Magazine*, *GUP Magazine* and more.



DLP Wall (2019)
Adhesive Inkjet Print, 40in x 60in, NFS

Jason Reed
New Braunfels, Texas

Artist Statement

The Place Where Flags Wave is a long-term project that activates government pictures from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection official archives hosted on Flickr. The site includes more than 11,000 images taken by public affairs staff using professional equipment and field agents with cell phone cameras.

Realized in a multitude of ways, such as prints and small books, the project repurposes the pictures made by government agents to look critically at the intersection of frontier mythologies and the militarization of the border. Heroic agents gallop to victory across the South Texas Plains in iconic poses of colonial power. The horse becomes the dirt bike and the helicopter, as military technology is increasingly implemented to exert control over the movement of people and goods across an arbitrary line drawn in the sand.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

Guns have long been a part of the border enforcement culture, however over the last two decades the border has become increasingly and systematically militarized. This is partly in response to perceived and sometimes real threats of cartel activity, but more so it is a performance of political power, particularly when photographed as part of the public relations campaign as these images represent.

Artist Biography

Jason Reed is an artist and educator from Texas. He is a Professor of Photography at Texas State University and founding director of Borderland Collective. He has created gallery and public space exhibitions at venues such as Artpace in San Antonio, Krannert Museum at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, Galerie Reinthaler in Vienna, Austria, Dallas Contemporary, La Asamblea Legislativa in Mexico City, and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Jason holds a BA in Geography from the University of Texas and an MFA in Photography from Illinois State University.



One of Three Panels

The Place Where Flags Wave (2019)
Archival Inkjet Prints, 13in x 80 in, NFS

Ricder Ricardo
Jacksonville, Florida

Artist Statement

There are more than 393 million guns in circulation in the United States and approximately 120.5 guns for every 100 people, according to the scientific literature. In the series of works Caras, I explore the different demographics across America affected by gun violence and furthermore the increasingly disappearance of safe spaces in this country. I come from a place, Cuba, where there was poverty, political oppression, and gender discrimination; however, gun violence was never an issue. There have been many different incidents involving guns across America, some of which include: the 2016 shooting at Pulse, in Orlando FL where 50 died and 53 were injured, the 2018 shooting in the Jacksonville a FL Landing, where 3 died and 11 were injured, and the most recent attack in 2019 that took place at a Walmart in El Paso where 22 people died and 24 were injured.

Even though all these attacks follow a similar pattern, they differentiate in location and the different groups affected by them. Making it really difficult for citizens to feel safe in common areas where these attacks should not be happening, like supermarkets, nightclubs, and movie theaters. So I ask myself and the American people, what is the solution? Should we ban the use of guns or should we restrict who purchase them? Why are professors and students being forced to carry weapons and defend themselves with more violence? Making it impossible to stop this vicious cycle that only seems to generate more hate.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

When I migrated to the states in my teen years, from my native country Cuba, I do not recall ever feeling unsafe. It was not until I started viewing different attacks across the nation that were happening more often, and experimenting fire drill for gun violence in schools and work places that I started feeling uncertain for my safety.

Artist Biography

Ricder Ricardo graduated from the University of North Florida on April 2019 with a BFA in Painting, Drawing and Printmaking and a minor in Photography.

The focus of his art today consists on finding his identity as a gay man with two different cultures. He wants to explore his roots and honoring where he comes from and everyone around him who shaped him into the artist he is today.



Caras I (2017)
Acrylic on vinyl
12in x 72in
\$500



Caras III (2017)
Acrylic on vinyl
12in x 72in
\$50



Caras V (2017)
Acrylic on vinyl
12in x 72in
\$50



Caras VI (2017)
Acrylic on vinyl
12in x 72in
\$50

Corrina Sephora
Atlanta, Georgia

Artist Statement

Iron ore. The rusty red strata that runs deep in the earth as veins of blood. For centuries, it has been smelted into usable iron through spiritual rituals. Later it was used for industrial purposes, including creating instruments of violence and war. Through heating the metal of guns and forging it, altering the material’s molecular structure, I am, in essence, setting the metal free through the process of transforming these weapons of violence into something new. In ancient times, the blacksmith was thought of as an alchemist crafting carefully with the four elements - earth, air, water, and fire - and transforming iron ore into iron. Hammered into iron as a gun, initially, and transforming that weapon into flowers-poses questions. Questions that have both micro and macro implications. Iron ore can be smelted to create tools of violence used in mass shootings across America and those same items can be repurposed into art. Beyond that are further questions regarding our culture of violence and, in fact, raises the question: are we all now targets?

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

Through heating the metal of guns and forging it, I have altered the material’s molecular structure and transformed them into something new. By reclaiming the metal in this way, I have placed a new purpose and meaning onto what once made up functional weapons of death. But can that connotation of death ever be completely removed? Iron ore can be smelted to create tools of violence used in mass shootings across America and those same guns and targets can be repurposed into art. Essentially, by altering the materials of the weapons and in a way the targets, I am altering the spirit of that material, and creating a new conversation, a new view and even a new possibility for the future.

Artist Biography

Corrina Sephora is a mixed media artist specializing in metal sculpture, painting, and installation who has lived and worked in Atlanta, GA, for 24 years. Sephora works with universal and personal themes of loss and transformation, within the context of contemporary society. She earned her BFA in Metals and Sculpture at Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, in 1995. She received her MFA in Sculpture in 2005 from Georgia State University and has done residencies throughout the US and abroad. A selection of her awards include: “Best in Show” Annette Cone-Skelton of MOCA GA and “Best in Show” and “First place” at the National Outdoor Sculpture Competition & Exhibition in North Charleston. Corrina’s work is on permanent display at The Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, The Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Greenfield Hebrew Academy, and in the collection of The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, and in national private collections, including Elton John.



Flourish (2019)
recycled guns and gun barrels,
forged steel, 13.5in x 28in x 5in, \$2,900

Native Lands I (2019)
recycled gun, forged steel, 6.75in x 7.75in x 1in, \$1,900

Native Lands II ((2019)
recycled gun, forged steel, 8in x 10.5in x 1.5in, \$1,900

Darryl DeAngelo Terrell
Detroit, Michigan

Artist Statement

The concern for Black well-being, in a time when black bodies don’t make it home, has been a consistent thought/worry/fear of mine as I maneuver through space as a black body. In this body of work I’m thinking about the collective anxiety within the Black Community but more specifically the anxiety Black Mothers hold for their children, which results in having them to turn to God, and Pray for their Protection.

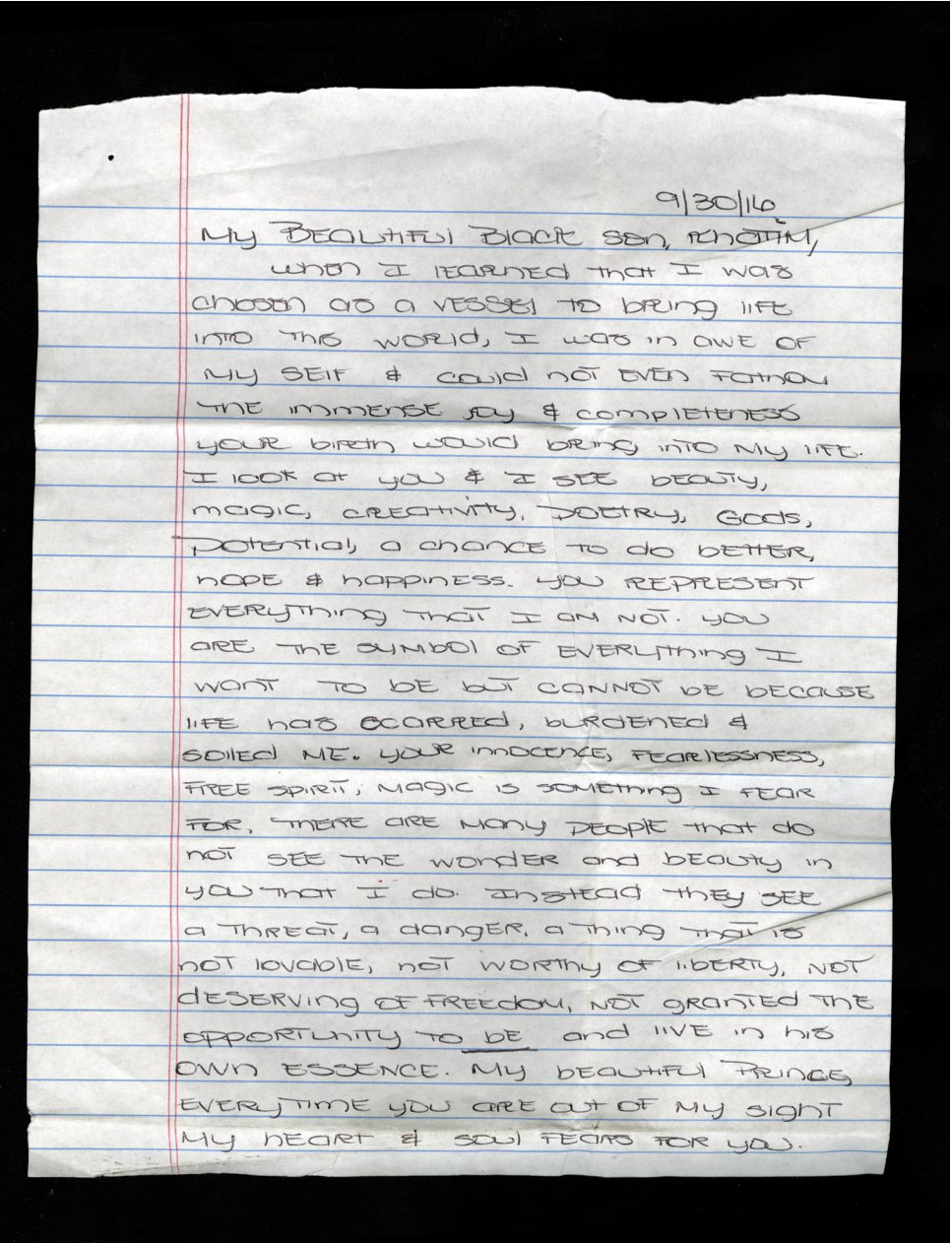
How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

I’m a black queer body, I live in America, I have young children that I have taught, and that are in my family, I have a black mother, older sisters, who all fear for their offspring’s lives whenever we’re not with them. This is For US!

Artist Biography

Darryl DeAngelo Terrell (b. 1991 Detroit, Mi) is a BLK queer artist, digital curator, and writer, currently based in Detroit, Michigan. A recent MFA graduate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where they studied Photography, under the supervision of Roberto Sifuentes, Ayanah Moore, and Xaviera Simmons. Darryl’s work is centered around the philosophy of F.U.B.U. (The Shit Is For Us). They think about how their work can aid to a larger conversation about blackness, and its many intersectionalities. Their work explores the displacement of black and brown people, femme identity, and strength, the black family structure, sexuality, gender, safe spaces, and personal stories, all while keeping in mind the accessibility of art.

Terrell is a 2019 Kresge Arts In Detroit Visual Arts Fellow, 2018 Luminarts Fellow in Visual Arts, a 2017/18 Hatch Project Artist in Residence at the Chicago Artist Coalition, a 2017 Artist in Resident at ACRE, and a semifinalist for the 2017 Edes Fellowship. Darryl has also shown at The Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Brooklyn, New York; the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Illinois; Xpace Cultural Centre, Toronto, Canada; the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Scottsdale, Arizona, and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC.



Before You Leave The House (2018)
Ink on Vellum Paper, 11in x 17in, Set of 20, \$500 each

In Your Name... (Charde's Prayer) (2018)
Vinyl Wall Print, 30in x 39 in, \$2500
Page 1 of 3

Paul Weiner
Denver, Colorado

Artist Statement

I am developing an encyclopedia of objects that capture the zeitgeist of their time. My paintings and sculptures are physical manifestations of social symbols. Today, those symbols refer to nationalism, mass violence, the military industrial complex, capitalism, and the links that exist between these themes.

How does your work relate to the theme *Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think?*

The sculpture I have included in this show is titled *Copycat*. For this sculpture, I acquired the Aurora theater shooter’s receipts for objects he used to train before committing a mass shooting in my home-town. The objects I used to construct this work are the result of my re-enactment of buying these objects, including human targets and auxiliary materials used to mount them for shooting practice. I have also included two American flags painted black. The American flag is an incredibly loaded symbol. By obscuring the flag’s easily identifiable and symbolic nature, the work forces viewers to reassess their own relationship to the physical object that is the flag.

Artist Biography

Paul Weiner was born in Aurora, Colorado in 1993. He received a BFA in Painting from Syracuse University in 2015. Weiner’s primary focus is a form of abstract painting that is imbued with political and social meaning, simultaneously riffing on neo-expressionism and post-conceptual painting. Weiner’s paintings contain a library of symbols that refer to the American flag, art history, cultural hybridity, sports, folk history, the legal system, and the military industrial complex.

Weiner’s works have been included in solo and group exhibitions at Krupic Kersting Galerie, Cologne, Germany; TWFINEART, Brisbane, Australia; Mana Contemporary, Chicago, IL; Durden and Ray Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Pablo’s Birthday, New York, New York; se! rum, Aarhus, Denmark; Re:Art, Brooklyn, New York; HF Johnson Gallery of Art, Carthage College, Wisconsin; SABOT/MIMI/FASTER, Berlin, Germany; Long Road Projects, Jacksonville, Florida; Alto Gallery, Denver, Colorado; Chabah Yelmani Gallery, Brussels, Belgium; YIA Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium; ARTBandini Fair, Los Angeles, California; Miscellaneous Press, Los Angeles, California; Leeds College of Art, Leeds, UK; York St. John University, York, UK; and CTRL+SHFT, Oakland, CA among others. He has participated in residencies, commissions, and visiting artist engagements at Kehinde Wiley’s Black Rock Senegal, Dakar, Senegal; Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin; Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York; Long Road Projects, Jacksonville, Florida; Miscellaneous Press, Los Angeles, California; and Front Range Community College, Fort Collins, Colorado.



Kemp Morgan (2019)
Oil paint and graphite on canvas
16 in x 20 in, \$2,500

The Man Without a Country (2019)
Oil paint and graphite on canvas
16in x 20 in, \$2,500

Copycat (2019)
human anatomy targets, bullseye targets,
steel target holder, labeler, and pasters,
dimensions variable, \$4,000

Complete Schedule of Events

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 2, 2019, 6:00-9:00 PM

Curator Talk with Arlette Hernandez: Sunday, November 3, 4:00-5:00 PM

Visiting Artist Engagement with Mark Menjivar:

Thursday, November 14, 2019, 6:00-7:00 PM: Panel discussion with visiting artist Mark Menjivar and faculty from the UGA Latin America and Caribbean Studies Institute on the intersection of violence in Central America and American policies.

Friday, November 15, 2019, 12:30 PM: Activation/Performance/Talk by visiting artist Mark Menjivar, related to the exhibited work “DLP.” This ongoing project examines the full contents of convicted murderer David Lee Powell’s cell at the time of his execution in 2010, which ended his 32-years on death row.

Experimental Music with Kathryn Koopman: Saturday, December 7, 7:00 PM

Exhibition Credits

Curator: Arlette Hernandez
Preparators: Arlette Hernandez, Lauren Fancher, Lilly McEachern
Lighting: Jon Vogt and Jason Huffer
Graphic Design: Lauren Fancher
Catalog: Lauren Fancher, Lilly McEachern, Arlette Hernandez
Interns: Kathryn Koopman, Alden DiCamillo, Lilly McEachern, Carly Mirabile, Maddie Greer

Support

Losing Control: Guns, Government, and Group-Think is sponsored in part by The James E. and Betty J. Huffer Foundation, The Georgia Council for the Arts, and The National Endowment for the Arts.

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