

In Plain Sight

A Collection of Responses from the
University of Washington Community

In Plain Sight

November 23, 2019 - April 26, 2020

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The fourteen artists of *In Plain Sight* strive to tell stories untold, to speak for voices that have been undervalued or deliberately silenced, to reveal aspects of our public narratives that have been obfuscated, and to reimagine histories for the future.

This associated guide shares written contributions from fourteen members of the University of Washington community who hold identities underrepresented on campus. The only parameters we gave the contributors were design restrictions and a limit of approximately 300 words, including the UW affiliations they chose to share. In these pages, you will find poems, essays, reflections, reactions, applications, interpretations, and questions, in sequence with the works as you encounter them in the museum.

We offer this guide as an alternative to the traditional museum wall text, giving license to those outside of the institutional framework of the museum to voice their perspectives on the exhibition. We encourage you to take it with you as you spend time in the museum today. We hope what you read here will spark conversation about the role of art in addressing systemic injustices—where it succeeds, where it frustrates—and how to participate in the ongoing dialogue. We look forward to continuing this conversation with you!

We would like to thank Henry staff members and UW faculty, staff, and students for the multiple ways they supported this project. And we would like to express sincerest gratitude to the fourteen contributors for their time and commitment.

Mita Mahato, PhD
Henry Art Gallery
Associate Curator of Public
and Youth Programs

Ian Siporin
Henry Art Gallery
Public and Youth
Programs Coordinator

This collection was funded by a Diversity and Inclusion Seed Grant from the University of Washington Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity.

What makes a structure a sculpture?

on Tom Burr, *Walls*

OLIVER DUBE

Sophomore
Comparative History of Ideas

The aesthetic of Tom Burr's work lies in abstract meaning. Echoing the exhibition's idea of hiding in plain sight, Burr's walls, at first glance, seem like a mere feature of the museum. It is only when one notices the lettering and the oddity of pieces of walls protruding in places they are not supposed to be that one realizes that they are part of the exhibition. Burr, in this way, invites the viewers to perform the act of ignoring the seemingly mundane and to reflect on the role it can play in the lives of some.

In this artwork, Burr communicates the role of hiding in plain sight for the queer community to discreetly express their sexualities. In a world where your own home could be a threat to your identity, queer communities have found solace in public spaces and, more recently, in digital space, to be vulnerable emotionally, physically, and sexually. In a museum, where the attempt is to lay bare the hidden world in plain sight, what is the role of an artwork that hides itself to convey a message for those who were forced to be hidden?

Just Out of Sight

on Sadie Barnette

LINDSEY MUSKIEWICZ

Double major
Comparative History of Ideas and Disability Studies
Student Disability Commission
Multimedia Intern

Sadie Barnette's installation not only includes portraits, but the room itself IS art, which brings a whole new level of engagement forward, especially for members with mobility impairments.

From the bright, sparkling walls to the high ceiling, painted pink, the installation engages the eye to move around the room from one object to the next. A glittery couch facing a large print copy of redacted names from the FBI's watchlist of Black Panther Party members may be the focal point, but no single part of the room feels less important than another. If you take the time to let your eye wander, sparkly security cameras discreetly clutter corners of the ceiling, all pointed at the couch.

However, the collages on the walls of Barnette's work reflect a larger issue in the art community: taking advantage of the assumption that everyone engages with art at the same eye level. From a shorter perspective, I strained to see some of the smaller photographs 2 feet above me. While the exhibition is one I highly enjoyed, moments within Barnette's installation still ask members to be capable of meeting a certain height requirement in order to participate.

What all art exhibits should ask is—who is the art speaking for, and how does the negation of intersectionality play into who is able to see themselves reflected in art pieces, and who isn't? Depending on who you are, everyone's interactions with art is different. Including the literal line of sight. People in wheelchairs can't see smaller works of art hung high on walls. And by removing the ability to experience art by virtue of leaving it just out of reach speaks to issues that echo throughout our culture. Art may be in plain sight, but in ways, it certainly is not for some.

Untitled

on Alison O'Daniel, *The Tuba Thieves*

ROLDY AGUERO ABLAO

Adult Programs Manager
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture

It is raining. The radio is on. Close up shots of clothes, hands, a steady beat. Thunder. Water sliding against a white exterior. The sound of rain wafts around the room.

What is the film about?

A plant moves. I see succulents, and tropical leaves.

It is a part of the earth. And the earth is? a part of her.

Cacti, banana leaves, palm trees - they are all gathered together in a small metal box. There is a low moan, and metal scraping. With each moan, a plant shakes (dances?).

A bit of air is pushed out the throat...

Fin. Title.

A dry landscape. Mountains of dusty green and brown. Tall palm trees stand in the distance. Is that LA? I close my eyes. A trumpet plays. Someone is stretching on a metal fence. They are on a bridge with friends. They sign to one another.

Will you catch me?

I hear the ocean and think about home, about Guam and white sandy beaches while I see friends on screen walking over metal and concrete. It is getting dark now.

A little kid comes into the room and tries to guess what's on screen. Before they leave, they ask "*Is that what Jupiter looks like?*"

Fin. Title.

"The Stars".

Two men are kissing. They are at an overlook. They lean into each other and point towards the sky. The bench creaks. A coyote howls in the distance. The trumpet plays again, over scenes of an urban landscape.

Fin. Title.

55.

Quiet rain and thunder. I am back to where I started. Loud thunderclaps. Acorns and air plants on a steering wheel. The radio talks about Hurricane Sandy. Again, I hear a steady beat. Thunder. Water. Engines. Earth.

"W h a t is the film about?"

Reflections on Transience

on Nicole Miller, *For Now* and *Athens, California*

AMAL NANAVATI

PhD Student
Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering

Miller's *For Now* transports us into a world of transience, where neither the past nor future matters, but rather the Now. Colors shift, letters shift, fonts shift. The piece is chaotic, yet orderly. The letters sometimes move forward quickly, like the time we spend with a close friend, and sometimes jump around tumultuously, like times when we are confused. The piece immerses us in the Now, while throwing our minds back to past Nows where our experiences mirror the visuals unfolding on screen.

Miller's *Athens, California* continues the theme of transience, but expands it to short and long-term impacts of the many Nows experienced by those living in the Athens neighborhood. A Now for Evelyn is her birth—a mere blip in her life, but the circumstances of which lead to a permanent connection with Jesus Christ. A Now for Jaelin is her rape—an event she accepts enough to talk about openly, but that leads to long-lasting questioning and hurt. A Now for Andrea is the Iguala protest—that communal energy is part of the Now, but the confidence gained is part of the Forever.

Miller's work challenges us to integrate such perspectives, which we seldom engage, into our lives. How can we, members of an elite, academic institution, continue focusing on the Now? How can we continue learning from the experiences of marginalized people? In this lies the greatest irony of her work. *Athens, California* is about a marginalized community, yet is housed in an elite institution whose attendees may never engage with such a community. This irony begs the question of the viewers—this art increased my understanding, but how do I translate that into action?

Who is the girl in the photograph?

On Hayv Kahraman

THAOMI MICHELLE DINH

PhD Candidate
English, American Ethnic Studies
Class of 2020

I grew up listening to my mom's stories, terrifying and vibrant, told in our kitchen over the dining table. Only a teenager when she left Saigon, my mom recalled her experiences fleeing Vietnam with her mother and sisters. As she painted our family's history, so did other mothers in our community. With my cousins and friends, we'd exchange photos that our parents and grandparents had preserved. Circulating through our homes and communities, these refugee memories were forms of care that taught us our history and what it means to be part of the post-war diaspora.

When I entered college and listened to stories told about our families rather than by them, I heard different ones. I saw photos like my mom's, but now they were framed through suffering. I found flattened narratives and repeated images of heroism. Stories of suffering masses were favored over individual ones, and the timeline of progress attempted to lighten each story with resolution. I learned that the dominant American narrative could only be maintained through the disavowal of the knowledge that had been passed down through our families and communities.

Through images of women as celebrity, audience, and stacked bodies, Hayv Kahraman makes refugee women's bodies both recognizable and unrecognizable. She asks us to question what aid means when it is coupled with gendered exploitation and the erasure of women's individual stories. Making visible the flattening of refugees, her paintings make me think of the ways in which imperialist historiography attempts to generalize suffering, making it easier to look away, but also how refugees and the post-war diaspora might look back.

Untitled

on Sanford Biggers, *And?*, *Forward Ever*, and *Lucretia*

PHILLIP RUSSELL

MFA Student
Creative Writing

How might we decouple white notions of pastness from the lived experiences of black peoples in this country? How is history in communication with us as we navigate our daily lives? How can we shift our gaze or alter what exists in the archive to see narratives hidden from our country's conversations or left outside the margins? Sanford Biggers is asking us to think about these ideas when we engage with his artwork. *And?*, *Forward Ever*, and *Lucretia* are all in conversation with these questions. When you walk into the gallery, your eye is drawn to the small black figures on the ground from his piece *And?*. Upon further inspection, we realize these African figures' shadows project forward instead of backward, presenting a trio of black women with afros, their faces illuminated by sparkling sequins. I'm struck by this joining of histories and how Biggers is interrogating what we follow and what follows us.

In *Forward Ever* and *Lucretia*, Biggers presents us with 18th-19th century antique quilts that he has altered to reference their alleged use as signposts in the Underground Railroad. At first, the tampering of these historical pieces may give us pause. Why might he do such a thing? The cutting away of fabric in *Lucretia* changes the shape of the quilt, it emphasizes the patterns created by the seamstresses, it asks us to think a bit longer on what we are seeing, what it means, and what we are missing. In *Forward Ever*, Biggers makes additions to the quilt. Two figures made visible through amending of the fabric with tar, glitter, and asphalt. I'm taken by this superimposition at play. It asks me what parts of my life—my personal narrative—are hiding amongst these threads. How might I see artifacts as a mirror reflecting myself back to me?

Untitled

on A.L Steiner

BROWN GIRL

School of Art+Art History+Design

Oh White People.

.

.

.

I don't want my mom to know that I'm a part of this.

I don't want my name attached to this.

.

.

.

Maybe this art is too high-level for me to understand.

Untitled

on Fiona Connor

ERIC ALIPIO

BA Student
ASUW American Indian Student Commission (Director)
Class of 2020

Near the front of most parks, you pass by noticeboards and signs. Maybe you look at them, maybe you don't. But they're there. In plain sight.

These boards sit in their parks everyday when people post their messages to them of lost pets, offerings of classes, park schedules, community gatherings, and more.

These boards that hang before you are more than just pieces of wood with tack and staple holes. Rather, they are hidden stories of the communities that surround these places. These boards become portals to different spaces.

The door that stands in the middle of the space is a literal portal between spaces. Yet it holds deep history within itself.

Fiona Connor encourages each of us to look deeper at those objects that surround us in our communities that are often glossed over. Each object in plain sight has its history as it shaped the community it resided in. Each nick, hole, and fade reminds us of these histories.

How did past communities behave? How did they react? How did they come together?

How have present communities changed? Who will they become?

So is that swing just a swing? Is that bike rack just a bike rack? Is that trail off the beaten path just a trail?

What stories do they hold if we just look a little bit closer?

Dun Womb at the End of the World

on Mika Rottenberg, *Cosmic Generator (Loaded #2)*

JOCINE VELASCO

Master of Landscape Architecture Student
UW College of the Built Environment

Ocean freights from Shanghai to Seattle cross 5,000 nautical miles in 12 days.

*Black hair dyed lighter
swallows fluorescent light
An arm reaches forward
contaminated*

The migrant caravan traverses 2,000 miles from the Mexican isthmus to the border in 30 days, on foot.

*A melted
technicolor blindfold
expands and bleeds
past the frame's border*

Fisher Sand & Gravel is a North Dakota company, whose subsidiary holds the patent for the border wall design in El Paso. Fisher Industries is located 137 miles from Standing Rock Reservation.

*Bottling her sweat
I dream
of rendered fat
in underground pipes*

According to the Chinese online marketplace Alibaba, China supplies 98% of the world's Christmas lights. A flight from Alibaba's headquarters to the Amazon Spheres takes close to 17 hours.

*The lights mimic stars
or embers or life
All is calm
All is bright*

Mexico is the biggest producer of silver at 21% and China is the third largest at 12%. Batopilas, a mining town, is 710

kilometers away from the Ciudad Juarez-El Paso border. It is unclear how far Batopilas is from Xinjiang.

*The border
punctures upward
Nail gun nails to the sky
Rust-hate veneer*

18th-century Mexican silver miners called the little explosives that helped extract ore *tacos*. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region sits in the northwestern corner of China with mountains rich in gold deposits while Uyghurs sit in detention camps.

*Flesh
swollen with cortisol
breathes nothing
but desert pink dust*

The exact numbers of the disappeared Uyghurs and Latinxs are unknown to me.

Untitled

On Andrea Bowers, *Education Should Be Free*

LEV CUNNINGHAM

Interim Associate Director
Q Center

The future calls us—

Education should be free.

How will we answer?

Panthers woven on a Whitebear

on william cordova, *Stand Up Next 2 a Mountain*
(5011 B. Whitebear y M. Tagawa)

BERETTE S. MACAULAY

MA Cultural Studies
Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences
UW Bothell

Black Cinema Collective
Black Embodiments Studio
GoMAP
Jacob Lawrence Gallery

you don't have to say everything for every/Thing to be considered
walls can be wi(n)dowed or bridged
within codes of exterior refusal
un/fixed

transcendental ruin resurrected in another geography
un/obstructed

opaque objects fiction-ed on purpose
for another time

connecting an/other People
but with-out the spectacle, with/out new bounds,
without "positional superiority"

Because...

aren't We All *up/rooting* amputated histories?

by Moten's assertion we can avoid the *recrudescence of resisting*:
whereas –

the norm of the missing,
the norm of the invisible,
the norm of the resistance / -to the norm

but rather –

the *ante*-survivance answer
the *un/writ* transcultured knowns
that exist in other worlds out-side, before,
and beyond the anti-structures

From the South, he casts north, new igneous juxtapositions
recruiting Ancestors of a few thousand years,
chiseled records *be/fore* the New World,
watering/out settler Spectres to reimagine the *im / migrants*,
detained through caged memories by *arrivants*

Our *ghostly* fluidity whose earthly hues intersect at Black river rocks
weave transistor placements as temporal grey testimonies

conjured
at each Daybreak.

Suspension.

We stand trans/fixed by this:

Loves, we were never lost ...

Us and Them

on Oscar Tuazon, *Water School*

ELIZABETH CALVILLO DUEÑAS

Jackson School of International Studies
School of Art+Art History+Design
Class of 2020

I took a class on water once. Water and Security in the Middle East. JSIS 493.

Water is considered an area of international security by the Department of State.

Hydrology turns out to be more complicated than you might think, and hydropolitics even more so.

Why?

Why is it that such a vital resource is so obscured and easily overlooked in our daily lives?

Why do I have no idea where the water I drink comes from?

We will only miss it when we need it most.

We think of the sinking land of Mexico City and California, but fail to recognize that there are companies buying up land here in Washington to get access to tomorrow's oil: water.

Do I fully understand Tuazon's work?

No.

But it's an important reminder and invitation to continue to think about water and its place in our lives.

We share more similarities with California, Arizona, and the Middle East than you might initially think.

Memories Within Reach

on Ebony G. Patterson

BRITTNEY FRANTECE

Graduate Student
Department of English
Black literature and cultural studies

Ebony G. Patterson showcases three 2016 mixed media installations. With their uneven edges and eclectic materials overflowing the frame, these works are captivating. They show portraits of people interacting and sharing loving looks, as well as identifiable objects like toys and cars. There are holes within the work itself, exposing the pink polka dot wallpaper on which the installations hang. Sometimes the materials superimpose each other, making them identifiable but obscured. Bead necklaces of different colors (but complementary to the color scheme of the individual piece) outline some of the objects, containing them, before the beads drop toward the bottom of the frame, falling out of the frame.

Patterson fills the middle of the gallery floor with *Invisible Presence: Bling Memories* (2014), a work of 47 medium-sized coffins covered in lace, floral, and polka dot patterned fabrics with gold accessories. Tassels of different sizes and colors dangle from the coffins' bottom. They sit on sky blue stilts, leaning toward each other. They hover slightly above my body. Within reach.

Patterson is my master teacher, instructing me on how to recall memories. She teaches me that memories don't die. They don't transcend into an ether of no return, an incomprehensible land. Rather, they remain with me if only I allow myself to feel and celebrate their presence. As suggested by the titles, I see the coffins and objects within the installations as relics of memories, the material manifestations of who and what occurred in the past. These relics magnify these memories and enhance the feeling of their presence, making the past not past at all. Celebrating the memory of the past because it's always here. Within reach.

On the Pros and Cons of Imperialism

on Beatriz Cortez, *Memory Insertion Capsule*

BELA SÁNCHEZ

Environmental Studies major
ESRM minor
Interdisciplinary Honors student
Class of 2020

I am the byproduct of the conquerors,
and of the conquered.

I am the byproduct of the immigrants,
and of the indigenous.

I am the byproduct of those who survived,
and of those who did not.

I am frightened of imperialism,
and grateful that it birthed me into this identity.

I am a Latina,
an identity defined as much by shared
names and languages as by violence and the
intermingling of disparate peoples.

I am not available to be colonized.

We were here.

We are here.

We will be here.

Appendix:

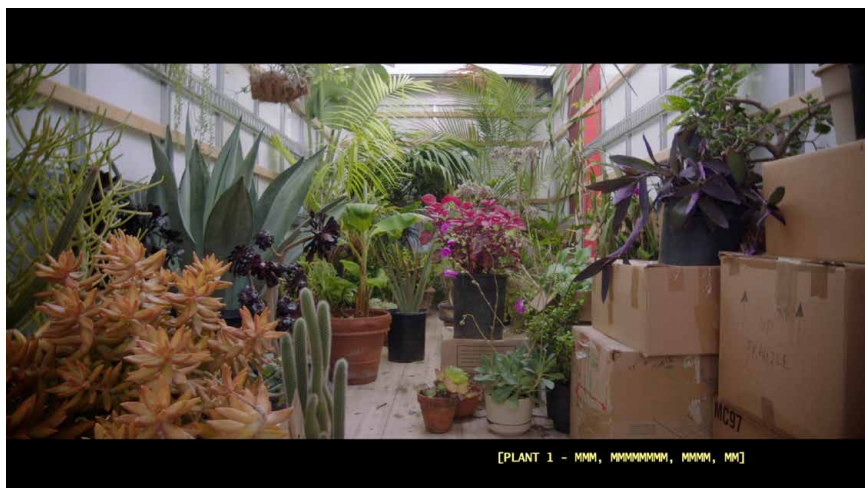
Featured Artwork



Tom Burr, *Des Moines, IA from Walls*, 1989/2019. Plywood, vinyl text, excerpts from *Spartacus*, 1994-1995: *International Gay Guide*. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Sadie Barnette, *Room to Live*, 2019. Mixed media installation, holographic vinyl sofa, metal flake TV, archival inkjet prints, metal flake security cameras. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



[PLANT 1 - MMM, M000000MM, MMM, MM]

Alison O'Daniel, *The Tuba Thieves - Scene 55: The Plants are Protected* [still], 2013-ongoing. HD video. Written, directed, edited by Alison O'Daniel, cinematography by Meena Singh, produced by Rachel Main, score by Christine Sun Kim. Courtesy of the artist.



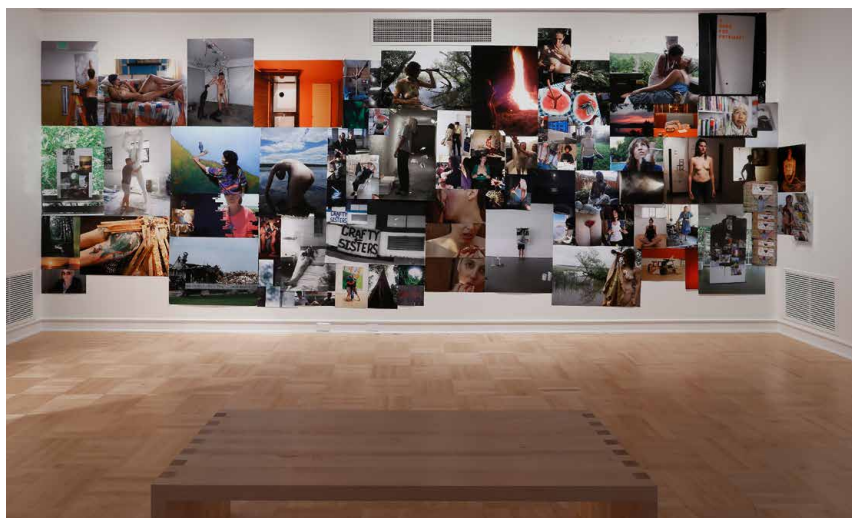
Nicole Miller, *For Now*, 2018. Synthesizer generated RGB laser animation; Duration: 44 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Koenig & Clinton, New York. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Hayv Kahraman, *The Audience* [detail], 2018. Oil on linen. Collection of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas. Gift of the Jedel Family Foundation. Photo: Mark Woods.



Sanford Biggers, *And?*, 2018. Sequins, canvas, fabric, tar, polystyrene, aquaresin. Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



A.L. Steiner, *Cost-benefit analysis*, 2014/2019. Color pigment prints. Courtesy of the artist and Deborah Schamoni Galerie, Munich. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Fiona Connor, *Closed Down Clubs, The Smell*, 2017. Wooden door, silk screen on coated aluminum foil, tape, surface coatings. Courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Mika Rottenberg, *Cosmic Generator (Loaded #2)* [still], 2017/2018. Single-channel video installation, sound, color; 26:36 min. Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth.



Andrea Bowers, *Education Should Be Free*, 2019. Cardboard, color changing LED lights. Courtesy of the artist and Vielmetter, Los Angeles. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.

2005-2013
William Cordova

Side A: Mike Tagawa Interview 17:33 min

Side B, 50N Bernie Whitbear Way 0212



Puerta de la Luna, Putuni, Bolivia
Courtesy Pavel Spindler



Black Panther Party (1969-1976)
173 20th Ave Seattle, WA
Courtesy U.S. Gov.



Daybreak Star Cultural Center
501 Bernie Whitebear Way
Courtesy Andrew Morrison (muralist)



Mike Tagawa in a Panther formation
at Garfield High School,
Seattle, WA, 1969
Photo courtesy of Eugene Tagawa

We should want...[our]relationship to space to evolve architecture as it is informed by the world.

—Leanne Welles-Blood in conversation with hosts, Artforum Magazine

william cordova, *Stand Up Next 2 a Mountain* (5011 B. Whitebear y M. Tagawa), 2019. Vinyl record and jacket; Interview with Mike Tagawa by Janet Jones, Trevor Griffey and Leo Totev 2005; Photo courtesy of Eugene Tagawa; Duration for Side A. Mike Tagawa Interview: 17 minutes 33 seconds; Duration for Side B. 5011 Berney Whitebear Way: 7 minutes 13 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.



Ebony G. Patterson. *...love... (...when they grow up...)*, 2016. Mixed media on hand-cut jacquard woven tapestry with beads, appliqués, embellishments, brooches, plastic, glitter, fabric, stuffed toys, papier-mâché balloons, on wallpaper fabric. Collection of Dr. Anita Blanchard and Martin Nesbitt. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Oscar Tuazon. *Los Angeles Water School (LAWS)*, 2018. Mixed media installation. Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, and Eva Presenhuber, Zürich and New York. Installation view of *In Plain Sight*, 2019, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Photo: Mark Woods.



Beatriz Cortez, *Memory Insertion Capsule* [detail], 2017. Steel, archival materials on video loop. Courtesy of the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles. Photo: Mark Woods.

The Henry Art Gallery is located on the historic and contemporary lands of the Duwamish, Suquamish, and Muckleshoot nations and other Coast Salish peoples who call the waters and lands of the Salish Sea home. We invite you to join us in this acknowledgement and reflect upon this context.

Henry

HENRY ART GALLERY

[HENRYART.ORG](https://henryart.org)