

# Challenging Borders



A GLCA Art Exchange

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## Participating artists:

Ron Abram	Denison University
Kristina Bogdanov	Ohio Wesleyan University
Michael Dixon	Albion College
Claudia Esslinger	Kenyon College
Noah Fischer	Kenyon College
Rodolfo Guzmán	Earlham College
Craig Hill	Kenyon College
Lori Kella	Oberlin College
Jim Krehbiel	Ohio Wesleyan University
Justin Kronewetter	Ohio Wesleyan University
Sarah Lindley & Amelia Katanski	Kalamazoo College
Sandy de Lissovoy	Kenyon College
Steve Nelson	Hope College
Byron Rich	Allegheny College
Keith Allyn Spencer	Denison University
Katherine Sullivan	Hope College

catalogue design: Eric D. Charlton

cover image:

[01] Steve Nelson. *Untitled*. 2018. piezography prints.

background image:

[02] Jim Krehbiel. *Equinox Sunrise*. 2016. digital print.



# Director's Forward

## Challenging Borders: A GLCA Art Exchange

The Bowman, Penelec, and Megahan Galleries at Allegheny College are pleased to present the inaugural Great Lakes Colleges Association Art Exchange, an exhibition showcasing work by 16 artists drawn from nine GLCA institutions. Conceived in response to the Global Crossroads Grand Challenge, the exhibition explores borders, which can be geographic, national, religious, generational, environmental, political, cultural, economic, or gender-based. Whether expressed as physical barriers or mental constructs, borders delineate the structures of our lives. Opening at a moment when rhetoric espoused by the U.S. government demanding a southern border wall has reached a fever pitch, the issues addressed in this exhibition feel timely and urgent. Art offers a space for radical speculation, a space where we can begin to ask questions that change paradigms and shift worldviews. Indeed, the artworks on view not only highlight the ways that borders perpetuate systems of power, they also gesture toward possibilities of dismantling the borders that divide us.

Generous support for this project was provided by the Great Lakes Colleges Association as part of its Global Crossroads Initiative, made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. We are immensely grateful for feedback and support from Dr. Terry Bense, Allegheny Global Crossroads Campus Liaison, and Dr. Simon Gray, Program Officer, Global Liberal Arts Alliance. This exhibition is also supported in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Paula Burleigh, PhD  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History  
Director, Bowman~Penelec~Megahan Galleries



# Borders and The Challenges We Face

by

Heidi E. Kraus

As global citizens living in 2019, we are acutely aware of and impacted by the subject of borders. The word “border” conjures notions of barriers, boundaries, hinderances, walls to climb, and hurdles to jump, both literally and figuratively. Borders, for example, might occur naturally in the environment, be politically motivated, geopolitical, religious, or cultural. Some borders are constructed to protect and defend, while others exclude and make vulnerable. As I write, the United States is in its twenty-third consecutive day of a government shutdown—the longest in U.S. history—as a result of failed negotiations between President Donald Trump and members of Congress over the proposed construction of a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. 800,000 furloughed workers have been without a paycheck for nearly four weeks, and negotiations seem to be at an impasse. Issues surrounding border security, power, immigration, economics, and human rights lie at the heart of the disagreement.

Borders are challenging. How do we as a global society attempt to bridge difference and conflict? To what extent can education, critical thinking, communication, curiosity, collaboration, and a desire to increase empathy on a global scale lessen these challenges? Questions surrounding borders, be they physical, cultural, or ideological, pose a global significance that goes beyond disciplinary boundaries—and the implications for humanity are real. These big questions are at the heart of the Great Lakes College Alliance Grand Challenge, whose central purpose is to promote transnational understanding about a topic of global significance. In 2016, Hope College received a Global Crossroads Initiative grant sponsored by the Great Lakes

College Association to complete a project entitled *Challenging Borders: Displaced Peoples*. The goal of the project was to create an interactive, 3 to 5-minute audio-visual “diaspora” in multiple locations across Hope’s campus to engage interdisciplinary and cultural issues related to themes of migration, displaced persons, and refugees. The objectives for the project were: to integrate the Challenging Borders theme into existing courses across disciplines; to develop student and faculty knowledge, curiosity, self-awareness, empathy, and responsibility in regard to global refugee crises; to promote campus-wide awareness of and engagement with Global Alliance partners and faculty; to present the Hope College community with multiple perspectives on the complex issues surrounding migration, displaced persons, and refugees; and to simulate a sense of place, space, and movement in a sensory, interactive, and visual learning experience.

Nine faculty-student collaborative projects were selected from across academic divisions to participate, and each Hope College project leader was charged with locating a Global Liberal Arts Alliance collaborator from a GLCA partner institution. The display and reception of the projects was multi-faceted. First, posters were hung in buildings across campus for the duration of the academic year, and individual projects were accessible to viewers via URL or by scanning a unique QR code with your smartphone. Each poster was accompanied by a take-away map, which listed the location of the nine projects across campus, as well as a description of the overall project goals and objectives. The audience was encouraged to walk from project to project in no particular order—evoking a sense of diaspora or scattering, of displacement. Following the public launch of the projects on Hope’s campus, an accompanying website was created to make the experience truly global in its accessibility.

The importance of the *Challenging Borders: Displaced Peoples* project lies in its relevance to all members of the Hope community and beyond. Project leader Dr. Deborah Vriend Van Duinen, Associate Professor of English Education, explored the topic of immigration with her First Year Seminar class. Van Duinen and her students used literature, nonfiction, memoir, and film to encounter a variety of immigrant stories in an effort to better understand their hopes, dreams, and sufferings. The class participated in a community-wide reading program around Edwidge Danticat’s *Brother I’m Dying* and learned from immigrants directly in the Holland, Michigan area. For their digital project, Van Duinen’s class created a website with texts and research projects as well as a collaboration with Barry Elz, a local professional photographer, to communicate visually some of the complexities surrounding the immigrant experience.

Dr. Joanne Stewart, Professor of Chemistry, addressed the real and immediate global threat of climate change through pictures, maps, and short stories. Along with her alliance partner, Anastasi Misseyanni (American University of Greece, Deree), students in Stewart's GEMS 295 course developed a Story Map to illustrate the role of climate change and displacement in nine different global regions. Another project, *Walking Gregory's Neighborhood*, explored how performative gesture and the documentation of place could offer a different narrative to widely-held perceptions of the incarcerated. Through written correspondence with Gregory, a poet and inmate at a Michigan correctional facility, Professor Tori Pelz (Art and Art History) visited each site in Gregory's Detroit neighborhood—a place he has not physically seen since the beginning of his incarceration twenty-two years prior. For her project, Pelz created a digital map of Gregory's neighborhood in an effort to bear witness to Gregory's personal history and transformation.

The scope of the Challenging Borders project was widened for the grant's second iteration in 2017. For *Challenging Borders: Global Issues*, eight audio-visual projects engaged the idea of border challenging from a variety of perspectives. Some projects continued with themes of immigration and physical borders, while others explored more nuanced topics. For example, a website project by my student Nina Kay, a Senior Art History and Women and Gender Studies double major, showed there was more to Andy Warhol than a commentary on mass production and an obsession with celebrity culture. Working with alliance partner, Allison Grimaldi Donahue (John Cabot University, Rome), Kay argues that through Warhol's artistic experimentation and examination of the constructability of human identities, he blurred the borders that entrapped gender and sexuality both in his artwork and personal life in New York City.

Challenging Borders at Allegheny College presents another opportunity to engage one another on the issue of borders as broadly conceived. Sixteen artists from nine GLCA institutions engage a wide variety of themes in their work, including the effect of geopolitical borders on migration and diaspora, the role of transit and voyage in the migrant experience, the capacity of cultural borders to create community and potentially alienate, personal borders, and the borders between reality and fiction. The selected works expose an interest in the dichotomies of borders, the juxtaposition of cultures and aesthetics, and misconceptions that political borders can create. In her photographic series, *Strange Crossings*, Lori Kella's four, large-scale photographs depict the vastness of oceans, engaging the viewer in both the awe and bewilderment of migrant life. The theme of water also persists in the photographs of Steve Nelson. Nelson's black and white images of Lake Michigan tug boats ask us to reflect on power and

vulnerability, the past and the present, distance and intimacy. Claudia Esslinger's *Horizons* series focuses on the inseparable relationship between the natural world and technology by layering translucent LCD video screens, neon, wood, and acrylic. The resulting images are fluid and abstract, leaving the viewer to contemplate both the power of technology and its ability to alter the natural environment. Katherine Sullivan explores cultural and aesthetic boundaries in her paintings, while Keith Spencer plays with cultural misconceptions at the Mexican borderland with his painted car covers. Large-scale metal sculptures by Sandy de Lissovoy confront gerrymandering and local partisan border shaping by replicating the form of heavily manipulated districts in Texas and Ohio. Small, delicately sculpted works by Sarah Lindley sit alongside essays by Amelia Katanski (a scholar of American Indian literature), calling to mind notions of displacement, land-use, and impermanence. The exhibition makes clear that, although different and distinct, these challenges imposed by borders—be they real or perceived—do not exist in isolation. Rather, these works ask the viewer to consider: can we better understand one type of border by investigating another?

Dr. Heidi E. Kraus, Hope College  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Director, The De Pree Gallery  
Grand Challenge Co-Coordinator, GLCA Global Crossroads Initiative

# Introduction

by

Paula Burleigh

In the ocean, borders are alternately absent and hyper visible. An offshore vantage point looks onto borders between land and sea, naturally occurring peripheries that often coincide with geopolitical dividing lines. But venture further into the ocean and such boundaries disappear, leaving only the horizon, a distant abstraction that divides one vast expanse from another. While nautical space is traversed by invisible, often contested maritime borders, its largely undifferentiated physical expanse feels resolutely in between--a space of transit where bodies and goods endlessly circulate among interconnected yet still physically distant places. Seafaring is rife with associations of border crossing: the mythic hero's journey, real and insidious colonial missions, clandestine and fraught migrants' passage.

A liminal space that feels strangely borderless, the sea has a strong presence in *Challenging Borders*. Lori Kella's photographs of dioramas from her *Strange Crossings* series picture fictional voyages through bodies of water. While believable as landscapes, Kella's process of photographing handmade sets and dioramas imbues the final images with an unsettling artificiality. Dramatic cutaway views convey the seductive grandeur of the sea, recalling a history of the romanticized, epic voyage. However, details like the empty raft and debris beneath the water's surface in *The Diver* hint that something is amiss—will the lone figure plummeting to depths eventually resurface? *While Circling Over Thermal Vents* suggests the wonder of strange species that live in the stream of undersea heat fissures, the thrumming mass at the bottom of the image equally suggests a lurking, sinister presence. In the absence of identifiable bodies



or place markers, photographs from *Strange Crossings* open onto a multiplicity of imagined seafaring narratives.

While Kella withholds visual information that would anchor the images in place and time, Steve Nelson's photographic diptychs in the *States of Being* series offer more intimate—even nostalgic—views of tug boats docked at ports-of-call throughout the Great Lakes. The vessels in the fleet pictured date from 1902 to roughly 1950, and while a viewer might not glean their precise age, the images evince an aura of industrial power that belongs to an earlier, bygone era. Boats are in some ways a quintessential symbol of border crossing, and additionally Nelson's photographs operate within the borderlands of reality—witnessed and documented by a camera—and memory images conjured in the mind's eye, an effect achieved through periscope-like framing of disparate views.

At a moment when the migrant crisis in Europe has become an urgent and divisive political calamity, images related to nautical voyage doubtlessly conjure associations with the treacherous journeys of political refugees. In her sculpture and video installation, Kristina Bogdanov addresses related themes surrounding forced migration and diaspora. Drawing upon her early life in the former Yugoslavia, *Desolation* and *A House is Not a Home* are part of a larger body of work that engages with the tumultuous state of the Balkans in the 1990s. In *A House is Not a Home*, the rickety ladder suggests the tenacious desire to transcend existing circumstances. The paper house resting on the ladder, which looks as though it may collapse at any moment, evokes the precarity of the migrant or refugee attempting to establish a home in a state of transience. In *Desolation*, a projected 1995 film documenting refugees fleeing Croatia juxtaposes human movement with paper bird silhouettes on the projection surface. The bird motif evokes the desire to move unimpeded across borders, an imaginative counter to the physical demands of migration undertaken on foot.

While Bogdanov's work offers an elegiac meditation on the interrelated concepts of home, memory, and migration, Rodolfo Guzmán anchors his practice in specific communities. His focus on the individual effectively humanizes concepts that threaten to remain abstract by virtue of their enormity. Guzmán's video and photographs emerge from interviews he conducted with Colombian immigrants living in New York City and Miami, Florida. However, where a viewer expects to hear stories told by those interviewed, the video offers only silence and ambient city noise. The frustrating experience of trying in vain to hear the withheld speech both inverts and illuminates the struggles inherent to communication across both cultural and linguistic divides,

particularly within a culture that grossly undervalues the lives of immigrants.

Currently, there are few spaces as fraught as the United States-Mexico borderlands, the target of increasingly insidious rhetoric about building a wall. This crisis makes Keith Allyn Spencer's work *Find the 2 and you will be kissed tomorrow. 555...*, a car cover painted with lowrider graphics, all the more timely. In El Paso, Texas, where Spencer grew up, lowriders—low-to-the-ground cars painted in candy colors and customized with hydraulics and chrome—are common fixtures and signifiers of Latinx identity. While often celebrated in movies and more recently, in more serious museum exhibitions, lowrider culture is equally subject to stigmas and stereotypes surrounding presumed connections to drugs or gangs. *Find the 2* is a rogue and roving installation that appears without warning in parking lots throughout the Allegheny College campus, symbolically transforming cars into lowriders. A cultural emissary from the borderlands, *Find the 2* works against existing stereotypes by staging unexpected and joyful encounters with its public.

That numerous artists interpreted the theme of borders as geopolitical or national is timely, given that debates concerning immigration are more polarizing than ever. But equally important cultural conflicts concern symbolic borders that circumscribe intersecting communities defined in part by race, gender, and sexuality. Works in this exhibition both reveal and challenge the historical divisions between the construct of “mainstream” culture—white and straight—and those non-conforming communities who are exiled to the margins. While the increased visibility of Black Lives Matter and the passing of legislation for gay marriage suggest that norms are shifting to become more inclusive, powerful systems of oppression remain.

In *Black Men, Beware!* Michael Dixon explores his own fraught position within contemporary American discourse on race. As a light skinned, biracial black man who sometimes “passes” as white, Dixon cannot easily situate himself within a conversation that tends to be binary, classifying individuals by skin color. Shirtless and clutching a Sambo doll—a racialized caricature originating in the 19th century—*Black Men, Beware!* connects the vulnerability of the Black body to the ongoing legacy of America's racist history.

Historically, members of the queer community have been forced to delineate borders between their public and private selves, which is the subject of Ron Abram's work. Looking through a peephole into one of the Huts in Abram's *Märchenbrunnen* project, the viewer-turned-voyeur sees a hybrid of film and digital animations that reveal the often covert meanings and histories

embedded within public spaces. While we often understand place in terms of geopolitical history, Abram's work gestures toward a more intersectional understanding of space rooted in the ways it can be co-opted by subcultures or imbued with highly personal meanings.

The collision between personal and public geographies that informs Abram's work is also crucial to other artists in the show who engage with themes of land use. Sarah Lindley's *Indefinite Boundaries* is a map assembled from spliced images of the Kalamazoo River, the site of the largest inland oil spill, along with segments of the Missouri River where it is crossed by the Dakota Access Pipeline. This constructed map calls to mind the ways in which natural resources are actually delineated by politically motivated and thus artificial borders. Likewise, Lindley and her collaborator Amelia Katanski highlight the vulnerability of those resources to human-incited disaster and trauma, as well as the systemic racism that has informed American views of land, ownership, and wilderness.

Borders can, however, protect natural resources and public monuments from degradation. Jim Krehbiel explores the volatility of protective borders in work related to his ongoing research in the Four Corners region of Southeast Utah, where he studies religious sites belonging to the Ancestral Pueblo culture. In 2016, President Obama used the Antiquities Act to designate the area where Krehbiel works—dense with archeological sites—a protected national monument. The Trump administration subsequently removed those symbolic and protective borders. Through processes of drawing, photography, and digital imaging, Krehbiel makes digital prints related to the topography of these sacred kiva sites. Hovering between abstraction and legibility, strange—even extraterrestrial—images serve as haunting representations of places poised to disappear.

Claudia Esslinger considers the ways in which technology both mediates and reshapes our relation to public land and nature in *Horizons*, a series of translucent LCD video screens illuminated by neon lines. The moving images loosely evoke aerial landscapes, but neon lines enact distortions that transform them into hypnotic, biomorphic abstractions. Esslinger generates the imagery from video recordings made in Ireland, California, and Ohio. Areas with dense power grids read more legibly on the screens, whereas less power translates into shadows and darkness. This visual mapping of electricity raises questions about how economic privilege impacts an individual's perception of their surrounding environment.

Mapping is also at the heart of Sandy de Lissovoy's work with gerrymandered congressional

districts in Ohio and Texas. Gerrymandering—the manipulation of electoral borders to favor one political party over another—often produces eccentric shapes not unlike drawings. De Lissovoy fashions metal replicas of nine of the most gerrymandered U.S. congressional districts. Once cut, those shapes are bent and stacked into large sculptures. Even though they are effectively made of maps, the resulting sculptures look abstract. This method of materializing the districts highlights the arbitrary nature of the gerrymandered shapes, which have no connection to natural topography.

Other artists adopted a more formal approach to borders, making visual meditations on the way in which borders can alternately divide, protect, and break down. Katherine Sullivan's *Jamia* and *Darśan* series, for example, comprise abstract paintings and works on paper that incorporate geographically distant artistic styles. Sullivan combines the translucent, tonal backgrounds evident in 18th and 19th century British oil painting with graphic elements found in traditional Indian visual culture. The resulting compositional tensions between foreground and background evoke the troubled dynamics of power and avenues of influence between colonizer and colonized.

Through a process of extreme close-up, Justin Kronewetter liberates the photograph from its conventional role of describing or witnessing. The resulting, intimately scaled compositions picture fragments of larger contexts that remain elusive and mysterious. Sections of wall are frequent motifs in Kronewetter's photographs. Within the context of this exhibition, they offer powerful meditations on physical barriers. Punctuated by the occasional fissure or crack, however, the series equally gestures toward the possibility of eroding the boundaries that divide us.

Borders can also be psychic. In that vein, Craig Hill explores the porous, shifting boundaries between the individual psyche and a more collective space of cultural memory. With *Super Freaky Memories*, Hill combines found images of Disney characters and other cartoon icons. Through unexpected juxtapositions and the process of decollage—sanding down the collaged surface to erode images and reveal hidden layers—Hill filters these fixtures of childhood through a more individuated perspective, producing dark and uncanny compositions.

The blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction is equally evident in the work of Byron Rich and Noah Fischer, who both create speculative scenarios to address the most wicked problems of our era. With *M-Ark*, the prototype for a satellite, Rich confronts the possibility of a planet rendered uninhabitable by climate change. While various works in *Challenging Borders*

ruminate on geopolitical borders, Rich's work suggests that such dividing lines are arbitrary in the face of a mass extinction. *M-Ark* is not a condemnation, however, but a prospect of hope for regeneration: the satellite carrying a human microbiome is designed to crash down to Earth at a time when climate conditions have become once again favorable to supporting life.

Fischer imagines a future more temporally adjacent to the present. His illustrated speculative fiction chronicles the fracture of the United States into disparate ideologically-defined territories. The possibility of reconciliation comes through artist collectives, who catalyze social movements with the power to incite reconciliation and healing. By locating his fiction in an art world—notably one outside of the conventional centers of artistic power and influence of New York and Los Angeles—Fischer invites us to consider the capacity for art to enact real, tangible change.

Our present moment is plagued by conflicts that can feel intractable: never before have politics been so partisan. As we continue to learn about the irreversibility of climate change, the task of mitigating its effects looks bleak if not impossible. In spite of the scale of crises relating to migrants, building a wall, and climate change, artists in *Challenging Borders* tackle these very problems. Existing structures of power are often expressed and perpetuated through borders, which artists in this exhibition have illuminated, challenged, and reimagined. It is within the speculative space of art that we can begin to picture viable solutions to our most urgent dilemmas.

Paula Burleigh, PhD  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History  
Director, Bowman~Penelec~Megahan Gallery

# Ron Abram

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

My work is directly influenced by place, history and culture. I see one element of queer aesthetics as the ability for art to speak in coded language and hidden meaning, reflecting the closeted lives of so many queer individuals of my generation. In that regard, when I travel I'm interested in the specific histories of queer spaces but also in interpretation of the lives lived there, and the struggles fought particular to actual times and places. In planning projects, I am also invested in envisioning queer fables and fantastical creations as explorations of truth, paradox and pathos. Through the use of peepholes, puppets and film, my *Märchenbrunnen* project implicates the viewer as a voyeur of the work. Connecting the dots of sexuality, identity, and culture—past and present—poses challenges. Nonetheless, my work is an attempt to draw the lines between the dots, to seek meaning and simultaneously retain the inherent mystery and magic of it all.



[03] *Rotkäppchen*.  
2013.  
screenprint, wood,  
photography.



In East Berlin, this project's inspiration comes from Ludwig Hoffman's 1913 Märchenbrunnen im Volkspark Friederichshain (Fairy Fountain in Friederichshain Park). The public fountain itself is made up of a multi-level basin surrounded by 10 limestone figures from Grimm's fairy tales and an arcade filled with multiple animal sculptures. Like most of the city, it was all severely damaged during the bombings of World War II and left to decay through the GDR period and 18 years after the wall came down. The park was known as one of the few meeting places for gay men during the GDR. As seen in Heiner Carow's 1989 film *Coming Out*, the park was an important gay cruising site in the East. The word "Märchenbrunnen" was code for being gay during this time. The contrasting elements of legend, myth and history are what first attracted me to this location for this project. In this regard and having come upon the park for the first time in winter (when the sculptures are housed in seasonal huts for protection), *Märchenbrunnen* acts as a metaphor for the city of Berlin as well as myself as a Gay artist. Along with being rooted in German history and legend, I see this project and its use of peepholes as a means to visually represent repression as a structure of containment with its own borders, further addressing issues of homophobia and the damage culture can inflict on personal identity.



[04] *Rotkäppchen*.  
2013.  
screenprint, wood,  
photography.

# Kristina Bogdanov

challenging borders: a glca art exchange



[05] *Desolation*. 2018. video projection, dryer sheets with cyanotype, rice paper, cast paper birds, white sewing thread, and clay.

Memory intrigues me in many ways. I unearth my own memories to reveal a delicate system of emerging patterns. Vital to shaping who we are, human memory is influenced by complex and multifaceted layers of personal experience, history, heritage, globalization and information age.

I was born in the former Yugoslavia. Witnessing the collapse of a country followed by the turmoil of civil wars, economic downfall, moral and cultural degradation all fueled my drive to move somewhere safer and better. Thousands of people shared that idea of escape, but the actual getaway was surreal and excruciatingly difficult for many because of sanctions, visas and lack of money. There are no such obstacles for birds to travel and to cross borders. A body of my work dealing with the 1990s events from the Balkans involves the use of birds as metaphors

for human conditions of physical and emotional fragility, and displacement or loss experienced by refugees or immigrants.

***Desolation*** is a mixed media and video installation that addresses the irrationality of political decisions and political manipulations used to gain power by promoting national and ethnic supremacy. In wartime, borders are crucial lines dividing who belongs where. The video projection is a 1995 film documenting Serbian refugees from Croatia fleeing to Serbia.

*A House is not A Home* implies the difficulty of transporting home to some other place, which is a weight experienced by refugees and immigrants. They may cross borders physically, carrying their own bodies but perhaps also burdened with the emotional and psychological implications of home.



[06] *A House Is Not a Home*. 2018. wood, yarn and paper-porcelain.

# Sandy de Lissvoy

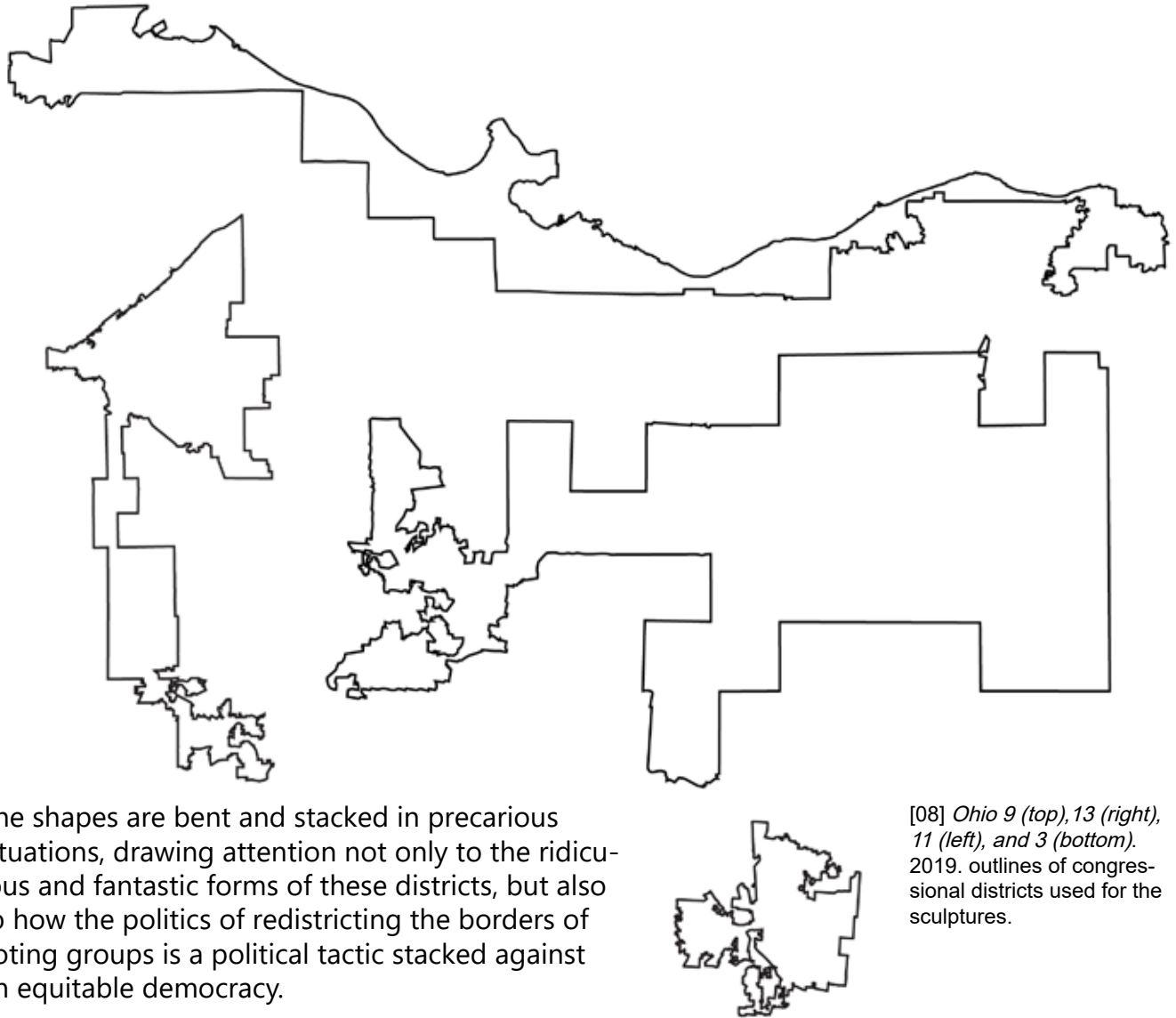
challenging borders: a glca art exchange

Gerrymandering is the manipulation of the boundaries of an electoral constituency to favor one political party over another, and it is a highly developed process in many states. "Packing" is one strategy to condense all of the voters of one party into fewer singular districts. The set of outdoor sculptures I created for *Challenging Borders* utilizes the shapes of nine of the most gerrymandered congressional districts of our current Congress. Gerrymandering is a form of drawing, it is partisan border shaping, and it presents intriguing aesthetics. While the shapes themselves adhere only to the logic of partisan border creation, they are perhaps more useful for unimaginable sculptures offering exits from the tensions of some of our most complex political issues.

The two metal sculptures are formed by cutting the exterior boundaries of districts in Ohio and Texas—two states whose recent electoral outcomes were deeply affected by gerrymandering. The smaller piece is composed of the "packed" Democratic districts in Ohio—3 (Columbus), 9 (the long Erie lakeshore), 11 (from Cleveland to Akron), and 13 (from Akron to the Pennsylvania border). The larger sculpture is composed of five districts in Texas that also effectively pack democrats together—20 (San Antonio), 35 (a sliver joining parts of San Antonio and Austin in one), and 15, 28 and 34 (extending from near San Antonio to the Rio Grande and Gulf of Mexico).



[07] Ohio 13. 2019. painted 1/8" steel.



The shapes are bent and stacked in precarious situations, drawing attention not only to the ridiculous and fantastic forms of these districts, but also to how the politics of redistricting the borders of voting groups is a political tactic stacked against an equitable democracy.

[08] *Ohio 9 (top), 13 (right), 11 (left), and 3 (bottom).*  
2019. outlines of congressional districts used for the sculptures.

# Michael Dixon

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

I have often felt out of place, excluded, and alone in majority white spaces. In black spaces, I have also felt different. What I have experienced is that I do not neatly fit into white culture or black culture but rather rest in the middle as a light skinned bi-racial black man. Exploring this in-between space has been the major focus of my creative work. *Black Men Beware!* is a painting from a series called *The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same*. This series of paintings is my response toward the brutal police killings of unarmed black men, women, and children across America. I use self-portraiture and props to insert myself into a narrative structure. The black doll I hold is a Sambo doll that was made for white children to play with decades ago. It is smiling, happy, and broken. This antique continues to serve as a reminder for me of the work we have to do in this country (and beyond) to demand social justice, equal rights, and protection under the law. My aim is to locate myself in this discussion as a bi-racial black man who has been both the victim of racism and passed for white because of my light skin.





[09] *Black Men Beware!* 2018. oil on canvas.

# Claudia Esslinger

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

The series *Horizons* uses the concept of a visual border between earth and sky as a metaphor for the relationship between technology and the natural world. It is a series that investigates the influence of electrical data on earth, air and water. It probes the power that humanity wields over natural resources, as technologies (conceived of, invented and controlled by humanity) interact with nature in both benevolent and destructive ways.

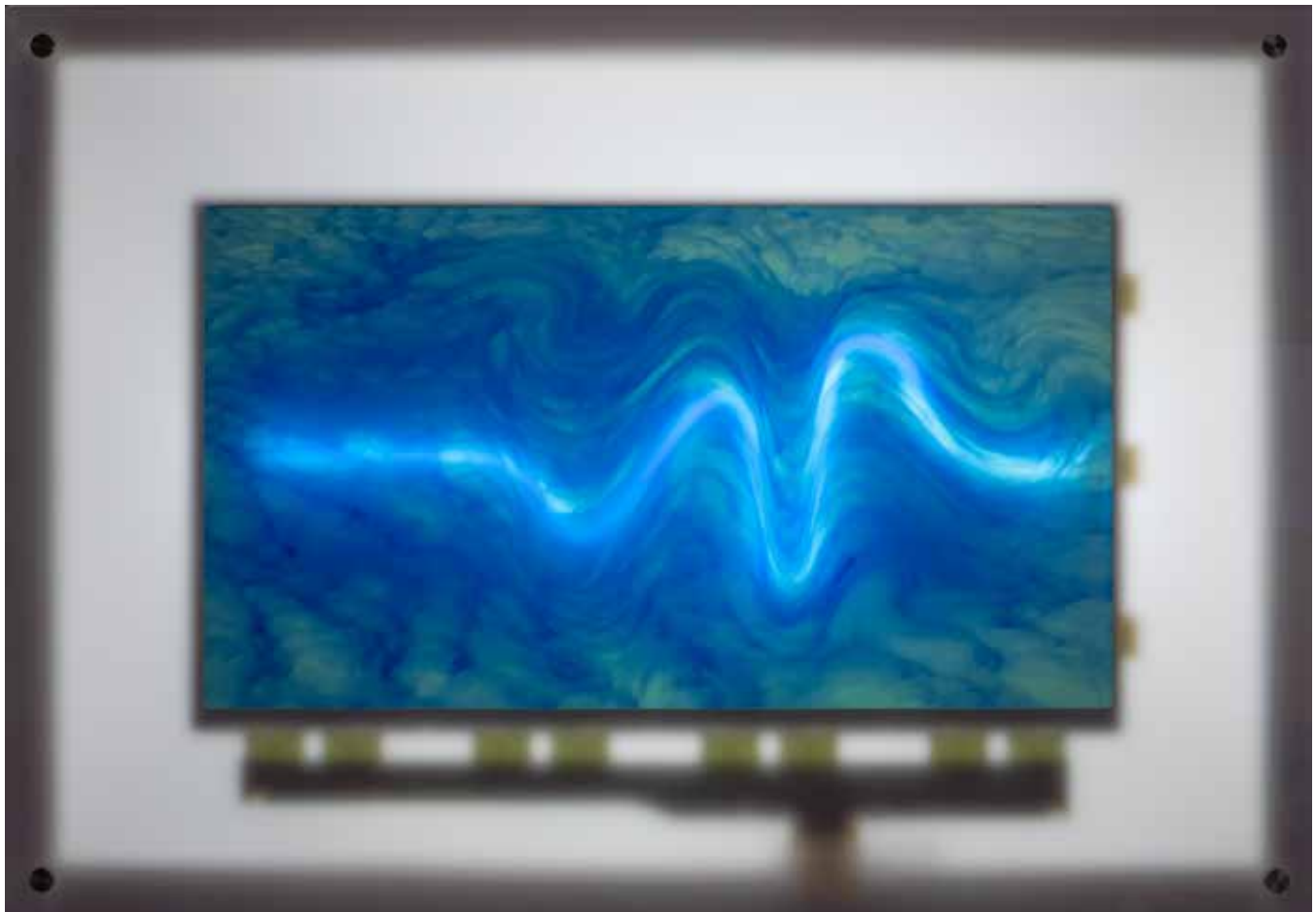
Here layers of translucent LCD video screens are illuminated by neon lines alone, their shape



[10] *SaltTracings*. 2015. LCD display with video, neon light source, acrylic, and wood.

alluding to the sine waves on oscilloscopes that measure electrical voltage. The line bifurcates the screen irregularly, prompting a distortion of the video image. The images appear as moving abstractions, though they are all recorded from natural sources. Instead of describing the meeting of two distinct entities such as earth and sky, the lines seem embedded within each element, the relationship between technology and the natural world inseparable.

This is one of a series of projects that explore technology in relationship to the world around us. It is evidence of my dueling interests: a curiosity about the possibilities of invention and a concern about fading resources. This is a personal border, buffered by desire and apprehension, but it is certainly a public border, reliant on the decisions of anyone with the power to act.



[11] *SkyTracings*. 2015. LCD display with video, neon light source, acrylic, and wood.

# Noah Fischer

challenging borders: a glca art exchange



[12] *Untitled (Make Art Great Again)*. 2018.  
watercolor and pen on  
paper.

It's a paradoxical time for borders: on one hand a growing literalism heard in echoes of "Build that Wall!" a literalism that can be seen as migrants fleeing violence in Central America in search of safer futures are halted with teargas in front of existing concrete embankments and steel barriers. Meanwhile, companies like financial giant Blackrock Inc. with 6.317 *trillion* assets currently under management (roughly the size of Japan and England's GDP combined) use an AI called Aladdin to speed-trade personal and sovereign debts the world over, amassing financial muscle that far surpasses most territoried nations.

This flow of capital concentrates wealth among elites from New York to Dubai to Singapore who are often barely affected by the nuisance of borders, buying citizenship through donations or crossing from one country to another without having to show passports to authorities because there is no authority higher than superwealth.

I am addressing the tension between these parallel developments through a speculative fiction project expressed in short stories and drawings. *Art of Survival* is a group of stories chronicling the splitting of the United States into separate ideological territories. The stories focus on how the barriers affect art communities and the kind of art produced inside the territories. How the barriers affect the horizons of its citizens. The story chronicles a journey of a young art enthusiast over these borders.

# Rodolfo Guzmán

The two million Colombians that live in the United States constitute the fifth largest Hispanic population in this country. Though their complex history as immigrants or transnational communities has not yet been written, the two fundamental reasons for moving to the United States since the middle of the 20th century until today have been political and economic. New York, Florida, California, Texas and the metropolitan area of Washington, D.C. are the states with the largest Colombian populations.

The collection of photographs and the accompanying video are the products of informal dialogue regarding the everyday lives and workplaces of Colombians in Miami, Florida and New York City. Theoretically, this project follows David Harvey's observation that "... some "universal" language of space, a semiotics of space independent of practical activities and historically situated actors, has to be rejected. Yet within the context of specific practices, the organization of space can indeed define relationships between people, activities, things and concepts." (The Condition of Postmodernity, 1990)

During the summer of 2014-2015, I visited neighborhoods, workplaces and the homes of some Colombians in these two cities and started to film and photograph them. In the summer of 2014, my visit to Queens, New York coincided with the Colombian Independence Day Celebration (July 20), which explains the numerous displays of the Colombian flags and national symbols in these photographs. The video is a collage of movements, sounds, lights and images. The lack of voices of the people in the video is purposeful. The video is not a documentary and its focus is the people and their places, not what they say. In other words, the viewer can listen to the spaces where they live.

Support for this project was provided by the Great Lakes College Association as part of its New Directions Initiative, made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.





[13] & [14] *Daily Life and Urban Spaces of Transnational Colombians in Two U.S. Cities.* 2019. photographs.

# Craig Hill

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

*Super Freaky Memories* is a series of framed mixed media collages on paper that explores the borders between fantasy and reality. These works on paper utilize both collage and decollage techniques and have become a process-based approach to image making. Mixing and layering found paper and painted paper, I create abstract compositions that highlight the juxtaposition of color, form, and texture. By allowing fragments of imagery borrowed from popular culture to show through, I create collages that lie on the shifting border between legibility and abstraction.

In combining my Surrealist interest in the unconscious with materials collected from my childhood, I create evocative collages that are psychically charged. These multifaceted works are composed from cut or torn fragments from children's coloring books or comic illustrations, and paper remnants. They often incorporate Disney characters and other recognizable cartoon icons. Images that are normally considered innocent and harmless are placed in illogical juxtapositions, resulting in a hybrid image that reads as a suspense story of the unconscious.





[15], [16], [17], & [18] Untitled. 2018. collage and decollage on paper.

# Lori Kella

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

*Strange Crossings* explores what lies below the surface. This series, partially inspired by the drifting debris from the Tohoku Tsunami, as well as global concerns about migration, aims to portray both the vastness of the ocean and the wonderment and trepidation that comes with its exploration. These tableau photographs highlight the surface beauty of the water, but they also illuminate what cannot be seen, the mysteries and dangers that lurk at ocean depths. By



[19] *Tidal Wetlands*. 2014.  
digital chromogenic print.

visualizing these hidden realms I can explore complicated narratives of longing, our relationship to the environment, and the various factors that drive such arduous journeys. Some of the photographs depict research vessels and allude to wanderlust and the desire to explore, while others show the tug of commercial ventures, or the misfortune of natural disasters. In the end, these photographs lead the viewer through a fictional space that ponders the many reasons for leaving home. The photographs become a meditation on migration as well as fate and free will, for they offer no answers, only prolonged contemplation of the vastness of desire and the relentlessness of the ocean.



[20] *The Diver*, 2014,  
digital chromogenic print.



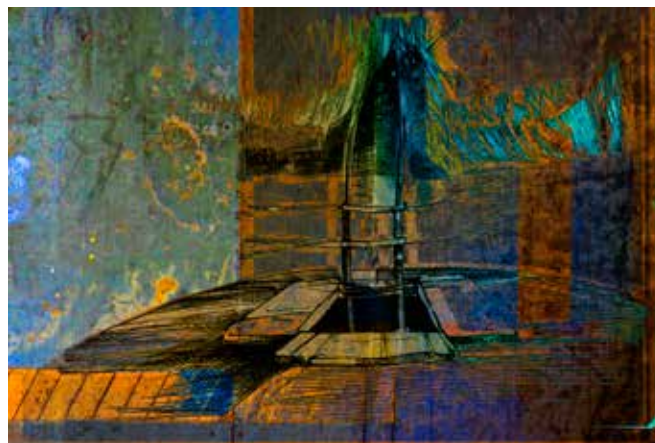
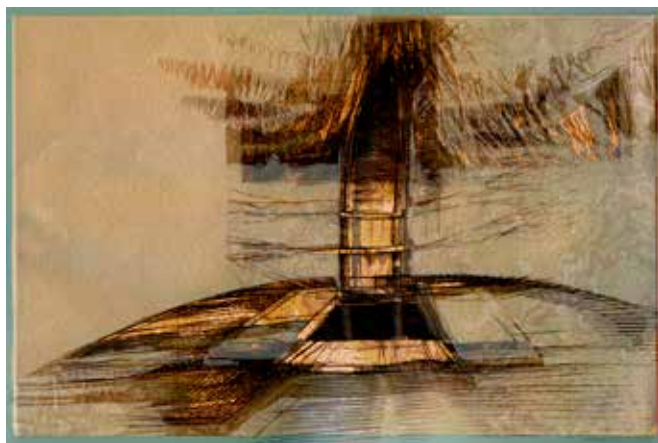
# Jim Krehbiel

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

My archaeology and archaeoastronomy research in southeast Utah and the future of Bears Ears National Monument are the impetus for this body of work. I have been engaged in explorations in the Four Corners region, southeast Utah, for the past 22 years, and for much of it I was carefully exploring and examining remote Ancestral Puebloan (Anasazi) cliff dwelling, pueblo, kiva and rock art sites and acting on my discoveries in my artwork.

For the past 10 years my research has focused on ceremonial kiva sites. Often kivas are positioned in relation to unusual features in the landscape. Years ago, I became more interested in these configurations, and I believe these kivas may have been set up to utilize astronomy: the risings and settings of the sun, moon and stars as seen during specific events in their movements. I work with archaeologists, astronomers, geomorphologists and Hopi Indians to understand these 850 to 1600-year-old sites. Some of my works engage with archaeoastronomical and archaeological discoveries in the field, while others respond to the issue of protection for these fragile places.

In 2016 President Obama used the Antiquities Act to proclaim the area where I work as Bears Ears National Monument. He placed a protective border around a place with arguably some of the highest concentrations of archaeology sites in North America--these include Paleolithic, Archaic, Basketmaker II & III, Pueblo I, II, & III sites as well as Ute and Navajo occupations.

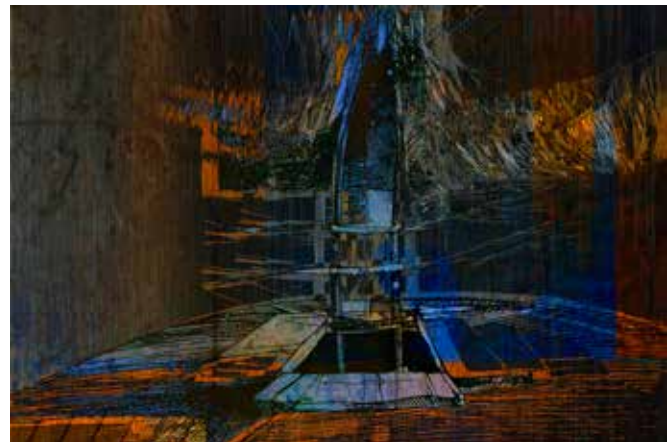


(left) [21] *Lost and Found, Now Lost Again, Stage 1 (Ceremonial Kiva Over Time)*. 2015-2017. digital print.  
(right) [22] *Lost and Found, Now Lost Again, Stage 2 (Ceremonial Kiva Pot-Hunted)*. 2015-2017. digital print.



In November 2017, President Trump eliminated the vast majority of this area from Monument status and in doing so removed protections for over 8,000 officially recorded sites. Unknown to many, there are uranium deposits below Bears Ears on the north side of Cedar Mesa, and a Canadian mining company is interested in opening up much of the area to retrieve the material. Such an effort would destroy much of what was protected by President Obama.

My work is about the creation of the protective borders around these delicate archaeology sites by one administration and the removal of the protections by another. Further, my archaeoastronomy research delves into ritualistic traditions of a complex civilization--the Ancestral Puebloans. Here, I examine linear sight patterns observed across the landscape and skies and systems that take into account solar, lunar and celestial alignments. Formally, these observations have always been made by specific clan or societal members of the culture--in essence those with specific training. No one else has been allowed to participate in the observation structure--there is a boundary surrounding each individual with a specialized set of knowledge.



(left) [23] *Lost and Found, Now Lost Again, Stage 3 (Ceremonial Kiva Secrets Discovered)*, 2015-2017. digital print.

(right) [24] *Lost and Found, Now Lost Again, Stage 4 (Ceremonial Kiva Removed from Bears Ears National Monument)*. 2015-2017. digital print.

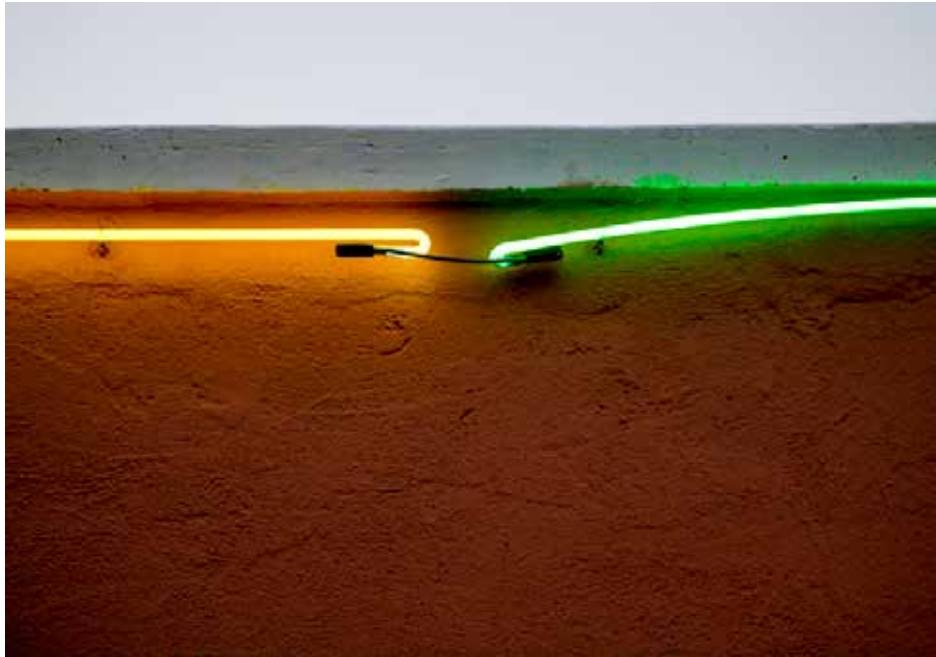
# Justin Kronewetter

Henry David Thoreau said, "it's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." I subscribe to that dictum. And to that end, I make photographs of things that I see. And the things I see are revealed as a consequence of purposeful looking. Typically, those things I photograph are things that exist in plain sight but are usually overlooked by others because of their presumed insignificance. Almost without exception, I tend to photograph common things in an uncommon way.

Mine is an art that focuses on that small portion of a given locale that I find worthy of being recorded photographically. Rather than wanting to show every conceivable aspect of a particular subject, each close-up, tightly cropped image is a reductionist response to the chaotic everyday environment from which it is derived. Each image intentionally offers little about the actual thing represented. Instead, it has been created as a unique work of art to be enjoyed for its inherent aesthetic value rather than to inform or instruct.

At a time when photographic technology permits, if not encourages, the production of complex imagery on a larger and larger scale, I take satisfaction in crafting small-scale images which follow the Bauhaus aesthetic that emphasizes clarity, simplification, reduction of form, and streamlined composition. To that end, I embrace the German-born American architect Mies van der Rohe's assertion that "less is more."

I use the camera's viewfinder to help determine what portion of a particular scene that will be included or excluded in the resulting photograph. The window mat surrounding the final photograph serves as a border that separates pictorial representation from the viewer's material world. And while the window mat is a less imposing border than a fence or wall, it is a border nonetheless. By virtue of inclusion or exclusion, its sole purpose is to isolate and enhance the effectiveness of the image contained therein.



(top) [25] *Tumcumcari, New Mexico*. 2013. photograph.  
(bottom) [26] *Cooke City, Montana*. 2016. photograph.

# Sarah Lindley & Amelia Katanski

The following essay by Amelia Katanski was created as part of a joint research and creative project with sculptor Sarah Lindley. Sarah Lindley's sculptures and installations reflect on power dynamics of American Industry and surrounding communities, including a large body of work based on Superfund and brownfield sites in Southwest Michigan. Amelia Katanski is a scholar of American Indian literature whose work examines relationships among storytelling, law, educational institutions, and indigenous ecological knowledge

## Perfect White

"Wherever perfect white is seen, the ground is horizontal, or nearly so."

Seth Eastman, Treatise on Topographical Drawing (1837)

Soldier, mapmaker, and artist Seth Eastman wrote Treatise on Topographical Drawing in 1837 to teach soldiers how to map a landscape they wanted to control, how to use these images to plot easily traversed routes across the "wilderness." Eastman explains measurements of hill grades not only by their angle of inclination but also by how easy it would be to move cavalry, artillery and infantry up such a hill. (At a 5 degree gradation, for example, cavalry "may move with order, and has up hill its most effectual shock" while at 25 degrees, "Light Cavalry may ascend one by one obliquely, and descend in the same way, but with great difficulty.") In Eastman's instructions for drawing hilly land, perfect white is the color of flatness, or horizontality. Eastman's words--"horizontal, or nearly so"--indicate that the earth is very rarely perfectly horizontal, unless engineered to be that way. So perfect whiteness is engineered space--land that has been altered and measured and smoothed; land that makes way for roads, for easy travel. Perfect white indicates a horizontality that accommodates armies, that moves settlers quickly onto indigenous land.

Like cavalry, camping trailers require flattened roads that make access to the "wilderness" easy and obtainable. They fulfill a desire to move effortlessly through the natural world, to be away from cities and large populations, but they require roads and campsites and even electrical and plumbing hookups to be fully functional and to meet the needs of those who bring them along to campgrounds and national parks as shelter. Trailers mediate an experience of the natural



[27] (front) *Horizontal Ground*. 2017. vitreous black clay.  
(behind) *Indefinite Boandaries*. 2017. cut and assembled inkjet prints.

world and provide a particularly white, settler-colonial approach to interactions with the landscape. The history of national parks is part of the history of land loss for indigenous peoples within the US and throughout the world. National parks frequently encompass lands that are particularly important--even sacred--to American Indian nations. National park land is no longer available for indigenous communities' use as home, sustenance, and sacred space, and is instead set aside for preservation and recreation. In practice, such recreation has drawn mostly white participants. Statistics from 2008-09 indicate that 78% of visitors to US national parks were white--which means that, compared to their proportion of the overall US population, white Americans were overrepresented in the national parks by 14%. \* The people traveling across the continent to see the great outdoors, pulling their trailers behind them on paved roads that may or may not follow centuries-old Native trading paths, are overwhelmingly white.

\* Tanya Golash-Boza et al. "Why America's national parks are so white." *Aljazeera America* 23 July, 2015. (online)



[28] *Horizontal Ground* (detail of one of five still lives). 2017. vitreous black clay.

# Steve Nelson

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

Water defines the borders of the land we inhabit, as well as the geography of our internal physical being. Epic journeys across expanses of water are a part of our past and current cultural mythologies, mirroring both the desire to discover what is beyond the horizon and the internal search for 'self'. Through this search questions of belonging emerge. How does one's quest impact these discovered places and the people encountered there? What is the nature of our interaction— is it based on power and dominance or an embrace of mutual exchange?

While growing up in a port city on Lake Michigan I was captivated by commercial shipping operations in the area. The ships entering and leaving port were impressive in scale, as they towered above my neighborhood near the channel. Their passage punctuated time, breaking the monotony of routine daily activities and activating my imagination of distant places.

The fleet of tug boats represented in this series are some of the oldest commercial vessels still in operation in the Great Lakes, one dating from the late 19th century. Located throughout all the major ports of the region, they provide ice breaking and navigation assistance to domestic and foreign commercial shipping vessels. Their distinct function and form, and their long operational history reflect an enduring industrial power. But they are also vulnerable to storms and accidents, resulting in the sinking of a few vessels, and ending tragically with the loss of life in one incident.

The binary viewing of the distant and intimate perspectives in my photographs reflects a search for clarity and understanding. Within this search, questions arise about the nature of what is seen. Where does the image exist - simultaneously before us and within our being, both witnessed and remembered? What lies between the conscious and subconscious where moments of clarity and wakefulness are surrounded by doubt and uncertainty? It is the tension between these moments that I seek to illuminate in my photographs.





[29] & [30] untitled diptychs from *States of Being* series. 2018. piezography prints.

# Byron Rich

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

*M-Ark* speaks to the ultimate disaster and asks at what point do we as a society take drastic steps to preserve some kind of possible future at a timescale beyond average comprehensibility. *M-Ark* asks whether borders matter in the face of planet-wide catastrophe, and what good regional divides, nationalism, and border security are when the threat doesn't recognize such demarcations.



[31] *M-Ark I (Microbiome Ark)*. 2017. pla print, gold, stainless steel, anodized stainless steel, carbon fiber, aluminum, porcelain.

*M-Ark* tackles the prospect of a future in which humanity has rendered our planet inhospitable; a prospect made all the more possible with the United States pulling out of the Paris Climate Treaty. Underpinning *M-Ark* is the philosophically compelling theory of panspermia: the idea that life is spread throughout the universe on comets, asteroids, planetoids, and even unnaturally by sufficiently sophisticated civilizations. *M-Ark* is a small satellite carrying a human microbiome, capitalizing on the hypothesis that human evolution was guided in part by the necessity of microbiota. This small satellite will be designed to theoretically crash back down to earth when climate conditions have once again become favourable, kick-starting panspermia.

*Special thanks to Ian F. Thomas for construction of the golden egg and Chris Siano for construction of the aluminum armature.*



[32] *M-Ark I (detail)*. 2017. pla print, gold, stainless steel, anodized stainless steel, carbon fiber, aluminum, porcelain.

# Keith Allyn Spencer

challenging borders: a glca art exchange

*Find the 2 and You Will Be Kissed Tomorrow. 555...* challenges borders by indirectly denying misconceptions about immigrant populations, promoting inspirational qualities associated with the United States/Mexico borderland, and toying with the perpetual blur between fact and fiction. This series comprises illustrated cars painted on car covers, parked in a variety of spaces permissibly or otherwise. These artworks act as a subtle form of protest by using humor, color, and form to engage passersby, disrupting their routines to incite further inquiry and illumination.

The car covers covertly point to the influence of our southern border. These artworks become informal ambassadors from the American Southwest borderland, and this is especially important when faced with rhetoric mischaracterizing it as unsafe--full of terrorists, rapists, and drug dealers. When questioned by onlookers trying to understand the covers, I speak to the rich culture and heritage of the borderland and its unrealized influence upon us. Simultaneously, the car cover installations counter the misperception of cities with dense immigrant populations as dangerous and crime-ridden. My hometown of El Paso, Texas is a prime example, as it has been rated among the top three safest U.S. cities per capita for several years in a row now. Despite physical barriers used to separate, the painted car covers allude to inclusive aspects of life on the border. Unexpected and unsolicited encounters with my artwork encourage viewers to see the enriching qualities of immigration and multiculturalism.

The title suggests a possibility for those willing enough to believe it. It hits upon the viscera, tapping into an emotional longing while playing with perception. If you find it, it will come. If you believe it, it is true. Truthiness, half-truths, and alternative facts speak to the implications of parafiction and plausibility misused within our political atmosphere. A figurative border between fact and fiction is distorted for a specific agenda. The 2 is right under your nose, not in the 5s, but within the prompt. You were distracted and manipulated into believing falsehood: finding metaphor and meaning in my painting when there is none and believing misguided generalizations about immigrants as a ploy to sustain schemas of power inequality.



# Katherine Sullivan

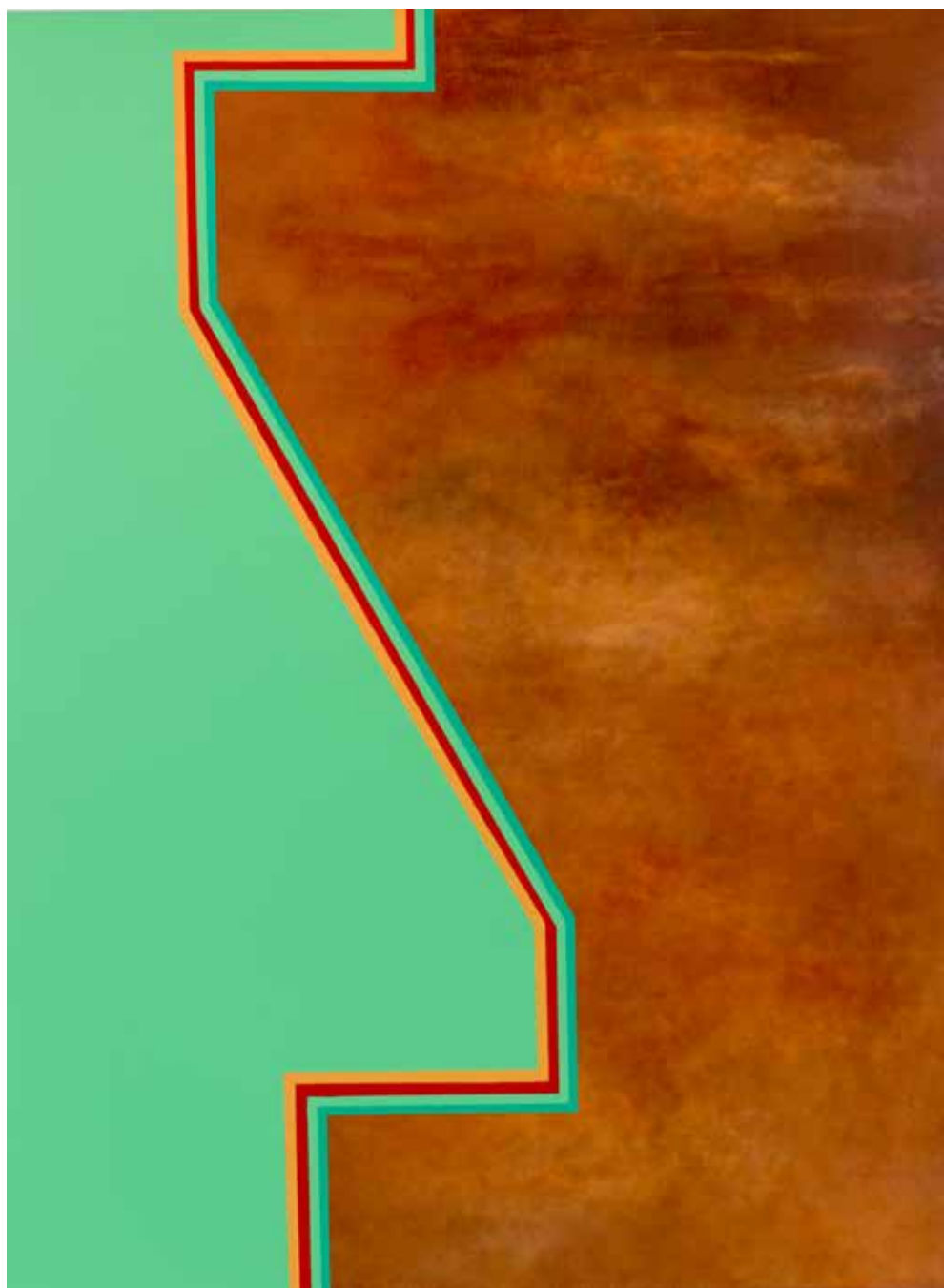
The *Jamia and Darśan* series juxtapose different cultural and period-specific painting methods to reflect shifting power dynamics. Incorporating aspects of Indian and Western painting, the work explores the boundaries between abstract and representational imagery, color and form, and direct and indirect painting technique.



Through eliminating identifiable subject matter, such as portrait, landscape, or still life, the paintings focus on abstract aspects of different painting styles. Combining the layered, translucent, tonal backgrounds that characterize 18th and 19th century British oil painting with graphic elements found in traditional Indian visual culture, the paintings explore how particular painting styles are inherently imbued with political connotations. As the relationship between background and foreground changes, different hierarchical relationships are suggested, not only between East and West, but also between color and value, line and form, and painterly and graphic technique. As hierarchies shift, borders are re-contextualized, collapse or remain fixed. The formal visual borders thus echo political and cultural borders in flux.

[34] 1857 - *Reflection III*. 2015. gouache on paper.





[35] 1857 - V. 2017. oil on canvas.

Special thanks to exhibition jury members:

Bill Brunken

Paula Burleigh

Amelia Carr

Eric D. Charlton

Justin Kronewetter

Ian F. Thomas

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