

2017 UIC MFA
Thesis Exhibition

Adaptations

for the

Understudy

Jose Luis Benavides
Lorenzo Gattorna
Liz McCarthy
Roni Packer

March 14–18

A mood of reverence imbues the assembled works of *Adaptations for the Understudy*, a feeling of deep history and geography traversed.

The Pen, an ongoing installation by Liz McCarthy, holds a multitude of forms in wet clay, dry clay, and fired clay in various states of making and unmaking. The scene appears to be the remnant of a human interaction or negotiation with the evocative material of clay: fleshy, evoking bodily forms and primeval mark making. Communal in its creation, *The Pen* unlocks a shared experience and makes its process material.

The body is not a fixed or immovable object, instead asserting itself in many environments within the exhibition: the body contained within a cultural context, the institutionalized body, the body transmuted into form, and the body interacting with the natural world. This body has a physical agency; it's surroundings shape it and it shapes its surroundings.

Through an archival practice and extensive research Jose Luis Benavides follows a narrative of identity very connected to his own in *Lulu en el Jardín*. Giving agency through experimental documentary, his mother's personal history as a queer woman—largely contained within the spaces of the Chicago-Read Mental Health Facility—is affirmed alongside a vast historical lineage of mental health diagnoses, medications, clinical studies, and institutional misconduct. The individual emerges from the archive and a dimensional history is told, despite the force of the institution's belief systems and historical positions.

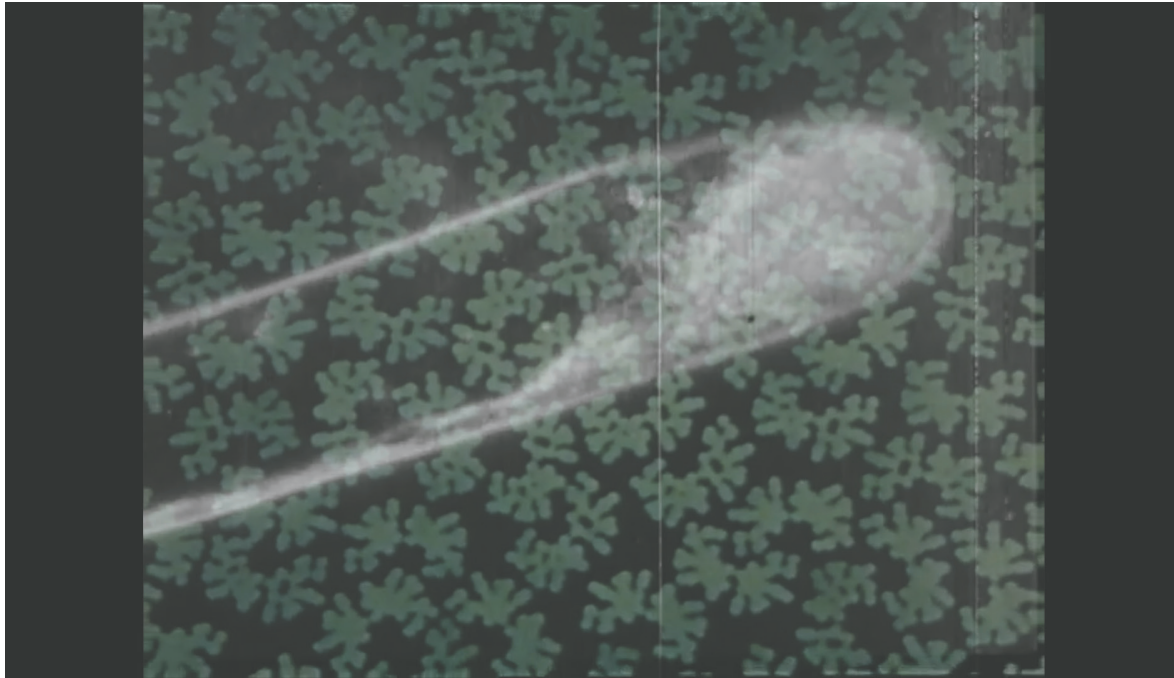
While one's narrative can take form, it can also take color, in hues and shades tracing conflict and trauma and how they affect individual anxieties.

Roni Packer, originally from Tel Aviv, uses paint and canvas to give color, pleasure, and beauty to ominous content. By tearing, reordering, and extending the canvas she cultivates an active and emotive relationship with the surface and the color of emotions contained within. Oscillating between grounded altar-like structures and floating canvases in transitory states, her work transcends a cultural fugue to access memory and place.

The living landscape is a space in which one's narrative can be found, the concept of retreat often finds itself in nature.

In *RIP* and *YES* Lorenzo Gattorna traces individual disturbances with the borrowed fables of Rip van Winkle and Jack and Jill, respectively. Blurring the content of these ages-old stories with the idiosyncrasies of his non-actors, Gattorna creates cinematic adaptations that fuse documentary and universal narratives to reflect on personal histories.

Moments of muted and amplified subjectivities, bodies and actors shaping the content of their own surroundings gives quiet power to the works in *Adaptation for the Understudy*. Processes of translation, re-enactment, and making material surface human energies that make likenesses of themselves. Where we are—in history, in geography, within man-made environs—gives an outline to our stories, but we have the power to shape them with the materials at hand.



Stills from *Lulu en el Jardín*, 2016
Digital Video, 1 hour 20 min





RIP, 2016,
digital video, 15:59
Featuring Mario Gattorna
Music by Trevor Welch

By Woden, God of Saxons,
From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday,
Truth is a thing that ever I will keep
Unto thylke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre —

CARTWRIGHT.



way of the gods, 2016,
S8/35mm to digital video, 10:05

The mysterious stirs a reaction: an *ah!*
This *ah!* is not an *ah ha!* or *Eureka*—that
is, an exclamation of discovering an
answer. The *ah!* response to mystery is
more a dumbfounded recognition and
appreciation of an inexplicable power
or presence ... For Shinto, though, the
point is to accept the awesome as part
of the world in which we live. To deny or
try to eradicate the wondrous mystery is
no less than to run away from home." -
Shinto: The Way Home, Thomas Kasulis



YES, 2016,
digital video, 17:11
Featuring Sebastian,
Esméralda and Yadhira Rau

Up Jack got, and home did trot
As fast as he could caper;
To old Dame Dob, who patched his nob
With vinegar and brown paper.

Then Jill came in, and she did grin,
To see Jack's paper plaster;
Her mother whipt her, across her knee,
For laughing at Jack's disaster.



The Pen Still, 2016
Archival Pigment Print
16" x 20" (single image)

In *The Pen*, an ongoing series, I create site specific installations by using a range of wet, dry and fired clay shaped by using a variety of traditional ceramic techniques. These installations are constantly changing when exhibited, because I continually return and alter the designated space. The clay also performs its own physical agency as it dries and crumbles while installed. I consider this artwork a performance installation, and the resulting photographs are performance documentation.

Mature Female with Wet and Dirty Clay Material, 2016
Digital Video
Duration 5:14 minutes





About Pleasing (Bright Yellow), 2016
oil and mixed media on wood, 23"x23"

About Pleasing (Bright Pink), 2016
oil and mixed media on wood, 23"x23"

About Pleasing (Green), 2016,
oil and mixed media on wood, 23"x23"

About Pleasing (Yellow), 2016,
oil and mixed media on wood, 23"x23"

Jose Luis Benavides

Jose Luis Benavides is a writer, filmmaker and visual artist born and raised in Chicago. He explores narratives of identity, place and community through an extensive research and archival practice. He writes for New City and teaches for Community Arts Partnership in Education. He is a 2016 Luminarts Finalist and his work has shown most recently at Links Hall.

joseluisbenavides.com

Lorenzo Gattorna is a filmmaker and programmer originally from New York. Recently, his cinematic work engages with extended temporality, eludes narrative causality and embodies the confluence of lived experiences and embellished counterparts. He also attempts to capture flawed, fleeting scenarios, and the bittersweet sentiments that accompany their passing. His films have screened at venues worldwide, including CUFF, Echo Park Film Center, Image Forum, LOOP Festival, Maryland Film Festival, Microscope Gallery, NYFF, Open City Cinema, The Nightingale, TULCA and VIDEOMEDEJA.

Lorenzo Gattorna

lorenzogattorna.com

Liz

Liz McCarthy is a transdisciplinary artist. Through research and studio production, she explores how different materials develop meaning through use and origin, and applies physical performance as a potential agent to reinscribe meaning.

McCarthy

liz-mccarthy.com

Born and raised in Tel Aviv, Israel, Roni Packer is a painter who prefers the paint and canvas to the pictorial space. Tearing, flipping, re-weaving, and carving are in the spectrum of her practices, through which she maintains an active-passive-aggressive relationship with the images and objects of her production.

www.ronipacker.com

Roni Packer

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Art and Exhibition Hall
400 South Peoria Street
312 996 6114
gallery400.uic.edu

**School of
Art & Art History**
