

MILLS

PRESS RELEASE

Contact:
Maysoun Wazwaz
Mills College Art Museum, Program Manager
510.430.3340 or mwazwaz@mills.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2014



Mills College Senior Thesis Exhibition April 1-20, 2014

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 5, 2014 | 6:00-8:00 pm | MCAM

Night of Performances: Wednesday, April 16, 2014 | 7:00-8:00 pm | MCAM

Oakland, CA—February 26, 2014. The Mills College Art Museum is pleased to announce *Close at Hand*, the 2014 Senior Thesis Exhibition on view from April 1-20, 2014. An annual exhibition featuring the work of graduating Studio Art Majors, the Senior Thesis Exhibition provides a unique opportunity to these young artists—for many of them, their first exhibition in a professional art museum. This year's presenting artists are Lora ChauDavis, Vanessa Cisneros, Sarah DePol, Kate Rose, Bridget Shaw, Minna Smith, Bridget Stagnitto, Anna Torres, and Christina Yglesias.

Working in a wide range of mediums from painting, sculpture, photography, video, sound, light, installation, and public art, the artists in *Close at Hand* present ambitious work that is

conceptually challenging, experimental, and socially engaged. The caliber of work coming out of this year's graduating class leaves us, as the title suggests, in anticipation of what they will do next.

THE ARTISTS

Lora ChauDavis creates sculptural, mixed-media paintings with used clothing, thread, and other found materials. Working with the parts of clothing that have been close to the body, stained, stretched thin, and worn down, each work exposes a moment of growth and deterioration.

Vanessa Cisneros uses triangular shaped canvases and sculptural forms to examine the transition of simple ideas into physically and theoretically complex works. Cisneros challenges the viewer to examine their own transitions and the various forms those transitions may take.

Using salvaged waste to explore order, purpose, and utility, **Sarah DePol** questions the visual possibilities of materials often considered repulsive and useless.

Kate Rose creates small photographic worlds that are eerily parallel to this one. Recalling the unnatural illumination of metropolitan night in her palette and content, she explores the visceral impact of dramatic scale shifts.

Bridget Shaw considers personal connection to nature through the formal elements of line, shape, and color. Working in mixed media and painting, Shaw uses these elements as a means to explore the visual qualities of organic matter, while functioning as a metaphor for personal timelines and emotions associated with natural spaces.

Minna Smith explores the themes of illusion and disenchantment in domestic life. Through painting and photography, she examines the ways in which mass-produced images influence our minds, thereby calling into question the amount of autonomy we exercise in choosing our private desires and expectations.

Bridget Stagnitto constructs oscillating spaces between the human world and the natural world. Taking inspiration from history, natural elements, spirituality, and human-made materials, she stimulates a sense of a malleable truth.

Anna Torres explores the duality that exists within her Mexican-American identity. Her work addresses the tension between history and modernity through the juxtaposition of the traditional medium of painting and contemporary digital technology.

Christina Yglesias appropriates archetypal romance movies and re-presents them as large scale, video installations. Redirecting attention through reduction, she leaves only one trope of the genre to consider—the lovers' stares—allowing the viewers a more critical look at these familiar images that have likely played a role in forming their ideas about love and romance.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Visit mcam.mills.edu for full details.

BEAMS

A collaboration between composer Alvin Curran and choreographer Molissa Fenley

Tuesday, April 1, 2014 | 5:00 pm & 6:30 pm | MCAM

BEAMS is a structured improvisation piece composed by Alvin Curran for upwards of 15 musicians playing primarily acoustic instruments and objects. For this particular performance at the Mills College Art Museum, Curran wrote a series of instructions to be interpreted by his musicians and sent those to Fenley. Fenley, in turn, reconfigured the musical instructions into a dance language that could be interpreted by her dancers. Together a textured performance of movement and sound emerges.

Close at Hand Opening Reception

Saturday, April 5, 2014 | 6:00-8:00 pm | MCAM

Join the artists in *Close at Hand* in celebrating the completion of their Studio Art degree. Refreshments provided.

Postal Mortem Pledge Drive with Jennie Ottinger

Saturday, April 12, 2014 | 2:00-4:00 pm | MCAM

Saving the United States post office from financial ruin is no easy task. But you can help! Jennie Ottinger invites you to participate in her pledge drive hosted by Wonderment Consortium (Packard Jennings, Steuart Pittman, and Scott Vermeire). With your support we can kick start the old-fashioned way and rescue this indispensable institution.

Close at Hand: A Night of Performances

Wednesday, April 16, 2014 | 7:00-8:00 pm | MCAM

Join the artists in *Close at Hand* along with students from the Dance, Music, and English Departments for an evening of performances.

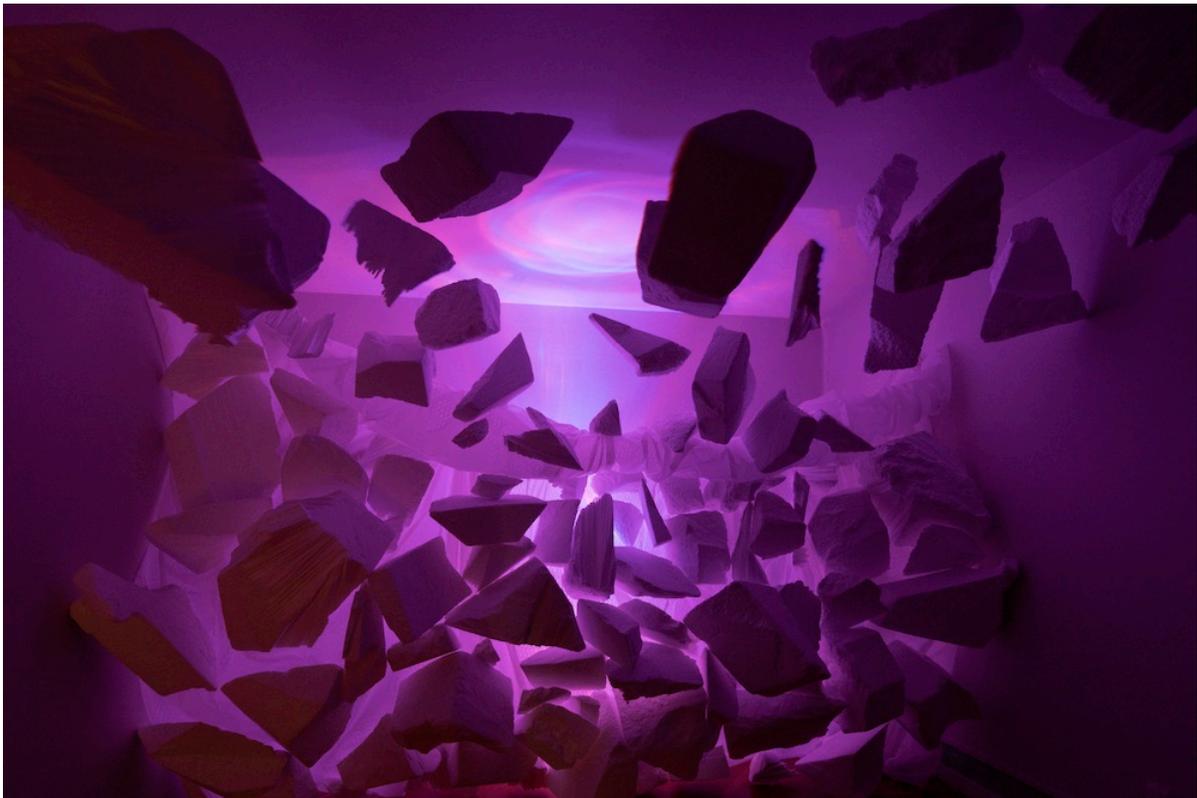
About the Mills College Art Museum

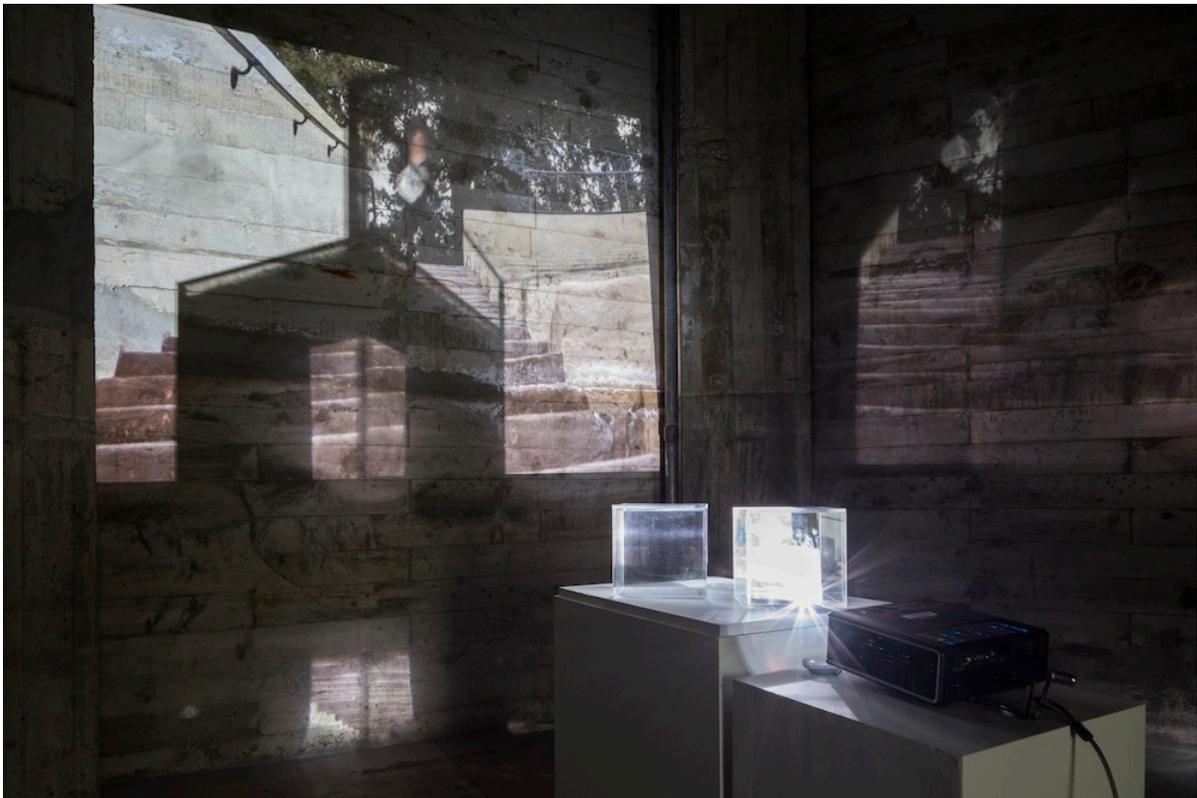
Founded in 1925, The Mills College Art Museum is a forum for exploring art and ideas and a laboratory for contemporary art practices. Through innovative exhibitions, programs, and collections, the museum engages and inspires the intellectual and creative life of the Mills community as well as the diverse audiences of the Bay Area and beyond. mcam.mills.edu

Museum hours are Tuesday-Sunday 11:00 am-4:00 pm and Wednesday 11:00 am-7:30 pm. Admission is FREE for all exhibitions and programs unless noted.

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“Close At Hand” Senior Art Exhibition (with PHOTOS)

By [Chardonnay Hightower-Collins](#)

April 29, 2014



Refreshments served outside of the “Close At Hand” senior art exhibition for the opening reception. (All photos by Chardonnay Hightower-Collins)

A large group of people surrounded artist Sarah Depol’s interesting combination of trash and acrylic on salvaged wooden panels, admiring the colors and composition of each pile of art. Like Depol, eight other artists dedicated tons of time and effort to create pieces of art that reflected their talents and inspirations.

People from the Mills and Bay Area community gathered in the [Mills College Art Museum](#) (MCAM) for the opening reception on Saturday, April 5 to view all of the artwork by this year’s undergraduate seniors. The exhibition pulled in an energetic and supportive crowd who engaged in conversations amongst the artists and visitors.



Sarah Depol's piece made of salvaged materials and acrylic on wooden panels.

The Senior Thesis Exhibition was on display from April 1 – 20, 2014. The artists included Lora ChauDavis, Vanessa Cisneros, Sarah Depol, Kate Rose, Bridget Shaw, Minna Smith, Bridget Stagnitto, Anna Torres and Christina Yglesias.

This Spring's Senior Art Show, titled [“Close at Hand.”](#) showcased different mediums of art from recycled items to video installations and paintings.

The title of the show came from a combination of all the different types of art that were displayed. Since each artist's work was quite different, they had to carefully think of a title that would bring their work together, all while emphasizing their shared talent — the use of their hands to create their pieces.



Minna Smith’s archival inkjet prints, “Better Homes #1-3.”

Minna Smith took an interesting approach to inkjet prints and video for her thesis.

For her inkjet piece titled *Better Homes*, Smith displayed ordinary yet detailed photos of different parts of a kitchen. There were three different photos on canvases lined next to each other. While it might seem simple from afar, you really got a grasp of the familiarity of the spaces up close. For example, the middle photo showed an open kitchen cabinet, but when you look closely you can see pasted pictures and the detail on the chinaware inside the cabinet walls.

Smith mentioned that time was a huge obstacle to face while preparing for the show.

“There were a lot of sleepless nights, but we all got through it somehow,” she said.



A crowd gathered at the exhibition.

Teamwork was also a crucial aspect of the production. Not only were the artists responsible for their own work, but they aided their peers as well.

“We all had so much to do, so really we were mostly there for each other for moral support,” Christina Yglesias said. “We could go to each other for feedback.”

[According to Yglesias’ website](#), her multi-channel video installation *The Looks of Love*, “appropriate[d] archetypal romance movies that span nearly one hundred years of American cinematic history.”

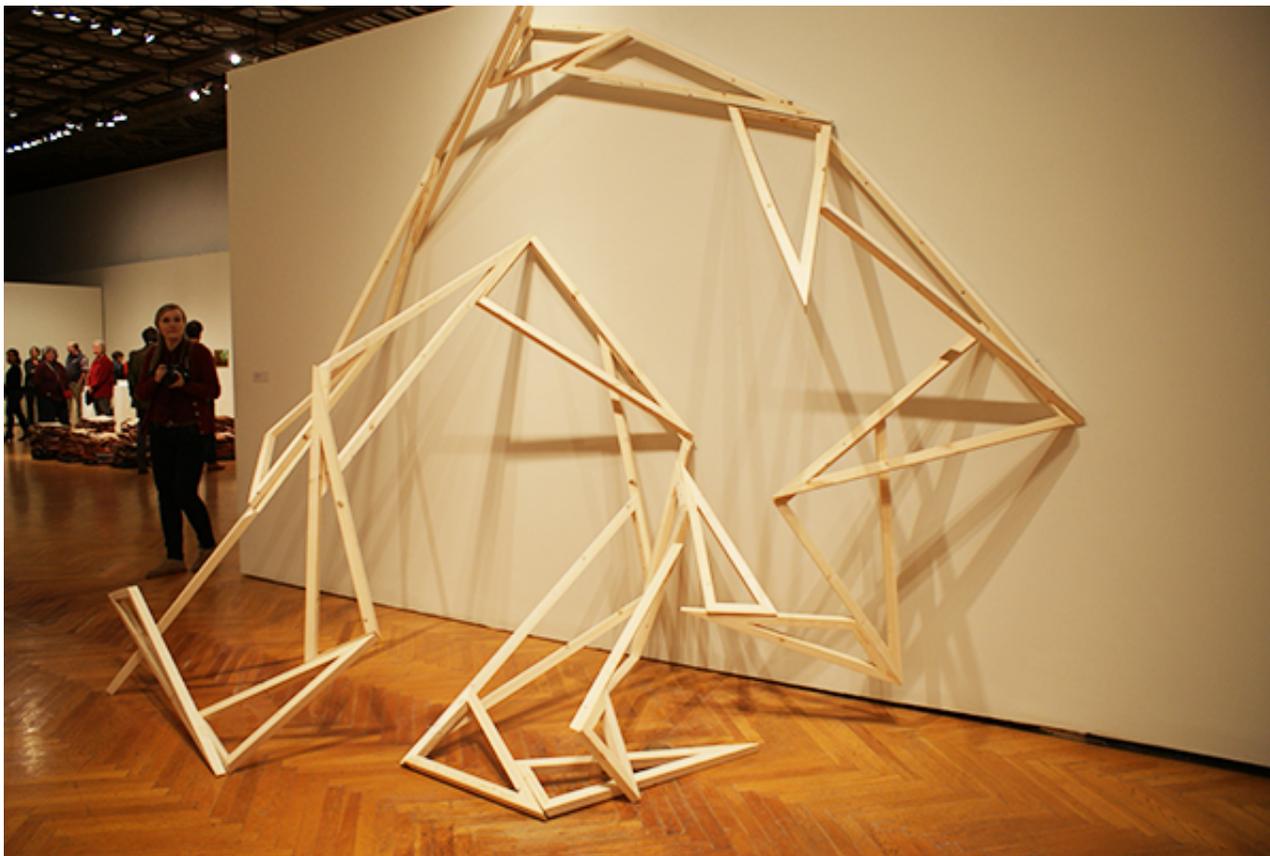
With five projectors displaying various romance films such as *Twilight* without the use of sound, Yglesias’ piece placed extra attention to detail in every selected scene.



Christina Yglesias' video installation, *The Looks of Love*. (Photo courtesy of the Mills College Art Museum Facebook page)

Another example of the art shown was Vanessa Cisneros' piece, which involved a myriad of triangles strung together, wrapping around a wall in the Museum, then constructed into a 3D form made with wooden stick pieces. The wooden pieces were botched together and strung along to stand out amongst the bare white wall.

Though the wooden triangles were fairly large, Cisneros managed to connect each piece together and build each triangle on top of each other, making a grand geometric piece of art.



Vanessa Cisneros' "Secondary Xylem" made of wood.

First-year intermedia arts student Laura Elizarraras was inspired by the seniors' pieces and enjoyed viewing their artwork during the opening reception.

"Attending the Intermedia Arts Senior Thesis Exhibition really gave me a better sense of what I can do in the future in general, but also for my own thesis," Elizarraras said. "Having shows like this is beneficial for the student that created the work, students following their steps and the general audience because these seniors can finally showcase a piece that they have put hard work and dedication into, as well as possibly get connections with visiting artists."

During the show's production process, Studio Art Professor Anna Valentina Murch, who was very involved with the senior exhibition, [passed away on March 26](#). Though the students were saddened by her passing, they managed to put on a show that would have made her proud.

"Anna was a truly gifted artist, a committed teacher and a wonderful colleague," said Kimberley Phillips, Mills provost and dean of faculty. "She mentored undergraduate and graduate students with the same energy that she put into her own work. Right up until the end she was concerned about her students and their futures in the art world."

Despite Murch's passing, the students were able to finish strong and remember all of the positive impacts that Murch made on Mills and her students.



Anna Torres’ archival pigment prints, “One Hundred Years of Solitude.”

The [MCAM](#) has open hours on Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., and Wednesday from 11 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. They are closed on Mondays.

MCAM is free and open to the public. For more information, call 510-430-2164.

The opening reception for the MFA exhibition, “Mixed Messages,” will be this Saturday, May 3 from 6 to 8 p.m. and will run from May 4 – 25.

“Close At Hand” Senior Art Exhibition (with PHOTOS) was published on April 29, 2014 in [Arts & Entertainment, Features](#)

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