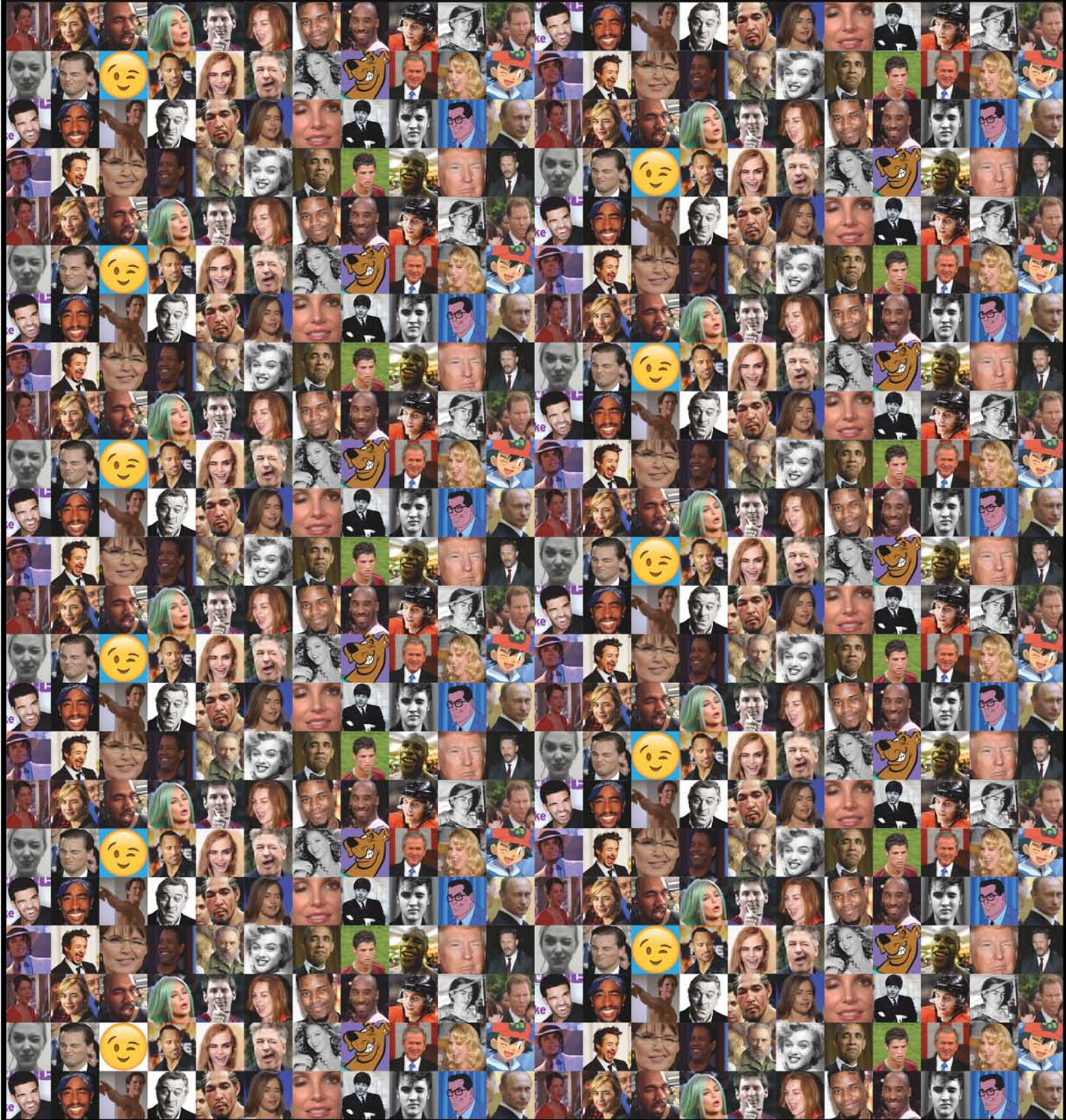


THICK DESCRIPTION

An Exhibition by the University of Chicago's DoVA MFA Class of 2018



Opening: Sep 8 6-9 pm

BLANC GALLERY 4445 s King Dr

Closing: Oct 27 6-9 pm

Thick Description

In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz states, “anthropologists don’t study villages, they study in villages.” As their first assignment together, these eight students were given a problem to find an image/object/site inside Macy’s that resembled another classmate’s artwork, both formally and conceptually. Through this exercise, each attempted to uncover the inner-woven complexity within the cultural field and analyze how unrelated signifiers can signify a comparable cultural meaning.

Thick description, a term coined by philosopher Gilbert Ryle, was later developed by Geertz as a way of providing enough cultural context for a person to interpret a behavior. In Ryle’s discussion of the term, winking is only a communicable gesture because of the pre-existing public code. The initiator and the receptor both have to understand the code to make the gesture meaningful. In the context of this exhibition, the artist presents a series of gestures within an image/object/site; the audience is asked to observe, analyze, and interpret in order to describe the web of culture the artist is positioned in.

As Geertz points out, “cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses.” To be a human is to navigate through life with interpretations and misinterpretations. Nonetheless, the individuals who are constantly making analogies, creating references from what they know to what they don’t, will approximate to a truth.

Adrienne Elyse Meyers pursues the haunted and unanswerable, communing with fleeting figures and uncertain spaces. Growing up in the woods of rural East Texas has provided her with grounding in the silent, the spiritual, and the strange, which continues through her work. Sources including literature and personal experience are woven into her practice.

Chichan Kuang makes “dumb” art that is against interpretation. Art making has long been considered as a language in the visual form. The analogy of it goes that a language needs to be deciphered to be understood; therefore, the artist deploys symbolism in an artwork to give a grand message or narrative to the viewer. Chichan challenges this “smart” art making convention by creating an absurd yet confusing situation to suspend logic and to elicit an immersive experience.

Derek Ernster is a multidisciplinary artist interested in creating thick narratives from the banal bits and pieces of everyday life. The work is an accumulative process that allows objects, images, and characters to be represented through multiple formats and mediums simultaneously. The result is a repetitive, theatrical, and excessively embodied comedy with a dry insistence on reality.

Elise Putnam examines the ways in which institutions shape identity politics. As an artist and educator, Putnam is committed to expanding access to the arts to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Putnam makes large-scale drawings, inflatable sculptures, performative spectacle, and community workshops that encourage viewers to reflect on their positions within shared physical and cultural spaces.

Frances Lee makes paintings and clothing. She is interested in the social production and impact of personal anxieties. Using investigations into historical and contemporary forms of the modern state’s iconography she considers group belonging through uniforms, textiles and flags. Through this work, Lee creates formal proposals or responses to how women participate in the workplace and political life.

Frances Mendes Levitin’s art-making practice incorporates scavenged materials into immersive installations and performances. Materials are recovered from her local environment and instrumentalized into audio-visual sculpture, projection, and sonic information. By re-engineering the materials she finds, Levitin disregards consumer value systems and aims to elevate a material’s secondary and tertiary lives.

Takashi Shallow’s projects span across multiple mediums and cultures. For a long time now, it has been impossible for anyone or anything to adhere to a single domain. Literary Critic Miri Nakamura writes, “Numerous scholars have in fact pointed to the colonial condition as a kind of schizophrenia [...] the colonial condition is to be always torn between the new ideologies upheld by the colonizer and the memories and the history that belong to one’s past.” The hierarchy present in this nationalistic narrative is also present in the arrangement of mediums within contemporary art. Shallow’s installations are explorations of simultaneous ancestral and material domains.

Zespo navigates between multiple cultural spaces. From his upbringing as a Mexican-American on the southwest side of Chicago, building rapport with local graffiti writers, to his training in academic painting, his work aims to bring together the different languages and codes he’s gained. Through a juxtaposition, he makes the complexities of identity visible to the audience.

Adrienne Elyse Meyers



Voyeur, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 20x16in.



Cursory Solution, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 20x16in.



Highwayside, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 20x16in.



Claustrophobia, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 20x16in.



Chichan Kuang

Wednesday Supper, 2017. Acrylic on Canvas, Grass, Sound.



Derek Ernster

Production Still from *Man After My Own Boot*, 2017. Inkjet Print. 98x48in.



Monument, 2017. PVC coated Fabric, Fan. 36x48x30in.

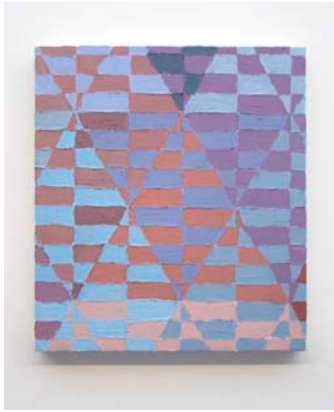


Fury and Fallacy, 2017. Silk, Nylon, Wire. Dimensions vary (Set of 5).



Frances Lee

Untitled, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 15x12in.



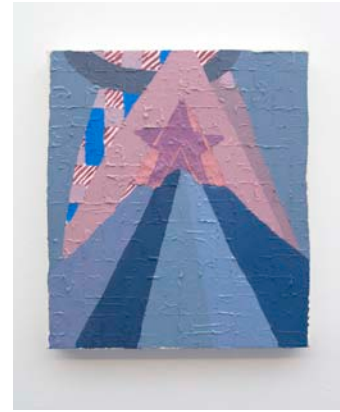
Untitled, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 16x12in.



Untitled, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 16x12in.



Untitled, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 17x13in.



Untitled, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 15x11in.



Frances Mendes Levitin

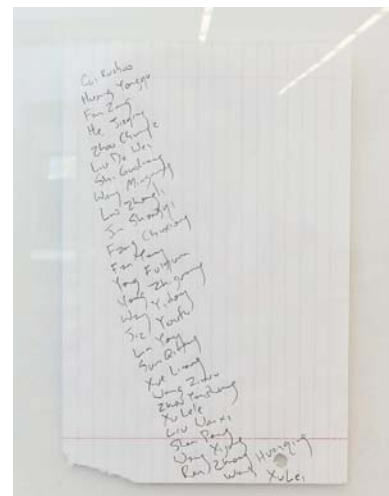
Bestowed Containers, 2017. Other People's Trash.



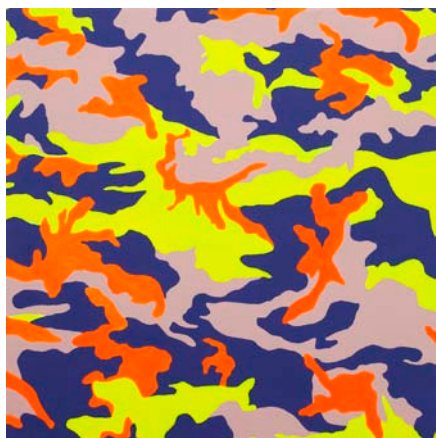
Anti-Anxiety Uniform (A-AU), 2017. Ongoing set of Proposals, weighted Shirt and Pants.



Tillmans is a Photographer, This is Not an Ashtray, 2017. Ash on Vinyl.



Living artists with total sales of 22,297,886 USD or more between 1/1/2012 and 10/21/2016 who aren't on Wiki, 2017. Graphite on Paper.



Hi-Vis Camo, 2017. Oil and Latex on Canvas. 28x28in.



Triple Double No Assist, 2017. Oil on Canvas. 70x58in.



Bullheaded, 2017. Acrylic on Plastic and Foam. 26x14in.



BLANC GALLERY
4445 S King Dr.
Chicago, IL 60653
blancchicago.com
Open Gallery Hours:
Saturdays 12-2 PM