

Carpenter Center  
for the Visual Arts

Visual and  
Environmental Studies,  
Harvard University

Apr 27-May 24, 2018

Opening Reception  
Friday, Apr 27, 5-7 pm

**VES  
2018**

**Senior  
Thesis**

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**interface**

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VA**

## VES 2018 Senior Thesis

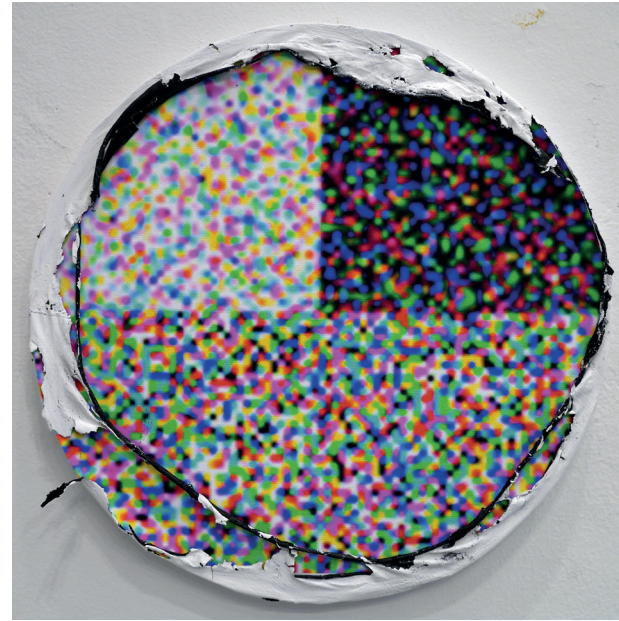
For many Visual and Environmental Studies students, the Senior Thesis is the capstone experience in the department. Students conceive their theses in conjunction with the department and work closely with faculty members as principal advisers. Throughout the yearlong process, students develop and refine their ideas into a thesis work, concluding with its presentation in this annual exhibition. The following texts are written by each student about their Thesis Exhibition work.

The Department of Visual and Environmental Studies is home to a range of studio and theoretical studies in the arts at Harvard University. It offers courses in painting, drawing, sculpture, film, video, and animation, as well as photography, film history, the built environment, and contemporary art. The academic experience transpires in the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, where thinking and making intersect to enable students from a variety of disciplinary studies to be aware of their visual environment.

Ariana Chaivaranon  
Bruno Moguel Gallegos  
Essa L.  
Susan Yao Li  
Brigheil Lalor  
Michelle Long  
Tanner McColl  
Lily Scherlis  
Kevin Zhu

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Gallery Hours Tue–Sun, 12–5 pm  
Free and open to the public



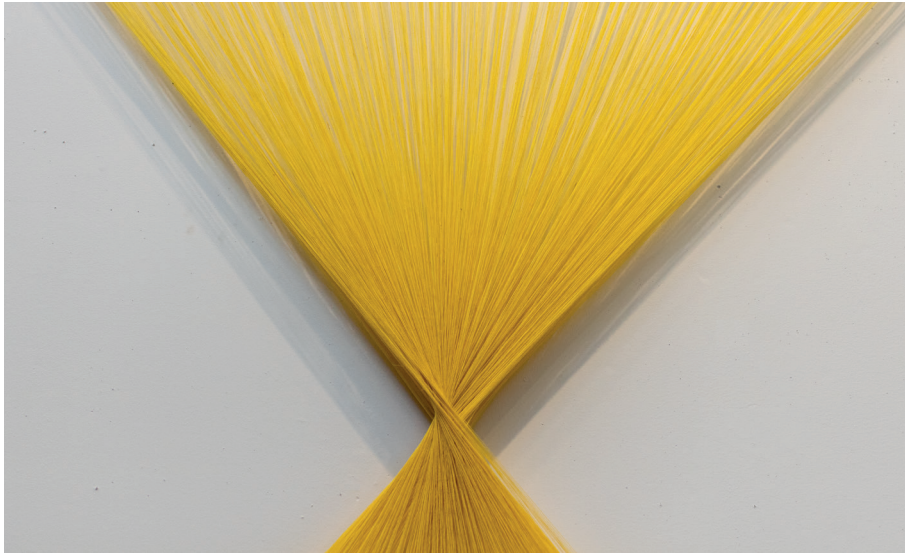
*Noise at the edge of semicircles.* 2017.  
Inkjet print on canvas, acrylic paint.  
10 x 10 x ½ in.

### **Ariana Chaivaranon**

How does the way we interface with technology change our understanding of what it means to be human? How does the specificity of the status of embodiment structure perception and thus data for world building/projection of the self into the environment? Disturbed by the notion that humans could be replaced with AI in a half century, I searched for a human element that could not be digitized, that is, coded into binary so as to be mathematically replicable.

Humans are biologically split into halves, inheriting genetic codes from two parents. We split the earth into halves. Binary code and neurological

action potentials are about halves. Efforts to codify the entity of 'human' assume that the infinite heterogeneity of the physicality and experiences of humanity can be expressed in binary. Looking for a symbol to both challenge and exemplify the notion of a binary, I took up the bisected circle, a form that combines 0 and 1 and enables connection with other forms. The thesis is about the fact that the notions of black and white must exist in a world of full color. This world opens up when one self-contained system, such as digital color categorization, must reconcile with other self-contained systems, such as the logic of inkjet printing or the elusive color of skin.



**Yellow.** 2018  
Bamboo, cotton thread, natural dye.  
101 x 96 x 4 in.

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## **Bruno Moguel Gallegos**

How does a foreign introduction affect the environment into which it is inserted? Cross-pollination has long altered the way different communities operate individually and relate to one another, but the advent of globalization has accelerated the rate at which these exchanges occur. Urban and cosmopolitan areas might thrive in interconnectedness, but how do more secluded settlements respond to such sudden change?

Through sculpture and installation, the body of work presented here examines the introduction of nonnative entities into a sheltered environment in relation to globalized society. The pieces explore processes of perception and internalization, juxtaposing alternate ideas of space, materiality, and tension. How do subjects, objects, and environments reconcile their dissonance while retaining their ethos?



**Title.** Year.  
**Medium.**  
**Dimensions.**

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## **Essa L.**

Dear Curator,

Previously, you asked me if I could send you an artist biography of 100 words or 500 letters as quickly as possible. Unfortunately I did not succeed at this task, as 100 words seem too concise to describe my work and really would be limiting to the complexity of my artistic practice. Therefore, 500 letters seems to me the best idea...

<https://vessel.gallery/artiststatement>



*Deepening Surface*. 2018.  
Oil on canvas.  
49 x 88 in.

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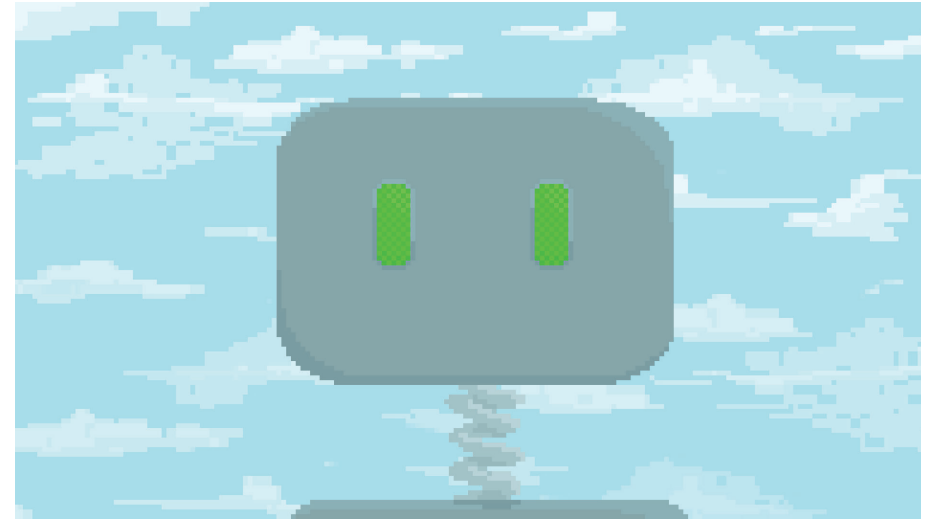
## Brigheil Lalor

*Looking Inwards; Pushing Outwards:  
Surface as Connection*

*An Exploration of Mediative Surface,  
Artistic Agency, and Spectatorship*

This work explores the formal and theoretical functions of art as a surface, a point of mediation and connection between the viewer and the artist. I strive to activate

surfaces in my work by disrupting viewers' expectations about their material quality, and juxtapose materials and modes of making to call into question the agency of the artist. Through the use of reflectivity and projection, there's an aim to create dynamic works that bring the viewer into a self-reflective state of engagement, provoking thought about surface as a point of contact.



*BOT* (still), 2018.  
Digital animation.  
6 min.

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## Susan Yao Li

```
void introductions() {
```

```
    printf("A contemplation of life,  
    death, and the space in between,  
    derived from an analytical  
    computing process.");
```

```
}
```

What is the nature of the neural and physiological wall which separates

the human from the non-human, the living from the non-living? Being alive means maintaining homeostasis in an entropic world, and code runs on no lifeblood. Metal retains no heat. Yet as machine learning advances, artificial intelligence grows ever so closer to our own complex nervous systems. At what point does a machine achieve consciousness?

This is a robot's coming of age story.



**Cultural Artifacts.** 2018  
Evolving installation.  
Plaster, polyester resin, rainbow boba,  
tobiko, porcelain.

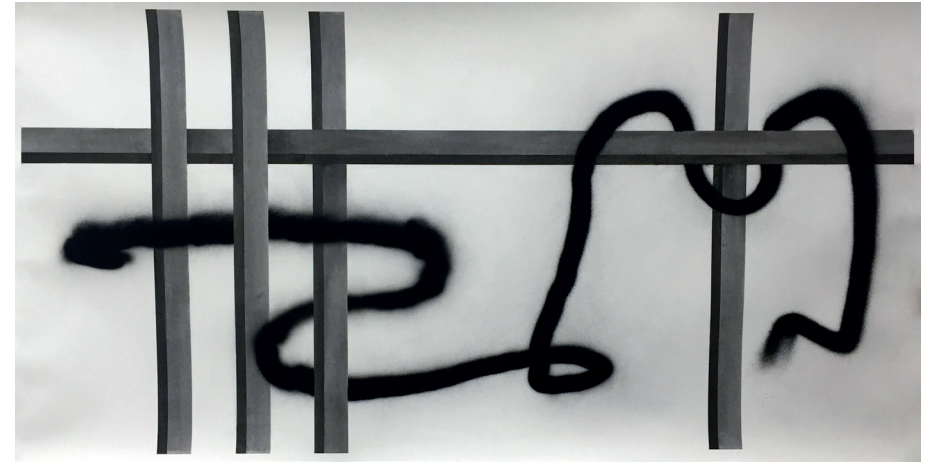
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### Michelle Long

The debris of present generations are continually offered up to the past. In the symbolic, generalized coating there is the kernel that begs for something specific--that tickles the desire to snatch it up and to say: "I have smudged it with my finger grease and gazed at it with the gloss of my eyeball." It's all fabricated but it's all so real. The containers for these

identities are thin-walled. An illusion of how we choose to carefully present and display something of our imagined selves.

The individual is so dependent on the native and foreign bodies that constitute it. We are all trying for containers but so hopelessly, beautifully, comically unable to maintain these gelatin walls.



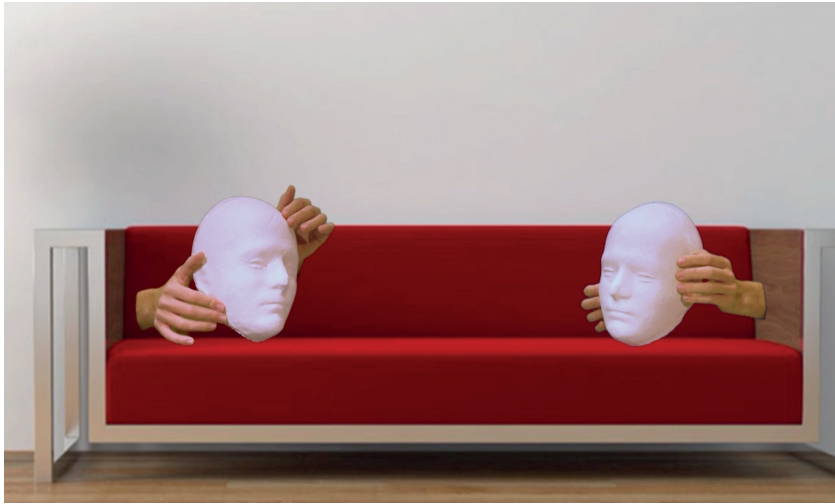
**Move #2.** 2018.  
Charcoal and spray paint on paper.  
36 x 73 in.

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### Tanner McCall

The work on view pursues an artistic conception of "The Middle Link" grounded by architectural or otherwise grid-like frames. From the clash of the natural vs. artificial, perhaps visually defined by the expressive vs. rigid, emerge the conflicting compositional elements of the works: fuzzy vs. hard edges, smoky vs. solid tones, and three-dimensional vs. flat forms.

These combined or otherwise isolated elements create illusionary relationships where disparate textures, marks, and planes flow between, behind, and in front of one another. "The Middle Link", then, exists in this space not quite left to total chance or design.



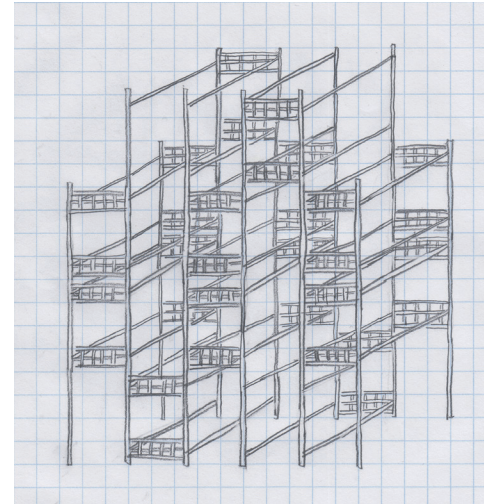
*Heads with hands* (still). 2018.  
Video.  
14 min.

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## Lily Scherlis

Let's use media to trespass on the divide between self and other. How can you make a body into a virtual prosthesis able to calibrate, reconfigure, and displace the semi-permeable boundary between here and there? If you try, you can form a mutually-fulfilling relationship with such an avatar. Can we reincarnate ourselves in a way that blurs the line between you and me?

This body of work is dedicated to a piece of chromakey green fabric in my studio that constitutes an interstice between the actual and the virtual. Over the course of this project, it was repeatedly subjected to digital erasure in order to give these incarnations virtual homes.



*Drawing for Bookends*, 2018.  
Steel.  
36 x 96 x 120 in.

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## Kevin Zhu

### *Lost at Sea*

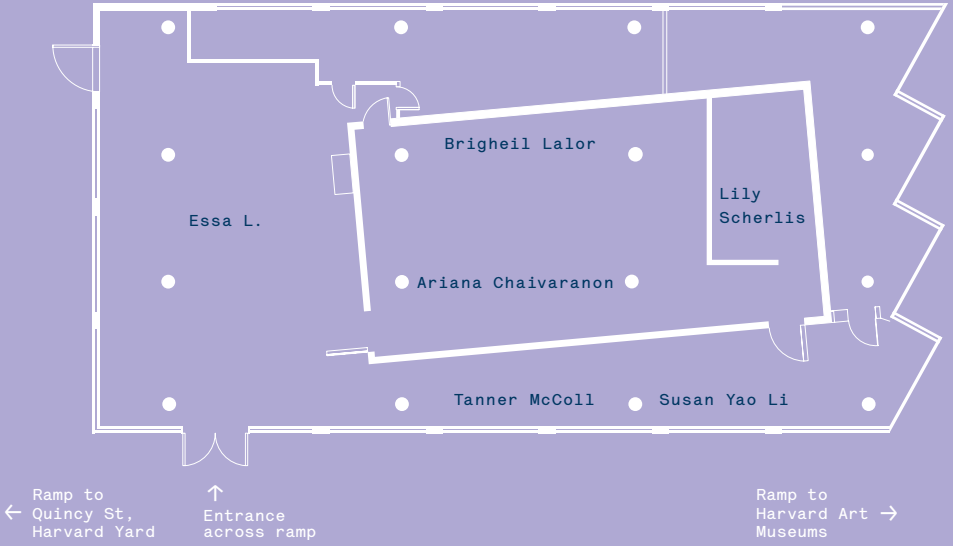
They go toward the island, and to absolutely nobody's surprise, Odysseus immediately caves in (since he is after all, just a man). He begs to be let go, but the ship keeps sailing. It's a curious moment, because even though at the time his vessel keeps him from getting what he wants (to great distress), it nevertheless brings him one step closer to home. I can't say I know what he was thinking, but

I'm sure a part of him was relieved. Because he knew that once he heard the Sirens' song, he would try to stay with them forever, doomed to never return home—he knew that, only bound, could his whims be suppressed for his own sake. In passing off responsibility, no longer was he able to destroy himself.

...

I want a robot son. Because I don't want humankind to end with humans.

**CCVA Level 3**  
**Sert Gallery**



**CCVA Level 1**

