

Carpenter Center  
for the Visual Arts

Visual and  
Environmental Studies,  
Harvard University

2015 Senior Thesis  
May 01–28, 2015

**VES**  
**2015**

**Senior**  
**Thesis**

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**the**  
**distribution**  
**of parts**

## **VES 2015 Senior Thesis: the distribution of parts**

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 year-long process, students develop and refine their ideas into a thesis work, concluding with its presentation in this annual exhibition.

*the distribution of parts* is the title students of the 2015 Senior Thesis have crafted for their group exhibition. The title is fitting, particularly at a moment when ideas, images, news, and materials are gathered and experienced from infinite sources, including social media,

## **Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts**

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## **Mission**

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University is dedicated to the synthesis of art, design, and education through the exhibition of existing works and production of new commissions. In addition to a site for exhibition and public events, CCVA is home to the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies and Harvard Film Archive. At CCVA, visual literacy,

advertising, online content, consumer culture, and lived reality—all interpreted and redistributed through some of the same communication channels. Hybridity, as the title implies, is an integrated factor of contemporary life.

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.

knowledge production, contemporary art, and critical inquiry seamlessly meet, ultimately enriching the creative and intellectual lives of our audiences. The Carpenter Center is the only building in North America designed by Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier.

## **Program**

The Carpenter Center fosters meaningful engagement among artists, art, and our audiences. Choreographing exhibitions, lectures, residencies, publications, performances, screenings, and informal gatherings, CCVA brings people, ideas, and objects together in generative ways that provide unparalleled experiences with contemporary art.



Tiana Abdulmassih,  
*Family In Progress*, 2015

## **Tiana Abdulmassih**

*Family In Progress*, by Tiana Abdulmassih, is a collection of film and digital portraits of the artist's immediate family, household interior, and outdoor spaces they inhabit. Driven by a sensitive awareness of fleeting time, Abdulmassih's photographic series documents a contemporary family with members living in disparate geographic locations coming together during holidays and vacations. Through intense studies of her subjects, the artist emphasizes the importance of the collective whole while conveying a sense of individuality, seeking to reveal the private interior qualities and self-perceptions of each family member.

## **Ashleigh Cote**

Ashleigh Cote uses puppet-based, stop-motion animation in her film *Counterweight* to represent ineffable states of the human condition. The interior of a house in disrepair is the dismal architectural setting where a female puppet figure struggles to carry the weight of another bodily form, faceless and depicted in scraps of gray fabric. Cote combines photography, lighting, scenic elements, and sound in her animation to visually perform a subjective human experience and propose what the condition of internal burden might look like.



Ashleigh Cote, *Counterweight* (still), 2015

## Selena Kim

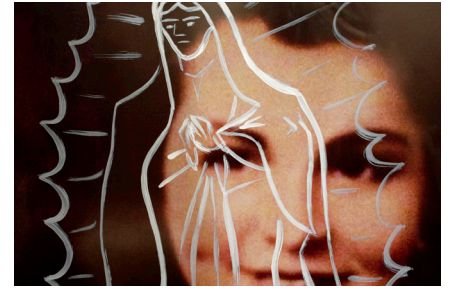
*VII (Memory, Fantasy, and Somewhere in Between)*, by Selena Kim, combines text and sculpture to explore the influence that fantasies about the future and memories of the past have on understanding personal identity in the present. The basis of the work is *VII*, a story written and illustrated by Kim about a female protagonist with a developing physical form who encounters seven creatures with distinct but fragmented bodily features. *VII* chronicles the protagonist's accumulation of corporeal parts that eventually define but alter her original identity. Forearms molded from plaster serve as a physical support for the book while enacting the imaginary narrative it explores.



Selena Kim, *VII (Memory, Fantasy, and Somewhere in Between)*, 2015

## Monica Palos

*Fragments*, by Monica Palos, combines painting and mixed-media installation to meditate on factors that influence individual identity and awareness of one's cultural heritage. The paintings are based on childhood memories, family photos, and images found in her grandparents' home—such as the Virgin of Guadalupe—excavated and combined with archetypal visual identifiers of Latino culture. Palos's self-portraits and interventions of these archival materials, layered with tropes of Mexican iconography, mirror the fragmented pieces of information about ancestry that coalesce to determine self-awareness.



Monica Palos, *Fragments*, 2015



Julian Avery Leonard, *Current Sculptures*, 2015

## Julian Avery Leonard

Julian Avery Leonard's sculptures are discrete forms made from such materials as embossed leather, frayed silk, wire, wood, stray threads, and linen studded with staples. They are conceived and exhibited as independent objects, but their placement in proximity to one another, juxtaposition of parts within the larger context of the group, and overall space invite speculative logics and narratives. Viewers become lost in the looming, bulbous, pleated, stitched, and stuffed objects as they try to decipher the internal logic of Leonard's arrangement, or simply experience the works singularly. The artist explores the materiality of forms in space and the meaning gained by placing the familiar in unfamiliar situations.



Ethan Pierce, *here, without: art, otherness and Israel—Palestine*, 2014–5

## Ethan Pierce

*Here, without: art, otherness, and Israel—Palestine*, by Ethan Pierce, comprises numerous components to address such topics as neocolonialism, the social roles of art and activism, and the possibility of mutual understanding among cultures. The project manifested in a series of actions and events, including an academic conference, artists' residency, publications, traveling library, and performances. In combination, these ideas, objects, and activity form a lens through which to examine Israel—Palestine using artistic production, critical reflection, and cultural exchange among participants. *Here, without* delves into questions about the intersection of art and activism in changing established perspectives.



Sam Rashba, *Fractal Entity*, 2015

### Sam Rashba

Sam Rashba's installation *Fractal Entity* draws upon Carlos Ruiz Zafón's 2001 novel *The Shadow of the Wind*. The novel is set in Barcelona's Gothic Quarter against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and chronicles the experience of a young man who searches to uncover the mysterious background of the author of his favorite book. In an involved process of research and lived experience, including retracing the fictionalized steps of the book's protagonist, Rashba dissects and rearticulates the narrative with original drawings, found images, and text.



Qianyun (Helen) Shi,  
*I Lived Here* (still), 2015

### Qianyun (Helen) Shi

*I Lived Here*, by Qianyun (Helen) Shi, is an installation and animated film. The installation derives from the appearance of Shi's childhood living room to explore how geographic distance and time affects the reimagining of personal biography and national identity. The worn album of archival childhood photos, a television, and a wood stand are based loosely on the artist's memories of life in Beijing, China, during a time of rapid economic growth and national reconstruction. The used furniture is intended to contrast with the vibrant animated graphics on the television screen, further complicating this media-influenced construct of personal, national, and political connections—and the sense of a reality both lived and imagined.

### Christina M. Rodriguez

The patchwork fabric panels by Christina M. Rodriguez are based on Renaissance depictions of the Madonna and Child, the Pieta, and the Coronation of Mary, symbolizing Joy, Sorrow, and Glory, respectively. The large-scale triptych takes the form of an altarpiece. Made from recycled clothing, linen, and other fabrics, these common materials are intended to give a warmth and intimacy to the scenes. While the center panel features the figures of the Madonna and Child, the main figures traditionally depicted in the flanking scenes are omitted. Rodriguez's interpretation pushes against historical tropes, removing the imagery connected to ideals of religious iconography, thus inviting viewers to reimagine the scenes and intuit connections among the individual works.



Christina M. Rodriguez,  
*Coronation* (detail), 2015

### Exhibition Checklist

#### Tiana Abdulmassih

*Family In Progress*, 2015. Photography.  
12 × 18 in., 18 × 22 in., 32 × 24 in.

**Ashleigh Cote** *Counterweight*,  
2015. Stop-motion  
animation. 8:58 min.

**Selena Kim** *VII (Memory, Fantasy,  
and Somewhere in Between)*, 2015. Mixed  
media. Dimensions variable

**Julian Avery Leonard**  
*Current Sculptures*, 2015. Mixed media.  
Dimensions variable

**Monica Palos** *Fragments*, 2015  
Mixed media. Dimensions variable

#### Ethan Pierce

*here, without: art, otherness and  
Israel — Palestine*, 2014–15. Social  
sculpture project. Dimensions variable

#### Sam Rashba

*Fractal Entity*, 2015. Charcoal and  
graphite on paper, research notes and  
photographs. Dimensions variable

#### Christina M. Rodriguez

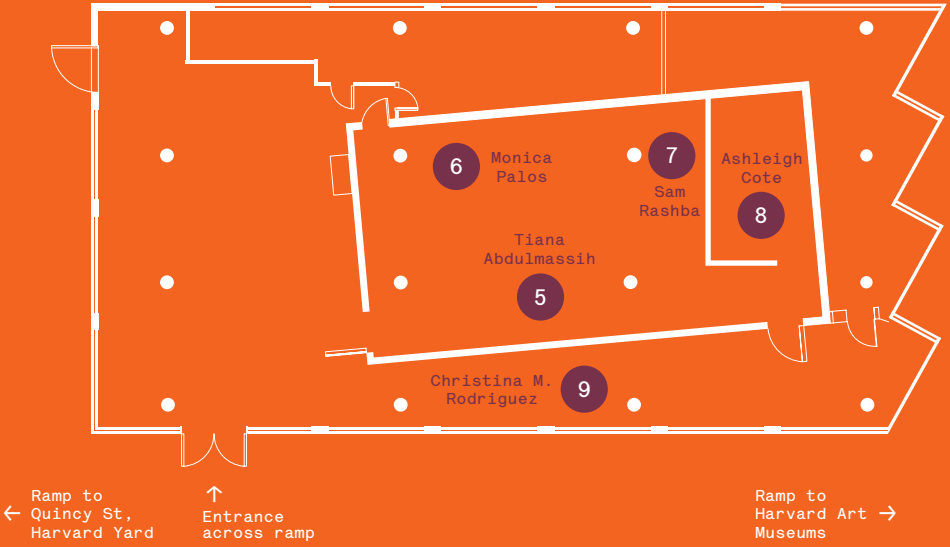
*Madonna and Child*, 2015, *Coronation*, 2015  
*Lamentation*, 2015. Textiles; patchwork.  
5 × 9 ft. 2 in.

#### Qianyun (Helen) Shi

*I Lived Here*, 2015. 2D Animation. 08:09 min.

Design: Practise  
Copy Editor: John Ewing  
Print: Puritan Capital

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



**CCVA Level 1**

