

A Shadow as a Stain

Ryan Dewey, Morgan Rose Free, Carla Fisher Schwartz, Yi Xin Tong, and Falak Vasa

Curated by Kate Sierzputowski

November 2nd - December 1st, 2018

Opening Reception: Friday, November 2nd, 6-9pm

Open Hours: Sundays, Noon-4pm and by appointment

Four years ago Google Maps implemented a new feature to display three-dimensionally rendered shadows of buildings and other large structures. The grayscale marks change angle and size depending on the time of day, allowing one to use the digitized landscape to accurately predict where they might find a patch of sun or shade in the real world. These data-driven shadows hover around their forms like digital ghosts, hugged tightly to their angles much like our own data morphs with our bodies as they move through space. Smart phones algorithmically learn as we navigate, photograph, and speak, understanding more about us and our surroundings with every environmental interaction. The digitized landscape expands with each picture we hashtag, each review we leave for a geological site, and each time a Google street car drives past a previously unglimped marker. We stomp on a weed to get closer to a lily for Instagram, mutating the natural environment in lieu of its digital exploration. Even when we are at our most delicate, even as we attempt to hover softly, we still end up leaving a permanent and irreversible impression.

A Shadow as a Stain presents sculpture, installation, video, and hand-embroidered textiles that analyze how our physical marks on the world distort digital and communal landscapes. Ryan Dewey presents works that connect the effects of present global supply chains to past geologic forces. His work investigates how resources have become increasingly displaced, while predicting far-off climate conditions that may result from our global trade. *Future Tide Pools* is a sculptural representation of a latent tide pool created with materials mined from the Great Lakes in addition to dormant brine shrimp eggs. The work uses ecological methodology from the past to hypothetically seed an evolution in the deep future. Another installation *Infinite Resource*, transposes a self-multiplying crawfish against the technological of a now irrelevant iPhone. Yi Xin Tong's practice heavily pulls from his interest in fishing, a solitary hobby he transposes against his desire to talk about the political and environmental instability of the present day. By combining still and moving images he takes while fishing with mined photographs from the library, he creates fictionalized chaotic landscapes that attempt to mirror the frenetic energy of our modern ecological decline. Both of Tong's works in the exhibition, *Fishing for Banana Trout at the Anarchy Drainage* and *Animalistic Punk — Abandoned Sunken*

Boat, merge layered digital messages on top of supposedly serene environments in a way that mirrors the experience of Augmented Reality.

Carla Fisher Schwartz's practice explores the implications of historical and technological mapmaking on our understanding of both the physical and digital world. Included in the exhibition are works that analyze our relationship to Google Maps and how the platform alters how we experience landscapes as we traverse their digitized doubles online.

Sentinel observes the omnipresence of Google street car's watchful lens. Its shadow, which is often accidentally imposed against the natural or manmade environment, is magnified and presented on the floor of the exhibition. Morgan Rose Free's sardonic works probe our modern relationship to nature via our technological devices—confronting our need to like, share, and rate others' expeditions into the wild from the comfort of our own home. Hand-stitched cursors hover over *People don't spend enough time in the dirt*, geolocating a found pattern of rocks, while an embroidered loading wheel is transposed over California's Lake Mead reservoir which hasn't been at full capacity since 1983. By using hand-embroidery she contrasts the immediacy of the internet, presenting a slow reading of the nature around us.

Falak Vasa uses performance, video, and writing to decolonize and queer binaries such as man and woman and nature and culture. They break down upheld colonial logics to create works that disrupt the marginalization of both "international" bodies and queer/trans people of color. Recently they have been spending time writing personal poems and embroidering wearable objects which allow the artist to express without the labor of speech. For the exhibition Falak presents a collection of embroidered shirts—delicate proclamations of her gender identity in soft, labored fiber.

Ryan Dewey's work is a kind of ecological dreaming that takes shape as installation, performance, research, workshops, and land art to highlight the entanglements between people, places, and land use. He has been a resident at ACRE, the Alps Art Academy, and a visiting researcher in the department of cognitive science at Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland) where he wrote *Hack the Experience: Tools for Artists from Cognitive Science* (Punctum Books). His work blurs disciplinary lines and often appears in unexpected venues including the British Society for Geomorphology, the American Association of Geographers, Kickstarter, the University of Bern, Concordia University (Montreal), the Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, the Annenberg School for Communication (Philadelphia), Progressive Insurance (Cleveland), MONU (Rotterdam), KERB (Melbourne), and the Art Academy of Cincinnati, as well as more traditional art venues including SPACES, ACRE, and other artist-run spaces.

Morgan Rose Free is a Canadian emerging artist predominantly working in sculptural assemblage and installation. She has exhibited in the U.S and across Canada including Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Baltimore and western New York. She held the position of Adjunct Professor of Sculpture and Freshman Foundations at Alfred University for the 2017 academic year, and recently relocated to Montreal QC. In early 2019 she will be spending four months as Artist in Residence at Bunker Projects in Pittsburgh, PA.

Falak Vasa (they/she) is an interdisciplinary artist from Bhawanipur, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, currently based in New York City. They recently graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA with a Thesis in Visual and Critical Studies) and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Her work intersects performance, video, photography and writing to explore notions of the (post)colonial and the (post)hu.....no, fuck this. Falak really just likes to cook, cuddle, read aloud to friends, find softness in hard things, tenderize everything, and dance to her own music like it's nobody's business.

Carla Fisher Schwartz is a visual artist and educator based in Chicago, IL. Her studio practice investigates the relationship between the mapped image and contemporary notions of exploration, virtuality, and the simulated environment through print media, sculpture and video installation. Her art has been exhibited at venues including the Chicago Artists Coalition (Chicago, IL), the SUBMISSION Gallery (Chicago, IL), and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum (St. Louis, MO). Recent residencies include ACRE Projects (Steuben, WI) and HATCH Projects (Chicago, IL). Schwartz received her MFA in Visual Arts from Washington University in St. Louis, where she was awarded the Bell Cramer Award in Printmaking, and her BA in Studio Art from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Art and Architecture at Harold Washington College.

Yi Xin Tong is a New York-based artist and amateur fisherman. Tong received his BFA from Simon Fraser University in 2012 and MFA from New York University in 2014. In poetic and absurd languages, he uses multimedia installation, site-specific project, video, and sound to analyze seemingly desperate social conditions, and our contradictory relationships with ourselves and with other living beings, objects, and cultural entities. Recent solo exhibitions include NARS Foundation (New York), Vanguard Gallery (Shanghai), Katzman Contemporary (Toronto); group exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, MOCA Shanghai, CAFA Art Museum, Long March Space, Alyssa Davis Gallery, Chambers Fine Art, and Hanart TZ Gallery. He received Canada Council for the Arts Project Grant and Joan Mitchell Foundation Scholarship.

Kate Sierzputowski is a freelance writer and curator based in Chicago. Fascinated by artists' studio processes, she founded the website INSIDE\WITHIN to physically explore and archive the creative spaces of Chicago's emerging and established artists. In addition to running INSIDE\WITHIN, Kate also contributes art writing to Hyperallergic, the Chicago Reader, and Teen Vogue, is a co-director of the artist-run gallery space Julius Caesar, and is half of the curatorial duo Episode with Mary Eleanor Wallace.