



TOP IMAGES: Detail of installation of *NOTHING has changed, everything HAS CHANGED*; COVER: Detail of installation of *FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case*

thousands of 2x2 inch, hand-cut paper and plastic tiles. From left to right, the wall arrangement gradually taps into the order of gradation represented in a color wheel creating multiple, overlapping areas of flat color. The same treatment is also illustrated on the arrangements on the amoeba-shaped tables where various objects that possess the same shade harmoniously exist.

Cortéz's extensive installation delivers several visual breaks of organized chaos by clustering objects based on color particularly in his temporal installation entitled *NOTHING has changed, everything HAS CHANGED*. It takes center stage in the atrium of the Culver Center of the Arts. Seven rectangular plinths on the floor each bear a complex tableau of objects unified by color. The arrangements on the plinths serve as an introduction to Cortéz's artistic process—the gestural rhythm and rhyme of the objects in relation to their color classification. And like the characteristics of color field paintings, the cluster of objects arranged anamorphically steer the artist's gestures, which are guided by control, chance and cognition. To extend the gestural notion of *NOTHING has changed, everything HAS CHANGED*, Cortéz plans to shift the installation of the plinths and its contents throughout different areas in the gallery.

IN SEARCH OF THE PROVENANCE

Signifiers and the signified are interspersed throughout *FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case*. The title of the exhibition alone unpacks this example—the signifier being “fingers crossed” and the signified is its association with “luck.” While the exhibition is loaded with this concept, Cortéz leaves the viewer without specific instructions on how to observe or wander through the installation. He leaves the viewer engulfed in the collection of objects classified by color intertwined with text that lends to his insight as an artist, and as an individual. The installation permits the viewer to gain control of their own conversation while being among the field of color and objects, rather than clinging to a shallow insistence on understanding what it all means. The array of objects trigger a range of curiosity and nostalgia situating the viewer to mentally archive what they know and what is familiar to them. Cortéz's explicitly invites the viewer to seek their own meaning. This is signaled by a 9x8 feet wall solely displaying a mirror with etched words: “IT'S YOU WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR.” With this, the artist tells us that the search is up to us: for meaning, for the once forgotten, for redemption. And he emphasizes the obsession, and the scale, and the sheer joy of the pursuit.

Curator: Jennifer Frias, Director of Education and Academic Relations

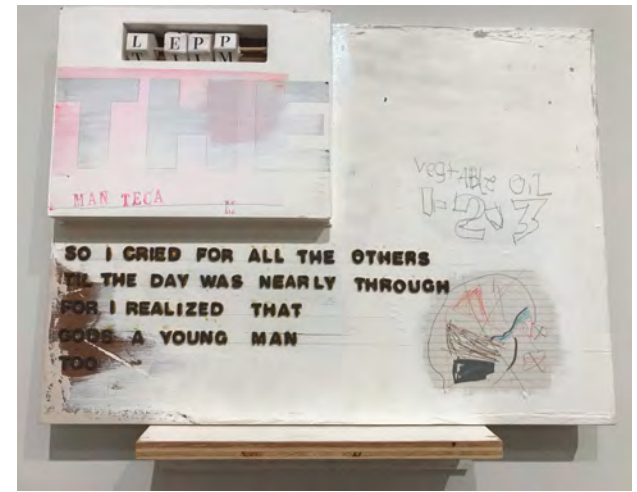
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Xavier Cázares Cortéz (b.1966) has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at various southern California art venues such as Vincent Price Art Museum, Wignall Museum of Art, Fullerton Art Museum California State San Bernardino, Plaza de la Raza, Self-Help Graphics, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Barnsdall Art Park, and Palm Springs Art Museum. His work has been shown in commercial art galleries such as Valerie Miller Fine Art, Imago Galleries, Denise Roberge in Palm Desert, and Patricia Correia Gallery in Santa Monica. He has been employed and held numerous artist-in-residencies that combined his art practice with educational programming at the Palm Springs Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Getty Foundation, Bowers Museum, Community Art Resources (CARS), HeART Project, The California Arts Project (TCAP) and others. Most recently, he has been Lecturer in Art History and Film at California State University San Bernardino, Palm Desert Campus and UCR Extension.

Related Programming: July 7 - ARTIST WALKTHROUGH (5-6 PM) and OPENING RECEPTION (6-8 PM); August 2 - CONVERSATION WITH XAVIER CÁZARES CORTÉZ (6-7 PM)

Xavier Cázares Cortéz
FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case
June 30–August 19, 2018





Xavier Cázares Cortéz: FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case

FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case is Xavier Cázares Cortéz's exploration of the proliferation of objects and their meaning and purpose. Presented as a sprawling installation, it is made up of objects and wall tableaux, organized in non-sequential subject matter and seemingly by color. He gives us no narrative about where to begin or end. Employing largely familiar objects, the artist constructs unfamiliar compositions. The tens of thousands of everyday objects in groupings that Cortéz coins as *feralscapes*, may cultivate a perception of familiarity but a sense of doubt may emerge as one tries to decode the significance of the installation. Cortéz's reasoning behind his *feralscapes* is to allow the viewer to connect their own vocabulary and meaning to the boundless arrangement of objects. Although the installation does appear to contain an interrelated sequence, it is not a definitive plot. Its core value remains in Cortéz's artistic process, which takes note from art-related practices both in studio and museum methodologies. His process in presenting a visual overload of objects and hues serves as an algorithm for countless pursuits for finding means to an end.

ARCHIVING THE MISCELLANEOUS

Cortéz employs museum methodologies—collecting, archiving, exhibiting, and interpreting. Each object type in his personal collection has piled up exponentially over many years. And whether they are in storage in his studio or on display in an exhibition, the objects are archived by color or specific type: bottles, letters, works on paper, to name a few. His methods of acquisition seem as various as his vast collection. Some things simply catch his curiosity, or he'll acquire the excess of an abandoned project, remnants from occupants vacating their quarters, or random objects encountered through sheer happenstance. Numerous objects in the installation are recent "acquisitions" from a Culver Center exhibition that preceded *FINGERS ARE CROSSED just in case*. A ball of used white gaffers tape that was a part of a student's undergrad exhibition and leftover vinyl letters, are now part of Cortéz's installation and collection. The concept of collection objects such as bottle caps, various knick-knacks, and accouterments is a result from the tendency to recycle the meaning and objecthood of things that may otherwise be classified as miscellaneous. Cortéz expresses that there is value and history in these objects. By exhibiting them in an institution that highlights important and valuable things, a museum, he uses context to erase authority and hierarchy. In other words, the idea of a scholarly institution dictating what should be displayed and endorsing the importance of the objects is subverted.

In addition to objects, text is another element in Cortéz's collection. Words of wisdom by 20th century thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard, as well as contemporary lyricists such as David Bowie, Lou Reed and Bono from the Irish rock band, U2, are preserved in

etchings, sketches or stencils on glass bottles, mirrors, panels and paper. Text, in Cortéz's constellation of objects, is a representation of something, or a simulacrum of someone. An example of this is illustrated on a panel bearing lyrics from Bowie's *The Width of a Circle* (1969) that reads,

*So I cried for all the others
Till the day was nearly through
For I realized that
God's a young man, too*



To further its iteration, the lyrics are situated directly across a tableau of objects associated with nursery rhymes, the great outdoors, (or New World conquest & Manifest Destiny). Plastic horses, bears and cabins are among the items that loosely reference the children's novelty song "The Teddy Bear's Picnic and the nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty" (or a Faustian bargain) which are imbedded in Bowie's lyrics.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Detail of installation, example of color field using hand-cut cards; Detail of installation in relation to lyrics by David Bowie; Panel with Bowie's lyrics to *The Width of a Circle*; Color wheel; Detail of installation

REACHING CATASTROPHIC ZEN WITH COLOR FIELD

Cortéz's artistic process can be traced through his interest in the midcentury artistic movement of Abstract Expressionism, which introduced the technique of Color Field painting. Color Field is synonymous with artists like Mark Rothko (American, 1903-1970) and Helen Frankenthaler (American, 1928-2011) whose paintings are characterized by the tension created by overlapping colors and shapes. A distinction that sets apart color field paintings from traditional painting techniques is that the treatment of the canvas or paper is perceived as a "field" of vision, (or a lack of a central focus), rather than in zones with a middle point. Like Cortéz's work, color field doesn't rely on a narrative or theme; the main subjects are complex overlapping interactions between forms and hues.

On a much larger scale, Cortéz's installation corresponds to the color field process but with the use of different media. He employs over 9,000 square feet of the gallery space as his canvas or "the field," and he uses tens of thousands of objects arranged by color in place of paint. The process is repeated in numerous *feralscapes* surfaces the gallery. The objects and colors, intermittently guide the arrangement of each *feralscape*. An example of this is the wall installation inside the Sweeney Art Gallery, which is composed of