CMP Projects: U

Ramón Miranda Beltrán
in collaboration with Emily Baierl, Lindsey Berfond, and Annie Shaw
California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock
May 3—September 20, 2014
Opening reception (with artist talk): Saturday, May 3, 5–7pm

RIVERSIDE, Calif., April 14, 2014 – California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock announces the next exhibition as part of the ongoing series “CMP Projects.” CMP Projects: U will be on view on the second floor of the museum from May 3 through September 20, 2014. U addresses practices of resistance and direct action at institutions of higher education. A collaboration among four artists – Ramón Miranda Beltrán, Emily Baierl, Lindsey Berfond, and Annie Shaw – U consists of both physical and discursive components.

red tape point blank
Presented in the gallery is red tape point blank (2014), a single sculptural concrete column consisting of 37 slabs on which six legal texts have been printed: Rules for the Maintenance of Public Order, New York University (May 1969, amended through November 1980); The Code of Student Conduct, University of Puerto Rico (December 2010); Rules for Maintenance of Public Order, Barnard College (August 2011); Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline, University of California (May 2012); University Regulations, Columbia University (September 2013); and a letter from UCR Chancellor Timothy P. White (December 2011) in which he announces the removal of assembly guidelines that had been briefly posted to UCR’s website. The selection, made by Miranda Beltrán and Baierl, is based on the personal educational histories of each of the four collaborators: Berfond studied at NYU, Miranda Beltrán at UPR, Baierl at Barnard, and Shaw at Columbia. The remaining two of the six texts represent the CMP by way of the particular history of the UC system.

The column concretizes the open-ended language of student codes of conduct into a solid rectangular stack that harkens back to the institutional critique and minimalist art practices of the 1960s and 70s. Reaching from the gallery floor to the ceiling, the administrative texts amount to a column that seemingly offers structural support for this university-run museum.

Fiat Lux
Also on view here are several photographs – printed on paper, framed, and hung on the gallery wall – from Fiat Lux, a series of black-and-white images made by Ansel Adams (1902–1984), commissioned by then-UC President Clark Kerr and published in book form in 1967. Depicting students, professors, and facilities of the UC campuses, Fiat Lux (“Let there be light”) takes its name from the university’s motto. Selected by the artists, these photographs augment the meaning of the site-specific sculpture by referring both to the history of student life, and to the political resistances of the 1960s on university campuses.
Educational Component

U also encompasses a research project that examines historical and present relationships between pedagogy and collectivity, as well as the relationship among protest, critique, and alternative models for learning. This research takes inspiration from Project Other Ways, a collaboration between educator Herbert Kohl (born 1937) and artist Allan Kaprow (1927–2006) in Berkeley, California (1967–1969). Project Other Ways combined traditional learning strategies with performance and conceptual art practices to build an experimental “storefront-environment-teacher-training-community” for local activists, teachers, and students. As it develops, this component of U will unfold as a reading room, summer workshops, and discursive events that bring compulsory education into conversation with university systems and alternative pedagogical models.

ARTIST STATEMENT

How might the “public” in public education be reassembled, and how might that public be poised to reclaim the university as an emancipatory space? U is an exhibition and ongoing pedagogical experiment that takes these questions as its point of departure.

Just as the public university has been slouching toward privatization over the past few decades, so has the university museum increasingly turned to private sources of funding to compete. The cost of this restructuring is that institutions have become increasingly beholden to gallerists, collectors, and other speculators whose profit-making fates are tethered to a stable artistic identity or “brand.” By approaching U as a collaborative project, we seek to undermine the art market tendency to fetishize the individual gesture and the institutional tendency to demarcate, delineate, and divide in ways that reinforce normative assumptions about identity.

From a young age, well before some of us have the opportunity to enter the university, we are taught that learning is measured by individual achievement amidst competition and comparison. We are taught that our goal is to be the first to have the right answer, to stand out amongst our peers, and to define our role in society by what we are best at. Our way of working on U, as a result, assumes that an unlearning process is a necessary starting point for collective learning, and it is collective learning that we think should be the model for education at all levels.

Through shared work and open communication, we support each other in stepping away from singular authority and individual authorship. Our collaboration, like any collective endeavor, has been riddled with compromises, contentions, and disagreements that are at times ideological, at times strategic, and at times interpersonal. But all negotiate between the individual and formally organized institutions, as well as between the individual and self-organized groups of people, including our group of four.

It is precisely through this “push and pull” of negotiation that we continually redefine and renew our common ground without necessarily advocating for the dissolution of boundaries between institutional and non-institutional structures. Nor do we necessarily advocate an “alternative” approach that forsakes privatized and privatizing institutions altogether; rather, we aspire to enact an “other way” of working from within. Our collective effort includes a researcher who curates, a curator who educates, a photographer who sculpts, an artist who organizes, but not necessarily in that order. U is snapshot in time of our process together. This is not a solo show.

— Emily Baierl, Lindsey Berfond, Ramón Miranda Beltrán, and Annie Shaw
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ramón Miranda Beltrán is an artist currently living and working in New York. His work has been subject of the solo exhibitions No Tenemos los Números, Walter Otero Contemporary Art, San Juan (2013); and Chicago is My Kind of Town, Julius Caesar, Chicago (2012). His work has also been included in the recent exhibitions This is Where We Jump, 7th Biennial El Museo del Barrio, New York (2013); and Chicago is My Kind of Town, Julius Caesar, Chicago (2012). His work has also been included in the recent exhibitions This is Where We Jump, 7th Biennial El Museo del Barrio, New York (2013); and Museo de Arte Pío López de la UPR, Cayey, Puerto Rico (2013); and Signos Vitales: Nuevas Adquisiciones del MAC 2009-2011, Museum of Contemporary Art of Puerto Rico, Santurce (2011). He earned his BA in Photography at Universidad de Puerto Rico in 2008, and his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012. CMP Projects is the first solo museum presentation of his work.

Emily Baierl is a curator, artist, and arts administrator based in New York. She has contributed to programming and collaborative projects at Artists Space, New York; Queens Museum, New York; Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson; and Gallery 400, Chicago, among elsewhere. She earned her BA in Architecture and Urban Studies at Barnard College in 2010, and has studied at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. She is currently the Program Associate at Art Matters in New York.

Lindsey Berfond is a Master’s Candidate at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. Her thesis work is focused on education-as-art experiments, radical pedagogy, and systems of schooling. She has contributed to projects at the SculptureCenter, Long Island City; Residency Unlimited, Brooklyn; and Storm King Art Center, Governors Island. She earned her BA in Art History at New York University in 2011.

Annie Shaw has spent the past decade developing both temporary and long-term collaborations and communal projects. Her work examines the disparities among commercial, sentimental, aesthetic, and personal notions of community and history. In recent years, she has turned her focus toward understanding the relationship between labor organizing and feminism. She continues to explore how the experience of collective art making and the process of group learning can contribute to building movements. Shaw founded the collaborative project space Leefahsalung at the New China Town Barber Shop (1999-2005), and co-founded the first participatory archive on the Ambassador Hotel (2005-2012). Her work has been featured at the Dumbo Art Center, New York; UnSmoke Systems, Braddock, Pennsylvania; La Casa Enciendida, Madrid; and Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles. She earned her MFA at Columbia University in 2007, and her BFA at Washington University in 1999.

CMP Projects is an ongoing series of solo presentations organized by Joanna Szupinska-Myers, CMP Curator of Exhibitions at the California Museum of Photography, part of UCR ARTSblock. Major support has been provided by an anonymous donor. Special thanks goes to Walter Otero Contemporary Art, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Additional funds have been provided by UCR’s College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the City of Riverside. In-kind support for this project was provided by White Cap Construction Supply, Riverside.

VISITOR INFORMATION AND PRESS INQUIRIES

UCR ARTSblock is located at 3824 & 3834 Main Steet, Riverside, CA 92501, and includes three venues: the California Museum of Photography, Culver Center of the Arts, and Sweeney Art Gallery. ARTSblock is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5 pm. Admission is $3, which includes entry to all three venues. Galleries are open late 6–9pm and admission is free during First Thursday ArtWalks, which take place on the first Thursday of every month. Film screenings are held on Fridays and Saturdays in the Culver Theater. The Culver Center opens 30 minutes prior to film screenings.
Trouble with the Index
Walead Beshty, Matthew Brandt, John Divola, Victoria Fu, Farrah Karapetian, Heather Rasmussen, James Welling, Jennifer West, and Mario Ybarra, Jr.
February 1–June 21, 2014

Gallery talk by James Welling: Tuesday, May 20, 10am (CMP)
Artist lecture by Victoria Fu: Thursday, May 22, 4pm (UCR campus; exact location to be announced online)

The truth of photographs has always been conflicted. Light hits sensitized paper to produce a picture of the world, capturing a moment in time. This was here, every photograph asserts. But the picture is flat and static, bound by edges and defined by depth of field, reproducible and variable in size: an artificial organization of a world that is spatial and temporal. Nevertheless, this was here. Since photography was invented, it has carried with it this elemental condition of “indexicality.” A photograph must exhibit some element of proof, some trace of reality, to be a photograph.

Many artists using photography today are grappling with this complicated state of photographic truth in ways that confront the typical expectations we may have of photographs. It seems that photographs alone can no longer secure their truth claim simply by accurately depicting the world in two dimensions. Through additional maneuvers artists privilege the index over pictorialism, pushing their resulting pictures even to complete abstraction. The activity of the artist is registered loudly in each work; This was here is now I was here.

100 Japanese Cameras
Selections from the David Whitmire Hearst Jr. Foundation Collection
July 19–October 11, 2014
Opening reception: Saturday, July 19, 6-9pm
Curated by ARTSblock Executive Director Jonathan Green; details forthcoming.

Flaws in the Diamond
Exploitation and Empire in South Africa, c. 1900
Selections from the Keystone-Mast Collection
February 22–July 19, 2014
Opening reception: Saturday, May 17, 6-9pm

This exhibition presents South Africa in forty pictures culled from the extraordinary riches of the Keystone-Mast Collection, part of the permanent collection of the California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTSblock. Organized in four sections, Flaws in the Diamond: Exploitation and Empire in South Africa, c. 1900 forms a valuable portrait of South Africa undergoing rapid social and political change at the beginning of the last century. This presentation offers a glimpse of the forces that led to apartheid, the system of racial segregation implemented in 1948, and its eventual dismantling in 1994.

Allan deSouza: Ark of Martyrs
FLASH! contemporary art series
March 22–May 24, 2014
Closing party: Saturday, May 17, 6-9pm
Flash: Allan deSouza is the presentation of a fragment of the in-progress video Ark of Martyrs. Based on Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, the video presents the first five pages of the artist’s rewriting of that 1899 novel. Whereas Conrad’s original text is framed as the narration of Charles Marlow, a British sailor who transports ivory along the Congo River during the height of European imperialism, Ark of Martyrs is set at a contemporary wedding party. DeSouza’s rewriting mirrors Conrad’s syntax, and employs rhyme and alliteration: “The water shone pacifically” becomes “The daughter yawned terrifically.” The text making up Ark of Martyrs scrolls over the screen while a narrator (Stephen Watrous) reads the corresponding passages from Heart of Darkness. According to deSouza, Conrad contrasts the present day “civility” of the River Thames, from where the story is told, with the timeless “savagery” of the Congo River, where Marlow’s story is set.

Dana DeGiulio: Proposal for a New Museum
FLASH! contemporary art series
May 31–August 9, 2014

Curated by grupa o.k. (Julian Myers and Joanna Szupinska); details forthcoming.

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