

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the University of Oregon Department of Art's MFA degree program, making it the second-oldest MFA program in the country. To commemorate this significant moment in our program's history, the 2023 Terminal Project Exhibition returns to the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art to be celebrated on the UO campus. The five artists showcased in this exhibition represent a diverse range of media and practices, spanning eco-feminism and social practice, to speculative fiction, fundamental joy, and ideas about representation through the materiality of painting.

UO ART

MFA

Thesis

Exhibition

2023

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For each of these artists, this exhibition is the culmination of three years of intensive study, including academic research and creative studio output, as well as an immersion in the Department of Art as instructors in undergraduate courses and labs. Through continuous mentorship from the faculty, as well as many guest artists, critics and curators, the grads in our program are given a high bar for their creative output. It's a rigorous period even when the world is stable, but it should be noted that this MFA cohort spent their entire first year in COVID lockdown, attending and teaching their classes remotely, while developing their studio practices with online critiques. Their perseverance and ability to overcome these extraordinary circumstances and produce the fully realized work seen in this exhibition is a remarkable achievement. This catalog and exhibition represent not only a punctuating moment of the past three years, but also a departure point for these five artists, as we look forward to following their creative endeavors in the years to come.

RON JUDE
DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Intro

David Peña is a multidisciplinary artist and cultural organizer from the border region between Tijuana and San Diego. He uses the vocabulary of patterns as a way to contemplate personal and public occurrences and as a point of collaboration. He seeks to connect his visual practice with his commitment to people and place, exploring ways to bridge community and understand organizing as an art practice in itself. Liminality, transitioning across boundaries, has been a central focus within his practice. He investigates the many ways we enter into and through in-between spaces and the ways we are confronted with borders, geographical, internal, tangible and abstract.

This older fence, made in the 1970s, surrounds the Montes family home located in Chula Vista, CA. Encarnacion Montes worked as a welder and piping manager for National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO), which made ships used by the US Navy and for oil drilling.

David

His projects have been featured in Juxtapoz, LA Times, KCET and he has shown work at Centro Cultural Tijuana, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Northwestern University, University of California San Diego, University of Oregon, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Ensenada, among others.

As David Peña bends steel through the act of welding, the work of preserving memory is underway. Welding requires vast transfers of energy that reveal instabilities in the state of matter. Incredible quantities of energy are concentrated on the steel, melting it from solid to liquid, if only for a mo-



Peña

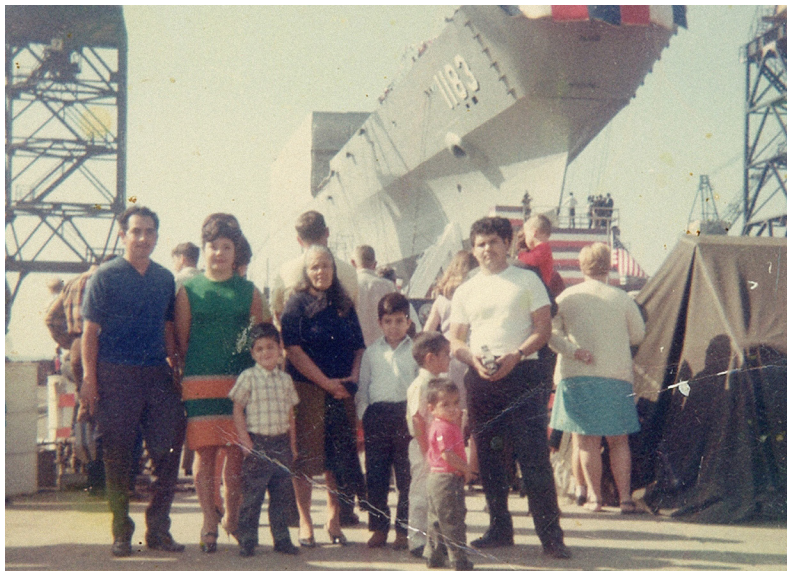
ment, so that the steel may be bent, distorted, dismantled impermanently to be reshaped again. A sinuous form emerges, one that has moved fluidly through the history of ornament. The Sankofa, an organic abstraction of a bird, is here turned into a web of tendrils. The sensual shape contrasts with steel's solidity. Under heat and force, steel reveals itself to be surprisingly reactive to being touched. Underlying the material transformation of welding is a human body, soft and seeping. Welding's corporeal nature leaves the traces of the body, including the stories and emotions it carries. In the welding pools, areas where molten metal builds up before it solidifies, memory, too, pours in.



In Peña's work, the accumulation of all these physical and mental exertions are held, tenably, in the shape of a fence. Fences are often made to disrupt passage and create enclosure. Rather than dividing, Peña's fence mediates connections across material forms and familial histories. It converses with an older fence, made generations earlier by Peña's abuelo, Encarnación Montes. This older fence, made in the 1970s, surrounds the Montes family home located in Chula Vista, CA. Encarnación Montes worked as a welder and piping manager for National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO), which made ships used by the US Navy and for oil drilling.



Peña's own fence complicates these histories by twisting and turning the central motif of Montes' fence. The presence of the archive cannot be understated in Peña's practice, which with every welded joint remembers, in form. Photos and letters are present in the memory work, but also the distances crossed, the time passed. It may seem counter-intuitive that a fence forges, rather than severs, connections. However, in this contradiction, like that between organic sensuality and steel's solidity, undulating openings are constructed.



At the core is a practice of care sensitive to finding holes loose enough to stretch and let healing come through. Tenderness bulges through the impasse.

JOE SUSSI (PhD Candidate History of Art and Architecture)



Anastasiya Gutnik is an interdisciplinary Russian-born artist whose work incorporates walking, storytelling, and notions around place and transience. Primal materials such as soil, salt, ash, bones, grasses, become starting points for her installations for their physical properties, cultural meaning, and ecological significance. The human and nonhuman find connections through their own gestural expressions, gravitational pulls, and historic entanglements.

She explores the way our connection to the natural world and each other is influenced generationally, weaving together installations that consider the distant past and the complexities of our contemporary moment, while imagining future relational possibilities.

IG @sokolikart
www.sokolikart.com

The human and nonhuman find connections through their own gestural expressions, gravitational pulls, and historic entanglements.



Anastasiya

Gutnik

"We are born and have our being in a place of memory. We chart our lives by everything we remember from the mundane moment to the majestic. We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection,"

BELL HOOKS**Belonging: A Culture of Place**

Memory is a connector, sometimes remembering is as impossible as predicting the future. Bodily memory. Ancestral memory.

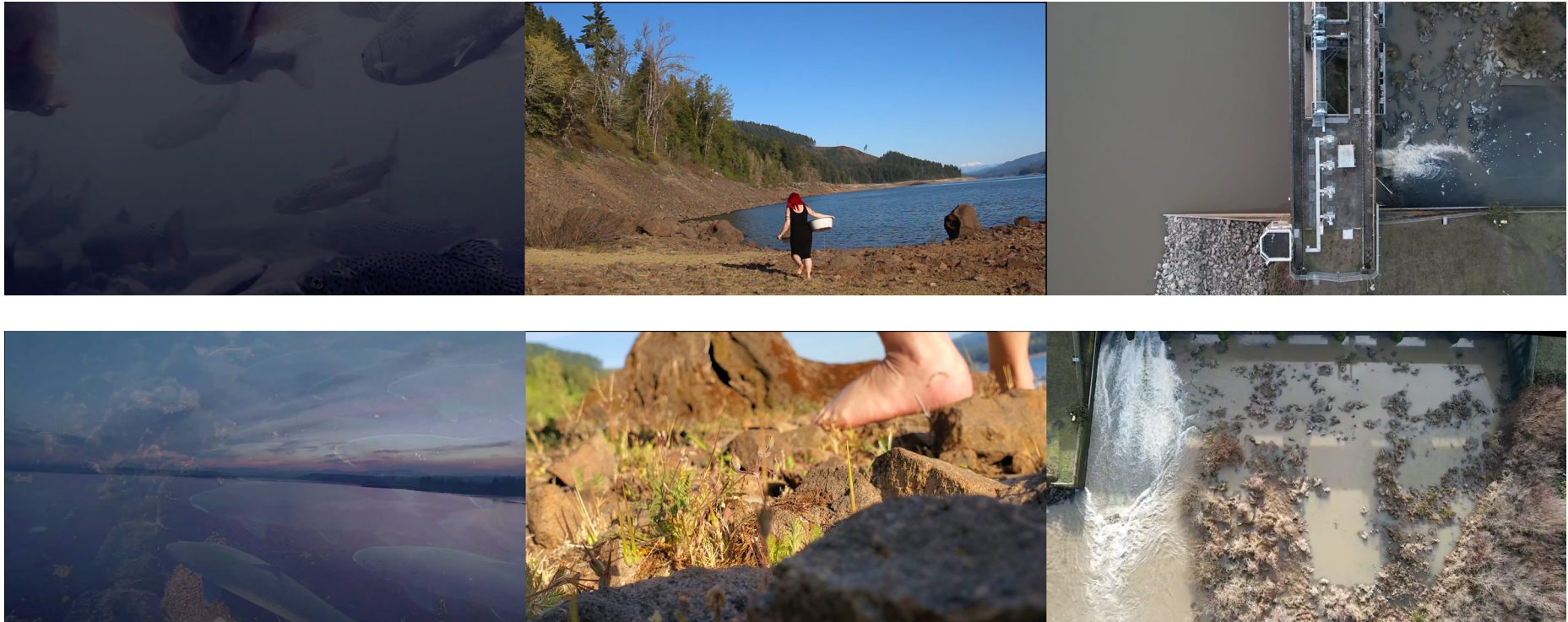
Distance leads to hazy misremembrances. A toy tank forgotten from a childhood photo, replayed with new eyes after the Russian invasion. Impossible returns are the waters we swim in, so they say. Longing as a generative act. Rainbow trout return. Salmon return. Beating tails against shores in defiance.



My practice spans multiple timescales, from the immediacy of gestural drawing to durational walks ongoing for years. My video works explore the possibilities of engaging with latent memory and embodied ways of coming to know place through layered imagery and non-linear narrative.

Charcoal finds its way into my work because of its ephemerality and symbolic potential. Charcoal is a residue, an obliteration of all that was, transformed through fire becomes a substance used for drawing, purification, nutrition. I am interested in the multitudes of meaning that organic matter carries as it shapeshifts from one form to the next, intersecting with our lives. Charcoal is futurity. A highly porous microcrystalline graphite portal. It may very well save you from poisoning one day.

Like charcoal, my white basin is a teleportation vehicle to the past and future in Memory of Returns. This multichannel video is comprised of three parts: 1) Fish flows; 2) The Journey: Vodonos (water carrier); and 3) Untethered Mapping. In this piece I draw over an archival map of Dexter Reservoir shortly after the completion of its dam in 1955. As the charcoal drawing frees the river from its man-made edges, it meanders outwards and becomes unruly. A school of rainbow trout flows past the confines of the dam, once again able to retrace trajectories coded in their DNA. Morphing into embryonic spinning form, the fish becomes a free-flowing ball of energy, full of emergent possibilities.



Lily Wai Brennan is a craft-based interdisciplinary artist whose concern lies in the experience of living within ambiguous bodies. Inspired by pop culture, dreams, and meditation, Lily interrogates themes of interrace, queerness, and femme. Drawn by personal narrative, her practice acts as an entry point for conversation regarding marginal identity. Her thesis titled *How Do the Visible Hide?* articulates the complexities of voyeuristic experiences in marginalized folk as she finds herself affected by a recent stalking incident.

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@lilywaibrennan

There is an unspoken understanding that your cards were not dealt evenly, as the deck resists the othering form your body has shaped to.

Lily Wai

As a second-generation American, I was left with the residual trauma my mother experienced immigrating to the United States from Hong Kong. When you are an immigrant in America, your default existence is survival. There is an unspoken understanding that your cards were not dealt evenly, as the deck resists the othering form your body has shaped to.

Meandering through a childhood sited in a rural, conservative, white community, I was continuously faced with nonconsensual moments that highlighted my body as speculative. I learned very quickly what it meant to be marginalized. When you are displaced in an environment of whiteness, you can feel how



Brennan

visible you are in the world. Nothing is thicker than the otherness that reeks out of your apparently abnormal flesh. How does one hide from the world when you walk through it observed like an animal in a zoo?

Don't look people in the eye. Draw your shoulders in. Cross the street. Zip up your jacket. Be dismissive. Be quiet. Be as invisible as you can.

I'm a fish out of water.



LILY WAI BRENNAN

How Do the Visible Hide?
2021
Single channel video with
sound, 4:30 minutes with
black and white subtitles
and a 10' x 10' print
in gallery

How Do the Visible Hide? is a manifestation of the events that occurred late last year, serving as a point of confrontation for the unavoidable visibility that marginalized bodies carry. As audience members watch the installation video performance, they occupy the role of both voyeur and subject.





Mary Evans is an interdisciplinary artist working primarily in experimental video and Paper Mache sculpture. Evans has developed a unique visual and conceptual vocabulary that speaks to ideas of consciousness, spiritualism, and interdimensional realities. Rituals of symbolic transformation are performed as characters travel into and flirt with the void in the format of pop music videos.

Upon passage, it alters states of consciousness and perception of reality. There is no undoing of change.

Mary

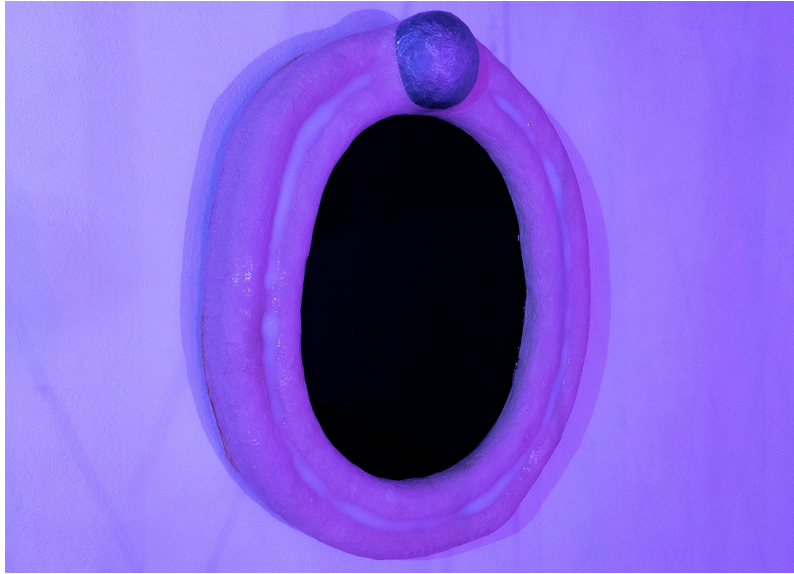
Change is a gateway. Upon passage, it alters states of consciousness and perception of reality. There is no undoing of change.

The wheel of change spins, creating cylindrical space like a slow-moving tornado in which we reside in the center. It collapses in on itself. Memory creates the shape of a spiral thrust forward into the future, mimicking the travels of the solar system. On birthdays, TV reruns, and with whiffs of familiar smells, we return to what is stored in the body. What feels like apparitions of the past are alive as well, moving through our DNA.



Evans

The ending of things leaves occupation for something else, A growing thing.
As a child, I was mystified by the crucifix. A line that divides space into four quadrants, the seasons, marked in the center by death. I continuously return to death, resurrection, and transformation in my work.. In 1974, a Lithuanian archeologist, Marija Gimbutas, published controversial theories developed from her digs in Old Europe. Her ideas about Pre-Indo-Europeans were informed by her discovery of over 500 Goddess figurines with breast, buttocks, and vulvas. She understood that this culture worshiped the Goddess as a birth, death, and resurrection symbol.



The female form was seen to mimic the cycle of life seen on the Earth as the changing of seasons. This re-contextualization of the Christ archetype outside the patriarchy was powerful for me. On this Earth, death must occur for spring to arrive. Eternal spring does not exist here, but eternity is found in the only constant, which is change.

When a caterpillar enters the chrysalis phase, its previous form dissolves into goo. Somewhere in its cellular memory is a blueprint of how to build itself back together in the form of a butterfly. We fall apart into dust, and there is no path ahead. In my experience, there is a call to the inside, to the cellular memory, the part of



yourself that built your body in the womb that still remembers how to build you. And that is how you crawl out.

The Tower can touch your life despite any securities used to void the discomfort of change. In the tarot, The Tower represents the unavoidable change that levels you out makes you start from scratch and address what is fundamentally important. Sometimes these are the necessary events that bring us back to who we are.



The Tower is evidence of attachment. It stands built with purpose, an echo of power, a mirror of ambition, a structure to lean on. This buildup of ideas rarely overpowers or escapes the reality of nature and time who is a destructionaireess.



Will Zeng uses painting, performance, and object-making to explore subjectivity through the intersection of Asian American, masculine, and queer identities. Zeng engages tensions between subject and object, graceful and pathetic, shame and pleasure, intimacy and distance as means of articulating a lived experience. His work currently utilizes the rice rocket, a racially derogative term that broadly describe compact Asian import cars modified in bad taste and import racing culture as a space for exploring the opportunities presented by the failure of the Asian American masculine subject.

Multiplicity is not a juggling act, it is an overlay, an overlap, that blends the lenses of perception into a seamless field of vision.

Will

HOW I CHOOSE TO SPELL MY NAME, OR, WITH BOTH FEET IN DIFFERENT WORLDS

For Will Zeng
March 15, 2023

"There's a tendency to think that if you are a multiplicity, you are dispersed," stated filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha in a recent interview with BOMB Magazine. "Actually, you are a multiplicity because you are very much one with yourself. If you are one with yourself, you can be many at the same time. ... In gazing at



Zeng

a mountain—a form of solidity—or at water—a form of liquidity—you are both mountain and water.”¹ When we contemplate solidity and liquidity, we come to understand that they are not diametric opposites; solidity and liquidity offer two possibilities of plasticine existence held together in the same hand—two facets of the multiplicity of form. Multiplicity is not a juggling act, it is an overlay, an overlap, that blends the lenses of perception into a seamless field of vision. Have you seen the multiverse montage of Michelle Yeoh in Everything Everywhere All At Once? Have you ever stood at the Four Corners Monument of the United States of America and placed each limb in a different state? What constitutes the contemporary Asian American

portrait; what reifies the Asian American experience? Will Zeng renders his subjects' likenesses not through mere phenotypic observation or the easily-called-upon narrative of the “stinky lunch” that regurgitates the othering of truncated Asianness, reduced to a series of tropes and icons in the gaze of American popular culture.² He instead draws upon an amalgamation of that which surrounds his subjects—a dreamscape realized—with the multiplicity of identity and experience, the liminality of hyphenation.³

¹ “Trinh T. Minh-ha by Shivani Radhakrishnan,” July 18, 2022.

<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/trinh-t-minh-ha/>.

² See: Edward Said, Orientalism, Vintage Books, 1978.



Zeng's work calls forth the space of the overlap in an effort to name it and therefore to shape it and know it, to identify its contours and its referents that construct its reality. The hyphen is a connecting joint, a web that stretches and encompasses more than it delineates. It glues things together, in defiance of binaric codependency, allowing them to maintain their individual structures all the while generating a new, unknown being. For Zeng and his subjects, the hyphen brings together masculinity and queerness, grace and pity, shame and pleasure, visibility and invisibility, clenched in the same fist. The Asian American identity is often experienced as such: to exist in many worlds at once, and thus to generate a new one from within the overlap.



Zeng's hyphen is not submissive; it expands in search of approximation and understanding.
JASON N. LE

³See: Dominika Bara, "Hyphenated Identity," in *Language in Immigrant America*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.



2023 MFA Terminal Project Exhibition

JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

Exhibition on view Saturday, May 6th through Tuesday, June 20th, 2023

Department of Art Faculty + Staff

Hiba Ali, Jonathan Bagby, Mika Boyd, Michael Bray, Chad Bush, Rebecca Childers, Isami Ching, Colleen Choquette, Sonja Dahl, Jovencio de la Paz, Tannaz Farsi, Julieta Gill, Brian Gillis, Rosy Hanssen, Wendy Heldman, Maia Howes, Colin Ives, Sage Joshlin, Ron Jude, Anya Kivarkis, Sylvan Lionni, Charlene Liu, Christopher Michlig, Donald Morgan, John Park, Jacob Riddle, Jack Ryan, Risa Saevedra, Michael Salter, James Schauer, Jeremy Schropp, Reanna Schultz, Stacy Jo Scott, Rick Silva, Jeremy Smith, Jessica Swanson, Jessie Rose Vala, Laura Vendenburgh, Ty Warren Claire Webb, Amanda Wojick

2022-23 Visiting Artist Lecture Series

Natasha Ginwala, , Carmen Winant, Jen Stark, Liz Magor, Marie Watt, Kate McNamara, Margaret Lee, Edie Fake, Elissa Auther, Salvador Jiménez-Flores, Alex Da Corte, Maama Tsabar, Jim Drain, Yoonmi Nam, Jullia Fish

Catalog and website design by FISK

Printing by Brown, Portland

University of Oregon

College of Design

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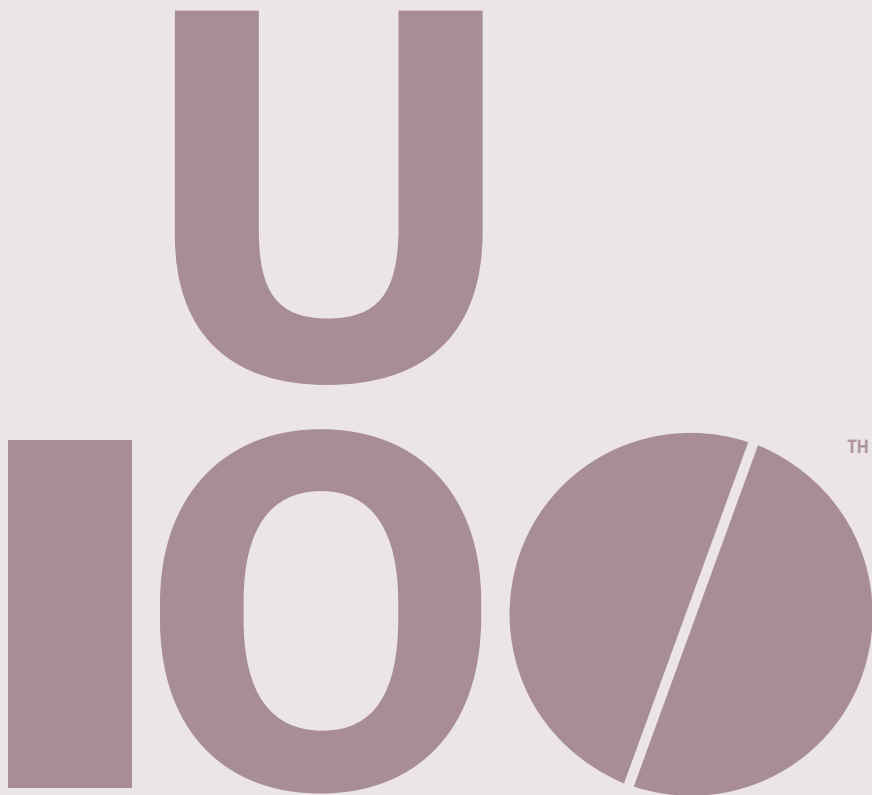
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David Peña
Anastasiya Gutnik
Lily Wai Brennan
Mary Evans
Will Zeng

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Anniversary of the University of Oregon Department of Art's MFA degree program