

(Inter)Connections: The Exhibition Mind Map

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This essay was started in Marfa, TX – the land of Donald Judd’s vision of interconnectedness between art, architecture, and landscape. I was thinking about the perception mechanisms and the role that apparently unnoticeable elements play in transforming our mind. Does the intensity of light influence our contemplation of a sculpture? Yes, tremendously. Does the absence of routine visual surroundings infiltrate our senses with more divinity? Absolutely, it does. When you think this building is just supreme it may be due to a perfect amount of an empty space around it. And when you realize the people in this faraway town are doomed to poverty and desperateness, it may be because of an insane magnetism Marfa has for a bohemian and wealthy artistic community searching for paradise and paying millions of dollars for their vacation property here.

The *(Inter)Connections* exhibition at WoCA gallery highlights the same approach of searching for clues. This show is unique because you can forget about my text and create your own narrative looking for the hints in artists’ works, finding other similarities and dialogues between them, and building the line of associations and continuity in an absolutely different sequence. But the essential truth is that you could find yourself almost reading a detective story where inconspicuous details become crucial in the end.

1. How do you read the news?

Doerte Weber’s sculpture combines weaving, news making, and a transitional nature of information circulation in the contemporary world. The artist reuses newspaper plastic wrappers to reflect on the perpetual phenomena of our connection to events happening in the world through newscasts. While you touch the surface of ‘newspaper kiosk’ with your fingers try to compare the feelings you get from sliding the surface of your smartphone or iPad when reading the news.

Morgan Chivers’s work reminds a cinematographic poetry by the minimalist (and Marfa-pilgrim!) Carl Andre. In “Breaking Newspeak” he plays with ideas of passive and active perception of information. The closer you look at this seemingly abstract and delicate black&white composition, the deeper you realize a hidden narrative of this ‘opt-art piece’. It turns out that this text-based work repeats a quote from the 43rd P.o.t.U.S. “*This government does not torture people*”. Minimal and monumental at the same time, Chivers’s work expresses the porous relationship between truth and untruth in the political landscape.

Painful connections between politics and people’s emotional life are illustrated by **Nicole Dane** in her community engagement project “The Where Have You Been”. An embroidered map is a monument to impenetrable borders and their absence in terms of emotional connectedness between people. It is a story of waiting, anticipating, and longing for family reunion, in which the artist’s relatives from the Philippines have been waiting for their US emigration petitions to become current for over 19 years.

This artwork is in conversation with another installation by **Claire Girodie** who searches for quietness, shadows, almost imperceptible conversation and comforting psychological landscape. Given the context of an abovementioned work, Girodie’s piece looks almost like a chapel for prayer in this exhibition space.

2. Why do you care about the Aesthetics?

A much more subversive allusion of a shrine arises when looking at **Deborah Kapoor's** work who deals with erotic images from the temples of Khajuraho in India. The suspended hoops speak about tension and the constant searching of balance and harmony. The artist focuses on a concept of pleasure as a unifying motif for all humanity, which goes beyond pure sexual satisfaction to emphasize a philosophy of the union between human soul and body.

Similarly, **Kate Clark's** video "Grotto Rub" evolves around the concept of ritualization of cultural landscape. She explores how material can be related to spiritual, and how soul could be born out of flesh or even a dead stone. Clark delves into the absurdity of human desires, which can be stimulated by even such banal thing as public sculpture.

3. Is this an Artificial Identity?

Speaking about ritualization of social media sphere nowadays, **Brian Cavanaugh's** works are important. "#happy is..." and "#hopeful" are his analytical response to the overabundant Instagram archive of images. The artist creates generalized portraits of online communities translating the hashtags through the custom-coded software. By extracting the frequency of color in each photo he finds on Instagram tagged with a certain word like 'love', 'happiness', 'fear', Cavanaugh hopes to discover the colors of universal, shared emotions through technology.

In fact, these 'portraits' remind us that the power of hashtag in social media is similar to the power of stereotypes and generalization in everyday life. **Josef Ostraff** attempts to execute a mechanism opposite to Cavanaugh's. His video performance "If:Then" explores personal family genealogical records and DNA testing of paternal and maternal lines. In fact, the video shows that the ethnicity is much deeper in our genes than we could see it on a 'surface'. Moreover, people might belong to multiple ancestries and thus share a number of nationalities and stereotyped identities.

Yelizaveta Nersesova translates the idea of a chimeric organism through investigation of forms in her drawings. It is quite uncontrollable process for the artist to give life to these animated creatures that dictate their own rules and roles on a paper. Hence, Nersesova ends up believing in their intrinsic intelligence. She builds her own imaginarium and enjoys the process of analyzing the inner DNA of her 'personages'.

4. ...or Fake Identity?

In the meantime, **Sarah Crider** experiments with being faded into the surrounding landscape. She is concerned about social mimicry, which is caused by an illusory assumption of how others would see us. Her works delicately speak about the emulation and danger of becoming a ghost while just following certain trends and beliefs with widely open blind eyes.

Susan Emerson makes an attempt to dive into the microscopic level of life. The biological cellular structures, which she depicts with an incredible patience and accuracy using fragile material, become a metaphor for the bonds linking all the humanity on a bigger scale.

In the meantime, **Rachel Fisher** draws a linear narrative of interconnections that evolve between people within time. "She" is the artist's self-portrait made at the period when Fisher was about to get married. Moving into a new phase of her life, she anxiously closes her mouth

with her grandma's braid, emphasizing the ever-present power gender practices spanning across generations.

The ritualization of culture and self-identification within long-established traditions has also become a question for **Sara Madandar**. She is zooming in into the fashion aesthetics of Shiite clergymen in Iran and creates really powerful ghosts by just depicting the form of turbans in ceramics.

5. How would you advertise sorrow..?

Jeniffer Wenker suggests a critical look at the public health sphere. In "Not Enough Greens" installation she uses her family paperboard food boxes to construct a beautiful wastestream. Her 'rainbow' is an ironic and critical statement about the USDA food pyramid and furthermore, the farm grain subsidies that favor long shelf-life over nutrition.

The juxtaposition of bright color palette and vitriolic imagery becomes a critical gesture for **Jave Yoshimoto** too. A medium of gouache paints combined with an imitation of digital illustration add to the bitterness of his perception of world disasters. Desperate in his powerlessness, the artist at least believes he could reach out to other millions of helpless observers of world catastrophes through his catching pop-culture, mass-media aesthetics.

6. ...and all these interconnections?

For **Nishiki Tayui**, the meaning of a written language and its visual form is a way to navigate between the native and acquired cultures. The artist paints a Bulgarian word "Thank you" transliterated into Japanese characters and incorporates it into a broader image called "Yogurt". Being an example of a contemporary hybrid personality, he masters the process of blending all the influences together during the creative mark-making on a surface of artworks.

Finally, this exhibition shows a perfect advertising campaign. Provocative works by **Liana Tomchesson** look so poignant because she uses very literal references. She plays with the most trivial things we practice in our everyday life – words and food. Thus, she creates chimeras of Starbucks/Sterling Bucks, and McDonald/McfauxDonald.

And now you can forget about my text and dive into your personal story-making ...