

All things share the same breath

Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago

Exhibition Duration: January 18 – March 9, 2019

Expanded Exhibition Checklist

Tamara Becerra Valdez

Scenography of Friendship 2019

Cast concrete, collaborative oil pastel rubbings with Mehmet, Fatma, Eyüp, Sudenaz, Yağmur, and Yaren

Courtesy the artist

Valdez's practice is frequently concerned with the ways that people make and claim space. Valdez spent time in the Tarlabası neighborhood of Istanbul—a lower class neighborhood comprised largely of Kurds and African migrants, some arriving due to climate change. There alongside collaborating members of the community, documented the surfaces and textures of the neighborhood with rubbings, thus exploring how the material history of a neighborhood gets remembered. Giving agency to the residents by enabling them to share their stories, challenge stereotypical narratives of the area, and preserve what is important to them, the work creates a portrait of a neighborhood and its people. Translating those rubbings into a series of concrete relief tiles, *Scenography of Friendship* allows fleeting moments of exchange to become concretized pieces of a historical record.

Related Research Project: *Care Across Species, Routes of Refuge, and People as Infrastructure in Tarlabası, Istanbul* Anthropologist and project coordinator Alize Arıcan has been working in Tarlabası for the past fourteen months. Tamara Becerra Valdez joined her for two weeks in the summer of 2018.

***Affinity Without Finality*, 2018**

Cast concrete, Turkish oil paper

Courtesy the artist

In *Affinity Without Finality*, Valdez draws our attention to the under-recognized details—such as the paper used to wrap dinner tables and traditional foods in Turkey—that define places. Valdez transforms and preserves that paper into concrete relief tiles, thereby enshrining the everyday experience of sharing meals as a community, one of the many quotidian forms of solidarity produced by the people of Tarlabası, Istanbul.

Related Research Project: *Care Across Species, Routes of Refuge, and People as Infrastructure in Tarlabası, Istanbul*

Anthropologist and project coordinator Alize Arican has been working in Tarlabaşı for the past fourteen months. Tamara Becerra Valdez joined her for two weeks in the summer of 2018.

Leticia Bernaus

On darkness, 2018

Video, 8:23 min.

Courtesy the artist

In a personal meditation on her journey to Bolivia, Argentinian-born, Bernaus reflects on the history of ethnography and the study of other cultures. Originally from South America, but assuming the role of an outsider, an academic, and thus deeming herself a “double agent,” Bernaus has created a film that occupies a space between fact and fiction, critiquing the notion of the researcher as an unbiased observer and truth teller. Questioning our relationship to the earth, Bernaus implicates the viewer in Bolivia’s water crisis, stating that there is, “no way of living without transforming or altering our surroundings. We humans are complicated creatures; we destroy in order to survive.”

Related Research Project: *New Urban Climate? Hydrosocial Encounters with Cochabamba*

Anthropologist and project coordinator Caitlyn Knecht Dye has been researching in Cochabamba, Bolivia since July 2014 and first conducted research there as an undergraduate in 2008. Leticia Bernaus was in Cochabamba for two weeks in May 2018.

Leticia Bernaus and Stella Brown

Trajectories, 2018

Video, 9:37 min. loop, inkjet print on paper, Masonite, ribbon

Courtesy the artists

Exploring how an urban garden can be a vital ecological site for its community, *Trajectories* considers the paths of refugees who fled the 1990s ethnic cleansing in Bhutan and lived in camps in Nepal before resettling elsewhere. Now in Chicago, some of these refugees—once farmers in their homeland—have urban gardens in which they grow many of the plants they farmed in Bhutan. *Trajectories* traces the movement of plants as a metaphor for the migration of people and for gardening as a means of connection to both the refugees native land and their new home.

Related Research Project: *Cultivating Chicago: Gardens as Ecological Infrastructures*
Anthropologist and project coordinator Molly Doane has been working in the gardens since 2016. Leticia Bernaus and Stella Brown spent time in the gardens in Summer 2018.

Stella Brown

Vermilion River Watershed Geologic Column, 2018

Materials collected in and around the Vermilion Watershed: limestone, ceramic drainage tile, HDPE drainage tile, disk harrow blades, John Deere green spray paint, soil, prairie seed mix, corn seed, soy bean seed, cover crop seed mix of barley, wheat, radish, and winter rye, diammonium phosphate, potash, ag lime, gypsum, CRP prairie seed mix, corn crop, distiller's grain, corn oil, ethanol, soy bean crop, soy hull pellet, soy meal, vegetable oil, methyl ester
Courtesy the artist

By evoking stratigraphy, or the study of rock layers, Brown visualizes a cross section of the materiality of farming and implicates humans in recent geological changes to the earth's surface and changes in the atmosphere. Samples she presents range from the local stone deposits to crop seeds, from soil additives to drainage tiles. Including what goes into and what comes out of the processes of growing crops, Brown's samples evoke the myriad ways humans have affected and controlled this particular ecosystem. Midwest soil is now nearly stretched beyond its capacity so that modern farming involves a complicated balance of added soil fertilizers, soil practices, drainage systems, weather monitoring, seed choices, pesticides, machinery, decisions of what to plant where and when, and more, as well as the complex economics of crop prices, loans, debt, and subsidies.

Related Research Project: *Knowledge Production and Practice in Industrial Row Crop Farming, Northern Illinois*

Urban Planning and Policy scholar and project coordinator Charles Corwin has been conducting fieldwork in the Vermilion River watershed since June 2017 as part of his dissertation research that began in Fall 2014. Stella Brown spent time in Northern Illinois in Summer 2018.

Bochay Drum

We Don't Dig, 2018

Mixed media installation

Courtesy the artist

Bringing the sites and sounds of an archaeology project into the gallery, Drum re-presents experiences of fieldwork and explores what it means to be in the field. *Yalbur Yaylası Archaeological Landscape Research Project* investigates the politics of water and settlement both in antiquity and in post-industrial modernity in west central Turkey. *We Don't Dig* turns our attention to the remains of and on the land, where past lives are intimately entwined with current ones in a stubbornly enduring, but always changing, landscape.

Related Research Project: *Ecology, Archaeological Heritage, and Disposable Landscapes in West Central Turkey*

Archaeologist, architectural historian, and project coordinator Ömür Harmanşah has been directing the *Yalburt Project* for the last eight years and conducting fieldwork research since 1993. Bochay Drum and Harmanşah have collaborated at a variety of sites and landscapes in Turkey since 2007.

Geissler/Sann

IRRSTERN, 2018

Inkjet print

Courtesy the artists and Cindy Rucker Gallery

IRRSTERN depicts the Erdapfel (literally translated from German as ‘earth apple’), the oldest surviving terrestrial globe, created by Martin Behaim in 1490–92. Both an archive of knowledge and a living document, the globe was continuously updated and reflects the misguided and subjective knowledge of its time: the Americas are not included, as Columbus had not yet returned to Spain (which happened in 1493), the Eurasian continent is enlarged with an ocean between Europe and Asia, the mythical Saint Brendan’s Island is included, and Japan is oversized and too far south. An instrument of colonialism, the globe claimed truth and objectivity, but represents imagination and belief, reflecting a human desire to own and master the world. Evocative of our current ecological moment, the Erdapfel is highly sensitive to UV radiation and its surface is very delicate, but it has been constantly marked by humans throughout its history. Today, our Irrstern (translated from German as ‘stray star’) is more fragile than ever, on the verge of collapse, and subject to the intentions, illusions, and perspectives with which we view it.

Robert Lundberg

Fragile Mechanisms, 2018

Digital photograph on silk, plywood, glue, sound recording

Courtesy the artist

By picturing the spillway of the Fort Randall Dam on the Missouri River in South Dakota, *Fragile Mechanisms* highlights the connection and flow of funding mechanisms and technological expertise from the Global North to South. The technology of hydropower dam building has been exported across the world, regulated by programs like the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), a program that incentivizes investment in “green” energy projects as part of international agreements to tackle climate change. The unintended consequences of these hydropower dams are far reaching, and at its heart, the effects of the Missouri Pick Sloan dams are not that different from those of the Lower Sesan 2 dam in Cambodia: the construction of the Pick Sloan Dams has resulted in the displacement of the Sioux and other peoples along the Missouri River, mirrored by the displacement of people and the disturbance of ecosystems in Cambodia.

Polen Ly

Beyond the Dam's Reservoir, 2018

Video, 12:39 min.

Courtesy the artist, W. Nathan Green and Ian G. Baird, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Although considered clean energy because they produce electricity that can replace energy produced by fossil-fuel-using power plants, large hydropower dams can nonetheless have devastating impacts on local livelihoods, wild capture fisheries, and aquatic ecologies. Documenting the research project *Large Hydropower Dams, the Clean Development Mechanism, and Environmental Impacts in Cambodia*, this documentary explores the ramifications of this so-called green energy in the Lower Sesan 2 dam in northeastern Cambodia.

Cate Richards

Wane, 2019

Champlevé and etched copper, sterling, cordage

Custom cartography by Laura Lee Brott

Courtesy the artist

Translating the flow of the Sesan River into a language of ornamentation, Richards responds to the research in Cambodia by exploring the obstruction and redirection of the river and migratory fish populations. Formally, the necklace takes on a loose silhouette of the river, forking to the east where the Lower Sesan 2 dam is located and shrinking in size as it moves downward. Richards' enameled pattern derives from her manipulations of photographs taken by the Cambodian landscape researchers.

Nicole Tu-Maung

Confluence, 2018

Colored pencil on paper

Courtesy the artist

Tu-Maung mimics the style of colonial maps —notably used historically for extractive purposes— in order to represent the importance of human- ecological relationships and how those relationships are overlooked in dam development schemes. Many fish species migrate between the Mekong River and its tributaries, including the Sesan River. The sheries in the Lower Mekong River Basin in Southern Laos are critical for food

security and local livelihoods. Depicted here is the *Mekongina erythrospila*, or Pa Sae-I, a species with both ecological and cultural significance. The species was regarded historically as a delicacy and is now vital for local consumption in both Laos and Cambodia but is today threatened by the Lower Sesan 2 Dam.

Ayub Wali

Untitled

2017–18 Brass, berglass, wood

Courtesy the artist

Using fallen leaves as a metaphor for the destruction of nature, Wali preserves the form of dead leaves, translating them into brass to create an evocation of permanence. Serving as a tribute to the village of Altit in the Hunza Valley, the sculptures evoke its long history, one that is marked by political conflict, colonialism, and climate change. The portrait is the face of a man from Hunza, wearing a local cap and shatti, a symbol of hope, pride, and respect. Altit Fort is around 1100 years old, making it the oldest monument in the Gilgit–Baltistan, or Northern Areas of Pakistan. In a state of disrepair, the fort was restored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's Historic Cities Programme, which promotes the conservation and re-use of buildings and public spaces in historic cities of the Muslim World. Wali was part of a research project that studied the restoration of such sites in the Wakhan Corridor, and the perception among users and inhabitants in order to highlight the negotiations and frictions between the global narrative of development and local strategies of resistance.

Related Research Project: *Place, Heritage and Resistance in the Wakhan Corridor, Pakistan* Art historian and project coordinator Javairia Shahid and artist Ayub Wali are both from Pakistan. Research was conducted in Hunza Valley from June 23–July 5, 2017.