

Press Release

Exhibitions at UIC Gallery 400 explore immigration, dispossession

Two exhibitions examining issues of immigration, (dis)location and belonging are on view at Gallery 400 on the University of Illinois Chicago campus through Aug. 6.

The exhibits, Nadav Assor's and Tirtza Even's "Chronicle of a Fall" and the group video exhibition "A Species of Theft," are free and open to the public.

"Chronicle of a Fall" is an immersive, feature-length video installation depicting the fragmented, transient experience of a group of immigrants in the U.S. The work deals with a period in which interpersonal relationships, the experience of home, and one's sense of presence and belonging have all been transformed and fractured by global capital, electronic media and government policy.

The exhibit begins with a simple question asked of a group of six immigrant workers, primarily from the Global South and the Middle East: "What is home to you?"

Many of the immigrants or immigrant-born subjects of "Chronicle of a Fall," including the artists themselves, have left one country in which democracy is cast in shadow for the U.S., where democracy is under threat by U.S. citizens enabled by American politics. The work's multiple videos convey the disjointed nature of the immigrant subjects' experiences, providing an intimate and visceral insight into their daily lives and domestic environments.

"UIC Gallery 400 is thrilled to debut the breathtaking 'Chronicle of a Fall' at its more than 90-minute full length. The filmmakers have created a mesmerizing environment that encompasses the absorbing scenes in which the work's immigrant participants provide intimate insights into their experiences of disjuncture, bias, love and yearning," said Lorelei Stewart, director of UIC Gallery 400.

Referencing the 1961 documentary "Chronicle of a Summer" by Jean Rouch, "Chronicle of a Fall" updates the former film's cinema verité approach with emerging technologies such as parallel body-worn cameras used by both subjects and filmmakers, as well as through volumetric capture and projection mapping.

Where "Chronicle of a Fall" highlights the uneven formation of immigrant identities and social bonds, "A Species of Theft" focuses on dispossession — the loss of possession,

namely land or personhood — as an entry point for understanding how property ownership is generated.

The exhibit, which features artists Marwa Arsanios, Carolina Caycedo, Tomashi Jackson and Skawennati, is informed by complex historical understandings of displacement, immigration, labor and alienation between North America, Britain and Kurdistan. As a resource, land establishes personal and political connections related to belonging somewhere. Its theft and rendering as an object for control have shaped settler-colonial societies and what their conceptions of race and identity are, according to the exhibit.

“The artists in the exhibition dramatize various historical problems that remain present and ever-relevant today,” said Denny Mwaura, curator of “A Species of Theft” and assistant director of UIC Gallery 400. “I hope the show offers a meditative and educational experience that enables deeper reflections on our relationship to earth.”

“Species of Theft” borrows its title from theorist Robert Nichols’ book “Theft Is Property!” in which Nichols contends that “dispossession” is a form of theft — one dependent on law and race to produce and pave the way for property ownership. The featured artists converse with Nichols’ theory and are concerned with issues regarding citizenship, nation-building and self-governance. They employ video to recognize “futurity, eco-feminist practices and sovereignty with an emphasis on editing techniques and narrative structures that expand on mediated experiences across varying landscapes.”

During the run of the exhibitions, UIC’s Gallery 400 will hold multiple events featuring “Chronicle of a Fall” participants, a screening of Jean Rouch’s 1961 *Chronicle of a Summer*, a conversation with artists Nadav Assor and Tirtza Even, and additional screenings of related works by contemporary film artists.

Please visit <https://gallery400.uic.edu> for full details on the ***Chronicle of a Fall*** and ***A Species of Theft*** exhibitions and the upcoming related programs.

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday 12-5 p.m.

Support for “Chronicle of a Fall” is provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the School of Art and Art History, the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, and UIC. The exhibition is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

The artists developed “Chronicle of a Fall” in part through a fellowship with MIT Open Documentary Lab, 2019-2021, with additional support from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Connecticut College and the City of Chicago.

Support for “A Species of Theft” is provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the School of Art & Art History, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, UIC. The exhibition is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.