


LA's COLA 2019 Fellowship Recipients

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Noah Becker's



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"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

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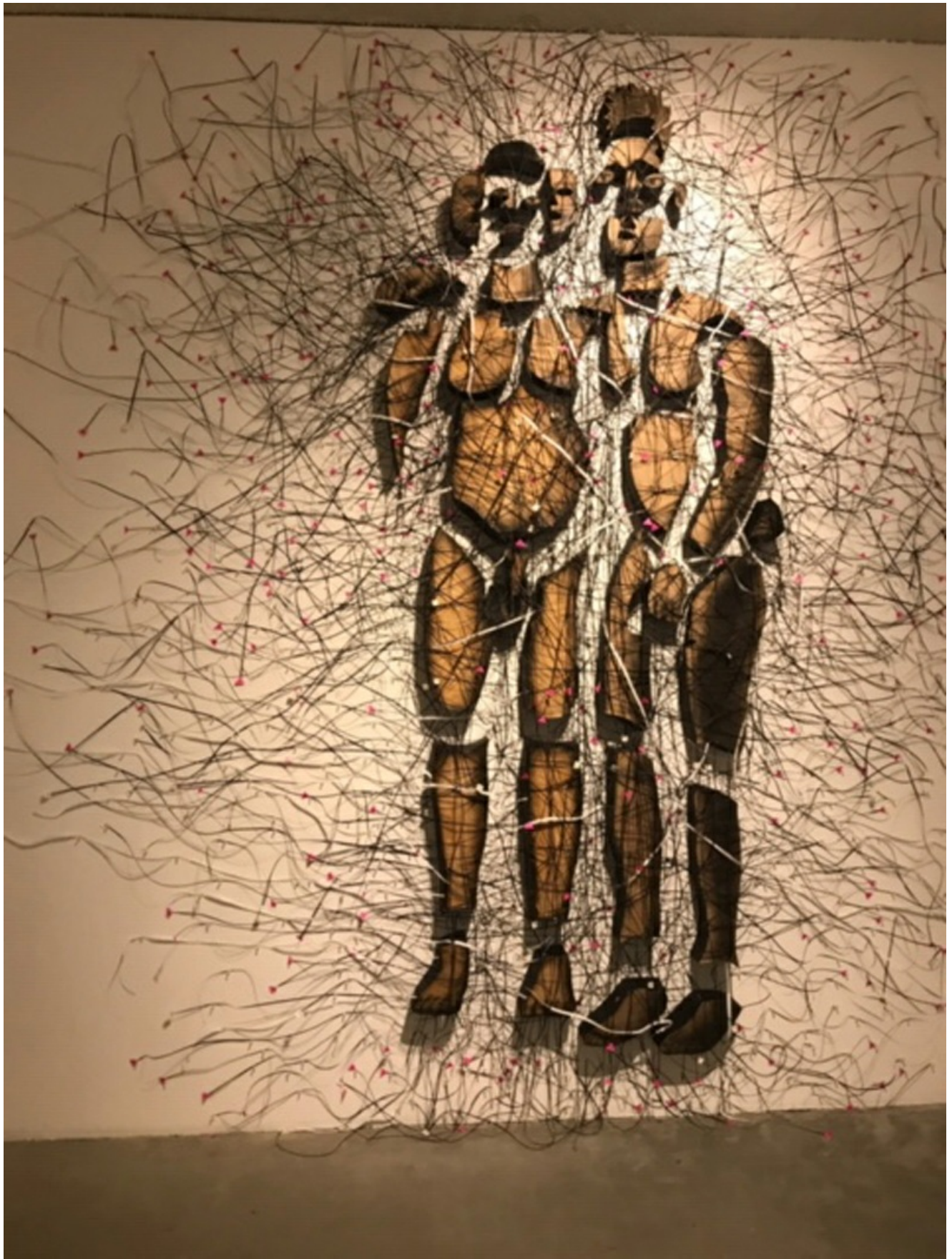
By GENIE DAVIS, July 2019

As interactive and immersive as the work is innovative, the 2019 COLA (City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Fellowships) exhibition at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery offers stellar visual works through July 14th. Awarded annually to LA-based artists by DCA, the COLA Fellowships support the creation of new works by a selection of the City's most exemplary mid-career artists, having received grants of \$10,000.

The program's contemporary artworks feature a dazzling range of mediums and approaches including video and sculptural installations as well as photography, mixed media, painted, and drawn images. Participating artists include: Juan Capistrán, Enrique Castrejon, Kim Fisher, Katie Grinnan, Sabrina Gschwandtner, Alice Könitz, Olga Koumoundouros, Suzanne Lummis, Aleida Rodríguez, Sandy Rodriguez, Stephanie Taylor, Dwight Tribble, Peter Wu, and Jenny Yurshansky.



At the opening event, highlights included a live musical interpretation performed on artist Katie Grinnan's wood EEG-based sculpture. Along with creating a massive, semi-circular sculpture based on diagrams of her brain activity during sleep, Grinnan offered a haunting original musical piece emanating from her sculpture, *5 Seconds of Dreaming*. Musicians Kozue Matsumoto and Eugene Moon performed the work, playing on strings stretched on the sculpture. The result was music that sounded like something both born of a dream and created on another planet. In other words, it fit perfectly with the aesthetic of Grinnan's sculpture: massive yet fragile in appearance, the jagged peaks and dips of the wood resembled a frieze in form, one that depicted the skyline of an alien kingdom. The curved wooden sculpture was placed on top of black metal "towers" that themselves evoked images of oil rigs.



Enrique Castrejon's spectacular, large scale wall sculptures were created using steel pins, foam core board, thumbtacks and black marker among other materials. Detailed with data from published reports on *HIV and Gay and Bisexual Men*, the graceful works use images of the male body annotated with data relating to HIV infection rates - higher among black and Latinx populations. Like giant, disjointed sculptural models or dimensional, disconnected brown paper dolls, the figures loom large against and within spidery wisps of steel wires. The impression of the work is of beings suspended within and caught among these strange mutant threads, yet refusing to be defined by them. Castrejon's works here touch on his career as a West Hollywood HIV counselor.



One of the most involving and absorbing works in the exhibition belongs to Peter Wu. The artist's *Or, the Creatures of Prometheus II*, uses mapped-HD video projection and sound in a 6 minute and 42 second loop. The loop is projected onto translucent fabric on a plywood cube in a darkened room. Attendees at the opening waited in line to enter and view the project, based on the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelly's novel *Frankenstein* – which was originally titled *The Modern Prometheus*, Shimmering colors shifted and dazzled, royal blue and purple to greens and gold or cosmic streaks of silver. Along with the changing color patterns, a sculptural image of Prometheus appeared, looming in fiery red or steely grey, seeming to speak to us. The outlines of the plywood cube at times glowed with what appeared to be neon, becoming for brief moments a searing hot tesseract. The project gave the illusion of birth/death/rebirth, and was infused with a struggle for redemption.



In another separate room, Jenny Yurshansky's installation, "A Legacy of Loss," conjured the displacement and loss of the emigrant experience. The piece was created in two parts, "Shroud" and "Disperse." Her "Shroud" uses dressmakers' muslin and embroidery floss in a flowing depiction of a burial shroud imprinted with the matrilineal history of the artist's family. The embroidery threads replicate the image of a rubbing taken from a headstone in a Moldavian graveyard where the artist's great grandfather is buried. While this is the central focus of the installation, what surrounds it is a beautiful dark green forest of glass. Curved metal "branches" suspended from the ceiling hold black/emerald glass "leaves." The leaves and branches are lit to cast a pattern of shadows on the floor as fecund as that in any forest. Just beyond them, slide projectors filter images through a gauzy curtain documenting the artist's visits to the Eastern European graveyard that holds the artist's great grandfather's remains.



While each work in the exhibition is well worth seeing, among the other standouts are Alice Konitz' temporary modular structure, which could serve as a model for a home on another world, and features a reflective, circular window; Kim Fisher's "Los Angeles Hedge," a large-scaled image of a hedge with flat geometric planes of color placed over and within it; and riveting black and white works from Sabrina Gschwandtner, whose glowing noir works remind the viewer of both mosaics and mazes.

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (www.lamag.org) is located at 4800 Hollywood Boulevard in Barnsdall Park. **WM**



