

March 21, 2017 | By Doug Ramsey

## Alumnae, Students Behind Performance at UC San Diego Qualcomm Institute

Graduate students at the University of California San Diego will stage an original work and performance on Thursday, March 23, in the Qualcomm Institute on the university campus. Their interdisciplinary work, “The Burden of Selfhood”, will explore the themes of feminism, identity and technology.

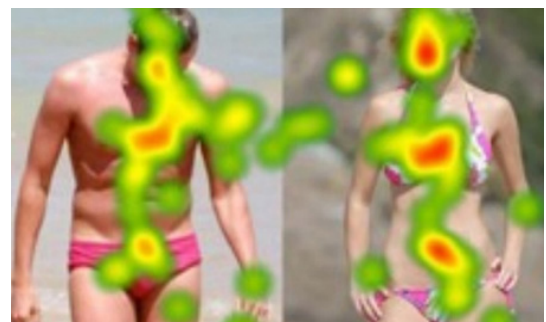
The performance is the third event in the institute’s 2016-2017 season of its performance series, the Initiative for Digital Exploration of Arts and Sciences (IDEAS). It takes place from 5pm to 7pm on Thursday, March 23 in the Calit2 Theater on the ground floor of Atkinson Hall, the institute’s headquarters building at UC San Diego.

The event is open to the public and free of charge. Anyone planning to attend is invited to RSVP to Trish Stone at [tstone@ucsd.edu](mailto:tstone@ucsd.edu).

By using interactive technology and research from cognitive science, music, poetry, video and performance art, “The Burden of Selfhood” will investigate the experience of viewing and being viewed as a gendered body.

“Technology has accelerated the recursive gaze to the point that we continually perform and project back onto each other our internalized expectations for unattainable perfection,” said artist Stefani Byrd, an MFA alumna in Visual Arts who is also a lecturer in the department’s ICAM major. “This poly-vocal performance will use large-scale data visualizations and live performers to make explicit both the collective gaze and the implicit impact of being seen.”

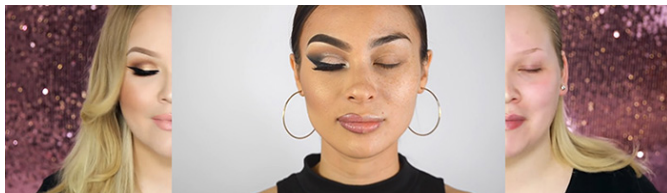
Using gaze-tracking technology, the first part of the live performance will implicate the view of the audience by revealing where their attention is focused on the body of the performer as the piece unfolds. This data will be used to create a ‘heat map’ that is then projected onto the performer’s body.



In Act Two, the artists use projection mapping to display alternative faces onto the performer's face, turning it into a "malleable surface that we can transform to visualize ideas around reconstructing identity," said Sara Ciston, MFA candidate in Writing at UC San Diego, who also worked on the piece.

*Images of individual makeup tutorials projected on Qualcomm Institute's Vroom display wall in Atkinson Hall's theater for performance of "The Burden of Selfhood."*

Cognitive Science Ph.D. student Amy Rae Fox conducted language-based content analysis of user-generated makeup tutorial videos as a prelude to projecting new faces on the performer. Other artists involved in *The Burden of Selfhood* include composer Fernanda Navarro, a Ph.D. student in the Music department, and UC San Diego MFA alumna Heidi Kayser, an interdisciplinary artist.



*Closeup of tutorials before and after makeup during performance of "The Burden of Selfhood."*

Following are short bios of the students and alumna behind the original work:

**Amy Rae Fox** is an information designer and doctoral student in Cognitive Science at UC San Diego. Her research examines the notion of representation and the relationship between external representations and

cognitive activity. Fox is interested in how representations of abstract concepts might engender novel insights, pushing the boundaries of human conceptual processing.

**Fernanda Navarro** is a composer who works with instrumental and electronic music and has been exploring performance art and installation. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at UC San Diego and promotes experimental music as a producer and curator of concerts and music festivals.

**Heidi Kayser's** interdisciplinary work interweaves sculpture with performance, fashion, photography, drawing and digital media while examining the relationship between body and self-image. A UCSD MFA alumna, she recently premiered the CARAPACE Collection of sculptural garments on the runway at the CUSP Fashion Show, and is currently working on a public art sculpture and performance in Los Angeles.

**Sarah Ciston** was recently named one of SF Weekly's "Best Writers without a Book" and now has two books slated for publication. She graduated from University of Southern California's Resident Honors Program as a Trustee Scholar and is now researching precarity and GIF poetics as an MFA candidate in Writing at UC San Diego.

**Stefani Byrd**'s artistic practice includes video installation, new media, and interactive technologies. She aims to shed light on the complicated nature of communication within a contemporary culture where social stereotypes often define our interactions. She is an MFA alumna and current Lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Computing and the Arts (ICAM) major in the Visual Arts department at UC San Diego.

Now in its fourth season, the Qualcomm Institute's primary performance series, IDEAS, features nine works that cross disciplinary boundaries at the intersection of art and technology. The performances and artist residencies were awarded after a peer-review competition open to faculty and graduate students in Music, Theatre and Dance, as well as Visual Arts and engineering disciplines.

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#### MEDIA CONTACT

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