

March 02, 2017 | By Sheena Ghanbari

UC San Diego Visual Arts Graduate Students Showcase their Talents

In the largest display of scholarship and creativity in visual arts at the university, UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts graduate students have organized two full days of programs designed to welcome the campus and community. The annual events known as the “Ph.D. Symposium” and the “Open Studios” highlight graduate student achievements. The programs take place **Friday, March 3, 3:30 – 9 p.m.** and **Saturday, March 4, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.** in three campus locations: the University Art Gallery, the Structural and Materials Engineering Building and the Visual Arts Facility.



A. distachyos, 2016, Aponogeton distachyos, water, acrylic, LEDs, thin film. Image courtesy of the artist, M.F.A. candidate Maya VanderSchuit

“This year is really the first time that we were able to truly weave together the Open Studios events with the annual Ph.D. Symposium,” noted M.F.A candidate and Open Studios coordinator, Andrew Sturm. “We are excited to see how it plays out—but we are hoping that it will mean more attendance at both events and create opportunities to find relationships between the Ph.D. talks and the M.F.A. work.”

The events kick off with a roundtable on “Art, Activism, and Alternate Pedagogies,” **March 3, 3:30 p.m., at the University Art Gallery** as part of “Re-thinking Art History, Center and Periphery,” the 10th annual Ph.D. Symposium. This year’s conference organizers were interested in addressing pedagogy and reflecting the current student body.

“We wanted our panelists to reflect the interests of our Ph.D. students and to challenge the Western canon of art history,” explained Ifan Chen, Ph.D. student and symposium co-organizer with Ph.D. student Julia Fernandez.

“Many issues are under-explored, like history of Latino arts and Asian arts (and many others) We want the field of art history to be more well-informed, fluid and relevant to the current world,” stated Chen, who added that the University Art Gallery is a fitting venue because of its historical commitment to displaying diverse art practices. “We are inspired by the department’s past, founded in the 1960s by a collaborative artistic community; their work responded to the vital political currents of the day,” she said.



Image courtesy of the artist, M.F.A. candidate Jessica Frelund.

“Re-thinking Art History, Center and Periphery” features a keynote address by UC Berkeley’s Anneka Lenssen, assistant professor of global modern art, titled “Two Headed Passport: An Art History of Arab Mobility,” **March 4, 3 p.m.**, in the **Visual Arts Presentation Lab, SME 149**. The organizers selected Lenssen as this year’s speaker because she embodied the theme of the conference and as a researcher of cultural politics in the Middle East her work is relevant to the current climate. The Symposium runs from **9 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 4** at the **Visual Arts Presentation Lab, SME 149**, immediately followed by Open Studios.

This year’s graduate student Open Studios will feature exhibitions and screenings in addition to approximately 40 open artist studios throughout the **Visual Arts Facility** from **4 – 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 4**. Sturm expands on Open Studios programs by saying, “In addition to the two shows of current M.F.A. work curated by Anthony Graham of [the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego] and alumna Brianna Rigg in the main and commons galleries, there will also be a show of M.F.A film and video work in the performance space.” Sturm also notes there will be a new twist this year: the students have organized a screening of film and video work by current faculty at **6:30 p.m.** on the second floor of the **Visual Arts Facility**.



CACTUS TO CLOUDS (everest), 2016, sculpture, painting, sauna, lookout, social sculpture, 7'x9' 6"x3'. Image courtesy of the artist, M.F.A. candidate Trevor Amery

In the end, the Ph.D. Symposium and Open Studios are a way for the department to create a bridge to the public, as Sturm concludes: “I hope that everyone can come early and spend a few hours checking out the work and engaging with the artists and historians — that is what the two events are really about.”

For a complete schedule of the Ph.D. Symposium and Open Studios events, visit:
<http://visarts.ucsd.edu/events/uc-san-diego-visual-arts-symposium-and-open-studios>

For more information about participating artists, visit: <http://ucsdopenstudios.com>

UC San Diego's Department of Visual Arts is ranked 13th in the nation for fine arts, according to U.S. News & World Report, with high-ranking specialties in multimedia and sculpture. The Division of Arts and Humanities jumped 10 points this year to #23, according to U.S. News and World Report's Global Universities rankings.

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