

Hrönn Axelsdóttir  
Nina Melissa Pascal  
Luis F. Ramírez Celis  
David Weiner  
Moira Williams

**M.F.A. THESIS EXHIBITION 2011**

**February 8 - March 2, 2011**

**UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY**

## INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 23rd anniversary of the MFA Thesis Exhibition and the 26th year since the MFA program was established at Stony Brook. The program continues to attract top students from all over the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Our students have sought out a program that encourages dynamic interaction between the artists in the MFA program and the art historians/critics enrolled in the department's MA/Ph.D. program; and they have benefited from the synergy. The Art Department is unusual in providing this type of close collaboration between traditionally diverse practices, allowing advanced studio and art history/criticism students to profit from each other's courses and ideas.

The Master of Fine Arts at Stony Brook is a three-year, sixty-hour terminal professional degree, designed to maintain a small enrollment (we allow no more than twenty candidates in residence) and to encourage close interaction with our professional faculty and their many important contacts in the New York City art world. We are uniquely situated geographically: we are near enough to New York, and its renowned museums, galleries, studios, and concert halls, to make recurrent visits easy; yet we are sufficiently far to enjoy insulation from the density and pressures of the city, in the relative peace provided by the suburban/rural environment of Long Island's North Shore. Our graduate students enjoy the use of our excellent technical facilities (foundry, kilns, darkrooms, presses), but can focus on their own work in recently renovated individual studios on campus. Additionally, they have the advantage of being part of a large,

world-class research university with centers not only in Stony Brook itself but also in Manhattan, Southampton and East Hampton, where the historic Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center are administered by our Department. Our students have access, for consultation and collaboration, to associate faculty in Philosophy, History, Women's Studies, the Humanities Institute, and Cinema and Cultural Studies; they participate in the Department's affiliation with the Consortium for Digital Arts, Culture and Technology (cDACT). They also profit from material, practical, and intellectual assistance from other, even unrelated, departments at Stony Brook: they have blown glass with the chemists, developed glazes with the metallurgists, harnessed laser optics with members of the Physics Department, and established creative connections with Computer Science, Music, and Theater.

University Art Gallery Director Rhonda Cooper deserves our heartfelt thanks for her energy, competence, efficiency, and design sense in staging these often challenging exhibitions by our graduating MFA students. The success of our students is readily apparent in the 2011 MFA exhibition; we are proud of each and every one of them.

Anthony V. Phillips  
Chairman  
Department of Art



Grönn Axelsdóttir  
*Shopping Cart*, 2009  
Digital color print





Luis F. Ramírez Celis  
*Circa 1954, 2009*  
Digital b/w print (series 1 of 12)



David Weiner  
*CLOUD POINT*, 2010  
Microcrystalline wax, water



Moira Williams

*Pickled Balloons*, 2010

Glass, biodegradable balloons, ribbons, cloves,  
dillweed, garlic, white vinegar, salt, water

## STATEMENTS BY THE ARTISTS

### Hrönn Axelsdóttir

Photography is my point of departure. The work is between motion and stasis. The videos refer to the past state, a reality one cannot touch. In two of the pieces the screen and its textural surface are integral to the work that is projected upon it. This embodiment of the screen is an attempt to keep the viewer present. The texture of the screen creates multiple experiences for the viewer depending upon the distance the viewer is to the screen. The photographs are of found objects. They show a past, but also project the human condition. Surprisingly these objects communicate our state of mind and being, like they were living in the world.

### Luis F. Ramírez Celis

In my recent work I have been interested in ideas about the future of the past and the figure of the modern architect. Stories about the modern spirit of progress and utopia, the death of modern architecture, and the resistance towards modernity in Latin America are the subjects of my visual explorations.

Photography, drawing, video, and architectural models are mixed in my work with popular music and humor to satirize and appropriate the phlegmatic linearity of the great masters of architecture. In the project "Superblock," images of the death of modern architecture are mixed with Venezuelan music composed for housing superblocks in Caracas. In "1954 CA" I perform for the camera as a modern architect in order to appropriate the design of the Whitney Museum through a sculpture and press clippings. "Closer Than We Think" presents futuristic designs and images of implosions of nuclear plants mixed with the song "Popcorn," 1969. The project in this exhibition explores drawing in relation to utopian architectonic structures from the 1960s.

### David Weiner

My work examines bodies in motion and material transformations; the scale ranges from the microscopic to the monumental. Driven to make large scale sculpture in real time, I create in an aquatic environment. This alternative workspace reduces the confines of both gravity and friction. Submerging myself completely in a vessel of cold water, I inject 55 gallons of hot liquid microcrystalline wax from above. The interaction reconfigures the lattice structure of the molten wax as it spreads and solidifies. Layers of metal mesh grids suspended under water act as a "net" for the wax extrusions forming a three-dimensional drawing board. In an effort to extend the length and girth of the forms, I can coddle the wax upon entry, gently restraining the influx of material and allowing the crystalline structure to coagulate and grow. These event-based sculptures examine the dynamics of closeness, proximity, and fluidity between artist, materials, and surroundings. The beauty of this transformation can only be accurately captured on a micro scale, photographing at 2000 frames per second. This footage is shown alongside the sculpture, exploring the intricacies beyond the visible.

### Moira Williams

I make or find objects that I interact with in my performance-based work. I attempt to reconfigure the objects either by wearing them or by using materials known for specific uses and altering their identity. The altered material remains essentially the same, yet it becomes something else.

I am interested in the in-between states of materials and how those states can be connected to healing and the ways of being with objects. I believe that objects may offer healing through the rituals of collecting, dispersing, and repetitive use. Objects, especially those that are hand-made or reconfigured, are powerful tools for accessing multiple modes of healing.



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Design: Hrönn Axelsdóttir and Luis F. Ramírez Celis

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I also want to express my appreciation to members of the Staller Center for the Arts staff: Joe Esser, Pat Moran, Pete Pantaleo, and Christian Routh, for

exhibition assistance; Vanessa Andujar, Elizabeth Carre, Cristina Cruz, Manami Hotta, Ji-Won Lee, San San Ng, and Natsue Sakurai, Gallery Interns; Mariko Aoyagi, Allison Conley, Sophia Dang, Luis F. Ramírez Celis, and Yoong-ju Yoon, Gallery Assistants; Liz Silver, Staller Center Production Manager, Liz Lamendola, Technical Director, and the Staller Center Technical Crew for exhibition lighting; and Aubrey Szczygiel, Gallery Secretary.

Most of all, I want to thank Hrönn Axelsdóttir, Nina Melissa Pascal, Luis F. Ramírez Celis, David Weiner, and Moira Williams for a very exciting MFA exhibition.

Rhonda Cooper  
Director