

Alexa Horochowski - Nomeacuerdo (I-don't-remember) Land



February 27, 2021 - March 27, 2021

ALEXA HOROCHOWSKI
NOMEACUERDO (I-DON'T-REMEMBER) LAND
HAIR+NAILS MINNEAPOLIS
FEBRUARY 27 – MARCH 27, 2021



"In an event known as the end Permian extinction, roughly 251 million years ago, an estimated 70 percent of land plants and animals died, along with 84 percent of ocean organisms. Memory of life is written in the fossil record by the victims of extinction. Within geologic time, the lifespans of the living are fleeting. One of the oldest beings, found in the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest in the White Mountains of eastern California, is Methuselah, a bristlecone pine, that is near 5,000 years old. My Ukrainian-Argentinian father is 85 years old, born on the same day that Minneapolis, George Floyd, at 46 years of age, was killed, May 25, 1935/2020.

The pandemic has accentuated human vulnerabilities to climate change. Urbanization and habitat encroachment result in interspecies co-mingling that gives rise to novel coronaviruses. Scientists speak regularly of ecosystem collapse brought on by human reliance on fossil fuels. We are living a time of convergence where climate change is no longer abstract but of consequence in our daily lives. In the preface to "This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation," Chicana scholar Gloria E. Anzaldúa writes,

Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it's become a sort of "home."

This exhibition offers a reverie about human and non-human relationships and encounters with deep and near time. Time etches the thoughts and memories of ancestors, living and dead, into the strata of the human brain. From 5,500 miles away, my father accompanies me in my travels and craft. Objects, digital prints, and video embody sensory experiences such as: hiking the lava fields of Kilauea Volcano, Volcanoes National Park, Big Island, Hawaii; co-habiting with a Northern flicker at an A-frame cabin, Forest Island Project, Mammoth Lakes, California; following stray dogs performing non-human allyship with human protesters, Concepción, Chile; welding and weaving an Acapulco chair, the outcome of a YouTube, how-to-video uploaded by Mexican fabricator, José Ríos."

– Alexa Horochowski, February 2021

A Part for the Whole: Alexa Horochowski's metonymic craftwork by Sarah Petersen

This show is massive.

HAIR + NAILS is not a large space, but every thing in *Nomeacuerdo Land* gives me pause. Referents boom, reverberate. The works (and beings) Horochowski situates us among in the confines of gallery space point to massive subjects - the role of interspecies collaborations in how our world gets made (and unmade), the deep time of geologic epochs laid bare almost casually in any given Present, the essentially fleeting experience of human time, even of individual human identity. But when I say "subjects" here, I guess I mean objects - the hyperobjects about which Timothy Morton writes, those many actual objects (like nuclear radiation, mycelial networks, weather, global warming, DNA) that are distributed across space, time, and bodies but whose effects are nonetheless determinative, evidenced near and far, while being impossible for humans to see or sense all at once (or ever) in their entirety. Instead, we get only glimpses, momentary appearances, examples and instances and warped views alerting us to their full existence and their impact on all they interlace. We just have to pay more and better attention in order to see them for what they are, these consequential objects. Horochowski and her collaborators tune our instruments.

The objects in this show shudder with multiple meanings, each like a faceted side view of some larger, massive whole; each pulls us closer, attunes us to interrelations and correspondences. We have Horochowski's deft use of recording technology - video, photography, writing - and her polymathic skills in object-making and fabrication to thank for this partial salvage of not only human experience but experiences of things that exceed us. She transposes and recombines materials, images, signs and symbols in ways that lead us to sense more than one thing at once. Interobjective realities, relations between things that produce one thing but also point to something else (or somethings else), come into being through her prepared hands - and through her work with witting or unwitting collaborators.

She wants us to think about this - it's not just *her* making this suite of works, not this time (if ever). The pamphlet for the show, with the works' titles and Horochowski's writings about them, distinguishes repeatedly where collaborations have taken place, "Made in collaboration with" appearing next to nearly every work. And when not made collaboratively, they are frequently made About the kind of interspecies mix-up of world-building, maintenance and destruction happening all around and through us, all the time.

Take the two-channel video work in the basement, *La Maravilla*. The two projection loops, each a separate but related montage, are of different lengths, so once they start, they never synch again - and you can't actually watch both sides at once, anyway: your eyes and attention cannot truly watch two images simultaneously, must instead slide and dart back and forth to produce some quick, loose, diachronic understanding. This can only be purposeful, this sense of overwhelm, this sense that we can only get the gist of the videos' relationships to one another; our interpretation of each concatenated moment will be determined by chance, and to some degree by our ability to keep up. Nearly all of the footage in both video channels is also slowed, but variably, further producing a sense of uneven suspension in time, a dislocating reverie from which to consider the relations playing out between these projections, between a dog's stare and

the camera lens or the eyes of its operator, between the subjects and objects of these projections and ourselves.

In each projection, *quiltros* - stray dogs endemic to Chile on which this show trains sustained focus - meander the street or shipyard, attentive, attendant; sea lions shed and sun themselves, mounting seaside stairways, the dogs seemingly as astonished as we at this hobbling use of the built environment. Fishmongers discard fish parts dockside, feeding sea lions and seagulls, entertaining human families, exciting dogs - a whole system. Always, there are dogs, on sidewalks, on beaches, in trash heaps, playing with toys produced by the death and offal of other beings, or monitoring the scene. Street shoppers transition to street protesters confronting pock-marked and paint-balled armored vehicles more lame than bold in their slow patrol - and here dogs once more intertwine their lives and purpose with humans, lunging and barking at military arrays in alliance with the people, becoming the *Negro Matapacos* (Blackie the Cop Killer) made internet- and movement-famous in Chile, 2019-20, as the "riot dog" mascot of protests (as Alexa writes in notes for her black-on-black embroidered flag of the same name, hanging on the wall nearby). The intersections among all these species produce more to think about than we possibly have time to consider - returning me to the work's title, "The Wonder" in English. I even have a moment of animal-vegetable-mineral misrecognition - absolute ignorance as I watch a woman disgorge from some organic, fuzzy body - what? something red, a large seed, another, a series of livers? - to be sold at her market stand. This entirely decenters my place in the systems I'm witnessing - and who even knows what's playing in the sidelong projection while this is going on, because I'm immersed over here. Our sight and attention can never fully be in two places at once.

Our hearing, on the other hand, can be everywhere at once - and the soundscape of the two-floor gallery show is not so much immersive as penetrative. The sounds don't pull you toward any one thing - they fill the space, and you. From the basement, the slowed-down sounds of waves crashing, seabirds, protest drums and human voices come to sound like wave-driven machinery or the bowels of a ship, thundering to mix with a

pitch and volume of cicadas emitting from I'm not sure where and the astonishingly liquid bird sounds from the *El Pais de Nomeacurdo* video on the gallery's main floor. These sounds mix to the point where the outside world, recorded, is inside me, and also make me crave a bodily experience of SOMEWHERE ELSE (quarantine has lasted so long, now). This forces another kind of recognition, a trans-kin-ship. We're meant to be overwhelmed, among others.

I've made claims for the expansiveness of this show; as if to prove my point, there is too much to write about. I can't even get to most of the embroidered linen flags, the photo book, the video taken at Horochowski's father's home in Argentina, the gotdang *Human-Woodpecker-Birch-Insect Collab*. I want to - it's well worth it - but it would suck the air and page count from this publication, and I really want to read others' thoughts on all this. More spacetime would yield study and articulation of the sumptuous, subtly baroque energy in the many lava-imaged chiffon prints draped on the main floor gallery walls, the honed contradictions between "permanent" mass and ephemeral, man-made delicacy in rhymed shapes (lava rock and chiffon, undulates both), fluttering from our own movements as well as from air purifiers joining us to disperse and neutralize our presence in the reign of COVID-19. As Horochowski states in the notes for these pieces, "Dimensions variable." Truer words were never spoken.

There is the biting *Schadenfreude* flag, the show's loudest work, visible from the sidewalk, a dirty neutral shade of lettering for the word itself, felt on blood red linen, one of the only red things in the show; there is the coin-flipped wall behind this containing its counterpoint, the other red thing - the handprints, hunted animals and hunter's head, imagery from the "Cave of Hands" in Patagonia (taken by her father in the early 1970's), printed on chiffon, delicately staring you down from 10,000 years in the past, calling our bluff on laughing at others' misfortune when misfortune is always shared. Red flags, warnings.

There is the matter of where each piece has been placed, of what has been taken for granted (not much) or newly considered (pretty much everything)

when fitting ideas and objects into the space, the matter of where our gaze is directed. One can imagine there was some editing to this exhibition - maybe not every thing is here. This selection of objects, arrangements, moving pictures, presences, indicates others elsewhere, just beyond. We are to think of them, too. And to think of ourselves in relation to them. What's here transposes what's not. As Morton says in *Hyperobjects*, "A thing delivers another thing."* What do Horochowski's things deliver? She brings a thing closer (a concept, a being), within range, makes it sensible. Every thing is short for something, a part of the thing they represent, a metonym, a shadow of a hyperobject or hyperobjects they are already a part of, a peek at a side. We sense the massive from the small. The echo is louder than the crack.

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*Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 2013. P 149.

Sarah Petersen is an artist, educator, and organizer. Recent publications include *conversations with Shana Kaplow* in her monograph, *Object Objects*, and with *Daniel Shinbaum* in the *Goethe in the Skyways* project catalog, published by Spector Books. Her multidisciplinary practice uses interventionist installations, performance, and participatory projects to reframe marginalized relationships to power and investigate the tension between circumstance and agency in our daily political lives. Since 2014, she has taught at MCAD, Hamline University, the University of Minnesota, and the Art & Social Change program at HECUA; she also served as artistic producer at the *Goethe in the Skyways* project for its year in downtown Minneapolis, 2018-'19. She earned her MFA from CalArts (Art, 2012) and fantasizes about mythical, nonexistent studios with rehearsal space, spray booths, dock access, daylight, and very long walls.

The Lamentation by Sheila Dickinson

When we arrived, we weren't quite sure what was going to happen. We set to work because we knew we had a job to do and we had a pretty strong plan, but it still needed to be open, not entirely set. This is the thing about working in a creative industry, with creative people, there needs to be at all times a certain amount of give, of flexibility to allow a thought, hunch, process to find its way to the end point that feels resolved, as much as it can be.

When looking at an exhibition, especially a solo show by a living artist, the process of bringing together objects and ideas by the artist has to be taken into account. While curating *Beautiful Sky*, Horochowski's solo show in the 4000 sq feet of Rochester Art Center's entire second floor, it felt like we had stepped into a vortex. Yes, we were installing some of Alexa's *Vortex Drawings*, so the word naturally comes to mind, but it was also a feeling, a sensation. Mostly it felt like a drawing inward of powerful forces held within the constructed objects and images that swirled around Alexa, an embodied intellect at the center of it all. She pulled in stray bits and pieces from the landscape, litter like, then transformed each into something else; coir logs that normally cover river shores hung from the ceiling, styrofoam cups danced around a wind vortex in a video, shipping crates made out of

adobe, large water carrying jugs out of crystalizing salt, and car sale flags cast in metal as if dripping in oil. These subtle translations of one material to another bespoke an unsettledness, of things that are not quite as they seem.

Once the viewer entered the space of these things/objects, all their associations began interacting with the objects themselves, they too added to the force of the vortex. Then a last minute surprise occurred, before the galleries opened to the public, the vortex pulled in some other powerful forces, unexpected but timely. We sped up our installation schedule for *Beautiful Sky* because we found out that some exciting guests wanted to see the exhibition while in Rochester; Ann Hamilton, Iñigo Monglano-Ovalle and James Garland. The power and insight that came with these visitors was incredibly satisfying, hearing their crystal clear understanding of Alexa's vision effortlessly articulated by these artists.

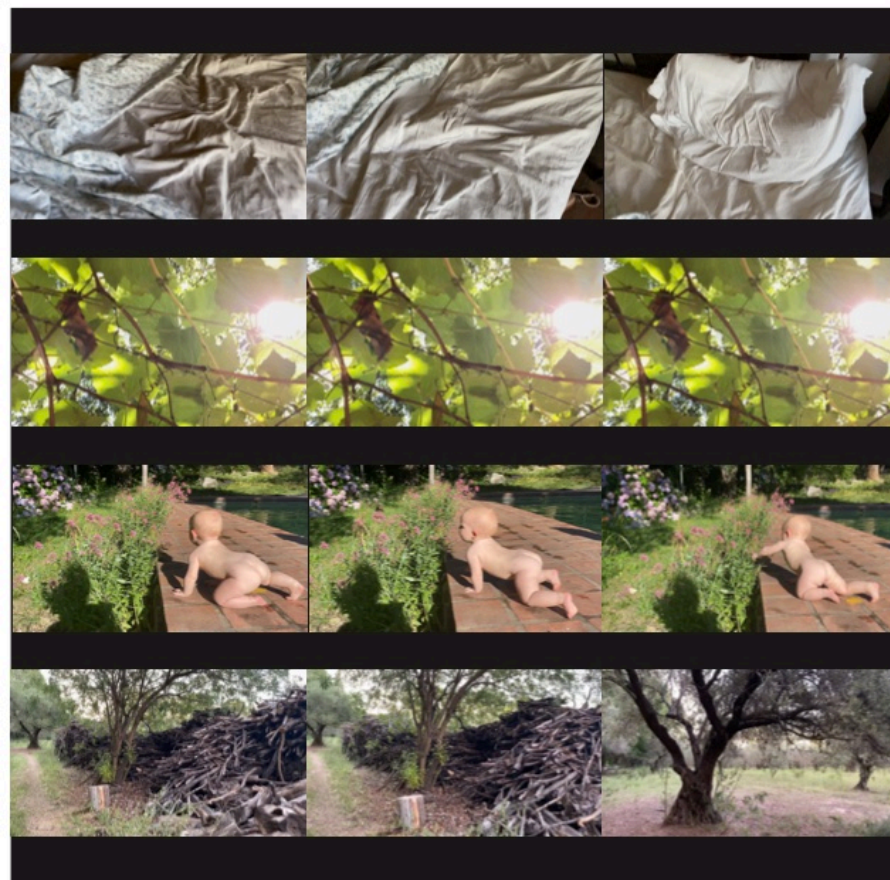
Before I began working on this project with Alexa, I had thought of her *Vortex Drawings* project as a clear statement about humans being sucked into the de facto mode of unsustainable modern convenience lifestyle. Though we might make small tweaks to live more sustainably, it is not enough, and we continue to exacerbate the problem, making it so that we cannot escape the vortex of the Anthropocene era. This is the conventional metaphor of what vortex means: a dangerous or bad situation in which you become more and more involved and from which you cannot escape. As we worked together in the curation of Alexa's work, the vortex expanded its metaphorical resonance to encapsulate forces that are seemingly greater than ourselves at work around us, pulling us in and then potentially transforming humans and matter. Caught in its inextricable pull, resistance is futile. Once we're bound up in its flurry, we then increase its pull, add to its force. The vortex generates collectivity with or without consent. This inability to individually alter the course of the vortex by being at the mercy of the many forces coming together, we metaphorically become the styrofoam cup and other litter dancing between buildings in a city. There is both a letting go or giving into the forces and a becoming enlivened and energized by them. Like the energy and swell of the uprising

that poured into the streets of Minneapolis after the murder of George Floyd, that danced between and into buildings, becoming its own vortex, one that insisted the status quo change. That in order to stop the general flow of socio-political moral acceptance of murder of Black men by the police, a new vortex of change needed such an intense collective force.

At the center of the vortex there is a burrowing down, a central, if hollow, centrifugal force. With *Nomeacuerdo (I-don't-remember) Land*, Horochowski's father and George Floyd, who share the same birth/death date, occupy the hollowed out space. Or what has become hallowed space of memory, love and rage. Horochowski's father, in his mid-80's now, lives in rural Argentina on a homestead being overrun by nature, 5000 miles from his daughter. Pulling in objects and images of her father, his rural abode and her own childhood, the top gallery of Hair and Nails seems to swirl around his absence. Confounded, perhaps, by COVID travel restrictions and knowing this past year that if something were to happen to her father, she couldn't go to see him. In the stunning video *El Pais de Nomeacuerdo*, the cyclical nature of life is foregrounded in the scenes of her father with his infant grandchild, but none more so than the lingering shot of her father's empty bed. The absence here has such an incredible weight, I could feel it heavy in my chest, eyes welling up, as the camera follows the folds and imprints on the linens. Mategna, the painter's name, literally rang out in my head, as it echoes mournfully through the video shot, Alexa's *Lamentation*.

Did this swell of feeling ready me for the decent into the basement gallery? Why did it feel so mournful down there? The aching slowness of the video footage on the bifurcated screen keeps the viewer stuck as in quicksand unable to tear away or truly gain a full picture of what is unfolding in front of them. I don't know about you, but the month of March 2021 has incapacitated my productivity, feeling as if I'm caught by something pulling back, most often to bed. I have been reading about others feeling the same, about this collective mourning for what we lost this past year, about the emotional heaviness cause by the anniversary of the first lockdown. Our salvation of hope lies in *Negro Matapacos*, one of a collection of

stray dogs at the focus of the apocalyptic scenes of civil unrest in Chile. With combined human and animal forces, they together rebel against the systemic abuse and the endemic inequality it causes. Despite the vicious repression of the protests, the dogs and the protestors find the will to persevere and rise up. The uniting of animal and human forces, combined in a shared cause returns to the notion of the centrifugal pull of the vortex, but the energy is different. While the slowed down motion allows us to see the dogs, who weave too quickly to be seen sped up, the slo-mo simulates the weighted effect of trying to grieve a trauma that is still ongoing. Yet there will be moments that will revive us out the mournful morass. We will persevere and rise up despite the absence of George Floyd, the absence of those lost to COVID-19 in the daily death counts, the absence of the year worth of days lost to nothingness. While equally predicting more loss in the future or anticipatory grief for Alexa's father who ages more quickly at a distance and the anticipatory grief for a conviction that will not be enough to cure the trauma of George Floyd's murder and not be enough to save our city.



1

El País de Nomeacuerdo (I-don't-remember Land), HD video, 10:09 minutes, 2021

Horochofski explores memory and loss in a video documenting her father's olive orchard in Los Molles, Córdoba, Argentina. Within geologic time, the lifespans of the living are fleeting. During an artist residency at Forest Island Project, Mammoth Lakes, CA, the artist visited Methuselah, a 5000 year-old bristlecone pine, at the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest in the White Mountains. Horochofski's Ukrainian-Argentinian father, a retired surgeon, has been tending an olive orchard for 26 years.

Dr. Sheila Dickinson is the former Artistic Director at the Rochester Art Center where she curated Alexa Horochowski: Beautiful Sky and Eamon O'Kane: Intimate Expansive. As an art critic she has published in Artforum, ART News, The Brooklyn Rail, Hyperallergic, InReview, Hong Kong's Artomity, among others and. Her PhD from University College Dublin, Ireland focused on contemporary Irish art.



2

Top Left: **Acapulco Chair**, steel, leather, 2021

Schadenfreude, linen, felt, 2021
Schadenfreude is a German word for taking pleasure in other's misfortune. This word came into focus throughout President Trump's presidency whose tenure exposed the deep seeded racism inherent in the American experiment.



3



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Bottom Right: **Human-Woodpecker-Birch-Insect Collab**, Birch log, woodpecker home, bronze ashtray, 2021



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Right: **Human-Woodpecker-Birch-Insect Collab**, Birch log, woodpecker home, bronze ashtray, calligraphy, 2021

Top Left: At Forest Island Project, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 2018, the artist and a noisy Northern flicker coexisted in a 1960's A-frame cabin. *Jedem Das Seine Immer Freunde* (To Each His Own Forever Friends) is etched on the mantle.

Bottom Left: Methuselah, Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, White Mountains, CA



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Top Left: Jose Ríos welds an acapulco chair in his how-to video on YouTube.

Bottom Left: The artist's father, Alejandro Horochowski repairs a patio chair, Los Molles, Argentina.

Right: The Acapulco chair is woven with leather cord by the artist in her studio.



11

Left: Nina, Laura, Leo, and Alexa, children on petrified log, slide by Alejandro Horochowski, Patagonia, Argentina, 1972

Top Right: Boleadora and Petrified Wood, keepsakes from Patagonia, 1972
Family portrait, framed, inkjet print from color slide by Alejandro Horochowski
Memento Mori, cast bronze Polystyrene packing peanuts, 2014.



12



13

Bottom Right: **Obsidian Sunglasses**, aviator sunglasses, obsidian, 2021

Obsidian, volcanic glass, is formed when lava cools rapidly with minimal crystal growth. Material samples were collected during an artist residency at Forest Island Project, Mammoth Lakes, CA. The obsidian was cut, ground, and shaped to create geologic, lens-like forms.



14



15



16

Left: **Tamarisk**, (detail) dye sublimation on chiffon, 2021

Top Right: Photograph of obsidian from Obsidian Dome, Eastern Sierra, CA, 2018

Bottom Right: Boleadora, hand carved by native Tehuelche, Patagonia, Argentina. A type of throwing weapon of weights on the ends of interconnected cords, used to capture animals.



Tamarisk, dye sublimation print, chiffon, 2020

NOE from the California Department of Parks and Recreation:
"Eight invasive tamarisk trees, *Tamarix ramosissima*, will be removed from the viewshed of the Salton Sea SRA Visitor Center. Staff will utilize handsaws and

loppers to cut the tamarisk, then treat the stumps with an application of Garlon 4 Ultra. All biomass will be transported to the park "boneyard," staged there for 6-12 months, then disposed of."



18

Top Left: **Lava Fold**, dye sublimation print, chiffon, 2020

Horochowski photographed lava flows on a trip to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Big Island, Hawaii, 2017. The sheer fabric's breezy movements re-animate the mineral folds of molten lava.

Top Right: 13 Moons, 8,000-year-old Paiute lunar calendar, Bishop, California

Bottom Right: Photograph of lava, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Big Island, Hawaii



19



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21



22

Top Left: **Lava Fold–horizontal**, dye sublimation, chiffon, 2021

Bottom Left: **Lava Fold–fern**, dye sublimation, chiffon, 2021



23

Right: **Manos Pintadas**, printed organza, original slide by Alejandro Horochowski, 1972/2021

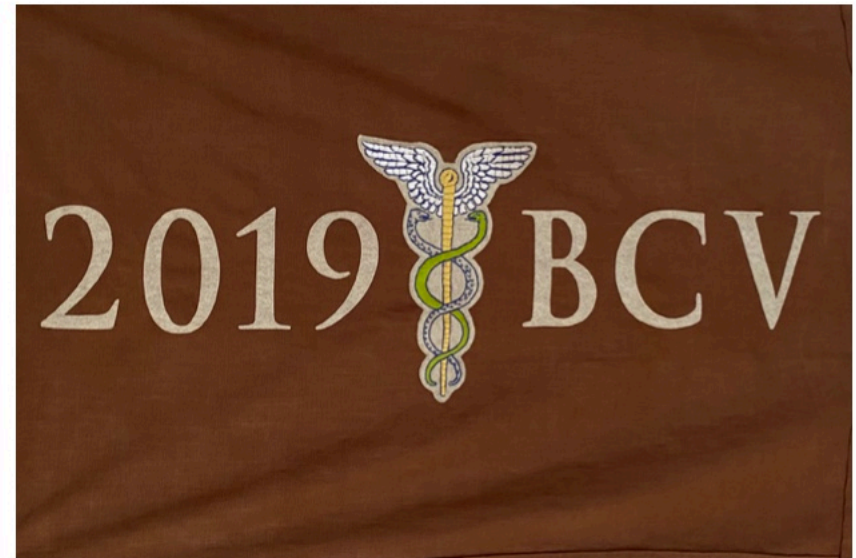
La Cueva de las Manos "Cave of Hands," Argentine Patagonia, has hundreds of prehistoric, colorful handprints airbrushed along the cave walls.



24



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26

Left: **Negro Matapacos** (Blackie the Cop Killer), linen, embroidery, 2021
Name of the Chilean "riot dog" that became the mascot of protests, 2019-2020.

Top Right: **Riot Dog**, linen, felt, 2021

Bottom Right: **2019 BCV** (Before Corona Virus), linen, felt, embroidery, 2021



27

La Maravilla, two-channel, asynchronous video projection, 34:44 minutes, 2021

During an artist residency in Southern Chile, Horochowski was responsible for feeding five *quiltros* (stray dogs). In lean times these dogs scavenge for food, hunt mice, and rely on the generosity of strangers. Negro Matapacos (Blackie the Cop Killer), a stray dog, claimed to have accompanied and protected protesters from the police, became a pre-pandemic icon of civil unrest in Chile. The *quiltro*'s gritty perseverance and

systemic neglect is familiar to all people impacted by economic models that engender material, political and social inequality. This video explores what scholar and activist Lori Gruen refers to as an "entangled empathy" that begins to erode animal hierarchy and imagines new models for "making kin" (Donna Haraway) in the Anthropocene.





29-30

Owens Lake (Dry), HD video, 13:39 minutes, 30' x 11', single-channel video projection exhibited as part of solo exhibition, **Beautiful Sky**, Rochester Art Center, MN, 2019.

In 1913, the water that fed Owens Lake in the Owens Valley of the eastern Sierra Nevada, Inyo County, California, was diverted to Los Angeles by LADWP (Los Angeles Department of Water and Power). By 1926 the lake was desiccated and would eventually become the largest source of dust pollution in the United States. The dust is currently mitigated through irrigation, managed vegetation, gravel, brine pools, and other techniques.

Alexa Horochowski's *Nomeacuerdo Land* by Cameron Downey

Serves up in late-afternoon light the firmest and most refined of nature's offerings. Burlaps of magma spur up ferns that don the audacity to find home. Land is the name of Horochowski's play, its teams swaying into the bounds of the other without effort. Each work, at first, is a cloak lighter than the air behind. The space of the gallery is at once the earthly features' homes and their thresholds. The first gasp of *Nomeacuerdo Land* is an inhale of options. And each possibility both *has* a name and *is* its name.

Of these portals, the 10-minute video, *El País de Nomeacuerdo* is a window into stillness and fact. Scenes slow track through a land that does perhaps remember, consumed into the sides of the shot. Chopped branches stack into a dam of unseen distinctions. Horses make velvet of themselves, brushing backs with the bottoms of ashy, stout, assured trees. Angles of reverence exhume a canopy of leaves into networks, architectures and communions— bearing fruit if only for itself.

Two steps closer than any Blue Planet, Horochowski's boundaries are serene, discrete. Confidence and the untold sit in the air of *El País* even in a soundscape scraped clean but for mechanical whirs of what we assume are subtropical cicadas and toads in a distant dance.

Reasonably, descent follows into what dark blue emits onto white brick: an ocean.

La Maravilla brings seagulls into cross at quarter-pace, a scene made baroque by desire for whatever fish is made waste by humans above deck. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1500) or a hell of lower stakes. Meanwhile, a lonelier, fuller shot swells the second screen of the two-channel video. A dog feasts on the discord of discarded things. In ecstasy, it becomes the smorgasbord of white corn husks beckoning to the wings of the chaos of seagulls at right. It is paradise, if not adjacent.

People stay at the edge of *La Maravilla's* world, whether by composition or otherwise. '1312's adorn the columns under a bridge in the color of celebration. Dust the hue of festival plums from military vehicles. I'd jump straight to joy, given Horochowski's implication of rupture; given Chile's demands for it. We find our way back to the birds, the seals, the splendor and scarcity in the land and hawing above. For them, the end has come and it does so daily.

Nomeacuerdo Land leaps into remnants of the known and makes country of them (For whatever that word means). Its work demands in few words that even the unaccounted for is place to spend time in. That what is barely known may be the only and final stop.

Cameron Downey is an anti-disciplinary artist and environmental scientist from Minneapolis, Minnesota. A current senior at Columbia University in New York City, she explores concepts of world-building and liminal space by way of Black, fantastical and precarious bodies. Cameron uses sculpture, film, photography, the written and the performed to engage and engulf a language of epics out of the minutiae.

Downey's art has been exhibited by HAIR+NAILS in: HAIR+NAILS at 9 Herkimer (Brooklyn, 2019), FUTURE FUTURE (2020) and in her solo show "Three Things Last Forever" (2020). Downey guest curated HOLDING SPACE, an exhibition of video, image, light and sound, in the H+N frontyard (summer 2020). Upcoming: "The Human Scale" at Rochester Art Center (summer/fall 2021).

Cross-Chronologies: Lost in "Nomeacuerdo Land."

by Christina Schmid

The dogs: the dogs are everywhere. One naps in the shade of a beach umbrella; another sniffs at washed up kelp. Two pups dig in the sand. On the dock, a feisty one barks at the sea lions, while another stalks a gull. A caramel-colored puppy rolls around in a heap of trash, happy with a big bone. A three-legged shepherd begs for food on a city sidewalk. The dogs join human bodies in a protest march, tagging along with the flow of banner-bearing bodies. *La Maravilla* (2021), a two-channel video installation, is edited carefully, the footage slowed down, the sound distorted: the beat of a drum arrives hollowed, recognizable and resonant but strange. Funereal. A sound dragging its shadow. Then, another dog: this one plays in the trickle that drips from the water cannon of an armored police truck. Moments of canine levity alternate with the weight of political unrest: cops on foot, on motorcycles. Shielded and vested in riot control gear, they look like characters from a video game, superhuman. The dogs don't care.

By centering the dogs, Alexa Horochowski simultaneously de-centers the human protagonists in *La Maravilla*: tourists, protesters, policemen, and

skateboarders. Their bodies occupy public space in markedly different ways—recording the spectacle of sea lions dive and wrestle for fish offal, strolling through streets in pre-pandemic proximity, riding skateboards, or marching, slowly, steadily, with determination borne of political conviction. Then, there are the bodies-turned-weapons of the military-style police who arrive in groups and move in threatening sync. Horochowski pairs their muscular menace with footage of gulls soaring and the sea lions' feeding frenzy: this is how bodies organize. And compete for control, for power, for food.

Only momentarily do the choreographies of human animals align with the movement of the nonhumans: gulls, sea lions, dogs—scavengers all, the critters beg, prey, and hunt. They live off the infrastructures of human life. One year in the life of a dog, an old adage goes, equals seven human years. None of the dogs looks old. Street life is not kind. Their presence at times seems a nuisance to the people who pause to interact with them, shoo them away, pointedly, or ignore them with the force of long held habit. Only once or twice, momentary encounters open into a kind of camaraderie, a temporary cross-species alliance: *Negro Matapacos*, one of three pieces of embroidered linen in the exhibition, references Blackie, the Cop Killer, a “riot dog” turned mascot of the protests in Chile in 2019-2020.

More than space, shared and contested, is being negotiated here.

Thinking with animals and art, Ron Broglio engages Jakob von Uexkuell's work in biosemiotics: “Each animal species holds its own point of view and its own distortions of the actual earth. These perspectives reflect how the body of the animal has evolved over ages to adapt to the earth and to meet the animal's needs. We are left with an understanding that there is no single unitary world and no unified space or time; instead, time moves differently for each species, and each animal senses and shapes space quite differently.”¹

La Maravilla slows down the motions of animal bodies, human and nonhuman alike. The lack of speed amplifies each gesture, distorts and draws it out to a scale, a pace, a place where humans are no longer the only ones keeping time. There is no single unitary world but a mess of overlaid life-worlds inhabited in equally distinct and entangled temporalities.

Thus, different chronologies erupt, collide, overlap, and unfold: the urgent immediacy of political protest pales in the face of geologic deep time. The ocean's ebb and flow put into perspective the jostle and dive at the harbor. A black dog runs along the beach in slow motion while a wave, reduced to a narrow shimmering bulge of water, rolls closer and closer to shore, so slow its movement verges on the imperceptible. To human eyes, that is. Dogs see differently: the rods and cones in their eyes flicker at a faster rate than humans'. They see the moments in-between when our brains only stitch together a semblance of continuity. The wave keeps heaving before it crests... and finally breaks.

The wave resembles other folds in Nomeacuerdo-Land: a photograph of the coiled surface of black lava is printed on chiffon, a material so light it moves with every breath of air. Pahoehoe is the local Hawai'ian name for the kind of molten earth that flows fast and is fatal to any living thing in its path, before it cools, pools, and ripples. Draped, the fabric's undulant forms echo the patterns of its fiery flow, a contrast as compelling as it is evocative. Like black elephant skin, pahoehoe acts as a tangible reminder of the impermanence of the continental plates we drift on. so. very. slowly. Most of the time, their movement unfolds beneath the threshold of human perception. But that does not mean it's not happening. Constantly.

Time takes physical form. Lava fields are as young as land gets, black and barren by birth. This is where ferns make their home: stubborn, resilient tendrils of green. Do we look at the potted plant in the gallery corner in quite the same way after we've seen it nestle and thrive between the inhospitable folds of pahoehoe?

Time also takes the form of a fat white baby by a pool in *El Pais de Nomencluerdo* (2021). Naked and glistening, the small human body crawls and explores. A clumsy hand reaches for flowerheads and butterflies. Slow fingers close and let go, too uncoordinated still to do much harm. A grandfather cradles the child. A rare autobiographical moment in Horochowski's work: the footage was shot at the artist's father's home in Los Molles, Argentina. Ancestry is embodied memory: *who is the "I" but inheritances?*² Generations of bodies displaced by political unrest move in waves of migration. They scatter, disperse, regroup, and settle, to live on dispossessed land. (*One body was not a sustainable unit for the project at hand*).³ Multi-generational waves of rebellion and restoration rise, crest, and fall. The land beneath remains, as if unchanged, mostly solid, a thin crust on a red-hot liquid core.

Back at the beach, an incoming wave lifts a single feather and washes it out of the camera's eye. As the water recedes, the feather returns, now upside down. But right before the water's movement gives way to a pause, in the stillness of the in-between, the feather flips and comes to rest, just like before.

Time flows differently in Nomeacuerdo Land. Cycles recur, spiraling onward.

Horochowski quotes Maria Elena Walsh, Argentinian poet and songwriter, in the eponymous photography book:

In the country of "I don't-remember" / I take three steps and I'm lost
One little step over there, did I take it I can't say ...
In the country of "I don't remember" / I take three steps and I'm lost
One little step backwards, I dare not step further
Because I have forgotten again, where I placed my other foot

Heterogeneous time splinters eurochronology, throws settler time—linear, progressive, standardized time—into sharp relief. Memory, an unreliable orientation device at the best of times, is always prone to distortions. In Nomeacuerdo-Land, the long-ago sidles closer, nuzzles us, while recent

events recede and blur. Here, the long-lasting becomes momentary; the split-second stretches. The infinitesimal broaches infinity. Bodies come and go.

Or, they disappear altogether, leaving behind nothing but the intimate topography of an empty bed, sheets rising and falling, cresting and folding like slow-motion waves that reform in a nightly rhythm of rest or sex or insomnia. The bed conjures another realm of nomeacuerdo, the land of dreams. An aging person's fading memory, the anticipated loss and grief of an aging parent's disappearance. Time plays tricks in Nomeacuerdo Land: three steps forward, and indeed, we are lost. Time warps as Horochowski pairs a 1972 family photograph with aviator glasses whose lenses are made of polished obsidian and packing peanuts cast in bronze: an anachronic *Memento Mori*. An Acapulco chair, made as an act of homage to the artist's father, sits empty, anticipating a body, absent a body. Seemingly sentimental objects masquerade as souvenirs out of step with a conception of time that progresses smoothly from past to present and ever onward into future.

What if time ripples like lava, drapes and folds, obliterates and generates lives that unfold, each at its own pace, as a form of emergent vital-material onto-poetics.

Eurochronology ravaged, savaged—returned to the woods where Late Latin *salvaticus* spawned the adjective leveraged against people at odds with settler time—cedes ground to an 8000-year-old Paiute lunar calendar etched into the side of a boulder in Nomeacuerdo Land. The dictatorship of modern time topples. Who keeps time? Who holds memory? A vortex of words. In each ring, the 5000-year-old bristlecone named Methuselah does. The pre-historic (ha!) handprints in La Cuerva de las Manos in Patagonia: before the official starting point of Euro-history, ancient humans already found ways to leave their marks, mark their time. Printed on organza, the red handprints quiver, animated by cross-currents of air. Now, our presence leaves beds of plastic debris washed up on beaches. It will outlast us all.

The evidence of such destruction, such carelessness belies the inspirational quote laser cut into a tree log hollowed by a woodpecker's noisy quest for food: "to each his own, forever friends." But what if our own was never ours to begin with. What if such separation was always only a profound delusion. Different worlds, different sensations of time, but porous, interlacing, contingent. Who has the heart to feel schadenfreude, that strange joy at another's misfortune that the Germans named, in the eerie half-light of anticipated loss? Forever might mean a short time around here, when it only takes three steps to get lost. Ripples in time, folds in chiffon, cast a long shadow on the future. And the waves keep coming.

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¹ Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters*. University of Minnesota Press, 2011. xxx.

² Tommy Pico, *Nature Poem*. Tin House Books, 2017. 43.

³ Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive*. Duke University Press, 2018. 6.
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Christina Schmid thinks with art and writes as critical practice. Her essays and reviews have been published both online and in print, in anthologies, journals, artist books, exhibition catalogs, and digital platforms. She works at the University of Minnesota's Department of Art in Minneapolis as an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Art and Critical Practice.

En el país de "Nomeacuerdo"
Doy tres pasitos y me pierdo
Un pasito para allí, no recuerdo si lo di
Un pasito para allá, ay, qué miedo que me da

En el país de "Nomeacuerdo"
Doy tres pasitos y me pierdo
Un pasito para atrás y no doy ninguno más
Porque yo ya me olvidé dónde puse el otro pie

En el país de "Nomeacuerdo"
Doy tres pasitos y me pierdo

María Elena Walsh, 1967

In the country of "I-don't-remember"
I take three steps and I'm lost
One little step over there, did I take it I can't say
One little step further, oh, fright, I'm so scared

In the country of "I-don't-remember"
I take three steps and I'm lost
One little step backwards, I dare not step further
Because I have forgotten again, where I placed my other foot

In the country of "I-don't-remember"
I take three steps and I'm lost

Alexa Horochowski is a dual citizen of Argentina and the United States. Her art practice includes sculpture, photography and video. Artist residencies at Forest Island Project, Mammoth Lakes, CA (2018), MAM, Chiloé (2017), CASAPOLI, Coliúmo (2013) significantly impacted her material and geopolitical research into the interrelationship between the environment and humankind. Horochowski holds a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Michigan, and a Bachelor of Art and Journalism from the University of Missouri. She has produced installations at, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN; Highpoint Center for Printmaking, Minneapolis, MN; The Rochester Art Center, Rochester MN; The Nemeth Art Center, Park Rapids, MN; The Soap Factory, Minneapolis, MN; The Drawing Center, NYC; Braga Menéndez Gallery, Buenos Aires; Diverseworks, Houston. Selected fellowships include an Efroymsen Artist Fellowship (2018), three McKnight Visual Artist Fellowships (2019/2014/2003), Artist Initiative Grants (2014/2012), and a Bush Artist Fellowship (2004). Horochowski teaches studio arts at St. Cloud State University.



HAIR+NAILS is a South Minneapolis contemporary art gallery founded and run by artists Ryan Fontaine and Kristin Van Loon since 2016. www.hairandnailsart.com

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