



Blaffer Art Museum
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Intimate confession is a project
October 27, 2023—March 10, 2024

Participating artists: Gwenneth Boelens, Benvenuto Chavajay Ixtetelá, ektor garcia, Lonnie Holley, Anna Mayer, Na Mira, Kate Newby, Josie Ann Teets, Chiffon Thomas, Iris Touliatou, Clémence de La Tour du Pin

The Blaffer Art Museum, in partnership with the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston, is proud to present ***Intimate confession is a project*** guest curated by **Jennifer Teets**.

Intimate confession is a project is a group exhibition that considers transmission, intergenerational life, and cultural inheritance through the prism of intimacy and infrastructure. The juxtaposition of “intimacy” and “infrastructure” as the theme for an exhibition might seem paradoxical: Infrastructure is, by definition, composed of material and immaterial relations that interchange or express movement. It’s the structures that make society operate (government, education, hospitals, power stations, cables, pipelines, etc.) and it enables, sustains, and/or enhances societal living conditions—until it ruptures. Intimacy, on the other hand, is a term of unbound meaning. It is a synonym for proximity or close relations. Intimate relations imply *affect*, or a looking inward, often embodied, private, and psychological. And yet, these two rubrics have been together animating conversations around relational life as of late, especially in the work of a number of artists.

This exhibition, through the work of eleven artists spanning generations and geographies, thinks through infrastructure as an intimate holding cell, capable of affective and affirmative power. While feminist and queer scholarship have engaged with intimacy as an analytical tool, introducing intimacy to the field of infrastructural research is somewhat novel. It situates the affective within the pronounced infrastructural turn, creating what thinkers such as Lauren Berlant, Ara Wilson, and Kai Bosworth have deemed “affective infrastructures.” Affective infrastructures draw our attention to the emotions produced by concrete infrastructure systems and they are composed of infrastructural relations of social systems. In our age of canals, pipes, tubes, wires, locks, valves, streets, tracks, ramps, networks, and so on, thinking through affective infrastructures allows for “multiplicity and difference and to be with each other in common, moving beyond relations of sovereignty,” in the words of Berlant, a cultural theorist. Intimacy can be enabled or hindered by infrastructures; influenced by material and symbolic

domains. *Intimate confession is a project* thus looks at that potentialized juncture in forms such as (glitched) artifacts and portals, vessels, buildings, fibers, found objects, and heirlooms.

The title of the exhibition is borrowed from a line of a sonnet by Juliana Spahr in her book *Well, Then, There, Now* (2011). In her poetry, the author illuminates various forms of infrastructural space, of being in common and in resistance. Spahr's poem is recast in this exhibition to reflect on the relational infrastructures of cultural material. Artists have long explored various forms of cultural and material transfer, and the works gathered here look at ways of subverting, dislocating, or distorting infrastructures. Some works reflect on forms of embedded experience in racialized, gendered, and environmentally determinant constitutions, of inherited forms often perpetuated by global capitalism. The show asks what happens when we acknowledge material transference as an act of symbolic and material power, with works confronting infrastructures and the resulting environments.

With major support from the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts at the University of Houston, this exhibition will debut new commissions and site-specific projects that expand on material and immaterial histories of Houston. At times they refer to the unique context of the Blaffer, connecting art to other fields of knowledge and experience.

Intimate confession is a project is accompanied by a rich public program featuring talks, readings, concerts, and performances in connection with a range of citywide and institutional partners across the exhibition's six-month run, including Basket Books & Art, the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation Collection, Institute for Global Engagement, Institute for Research on Women, Gender & Sexuality, Project Row Houses, and UH School of Art.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalog designed by Espace Ness, Paris and co-published by Inventory Press in 2024, featuring essays and writings by exhibition curator Jennifer Teets, poets Juliana Spahr, Roberto Tejada, Lara Mimosa Montes, theorists Ara Wilson and Kai Bosworth, and cultural critic Orit Gat, amongst others. This exhibition and its accompanying catalog and public programs are made possible with funding from the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. The exhibition is also made possible with funding from The Mondriaan Fund, Dutch Culture Fund USA, and Etant donnés Contemporary Art, a program of Villa Albertine.

The ***Intimate confession is a project*** exhibition and public programs are organized by guest curator **Jennifer Teets**.