

Kai Matsumiya

MARYAM JAFRI

Independence Day 1934-1975

April 11- May 18, 2024

Lithium Balance

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Lithium Balance

April 11 – May 16, 2024

Opening: Thursday, April 11th, 6-8pm.



The above image is a photograph (1949) of a mental hospital for WWII veterans in Australia where lithium carbonate was first developed as a treatment for bipolar disorder, a milestone in psychiatric history. Over the image, Jafri has placed a black keyboard frame and the “caps lock” key from a discarded laptop.

Following her single work exhibition *Independence Day, 1934-1975*, Maryam Jafri presents *Lithium Balance*, opening on Thursday, April 11th. The centerpiece installation *No Lithium, No Work* (2023) explores lithium’s dual life as a principal medicine for mood disorders and as the main component in rechargeable batteries underpinning everything from smartphones, to electric cars, to solar panels.

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The installation *No Lithium, No Work* (2023), situated in the front entrance room, simultaneously pared down and yet also expansive, weaves together the imaged yet interdependent worlds of mental health, global economies from both the production and consumption ends, and cultural history. We witness factory workers assembling lithium-powered smartphones and laptops threatening to jump to their deaths rather than work another day for Apple or Dell to burnout, depressions, and suicides by members of the creative class, all to the silent tunes of Glenn Miller's "Smooth" album sponsored by a pharmaceutical company and Nirvana's "Lithium". Additional installation elements include photos of Dell factory workers threatening a mass suicide action on a rooftop, a wireless keyboard spelling the words "Help Me", and a pill organizer spelling out the words "IM NOT WORKING".

In the second room, we are presented with the video *Screen Culture* (2024) focusing on e-waste and informal workers in the Global South, and the text-based works *Hang The Man* (2024) and *Loop/Doom* (2024) made out of cardboard and discarded keyboard keys.

On view in the third and final room is the work *Three Clipboards* (2024), juxtaposing pharma-branded pens for lithium medications with printouts of peer-reviewed articles from scientific and public-health studies revealing the benefits of lithium carbonate, whether it ought to be added to our water supply to lower suicide rates or its status on the World Health Organization's list of essential medicines.

The namesake of the exhibition *Lithium Balance* refers to a company that provides lithium-battery management solutions for industrial-scale applications, but which also unconsciously echoes the longer psycho-pharmacological history of lithium carbonate. In its unsparring examination of the nexus between the suicidal and the digital, cutting across disparate geographies and social groups, the exhibition underscores the definitive yet labyrinthine relationship between individual symptoms and collective crises.

Maryam Jafri's multimedia practice integrates video, sculpture, photography, and installation. Recent solo presentations include *No Lithium, No Work* at Kunsthall Aarhus, DK (2023), *A Broad and Narrow Point*, Blaffer Museum of Art, Houston, TX (2021), *I Drank the Kool-Aid but I didn't Inhale*, ICA Los Angeles, CA (2019), and *The Road to Serfdom, Repaved, Taxis* Palais Kunsthalle Tyrol, AT (2019). Recent biennials and notable group exhibitions include *to see oneself at a distance*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2023), *Blocks*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Palermo, IT (2021), *Front International Triennial*, Cleveland, OH (2018), *Athens Biennial*, GR (2018), *São Paulo Biennale*, BR (2016), and the *Belgian Pavilion*, Venice Biennale, IT (2015).

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Installation View, Kai Matsumiya Fine Arts Gallery



Installation View, Kai Matsumiya Fine Arts Gallery





LOOP

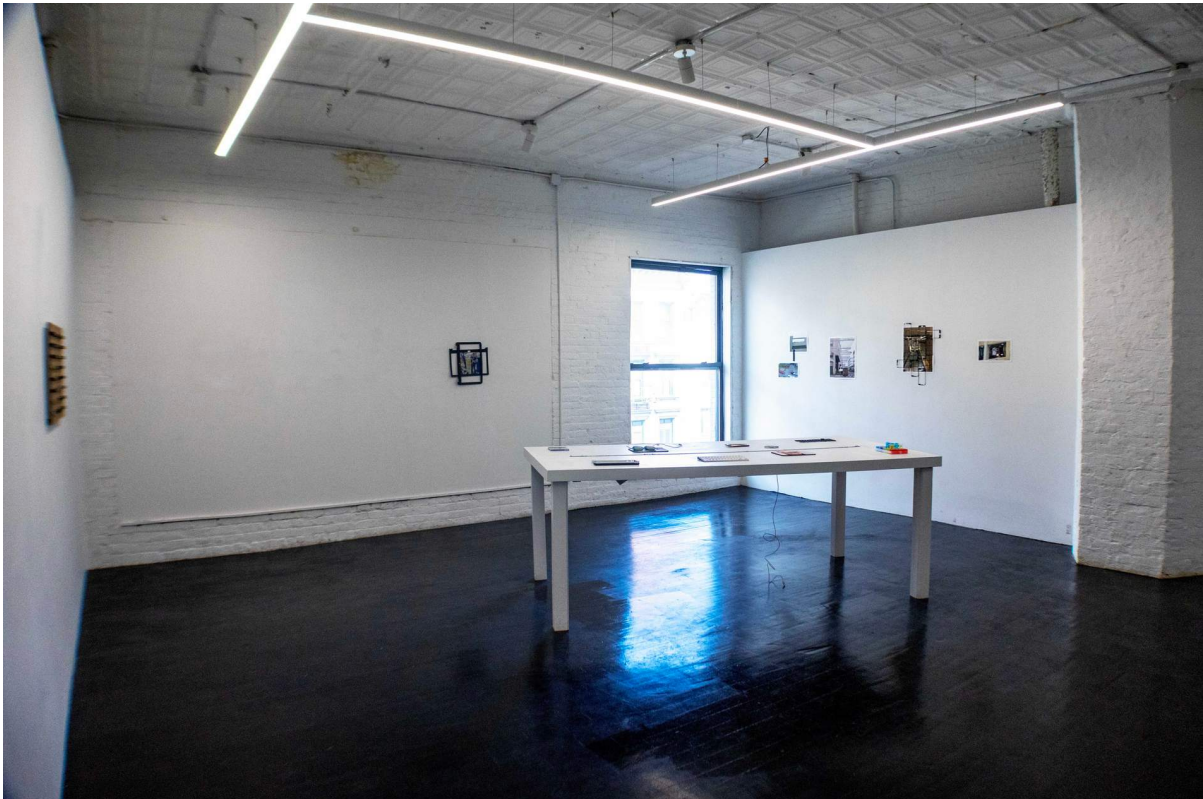






Installation View, Kai Matsumiya Fine Arts Gallery

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Maryam Jafri

No Lithium, No Work

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

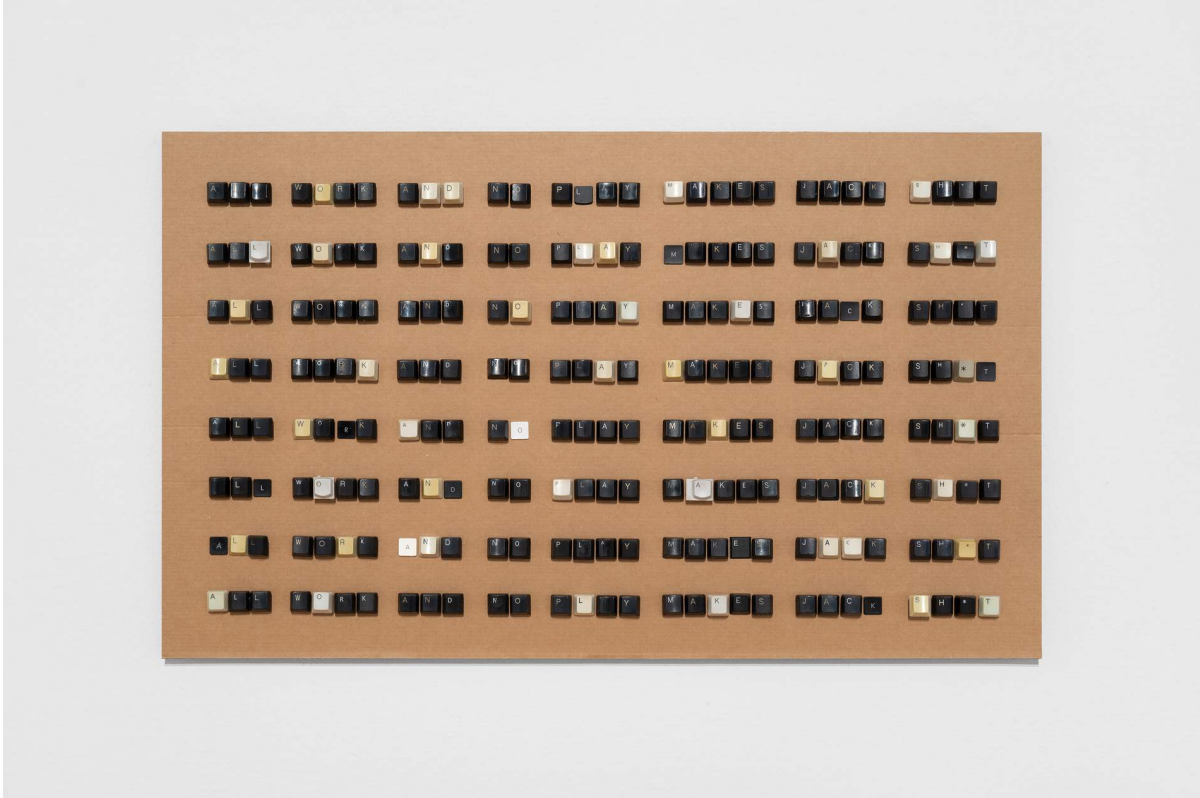
Mixed media installation (wooden display table, photos, texts, objects, video, iPad, iPhone)
variable dimensions

MJ0140.1

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*All Work And No Play Makes Jack Sh*t (No Lithium, No Work)*

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

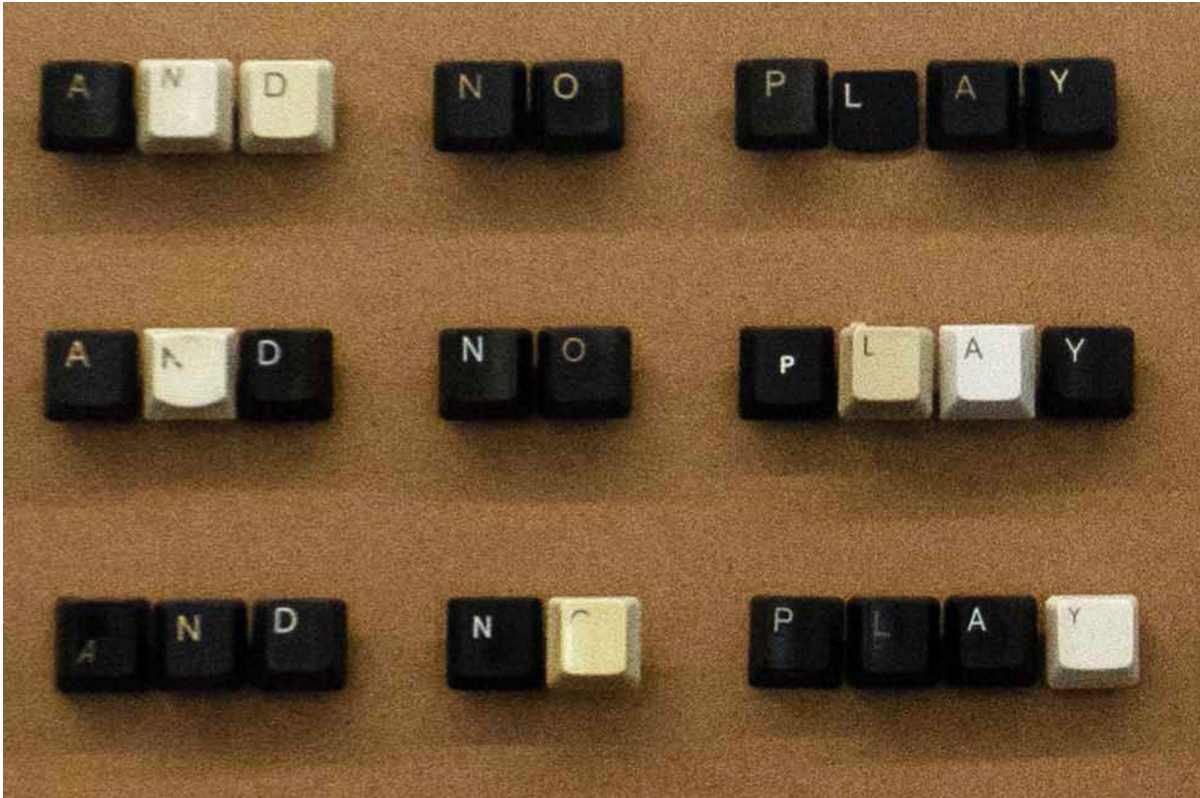
Computer keys, cardboard mounted on alu-dibond

17¾ x 29½ in. 45.00 x 75.00 cm

MJ0142.1

*Using letters from discarded keyboards, the phrase is spelled out and repeated. The original saying is "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Jack shit is slang for nothing although you can also read it literally. In the film *The Shining* (1980), the main character, Jack, types the original saying thousands of times instead of working on his novel.*

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Delete (No Lithium, No Balance)

edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

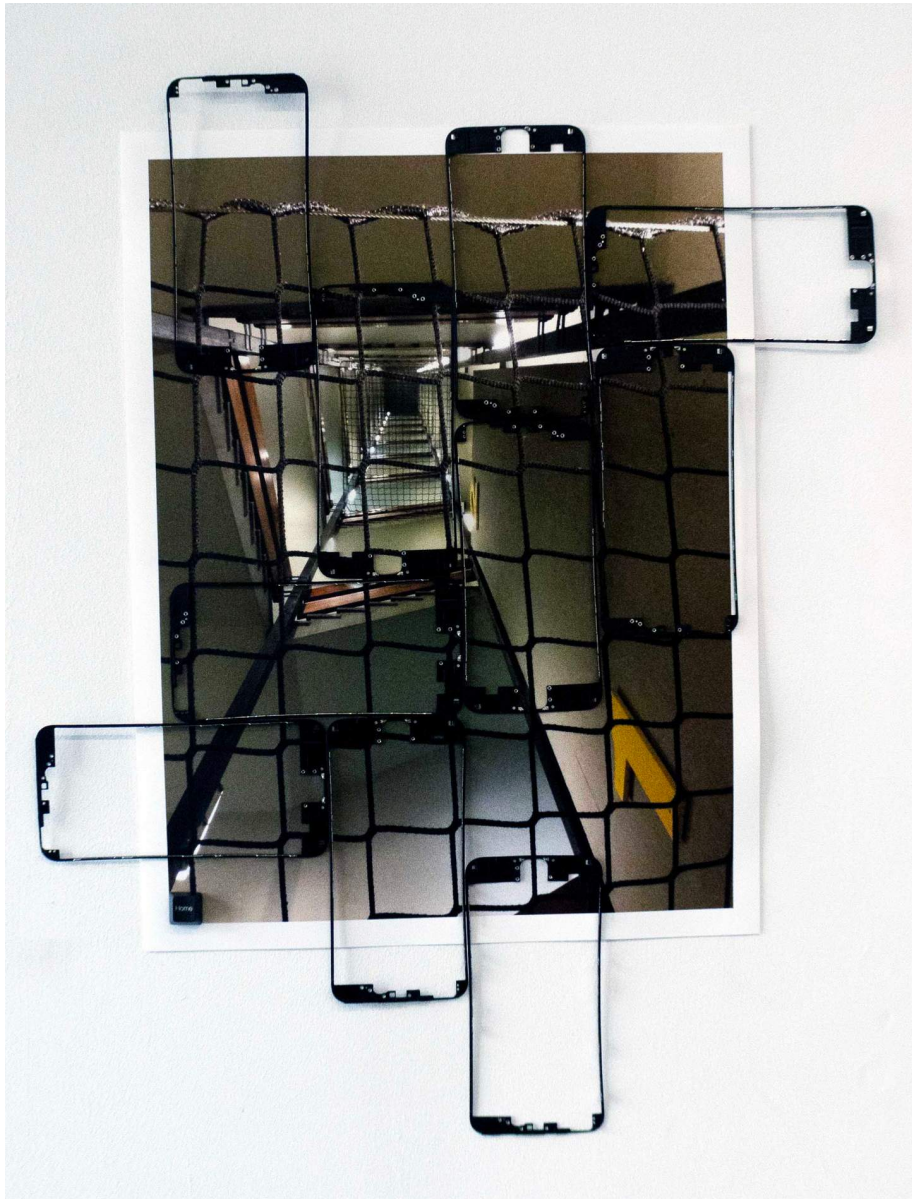
Laptop bezels, custom-printed mousepad, keycap

14½ x 14½ in. 36.83 x 36.83 cm

MJ0152

The image shows a dispute at an Apple store. The laptop bezels are from Dell and HP brands.

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Home (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

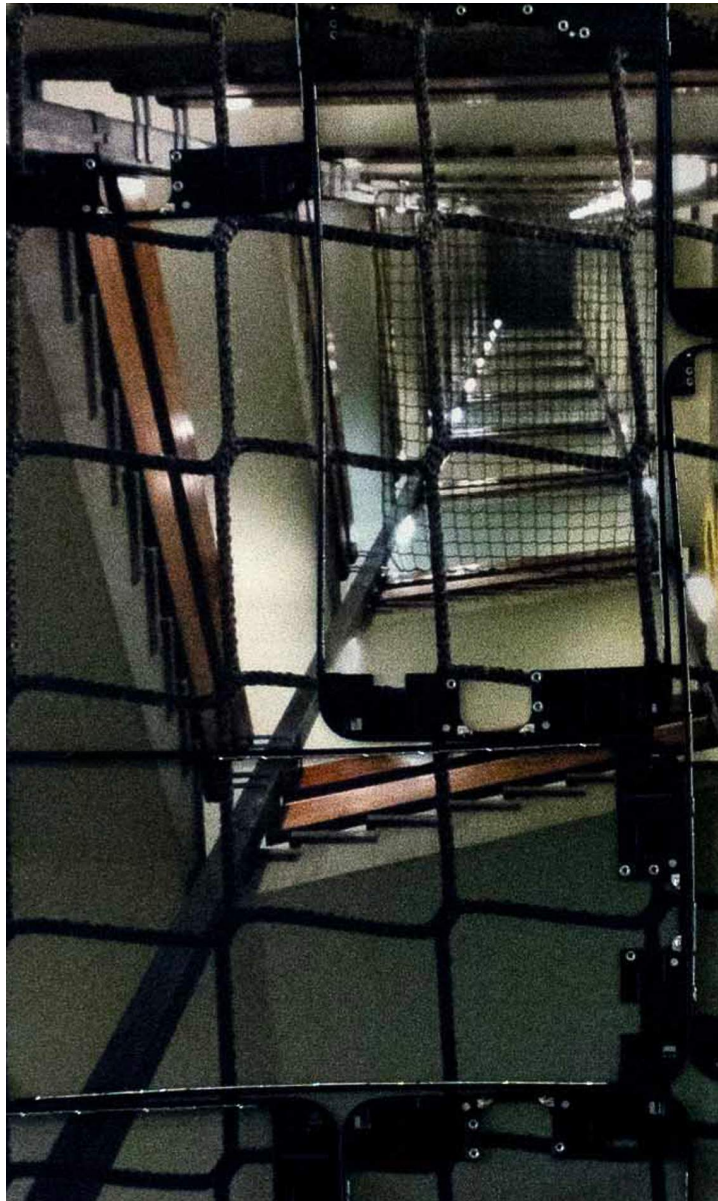
Archival inkjet prints, smartphone bezels, key cap

13¼ x 17¼ in. 33.66 x 43.81 cm

MJ0143.1

Photo of anti-suicide nets installed inside workers dorms by Apple-supplier Foxconn

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Shift (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

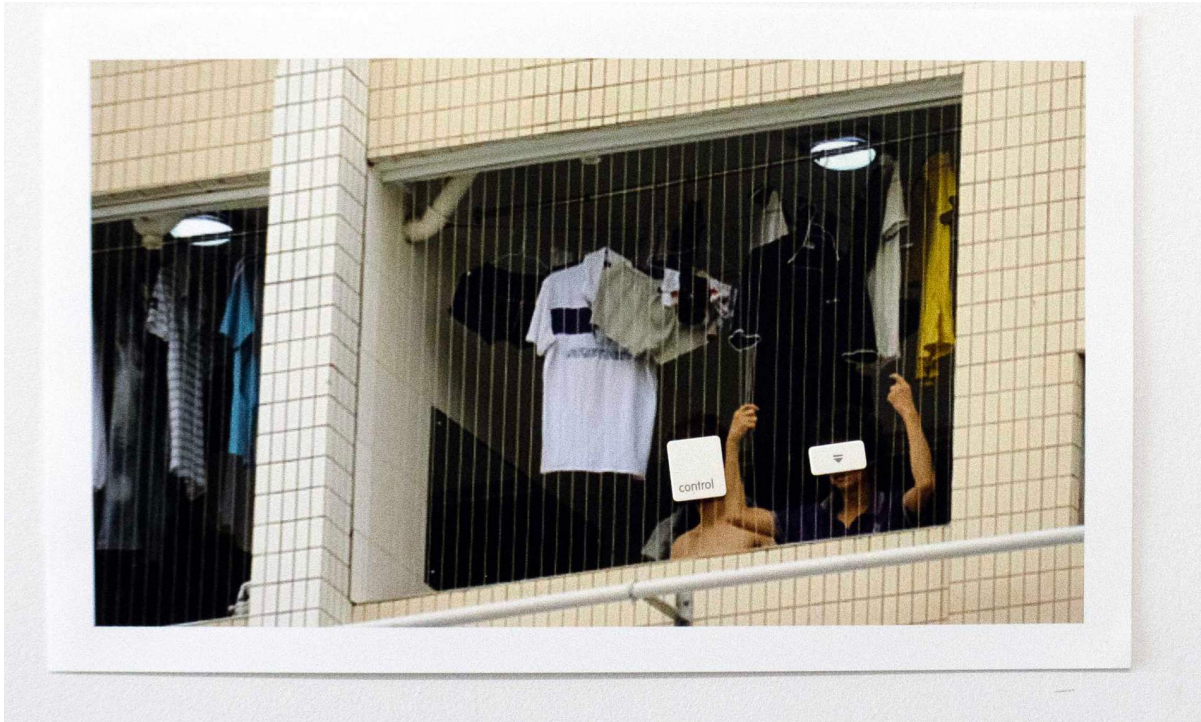
Archival inkjet print, key cap

16⁷/₈ x 13³/₈ in. 43.00 x 34.00 cm

MJ0144.1

Worker at Foxconn campus with anti-suicide nets above

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Control (r) eject (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

Archival inkjet print, key caps

7½ x 12½ in. 19.05 x 31.75 cm

MJ0145.1

Photo of two factory workers at barred window of their dorm room.

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Caps Lock Clinic (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

Archival inkjet photo, laptop keyboard bezel, key cap

7 x 11½ in. 17.78 x 29.21 cm

MJ0146.1

Photograph of the mental hospital where Dr. Cade first discovered lithium's role in treating mood disorders, a milestone in psychiatric history.

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Cut the Wires, Cut the Tears (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

Custom-printed mousepad, two vintage iMac mice

8 x 9 x 1 in. 20.32 x 22.86 x 2.54 cm

MJ0147.1

One wired mouse, one mouse forcibly made wireless. The mousepad features a 1948 archival photo of Australian psychiatrist and former prisoner of war Dr. John Cade who discovered the use of lithium carbonate for mood disorders.

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I'm Not Working (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

Pill organizer, keyboard letters

2 x 9 x 5 in. 5.08 x 22.86 x 12.70 cm

MJ0148.1

The white keys in the box spell the phrase "I'm Not Working." Overlaid with that is of course the text from the organizer itself displaying the day of the week and the time (morn, non, eve, bed) . The phrase can refer to both wellbeing and/or labor.

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Help Me Keyboard (No Lithium, No Work)

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2023

Wireless Apple keyboard

½ x 11 x 4½ in. 1.27 x 27.94 x 11.43 cm

MJ0149.1

Custom-modified keyboard spelling the phrase "help me".

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Nirvana Lithium (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

ipad, video (looped)

10¼ x 6¾ in. 26.00 x 17.00 cm

MJ0151.1

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Custom-printed mousepad, space bar (No Lithium, No Work)

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

Custom-printed mousepad, space bar

7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 in. 20.00 x 23.00 cm

MJ0150

Film still from The Shining (1980) , a movie that, among other things, is about a failed writer having a breakdown.

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Nirvana Lithium (No Lithium, No Work)

2023

iPad, video (looped)

9¾ x 7 in. 24.74 x 17.78 cm

MJ0153

iPad playing video for Nirvana's 1991 song Lithium (without sound)

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Some Medicate, Others Meditate

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

2023

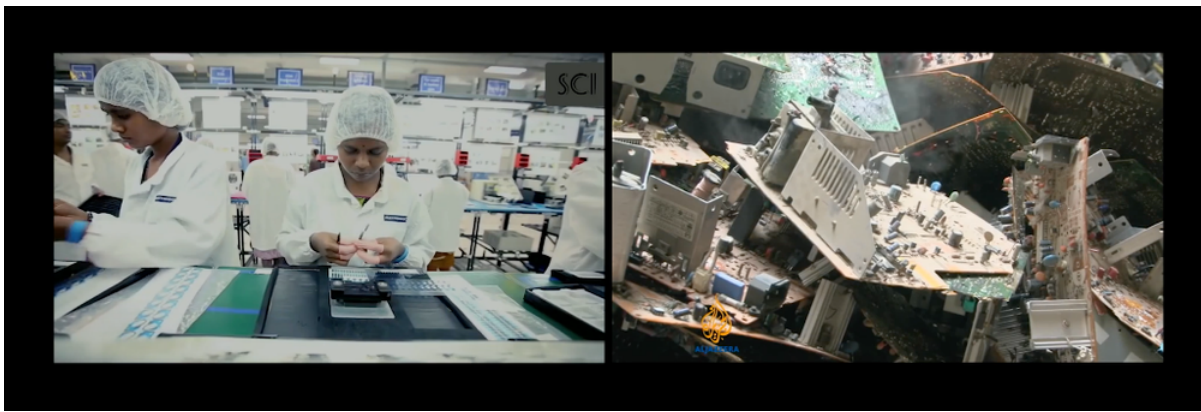
Custom-printed mousepad, space bar (No Lithium, No Work)

MJ0154.1

Smartphone charger with custom print of Van Gogh painting with his ear cut off and a refurbished iPhone playing a silent clip from David Lynch's Blue Velvet in which the main character finds a severed human ear. Van Gogh is of course the epitome of the tortured artist whereas David Lynch credits transcendental meditation for his creativity and mental health.

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Screen Culture

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

2024

Two-screen video installation

3:58 min, looped

MJ0139

Vimeo single-screen preview:

<https://vimeo.com/872465852?share=copy>

Password: eWaste

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Loop/Doom

unique

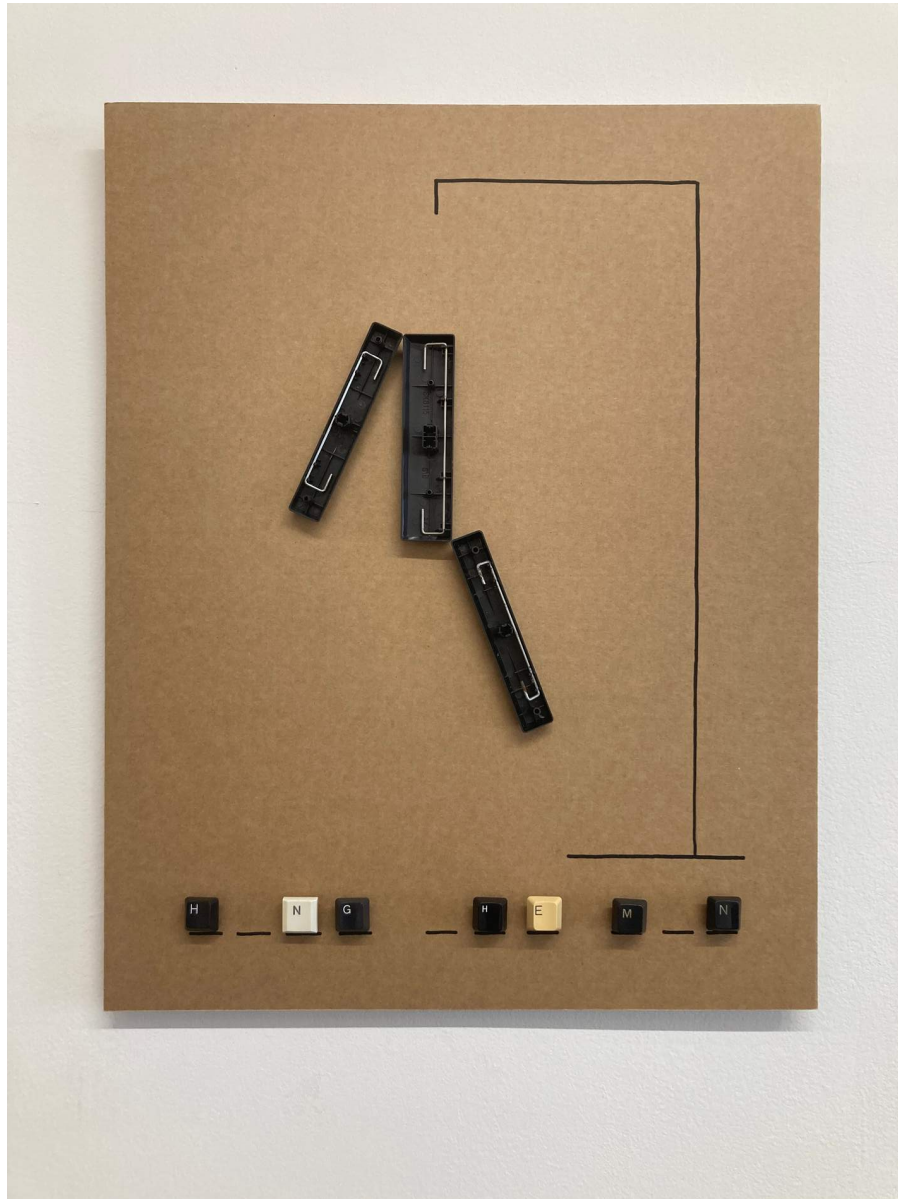
2024

Computer keys, cardboard mounted on alu-dibond

26 x 15 3/4 x 1 1/2 in. 66.04 x 40.01 x 3.81 cm

MJA0103

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Hang The Man

unique

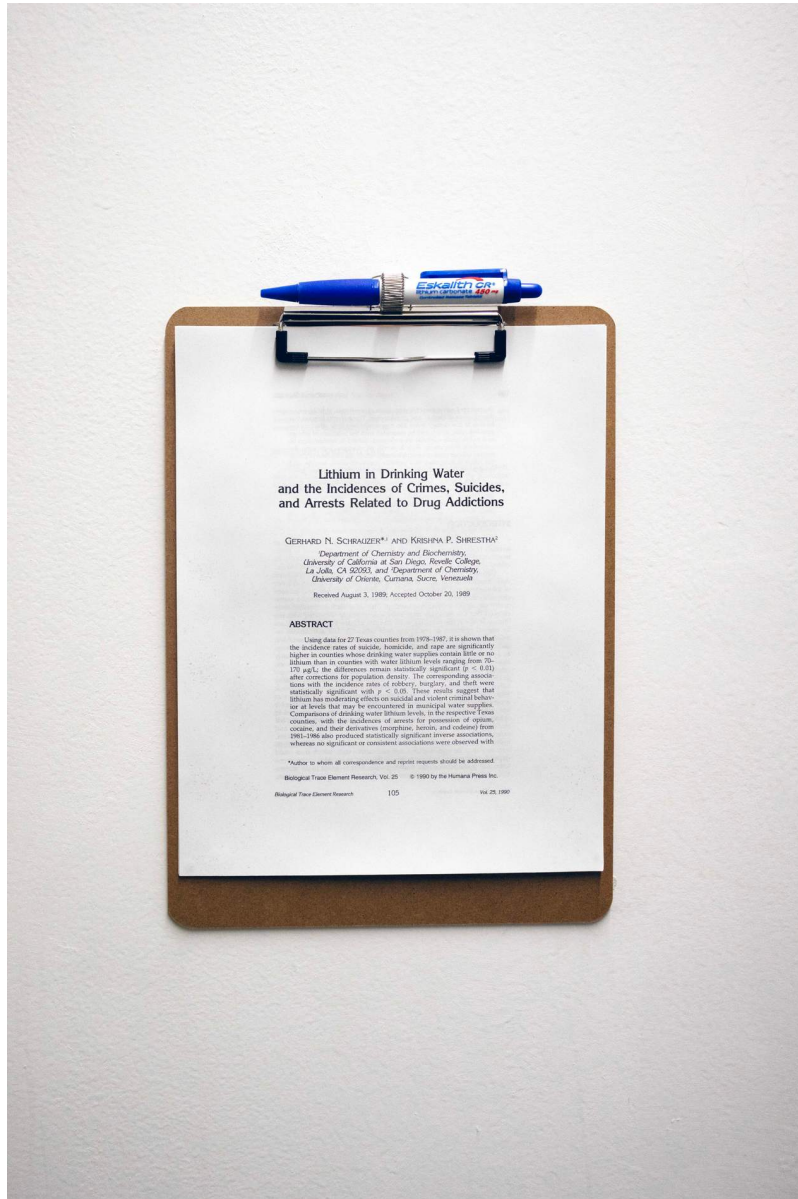
2024

Computer keys, cardboard mounted on alu-dibond

15 x 19 x 1.5 in. 38.1 x 48.26 x 3.81 cm

MJA0105

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Lithium in Drinking Water and the Incidences of Crimes, Suicides, and Arrests Related to Drug Addictions

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ABSTRACT

Using data for 27 Texas counties from 1976-1987, it is shown that the incidence rates of suicide, homicide, and rape are significantly higher in counties whose drinking water supplies contain little or no lithium than in counties with water lithium levels ranging from 20-170 $\mu\text{g/L}$; the difference remains statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) after corrections for population density. The corresponding associations with the incidence rates of robbery, burglary, and first-time arrests are also statistically significant with $p < 0.05$. These results suggest that lithium has moderating effects on suicidal and violent criminal behavior at levels that may be encountered in municipal water supplies. Comparisons of drinking water lithium levels, in the respective Texas counties, with the incidences of arrests for possession of cocaine, cocaine, and their derivatives (marijuana, heroin, and cocaine) from 1981-1985 also produced statistically significant inverse associations, whereas no significant or consistent associations were observed with

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Three Clipboards

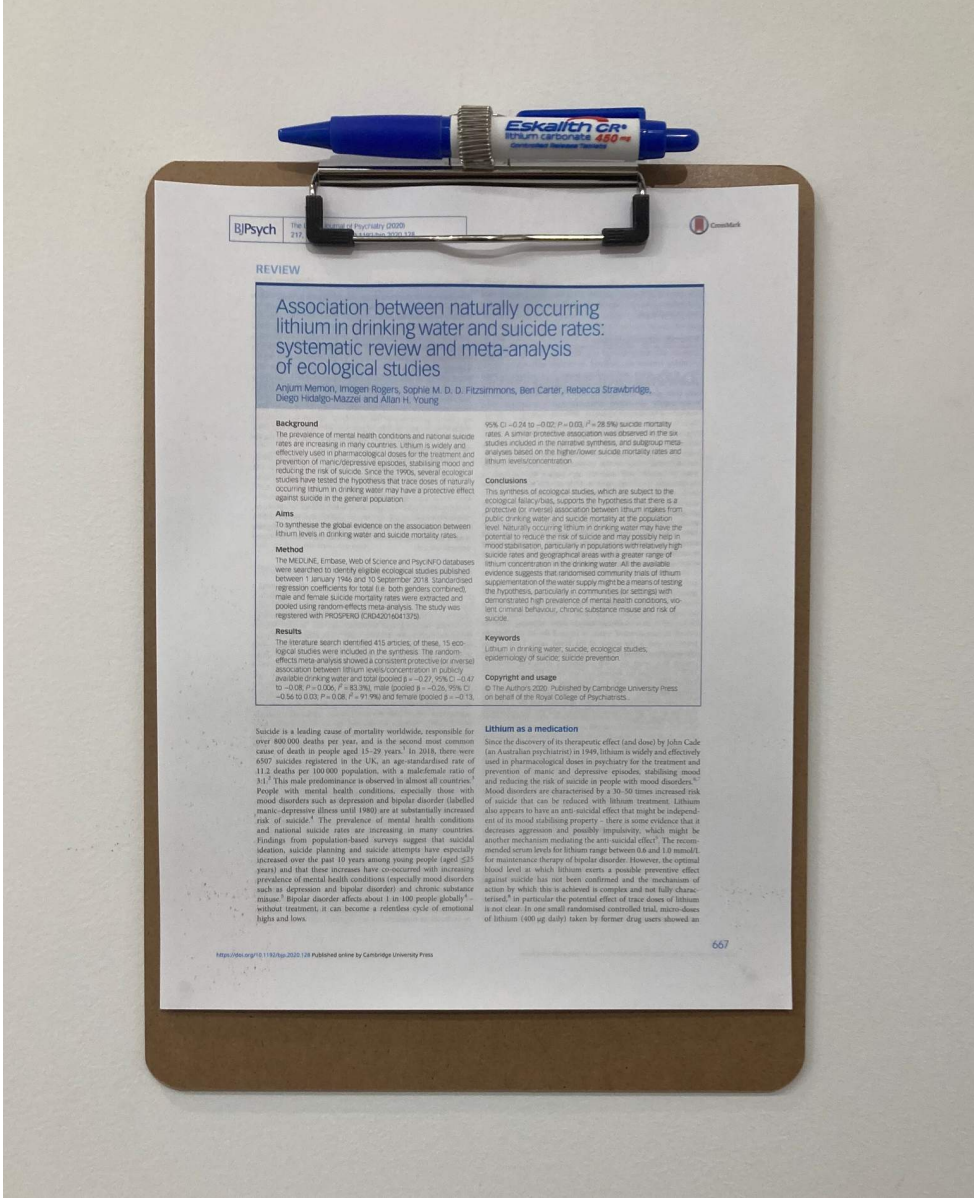
2024

Clipboards, pharma-branded pens, office paper

9 x 12 in. each 22.86 x 30.48 cm each

MJ0141

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