

## Exam Room 2

Ido Radon's forms emerge from historical research to include the social, the engineered or infrastructural and technological as these concern human capacities for and impulses for new forms of life under the conditions of modernity. This means confronting failure and incompleteness. The sculpture on view abstracts the unrealized plan of Frank Lloyd Wright for Pittsburgh's Point Park, often linked to his vision to the towering Point Park Fountain, realized eventually as part of the city's "Renaissance" as a bombastic symbol of American exceptionalism. "Yosemite meets Vegas," as artist Ido Radon describes it, with its one-acre infinity pool and LED lights installed in 2013 to mark a new-age modernity that has left the city with a vacant façade.

Katherine Hubbard's work engages the intersections of photography, performance and text. Using analogue photography and experimental darkroom practices, Hubbard asks how photographs procedures might be called upon to investigate social politics, history, and narrative. *untitled (tread)* documents a project in which the artist performatively trespassed on an East Liberty condo construction site in 2019. Focusing on the wheel of an enormous machine made uncanny through intentionally ambiguous shifts in scale and resemblance to an army tank, the photograph speaks to intrusive plans or "solutions" that neglect the embodied experience of the built environment.

## Exam Room 3

In *No Reason*, Chicago-based artist Max Guy reimagines the imposing cityscape through documentation of the annual St. Patrick's Day spectacle where riverboats float down the river spewing acid-green dye into the water most known for vistas of looming buildings from tourist boats. Using green screen technology, he imposes a black layer on the water, signifying the ways ideologies are imposed on the earth and opening up a the ambiguous questions around abstraction, cities, and race: what if water were black?

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of daily life we desire, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, what aesthetic values we hold. The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire. — David Harvey

## ROMANCE

### *Fourth River*

Cay Bahnmiller, Jono Coles, Sophia DiRenna, Finn Dugan, Justin Emmanuel Dumas, Armanis Fuentes, Sophie Friedman-Pappas, Alice Gong Xiaowen, Max Guy, Katherine Hubbard, Kahlil Robert Irving, Robert Lepper, Erin Jane Nelson, Ido Radon, Jerome Sicard, Harrison Kinnane Smith

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A body of water is buried beneath Pittsburgh; local lore refers to it as the "Fourth River." A river snaking below the city and its sharp downtown skyline is a surreal image, suggesting the possibility of an underworld free from urban development and capital. Prior to the formation of city's three defining rivers, this region known as Pittsburgh marked the edge of a shallow ocean running across the Midwest and today constitutes the easternmost edge of a large swath of the US known as the Mississippi River Basin. As a result of these easy trade routes, the city fell prey to the industrialists, starchitects, and urban planners (Olmsted then Moses then Wright) of the early 20th century.

## Main Gallery / Office Gallery

This exhibition brings together works that consider how cultural myth shapes cities and, in turn, the emotional experience of not just the individuals who live there, but the psychological energy contained within a place itself. The show uses the mythology of the Fourth River and its connection to other mythological waterways—namely, the Ohio to the Mississippi River—as a metaphor for the emotional impact of American ideology and cultural myth on the built world.

The specific works here share visual affinities: a resemblance to memorials or memento mori; abstracted expanses of material that highlight a surface's physicality: where ideology meets emotion meets materiality in an accumulation or conglomeration of matter and narrative; and, finally, borrowing from historical Conceptualism, through surreptitious documentation of polluted modernism dreams.

## Back Storage

Jono Coles's *Office<sup>2</sup>* depicts a makeshift architectural office on a vacant floor of a building in South San Francisco. These architectural renderings are made from an exact digital replica of the building, produced by Coles from within the referenced site. Constructed in 2012, this building will be destroyed in the coming decade to form a void for another building, a speculative investment.

In this rendered architectural office space, paperwork, computers and printers dominate the workplace as opposed to the expected models, drawings and images, presenting architects as managerial professionals who not only structure space but also the flow of information. Their offices are sites of administration, from which other offices proliferate. Rejecting the architectural and financial logic of speculation, these images constitute architectural visualization turning back on itself to represent a real space at the end of its life, as opposed to a new, imaginary one.

3.12 million ft<sup>2</sup> of office space is currently under construction in San Francisco, despite 32.7 million ft<sup>2</sup> of office vacancy in the city. This amount of vacant space is roughly equivalent to the entirety of Downtown Pittsburgh (37.2m ft<sup>2</sup>)—a city for whom San Francisco's tech renaissance remains the shining model of economic growth. As a document of San Francisco's irrational commitment to empty development, *Office<sup>2</sup>* questions Pittsburgh's subscription to this tenuous model.

## Hallway

Jerome Sicard draws on the unique semiotic landscape of his Western Pennsylvanian home to reveal and critique the mythologies underlying American identity. Sicard's narrative and research-based projects blur the lines between truth and fiction, sincerity and satire, parody and pastiche, while remaining grounded in the cultural heritage of Appalachian America.

The work stems from a broader interest in distilling the regional aesthetic of Western PA, and Appalachia more broadly. Central in our research is the aesthetic representation of this region outside its borders — both in the circulation of Appalachian materials and the reproduction of their forms.

*Reproduction* is a particularly significant idea for this work, which uses a kantha blanket, made in India, designed in the famous "Lancaster Bars" pattern. The locally-harvested phragmites plants are similarly introduced from Eurasia, and evoke the (now mythologized) agricultural history of this region. This work is the second in a series of "Lancaster" sculptures that use Lancaster Bars kantha quilts and phragmites alongside materials collected in the exhibition city (a wooden container, rolling casters, trinkets designed to function as souvenirs). Each iteration of the Lancaster sculpture is thus designed to evoke the aesthetics of Appalachia while being formally determined by its conditions.