

Juliana Halpert, Chris Kraus
with additional artworks by Luis Baez
Civil Commitment
July 19 - September 13, 2025
Opening reception Saturday, July 19th 6-9pm

In this exhibition, Chris Kraus and Juliana Halpert collage investigations and personal stories that occur in locations they once called home. In their work as writers and visual artists, Kraus and Halpert revisit small, rural, mostly white communities with stark economic disparities. Both traverse physical and cultural boundaries, using their demographic positions and lived experience to pursue narratives to unexpected ends. The installation of photographs and notes also reveals how Kraus and Halpert, each in her own way, self-reflexively document the creative process as they explore a subject. The two have maintained a close friendship since meeting at ArtCenter College of Design in 2018; this exhibition marks their first artistic collaboration.

Mapped across the gallery in a constellation of original research material and personal effects, Chris Kraus charts the inspiration for the plotlines of her forthcoming novel, *The Four Spent the Day Together*, in which a series of events leads the Los Angeles writer Catt Greene to investigate a teen murder within the “meth community” of Harding, Minnesota. While the display resembles an evidence pinboard, Kraus’s intent is never to assign innocence or guilt or parse right from wrong. Although *The Four* is a work of fiction, the myriad papers Kraus gathered reveal how she bears witness to and records reality as part of her writing process. Her materials include haunting photos culled and printed from social media posts, incriminating transcripts and interviews, memorabilia from Kraus’ childhood, and snapshots of her second marriage/divorce. In the novel and in this exhibition, we are drawn into a web of lies and troubling truths. Kraus connects parts of her family history to her own experience in cancel-culture, to the violence of the ravaged American dream. Following these threads, Kraus contextualizes an unfolding epic of coldness and compassion—and riveting heartbreak.

The assemblage also exposes the emotional and psychological process of writing fiction with the involvement of others. Between 2022 and 2024 Kraus shared pages with her good friend, the Mexico City-based artist Luis Baez and he decided to illustrate. Working in crayon, pen, ink, watercolor and colored pencil, Baez rendered the dark scenes in Harding in a childlike, emotional style. In so doing, he encouraged Kraus to boldly proceed down her own path in writing.

In tandem, Juliana Halpert presents a new body of photographic work that captures a cross-section of her hometown of Montpelier, Vermont, through the lens of her mother’s work as a public defender. Familiar with the conditions Kraus encountered in Harding, her new series comprises two sets of triptychs that mirror *The Four*’s three-part structure and touch similar thematic ground. Early this summer, Halpert returned to Montpelier on the eve of her mother’s full retirement from the Vermont Defender General’s office. She resolved to capture the unglamorous nature of her mother’s work as a state employee advocating for criminal justice reform. Centuries-old file cabinets, motivational slogans, and faded artwork surround those who have dedicated their careers to the notion that everyone deserves representation.

Other images capture her mother’s book group—which has convened regularly since 1985 and is attended by defense attorneys, Supreme Court justices, and an aide to a US Senator, among other women working in local law and government—and state prisons where her mother’s clients were housed. These pictures are complemented by interstitial footage of life in Vermont, a place where hippie utopianism and bucolic scenery veil intense class bifurcation and sky-high substance abuse.

Through Halpert’s DSLR, Vermont’s Volvos, nature trails, and aging office furniture convey the artist’s incongruous feelings and mirror Kraus’s inquiries into subjects and sites that remain mostly unseen. Records of these local lives are preserved only in the remnants of disappearing infrastructure and social services. In *Civil Commitment*, Halpert and Kraus honor the craft of story-building from stray facts.

Juliana Halpert (b. 1989, Montpelier, Vermont) is an artist and writer living in Los Angeles. She received her MFA from ArtCenter College of Design in 2020. Her work has been featured in recent solo and two-person exhibitions at Sebastian Gladstone, New York (2024); Climate Control, San Francisco (2024); lower_cavity, Holyoke, MA (2023); Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2023), and No Moon LA, Los Angeles (2021). It has also been included in group exhibitions at Gattopardo, Los Angeles (2025/2022); Lore Deutz, Cologne (2024); Scherben, Berlin (2024), and Larder, Los Angeles (2024), among other venues. She works at e-flux.

Chris Kraus is a writer and critic. Her new novel, *The Four Spent the Day Together*, will be published by Scribner this Fall. Her previous novels include *Summer of Hate*, *I Love Dick*, *Torpor* and *Aliens & Anorexia*. She frequently writes about culture and art and lives in LA. She is a co-editor of *Semiotexte*, alongside Hedi El Kholti, and has taught writing at ArtCenter College of Design, European Graduate School and Scripps College.