

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
515 WEST 26TH STREET
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ritual being

Curated by **Martine Gutierrez**

July 13 – August 13, 2022

Opening reception: July 13, 6:00-8:30 pm

Including works by Sam Sae Jin Chun, Devan Díaz, Pedro Moreira, Martine Gutierrez, Lutfi Janania, Mexican Jihad, DonChristian Jones, Andy K-B, Manal Kara, Heesoo Kwon, Charlie Mai, Avion Pearce, Emma Safir, Sebastian Silva, Christopher Udemezue, Stewart Uoo, WangShui, Chris Wolston, and Kennedy Yanko

Live performance by Davia Spain

As every generation moves closer to living out the predictions of science fiction, humanity's technological confidence belies a building tension—that between mankind's dependence on technology to socialize amid global outbreaks and the impending fear that artificial intelligence will give way to the machine uprising. With the very future of our species threatened by environmental disaster and depleting natural resources, it is no wonder we flock to the few venues within our control—one-upping ourselves @online to no end, sending valentines, getting high, whoring out—dimming the reminder we all still inhabit mortal bodies.

Over centuries, the Vitruvian image has manifested mankind's ceaseless aspiration to perfect the human form. We have grown human embryos in labs using artificial wombs, extended life, cloned food, militarized national defenses, replaced the body's hormones to transform its sex, et cetera—the technological imperative soon supplanting the very binary of men and women to that of man and the machine. The end of the individual, and the beginning of the immortal non-human. These modern alliances precede today's date—with droids guarding our bedside, awaiting to navigate as we dream an arm's length from personal R2-D2s. Perhaps to our detriment, we believed the future would be so much cooler than it actually is (or was?).

The new face of war hails no religious right, but rather is soulless. Ever since charting stars and walking on moons, our bio-myths of the old ways—our traditions and rituals of Earth's indigeneity—have been relixed by science, ever driving us to live on the brink of the future. Threatened and threatening, we face the new politics of identity—post-modern, post-monogamous, post-gender, post-script, post-colonial, post-traumatic, post-depressive, post-apocalyptic and posting.

With what pronouns does the machine identify? What #inclusion for the LGBTQ+AI—a new color added to the rainbow, a new equality to legislate, a new autonomy without conditions? The definition of human is changing, just as the definition of life is changing. The change is symbiotic. No matter how fractured our species becomes, we are bound to the fate of our planet—and to one another. Till the world ends, deep in the rave of Earth's core, may we be reminded all is full of love, all stardust, all his children, all that Big Pharma money, all entangled, all interdependent, all threatened by the universal vulnerability of our species' survival.

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Rendering after rendering of fallen empire—cradles of civilization tomb-raided and canonized into the currency of the next shimmering Metropolis—captivating our imagination and redesigning modernity. There is no limit of time or space in the simulation, no boundaries and every rule to break in 3D. Without transformation, how can life be redefined? Does the break from tradition mean an amass of digital atheism to come, or will Utopia be the Matrix's return to ritual? Now, I lay me down to sleep— which genesis of inherited trauma to keep? Which of the historical ancestors and their cultures will humankind decide deserve preservation and superiority? If I should die before I wake—I pray to see the end of the icon. Truly, what even is 'The End' when our divine cosmos reincarnates our molecular existence into the very atoms of the universe? Big Bang? Big mistake—huge. Those whom we deem alien must wonder— how can one species be so afraid of death when the cycle of life itself is eternal?

Martine Gutierrez (b. 1989 Berkeley, CA) is a transdisciplinary artist, performing, writing, composing and directing elaborate narrative scenes to subvert pop-cultural tropes in the exploration of identity—both personally and collectively intersectional to the cultural discriminations of race, gender, class and nationality. Her amass of media—ranging from billboards to episodic films to music videos—produce the very conduits of advertising that sell the identities she disassembles. Her examination of advertising allows for Gutierrez to hybridize the industry's objectification of sex with the individual's pursuit of self, satirically undermining the aesthetics of what we know.

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Sam Sae Jin Chun (b. 1986 Willingboro, NJ) is a Korean American artist whose work touches on aspects of history, the present, and future aesthetics referencing Chōseon Dynasty ideologies, perspectives, and tastes. Growing up in the 90's, each Korean community in the US had at least one video (VHS) rental store. Although seemingly innocuous, Korean historical dramas had a profound impact on Chun, and he felt a kinship towards his inherited history, though also a deep sense of foreignness, having been surrounded by an Americanness which was equally as foreign.

Devan Díaz (b. 1992 Queens, NY) is a writer based in New York City. 'Self Tape' was originally recorded as an audition tape for the romantic, transgender lead of a film starring Ryan Gosling. Hundreds of women across the city memorized the same lines and recorded the same tape. Eventually Gosling dropped out, and the movie never came to be. Imagining the hours of unseen footage, Díaz presents her own audition, recorded and re-recorded, until the image degrades and the audio turns into a digital shriek.

Pedro Moreira (b. Lisbon, Portugal) is a queer multiracial artist whose work parallels virtually terraformed landscapes such as videogames and social media. He explores the relationship between the idealization of virtual spaces and theological, mythological, utopian phenomenologies. Using the method of world-building as a narrative tool, Moreira's research materializes as videos, installations, performances, and sculptures. These works usually retain some level of interactivity.

Alberto Bustamante (b. 1986 Oaxaca, Mexico), frequently known as Mexican Jihad, is an architect, promoter, activist, and DJ. His work has been exhibited by the Design Museum in London, the Palace of Fine Arts in CDMX, and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. He is currently operating a dungeon/gallery called mexicanjihad & co., developing a podcast for Spotify, producing a prehispanic ópera, and working as a consultant for the creative and entertainment industries.

Lutfi Janania (b. 1988 San Pedro Sula, Honduras), has always coveted nature for her self-pronounced opulence. His sculptures, comprised of exquisite, distinguished dry and hydrated natural materials, convey this sense of enrapture. Janania invokes romantic aesthetics of centuries past while cultivating ornate images within his cultural contexts. In doing so, Janania summons an elegant passion to his immediate realm. With each work and each "new world," he emboldens once-faint ideas, reinforcing them with grace and gravitas at his studio in Brooklyn, New York.

DonChristian Jones (b. 1989 Philadelphia, PA) is an interdisciplinary multi-media artist, musician, and director whose work spans painting, music, videos, and performance installation. Don has shown and performed at the Whitney Museum, MoMA PS1, New Museum, Brooklyn Museum, and the Shed. Much of their work today is informed by their time spent painting murals on Rikers Island and teaching at Harvey Milk HS/Hetrick-Martin Institute. In 2020, Don founded Public Assistants Inc., a mutual aid network and community design lab headquartered in Brooklyn.

Andy K-B (b. 1989 Tacoma, WA) is a visual artist with a background in documentary filmmaking. The focus of his work has been in highlighting queer youth and showcasing their rich inner landscapes through the capturing of the performative aspects of their identity and interpretation of self. His work has shown in film festivals such as Doc NYC and underground queer nightlife spaces such as the now defunct Spectrum. Andy is transitioning his artistic practice into the medium of Virtual Reality.

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Manal Kara (b. 1986 State College, PA) is a Moroccan-American self-taught interdisciplinary artist. Their work has been included in group shows around the world, and recent solo exhibitions include *Conjectures* at Shulamit Nazarian, CA; *XYLEM & PHLÖEM* at No Place, OH; *THE VIEWING-ROOM VS. THE ADORING-GAZE* at Interstate Projects, NY; and *Song of the Other Worm* at Prairie, IL. Selected group exhibitions include *Jupiter Finger* at Real Pain, CA; *Suspended Disbelief* at Arsenal Contemporary, Toronto; and *K as in Knight* at Helena Anrather, NY.

Heesoo Kwon (b. 1990 Seoul, South Korea) is a visual artist and anthropologist. In 2017, Kwon initiated an autobiographical religion *Leymusoom*, as an exploration of her family histories and feminist liberation. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Et Al and Studio 2W, CA; Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, CA; and CICA Museum and Visual Space Gunmulsai, South Korea. She has participated in group exhibitions at the CICA Museum; BAMPFA, CA; 47 Canal, NY; Chinese Culture Center, CA; Slash Gallery, CA; and Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK.

Charlie Mai (b. 1995 Arlington, VA) works between sculpture and performance to investigate the lineage of immigration both personal and collective, assimilative and resistant. Through his objects, he examines the luxury knock-off as an intersection of wealth, authenticity, and scammy. In his performance and installation, he uses found objects and recognizable images to transform the seemingly familiar and anonymous into deeply coercive reflections of his own subject-hood.

Avion Pearce (b. 1990 Brooklyn, NY) is an interdisciplinary artist exploring the use of photography as a conveyor of truth. She uses created environments, costumes, props, and found objects to stage narrative scenes that attempt to fill in blanks left in western pictorial histories. The characters of these narratives are often queer and trans people of color, immersed in the routines of the day to day, engaged in moments of tenderness, bliss, fury, melancholy and quiet introspection.

Emma Safir (b. 1990 New York, NY) is an artist who employs material exploration and manipulation of fabric through weaving techniques, smocking, lens-based media, rasterization, upholstery, among other methods. Her work functions as screen simulations, proxies and portals. Safir is interested in hierarchies of labor, especially in their relationship to gender and digitization. She has exhibited recently at Shulamit Nazarian, Baxter St at CCNY, SHIN HAUS at Shin Gallery, Lyles & King, Pentimenti Gallery and TW Fine Art. Safir lives and works in NYC.

Although best known for his work in film, **Sebastian Silva (b. 1979 Santiago, Chile)** has spent the majority of his life actively drawing and sketching. Inspired by a childhood depicting classic cartoons, Silva's large format paintings are an effort to become more physical and gestural, embracing the sensuality of curved lines and exaggerated forms. Silva's films have received international acclaim, including winning the Grand Jury Prize, World Cinema Dramatic at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2010 Golden Globes Awards.

Davia Spain (b. 1994 Redwood City, CA) is a performance artist, musician, and filmmaker. She harnesses afro-future themes of time travel, multi-dimensionality, and circular time theory to imagine new possibilities for this physical plane. Thus far in 2022, she has completed the Broadway Advocacy Coalition's Artivism Fellowship, during which she wrote her staged play "The Alternate", a science fiction retelling of her personal experiences navigating the American criminal "justice" system. This new work is slated to be presented at REDCAT in 2023.

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Christopher Udemezue (b. 1986 Long Island, NY) utilizes his Jamaican heritage, and ideas of the desire for connection and healing as a primary source for his work. He has shown work at the Queens Museum of Art, MoMA PS1, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Mercer Union, and Recess Gallery. In 2018, Udemezue participated in the New Museum's 40 year anniversary show, *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*. In 2021, Chris had a solo show at Anat Ebgi Gallery, CA.

Stewart Uoo (b. 1985 California) lives and works in New York City. He recently participated in *Looking Back / The 12th White Columns Annual*, selected by Mary Manning, at White Columns, NY in 2022. His most recent solo exhibition, *used*, was on view at 47 Canal, NY in 2021. He has participated in group exhibitions at K11 Art Museum, Shanghai (2017); MoMA PS1, New York (2015, 2014); ICA London (2015); and the 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014). His work is held in several public collections including the High Museum of Art, GA; Aishti Foundation, Jal el Dib, Lebanon; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; and the Rubell Family Collection, FL.

WangShui (b. 1986 New York, NY) has been included in several recent solo exhibitions including Julie Stoschek Collection, Berlin, Germany. Group exhibitions include the Hammer Museum, CA; International Congress Center, Germany; Von Ammon Co., DC; Galerie Nordenhake, Mexico; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; The Shed, NY; EMPAC, NY; ArkDes, Stockholm, Sweden; Spazio Punch Gallery, Italy; Triple Canopy, NY; Petzel Gallery, NY; Jack Hanley Gallery, NY; Anonymous Gallery, Mexico; Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, NY; Night Gallery, CA.

Chris Wolston (b. 1987 Providence, RI) is an American artist and designer based in Brooklyn, NY and Medellín, Colombia. His thoughtfully conceptualized work, ranging from furniture and lighting to installation and sculpture, rigorously blends traditional techniques and materials with a wry, contemporary realism. Wolston was invigorated by his exposure to non-western art-making during his studies at the Kokrobitey Institute in Accra, Ghana and Fulbright grant research in Colombia, Wolston. He has created work for such brands as Fendi, Dior, and Philip Lim.

Kennedy Yanko (b. 1988 St. Louis, MO) is a sculptor and installation artist working in found metal and paint skin. Her methods reflect a dual abstract expressionist-surrealist approach that centers the seen and unseen factors that affect, contribute to, and moderate human experience. Her current work explores the limits of material gesture, and simultaneously reveals innate links between seemingly dissimilar objects.