

**California College of the Arts Graduate Curatorial Practice Program
and CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts present
*Absolute Memory: An Archive of Softness***

Featuring work by five acclaimed artists Widline Cadet, Xandra Ibarra, Michael Jang, Clifford Prince King, and Kenneth Tam, the exhibition will be on view from April 26 to May 18, 2024



Xandra Ibarra, "A Scarlot Mouth Dawns," (2023), Photography series: Archival Pigment Prints. Image courtesy of the artist.

San Francisco, CA — April 3, 2024 — California College of the Arts (CCA) is pleased to announce *Absolute Memory: An Archive of Softness*, a group exhibition featuring five artists working in themes of the everyday and subjective narrative, Widline Cadet, Xandra Ibarra, Michael Jang, Clifford Prince King, and Kenneth Tam.

Absolute Memory, which is free and open to the public, will be on view from April 26 to May 18, 2024 at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco. The

exhibition is curated by the CCA Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice Class of 2024: Samantha Hiura, Megan Kelly, and Sherry Xiang.

The artists in *Absolute Memory* use the 'hard' forms of installation, video, sculpture, and photography to access the 'soft' archiving of memory, feelings, autobiography, auto-fiction, and the everyday as material. Each artist contributes works that treat everyday, intangible experiences of marginal subjects as material objects. Yet, their collective work maintains individual narratives. We ask: *How can an archive be soft and how can an exhibition begin to unravel and reconstitute containers of cultural memory?*

The artists work across video, sculpture, photography, and installation to stitch archives and severed histories back together – Cadet's fragments of family moments, Tam's materialization of intergenerational healing, and King's fuzzy romanticization of memory. Meanwhile, Jang and Ibarra both incorporate and reference actual ephemera objects as a refiguring of biographical archives.

A joint statement from the CCA Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice Class of 2024:

"As curators, we see the archive as having softer, more porous boundaries and the capacity to hold tenderness and the inarticulable. The exhibition's form creates a tension between ephemerality and the archive's urge for permanence."

About Widline Cadet

Through the intersection of photography, installation, and video, Widline Cadet, born in Pétion-Ville, Haiti, and currently working in Los Angeles, enacts memory as a primary material of investigation into the complexities of diasporic Black life and survival. Exhibiting it for the first time in the United States, her video *Views From Home* and accompanying installation reflect on the passage of time, the interconnectedness of family, and beauty found in everyday moments. Through snippets of her life and family, Cadet captures fragmented views into her everyday as a site of archival work.

About Xandra Ibarra

Oakland-based artist Xandra Ibarra works to extend biographical archives through creative memorialization across mediums, including sculpture, installation, and photography. From her archival project with ONE Archives in Los Angeles, Ibarra's hand-fabricated sculptures are made in honor of the lives and work of Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose who were artists, BDSM collaborators, and life partners. Through meticulous labor and a deep investment in her subjects, Ibarra cultivates interpersonal and intergenerational kinships rooted in sex, pleasure, illness, and disability.

In a new series of photogram prints, exhibiting for the first time on the West Coast, Ibarra similarly extends the archive of San Francisco sex worker, sex work activist, author, and filmmaker Carol Leigh, also known as The Scarlot Harlot, through photographs of Leigh's personal effects and the water-stained boxes in which they resided. Ibarra collages Leigh's personal items, not only to preserve her legacy, but also her biography told through objects.

About Michael Jang

San Francisco-based photographer and street artist Michael Jang approaches his extensive, historied body of work as a real-time remix of his own archive of photography. The exhibition includes works in which Jang has wheatpasted enlargements of his works largely from the 1970s on public walls around the city. In addition to his wheatpaste pieces, inspired by the city's street art, vintage graphic design, and his own photographs, Jang will also present a collection of personal ephemera, evocative of the artist's own childhood bedroom. He uses these mediums to bridge his archive of work with the city's public.

About Clifford Prince King

Exhibiting much of this work for the first time in the Bay Area, New York-based artist Clifford Prince King constructs a photographic archive of shared space between Black and brown queer men. Inspired by bursts of memories, daydreams, and cinematic recollections of everyday life, he prods the photographic medium's capabilities of capturing the undefined. Presented in clusters and constellations, a selection of 8 photographs by King are repeated in multiple sizes to emulate the sensation of poetically fragmented memories – a departure from traditional exhibition of King's work.

About Kenneth Tam

Houston-based artist Kenneth Tam fluctuates between performance, video, and installation as a means of creating new possibilities for the present and future by drawing upon the interior lives of Asian Americans. In his 2015 video work, *sump*, Tam examines Asian-American masculine dynamics by making strange the quiet yet fraught space between him and his father. This video will be paired with a never before exhibited greeting card, written by the artist to his father but never sent. Originally published in the 2021 book *Best! Letters from Asian Americans in the Arts*, the document echoes the ways in which culturally-rooted anxiety and pain linger.

PUBLIC PROGRAM:

Letter Writing with Survived and Punished

[CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts](#)

April 27, 2024 | 4 to 6 pm

Location: 360 Kansas St., San Francisco, CA 94103

Admission: Free and open to the public

The exhibition will host a **letter-writing event** to connect participants to California-based incarcerated survivors. Working with [Survived & Punished](#), a grass-roots organization dedicated to the defense and care of people imprisoned after surviving domestic violence, this collective letter-writing event aims to foster the soft effects of shared space and shared relationships in contrast to the hardness of the prison system through the power of interpersonal connection.

In collaboration with a CCA designer and printmaker, unique cards for letter writing will be commissioned for the event, and will have a dedicated space in the exhibition's Reading Room for sustained engagement. During the event, participants will have the opportunity to be guided and to learn more about carceral dismantling from an individual and community-based lens from Survived & Punished representative Neda Said.

About CCA's Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice

In CCA's two-year MA in Curatorial Practice, students work closely with faculty mentors—and collaborate with fellow students—to develop the intellectual, analytical, and practical skills needed to pursue a range of professional paths in curating contemporary art. The program positions the curator as a researcher, advocate, and ally who understands context as a means of articulating connections among artists, artworks, ideas, information, and audiences. Curatorial Studies students acquire the knowledge and tools provided by museum studies, exhibition studies, or arts administration programs, but they are also encouraged to work creatively, think critically, and imagine a practice beyond the current boundaries of the art world. We ask students to challenge the assumptions and inequities on which museums and other arts institutions have been built and to envision how cultural producers might work together to foster new models for the future.

About CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

Founded in 1998 at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and located a few blocks from its campus, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. As an exhibition space, it commissions and shows new work by emerging and established artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include Rodrigo Hernández; *with what eyes?*; Ana Jotta; *Never the Less*; *Drum Listens to Heart*; Hervé Guibert; *This and More*; Josh Faught; *Look Across the Water Into the Darkness, Look for the Fog*; Maia Cruz Palileo; *Long Kwento* (which traveled to the Kimball Art Center in Park City, Utah); Jeffrey Gibson;

Nothing Is Eternal; Lydia Ourahmane: صرخة شمسية *Solar Cry*; Cinthia Marcelle: *A morta*; Vincent Fecteau; Abbas Akhavan: *cast for a folly*; Akosua Adoma Owusu: *Welcome to the Jungle* (which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans).

About California College of the Arts

Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

CCA offers a rich curriculum of 22 undergraduate and 10 graduate programs in art, design, architecture, and writing taught by a faculty of expert practitioners. Attracting promising students from across the nation and around the world, CCA is ranked among one of the top 30 most diverse colleges in the U.S. The *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked CCA as [one of the top 10](#) graduate schools for fine arts in the country.

Graduates are highly sought-after by companies such as Pixar/Disney, Apple, Intel, Meta, Gensler, Google, IDEO, Autodesk, Mattel, and Nike, and many have launched their own successful businesses. Alumni and faculty are often recognized with the highest honors in their fields, including Academy Awards, AIGA Medals, Fulbright Scholarships, Guggenheim Fellowships, MacArthur Fellowships, National Medal of Arts, and the Rome Prize, among others.

CCA is creating a new, expanded college campus in San Francisco spearheaded by the architectural firm Studio Gang. The expansion will add an additional 82,305 square feet of all-new maker spaces, classrooms, studios, galleries, and a continuous indoor-outdoor environment. The campus design will be a model of [sustainable construction and practice](#); will unite the college's programs in art, crafts, design, architecture, and writing to cultivate collaboration across disciplines; and will provide [more student housing](#) than ever before. For more information, visit cca.edu.

[PRESS IMAGES HERE](#)

[Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts](#)

On view: April 26-May 18, 2024

Opening Reception: April 26, 2024 | 6-8pm

Public Program: April 27, 2024 | 4-6pm

Location: 360 Kansas St., San Francisco, CA 94103

Admission: Free and open to the public.

[Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts](#) is open Wednesday-Saturday from 12-6pm.