



## MEDIA CONTACT

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**California College of the Arts Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice in partnership with CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts present:**

### ***The Word for World is Forest***

A curatorial project featuring work by Sofía Córdova, Beatriz Cortez, Candice Lin, Allison Smith, and Patrick Staff

Online at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org) from May 14–September 14, 2020

Curated by Fiona Ball, Naz Cuguoğlu, Chloe Kwiatkowski, and Orly Vermes, in partial fulfillment of the degree Master of Arts in Curatorial Practice



Sofía Córdova, *dawn chorusi: LA PREKUELA*, 2016–2020. Two-channel video, color sound. Photo courtesy of the artist.

**San Francisco, CA—Thursday, May 7, 2020—***The Word for World is Forest*, a project curated by CCA's Curatorial Practice graduate program Class of 2020, centers around world-building and takes alternative ways of being as its point of departure. The project, which features work by Sofía Córdova, Beatriz Cortez, Candice Lin, Allison Smith, and Patrick Staff, will be available for viewing online at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org) beginning May 14, along with an exhibition catalog that can be downloaded or ordered as a hard copy.

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*The Word for World is Forest* can be explored on the Wattis website through a virtual rendering of the Wattis gallery—a working document for visitors to experience the intended spatial relationship of the artwork—as well as through images of the artwork, a curatorial essay, the downloadable exhibition catalog, video interviews with the artists, and more.

*The Word for World is Forest* was originally scheduled as a physical exhibition to take place April 16–May 16, 2020, but was indefinitely postponed as part of CCA’s ongoing response to help limit the spread of COVID–19. Additional information about a possible physical exhibition will be available in the coming months at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org).

### **About *The Word for World is Forest***

*The Word for World is Forest* invites the audience to imagine a future for San Francisco that allows for various ways of coexistence and values joy and care for the neighbor and for the other. It turns to artistic practices that demand their own agency through world-building and alternative ways of being. The work investigates how speculative thinking can challenge dominant narratives. By looking to ways of being that value living with allied species in a conscious symbiosis, the project imagines an alternative world of mutual respect, care, and survival. Sofía Córdova, Beatriz Cortez, Candice Lin, Allison Smith, and Patrick Staff provide lenses for viewing time as malleable and circular—constructing a world where the future is, in fact, possible and within reach.

This exhibition takes its name from Ursula K. Le Guin’s book *The Word for World is Forest*. Beginning in the 1950s, Le Guin’s science fiction insisted on the power of the imagination and regarded fantasy and speculation as a way to challenge the established order. Science fiction is sometimes abbreviated as SF, which Donna Haraway and other thinkers have also used to stand in for terms including speculative fiction, string figures, and speculative feminism. The universes Le Guin created featured protagonists concerned with creating an impact while causing the least harm to others—not only humans, but all beings that accompany us on this planet: the stones, streams, plants, birds, rivers, and the rest of our nonhuman kin.

Córdova, Cortez, Lin, Smith, and Staff investigate ways to build on top, to replant displaced knowledge and cultivate new ideas within the soil that has already been tilled. The world as we know it may not need to be thrown away, just need to see something new.

For this project, Córdova has developed a new video in her *dawn chorus* series, which imagines earth 500 years in the future after climate

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collapse, to be exhibited as an installation with new sculptures. A short clip of the new video will be available online; the full video and installation will premiere for *The Word for World is Forest* if the exhibition takes physical form at a later date.

Sculptures by Cortez, Lin, Staff, and Smith are also featured in the project. Cortez's *Shields* (2019) takes the shape of three geodesic domes that occupy the gallery. Made out of recycled materials, these sculptures both suggest nomadism as a choice for a future that echoes certain indigenous ways of living, while raising awareness around forced displacement and detention, precarity, and an unsustainable contemporary housing system.

Lin drapes the figurative sculptures *Witness (Blue Version) and (Yellow Version)* (2019) in cloaks woven with patterns derived from drawings made as she conjured hallucinations by dosing herself with herbal tinctures. Lin and Staff's *Hormonal Fog* (2016–2018) is a smoke machine that makes use of homemade herbal tinctures to produce a hormonal smoke that lowers testosterone levels in the body.

Smith's *Ritual Instruments for Addressing 400 Years of Trouble (Harms Done, Harm None)* (2020) are handmade objects that facilitate a confrontation with the pain and grief caused by the artist's ancestors.

An installation featuring a garden of plants indigenous to the Americas, cultivated by the curatorial cohort through the instruction and guidance of Cortez and her collaborator Elizabeth Pérez Márquez, was intended to grow in the Wattis gallery just inside the front windows for the exhibition. The cohort is now caring for these plants at home. Photo updates on the growing gardens will be available online and updated over the course of the summer; a plant list and growing instructions are also shared for visitors in the catalog.

### ***The Word for World is Forest* exhibition catalog**

An exhibition catalog will be available on May 14 as a free PDF, with physical copies available to order. The catalog features an interview with Sofía Córdova, an essay and instructions for growing a garden of plants indigenous to the Americas by Beatriz Cortez and Elizabeth Pérez Márquez, a text by Allison Smith about her ritual instruments featured in the project, field notes from Northern California burn zones by Gavin Kroeber, and essays by the curatorial cohort.

### **About the artists**

**Sofía Córdova** (b. 1985, Carolina, Puerto Rico; based in Oakland) makes work that considers sci-fi and futurity, dance and music culture(s),

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the internet, mystical objects, extinction and mutation, migration, and climate change under the conditions of late capitalism and its technologies. She is one half of the music duo XUXA SANTAMARIA. In addition to discrete projects, performances, and albums, the duo collectively scores all of Córdova's video and performance work. Her recent solo exhibitions include: *Green Grass* with Dionne Lee, Lane Meyer Projects, Denver; *A las mil maravillas/ In the Thousand Wonders*, Kate Werble Gallery, New York; *Where Thieves Go After Death*, ASU Museum Project Space, Phoenix; *The Gentle Voice That Talks To You Won't Talk Forever*, City Limits Gallery, Oakland; *New Earth* with Joelle Mercedes and Jacqueline Carmen Guerrero, ACRE, Chicago; and *A+P+I* with Genevieve Quick and Sanaz Mazinani, Mills College Museum of Art, Oakland. She is currently in residency at Eyebeam, New York. She has received the Creative Work Fund Grant; *Signals From the West: Merce Cunningham at 100* commission and residency, as part of Hope Mohr Dance's Bridge Project from SFMOMA Open Space; and was an SFMOMA SECA Award Finalist. She received her MFA at California College of the Arts in San Francisco in 2010 and her BFA in Photography at St. John's University, Queens, NY in 2006.

**Beatriz Cortez** (b. 1970, San Salvador, El Salvador; based in Los Angeles) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. Her work explores simultaneity, life in different temporalities and versions of modernity, memory and loss in the aftermath of war and the experience of migration, and in relation to imagining possible futures. Cortez has had solo exhibitions at Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles; Clockshop, Los Angeles; Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles; Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles; Centro Cultural de España de El Salvador; and Museo Municipal Tecleño, El Salvador. Selected group exhibitions include *In Plain Sight* at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle ; *Candelilla*, *Coatlícue*, and *the Breathing Machine* at Ballroom Marfa, in Texas; *Unfolding Universes* at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, Colombia; *Utopian Imagination* at the Ford Foundation Gallery, New York; *Paroxysm of Sublime* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions; *Ingestion* at TEORÉ/Tica in San José, Costa Rica; *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas* at the Queens Museum, New York; and *Chronos, Cosmos: Deep Time, Open Space* at the Socrates Sculpture Park, New York. Cortez has received the Artadia Los Angeles Award, Frieze LIFEWTR Inaugural Sculpture Prize, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant, and California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists, among others. She holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, and a doctorate in Latin American Literature from Arizona State University. She teaches at California State University, Northridge. Beatriz Cortez is represented by Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles.

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**Candice Lin** (b. 1979, Concord, Massachusetts; based in Los Angeles) is an interdisciplinary artist who works with installation, drawing, video, and living materials and processes, such as mold, mushrooms, bacteria, fermentation, and stains. Recent solo exhibitions include the exhibition *A Hard White Body* at Bétonsalon, Paris; Portikus, Frankfurt am Main; and the Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago; as well as exhibitions at Gasworks, London; 18th Street Art Center, Los Angeles; and Human Resources, Los Angeles. Lin has been included in prominent recent group exhibitions including the Taipei Biennale; the Athens Biennale; *Made in L.A.*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; New Museum, New York; Sharjah Biennial, Beirut; and SculptureCenter, New York. She is the recipient of several residencies, grants, and fellowships, including the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, the Davidoff Art Residency, and Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship. In 2018, she was appointed to the faculty of the University of California, Los Angeles Department of Art. She received her MFA in New Genres at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2004 and her double BA in Visual Arts and Art Semiotics at Brown University in 2001.

**Allison Smith** (b. 1972, Manassas, Virginia; based in San Francisco) investigates the cultural phenomenon of historical reenactment, or Living History, using it as a means of addressing the relationship between American history, social activism, craft, and identity. She has produced over 25 solo exhibitions, installations, performances, and artist-led participatory projects for venues such as SFMOMA, San Francisco; Public Art Fund New York; the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; the Arts Club of Chicago; and SIGNAL Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö; among many others. Smith has exhibited her work in group exhibitions at galleries and museums including P.S.1/MoMA, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; MASS MoCA, North Adams; and the Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College. Notable residencies include IASPIS; the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University; the Museum of Modern Art *Artists Experiment* initiative; the International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York; Artpace San Antonio; and Headlands Center for the Arts. Smith lived in New York City from 1990 until 2008 when she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to join the faculty of California College of the Arts, where she currently serves as Dean of Fine Arts. She received a BA in psychology from The New School for Social Research, a BFA in fine arts from Parsons School of Design, and an MFA in sculpture from the Yale University School of Art; she also participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

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**Patrick Staff** (b. 1987, Bognor Regis, United Kingdom; based in Los Angeles and London) is a contemporary artist who works with installation, video, and performance to explore representations of the queer body. Staff has had solo exhibitions at Serpentine Galleries, London; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Dundee Contemporary Arts, Scotland; LUMA Westbau, Zürich; Collective Gallery, Edinburgh; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; Chisenhale Gallery, London; the Showroom Gallery, London; and Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles. Group exhibitions have been held at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; ICA London; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; New Museum, New York; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions; Serpentine Galleries, London; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Maison Populaire, Paris; and Whitstable Biennale, in the U.K. Select performances and screenings include Navel Gallery, Los Angeles; Queer Lisboa; London Film Festival; Outfest, REDCAT, Los Angeles; and Tate Liverpool. They are the recipient of the Paul Hamlyn Award for Visual Artists as well as residencies at FD13 Residency for the Arts, LUX, the Showroom, Fogo Island Arts, and Banff Centre. They received their BA in Fine Art and Contemporary Critical Studies from Goldsmiths University of London in 2009, and completed the LUX Associate Artists Programme and the Cunningham Method Contemporary Dance course at the Place, London in 2011.

### **About CCA's Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice**

In CCA's two-year MA in Curatorial Practice program, students work closely with faculty alongside visiting curators, designers, and artists to develop the intellectual and analytical skills needed to pursue a range of professional paths in curating and contemporary art. The program has a broad perspective of the curatorial, positioning the curator as a productive agent and researcher who embraces context as a valuable asset for articulating connections among artists, ideas, objects, archives, institutions, digital technologies, and audiences. The program equips students with knowledge and tools, inspires curiosity, and builds self-confidence for working creatively across disciplines and thinking imaginatively about mediation today, incorporating activity beyond art into the field of curating.

### **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 Abbas Akhavan: cast for a folly; Akosua Adoma Owusu: Welcome to the Jungle (which

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traveled to the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans); Diamond Stingily: *Doing the Best I Can*; Roshia Yaghmai: *Miraclegrow*; Adam Linder: *Full Service* (which traveled to Mudam Luxembourg); Ken Lum: *What's Old is Old for a Dog*; Henrik Olesen: *The Walk*; Melanie Gilligan: *Partswholes*; Howard Fried: *Derelicts*; Laura Owens: *Ten Paintings*; Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys: *Tram 3* (which traveled to MoMA PS1); Josephine Pryde: *Lapses in Thinking by the Person I Am* (which traveled to ICA Philadelphia and earned Pryde a 2016 Turner Prize nomination); K.r.m. Mooney: *En, set*; Sam Lewitt: *More Heat Than Light* (which traveled to Kunsthalle Basel and the Swiss Institute, New York); and Ellen Cantor: *Cinderella Syndrome* (which traveled to Künstlerhaus Stuttgart). A recent group exhibition, *Mechanisms*, traveled to Secession in Vienna in an expanded form entitled *Other Mechanisms*.

As a research institute, the Wattis dedicates an entire year to reflect on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public programs and publications involving the field's most prominent artists and thinkers. The 2019–2020 season is dedicated to the filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha; past seasons featured Joan Jonas, Andrea Fraser, David Hammons, Seth Price, and Dodie Bellamy.

The Wattis also hosts an annual Capp Street Artist-in-Residence, one of the earliest and longest-running artist-in-residence programs in the country, founded in 1983 by Ann Hatch as Capp Street Project, and incorporated into the Wattis Institute in 1998. Each year, an artist comes to live and work in San Francisco for a semester, teaches a graduate seminar at CCA, and presents an exhibition. Recent participants include Abbas Akhavan (2018–2019), contemptory (2017–2018), Melanie Gilligan (2016–2017), Carissa Rodriguez (2015–2016), Nairy Baghramian (2014–2015), Claire Fontaine (2013–2014), Ryan Gander (2012–2013), Harrell Fletcher and Kris Martin (2011–2012), Paulina Olowska and Renata Lucas (2010–2011), and Abraham Cruzvillegas (2009–2010).

For more information, visit [wattis.org](http://wattis.org).

### **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 and a faculty of expert practitioners, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility. Graduates are highly sought after by the world's cutting-edge companies, architecture and design firms, cultural and arts organizations, and more. CCA is

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currently expanding its San Francisco campus with new student housing and a new building by award-winning firm Studio Gang that will open in the coming years.

For more information, visit [cca.edu](http://cca.edu).

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

California College of the Arts presents:

The Word for World is Forest

A curatorial project by CCA's graduate program in Curatorial Practice Class of 2020, presented in partnership with CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

Online at [wattis.org](http://wattis.org) from May 14–September 14, 2020

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