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THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN AND GRAYDUCK GALLERY PRESENT EIGHT AUSTIN ARTISTS IN THE CULMINATING EXHIBITION OF THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN'S CRIT GROUP 2019

Crit Group Exhibition 2019

July 27 – August 25, 2019

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 27, 2–4 pm

grayDUCK Gallery, 2213 E. Cesar Chavez Street

JULY 12, 2019, Austin, Texas—The Contemporary Austin and grayDUCK Gallery are pleased to present the exhibition *Crit Group 2019*, featuring work by eight artists who participated this year in the museum's Crit Group—a program that combines group critique with professional development to support the holistic artistic practice of local artists. This eight-month-long program aspires to build a supportive community of Austin artists and to strengthen their practices with input from each other and established professionals in the field.

The opening reception will take place Saturday, July 27, from 2–4 pm at grayDUCK Gallery. In addition, the participating artists will give a public gallery talk about their work and their artistic growth during a program on Saturday, August 25, at 3 pm. The exhibition is on view at grayDUCK Gallery through August 25, 2019. Regular gallery hours are Thursday–Saturday, 11 am–6 pm and Sunday, 12–5 pm. All events are free and open to the public.

The culmination of the Crit Group program, the exhibition includes a diverse range of painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, drawing, video, sound art, and installation created during the Crit Group program. Dynamic and surprising, it features work by these eight talented Austin-based artists who challenged themselves to grow their art practices in new ways: Veronica Ceci, Madeline Irvine, Paloma Mayorga, Virginia Lee Montgomery, Michael Muelhaupt, Manik Raj Nakra, Matthew Steinke, and Jenn Wilson.

The artists were each invited to participate in the program for a variety of reasons and while their art takes distinct forms, a number of themes, including the body, systems, and stories, unite their group exhibition. Veronica Ceci, while trained as a master printer, has manipulated found objects through time-intensive artmaking processes. By adorning everyday materials associated with cleaning, she acknowledges the often-overlooked and often-female bodies providing this essential domestic labor. Paloma Mayorga's photo-based experiments press organic imagery against glass. Delicate transparent compositions of the artist's flesh, textured plants, and luscious foods intermingle on experimental materials like specimens that change over time. Michael Muelhaupt's sculptural installation and video consider the body and its natural and mechanical systems. Incorporating organic materials with recognizable storage objects, drains, and a humidifier, his art reveals and conceals bodily systems such as digestion, hearing, and respiration. Similarly, systems echo throughout Matt Steinke's finely sculpted sound installations. Biomorphic networks and stacked shapes listen and speak in dialogues that interact with the bodies in the gallery. Majestic ecosystems and the threats of climate change inspire Madeline

Irvine's flowing salt paintings. Factors outside Irvine's control affect how saline solution dries to a crystalline surface, yet she elegantly evokes both aquatic plants and minimal abstract painting. Contrasting a Luna moth's metamorphosis with her own stark interior space, the characters of Virginia Lee Montgomery's video both discover their sensory environments. Jenn Wilson's luminous installation of figurative paintings on copper shapes reflects almost-recognizable classic narratives and Romantic landscapes. Bold, graphic paintings by Manik Raj Nakra bring a refreshing pop take on folklore about wild beasts and ancient architectural motifs.

While the art exhibition is diverse, each artist in Crit Group 2019 is connected by an intense desire to hone his or her artistic practice and by a rigorous investigation of representations of the human form, the natural world and storytelling traditions that mediate between them. More information can be found at thecontemporaryaustin.org and at grayduckgallery.com.

CRIT GROUP AT THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

Launched six years ago and now with forty-nine artist alumni, Crit Group at The Contemporary Austin brings together emerging and established Austin artists to facilitate the growth of their complete artistic practice. Participating artists attend monthly sessions, informal gatherings, and studio visits while receiving group feedback on works in progress. The group also discusses professional development topics such as writing effective artist statements, bios, and proposals; applying for grants and residencies; and what to expect from curators and art dealers. An off-site summer group exhibition and public artist talk round out the program. Crit Group is organized by Andrea Mellard, Director of Public Programs & Community Engagement at The Contemporary Austin, with co-leaders Sterling Allen and Annette DiMeo Carlozzi.

Offered free to selected applicants, Crit Group extends the reach of The Contemporary Austin's vibrant educational initiatives, providing valuable continuing education experiences for professional artists and strengthening the contemporary art community as a whole.

Applications for Crit Group 2020 will open October 18, 2019 with a deadline of December 1, 2019, and will be led by Andrea Mellard, Sterling Allen, and Annette DiMeo Carlozzi for a third year in a row [confirmed].

More information at thecontemporaryaustin.org/explore/for-artists.

GRAYDUCK GALLERY

Now in the sixth year of its partnership with The Contemporary Austin's Crit Group, grayDUCK is a celebrated exhibition space founded in 2010 in South Austin and based in its current home in East Austin since 2014. In this art-energized neighborhood, the gallery strives to exhibit the work of exceptional artists while creating a welcoming place for everyone: visitors, artists, and neighbors. Monthly exhibitions highlight work from artists with a broad range of experience, both locally and nationally. The refurbished hundred-year-old house is a hybrid of new and old, clean lines and comfortable wood. The inviting space with a modern sensibility is a beautiful setting for artwork, poetry readings, film, music, and performances—a place where art is integral to everyday life.

THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As Austin's only museum solely focused on contemporary artists and their work, The Contemporary Austin offers exhibitions, educational opportunities, and events that start conversations and fuel the city's creative spirit. Known for artist-centric exhibitions and collaborations, The Contemporary invites exploration at both its urban and natural settings—downtown at the Jones Center (700 Congress Avenue), lakeside at the Laguna Gloria campus (3809 West 35th Street), and around Austin through the Museum Without Walls program.

CRIT GROUP CO-FACILITATORS AND EXHIBITION CURATORS

Sterling Allen holds an MFA in Sculpture from the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College. Allen is a co-founder and co-director of Okay Mountain, an artist collective and former gallery based in Austin, Texas. As a solo artist and in collaboration with the group, Allen has exhibited, organized, and completed projects at venues throughout the United States and received several residencies including the Artpace International Artist-In-Residence Program in San Antonio, Texas and a residency at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, NE. He has exhibited at numerous venues including the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City, UT, the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC, and VOLTA NY. He has been twice nominated for an Art Matters Grant and was recently awarded a Rauschenberg Foundation Residency. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Texas State University where he teaches Sculpture and is acting Area Coordinator in Foundations.

A champion of local artist communities who stays abreast of international developments, **Annette DiMeo Carlozzi** has a keen eye for emerging talent and a steadfast commitment to looking beyond labels. Building an expansive practice as a curator of modern and contemporary art, she has created seminal exhibitions, produced important commissions, and acquired major works by a wide range of artists for curatorial and directorial posts in Minneapolis, Aspen, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Austin. Recently retired as Curator at Large from the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin, Carlozzi is now an independent curator. Named to the Austin Arts Hall of Fame in 2013, she has been a consultant, adviser, board member, and/or panelist for over fifty organizations including Creative Capital, Artpace, and UT's Division of Diversity and Community Engagement.

Andrea Mellard is Director of Public Programs & Community Engagement for The Contemporary Austin and founder of Crit Group. She curates programming that takes advantage of the museum's two distinct sites—one urban and the other natural—and provides platforms for audiences to come together, investigate art, and create new experiences. In addition to film series and artist talks, Mellard has curated recent exhibitions and projects with Janine Antoni, Sanford Biggers, Nick Cave, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Lucky Dragons, Ragnar Kjartansson, and Mark Mothersbaugh. She has worked with a multitude of emerging Texas artists for the *New Art in Austin, Texas Prize* and *New Works* exhibition programs (both at the formerly named Austin Museum of Art and AMOA-Arthouse). She has over eighteen years of museum experience, and an MA in American Studies from The University of Texas at Austin inflects her interdisciplinary approach to contemporary culture.

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High-resolution images available upon request.