

## DISAPPEARING ACTS

REAGAN KENDALL, JESSICA NINCI, DAN SCHMAHL, SOUP CERAMICS, SPECIFIC OBJECTS

PICNIC CURATORIAL PROJECTS

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*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it. — Arundhati Roy*

*I hear you're buying a synthesizer and an arpeggiator and are throwing your computer out the window because you want to make something real. You want to make a Yaz record — James Murphy*

A few months before serving as a guest lecturer at one of the local universities, I gave a talk at The Museum of Modern Art in Fort Worth in conjunction with the exhibition *Disappearing—California*, where I argued for works of art that move away from object-oriented, normative, economically driven modes of production; championing methods that favor radically divergent tangents, methods that lead to results both difficult to define and to document. I discussed 1970s California, the egalitarian nature of punk rock, Bas Jan Ader and the sea, economic lifecycles of the matsutake mushroom, and other forms of disappearing.

By the time I came to conduct the semester-long graduate critique course, I was already on my way to dropping (*failing?*) out of the art world. For me, the class was an opportunity to test emerging minds with my misgivings at the time about artist life. I organized the course around essays that sought new models for our current institutions, if not outright discouraging art-making altogether. Despite my perseverance, hoping that some of them (at least the good ones anyway) would find some substance from it all, admittedly the class wasn't going very well. They were after all star-eyed candidates still with hopes and dreams and I was in a much different place.

Somewhere in the semester and over beers with a friend, I shared thoughts about the class, my persisting troubles with *ART*, ecological concerns, and the want for something more fulfilling. Likely more helpful to me at the time than the students, we got on to the idea of a *picnic for one* as sort of a conceptual residency, a place for solace and retreat; a radical form of *action!*

The class concluded, and soon after the pandemic happened. All programming and art activity in general halted. Like everyone else in the world in some form or another, I had a lot of time on my hands to reflect, the *picnic for one* had become a forced reality. Whether consciously or not, I began unpacking all this disappearing business that had rattled around the year before.

I have spent nearly two decades collaborating in some form or another, whether in bands, collectives, or partnerships, dissolving self into the amalgamation of others as a way to restrain ego and open pathways to experimentation, discovery, and transformation. It has taken time, but a nebulous has formed and katamari-damacy'd its way around these histories.

*Disappearing Acts* is an exhibition about friendships, a collective of people whose work, conversations, and collaborations (old and new), have helped to inform the conception of Picnic Surf Shapes in one way or another. Artists who work in ways that fly in the face of convention, find the means to survive and disappear into the pure act of object-making, sometimes upholding traditions that homospisens have maintained for centuries while no less practicing conceptual rigor and relevance in step with each individual's artistic practice. A collection of beautiful things made lovingly by real artists and collectible by real people. Pure vibration. — Gregory Ruppe, PICNIC SURF SHAPES

**Reagan Kendall** is an artist living and working in Dallas, TX. Her work primarily utilizes hand-drawn typography and illustration to explore the human hand's strive for perfection and the organic beauty that arises in our inability to reach it. Over the years her compositions have increasingly made use of textiles and garments as substrates. Influenced by a love for DADA, punk, and the celebration of imperfection, her early works manifested as meticulous freehand renderings of anarcho-punk album covers, one-to-one documentation of their content painstakingly transcribed in fine line sharpie with precision and care. The results harken back to a pre-digital age, carrying a similar kind of slowed handling and attention as the time spent with the very LP packaging they reference. For 'Disappearing Acts' Kendall has broken from this practice, creating a new series of five works comprised entirely of her own verbiage, typefaces, and illustrations to explore radical forms of spirituality and being.

**Jessica Ninci** is from Houston, Texas (b. July 17th, 1986). She earned her MFA in painting and drawing from the University of Houston in 2013 and her work has been exhibited in various spaces including the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Lawndale Art Center, The Blaffer Museum, Box 13, Jonathan Hopson Gallery, Front Gallery, the Glassell School of Art, the Galveston Artist Residency, and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Ninci currently lives in Galveston, Texas with her partner and fellow artist Dan Schmahl, their dog, and two cats. They are 2019 recipients of The Idea Fund artist grant and have operated a project space turned collaborative project in Galveston called Rising Tide Projects. More recently, Ninci was awarded a Public Art Grant from the city of Galveston and exhibited her most recent body of work, titled Window Shopping, in a window in the city's downtown area. Ninci's interest in ceramics ranges from functional to sculptural. She often explores the "trompe l'oeil" or "illusionistic" in her sculptural practice, but then juxtaposes those pieces against non-objective abstraction. Her work is influenced by domestic settings - being functional at times - but also reflects living on an island and the landscape of the Texas Gulf Coast.

**Dan Schmahl** (b. Key West, FL) is an artist and printmaker based out of Galveston, TX. His work uses photography to seek and create visions of utopia in day-to-day life. Punk house science fiction under clamp light; just within reach. He has a BFA from Florida State University and was an artist-in-residence at the Galveston Artist Residency from 2014-2015. He's exhibited work at the Galveston Arts Center, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, The GAR Gallery, among others. He also runs a small artist-oriented risograph press called SUPER HIT PRESS in his spare time, in addition to Rising Tide Projects in downtown Galveston which he created with his partner Jessica Ninci in 2019.

**SOUP [ceramics]** features an evolving collection of functional ceramics by interdisciplinary artists Summer E. Aquino and Jeff Gibbons. Each one-of-a-kind piece is made by hand with a locally produced clay body and glazes formulated by us in our Dallas, Texas studio. Our pots are food-safe, dishwasher-safe, made with care, and widely collected around the world.

**Specific Objects** is a custom design and fabrication studio located in Dallas, TX. SO combines traditional techniques with fine art practices, creating one-of-a-kind objects that fulfill industrial/consumer needs while capturing a singular artistic vision. Specific Objects is owned and operated by Ryan Goolsby, a Dallas-based artist, and fabricator. His background is in photography (BFA from UNT 2001) and later sculpture (MFA from TCU 2014). His artwork can be seen at Erin Cluley Gallery and he founded and operates Specific Objects LLC design and fabrication studio with his wife and three daughters.

A surf brand, a research lab, and a platform for experimentation and collaboration, **PICNIC SURF SHAPES** is an artist-led, conceptually rigorous, and ecologically dedicated initiative that produces hand-shaped surfboards, and other unique objects for use both in and out of the water. PICNIC was founded in early 2020 by artist and shaper Gregory Ruppe and Alden Pinnell of The Power Station contemporary art space. Every shape is hand built from start to finish and is one of a kind. Every design is made in-house and in small batches with durability, and environmental kindness in mind. **PICNIC CURATORIAL PROJECTS** acts as the brand's curatorial arm.