


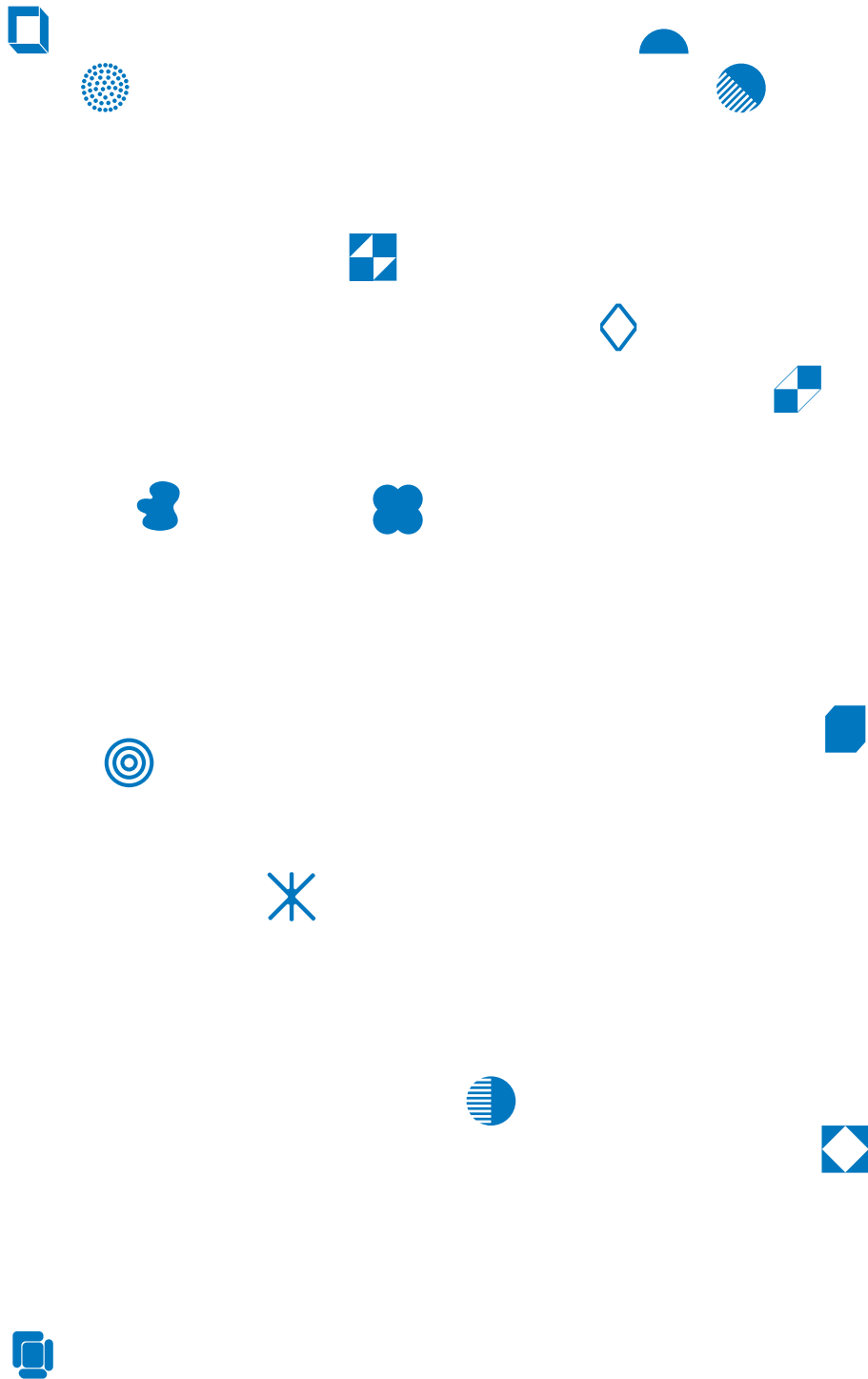


THE
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OF
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BJECTS

April 2–
June 5, 2022

Teresa Baker, Ashwini Bhat, Demetri Broxton,
Sophronia Cook, Tyler Cross & Kyle Lypka, Renée Gertler,
Cathy Lu, Masako Miki, Natani Notah, Peter Simensky

MARIN
MOCA



The Potential of Objects highlights eleven emerging artists with ties to the Bay Area who use everyday materials to explore the human condition. In their hands, objects become transformative—conduits, vessels, mirrors, talismans—and engage with a range of social and political issues.

The works on view deploy a combination of natural and artificial materials, from clay, fiber, minerals, and shells to AstroTurf, pleather, resin, and steel, to draw out hidden meanings and latent possibilities. Teresa Baker, Demetri Broxton, Cathy Lu, Masako Miki, and Natani Notah manipulate traditional manifestations of culture through a contemporary lens to challenge our assumptions of identity, borders, and inherited values, while Ashwini Bhat, Sophronia Cook, Tyler Cross and Kyle Lypka, Renée Gertler, and Peter Simensky invent entirely new forms as conduits for healing, preservation, intimacy, and universal connection. Through their various preoccupations with materiality, these artists ask: How does identity relate to inanimate objects? What role do things play in human relationships, dialogues, and debates? Can they connect disparate eras and geographies? What can material from the past reveal about the present? And can object making be an act of resistance?

The exhibition reflects recent contemporary debates around visual culture (recall for instance the hotly contested removal of Confederate monuments) and also draws from a long history in both Eastern and Western philosophy of pondering “vital forces,” as in political theorist Jane Bennett’s 2009 book *Vibrant Matter*, which posits that matter, things, and nonhuman forces have agency, vitality, and auras of their own. Indeed, a vital materialism imbues the featured works, urging viewers to consider the potential of objects to wrestle with many of the most pressing issues of our time. As we collectively reemerge from prolonged separation and try to make sense of today’s polarized culture, conflicting values, and distortions of truth, the artists presented here demonstrate the alchemical materiality of sculpture to question, transform, and restore our relationships to the things that surround us and to one another.

Teresa Baker's mixed-media practice hovers between two and three dimensions, combining artificial and natural materials to create abstracted landscapes, most often the vast northern Plains of her Mandan and Hidatsa tribal origins. Manifesting her interest in topographies, she heightens ordinary materials like AstroTurf, spray paint, and polyester yarn with willow, bark, and sinew to embody the freedom of space. The works' asymmetrical shapes and gestural mark making reference the territories and unique geological formations from which they are drawn but resist conventional borders, creating an intuitive kind of mapping informed by the artist's rigorous practice of walking and deep relationship to the land.

Drawing on her southern Indian roots and training in classical dance and literature, **Ashwini Bhat** works across ceramics, sculpture, installation, and performance. Her radical but somehow familiar forms suggest a complex interplay between the landscape, humanity, and the nonhuman. In *My Body Is Dirt, My Spirit Is Space* (2021–22), clay and the human body become extensions of each other, reflecting on the interdependency of species and enacting an ethical concern for the implications of humanity's position as independent from our surroundings. Bhat's work searches for gestural links that emphasize what we share with the nonhuman world and underscore our inextricable relationship to all living organisms.

Demetri Broxton's textile sculptures reflect the artist's connections to the sacred art of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, the beading traditions of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians, and American hip-hop and graffiti. His work is an ongoing investigation of cultural continuities across Africa and the United States, with a particular interest in how ancient cultural forms find their way into mainstream contemporary culture. *Save Me, Joe Louis* (2019–20) references the last words of a Southern Black prisoner on death row and captures the importance of boxing to the African American community during the Jim Crow era through a totem honoring Louis, one of the sport's enduring legends. With the work, Broxton asks how far the United States has really come since the 1930s.

Sophonria Cook's intuitive constructions begin with personal iPhone photographs translated into abstract collages cast in resin. Appearing as though vacuum-formed, her experimental shapes are like distorted time portals, remixing memories and preserving them as sealed reliquaries. *Rarest of Feelings* (2022) takes MarinMOCA's gallery windows as the point of departure for a new installation. Cook trades the immediacy of her iPhone for the physical architecture of

the building by placing custom resin "lenses" over the glass panes so as to capture the present moment through ever-shifting light. The piece casts a fresh perspective on the surrounding environment, emphasizing the window's symbolic nature as a space of consciousness, possibility, and renewed connection with the world around us.

Tyler Cross and Kyle Lypka leverage their intimate relationship to create collaborative ceramic sculptures. Their expansive take on that most primitive of objects, the vessel, translates line drawings into clay and incorporates meticulous experimental glazing techniques to create forms both familiar and otherworldly. The couple's shared endeavor of object making resists the tendencies of the digital realm to disembody, and thus endanger, real-world connection. *Unlucky Star* (2022) conjures Gothic gargoyles or a double-headed serpent, a symbol of omen and rebirth, auspicious in its relationship to our reemergence from dark times. Its green patterning resembles a snake's glistening scales, nodding to a shedding of the past.

Renée Gertler's meticulous drawings and hand-beaded sculptures draw from the opposing realms of science and mysticism—arenas Gertler was immersed in as a child through her parents' respective vocations. Made using number patterns, papier-mâché, crystals, and beadwork, her shimmering abstractions conjured from humble materials bridge logic, intuition, craft, and the paranormal to embody modes of connection, healing, and memory. Their mysterious, talismanic forms invite close inspection, suggesting portals to another realm. The artist's obsessive preoccupations and meticulous, ritualistic methods serve as meditative therapy for their maker as much as for viewers.

Cathy Lu's *American Dream Pillows* (2020) are inspired by two very different sources: ceramic pillows from the Chinese Song and Tang dynasties that were believed to influence dreams and life experiences, and the tensions between the promises of the American dream and the realities of racism and exclusion. Various features of the works allude to ubiquitous aspects of the Asian American experience, for instance the East Asian beauty masks that have become popular in the United States, or long fingernails, which in China are believed to signify wealth, and here reference the preponderance of nail salons run by East Asian immigrants. Lu's works amplify feelings of invisibility and hypervisibility and consider the possibility of reconciling dreams and dystopian realities.

Masako Miki's felt and bronze sculptures continue the artist's preoccupation with the Japanese Shinto concept of shape-shifting spirits that occupy household objects. In this folklore, inanimate objects

can become sentient beings. As an immigrant herself living between two cultures, shape-shifting can be seen as a metaphor for cultural adaptation and survival. The artist's characters embody aspects of both the sacred and the secular, animate and inanimate, and reflect the nuances of nonbinary spaces across gender, biracial identity, and multiculturalism. Through the lens of ancestral narratives, Miki's work emphasizes the idea of interrelatedness in the universe to embrace dichotomies of human identity and transformation.

Natani Notah explores contemporary Native American identity through a Diné (Navajo) woman's perspective. Her practice marries unexpected natural and synthetic materials to purposefully and thoughtfully resist colonial mindsets. Made from secondhand garments and sentimental clothing gifted to her by family members, Notah's soft sculptures often pair unexpected elements with Native beadwork, leatherwork, and fiber to complicate our understanding of inherited tradition and value. They remind us how Native American representation and cultural objects have been appropriated and commodified by non-Native commercial interests, and aspire to nurture understanding across cultural divides.

Peter Simensky assembles everyday knickknacks into anthropomorphic sculptures that serve as functioning receivers and transmitters; their shards of reflective pyrite (fool's gold) capture audio from AM transmissions. While pyrite's value and utility is limited, its use as a detector in crystal radio sets in the early twentieth century remains an important part of radio technology history. In conjunction with works from his ongoing *Pyrite Pirate Radio series* (2021), the sculptures connect directly to the communities they inhabit via live broadcasts, literally giving each context and sculpture a voice. The audio programming includes collaborations with artists, musicians, activists, pirate radio stations, and local communities.

– Amy Owen

Works in the Exhibition

Teresa Baker

Loom, 2018
Yarn on AstroTurf
73 × 102 in.
Courtesy the artist and de boer, Los Angeles

Good Weather, 2021
Yarn, solder, bark, spray paint, AstroTurf
108 × 69 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist and de boer, Los Angeles

Mandaree, 2022
Willow, sewing thread, embroidery thread
34 × 17 × 17 in.
Courtesy the artist and de boer, Los Angeles

Ashwini Bhat

My Body Is Dirt, My Spirit Is Space, 2021–22
Glazed ceramic, thread, wood, and single-channel video (color, sound, 2:01 min.)
48 × 12 × 8 in.
Courtesy the artist and Shoshana Wayne Gallery

Demetri Broxton

Save Me, Joe Louis, 2019–20
Everlast boxing gloves, redwood, cowrie shells, Japanese and Czech seed beads, cotton, silver wire, stainless steel chain and hardware, frankincense, nylon thread, mirrors
60 × 24 × 15 in.
Courtesy the artist and Patricia Sweetow Gallery

Sophonra Cook

Rarest of Feelings, 2022
Resin, aluminum, stainless steel, foam, lizard skin
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Tyler Cross and Kyle Lypka

Unlucky Star, 2022
Glazed ceramic
26 × 18 × 16 in.
Courtesy the artists

Renée Gertler

Shroud, Conscious/Unconscious, 2019
Silk print, thread, beads, papier-mâché wood, plaster, Flashe, Plexiglas
14 × 9 × 11 in.
Courtesy the artist

Glimmer jeune fille, 2020
Papier-mâché, plaster, beads, wood, thread
14 × 10 × 9 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist

Glove (for Viola), 2020
Papier-mâché, plaster, beads
1 × 9 × 4 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist

Stone Face, No Face, 2021
Papier-mâché, plaster, beads, Flashe
10 ½ × 9 ½ × 7 in.
Courtesy the artist

Transmissions, 2021
Ink, graphite, and colored pencil on paper
29 × 42 × 1 ½ in. (framed)
Courtesy the artist

Cathy Lu

American Dream Pillow, 2020
Porcelain, packing blanket, cinder blocks
17 × 11 × 6 in. (approx.)
Courtesy the artist

American Dream Pillow, 2020
Porcelain, packing blanket, cinder blocks
17 × 11 × 6 in. (approx.)
Courtesy the artist

Masako Miki

一つ目小僧 *Hitotsume-kozo (One-eyed ghost)*, 2018
Wool, foam, mahogany wood
46 × 59 × 11 in.
Courtesy the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions

如意自在 *Nyoiizai (Animated back scratcher)*, 2018
Wool, foam
96 × 48 × 48 in.
Courtesy the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions

Cream Nopperabō (Faceless ghost), 2021
Cast bronze, automobile paint, urethane
17 ½ × 7 ½ × 7 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist and CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions

Natani Notah

Raring to Go, 2021
Found bike part, horsehair, thread, screws
27 × 2 ½ × 3 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist

Shell-Shocked, 2021
Vintage Four Corners T-shirt, shell beads, thread, faux fur, pleather belt, plastic corn pellets
15 × 11 × 8 in.
Courtesy the artist

Hooked, 2022
Found metal hook, leather, thread, seed beads
26 ½ × 4 × 1 ¼ in.
Courtesy the artist

Peter Simensky

Pyrite Pirate Radio – drum kit, 2021
Pyrite (fool's gold), steel, plywood, copper, electrical wires, antenna cymbal, brass tubes, amplifiers, radio hardware
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Pyrite Pirate Radio – pink hair I don't care, 2021
Pyrite (fool's gold), steel, plywood, copper, electrical wires, antenna umbrella, beads, loop antenna, amplifiers, radio hardware
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

Public Programs

Thursday, April 21, 2022, 5–6 PM on Zoom

In conversation: Demetri Broxton and Natani Notah,
moderated by Amy Owen

Saturday, May 14, 2022, 2–4 PM

Community Dream Pillow Ceramics Workshop with Cathy Lu
MarinMOCA Classroom

Sunday, June 5, 2022, 11 AM–4 PM

Closing reception and Family Day Shape-Shifter Workshop
inspired by the work of Masako Miki
MarinMOCA Galleries and Classroom

Tours: Docent tours begin April 6
and take place Wednesdays at 11
am and Saturdays at 2 pm.

Admission: \$10 for adults, \$8 for
seniors and students.
Free for members.

For details and updates, visit marinmoca.org.

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April 2–June 5, 2022

MARIN MOCA
Museum of Contemporary Art

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