



Metropolitan State University of Denver

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Center for Visual Art Reopens on August 14 with *The Walls Between Us*

DENVER, COLORADO – Walls, whether emotional barriers, physical structures, implied boundaries, or heavily guarded borders, permeate our lives as human beings. Since the beginning of civilization, walls have been erected to shelter and protect, to divide and separate. In the exhibition *The Walls Between Us*, the artist collective Artnauts was asked to make work responding to the theme of borders and barriers, literal or intangible, that separate and divide us from others. "As a response to the political divisions that are in sharp focus around the world and in particular the United States, the exhibition offers 38 different expressions of conflict", says CVA Director & Curator Cecily Cullen. The artist's individual explorations of the theme will be presented for public viewing from August 14 – October 17, 2020 at the Center for Visual Art.

The social justice focus of Artnauts greatly aligns with CVA's mission to promote dialogue and engagement with global, urban issues through the lens of contemporary art. This theme came from a discussion of crossing borders – politically charged, contested, invisible, those that are clearly delineated, as well as socioeconomic, emotional and other intangible barriers. Through these works created for the exhibition, "The Artnauts seek to tear down walls that separate humanity from inhumanity. Only by reaching out can we break barriers that prevent us from actualizing to our full potential", says Artnauts founder Dr. George Rivera.

The examinations that these artists have manifested for *The Walls Between Us* are presented in many different forms and contexts. Michael Dixon approaches his artwork through his own experience of living between cultural walls as a biracial man. His piece *Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!* is titled after a line from Emma Lazarus' poem *The New Colossus* and focuses on immigration and the harm caused by the literal and figurative walls that the U.S. government has erected against immigration. Dixon's painting depicts the children being detained at the U.S. border with Mexico and seeks to address their plight as it contradicts what the Statue of Liberty, our "Mother of Exiles", represents.

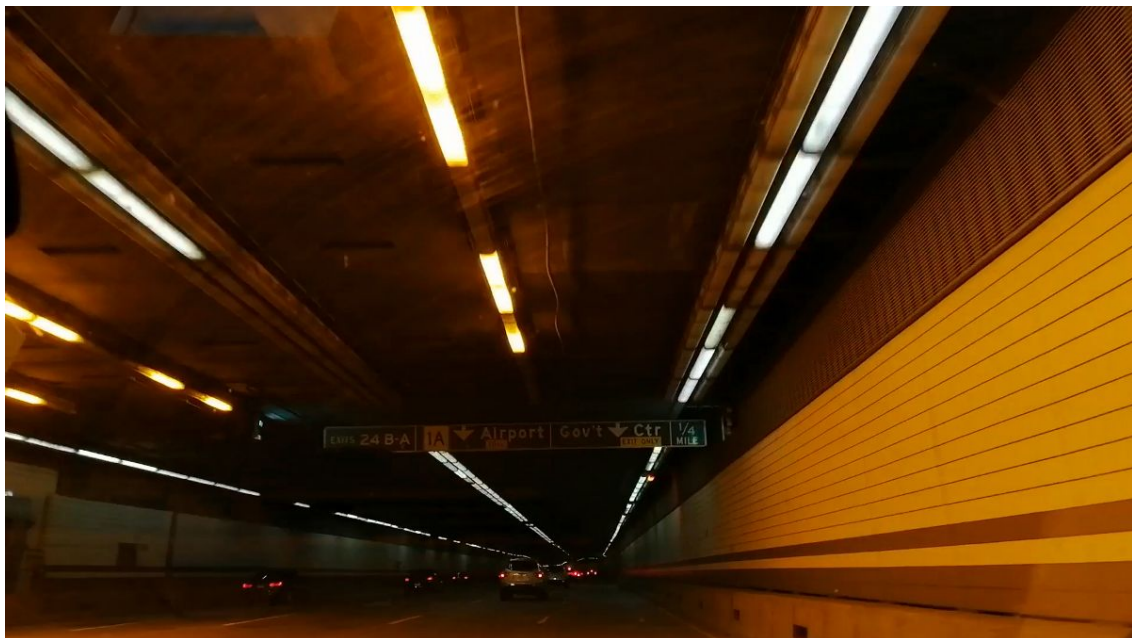
Trine Bumiller also addresses the border wall erected between the U.S. and Mexico but with an emphasis on the ecological destruction of the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. As a UNESCO biosphere reserve, the preservation of the park is vital to national and international scientific communities who study the pristine environment of the park to better understand this extraordinary land and its impact on humans. In a series of 13 paintings, Bumiller's piece titled *Broken Barrier* gives us a view of a majestic organ pipe cactus as seen through the obstructive slats of the metal barrier being constructed through the park. As a 60-foot wide swath of earth is bulldozed for the construction of an 18-foot high, 6-foot deep metal barricade, untold devastation has been wrecked upon the treasured plants, wildlife, and sacred sites of the reserve.

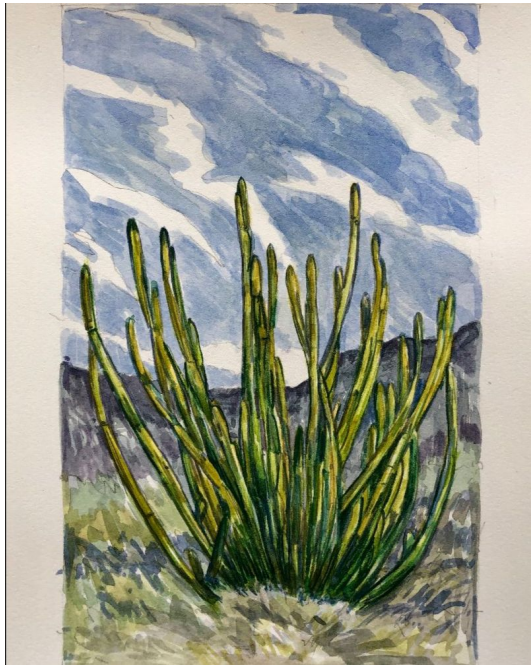
In contrast, several artists have examined movement and the impact of walls upon journeys both physical and mental. Robin Hextrum's painting *Open Borders* examines nomadism and the freedom to move about unconstrained by the walls that humans have put up to separate themselves from others. Additionally, Lourdes Archundia's video piece

Depart projects the continuous motion of the open road against the solidity of a fixed wall in an investigation of opposing forces. Her intent with the work is to have the viewer reflect on their own journeys and the barriers they have faced, whether emotional, geographical, social, or political.

Rebecca DiDomenico's work analyzes the dichotomy of walls created to enclose and protect versus walls created to divide and barricade. In DiDomenico's piece *The Biology of a Wall*, she constructs a wall out of mica, playing off of its solid yet delicate composition. Inside the transparent wall of mica, DiDomenico has layered one side with digital images of personal suffering as a result of society's divisionary tactics and drawings of the naturally and necessarily occurring walls and divisions that make up the interior of the human body on the other side. This juxtaposition attempts to showcase how humans might construct walls without rooting them in hate, rather, choosing to approach their construction from a place of grace.

The Walls Between Us opens August 14 and continues through October 17, 2020. *The Walls Between Us* is organized by the Center for Visual Art, led by Cecily Cullen in cooperation with the Artnauts members Dr. George Rivera, Martha Russo, and Sandy Lane.





Images: Lourdes Archundia, *Depart*; Trine Bumiller, *Broken Barrier*, 2020, watercolor sketch; Robin Hextrum, *Open Borders*, 2020, oil on canvas

Header Image: Beth Krensky, *Make Me a Sanctuary*, 2018, video still

About the Artnauts

The Artnauts is an artist collective that uses the visual arts as a tool for addressing global issues while connecting with artists from around the world. In 1996, Dr. George Rivera, professor in the Art and Art History Department at the University of Colorado Boulder founded the Artnauts with Dennis Dalton, (University of Colorado Pueblo), Dr. Beth Krensky, (University of Utah), Garrison Roots, and Luis Valdovino, (University of Colorado Boulder). Dr. Rivera has been the lead curator since the inception of the collective.

The name derives from combining the words “art” and “astronaut” as a way to describe the process of exploring uncharted territory in the world at large. The name also denotes the practice that is “not” art as usual, going beyond the confines of the traditional or conventional art world and blurring the boundaries between art, activism, and social practice. The Artnauts have worked at the intersection of critical consciousness and contemporary artistic practice to impact change for almost 25 years. More than 350 artists have been in the collective, participating in over 270 exhibitions on 5 continents.

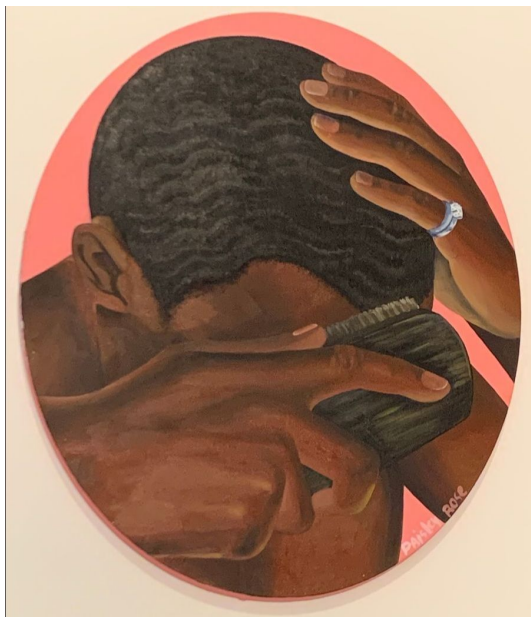
Artists in the Exhibition

Patricia, Aaron, Valerie Albicker, Doris Araujo, Lourdes Archundia, Barbara Arnold, Pamela Beverly-Quigley, Trine Bumiller, Andrew Connelly, Rachael Delaney, Rebecca DiDomenico, Michael Dixon, Suzanne Faris, Melissa Furness, Quintin Gonzalez, Andrea Gordon, Kari Greenberg, Robin Hextrum, Nicole Jean Hill, Ben Jackel, Beth Krensky, Sandy Lane, Sammy Lee, Catherine Leisek, Patrick Marold, V. Kim Martinez, Susanne Mitchell, Faten Nastas, Jorge Ed PerezGa, Laura Phelps Rogers, Kim Putnam, George Rivera, Martha Russo, Virginia Schick, Tina Suszynski, Leah Swenson, Luis Valdovino, Summer Ventis, Joo Yeon Woo

Exhibition Events

CVA is delighted to host a series of virtual artist lectures with *The Walls Between Us* artists. A complete listing of events will be announced on the website and through CVA's e-newsletter, www.msudenver.edu/cva.

Socially Distant Culture Club, CVA's art-making happy hour, will be hosted online from 5-6:30pm with exhibition related activities on the following Wednesdays: August 19, September 16, and October 14.



Images: Paisley Rose Amrien, *Wave Check*, 2020, acrylic on canvas; Clay Hawkley, *Organized Aggression*, spray paint on found photograph

965 Project Gallery

The 965 Project Gallery presents *Revealing*. Clothing, hair, and accessories have

the power to create protective yet expressive personal statements that enable the wearer to feel connected to culture, movements, organizations, etc. They also have the power to undermine preconceived notions when it comes to gender, race, and sexuality. Masculinity and femininity are tropes that often dictate socially acceptable appearance, gender-roles, careers, activities, and relationships cross-culturally. More than ever, we are seeing individuals breaking through barriers of what is expected of them to perform within the bounds of their assigned gender, race, culture, or sexuality. We are also seeing repercussions from the anonymity of uniforms that make it easier to inflict violence upon the bodies that wear them for the sake of the team.

Revealing explores the ways in which articles of clothing, hair and accessories carry within them connotations of normative behavioral expectations by exhibiting artists that address traditional conventions of gendered appearance. This exhibition focuses on fashion to create conversations surrounding societal presumptions about individual personal expression, allowing for toxic behavior to be addressed, and creating room for the celebration of marginalized communities. These conversations aid in subverting confining limitations and draw attention to the popularity of aggressive and violent professions, hobbies, and behaviors.

Artists exhibiting in *Revealing* are Paisley Rose Amrien, Drew Austin, Clay Hawkley, and Audrey Twigg. This exhibition was co-curated by Kristin Smith and Grace Gutierrez, former 965 Student Curators, with the assistance of Shari Myers and Molly Quinn, current 965 Student Curators. The 965 Project Gallery is a student-led space that provides premiere professional development opportunities to students interested in fine art curation and arts administration.

About CVA

Center for Visual Art is the off-campus contemporary art center for Metropolitan State University of Denver. CVA provides a year-round schedule of bold, contemporary exhibitions of both local significance and international reach, educational programming open to the community and immersive workforce development for students in creative fields. CVA's mission is to provide access to diverse, high-quality art experiences that advance the global urban dialogue. CVA is free and open to all.

#

Media Contact:

Jenna Miles, Communications Manager

milesjen@msudenver.edu • 303.294.5207 (office) • 720.943.1889 (direct)

Additional images available on request.
