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From: Visual Arts at HMC

Jasmine Baetz and Alessia Lupo Cecchet *Special Archives*

October 17-December 13, 2024
Sprague Gallery



Jasmine Baetz, *Sugar in the milk* (August 2024 iteration), 2023, fired clay, oxide, sand, blood, and construction light, 42 x 30 x 20 inches.
Alessia Lupo Cecchet, *Cerberus* (still), 2024, video, 1 min.

Sprague Gallery is pleased to announce *Special Archives*, a two-person exhibition of Jasmine Baetz and Alessia Lupo Cecchet. Baetz, who in 2021-2024 was the Lincoln Visiting Professor in Ceramics at Scripps College and Claremont Graduate University, is currently a Visiting Scholar at Claremont McKenna College; and Cecchet is the Visiting Assistant Professor in Media Studies at Pomona College.

This exhibition brings the two artists together for their use of artistic research and inquiry into subjectivity amidst centrally produced knowledge. Their research, often archival, begins by identifying and questioning colonial, anthropocentric, or patriarchal histories and narratives on the subject; progresses by navigating ways, through visual and material experiments, to push the subject and the viewer beyond the known and told and toward the very singular, individual subjectivity; and concludes with an artwork through which the subject, now much covered with affective moments, becomes and remains obscure, strange, and unintelligible.

Baetz responds to inherited norms, categorizations, and environments by disidentifying and maladjusting the subject, sometimes over a period of time long enough to counter history. “Sugar in the milk” (2023), a ceramic coil flame housed in the self-righting base of a light meant for rough and uneven jobsites, was once part of *Blood in the fire, sugar in the milk* (2023), a larger installation that references a Zoroastrian fire temple; and takes its title from the supposed promise made by diasporic Zoroastrians to Indian authorities twelve centuries ago that they would exist in assimilation ‘like sugar in the milk.’ “Surface Finds” (2023), an installation of four trays each filled with multiples of some unidentified fragment, was made for a curatorial project from which the artist received a written description of a historical ceramic vessel as a prompt to reimagine the object and

create an artwork in semblance to it. For “Lesser-known” (2024), a pile of IRAN Journals made into an illegible object using clay, wood glue, rice paste, and thin set, the artist carried and read the Journals for ten years and cut and pasted them for four years.

Cecchet redigests historical documents and objects to bring forth forgotten human and non-human experiences and create space for dispute and mourning. Her works each using a number of mediums including photography, live-action film, animation, found footage, and sculpture are multivocal and complicated.

“Cerberus” (2024), a short video vignette of peace lilies containing unexpected qualities of moving and electric, evokes questions regarding the human gaze on time, life, and intelligence of the natural world. “balaena” (“whale”; 2022), a film that engages a stranded whale, male interlopers collecting and dissecting the whale and taking selfies, and a silent woman who brings the whale back to the sea, is inspired by the artist’s research on the forgotten practice of parading dead whales on railroad carts and photographing women alongside for promotional purposes. “il sentire dell’occhio” (“the hearing of the eye”; 2017) lingers on the death of an animal, a moment where, through the usual human lens, wonder turns into horror. “The Monarch Souvenir” (2022) reintroduces Monarch the grizzly bear, who was captured, lived in captivity for twenty-two years, and, after his death, had his skin mounted and exhibited, by foregrounding the remains of his body and drawing the bear in animation.

It is hard to imagine the two artists’ subjects returning to the same archives where they once belonged. If one takes them, it would be with an undertaking of studying and remembering them differently from the way one normally does the Journals, fire temples, vessels, peace lilies, Monarch, and other dead animals.

Special Archives opens on October 17 and continues through December 13, 2024. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with additional hours during events on evenings and weekends. The exhibition is open to the public.

The exhibition is curated by Arts Director Julia Hong of the Harvey Mudd College Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and the Arts.

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