

PERCEPTION SHIFT:

How does our perception shape our understanding of our surroundings? The works included in this show are perception-shifters: they question one's vision and ask for a closer look. In a world that is rapidly changing, it is not exclusively what happens to us that matters, but how we perceive what happens to us. The past few years have elicited major changes in how we respond to the world around us. Learning, memory, expectation, and attention have an influence on our perceptual processes. People's behavior is based on their perceptions of what reality is, not on reality itself. Perception can be a mystery: we all have a unique experience of this shared Earth.

Perception Shift investigates how different materials— projected light, shadow, ceramic, graphite, glass, and metal— can work alongside each other to shift our way of perceiving. Together, the works liberate us from expectations by manipulating the senses or surprising them; each manifest perception shifts in different and illuminating ways.

From a distance, Natalie Thedford's vibrant sculptures, *Fringe Forms* and *Woven Landscape*, seem to be made of a malleable fabric, but as one approaches them it becomes clear they are made of a tough, durable material: fired clay. With 3D works inspired by quilts and women's handicrafts, Thedford denies the intended function of these objects— to provide warmth and comfort. This shift of materials invites consideration of alternative functions of the quilt and challenges the perception that women ought to be similarly warm and comforting. *She Couldn't Be Forgiven, She Had Done As She Liked* is an amalgam of materials collaged and sewn back together. The text was inspired by Elena Ferrante's novel, *The Story of a New Name*. Textures were collected from Thedford's environment: laundry baskets, box fans, and city drains. Materials have been combined in unexpected ways: paper has been cut into strips and sewn back together along with ceramic pieces made of textures inspired by women's traditional role of manipulating fibers. Through subverting the function of the quilt, this work is concerned with the perception of women breaking apart from what is traditionally expected of them within a patriarchal society. Thedford's act of weaving unconventional quilting materials questions what is expected and connects to larger questions of understanding our positionality within Earth.

Hala Abubaker also combines unexpected materials to shift perception. Abubaker's work *Moving Light Sculptures* investigates what can exist beyond the object, specifically in the reflections of our perceptions of objects. Hala states, "Only through deconstructing the conditions of perception can we reach new realities." To create the *Moving Light Sculptures*, Abubaker mixes oil and water— two materials where a connection is not possible— but in this artistic practice they unite. Oil and water affect the speed in which light can pass through them, causing disruptions of visual imagery, creating their own reality as one views the videos of light passing through the liquids. The moving images on the monitor screens move beyond the object: they are reflections and projections of the original liquids.

Morphing Chaos, the work of Kimberley Bianca, is an immersive projection in response to the most abundant thing that connects all living and nonliving things— space. Representations of naturally occurring objects and personal decay are combined by morphing audiovisual patterns. Chaos is determined and decay is random at least at the atomic level and above, so it is the only randomness

we can observe directly. Kimberley brings attention to environmental decay with psychological and sociological constructs of personal and political decay. The morphing and mutating of forms express an abstract sense of control. The visuals morph into and over themselves collapsing and re-inventing space— similar to Andrea de Leon’s sculptures and Alli Lemon’s drawings.

Andrea de Leon's work examines the nature of reality, including the relationship between mind and matter, substance and value, and the essence of our universe and our place within it. *Parabolic Reflector* is a piece inspired by telescopic optics and is concerned with how we receive information about our external environments. The metal centerpiece alludes to an iris; we receive visual information due to a similar phenomenon of light being bent in reverse and corrected by our brains. *Shadow* contains a center made from one of the most conductive materials in the world: copper. This idea alludes to the potential energy within all matter as a focal point. The layer it is embedded on comes from an abstracted image of a neuron creating a type of “Rorschach” image. *Iris* expresses a distilled concept of how light transforms into information in our minds. The metal structure serves as an aperture: the lines define the void of a lens where light passes through. Behind it is the membrane of a hazel iris— representing the tissues and fibers that determine how much light enters the retina. Subtly, the mirror backing it absorbs and reflects back the light coming through the piece— exposing and inverting what we see and simultaneously cannot see. The work takes a metaphysical approach to reveal something about the viewer— ultimately grasping an understanding of what makes us human.

Situated near de Leon’s sculptures, Alli Lemon’s drawings are a point of connection. Alli Lemon is also invested in unveiling our place within the universe. Through detailed drawings that confuse one’s perception of how they are made— Lemon works in a circular process that involves creating scans of previous drawings, printing them, and collaging the printed imagery together. In revisiting these images, they are able to have a conversation with themselves across time, collapsing what is “new” and “old”. In addition to the printed drawings, Lemon transforms past drawings into sticker embellishments layered atop each work. The process is not planned— it is a continual flow of materials, ideas, and techniques that folds into and over itself. Symmetry in the circle is present in these works, Lemon states, “The circle, or the sphere, is a symbol of something un-ending, while symmetry implies a logic. These works are the ceaseless search for some idiosyncratic logic. By searching through my own repeated patterns and continually allowing them to change, I’m accepting evolution in myself as much as in my images.” The drawings speak their own rhetoric, but point to a universal understanding of how we perceive our position within this cosmos.

The work in Perception Shift is connected through its exploration of reality and ability to alter the gaze of the viewer, to challenge us to perceive differently, and to free ourselves from expectations. Perception is activated in distinct ways throughout the show: Thedford’s ceramic sculptures confuse the eyes and provoke the sense of touch, Bianca’s projections allow one to visualize space in a new way, Abubaker plays with our sense of sight as we try to decipher the phenomena in her projections and sculptures, Lemon and de Leon’s works point to the metaphysical; investigating ourselves beyond our earth existence. Perception Shift seeks to guide viewers through an exploration of their own realities— to provoke a deeper understanding of ourselves and our place within this world.

— Amy Hoagland