

CATHARINECLARKGALLERY



Above: Stephanie Syjuco, *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*, 2019; digital dye sublimation on fabric; 118 x 68 inches; edition of 3 + 2AP.

To the Person Sitting in Darkness: On View October 31 – November 7 Only

Work by Sandow Birk, Nina Katchadourian, Deborah Oropallo and Andy Rappaport, Elyse Pignolet, Stephanie Syjuco, Marie Watt
Media Room: Rob Carter: [Stone on Stone \(2009\)](#)

Opening reception with artists' talks: Saturday, October 31 from 12 – 5pm; talks from 2 – 4pm

Digital presentation at the following link: <https://cclarkgallery.com/exhibitions/to-the-person-sitting-in-darkness-2020>

*In observance of the election, Catharine Clark Gallery will be open on Monday, November 2 from 10:30am – 5:30pm and closed on Tuesday, November 3 – VOTE 2020

San Francisco, CA: In conjunction with the 2020 presidential election, Catharine Clark Gallery presents *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*, a special, one-week exhibition of recent works that critique the concept of monumentality, political theatre, and American Imperialism. On view October 31 – November 7, 2020, the exhibition features installation, drawing, sculpture, and video by Sandow Birk, Nina Katchadourian, Deborah Oropallo and Andy Rappaport, Elyse Pignolet, Stephanie Syjuco, and Marie Watt.

The title of the exhibition is inspired by Stephanie Syjuco's work of the same name, a large-scale flag hanging from filament that viewers encounter upon entering the gallery. Originally conceptualized for the artist's 2019 survey exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Syjuco's work for the show is part of an ongoing investigation into the power and meaning of flags and banners as symbols that represent ideas of nationhood and national identity, and a country's claim over territory. Its design, as Syjuco notes, draws from the words of author Mark Twain, who condemned efforts by Western nations to lay claim to the non-Western world.

CATHARINECLARKGALLERY



Above: Nina Katchadourian, *Monument to the Unelected* (2008/9 and ongoing). Pictured above, October 2020 installation at Roots Community Health Center, Oakland, CA. A BOXBLUR off-site project. Photo: Billy Davidson. Project generously supported by Richard Grossman and Elly Chen.

Syjuco notes that “in a 1901 essay for the *North American Review*, reprinted as a [pamphlet](#) by the Anti-Imperialist League, Twain said, ‘And as for a flag for the Philippine Province, it is easily managed. We can have a special one—our states do it: We can just have our usual flag, with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and crossbones.’” While Twain’s flag was never produced, Syjuco takes up the author’s proposition, printing the flag as it was designed and published in the *North American Review*, reimagining it at an oversized scale that, while impressive, hangs slack, rendering its symbolic impact as limp and powerless.

The focal work of Gallery 1 is Nina Katchadourian’s major installation *Monument to the Unelected* (2008/9 and ongoing), a BOXBLUR project. Katchadourian’s ongoing piece is comprised plastic election signs bearing the names of every major-party candidate who ever ran for the office of president and lost. Originally commissioned by the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, the work has been exhibited during every presidential election cycle since then. These are not historical signs; each sign made for this project has been designed to look contemporary, even if it advertises a candidate from a previous century.

At the moment when the country is deeply preoccupied with a major national election, *Monument to the Unelected* presents a view and a reminder of the country's collective political road not taken. *Monument to the Unelected* has been exhibited since the 2008 election cycle on public sites, in front of private homes, as well as in museums and galleries, almost always spanning the time both before and after the election. This year, after the election results have been determined, the 59th loser's sign will be added to the group by a first-time voter; details to be announced. This year, *Monument to the Unelected* is presented at eight venues nationwide, including three sites produced by [BOXBLUR](#): Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco; [Roots Community Health Center](#), Oakland, CA; and the family home of former [Wisconsin State Supreme Court Justice Shirley Abrahamson](#), Madison, WI. [A full press release for *Monument to the Unelected* follows this release](#), with additional details on the overall project as well as information on how to support BOXBLUR.



Above: Marie Watt, *PLACEHOLDER*, 2017; reclaimed wool blanket, clear transparent glass Czech seed beads, thread; 56 ½ x 140 ¼ inches. Collection of the Abrahamson Family Collection, Madison, WI.

Marie Watt's monumental wall-based textile *PLACEHOLDER* (2017), on loan from the Abrahamson Family Collection, furthers a dialogue on manifest destiny initiated by Syjuco's work. An enrolled member of the Seneca Nation, Watt's work draws from history, biography, proto-feminism, and Indigenous principles, and addresses the interaction of the arc of history with the intimacy of memory. She uses materials that are conceptually attached to narrative: in particular, exploring the stories connected with commonplace woolen blankets, cedar, and iron. *PLACEHOLDER*, by extension, is comprised of a reclaimed wool blanket, embroidered with the words "ephemeral monument" in Czech crystal beads a phrase derived from the book, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of*

CATHARINECLARKGALLERY

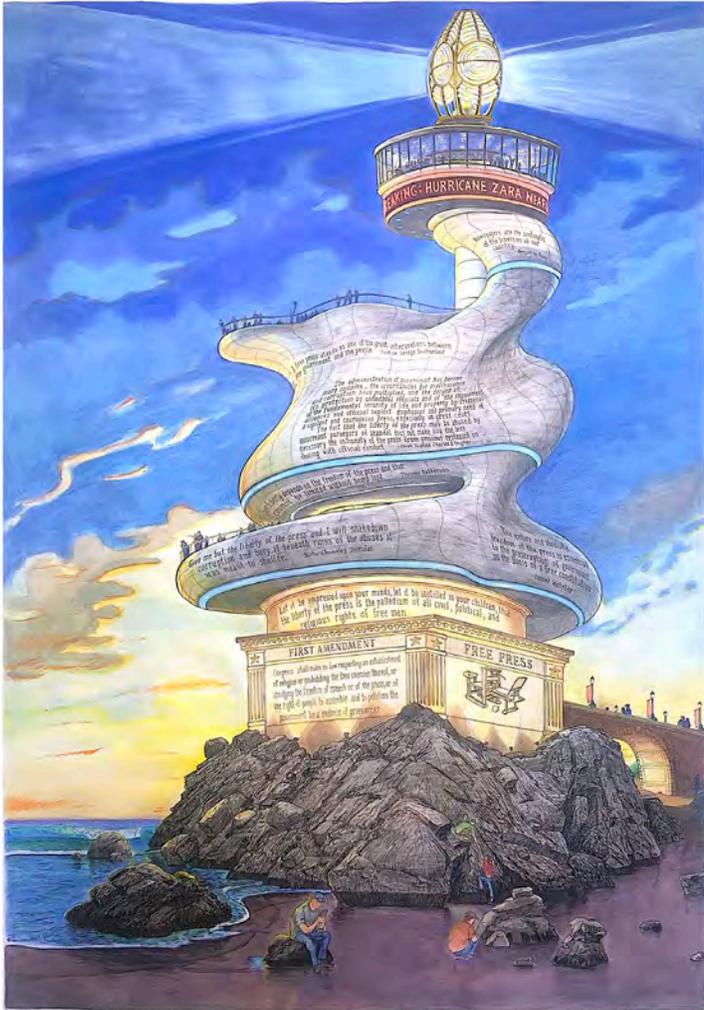
Chicago (2016) by scholar John N. Low. In this text, Low writes: “The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians has been a part of Chicago since its founding. In very public expressions of indigeneity, they have refused to hide in plain sight or assimilate. Instead, throughout the city's history, the Pokagon Potawatomi Indians have openly expressed their refusal to be marginalized or forgotten and in doing so, they have contributed to the fabric and history of the city.” This major work is complemented by a smaller embroidered blanket-work, *COMPANION SPECIES (SHINGLE)* (2019), emblazoned with the word “PROTO” three times as a gesture to Indigenous futurity that is central to Watt's practice.



Above: Deborah Oropallo and Andy Rappaport, still from *RECKONING*, 2020; single-channel video projection with two-channel sound; 13:32 minutes; edition of 8 + 2AP.

Upon entering Gallery 2, viewers confront *RECKONING* (2020), a new, major single-channel video projection by Deborah Oropallo and Andy Rappaport. Set against a stormy and roiling sky, Oropallo and Rappaport's video depicts over 200 felled and defaced monuments to America's Confederacy, white supremacy, and global colonialism. Sourced from online reportage and news sites, *RECKONING* reimagines these historical statues as monuments that reflect the present moment: toppled and splattered with paint, a corrective gesture that the artists note “references the blood that stains the hands of a white hegemony that has used these statues as visual weapons that glorify the subjugation and discrimination of BIPOC populations worldwide.” *RECKONING* is accompanied by a triptych of printed works on panel by Oropallo and printed at Magnolia Editions which depict the busts of statues that have been defaced and toppled within the last year.

Two new *Imaginary Monuments* drawings by Sandow Birk invite further reflection on what histories and narratives we collectively commemorate. *Low Tide at the Monument to the Free Press* (2020), a rare full color drawing in the series, depicts an imaginary monument to the ideals of freedom of speech and a free press, imagined as a costal lighthouse connected to the land at high tide by a bridge.



Above: Sandow Birk, *Low Tide at the Monument to the Free Press*, 2020; pencil, ink, acrylic on paper; 60 x 42 inches unframed.

The lower part of the tower is a colonial American structure which bears the text of the First Amendment to the Constitution on one side, and on the other, an image of an early American printing press. From that foundation, the monument rises into an amorphous shape, ebbing and flowing in the wind, and engraved with quotes from various historical figures about the importance of a free press in democratic government. There are two viewing platforms and an imagined museum inside the structure. At the top level a restaurant offers panoramic views, while an illuminated ticker-tape style electronic display rolls off breaking news. Above it all is the light, illuminating the darkness with knowledge and reporting.

This drawing is accompanied by the small format drawing *At the Monument to the Three Larry's* (2020), a tongue-in-cheek imaginary monument to three men named Larry, all of whom have made important impacts on American life. Imagined as a spoof of a traditional plinth and horseback rider monument, the monument depicts activist Larry Kramer battling the dragon of HIV and AIDS. A lower plinth depicts pornographer Larry Flynt, whose legal battles for First Amendment rights shaped contemporary conversations on freedom of speech. On the third and final plinth, ground-breaking comedian and iconic

curmudgeon Larry Kramer sits backwards facing a horse's ass.

While tongue-in-cheek, Birk's monument also encourages viewers to consider how incitement for social change or influence sometimes requires an instigator who is unabashedly relentless, even abrasive, but committed to getting the message through at all costs. A major presentation of Birk's drawings and gravures in the series *Imaginary Monuments* is also on view at Minnesota Street Project in conjunction with *Monument*, a group exhibition in the project's Atrium curated by Julie Casemore, on view October 28 – December 19, 2020.

The gallery's Viewing Room features *Boys Will Be Boys*, a comprehensive presentation of ceramics and works on paper by Elyse Pignolet, on view through December 23, 2020. "Boys Will Be Boys" is a series of ceramic sculptures and watercolor paintings imbued with traditional porcelain decoration from around the world, the vessels depicted contain familiar patterns and motifs but, upon closer

CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY

inspection, reveal ubiquitous flower patterns have been reimagined with text referencing Trump's many unsettling and demeaning comments on women, references to elected figures publicly accosting female colleagues, sexual assault and the everyday experience of street harassment and gendered stereotypes.



Above: Elyse Pignolet, *Learn to Get Along with the Boys*, 2020; ceramic platter with glazes and gold luster; 17 x 12 ½ inches

The tension between the decorative floral arrangement and the vulgar text speaks as much to the contemporary world women face daily as it does to the political climate in the United States today. Pignolet's exhibit will continue through December 23 in the gallery's Viewing Room. In conjunction with her presentation, Pignolet's work will be featured in a special, two-person online booth with works by Katherine Vetne for Intersect Chicago, on view November 6 – 12, 2020 at the following link: <https://www.sofaexpo.com/>.

Please join us for an opening reception on Saturday, October 31 from 12 – 5pm, with artists' talks from 2 – 4pm. In observance of the election, Catharine Clark Gallery will be open on Monday, November 2 from 10:30am – 5:30pm and closed on Tuesday, November 3.

In conjunction with the opening, Catharine Clark Gallery has united with **Swing Left** to provide an opportunity to mobilize voters in Arizona. Please visit the following link for details: <https://swingleft.org/> and join us in getting out the vote.

BOXBLUR

at Catharine Clark Gallery



Nina Katchadourian, *Monument to the Unelected* (2008/9 and ongoing). Pictured above, October 2020 installation in Madison, WI in front of private home, courtesy of Abrahamson Family Collection, 2020. A BOXBLUR off-site project. Photo: Karl Lang

Nina Katchadourian

Monument to the Unelected, 2008/9 and ongoing

Monument to the Unelected is a series of plastic election signs bearing the names of every major-party candidate who ever ran for the office of president and lost. It was created by artist Nina Katchadourian for the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in 2008/9, and has been exhibited during every presidential election cycle since then. These are not historical signs; each sign made for this project has been designed to look contemporary, even if it advertises a candidate from a previous century. Many of the signs borrow directly from real election signs the artist has observed and documented in different parts of the country. Like familiar political lawn signs, these signs are printed on corrugated plastic using the same commercial production methods.

At the moment when the country is deeply preoccupied with a major national election, *Monument to the Unelected* presents a view and a reminder of the country's collective political road not taken. *Monument to the Unelected* has been exhibited since the 2008 election cycle on public sites, in front of private homes, as well as in museums and galleries, almost always spanning the time both before and after the election. This year, after the election results have been determined, the 59th loser's sign will be added to the group by a first-time voter.

For the 2020 election cycle, *Monument to the Unelected* is presented at eight sites across the United States, which are listed below. BOXBLUR presents the work at three sites: at Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco; in Madison, Wisconsin at the family home of former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Shirley Abrahamson; and at Roots Community Health Center in Oakland, CA, which provides primary healthcare and wraparound services to Black communities and communities of color in San Francisco's East Bay. *Monument to the Unelected* is a BOXBLUR event generously sponsored by Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA; the Abrahamson Family Collection, Madison, WI; and Richard Grossman and Elly Chen, San Francisco, CA.

For additional information on the project and related events, please visit <https://cclarkgallery.com/exhibitions/katchadourian-monument-to-the-unelected-boxblur-2020>

To make a tax-deductible donation to BOXBLUR, please visit <https://donorbox.org/boxblur2020>

Past and present venues:

Election cycle 2008: SMOCA, Scottsdale, AZ (exhibited on three public sites in Scottsdale/Phoenix).

Election cycle 2012: The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT (in front of a colonial-era house)
Headquarters of the Wall Street Journal, Washington, DC
The Boiler, Brooklyn, NY

Election cycle 2016: Lefferts House, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY (in front of an historic house)
SMoCA, Scottsdale, AZ

Election cycle 2020: Pace Gallery, New York, NY
<https://www.pacegallery.com/journal/monument-unelected-insights/>

Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
<https://cclarkgallery.com/exhibitions/katchadourian-monument-to-the-unelected-boxblur-2020>

Grand Central Arts, Santa Ana, CA
<http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com/nina-katchadourian-monument-to-the-unelected/>

SMoCA, Scottsdale, CA
<https://smoca.org/exhibition/nina-katchadourian-monument-to-the-unelected/>

mOca Cleveland, Cleveland, OH
<https://mocacleveland.org/>

Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH
<https://transformerstation.org/>

Roots Community Health Center, Oakland, CA
<https://rootsclinic.org/>

Private home, Madison, WI (the house is the family home of former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Shirley Abrahamson, and the work is shown in collaboration with the Abrahamson Family Trust and Collection)