



# Lift Off

**San Jose State University's  
2010 MFA Exhibition**

Main Gallery  
May 29-June 19, 2010

Kirkman Amyx, Tracy Burk, shiloh burton, Yunan Cao,  
Wendy Crockett, Jim Edgeworth, Johnny Hanna, Hedwig  
Heerschop, Barbara Horiuchi, Trevor Koch, John Pickelle,  
Beverley Rayner, Elizabeth Ribera, Danielle Siembieda,  
Susan Suriyapa, t.w.five, Hongbiao Wang

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# Lift Off

## 2010 San Jose State University MFA Exhibition

Over the last two to three years, while the 17 Master of Fine Arts (MFA) graduates in *Lift Off* have been immersed in San Jose State University's (SJSU) academic program, our country and world have undergone dramatic changes. We have witnessed a presidential campaign based on hope while the economy plummeted downward and troops continued to fight in wars in foreign lands. Issues ranging from healthcare, jobs, sub-prime mortgages and terrorism confront us daily. In the face of these challenges, the artists in *Lift Off* also remained hopeful, sharing their voices and enriching our community by making art. Central to the mission of the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) is inspiring creativity by allowing artists to make new work, innovate and comment on the world around them. That is why this collaboration with SJSU's art department, now in its sixth year, continues to be such a meaningful partnership. From sculpture to photography and printmaking to new media, the artwork in this exhibition challenges, inspires and reflects on the ideas and culture of our time.

As the ICA turns 30 this October, we continue to reflect on our commitment to create meaningful opportunities for emerging and local artists. *Lift Off* is an example of this commitment. This diverse group of graduates reflects the cultural vibrancy of our community. We are proud to present their accomplishments and to provide a launching pad for their future endeavors. We invite you to pause and engage with the objects, images and concepts put forth by these artists as they embark on the next steps of their artistic journeys.

The ICA would like to thank Linda Walsh for her continued commitment to deepening this collaboration. Special thanks to MFA students Susan Suriyapa and Barbara Horiuchi for their leadership and dedication to making this project a success. Most importantly, we are especially grateful to the artists in this exhibition for their hard work, cooperation and enthusiasm for this collaboration. As emerging artists in our community, the voices of the 17 MFA graduates inspire and challenge us. It truly has been a privilege to work with each of them.

Artists in alphabetical order

**Kirkman Amyx's** artwork, *10,000 Dice Rolls CMY* explores hidden patterns, structure, and meaning found through image repetition. Over a period of 10 hours, the artist threw dice on a light box and took a picture of where they naturally fell. Using a 12-sided cyan die, a 6-sided magenta die, and a 4-sided yellow die with equal frequency, he repeated this action 10,000 times, each time taking an image. The 10,000 separate images were then merged into different iterations of this experience, representing a culmination of where the dice fell over time. In this project, Amyx is interested in how repetition eventually overcomes chance random events. He writes, "I hope the project acts as a metaphor to stimulate contemplation about the synthesis of the forces of chance and probability that control our very being, and ultimately, our destiny."

**Tracy Burk's** small bronze sculptures are inspired by her experience with nature, specifically the vegetables, insects and vines in her garden. The artist creates the pieces to resemble religious objects that operate in a belief system of her own imagination. Her bronze bugs and tree reliquaries serve as shrines and offerings for the next garden harvest. While she admits that she is "engaging in a futile attempt at control," she also connects her motives to the larger history of symbolic rituals born out of man's desire to control the natural world.

The mission of **shiloh burton's** socially engaged project, *Gender Intelligence Agency (GIA)* is to unravel the confusion and ambiguity of identity. Through surveys, conversations, and marketing materials, burton's project relies on the participation of the viewer. To participate in the project, visitors may complete the *ORGA (Official Real Gender Archive)* survey or join the artist on Friday, June 4, from 7-9:30 pm and Saturday, June 12 from 1-4pm to discuss issues of identity.

Born in China, **Yunan Cao's** work demonstrates her interest in politics and media. Ping Pong Diplomacy is a social project inspired by a historical event in 1971 when the Chinese government invited the American Ping Pong team to the

People's Republic. This incident was one of the first signs of improved relations between the two countries, ushering in an era described as "ping pong diplomacy." While the phrase was coined over 30 years ago, Cao uses the same language to describe current relations. Ping Pong Diplomacy addresses the strained relationship between the US and China with humor and play, inviting the audience to participate in the game of ping pong diplomacy.

**Wendy Crockett's** photographs document the changes, both the subtle and dramatic, of young people on the verge of early adulthood. The artist writes, "I consider this work to be social documentation. I travel with my light meter and a medium format film camera. My lighting is simple – I always work with available light. The subjects always inhabit their natural environments, often choosing the setting for their own portraits. These encounters are usually spontaneous and awake in my own being an understanding, perhaps a memory and sense of wonder at what it was to be young."

Made of hundreds of found stuffed animals, *The Seeds of Wonder* is **Jim Edgeworth's** response to a childhood fort. Ideally, Edgeworth imagines crawling up inside his sculpture, perhaps to take a nap, talk to visitors or escape from the noise of everyday. In all of his projects, Edgeworth says he is seeking to "support a centered spirit, to help maintain emotional and sensory equilibrium, to make certain that I remain a catalyst for the making real of dreams..."

**Johnny Hanna** is a compulsive collector and a self-admitted hoarder. While his childhood knick-knacks have profoundly influenced the sculptures he makes in ceramic, he recently shifted his attention to his collection as a readymade art object. While these objects only represent a fraction of the complete collection, they serve as a colorful portrait of the interests, obsessions and idiosyncrasies of the artist.

When Dutch-born photographer **Hedwig Heerschop** inherited an extensive photographic archive from her father consisting of his negatives and photographs taken from 1947-1950 in Southeast Sumatra (at the time known as the Dutch East Indies), she embarked on a four year research endeavor and personal re-examination of her family history. The entire project includes audio recordings, interviews, writings and photographs. Heerschop writes, “in establishing my father’s place in his life before I knew him, I can gradually reclaim previously unknown characteristics about him that enrich portions of my family’s heritage and myself.”

*“After Patrol” Dick Heerschop Pampangan Area, Sumatra 1947-1950*, is comprised of a hanging poem and bronze sculpture. The artist wrote the poem with excerpts from letters her father sent to his girlfriend while away on duty. The bronze sculpture is based on a found photograph of the artist’s father from the archive. *Portrait of a Soldier, Dick Heerschop* depicts the artist’s father immediately before going to Southeast Sumatra and three years later, when he returned home.

As a third generation Japanese-American, **Barbara Horiuchi** explores her cultural identity in her artwork, whether making expressive paintings with Sumi ink or large-scale installations. The artist writes, “Through research and personal reflection, my perspective is marked by the historical stories, photographs, memories, and experiences of my ancestors. This information becomes imbued into my artwork during its creation and resides in the work itself.”

From the fairy tales of his youth to the myths and symbols of his adulthood, **Trevor Koch** has always been fascinated by how humans create meaning. Intrigued by how each person reads objects and symbols differently based on belief systems, experience or culture, Koch makes objects that are on the verge of opposing viewpoints. On the one hand, the sculptures could be perceived as a “transformative symbol” like a religious or mythic narrative. On the other hand, they could be read as a “cynical prop” based on artifice and lies. Through his artwork, Koch investigates this tension.

Today we can easily adjust pixels on a computer screen to alter an image. Trained as a traditional photographer, **John Pickelle** is constantly reminded of how the computer has dramatically changed the way we see and make images. In these works, Pickelle blows up the pixels of the images to the point of abstraction. Like a Chuck Close painting or woven tapestry, the images become more or less abstract based on the viewer's distance and relationship to them.

**Beverly Rayner's** work addresses a number of issues revolving around her core interest in human nature. She writes, "My work takes a look at how we see ourselves, how we relate to each other, how we set up systems to navigate life in this world, and how we negotiate with nature through science and technology." With impeccable attention to craft, Rayner cleverly combines found materials to create hybrid objects with new meaning. Using an old vintage screen that may have once been a classroom map, *Power* depicts a satellite image of the world taken from the moon. Rayner's subtle intervention with the striking and familiar image makes visible the clusters of lights, population density and sprawl of the globe.

**Elizabeth Ribera's** work is inspired by her interest in natural phenomena and religious philosophies. *Lilith* refers to the legendary creature that appears in many creation myths. Believed to have originated as a female Mesopotomian storm bringing disease, illness and death, Lilith was also Adam's first wife who left the Garden of Eden after she refused to be subservient to him. Ribera's Lilith is a serpent, one of the most widespread mythological symbols. Depending on the culture, the serpent serves as a positive or negative symbol. While Lilith has been recaptured today as a feminist icon, Ribera intentionally combines symbols and mythologies from various belief systems to reveal commonalities and contradictions underlying different theologies.

Burg is an acronym for Building User Response Gizmo. **Danielle Siembieda's** machine intends to serve as a communication device between a building's infrastructure and its inhabitants. For instance, the heart and lungs move according to the amount

of kilowatts that various electronic devices use. The more that are plugged-in to the device, the more energy and quicker they move. The amount of energy used is then virtually uploaded to a twitter account (twitter/BURG\_project) in order to be monitored virtually through common social media tools.

**Susan Suriyapa's** ethereal drawings are based on her experience and observations of the natural environment including flowers, seeds and sweeping landscapes. While she draws inspiration from traditional Chinese landscape paintings, her spontaneous and expressive works attempt to describe the "moments that are often beyond the ability to be adequately captured."

**t.w.five** is the name of a collaborative team comprised of Brazilian artist Paula Pereira and Swedish artist Pernilla Andersson. With a multi-cultural perspective, their ideas intermingle into what they describe as, "a new hybrid of in-between." The large scale vinyl works depict public sites that could be anywhere, places like train stations, bus interiors and airports. For the artists, these locations represent sites of displacement, places where people are in-between destinations. Living in between two cultures is a day-to-day reality for t.w.five. For them, the works are giant postcards that boldly announce their unsettled relationship with their geographic and mental states. They write, "this project started off as a personal journey. Both of us are immigrants in the US and are dealing with a new country, a new language and a new culture while holding on to our past selves."

Classically trained in China, **Hongbiao Wang** explores the transition of leaving her homeland to a new life in the United States. Influenced by the introduction of conceptual and contemporary art practices during her studies in graduate school, Wang articulates the dramatic shift in her thinking since living in the US. Creating a large scale portrait of her head, Wang's sculpture is made out of flexible and nearly transparent metal mesh. Just as the artist has shifted perspectives since being in the United States, she is interested in allowing others to experience the vision of her head in various perspectives.

Additional Programming:

### **In the Gallery**

**Friday, June 4,** 7-9:30 pm

**Saturday, June 12,** 1-4pm

Join shiloh burton of Gender Intelligence Agency (GIA) to learn more about her socially-engaged project.

**Saturday, June 19,** 2:30-4pm

Join *Lift Off* artist Danielle Siembieda "The Art Inspector" to learn about "green" artist materials. To participate, bring in your epoxies, paints, fabrics, resins and woods and the Art Inspector will instruct you on eco material of similar value in exchange. Learn how to use these new materials and how they can be better for you and the environment while making amazing art at the same time.

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#### **Celebrating 30 Years**

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