

Juan Juarez

CORPUS

point of
contact gallery
punto de contacto

point of
contact gallery
punto de contacto

Point of Contact Gallery Staff:

Miranda Traudt
Managing Director

Kendall Harter
Assistant Director

Rainer Wehner
Preparator

Weisi Liu
*Financial and
Administrative Specialist*

Meghan Ferrucci
Connie Flores
Gallery Assistants

Tere Paniagua
*Executive Director of
Cultural Engagement*

Juan Juarez

Corpus

February 16 - March 17, 2017

This exhibition is part of the 2017 Symposium on "Place," sponsored by the Syracuse University Humanities Center. It is also made possible thanks to the generous support of The College of Arts and Sciences, and the Coalition of Museums and Art Centers at Syracuse University.

Cover Image:
8/15/2016
Photographs on light-blocker film
2017

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
**College of Arts
& Sciences**
Cultural Engagement for the
Hispanic Community

coalition of museum and art centers
cmac
syracuse university

 **SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY**
HUMANITIES CENTER



Casita
Three channel HD video installation
with ambient soundtrack
2016

An Interview with Juan Juarez

by Chris Wildrick

Chris Wildrick: Hi, Juan. I was wondering if you could start us off by giving us a high-level breakdown of the different bodies of work that you have in this show here today.

Juan Juarez: The exhibition, *Corpus*, is divided into three parts. We have a multimedia and part-video installation called *Corpus: In (or Out of) Phasis*; the *Casita* videos are part of that, in the window display. Then there is a video documentary of my grandmother that I recorded back in 2011 talking about dreams and her life growing up as a young woman and then moving into Laredo, Texas. The second part of the exhibition is also collectively titled *Corpus* and broken up into individual units of photographs of my grandmother's house beginning in summer 2011 and ending recently in fall 2016. The third part of the exhibition is called *Markers*. That's a group of three photographs and an installation of forensic evidence markers on the floor, which I used in the photographs, attempting to demarcate nothingness. I was interested in the futility of that. The markers themselves are part of the installation and people are welcome to go in there and attempt to demarcate their own designation of nothingness.

CW: You've mentioned before that some of the photos are more straight documentation, and others are more manipulated. Could you talk about why you use those two different approaches and what kind of different effects they might have within the show?

JJ: I think the main way for me to think about that is in relation to my drive to document and archive images, and also the way that I process the images once I am done with that documentation process. For example, the *Phasis* piece is a heavily manipulated image. I think it's probably the most manipulated one in the exhibition. It's partial collage and then also it has a sound element and it has an olfactory element. So that one for me was an opportunity to take a set of the documentary photographs that I shot of the house at night and try to construct an environmental invitation for the viewer to come in and become part of the scene, part of the photograph. For me, the manipulation process was really important to that particular image. Then with the other photographs, a lot of them were predominantly documentation, taking the camera and having a set path around the house and inside of the house, moving from room to room or section to section of the house, using the camera frame as a way to look at the house and to decide what I wanted to photograph. That approach has a component of documentation, but it still has an element of interpretation that is crucial because it connects me to the work—the reasons why I am photographing the house in the first place.



Corpus: In (or Out of) Phasis
Digital collage projection,
olfactory delivery system
with ambient soundtrack
2016

CW: The piece with the evidence markers seems like a mix of those two different approaches as well. The photos on the wall are documentation of your original installation but the reinstallation of the evidence markers on the floor allows people to alter things themselves.

JJ: It's an interesting way to succinctly put into focus some of the things I was thinking about in relation to this installation. This idea of being able to allow the viewer to take on my role in the photograph activates the photograph to a certain extent. It turns it into more of a narrative foundation or structure that the viewer can involve themselves in, through the actual physical manipulation of the markers themselves. There's an element of humor in it also because I couldn't help but think about my experience out there around the house, attempting to demarcate originally what was missing from the house—it had been torn down over the years—and then quickly realizing that that in itself was silly for me to do. I just got consumed with this thought that it was a silly exercise so it became rather humorous to me that I was out there with these legit forensic evidence markers, almost like an investigator, trying to demarcate a crime scene. I just decided to go for the idea and let the humor take over in that part of the experience. I was hoping that would translate with the installation and that individuals will come in and feel compelled to do it.

CW: Can you talk about the projected installation with the smells some more? You've said before that in today's world, images are fleeting and create such a clutter in our culture that it's easy to pass them by.

JJ: That's one of the things I'm interested in, in terms of activating an image beyond just the image. I think that we're so accustomed to images in our culture now, it's interesting to pause and think about how bombarded we are—with photographic images in particular. The idea to allow the viewer to pause and scan the image, become involved in the image, become lost in the image, is more or less the motivation for the idea of the sound and the olfactory component. The olfactory component is something that I've been thinking about for a while now and this is my first experiment thinking about how to activate an image with more sensory information. I like the results



Markers
Photographs on light-blocker film and
forensic evidence markers, installation
2017

in relation to how people start thinking about the installation as a very specific place, or a place that can be activated by images in a way that a typical photographic exhibition would not function. A typical installation of photographs gets caught up with the image, the presentation to a certain degree, and also the way that it's shot. There's a tendency for people to maybe dismiss that. That's why I wanted to use the olfactory component to allow people that extra pause.



CW: We talked before about how the house and our bodies are like a frog in boiling water, in that we don't necessarily notice things getting worse on a day-to-day existence, but their changes are much more noticeable from the outside. Do you think that she and your father saw those changes in the house and in her differently than you did?

JJ: It was shocking to go back after about five years. When I video documented her back in 2011, the house was already in more or less a decrepit state, but she was still living in it. There were portions of the house that were still livable, even though my dad had sectioned off areas of the house that she couldn't go into because it was unsafe. I had a concern about it then. I would always ask her about it, and she would joke and say the house will go when I go. In a way it was this thing I couldn't do anything about. The house is the way it is, I don't have the financial means to fix it, and my dad is doing the best he can to keep it going. But then after five years, going back and she was no longer in the house, it had been abandoned at that point, things were really progressively getting worse. That became very sad to see. The thing that I was recognizing about the house, or that was taking over my thoughts about the house, were how decayed and falling apart it was at that point. Before I would overlook things and now it was obvious there was no way she could come back in here. It was already lost to a certain degree. My grandmother and my dad know it's a bad situation. He has to board it up and tear down certain structures that are falling apart and dangerous but he's in a situation also where he's overlooked quite a bit of it as well. I think he's gotten used to it to a certain degree. My grandmother has definitely gotten used to it and now she's forgetting as well because she's going through dementia and she knows the house is in bad shape and she can't live in there but she doesn't have the specific memories anymore about the current state of it or what it looks like at this point.

8/15/2016
Photograph on light-blocker film
2017

I think for her the moment where it became obvious that she could not live in there anymore was about 3 years ago, she fell and broke her hip. She had to go to the hospital and go to therapy and when she came back she had to move into my dad's house. It became very obvious to her, even though she was reluctant to do it, that she had to move out because the house was beginning to take its toll on her now. She couldn't move around, she couldn't take care of herself, and my dad had to watch her as well. It was a physical ailment, a physical moment in her life where it became the cut off: "I can't live there anymore."

CW: This show tries to mark or maintain your memory, and your grandmother's memory, through documentary-style photos, interviews, and evidence markers. I think the evidence markers, which show you wrestling with your memory, are almost more about the evidence of your memory of things than they are evidence of the actual things themselves.

JJ: Memory is something that becomes really punctuated when you're using photographic means. Part of that is the history of photography. Memory seems to be this kind of ongoing fascination. I'm interested in actual memory and also constructed memory. I think that's one of the things that I was actively engaged with when I was working on this project. Thinking of how I was going to display the documented images of the house, also the extent to which images are manipulated in some sections of exhibition. Even simple manipulations, even the way photographs are set up as constructions on the wall, as visual objects or playing with the idea of the objects in the photographs. To me this ties into that whole notion of the construction of memory. It's very specific, deliberate things that I want you to see about the house. There's a lot of stuff that I photographed that to me is very mundane and did not have this kind of fantastical element to it. My judgement, in order to select photographs for the final group, was if something caught my imagination or ability to build on the image through fantasy or constructing memory, then I would go ahead and select that.

CW: The physical layout of the show, even the photos on the walls, is related to the construction of memory. It reminds me of mind palaces, created by people who have highly archived memories. People create mind palaces by physically imagining a space, and then move within that imaginary space to the locations where certain information is stored. The way you've laid out these photos on the wall is structured similarly to a mind palace, as a way to remember where different parts of the house are.

JJ: I've always been jealous of people with eidetic memory, that can record everything perfectly the way they see it. Training yourself to do that is interesting. That idea, that notion of constructing a mind palace and to keep those memories safe is this vault or archive that you can then access anytime you want. I find that photographs do that to a certain extent, but they are also pernicious in the sense that they take over the memory. So when we look at a photo album on our computer, or a physical photo album if people even have those, those select moments that people choose to upload on social media start to take over as the ideal of that memory, and perhaps you start to forget other details about the memory. I think the idea of the correlation between a mind palace and the way that the



photographs function as a group or a structure, I like that suggestion because the photographs for me are triggers for building on the memories. I like the idea that I can take the memory of a house, and the way that I document it, the way that I build on it, can give it some sort of life beyond the photograph. There's a narrative structure that can be plugged in by whoever looks at the stream of photographs and decides to plug in a narrative, or it leads them down a certain kind of emotive, or recollection of an emotive, experience in their life that's maybe similar or not similar but the images lead them to think about them in that way.

CW: The TV show Legion has been playing with the idea that we are our memories. If our memories aren't true, then are we really who we think we are? Can you talk about how your identity and your grandmother's identity may depend on the fleeting qualities of memory?

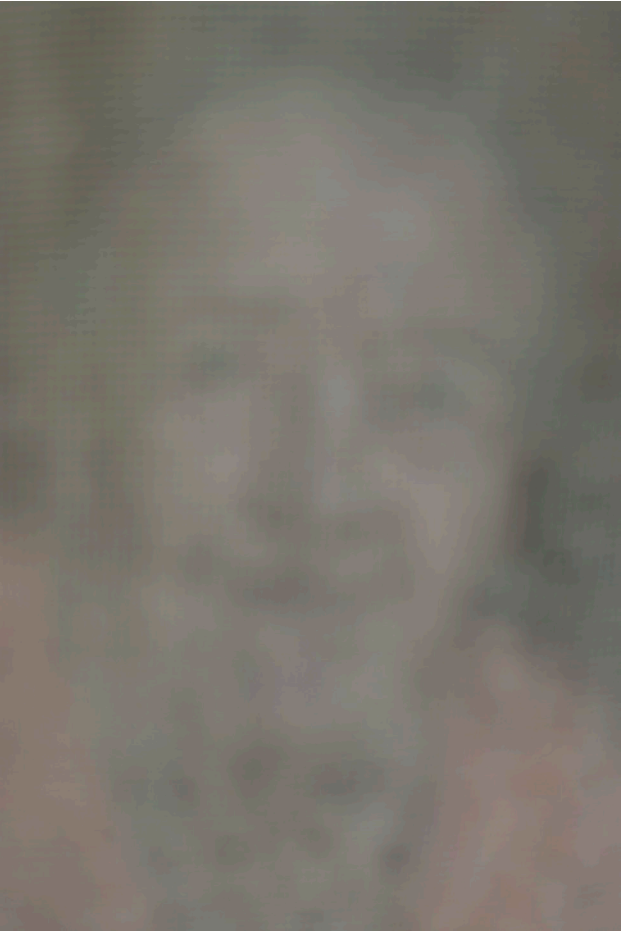
JJ: I think it's really dependent on it. I think we tend to idealize memory and we cling to memory. Memory inevitably gets diffused or it disintegrates or it changes or evolves, whether we want it to or not. We're kinda going back to the idea of loss of control to a certain degree. But, it's interesting to me that if the memory starts to be altered or changed, or we lose grasp on the memory, are we willing to still imbue it with the resonance it originally had, or do we just discard it and build a new one from that point forward. You thought about Legion and I started thinking about Blade Runner. I started thinking about Replicants and implanted memories and how once they know that the memory is not theirs—they're a machine and they were given the memory—it's something that they can easily discard. It loses the resonance even though they've been clinging to it for such a long time. That's kind of an interesting moment when things get altered, or it inevitably dissolves or disintegrates. What do you choose to do: keep it going in some way, or do you accept the alteration and build on that, or do you discard it completely and start fresh?

CW: I think we build these mythologies about ourselves based on our memories and as we forget the details, the mythology remains. When you get to a situation like your grandmother's, where those memories become even more fleeting, it must be even harder to know who you are, where the mythologies and the truths are even harder to differentiate.

JJ: It's a good point you're bringing up because even now she's going through a pretty significant memory loss and dementia. She'll forget who you are, what you're doing, why you're there. And those are very shocking to a certain degree. I remember years ago when I was a teen I interviewed her and recorded her on audio cassette and I asked her to tell me stories because she was always telling me stories. It was for a project at school and she was really active, like remembering all these stories and she added on to them as well. So, she's always been a really interesting weaver of tales. In 2011, when I video documented her and I was asking her, I had to lead her quite a bit to remember: "Oh remember when you told me about this story and that story? Can you tell me about that again?" "Oh okay" and then she'll start telling me and she would start meandering a little bit. So maybe she was already starting to feel some of those effects back then. We did have a very active conversation and she remembered quite a bit and she elaborated also to a certain extent. But using that as a

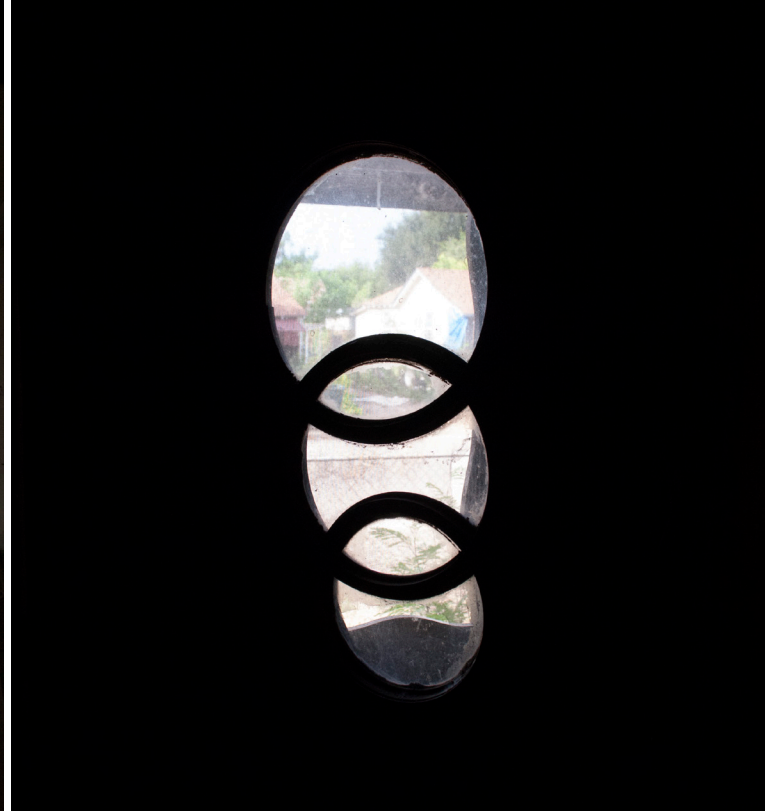
measuring stick to how far her memories have disintegrated, it's kind of interesting to look back at it retrospectively from my time as a teen to that moment in 2011 to this past year when I went to go see her and she didn't even remember some times who I was.

CW: Finally, I want to talk about the challenges of knowledge and representation. Much of your show questions how you document something that's not there anymore, like the original state of the house compared to what it is now, and your grandmother's physical and mental changes. You used different strategies to do this, like the very dark photos that look almost completely black, the picture of your grandmother through the screen door, and the evidence markers. All of this speaks towards the impossibility of fully grasping absence.



JJ: Absence: I think that was something that was really guiding the process of collectively putting together this work. Memory loss, absence, alteration, all of these themes that we've been talking about, speak in conjunction with when I started thinking about the selection of some of these images—like you mentioned the image of my grandmother photographed through the screen. I had a whole collection of images that I shot of her during that original experience back in 2011 and I decided to go with this one because for me it visualized where she was currently. So, there are certain ideas or points of departure that I have in my own thought process as I'm thinking about these images to act as a catalyst for their selection. It's not really a great photo, but it gets across the idea of things are fading, things are disintegrating, things are decaying, they're no longer going to be there. But it's also a portrait that makes me smile when I look at it because it really captures her personality. She was always very welcoming. She always had a smile on her face. So, it captures her, but it also captures the idea or mood that was happening as these images were getting selected for this exhibition.

11/29/2016
Photograph on light-blocker film
2017



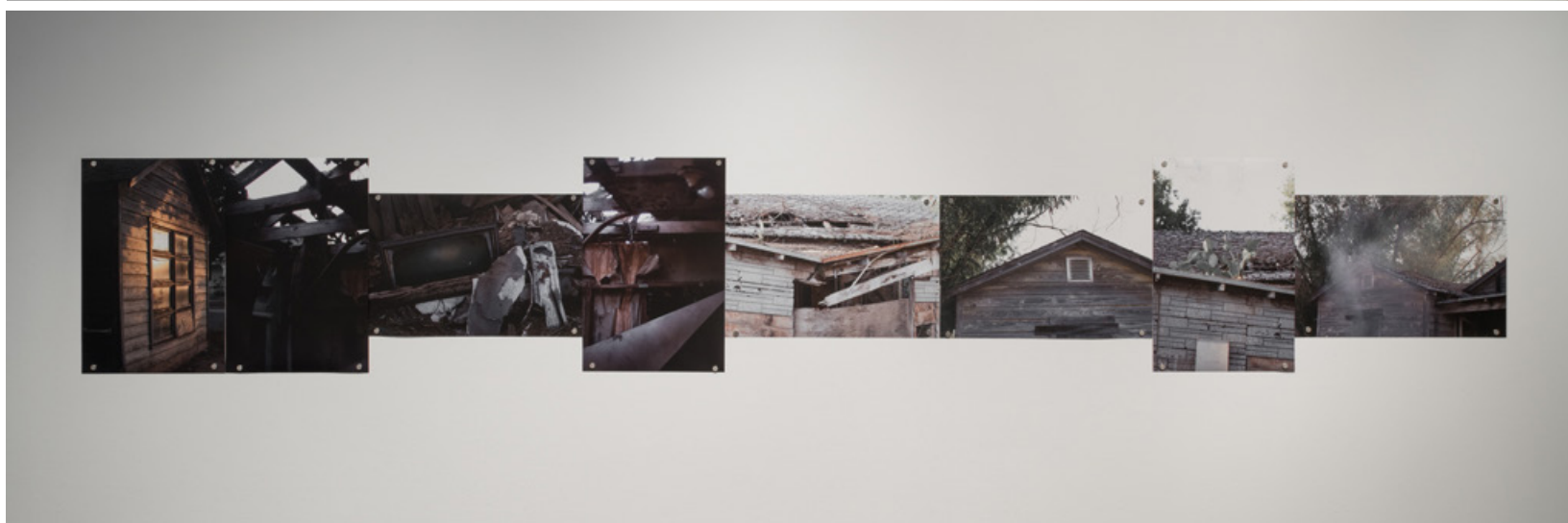
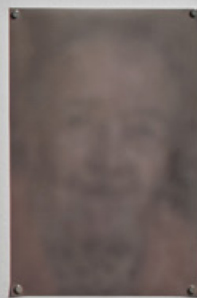
8/15/2016
Photograpghs on light-blocker film
2017



8/19/2016
Photograpgh on light-blocker film
2017







JUAN JUAREZ

Juan Juarez's creative practice can be described according to the role played by the artist in its production, which is that of archivist and translator. Research is concerned with pre-digested images, specifically photo-based imagery on the Internet. Juarez's work engages in extracting and unpacking these individual points of reference exposing them for everyone to see. Juarez localizes his creative practice as intermediation between what the photograph inherently communicates and a new context to place it in. Juarez does not employ a singular mode of translation. It involves photography, collage, image hacking, video, and digital mediation in broad terms. The type of image and context of the project determines the method. Juan Juarez has exhibited in institutions and museums such as the Milwaukee Art Museum (Milwaukee), Furtherfield Gallery (London), Los Angeles Center for Digital Art (Los Angeles), Everson Museum of Art (Syracuse), The Kinsey Institute (Bloomington), Gallery 400 at University of Illinois-Chicago (Chicago), and Institute of Visual Arts (Milwaukee). Juan Juarez is currently an associate professor at Syracuse University's School of Art.

www.juanjuarezart.com

Select Exhibitions:

2017 | *Corpus*, Point of Contact Gallery, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, USA
2015 | *Boite-en-Valise: Exchanges through Performativity and Practice*, Palazzo Trevisan degli Uliv, Venice, Italy, Rio Terra San Vio, Venice, Italy, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, England
2015 | *Conceal/Reveal: New Work from the Faculty of the College of Visual & Performing Arts*, SUArt Galleries, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, USA
2014 | *Unfamiliar*, Frank Juarez Gallery, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, USA
2013 | *LACDA International Juried Competition*, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Los Angeles, California

2013 | *Continuum 2013: In Retrospect Denis Sargent*, POSA Arts Center Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
2013 | *Glitch Moment/ums*, Furtherfield Gallery, London, England
2012-2013 | *TONY (The Other New York)*, Everson Art Museum, Syracuse, New York, USA
2012 | *Strange Glue: Collage at 100*, The Cambridge School of Weston's Thompson Gallery, Weston, Massachusetts, USA
2011 | *MAM After Dark*, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
2011 | *The Kinsey Institute Juried Art Show*, Indiana University SoFA Gallery, Bloomington, Indiana, USA
2010 | *New Art/Arte Nuevo: San Antonio Biennial*, University of Texas at San Antonio Art Gallery, San Antonio, Texas, USA
2009 | *Boys Will Be Boys*, Fe Arts Gallery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
2006 | *Mary L. Nohl Fellowships for Individual Artists Exhibitions*, Institute of Visual Arts (INOVA), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Grants/Fellowships:

2016
2007-2013 | College of Visual & Performing Arts Faculty Development Grant, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, USA
2005 | The Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Mary L. Nohl Fund Fellowships For Individual Artists - Emerging Artist Category, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
2001-2004 | Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Education:

2004 | Masters of Fine Arts in Studio Art, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
1992 | Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA

7/18/2010

Photograph on light-blocker film
2017

point of
contact gallery
punto de contacto

350 West Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY, 13202
315.443.2169
www.puntopoint.org

GALLERY HOURS:
Tuesday-Saturday
12 pm-5pm
or by appointment