A&E

‘Made at Berkeley’ showcases student arts, design projects on campus


BY IMAD PASHA, SOPHIE-MARIE PRIME AND OLIVIA JERRAM

Run by the Berkeley Arts + Design Initiative, “Made at Berkeley” is a campuswide showcase of student works, including visual art, dance, theatre, music, film, environmental design and more. The showcase brings together numerous departments that are individually presenting student projects, often senior theses, under a single banner. The Daily Californian Arts and Entertainment department visited a few of the events on campus, several of which are ongoing throughout the months of May and June.

Department of Art Practice — The Spring 2017 Senior Thesis Exhibition

The Art Practice Senior Thesis Exhibition happens twice a year, turning the Worth Ryder Art Gallery’s mini-museum space in Kroeber Hall into a small wonderland of senior thesis projects. From May 3 to May 15, 32 UC Berkeley student artists are

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showing their final works from the semester-long senior projects class.

“They all have to come up with a fully realized, well-thought-out series or small group of works to display,” explained Farley Gwazda, who designed the layout of the showcase and the Worth Ryder Art Gallery director. “In an art class often you have an assignment, but really with this show, the students are coming up with their own ideas and their own projects and realizing their vision, which of course makes it both a lot harder and a lot more interesting.”

Everywhere you turn, there’s a different creative vision sitting or hanging or laying sprawled across the floor. Sharing the gallery with Katie Revilla’s “STRUCTURES,” the hanging display of plaster-casted silk and plastic sculptural dresses, is Ilse Zhang’s “An All-American Combo,” a set of digital prints on shaped wooden panels deconstructing a hamburger, including a layer of sponge and melted cheddar cheese, bacon draped over an eraser and little red Google Maps pins sprouting from the sesame-seed bun on top.

Around the corner, spread across much of the section’s floor space, is “Fallen,” a mixed-media sculpture by Caz Azevedo entangling ceramics, intaglio prints, wood, wire, denim, cotton fabric, wheat paste, natural pigments, oil and acrylic.

There’s a wide variety of art media on display, from traditional painting and drawing, to video, fashion and interactive works. Between the scope of the art and the undaunting size of the gallery, it’s an absolutely worthwhile study break activity.

*The Art Practice Senior Thesis Exhibition is on display in the Worth Ryder Art Gallery from May 3 to May 15, 12:00 p.m. to 5 p.m, Tuesdays through Saturdays.*

— Olivia Jerram

**Department of Film and Media — Advanced Production Class Screening**

The advanced production class offered through the film department is one of very few classes that allows students to explore the creative process of filmmaking on their own terms. The films the students produced demonstrated at a public showing May 5 their ability to leverage their numerous film courses, taking what works from independent and avant garde film movements as well as blockbusters and bring them together in their original narrative films that ranged from approximately 10 to 20 minutes.

Mira Koppell, who teaches the course, had no shortage of positive things to say about the students whose creative processes she facilitated. The films’ themes ranged from tales of grief and hope to sexuality, identity and aspirations for the future. Though not all the films were finished, and some appeared choppy, the students collectively demonstrated immense promise.

“Love in Transition,” directed by Jo Howard, demonstrated a particularly well-polished narrative with authentic dialogue — the film featured a poignant story that spoke to the director’s technical and empathetic abilities equally. “Where Were We”, directed by Dartanyan Tzanetopoulos, weaved well-timed humor with a narrative of grief.

Each of the 10 films spoke to the thoughtful and talented community of student filmmakers at UC Berkeley — a community that deserves more visibility as it engages with stories that help us process with complex themes and escape into fantastical entertainment.

— Sophie-Marie Prime

**Department of Film and Media — Advanced Screenplay Class Table Read**

In the production stage of most films, television shows, radio shows and theatre performances, the table read is the first time the shape of the finished product comes together, as the actual actors or
voice talents involved with the production read through the script aloud with the writers, director and sometimes financiers or executives present.

As a critical moment for most scripts, a table read has been the traditional final point of UC Berkeley’s advanced screenplay class, in which a small group of primarily film majors work together for the semester to produce a full, polished, self-contained script. For the last three sessions of the class, the students have focused their efforts on crafting a hypothetical episode of a popular television show — last year, the group crafted what would be their season premiere for “Game of Thrones: Season Seven” — and this year, they tackled writing a season premiere for the forthcoming season of “Westworld.”

It is a testament to the writing ability of those in the class — and to their voice acting — that the hour of the table read was nearly as gripping as watching the show itself. Reading along in provided scripts, it was easy to get lost in the fantasy of the show, and the episode’s climax was as heart-stopping as they come. Not to mention that student Dartanyan Tzanetopoulos’s voice acting of Bernard Lowe (played in “Westworld” by Jeffrey Wright) was so accurate that if you forgot to look up from the script, you would think they were playing the actual show over the projector.

The chemistry of the small class was palatable as they joked and added goofy sound effects to the screenplay they had spent all semester on, but ultimately, the final product was eminently well-characterized — HBO could easily have produced a similar screenplay (and indeed might). It makes sense though — after all, the students in the class will soon be the ones writing HBO’s scripts for them.

— Imad Pasha

**Department of Music — Eco Ensemble: Berkeley Composers**

Hertz Concert Hall was host to an unconventional performance Monday evening. Played by members of ECO — the resident professional new music ensemble in the Department of Music which sponsors works by UC Berkeley composers — the performance featured a piece by music doctorate student Oren Boneh entitled “To Form a More Perfect Human.”

The contemporary piece was unconventional in more ways than one. The stage visible to the audience featured a traditional quintet — violin, cello, double bass, clarinet and piano — but also playing were a trumpeter and a percussionist, both hidden behind a screen and amplified through speakers.

“Normally, when we’re listening to classical music or contemporary music, when we’re in the live performance, we see a violin and we hear the sound, and we attribute the sound that we hear to the violin,” Boneh explained. “We know that sound belongs to the violin, we know that instrument — it’s historically ingrained in our minds. But I’m really interested in sounds that we can’t necessarily easily attribute to a particular object.”

To emphasize this idea, the two hidden players used their instruments in atypical ways, with the trumpet focused on fragile, quiet sounds normally never heard from trumpets, while the percussionist employed various toy instruments. Both, once amplified, produced an unsettling effect on the audience, which could place neither the location of the sounds’ production nor the creation mechanism.

For Boneh, the hidden instrumentalists represented a reflection of our society. “I’ve felt throughout my life a bit inauthentic, a bit not myself, because I’ve felt that I had to be a certain way,” Boneh said. “I think the idea of having the performers behind screens, that was my way of dealing with this idea of hiding behind an image.”

Taken as a whole, “To Form a More Perfect Human” is both highly conceptual in its performance design and instrumentation and a deeply (if subconsciously) emotional portrayal of the way Boneh interacts with and synthesizes humanity in general.

— Imad Pasha

**Department of Theater Dance and Performance Studies — Berkeley Dance Project 2017**
Berkeley Dance Project is a yearly production put on by the department of Theater, Dance, and Performance studies. Each year, the pieces are joined by shared themes and feature modern choreography from students, faculty and guest choreographers, performed by UC Berkeley students. This year, the pieces engaged with nature and identity.

“Meta Morphic,” one of the four pieces in this year’s performance, was choreographed by TDPS alumnus James Graham. He says his pieces are often sensory-oriented: “Whenever I create work it is important to me to recognize, see, honor, reveal the humanity of the performer on stage. ... I bring my dancers’ attention to how their skin feels, what’s happening inside of their chests, being alive and ready for anything and feeling their solo while being hyper-aware of everyone else on stage.” “Meta Morphic” is visually minimalistic, with an almost avant-garde tone. BDP performances are often fantastically influenced by performance art, and this year’s pieces were no exception.

“What I have come to know through this piece is that we are the Earth, the water, the soil, the rock, the oxygen, the charcoal ... there is no separation between us humans and the natural world,” said Graham. “It can be a radical act to remind or claim this place in the natural world, to feel equal to the wind, cousins with the stones, empathetic to the fire. And it can help us to care about environmental causes inside and outside the borders of our skin.”

“Network,” choreographed by Krista DeNio, also intertwined nature with human collectivity. Her piece relied on the metaphor of roots that keep trees, and human beings, grounded and help them grow. “To me, our very survival as a human race is inherently interlocked with an understanding and acceptance of our interdependence,” DeNio said.

“Ultimately with this piece, I would love people to feel empowered as human animals through a sense of remembering what we already know and understand about interdependence, but also to get more educated and activated to stand against systemic oppression, mass incarceration in particular, by recognizing that dismantling division and instead creating collaborative, restorative ways of being is what will give all of us and our planet a chance to survive and thrive.”

The student-choreographed pieces “Blahh!” and “Basural!” also engaged with themes of identity with contrasting tones. While “Blahh!” took a darker, more adolescent and self-serious approach, “Basural!” playfully represented the way we often try on various identities before finding the ones that “fit.” The dancers changed in and out of clothing scattered across the stage in a way that seemed to mirror metamorphic performances of the self.

— Sophie-Marie Prime

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