

## **ARTISTIC RESEARCH**

VISUAL ARTS FACULTY EXHIBITION 2015

UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

7-14 May 2015

The University Art Gallery's approaching 50th Anniversary provides an opportune time to look back on the gallery's achievements. In many ways, a faculty exhibition provides the best framework through which to do so. The gallery's exhibitions and programs have always emerged from the research interests of faculty in the Visual Arts Department, in concert with the students with whom they work and teach, and exhibitions of this work provide important touchstones in the consideration of its history. The role of the Gallery has been to present this research-based artwork in the context of the broader interdisciplinary environment that informs it. The conversations these exhibitions have engaged about the nature of art practice in the research environment of UC San Diego have had important repercussions in the changing culture of the campus and region, as well as in the larger arenas of cultural practice in the world beyond.

The Gallery has been able to perform this role because of its unique constitution at a prominent research university, for a period of time that is nearly as long as the age of UCSD itself -- a situation that has enabled it to present vanguard artistic research before it is subject to the dictates of the market (in fact building on a historical tradition that began nearly a quarter century before the global art market emerged). In an institutional landscape where risk taking has, over these years, become increasingly rare, the ability to perform this function has become exceptionally important. It has enabled the Gallery to draw on and synthesize research in experimental forms that would otherwise not be possible. Audiences are drawn to the UAG precisely for this purpose: to encounter research-driven work that anticipates cultural patterns that are only just beginning to emerge on the horizon, in forms that could not otherwise be seen.

The term "research" might seem inapplicable to artistic pursuits because they are often regarded as primarily expressive in their orientation. It might even seem to introduce a contradiction: the privileging of an objective method that is the very antithesis of creativity. Yet artistic methods are hardly opposed to scientific ones. They are rigorous in ways that do not involve the vanquishing of the imprecise. In their unique hybridizations of disciplinary approaches these artistic methods enable the novel insights that only unconventional syntheses can provide. They are crucial in a world where specialized practices are increasingly becoming automated.

An accompanying catalogue includes documentation of the current work presented in the exhibition. The Gallery's past programming is engaged through the lens of this contemporary work, in the form of an overview of past exhibitions situated within the cultural environments of their time. This reflects the necessity of historical awareness in the present context of artmaking, in ways that inform the ability to speculate on what is yet to come.