

# BERKELEY ART CENTER

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## *Suspended Matter*

October 30, 2021 – January 15, 2022



Asma Kazmi, *After Jahangir*, 2021 Photo by Iqran Rasheed Mehar

October 1, Berkeley, Calif. — Berkeley Art Center presents **Suspended Matter**, a group exhibition curated by Patricia Cariño Valdez and featuring artists Julia Goodman, Asma Kazmi, Laura Arminda Kingsley, and Jenifer K. Wofford. The exhibition title borrows from the environmental definition of suspended matter: it is an occurrence where tiny organisms, plants, and minerals naturally exist within a liquid or due to a disruption, like heavy rainfall or a flood. The mixing of these particles creates a new composition, one that does not dissolve. *Suspended Matter* refracts our contemporary moment to examine the sentiments and materiality of these unsettled times. Through sculpture, video, photography, and paintings, the artists consider the intimate connections within ourselves, with others, and the domestic objects that shape our surroundings.

Julia Goodman continues to dive deeper into the potential of handmade paper to create objects that hold personal histories and relationships, both mundane and profound. Through a laborious

process of tearing and pulping discarded bedsheets and t-shirts, the artist then presses this suspended liquid against plates or surfaces to create sculptural and abstract forms. Re-presented over ten years later, Goodman recontextualizes *Certain is Nothing Now*, 2009. The work, which consists of concentric circles of handmade paper, hangs from above, inviting the viewer to look up at these shifting, concrete-like forms. *Waning* (8/19/07 – 7/14/08) & *Waxing* (7/27/18 – 5/10/19), a deeply personal piece, speak to the arc of life: being a grieving daughter and an expecting mother. Created twelve years apart, it draws from a need to seek catharsis through transforming physical materials through mimicry of Jewish mourning rituals. In her newest series, *Traces*, Goodman presses pulped fabrics from within and against hard exterior surfaces, such as brick walls and concrete floors, and leaves them to dry outside, introducing tension on how we navigate public and private spaces. Commenting on intimacy, domestic space, and shifting time, Goodman's art blends soft material to contrast complex individual and collective experiences.

Understanding our relationship to domestic objects is the new works by Asma Kazmi, whose practice tells the intertwining stories about Islam, Muslim culture, complex trade routes, global flows of people and commodities, labor, colonial and indigenous knowledge systems. In *Suspended Matter*, Kazmi presents *After Jahangir*, a series inspired by the history of Mughal emperor Jahangir (1569-1627). Also known as "World Seizer" for his preoccupation with collecting plants, animals, minerals, and rarities from different parts of the globe, Jahangir is often depicted in royal portraits with his arm lifted to his face holding up a distinguished object to meditate on its properties. In her new photographs and paintings, Kazmi performs his gesture of carefully gazing at an object placed in her palm, a practice of contemplating common household consumer objects that she consumes. Taking place in San Francisco and Karachi, these self-portraits represent the uneven urbanization of the two cities. The presentation collapses spatial and temporal locations, establishing new and unique possibilities of thinking about the matter, materiality, and ecology.



Laura Arminda Kingsley combines drawing, painting, and sculpture to create works inspired by her interest in her Caribbean heritage, folklore, and science. In her new videos *Murmurs of the Deep VIII* and *Murmurs of the Deep II*, she illustrates the world through the lens of deep time, a vast time scale that goes well beyond human lives. She depicts microscopic and macroscopic moments referencing the Atlantic Ocean, Black bodies, geometrically shaped microorganisms, sea creatures with

tentacles, and fossils. Kingsley manifests a seductive scene that unfolds, palpates, and generates movement from a bottomless space. As the video progresses, the shapes mutate, fuse, and split off into a void. The work becomes an exercise in gaining perspective of a fraction in time,

situating ourselves both in the immediate and its impermanence, and constellating how we fit into the larger story of the planet. (Image caption: Laura Arminda Kingsley, *Murmurs of the Deep II*, 2020)

Jenifer K. Wofford's new series of drawings ground the viewer in our contemporary challenges within the past year. In *Suspended Matter*, Wofford brings together the September 9, 2020 wildfire, an ominous day in which fires engulfed Northern California, as well as the tragic events of the past year of 2020. Using the complementary colors to reference the once blue sky turned doomsday orange from the fire, Wofford creates a gradient that blends together into a neutral muted color. This oscillation of color exemplifies the pendulum swing of the last year: instances of joy and levity, in friction with the heaviness of fear and anxiety. Her stylized drawings outline figures and shapes that anchor and frame the atmosphere. Wofford references the collective curiosity and confusion of the Bay Area and the lingering sentiments that started in 2020.

The works in *Suspended Matter* contemplate how we interact with others and our surroundings. From the reconstitution of familiar fabrics into abstract shapes as seen in Goodman's sculptures to a close examination of domestic objects that we interact within Kazmi's work, the artists recognize the shifting interactions with our values, beliefs, and the everyday objects that we keep. The otherworldly sci-fi videos by Kingsley and Wofford's depictions of solitude and isolation remind us of the constant revaluation of our existence and our resilience in relation to the past and present. Collaborating closely with Berkeley Art Center, Patricia Cariño Valdez curated *Suspended Matter* as a dedication to her mother, a love letter to encapsulate the challenging past years. The artists together with the curator in *Suspended Matter* honor a time of respite during turbulent times, offering a moment for awareness, wonder, and hope.

*Suspended Matter* opens on October 30, 2021, and runs through January 15, 2022. Exhibition programming will be announced on the Berkeley Art Center website.

### **About the Curator**

**Patricia Cariño Valdez** is an independent curator based in Los Angeles, CA. Her passion is to inspire curiosity about material culture, and her vision is to strengthen the community through art collecting, exhibitions, and public programs. Currently, she works as an Associate and Artist Liaison at Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles. Previous to this role, she started Cariño Valdez Art Advisory. From 2018 to 2021, she developed engaging virtual and onsite public programs for the Oakland Museum of California, and from 2016-2018, she served as the Curator and Director of Public Programs at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art. Valdez was appointed by the Mayor of Oakland to serve as a member of the Public Art Advisory Committee in 2017 and served two terms. Valdez has curated exhibitions and public programs for the Asia Society Texas (Houston), Erica Broussard Gallery (Santa Ana), Exploratorium (San Francisco), Contemporary Jewish Museum (San Francisco), San Francisco State University, Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts (San Francisco), and Pro Arts (Oakland). She has participated as a lecturer,

speaker, and panelist at the Asian Art Museum (San Francisco), San Francisco Arts Commission, Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive, Living Room Light Exchange (San Francisco), Stanford University (Palo Alto), University of San Francisco Thacher Gallery, Cal State University East Bay, Central Features Contemporary Art (Albuquerque), and Arizona State University. Valdez earned her BA in History of Art from the University of California, Berkeley, and her MA in Curatorial Practice from California College of the Arts.

## About the Artists

**Julia Goodman** creates low and high relief handmade paper sculptures. Goodman's work holds strong throughlines with the history of rag paper as she gathers, sorts, tears, soaks, and pulps fabrics. She transforms discarded bedsheets and t-shirts into malleable pulp to press against brick walls, concrete, textiles, woodcarvings, flat surfaces, and even her own hands. By working with fabrics that exist in close proximity to our bodies -- objects that hold personal histories both mundane and profound -- she highlights layers of relationships and caretaking, the love and loss that shapes our lives. Goodman earned an MFA from California College of the Arts (2009) and a BA in International Relations and Peace & Justice Studies from Tufts University (2001). She studied art at Santa Monica College (2002-2006). Recent exhibitions include: National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.; Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL; Poetry Foundation, Chicago, IL; Salina Art Center, Salina, KS; Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN; California College of the Arts Hubbell Street Gallery, San Francisco, CA; and the Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA. Her residencies include JB Blunk Residency, Inverness, CA; Recology SF, San Francisco, CA; Creativity Explored, San Francisco, CA; and Salina Art Center, Salina, KS. Goodman lives and works in Berkeley with artist Michael Hall and their young child. She is represented by Euqinom Gallery in San Francisco, CA, where she will have a solo show in November 2021.

**Asma Kazmi** was born in Quetta, a city in Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan. She works between the US, India, Pakistan, China, Europe, and the Middle East to create installations that are legible in various cultural contexts. Asma Kazmi's selected exhibitions include Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture (Shenzhen, China); San Francisco Art Commission Gallery; the Espacio Laraña, University of Seville, Spain; the Commons Gallery, the University of Hawaii in Honolulu; Faraar Gallery (Karachi, Pakistan); Elaine L. Jacob Gallery, Wayne State University (Detroit, MI); Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art, (San Francisco, CA); San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (San Jose, CA); Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (Salt Lake City, UT); Queens Museum of Art (New York, NY); Galerie Sans Titre (Brussels, Belgium); LACE (Los Angeles, CA); 18th Street Arts Center (Santa Monica, CA); Contemporary Art Museum (St. Louis, MO); among others. Kazmi is the recipient of many grants, including the Townsend Fellowship; the Hellman Fellow Fund award; the BCNM Seed Grant; Al-Falah Grant; the Fulbright to India; and Faculty Research Grant, CalArts. Kazmi is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Art Practice and the Berkeley Center for New Media at UC Berkeley.

**Laura Arminda Kingsley** is a Swiss-Dominican-American artist based in Zurich, Switzerland. In 2004 after completing her Associates in Fine Arts and Illustration at Chavón the School of Design in La Romana, Dominican Republic, Kingsley migrated to New York. She completed her BA from Hunter College, New York in 2012 and obtained her MFA from California College of the Arts in San Francisco in 2014. Shortly after, she moved to Zurich, Switzerland. Her work has been exhibited in the Bay area at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, Southern Exposure, San Francisco Luggage Store Annex, Heron Arts, Oliver Art Center and Isabelle Percy West Gallery. She has shown at Museo de Arte Moderno and Altos de Chavón, Dominican Republic; Taller Boricua Gallery, Thomas Hunter Project Space and Sidney Mishkin Gallery in New York; and Casa Escute, the Interamerican Gallery, Art Gallery of the Humanities Dept. of the University of Puerto Rico and the Department of State in Puerto Rico. In 2021 she received the Art Studio Award of the City of Dübendorf and the LOCUS Micro-Grant. Her work can be seen in Sculpture in the City (London, England); the 22nd Triennale Grenchen (Grenchen, Switzerland), the CICA Museum (Seoul, South Korea), the LOCUS Digital Gallery (Chicago, IL), Pineapple Black Arts (Middlesbrough, UK), Kunst im GZ (Regensdorf, Switzerland), and the Aargauer Kunsthaus (Aarau, Switzerland).

**Jenifer K Wofford** is a San Francisco-based artist and educator. She is also 1/3 of the Filipina-American artist trio M.O.B. Her work has been exhibited in the Bay Area at the Asian Art Museum, Berkeley Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, YBCA, San Jose Museum of Art, Southern Exposure, Kearny Street Workshop. Further afield, she has shown at New Image Art (Los Angeles), Wing Luke Museum (Seattle), DePaul Museum (Chicago), Silverlens Galleries (Philippines), VWFA (Malaysia), and Osage Gallery (Hong Kong). Wofford is a 2017 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. Her other awards include the Eureka Fellowship, the Murphy Fellowship, and grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Art Matters Foundation, and the Center for Cultural Innovation. She has also been an artist-in-residence at The Living Room (Philippines), Liguria Study Center (Italy) and KinoKino (Norway). Wofford is part-time faculty in Fine Arts and Philippine Studies at the University of San Francisco. Born in San Francisco and raised in Hong Kong, Dubai, Malaysia and the California Bay Area, Wofford has also lived in Oakland, New Orleans and Prague. She lives and works in San Francisco.

### **About Berkeley Art Center**

Berkeley Art Center (BAC) is a hub for artistic exploration and community building that champions work by Bay Area artists and curators. Nestled in Live Oak Park in North Berkeley, the gallery makes contemporary art approachable and accessible – for free – at an intimate scale. Since its founding in 1967, BAC has exhibited work by important local figures such as Robert Bechtle, Enrique Chagoya, Taraneh Hemami, Mildred Howard, Hung Liu, Jim Melchert, Chiura Obata, Sonya Rapoport, Betye Saar, Katherine Sherwood, Peter Voulkos, and Carrie Mae Weems, among many others. For more information and images, contact Kim Arteché at 510-644-6893 or [info@berkeleyartcenter.org](mailto:info@berkeleyartcenter.org). Berkeley Art Center is located in Live Oak Park at

1275 Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA 94709. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. Generous support for Berkeley Art Center is provided by the City of Berkeley, the Alameda County Arts Commission, the California Arts Council, the East Bay Community Foundation/East Bay Fund for Artists, Mechanics Bank, Wattis Foundation, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and BAC's members and donors.