

Tell Me Why, Tell Me Why, Tell Me Why
(Why Can't We Live Together?)

Exhibition
March 4 - April 29, 2017

Opening
Saturday, March 11, 2017
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

LISA SETTE GALLERY

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Friday 10am - 5pm | Saturday 12-5pm | or by appt.

What do we do when the news makes us cry?

Art remains a source of solace, explanation, and surprise. In *Tell Me Why*, a diverse range of contemporary artists consider our present moment of conflict, addressing narratives of difference and resentment as well as hope and beauty. The show's title is a lyric from the 1972 Timmy Thomas recording *Why Can't We Live Together?* The song's central question resonates throughout the show, with responses in the form of conceptually rigorous work from artists including: Enrique Chagoya, Sonya Clark, Jamal Cyrus, Binh Danh, Claudio Dicochea, Angela Ellsworth, Maximo Gonzalez, Siri Devi Khandavilli, Mark Klett, Carrie Marill, Luis Molina-Pantin, Ann Morton, Reynier Leyva Novo, Kambui Olujimi, and Charlotte Potter.

The artists of *Tell Me Why* are connected by their fearless approach to experimentation, beauty, and political engagement, and their insistence on artwork as a means of cathartic reconciliation.

"Everyone is born somewhere. I'm not so interested in the idea of a shared origin, I'm interested in the idea of a shared destination."

— *Claudio Dicochea*

In a state of anxiety over our country's state of affairs, Enrique Chagoya took up transcendental meditation; his practice gave a new direction to his *Illegal Alien's Guide* series: works that take their multivalent pictorial form from the pre-Columbian codex. The codices, remarks Chagoya, contain a series of "self-portraits as ethnic stereotypes from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America among others...addressing issues of xenophobia, gender, and racism, in a style that I call 'reverse modernism.'" His work is a "conceptual fusion of opposite cultural realities that I have experienced in my lifetime." This approach informs much of the work in *Tell Me Why*, as artists explore identities and cultures in conflict.

Artist Sonya Clark exhibits *Unraveled Persistence*, a Confederate flag meticulously deconstructed, yet even in its unraveled state projecting our nation's most powerful symbol of divisiveness. And in a literal perspective-switch, Charlotte Potter's *Lenticular America* consists of hand-

engraved portraits on glass, spliced together and mounted using lenticular technology, so that, says Potter, “when viewing the work straight on the portraits... are only revealed by physically changing perspective.” Moving around the piece, the viewer glimpses the ghostly visage of Michael Brown, a young man killed in Ferguson, MO, as it shifts to a depiction of Darren Wilson, the officer who shot him.

In Kambui Olujimi’s newest series *Killing Time*, an installation of adorned handcuffs act as lyrical drawings to highlight the plight of mass systemic incarceration and the ties between those caught within a cycle they cannot escape.

Jamal Cyrus’ *Kennedy King Kennedy* triptych features excerpts from the *Chicago Daily Defender* newspaper’s reports on the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. Laser-cut into Egyptian papyrus, one of the earliest known writing materials, Cyrus lends historical weight to the seemingly disposable news cycle we experience on a daily basis.

Maximo Gonzalez’ work evokes the contemporary “multiplicity of repetition” idea on which today’s tendentious news culture is built. In his piece *Arqueologia de la prensa / Archaeology of the press*, the repeating squares are created from the white borders of out of circulation currency and give the impression of a group of people, holding banners in demonstration and repetition. The empty banners can be filled with the different fears, injustices, and claims that all the groups, minority or majority, in any country of the world are screaming out.

Bangalore-based artist Siri Devi Khandavilli mimics traditional Hindu temple figurines in her series of cast bronze sculptures. Khandavilli remarks, “These works are about religions and their relationship with violence and need for control and power, and human brutality disguised in the name of religious duties.” The series shows the incarnations of Vishnu, each brandishing a different weapon.

Cuban artist Reynier Leyva Novo uses reappropriation in his series *Margin Notes*. Each day he reads the highly censored Cuban “Granma” newspaper and clips figures or texts of interest and then alters the original meaning by rearranging the clippings to create unprecedented images of strong political commentary, interspersed with irony, poetry, and humor.

Mark Klett’s *Fence separating the US/Mexico border south of the Gila Mountains, May 2015* captures the existential absurdity of political effort toward division: a lone steel wall crosses a gully while around it stretches the boundless, bare, and politically indifferent geography of the desert.

Meanwhile, across the border, Venezuelan artist Luis Molina-Pantín’s *Untitled (Doorbells from Mexico) / Sin título (Timbres de México)* series explores his droll observations of fear and personalized security varying from house to house.

A close examination of our human condition and current political situation may be dispiriting, but for some of the artists of *Tell Me Why* it serves as an opportunity for deeper aesthetic engagement. Carrie Marill says “My work is about symmetry and balance and pattern, and when I reflect on that familiar visual language in terms of questioning our society, I’m often lead back to meditation in order to calm my overthinking mind...”

Binh Danh works with experimental photographic processes to capture “mortality, memory, history, landscape, justice, evidence, and spirituality. Danh’s luminous daguerreotypes become mirror-like, an occasion for reflection and contemplation. The daguerreotypes allow viewers to see themselves in the Buddha and for us to see ourselves awaken.”

In an essential way, *Tell Me Why* is a united act, presenting contemporary work by artists from Bangalore to Mexico; the borderlands of the Southwest to California’s immigrant shores. While valuing conceptual exploration over a specific or exacting agenda, the artists of *Tell Me Why* converge in the shared practice of working to make sense of our common humanity.

“All we want is some peace in this world” — *Timmy Thomas*

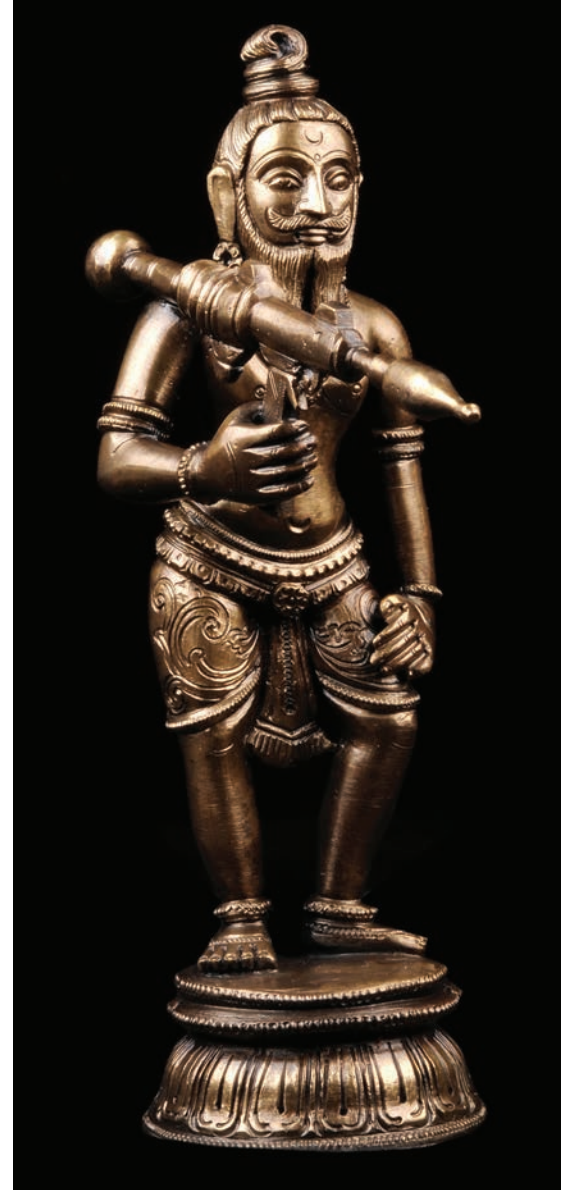


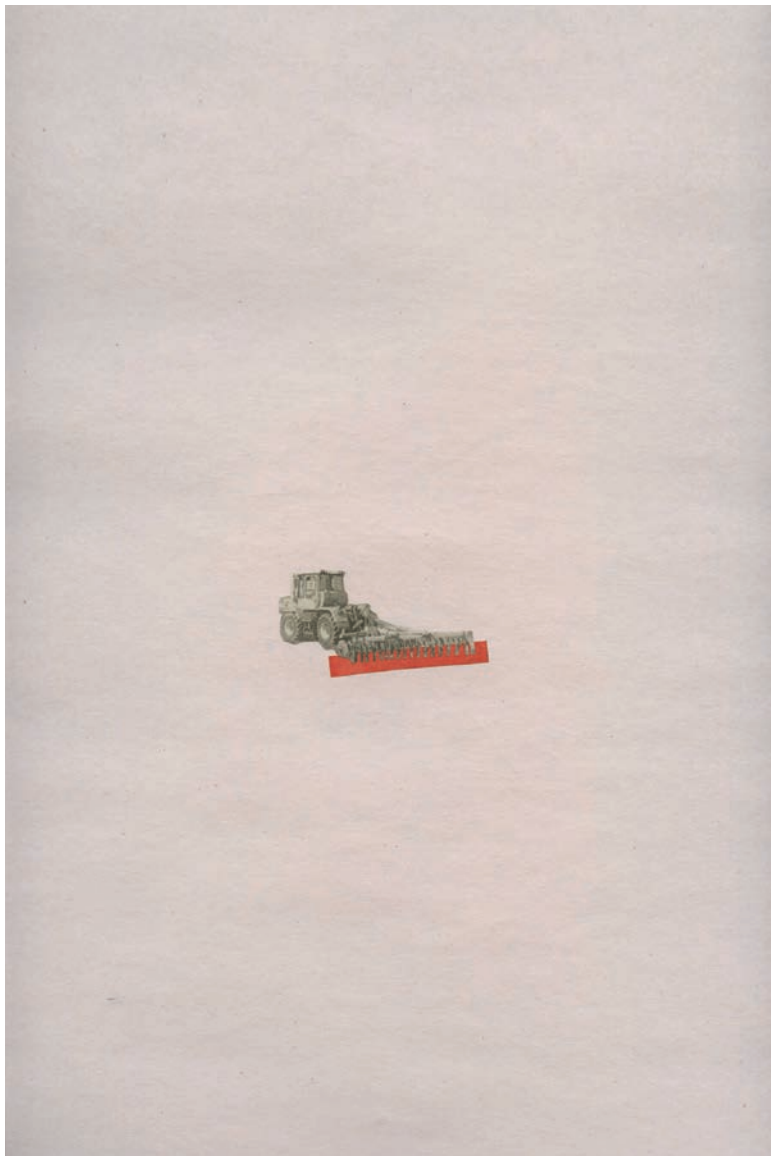


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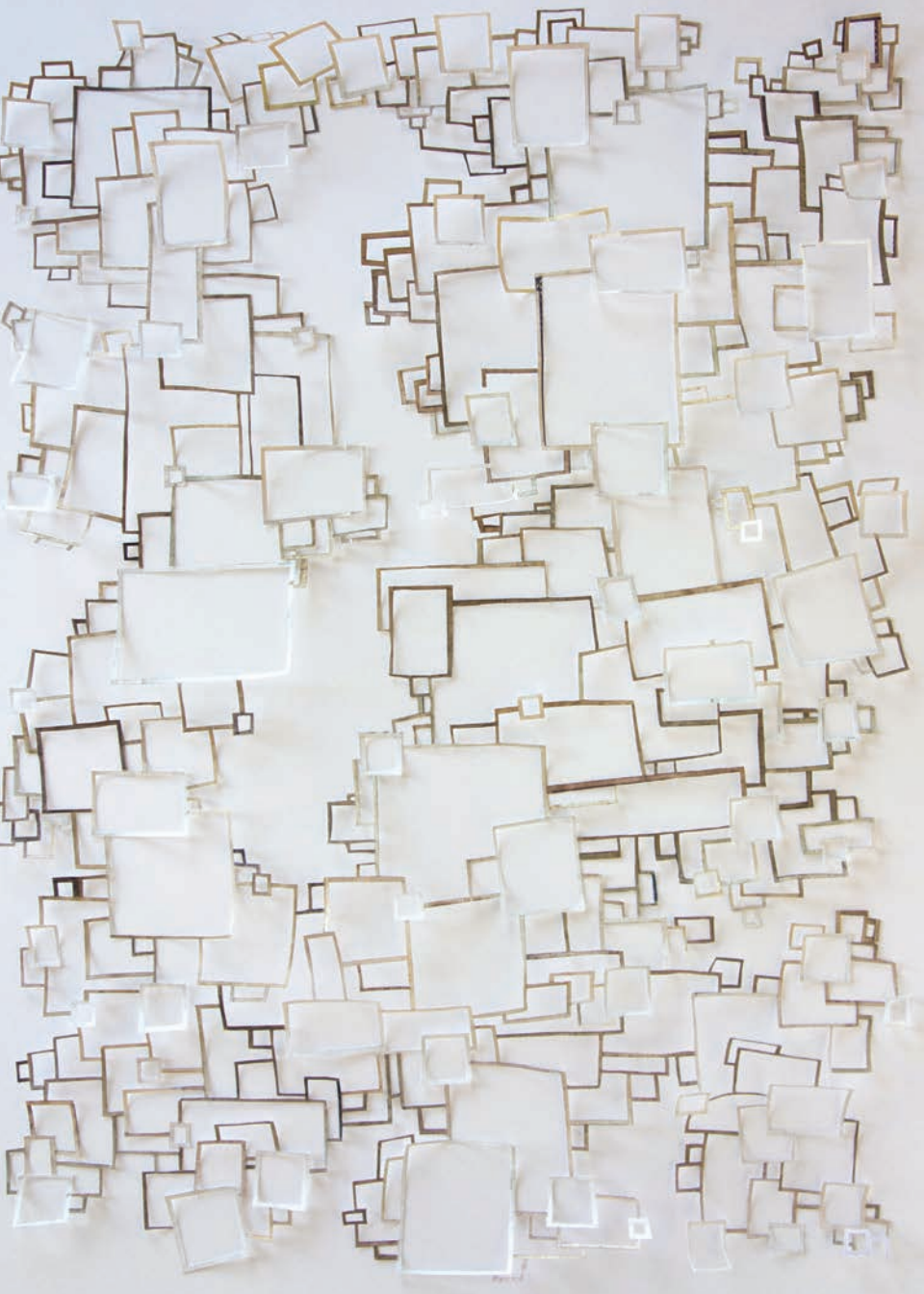
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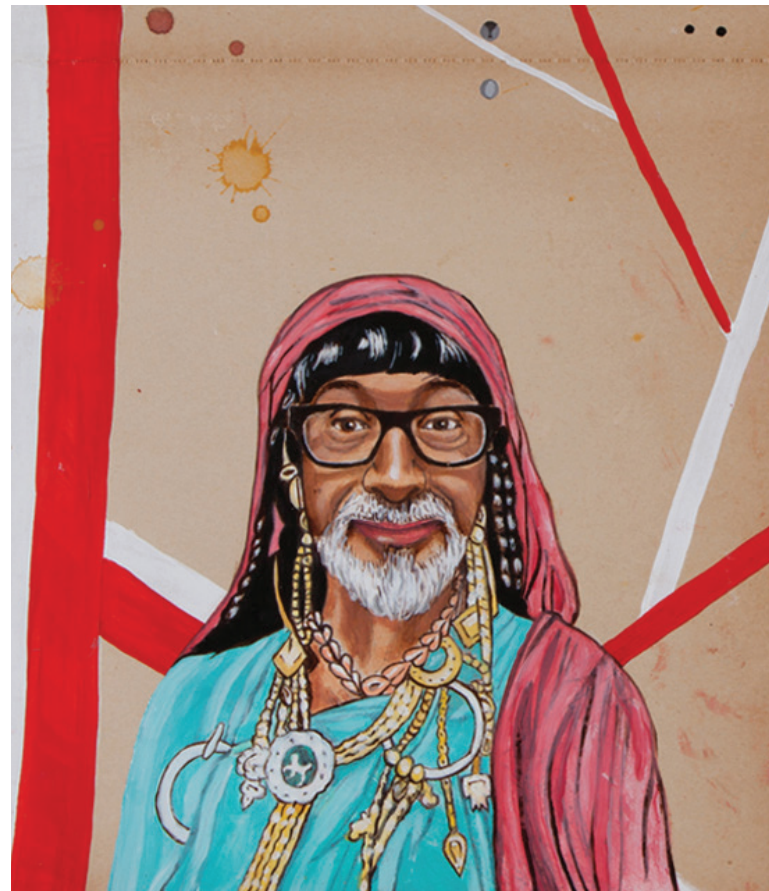














Tell Me Why, Tell Me Why, Tell Me Why (Why Can't We Live Together?)

Front cover:

Binh Danh

Stay Woke Buddha 2, 2017,
daguerreotype
7.5" x 5" unframed
12" x 9.5" framed
Unique

Inside front flap:

Sonya Clark

Unraveled Persistence,
(detail), 2016, deconstructed
nylon Confederate Battle
Flag, flag pole, 104" x 24" x 8"
Edition of 5

Sonya Clark

Unraveled Persistence,
2016, deconstructed nylon
Confederate Battle Flag, flag
pole, 104" x 24" x 8"
Edition of 5

Claudio Dicochea

*de Santanico Pandemonium
y el Vaquero, la Vampira
del Rio y la Pirateria (of
Santanico Pandemonium
and Cowboy, the River
Vampire and Piracy)*, 2012
acrylic, graphite, charcoal,
transfer, wood, 72" x 96"

Angela Ellsworth

*Seer Bonnet XXIV (Sister
Sarah) and Seer Bonnet XXV
(Sister Maria)*, 2016
33,407 pearl corsage pins,
fabric, steel, 65" x 48" x 24"
(base 48" x 24" x 4")

Siri Devi Khandavilli

Not in Anyone's Name
2015, cast bronze
7" x 2.5" x 4.5", Unique

Reynier Leyva Novo

*Margin Notes No. 3 (Remove
the Burden)*, 2015 newspaper
clippings collage on paper
17" x 14" unframed

Sonya Clark

Afro Abe Progression, 2008
five dollar bills, thread
35" x 11.5" framed

Jamal Cyrus

Kennedy King Kennedy, 2015
Laser-cut Egyptian papyrus
backed with handmade
paper 3 @ 27" x 16.75" each
framed

Maximo Gonzalez

*Arqueologia de la Prensa /
Archaeology of the Press*,
2016, Collage: white borders
of out-of-circulation
currency, 41" x 51" framed

Ann Morton

Proof-Reading, 2017
handmade handkerchief
with embroidery, 12" x 12"
hanging dimensions
4" x 15" x 3", Edition of 5

Mark Klett

*Fence Separating the US/
Mexico Border South of the
Gila Mountains, May 2015*,
2015, pigment print
23" x 30.5" / 35" x 46.5" /
43" x 57", Edition of 20

Luis Molina-Pantín

*Untitled (Doorbells from
Mexico) / Sin título (Timbres
de México)*, 2014-2016
C-prints, 60 images at
10" x 8" each, Edition of 6

Carrie Marill

Meditation, (detail), 2017
egg tempera on linen
20 x 20"

Sonya Clark

Reach, 2004, glass beads
15.5" x 1.5" x 1.5"

Enrique Chagoya

*Illegal Alien's Guide to
Mindfulness*, 2015, acrylic
and water based oil paint on
de-acidified vintage paper
11.25" x 93" unframed
15" x 97" framed

Charlotte Potter

*Lenticular America,
Brown/Wilson*, 2016
hand engraved glass
cameos, steel, wood
15" x 16" framed,
Edition of 3

Enrique Chagoya

*Mindful Alien's Guide to Re-
verse Anthropology*, (detail)
2017, acrylic and water based
oil paint on de-acidified
vintage paper
11.25" x 93" unframed
15" x 97" framed

Sonya Clark

Watermelon World, 2014
wood, cotton, embroidery,
pins, 7" x 5" x 5"

Inside back flap:

Reynier Leyva Novo

Revolucion: Una y Mil Veces,
2011, book
closed: 11" x 8 1/8" x 3 1/8"
open: 9 3/8" x 14 7/8" x 2 1/2"
Edition of 5, 2 AP

Kambui Olujimi

Killing Time, 2017
installation
(not pictured)

Back cover:

Binh Danh

Stay Woke Buddha 1, 2017,
daguerreotype
7.5" x 5" unframed
12" x 9.5" framed
Unique

design: ps:studios

copy: megan bates

printing: ben franklin press





Tell me why? Tell me why? Tell me why?
Mmm, why can't we live together?
Tell me why? Tell me why?
Mmm, why can't we live together?

Everybody wants to live together
Why can't we live together?

No more wars, no more wars, no more war
Mmm, just a little peace in this world
No more wars, no more war
All we want is some peace in this world

Everybody wants to live together
Why can't we live together?

Can't live, can't live
Can't live together
Can't live together

No matter, no matter what color
Mmm, you are still my brother
I said, no matter, no matter what color
Mmm, you are still my brother

Everybody wants to live together
Why can't we live together?

— *Timmy Thomas, 1972*

