

Sabbatical Report for Academic Year Fall 2017-Spring 2018

Cynthia Minet  
Professor of Studio Art  
Moorpark College

Respectfully Submitted February 17, 2019



## OVERVIEW OF SABBATICAL PROPOSAL:

The goals of my one-year sabbatical were three-fold:

1. Increase my proficiency in 3-D modeling, 3-D printing and interactive technologies.
2. Expand my sculptural skills by creating and presenting new works for a solo museum exhibit in Texas in November 2017.
3. Curate and present an exhibit featuring artists from the Rio Grande Valley and from Los Angeles, to be located on the campus of one of the colleges of the VCCCD.

**I have met my goals in the following ways:**

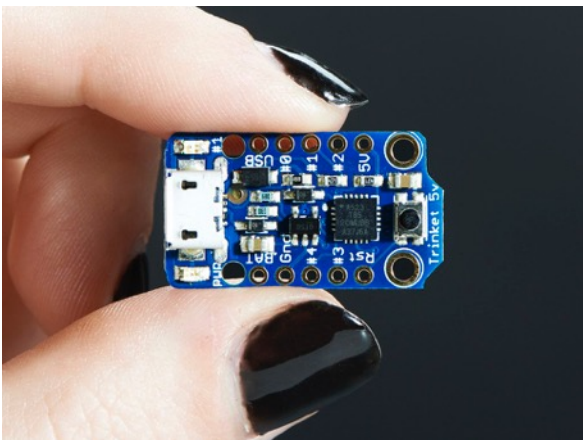
### Goals 1 and 2:

During the **Fall 2017 semester**, I worked closely with Vaughn Hannon, LED systems designer, on designing and implementing interactive lighting and sound components for my solo museum installation, *Migrations*, at the Museum of Art and Science in McAllen, Texas (IMAS). The exhibit featured six over life-size sculptures of Roseate Spoonbills made from recycled plastics, wood, PVC and found objects. The exhibit was originally scheduled to open in November 2017, but it was pushed back to April 2018. It was subsequently extended until December 2018, so it ran from April 14-December 9, 2018. The exhibit has travelled, and is now on display at the MOAH (Museum of Art and History), Lancaster, CA. (Jan 26-April 20, 2019) in its own room within a large thematic show called *Peace on Earth*.

For *Migrations*, my artistic vision was an immersive installation of six suspended sculptures that featured sequenced and animated lighting, and motion-activated sound. I knew that incorporating the new technology would teach me many techniques that would not only be useful in my artwork, but relevant to my teaching.

I wanted to learn how to use programmable RGB LEDs to place in the sculptures, as the LEDs I had used previously had to be colored individually. I had used commercially available colors, or I had customized the lighting with a specially colored putty that I placed over each LED. The advantage and beauty of the programmable LEDs is that, once installed in the sculpture, there is no limit to the color range that I can use. I was able to work with Vaughn and adjust the range of colors on the spot by changing the programming from a laptop computer. It is truly painting with light! The lighting program is stored on a Trinket Pro .

The Trinket Pro is a mini microcontroller board that we soldered to the wiring that connects the LEDs.



Once I selected the colors on my first sculpture I was able to work with Vaughn on the sequencing pattern that I wanted throughout the sculptures, and to change the color palette in each bird so that they complemented each other within the installation.



*View of the sculptures in progress in my studio. Double click on the video above to see the animation.*

As I completed each sculpture of the six over the course of the summer, Fall 2017 semester, and into March of Spring 2018, I was able to collaborate with Vaughn to fine-tune the lighting in the installation.

Another component that was essential to resolve was how to implement the interactive sound components. We used motion sensors to trigger the sounds programmed into an additional Trinket Pro attached to a mini-amplifier board and speaker. The electronics components are housed in the breast area of the birds, and are easily accessible if any adjustments are necessary. The sounds that are triggered by visitors to the exhibit are bird calls sourced from a recording of the Roseate Spoonbill from the Macauley Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Additional sounds are a recording of water that I made at the Los Angeles River, and sampled footsteps from an audio effects database. I worked with TV editor and director Jill D'Agnew to edit the recordings into 1-minute snippets that are triggered by the motion sensors. There was a lot of trial and error to avoid feedback on the sound, to properly wire the lights, and to adjust the volumes. In the first showing of the work in Texas the volume was too low, but for the exhibit in Lancaster, we prepared new mini-amplifiers that are louder and work better.

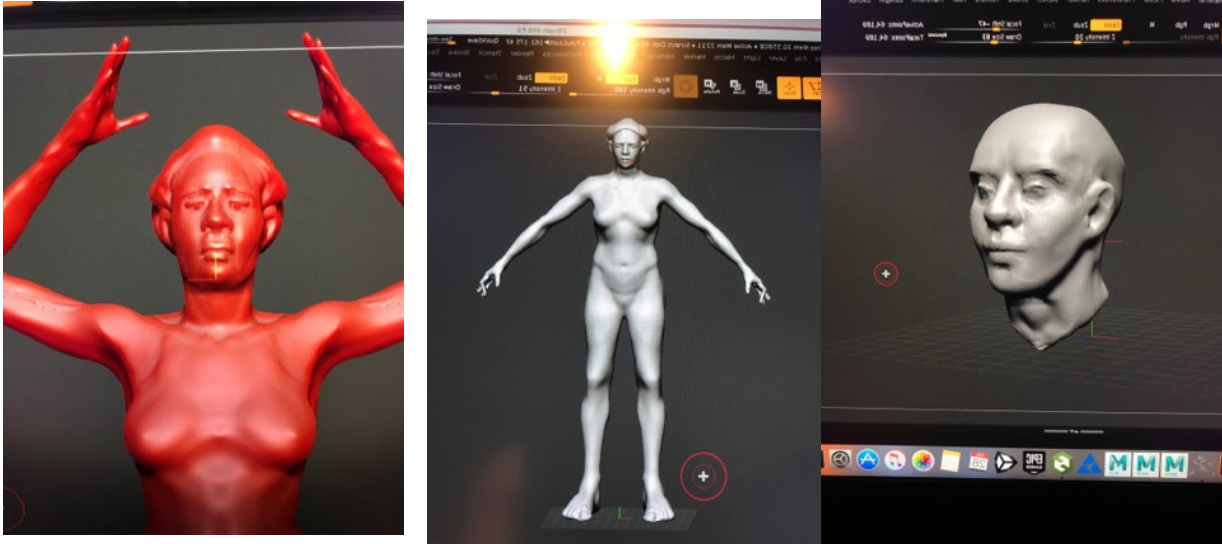
Please see the video linked here for the documentary that accompanies my exhibit.

<https://vimeo.com/265446828>

Please also see two excellent reviews that appeared in the local newspaper in my attachments.

## Academic Coursework During the Spring 2018 semester:

I was able to develop skills in 3D modeling by taking **Digital Sculpture at Glendale College**. This was a 3 unit class in the program ZBrush, and I learned how to make a human head and then an entire body in the program. It is a very challenging but rewarding program, and I hope to implement its use in a limited way in my figure sculpture class.



*Screen shots of my 3D modeled sculptures designed in ZBrush*

Glendale College has a MakerSpace, as well as a wonderful open lab that is easily accessible, and I was able to make several 3D digital prints of my head sculpture. My instructor (Roger Dickes), emphasized that one only needs limited "brushes" to make sophisticated forms. He held several critiques via video conferencing with a professional in the industry who works full-time in character development using ZBrush. It was very helpful to get feedback from this outside source. The course was a full semester length class that met once a week for 6 hours, with additional lab time. (see attached transcript).

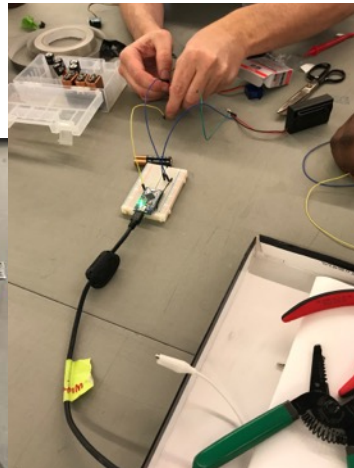
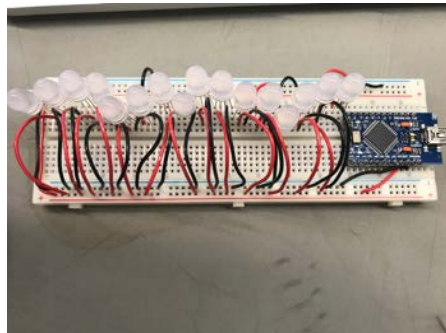


*Images of the 3D print in different materials*

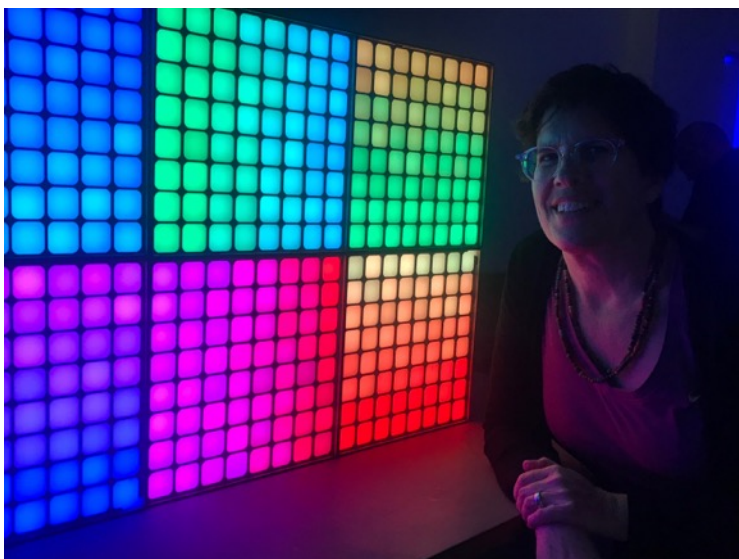
I plan to realize a number of 3D projects with our MakerSpace, and already have had my 3D Design students make 3D prints to include in their class projects. If I hadn't had the opportunity to study this

technology during my sabbatical, I don't think I would feel as confident about the potential of 3D printing that I now feel.

Another course that I was able to complete during the **Spring 2018** was a non-credit course called **Design with Technology: Build** through **Art Center at Night**. I had originally planned to take the full version of this course, listed as Intro to Electronics: ACN-203W. When I went to enroll, I found that the instructor had split the course into two terms, and only offered the Build part of the course in the Spring, so I took that section instead. I was also intending to take the Introduction to Interactive Design class, but after attending the first class, it was clear that the course focused on designing websites and apps for the phone, and I was more interested in studying lighting applications and interactive sculptural environments. The Build with Technology was an excellent hands-on course in using the Circuit Playground microcomputers and breadboards to program lights and movement. The instructor introduced the IoT (Internet of Things), User X and other current developments in the human/technological interface. The class covered the standard approaches to design based learning (Empathize, Identify, Ideate, Prototype, Test, Repeat), and this approach is directly applicable to the courses I teach in 3D Design. I learned how to program simple movements, and also how motors work, all of which are useful in my courses and in my personal artwork. The instructor emphasized the importance of hands-on experimentations. This approach gave me confidence that the advances in technology and fabrication that are changing around us at every moment need not be intimidating. (see attached transcript).



*Programming a lighting sequence on a breadboard with RGB programmable LEDs*



*Final Project: each student created a box with selected colors to make a group lighting display.*

**Additional research and learning, Spring 2018.**

Although it was not part of my original proposal, I also enrolled in and completed an online course in Spanish II from Moorpark College. I studied with Alejandra Valenzuela. This course was excellent and helped me to gain an understanding of both Spanish language and Latino culture. Since part of the focus of my installation is influenced by the border issues of Southeast Texas, it is relevant that I developed further skills in speaking Spanish. Indeed, it helped me interact easily with the non-English and Spanish-speaking visitors to my exhibit at the IMAS. (see attached transcript) It has also given me confidence in using Spanish when necessary to help students at Moorpark College as well.

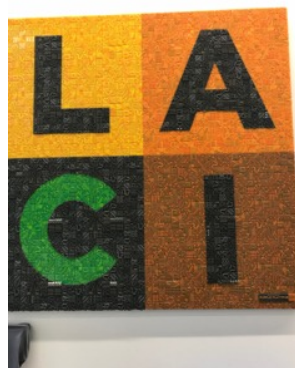


Speaking Spanish with Mexican visitors to the IMAS.



I applied for an artist's residency grant at the Los Angeles Clean Tech Incubator. in downtown Los Angeles during the Spring 2017 semester. I was not selected, unfortunately, but I was able to visit the center, speak with the staff and see the equipment they have available.

*water jet machine*



**GOAL 3: Curate and present an exhibit featuring artists from the Rio Grande Valley and from Los Angeles, to be located on the campus of one of the colleges of the VCCCD.**

The third goal that I had for my sabbatical year was to curate an exhibit on the topic of **Borderlands**. This topic is thematically linked to my research on the political, environmental and social realities in Southeast Texas, where my exhibit was, as well as the complex issues surrounding borders and liminal spaces around the world. I have organized an exhibit that will be on view at the McNish Gallery at Oxnard College from March 13-April 18, 2019.

Entitled *Borderlands*, the show features paintings, sculpture, photography, drawings and installation by six artists: three artists and academics from the Rio Grande Valley: Paul Valadez, (University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley), David Freeman, and Scott Nicol, (both from South Texas Community College), and three accomplished artists/ academics from Los Angeles: Hillary Mushkin, (California Institute of Technology), Margaret Griffith (Mt. San Antonio College), and Nery Gabriel Lemus (Asuza Pacific University). In addition to the exhibit, I will moderate an artists' panel discussion through Oxnard College's OC Live Program before the opening reception of the show. The panel will feature David Freeman and Scott Nicol, both of whom are flying out from Texas for the opening, and Hillary Mushkin from Los Angeles. We will live stream and project the panel discussion through ConferZoom so that it may be viewed at Moorpark College as well. The panel will focus on issues relating to borders, the politics of landscape, the environment, and identity in the artists' works.

**Below is the timeline that was part of my sabbatical year proposal.** The dates of the exhibition at IMAS changed, so I was able to work longer on the sculptures, which I definitely needed. **I completed all my goals and then some, with the additions and changes that are reflected in italics below.**

**FALL SEMESTER 2017:**

**Aug- 2017-April 2018:** The exhibit date was pushed back to April 2018, so that allowed more time to complete the work as well as realize a **documentary video and a self-published catalog for the IMAS show**. I needed all the time I had in the Fall term, and half of the Spring term to make the detailed and technologically sophisticated works that comprise my *Migrations* installation.

Continue work in studio on sculptures and drawings for exhibition

Continue work with Vaughn Hannon on light sequencing

Continue work with sound engineer Tony Shogren on sound design.

***\*I was able to work with Jill D'Agnew and Vaughn Hannon instead of Tony.***

Design mounting devices for sculptural *installation*

***\*I used recycled climbing ropes that were donated by my local climbing gym for the mounting solution.***

Arrange for framing of drawings for exhibit

***\* I did not have to frame the drawings.***

Finalize arrangements with shipping company (Cooke's Crating)

***\*The shipping company required multiple visits and measuring of the works to make the crates. Fortunately, the IMAS covered all costs of crating and shipping to and from Texas, as well as a stipend for materials/fabrication of the work, and the costs of my travel and lodging.***

**October 2017: (the project was actually finalized and shipped March 1, 2018.)**

Develop and finalize didactics and slide show/Powerpoint for gallery on my process

***I delivered a lecture on my work at the IMAS on April 14, 2018***

**Additional documentation for the exhibit:**

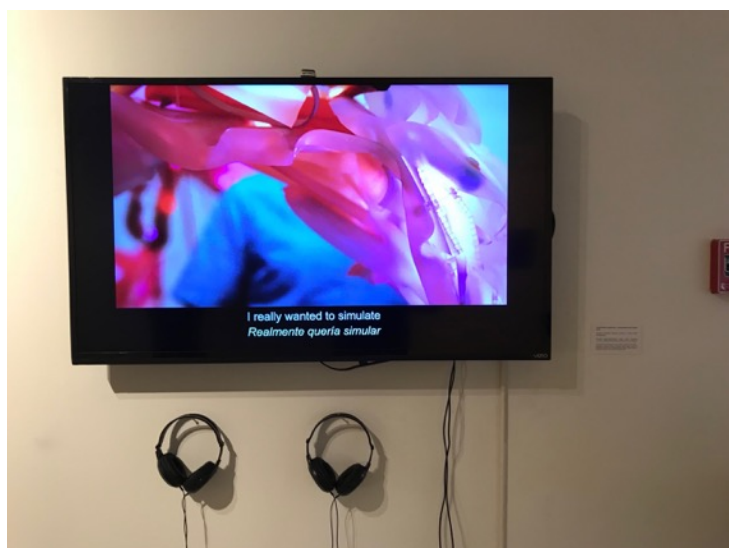


*I self-published a catalog through Shutterfly.*

*This catalog was sold at the museum shop at the IMAS, and is now for sale in the museum shop of the MOAH.*

*I worked with Z Frame to make a documentary on the Migrations project. This included an interview and multiple filming sessions.*

*The video was displayed outside the gallery wall at the IMAS, and is now on view outside my installation in the MOAH show. We close-captioned it with subtitles in English and Spanish. Perry and Rachel of Z frame arranged for donations of the music from a well-known group in New York, as well as footage of the Roseate Spoonbill in flight. I am very proud of their work, and it is an excellent documentary on the process and meanings behind my installation.*



**Cynhia Minet: Migrations, a documentary by Z frame, 2018**

Roseate Spoonbill footage courtesy of Mark Smith Photography

Roseate Spoonbill/Platalea Ajaja audio recording courtesy of Michael Anderson/Cornell Lab of Ornithology

"Wichita" from the album "Ghost Box" courtesy of SUSS  
Songwriters: Holmes (High Lonesome Music BMI), Irwin (PI Publishing ASCAP), Leib (RayBilge Music BMI), Gregg (Obliterati Publishing ASCAP) & Garrett (G4 Music ASCAP)



Complete works for the installation at IMAS, and ship work to Texas



*Cookes Crating in action*



*Crates and installation at the IMAS*





Fly to McAllen, install work (6 days)  
Attend opening, give a formal artist presentation, document the show.  
*\*This happened the second week of April, 2018*



*IMAS opening reception 14 April 2018.*



*\*Meet with local artists Scott Nicol and David Freeman. Visit Freeman's studio and visit the Pump Station/border fence at the U.S./Mexico border, McAllen. Discuss their work and invite them to exhibit at VCCCD for this Spring.*

I worked with local photographer (Carlos Limas) to photograph the exhibit. I was also interviewed by the local TV station, and two reviews were published in the local newspapers. (see attachments)

**SPRING SEMESTER 2018:** During the Spring semester, I will take specific courses that relate to my teaching assignments of 3D Design (ART M23), and Sculpture classes (ART M77/78).

January-April 2018:

Enroll in Intro to Electronics: ACN-203W, Art Center College of Design/Art Center at Night.

**\* I enrolled in and completed the second semester of this class, Design Build with Technology, as noted above.**

Enroll in Intro to Interaction Design: ACN-200, Art Center College of Design,/Art Center at Night.

**\* I enrolled in and completed the Electronics class instead, as noted above.**

Enroll in Introduction to 3-D Digital Modeling (Rhino/SolidWorks), Otis College of Art and Design Continuing Education.

**\*This was a six week, 1 unit class that I had enrolled in, but which was cancelled due to low enrollment. I completed the 3 unit, 18 week semester long class in ZBrush/Digital Sculpture at Glendale College instead, and I am very glad I did**

**Additionally:**

**\*Completion of 5 units of Spanish II, Moorpark College.**

I completed the tutorial on working with 3 D printers on Lynda.com as well as attending another class on 3 D printing at the HexLab Makerspace in Chatsworth.

Additional use of the 3D printer at Glendale College as noted above.

**May 2018:**

Begin work on organizing an exhibit at Moorpark College, or Oxnard, or Ventura Art Galleries that focuses on border issues and the environment. Investigate potential for bringing the work of Texan artists to our District.

**\* As noted above, this will be presented next month at the McNish Gallery, Oxnard College, in March 2019.**

Develop new projects for 3D Design curriculum and Sculpture curriculum.

**3D Design students have and will continue to work with the MakerSpace to create interactive and/or 3D printed and laser-cut projects in ART M23.**

(tentative)

Fly to Corpus Christi to install next leg of the Migrations show at the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi. **(this did not work out)**

**\*\* The show travelled to MOAH, Lancaster, CA, instead, as noted above.**

**I will participate on an artists' panel March 16, 2019, in discussion with two other artists and the curator of the Peace on Earth exhibit, Andi Campognone.**

**June 2018-Sept. 2019**

Work on new interactive exhibit slated for Sept. 2019-Jan 2020 at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles. This show is scheduled to open September 29, 2019. The Craft and Folk Art Museum is now called Craft Contemporary. I have been given the entire ground floor of the museum, to include 4 display cases, the window and lobby area, and the large wall by the window. I am working on a large mechanical sculpture to incorporate lights, sound and actual movement, as well as 3D printed manipulated

skulls of extinct or endangered animals to be presented in the display cases. I am planning to collaborate with Vaugh Hannon again on the electronics. I wouldn't be able to undertake this project if it weren't for the learning that I gained during my sabbatical year. Look for *Jacked: Panthera Atrox* to open September 29, 2019.

**April 2019.**

**I intend to make a presentation on my Migrations project during Multicultural Day, SP 2019.**

***I thank the administrators of Moorpark College and the VCCCD Board of Trustees for the opportunity to complete my sabbatical year 2017-2018!***

**Attachments:**

- 1. Transcripts of course work completed.**
- 2. Reviews of Migrations**
- 3. Wall Text from the IMAS museum in McAllen, Texas.**

# GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Name:** Minet, Cynthia A  
**Student ID:** [REDACTED]  
**SSN:** [REDACTED]  
**Birthdate:** [REDACTED]  
**Print Date:** 07-13-2018  
**Send To:** CYNTHIA MINET  
 [REDACTED]

### Beginning of Credit Record

#### Spring 2009

| <u>CSU GE</u>      | <u>IGETC</u> | <u>Course</u> | <u>Title</u>      | <u>Attempted</u> | <u>Earned</u> | <u>Grade</u> | <u>Points</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|                    |              | CAM 210       | CAM Basic Milling | 3.000            | 3.000         | B            | 9.000         |              |
| <b>Term Totals</b> |              |               |                   | <b>3.000</b>     | <b>3.000</b>  | <b>3.000</b> | <b>9.000</b>  | <b>3.000</b> |

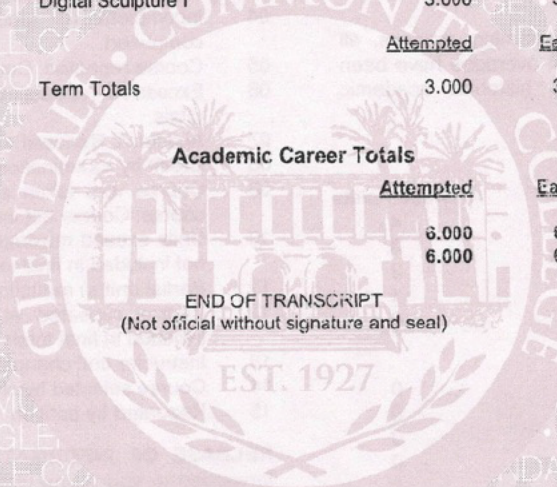
#### Spring 2018

| <u>CSU GE</u>      | <u>IGETC</u> | <u>Course</u> | <u>Title</u>        | <u>Attempted</u> | <u>Earned</u> | <u>Grade</u> | <u>Points</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
|                    |              | ART 245       | Digital Sculpture I | 3.000            | 3.000         | A            | 12.000        |              |
| <b>Term Totals</b> |              |               |                     | <b>3.000</b>     | <b>3.000</b>  | <b>3.000</b> | <b>12.000</b> | <b>4.000</b> |

### Academic Career Totals

|                              | <u>Attempted</u> | <u>Earned</u> | <u>GPA Units</u> | <u>Points</u> | <u>GPA</u>   |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>GCC Cum Degree Totals</b> | <b>6.000</b>     | <b>6.000</b>  | <b>6.000</b>     | <b>21.000</b> | <b>3.500</b> |
| <b>GCC Totals</b>            | <b>6.000</b>     | <b>6.000</b>  | <b>6.000</b>     | <b>21.000</b> | <b>3.500</b> |

END OF TRANSCRIPT  
 (Not official without signature and seal)



GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE • GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

AN OFFICIAL SIGNATURE IS WHITE WITH A BURGUNDY BACKGROUND

The name of the college printed in white across the face of the transcript. When

*[Handwritten Signature]*



Minet

Cynthia Anne [REDACTED]

05/01

Cynthia A. Minet  
[REDACTED]

February 15 2019

| COURSE  | Course Title  | CRD         | GRD | GRDPT |
|---------|---|-------------|-----|-------|
| ACN076  | SPRING 2009 ACAN (01/12/2009 to 04/18/2009)<br>INTRO TO I.D. MODELING<br>01/27/2009 to 03/12/2009 | 2.00        | B+  | 7.00  |
|         | Term GPA 3.500  | Credit 2.00 |     |       |
|         | Cum GPA 3.500   | Credit 2.00 |     |       |
| ACN431W | SPRING 2018 ACN (01/16/2018 to 04/21/2018)<br>DESIGN W/ TECHNOLOGY: BUILD                         |             |     |       |
|         | Term GPA 0.000  | Credit 0.00 |     |       |
|         | Cum GPA 3.500   | Credit 2.00 |     |       |

End of official record

Unofficial Transcript

## REVIEWS:

# ARTIST TAKES SERIOUS LOOK AT MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT IN NEW IMAS EXHIBIT

MFAOFFICIAL NEWS., ALSO PRINTED IN THE MONITOR

By Nancy Moyer, Art Critic for The Monitor  
MAY 14, 2018

Walking into the darkened gallery at the International Museum of Art & Science, or IMAS, there is a feeling of venturing into a mysterious cavern. Is it a magical or ominous place?

Large birds hover closely overhead, glowing with vividly colored lights pulsating from the very core of their being. Closer inspection reveals that something is happening here; each bird carries a strange cargo. The realistically scaled Roseate Spoonbills that inhabit this space are constructed out of found plastic materials California-based artist, Cynthia Minet, use for her exhibit, "Migrations."

Minet sees the Roseate Spoonbill as an analogy for human migrant experiences in this region; her sculptures tell an environmental story of the birds and the people who migrate from Latin America into the United States.

The sculptures are impressive. Using unorthodox materials, Minet has captured the anatomical structure of these birds with a fascinating creative integrity, suggesting at first glance that they must be some kind of weird taxidermy. Not so; she works with discarded plastic objects, reconfiguring them to accurately reflect the shapes of her subjects, and then relies on LED lighting to emit the vibrant colorations and dramatic effects. Attractive with their seductive beauty, the LED evokes unnatural radiations. The plastic is a petro-chemical product. The artist's choice of this material for her creatures carries a deadly message that under-lines the sabotage it continuously inflicts on the environment — the loss of habitats and species due to pollution and climate change.

Plastic strips reminiscent of beverage containers and shipping tapes wrap around the birds' bodies. Plastic tangled in their legs question their chance at survival. Minet has brilliantly synthesized her artistic explorations of alternative materials with her concerns for social migration and the environment.

As a means of connecting her sculptures more closely to their human counterparts, attached to each winged creation are objects previously transported by migrating people, then lost or abandoned.

"People are being impeded in their safe passage by the wall," Minet said. "What I've seen at the fence ... these objects represent that struggle for people trying to gain safe entry. They are materials that I got from here, from McAllen."

The Spoonbill migration stretches from South America to the Texas gulf coast and depends on a healthy environment for survival; in a sense, human migration parallels that journey into the United States.

The border fence sets up obstacles for both humans and fauna. Minet visited the fence to see what was dropped by crossing migrants, but found only a few things.

Needing more discarded possessions for her sculptures, Sierra Club activist Scott Nicol provided her with Homeland Security bags and several other migrant-abandoned things such as earbuds that hang from one of the sculptures.

Through these discarded items, Minet comments on losses and negative messages such as the empty plastic water bottles, which represent thirst and also endanger the environment.

The LED lights are beautiful, but it is hard not to sense that they may signal danger, something that could happen somewhere along the migration route. The light fills the bodies of these creatures,



rhythmically ex-pressing the movement of life — or is it a warning? This exhibition gives the viewer a lot to think about.

Just when we thought nature and the outdoors was a pleasant escape from current problems, we may have to think again.

*Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at [nmoyer@rgv.rr.com](mailto:nmoyer@rgv.rr.com).*

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- FROM THE MONITOR, MCALLEN, TEXAS. ALSO RE-PRINTED IN THE BROWNSVILLE HERALD AND ON APNEWS.COM

## MIGRATORY BIRDS, IMMIGRANTS' PLIGHT SUBJECT OF LA ARTIST'S EXHIBIT AT IMAS 'TWO TYPES OF MIGRATION'

- J. EDWARD MORENO | STAFF WRITER Apr 13, 2018

MCALLEN — A child's pink underwear, a single sandal and water bottles were among the discarded items a Los Angeles-based artist found near the Rio Grande, left behind by immigrants making their way to the U.S.

"It just really made me so sad to see things like little pink underpants and things that had been left by children as well as adults," Cynthia Minet said. "I couldn't take the clothing. It was too upsetting for me."

The items Minet was collecting were for an exhibit titled "Migrations," which opens Saturday at the International Museum of Art and Science in McAllen. She typically uses recycled plastic for her sculptures, but what makes this exhibit unique is that she's using items found locally, specifically from immigrants trying to reach the states.

Minet then sculpted those items into five suspended Roseate Spoonbill sculptures — complimented by one floor piece and several wall-mounted drawings.

The Roseate Spoonbills are a migratory bird that finds its way to the Rio Grande Valley in late spring and early summer. These birds relocate annually, seeking a steady supply of food and a safe place to raise their young. Throughout the years, however, there have been less of these birds as river levels have risen.

It's a familiar plight to that of immigrants. At least that's how Minet sees it.

"I tried to tie two types of migration together," Minet said. "I tried to look at avian migration — of birds and how they can manage or not manage with the border wall, and people and how they can manage or not manage with the border wall."

She thought the bird's pink feathers, spoon-shaped beak and webbed feet would be best represented through discarded plastics — a medium she's been using since 2009.

The artist sculpts animals with plastics to make a statement about environmental degradation and the effects it's taken on certain fauna's anatomy.

Regarding the materials used, Minet considered the experience an “eye-opening” one that allowed her to bind two issues she feels strongly about.

“It was very eye-opening for me to see the stuff by the river, and to see the height of the border fence and how that fence has encroached on people's property and across public parks, just without any regard for how delicate it seems to me as an outsider that the culture of the borderlands is,” she said.

She acquired the help of Scott Nicol, an activist with the Lower Rio Grande Valley Sierra Club, who sent Minet some of the items in her exhibit.

He often finds Homeland Security bags along the border, which hold apprehended immigrants' belongings. While those belongings are supposed to be returned once immigrants are released or deported, it's not uncommon for Nicol to find sensitive material, such as birth certificates still inside the bags.

“There's a lot of very personal items that I suspect people didn't just give up willingly,” he said. “There's often a lot of them out there, so I don't know how that happens.”

Minet's bird sculptures have items such as earbuds, water bottles, children's toys and even the Homeland Security bags suspended from their beaks, as though they are transporting them.

The LA-based artist hopes her sculptures — at the very least — provoke dialogue about those issues and how they intersect.

Though, Minet stresses that she doesn't mean to “pretend to be able to speak for what people's experiences here,” and she “doesn't have all the answers.” The one thing she is sure of is that she believes these issues should warrant empathy, she said.

“I'm not coming here as an outsider to say, ‘This is what should happen,’” she said. “But my feelings from my observation of it is that I think it's wrong, and people need to be allowed for a safe haven; they need to be allowed for the economy; they need to be allowed to communicate with their families.”

Minet's exhibit will open with a reception at IMAS at 3 p.m. Saturday, when she'll give a presentation on her work. It'll be on display at the museum from April 14 through Sept. 4.

[emoreno@themonitor.com](mailto:emoreno@themonitor.com)

## Wall Text from Migrations exhibit at the IMAS, McAllen, Texas

The brilliant sculptures of Los Angeles artist Cynthia Minet, carefully constructed of brightly colored plastics, LED lights and sound, combine whimsy, serious social and political commentary, and a deep commitment to the preservation of our natural environment.

IMAS is honored to host her site-specific installation, *Migrations*, the result of visits to the Rio Grande Valley and observation of the aquatic wading bird the Roseate Spoonbill.

Minet sees the Roseate Spoonbill as an effective artistic surrogate for human experiences in the region. Native to the Southeast coastal regions, its migration takes it all the way to South America. Due to its dependence on a specific balance of water levels and food for its survival and propagation, the Audubon Society considers this bird an indicator of the environmental health of the Gulf Coast. Minet's sculptures are based on close study of the bird's anatomical structure with a result that is highly realistic yet painfully fantastical.

Artifacts dropped along the border are imbedded into the sculptures of *Migrations*: clothing, ear buds, cigarette packaging, Homeland Security bags, mascara, a toothbrush and “Minions” sticker. Scott Nicol, artist, border activist, and faculty at South Texas Community College, added artifacts to those Minet collected. The use of found materials, whether migrant dropped or sourced from recycled household containers or toys, expresses the underlying meanings of the installation. Through these discarded objects, Minet explores both the risks migrants take to escape intolerable situations and the specter of plastic which slowly erodes in our landfills but never disappears. Petrochemical products are a significant component in the loss of habitats and species to climate change and pollution.

For this installation, Minet worked with LED systems designer Vaughn Hannon to develop motion-activated light and sound using bird sound clips from the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and her own recordings of water at the Los Angeles River. Minet stresses the collaborative nature of this installation, both through the help of her studio assistants, Rachel Arena and Isabella D’Agnenica, and that of Valley residents who willingly gave their time and access to observation sites of the Roseate Spoonbills. Minet was “amazed by people’s generosity and willingness to help!”

Given the worldwide migrant crisis and plans of the U.S. administration to build an even larger wall, *Migrations* is strikingly timely in its exploration of the complex social and political issues of borderlands, whether in the United States or worldwide. The spoonbills’ return from an almost extinct status in the late 1800’s is now threatened again by man-made obstacles that parallel the threats to our own social fabric. Cynthia Minet has created a conceptually and politically astute body of work that exudes a wry hope for our future: that we will commit to the care of our natural and human worlds.

The artist wishes to acknowledge the following people who were instrumental to this project: Vaughn Hannon, Jennifer Cahn, Scott Nicol, Rachel Arena, Isabella D’Agnenica, Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Jill D’Agnenica, Perry Freeze, Patty Alexander, Marilyn Lorenz, and Moorpark College.

Born in New Jersey and raised in Rome, her artworks have been exhibited both nationally and internationally, including a collateral project at the Venice Biennale (2009) and the Los Angeles International Airport (2013). Minet received her MFA in Sculpture from San Francisco State University and has taught Studio Art at Moorpark College since 2001.