

## Franklin Williams

Parker / Los Angeles

From Funk art to Nut art to Pattern and Decoration, Petaluma-based artist Franklin Williams has been associated with a wide range of postwar artistic movements that will likely be unfamiliar to contemporary art audiences outside of Northern California, where many of these provincial categories were born. While Williams was included in the eponymous "Funk" show at UC Berkeley Art Museum in 1967, his practice does not quite align with the irony, excess and abject humor of Funk, as his first Los Angeles solo exhibition shows us. Dating from 1963 to 1972, the mixed-media drawings, sculptures and paintings on view display a formal precision and attention to materials that reveal the artist's deep ties to craft and a more buoyant, almost camp, sensuality. The bold planes and lines of Williams's works, whether sculptural or wall-mounted, are often stitched together or formed with beads, sequins, yarn and other tactile embellishments that erupt from the surface. These are things that want to be touched.

The earliest sculptures in the exhibition display a more subdued palette, demonstrating the foundational role of quotidian materials and corporeal motifs in Williams's body of work. Two sculptures from 1964 stand out: *A Thing* is comprised of an iridescent tuber punctuated with red polyps and short, curly hair; the second, an untitled work, involves a cockish, braided appendage bursting out of a decorative box covered in a dirty nylon stocking and stitches — Lee Bontecou meets Joann's Fabrics.

Yet the artist's phallic forms are most resonant when rendered in ambiguous amalgamations. For instance, an untitled painting from 1967 features a grid of crochet thread atop an otherwise flattened scene of biomorphic shapes and frenzied marks, evoking both male and female reproductive organs and microscopic protozoa, all without figure-ground distinctions. While one could approach this orgiastic style as a kind of postmodern pastiche, Williams's nuanced politics can be found in a formal paradigm that persistently complicates binary approaches to difference.

by Olivian Cha

## Elaine Cameron-Weir

Hannah Hoffman / Los Angeles

Part mad scientist's laboratory, part medieval S&M dungeon, Elaine Cameron-Weir's otherworldly sculptures conjure the macabre with gaiety and wit. Costumes, props and background décor converge to form a mise-en-scène fit for Frankenstein and his freakiest cronies. Amid this phantasmagoric evocation of disparate worlds, one wonders: *Whose funhouse is this, anyway?* Cue the steampunks, furries and Renaissance fair reenactors.

Cameron-Weir presents a vision of the future punctuated by the paraphernalia of the past: scraps of leather curl around bits of wire, intricately bound to clunky pewter casts. The sculpture *dressing for altitude* (2017) is a chainmail-bedecked scarecrow form, its outstretched arms recalling at once the Crucifixion and an indecisive mannequin mid-shrug. Belly button and nipples protrude from the figure's cast breastplate, hinting at the shape of a body underneath the heavy protective shroud. Thick leather straps harnessed to this faceless body underscore a sense of menace.

This heavy robe and other accouterment of bygone eras are suspended from a system of chain pulleys anchored by white sandbags. Either the apocalypse is upon us or it's just another storm, wildfire or hurricane. Wires and cords float throughout the show, jaunty flourishes shaped by tension and gravity. Mounted to the wall, *aftermath, when the restraints bound them to their will* (2017) suggests a window — ruched silk curtain, dangling cord and frilly leather behind stainless-steel bars. The gathered ruffle and drooping pleats resemble organic overgrowth, a counter to the prison-cell geometry of the bars.

The artist delves into scent in *Who are what looks out from behind you are is the thing that names what transforms...* (2017), pumping musky traces of labdanum into the gallery using a laboratory heating mantle, the sticky resin rendered a subtly palpable perfume. In Weir's outlandish workshop, all manner of texture, silhouette and substance are subject to her delightfully inquisitive mode of scrutiny.

by Simone Krug

## Suárez Londoño and de Paoli

Lulu / Mexico City

José Antonio Suárez Londoño and Santiago de Paoli's two-person show at Lulu is an unlikely marriage between two *minor* Latin American artists, sanctified within this inconspicuous project space in Mexico City. Modest but labyrinthine postcard-sized etchings by the Columbian cult artist Suárez Londoño are contrasted by the Argentinian de Paoli's perplexing obsession with the derriere in oil paintings on felt and other unusual supports. At Lulu, *minor* isn't less than canonized but is characteristically generative rather than illustrative, according to curator and cofounder Chris Sharp.

The paintings by de Paoli (all new from 2017) are beasts that escape any readymade classification or description. Two paintings exemplify the absolute oddity of the artist's repetitive subjects: in *Mirá esta pintura* (Look at this Painting) two unidentified brown bodies, their impossibly round asses dominating the picture plane, seem to be in conversation. One figure grasps a tiny sub-composition between a spindly index finger and thumb. The painting-within-a-painting, *Luna sola* (Moon Alone), hangs in the gallery just to the right and bellow *Mirá esta pintura*, creating a surreal sensation of displacement. These are charming little monsters full of sex and angst.

"Mientras tanto" (meanwhile) reads one of Suárez's prints, *Untitled #224* (2005), with the image of a girl lifting her skirt to reveal bare nakedness and a burning chapel. The ambiguous phrase is repeated in several of the etchings, which create a seemingly pagan or primitive mythology between the human and natural world. The words first appear in *Untitled #193* (2000), which marks a separation of elements and the introduction of text in compositions that read like concrete poetry stanzas, as opposed to the earliest etching from 1992 — although the progression in time through more than twenty years also shows unwavering consistency. Still, nothing is easily extracted from the details of Suárez's tiny world.

Mystical weirdness echoes through both Lulu's programming and the origins of these two idiosyncratic South American artists.

by Devon Van Houten Maldonado



From top, clockwise:  
**Santiago de Paoli**  
*C.H. (2017)*  
Courtesy of the Artist  
and Lulu, Mexico City

**Elaine Cameron-Weir**  
*aftermath, when the restraints bound them to their will (2017)*  
Courtesy of the Artist  
and Hannah Hoffman,  
Los Angeles  
Photography  
by Veli-Matti Hoikk

**Franklin Williams**  
*Three Blue Fingers (1969)*  
Courtesy of Parker  
Gallery, Los Angeles  
© Franklin Williams