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All Systems Go at Mills

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‘In Plain Sight’ at Mills College focuses on the hidden systems that underlie and override the lives of our overly tech-reliant and even addicted citizenry.

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See Weston Teruya’s art.

PHOTO COURTESY MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

*In Plain Sight*, at Mills College Art Museum, focuses, as you would suspect from the title, on the hidden systems that underlie and override the lives of our overly tech-reliant and even addicted citizenry.

Guest-curated by the Berkeley Art Center’s Daniel Nevers, the show features multimedia and mixed-media works with a conceptual, cross-disciplinary bent by Los Angeles’ Kathryn Andrews, the San Francisco artist team of castaneda/reiman, Houston’s Dario Robleto, and SF’s Weston Teruya. Considering the amount of deciphering required by current politics and business, exemplified in Facebook’s hands-off approach to fake-news political messaging, and PG&E’s feckless fire-and-fury mismanagement of its infrastructure, the covert operations and overt corruption running the show in the background are long overdue for scrutiny by a “woke” populace.

Andrews’ *Black Bars: Wolverine Woolverton*, with its reference to redactions, Bill Barr’s or not, is a large plexiglas box or vitrine containing an assemblage of random pop-culture images about always-exciting violence. The action-movie and underground-cartoon imagery is obscured beneath two large black rectangles, screen-printed onto the Plexiglas, that have the commanding presence of monoliths, ancient steles, or Richard Serra’s steel plates. Other pieces are more puzzling, requiring insider knowledge of the LA art scene, and so less forceful in their critique. Castaneda/reiman’s investigation

of the cultural/institutional landscape goes behind the scenes here with large, carefully composed color photographs of MCAM’s painting racks, seen in elevation view, like a 1960s stripe painting and a shot of shelved figurines, with their outlines and catalogue numbers traced on the underlying ethafoam padding as Magrittean visual/verbal shadows or equivalents. Robleto explores the history of science with 3D-printed renditions of an 1870 waveform of bloodflow from stressed and unstressed hearts, displayed like holy relics, albeit in modern minimalist style; and a Wunderkammer treasure-trove vitrine full of shells, teeth, and spines. Weston Teruya crafts sculptures of humble domestic objects — locks, gates, rakes, and brooms — from “lowly” recycled materials and photographs, demonstrating again that aesthetic worth, like moral character, trumps luxury and pretentiousness. A catalog is available in print, or online at the museum website.

*In Plain Sight* runs through Dec. 8, Mills College Art Museum, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue.-Sun., open until 7:30 p.m. Wed., 510-430-2164, [MCAM.mills.edu](http://MCAM.mills.edu).