

# BRANDON LATTU

*EMPIRICAL, TEXTUAL, CONTEXTUAL*

OCTOBER 2, 2021–FEBRUARY 6, 2022

CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Set within the broad, mercurial image environment in which we create and consume, this timely and first survey exhibition of Brandon Lattu's 25-year practice is a sensory and cerebral journey. This is a rare opportunity to see Lattu's early work alongside recent and new projects, manifesting the ongoing through-lines of his creative practice as a pioneer of art in the digital idiom. Lattu has continuously pushed beyond the industrial expectations and limitations of the formats of contemporary art and this exhibition ranges from small, singular photographic prints, an interactive light installation, animated slideshows, through to computer-carved sculptures. The exhibition, curated by Charlotte Cotton, highlights the restlessly experimental photographic underpinning of Lattu's practice. Constellating works into thematic clusters and flows through the California Museum of Photography's galleries, this survey exhibition amplifies the conceptual freedom to push ideas of photography and animate the indexicality of the medium and speak to the patterns and paradoxes of our cultural conditions, regardless of material form.

## ABOUT BRANDON LATTU:

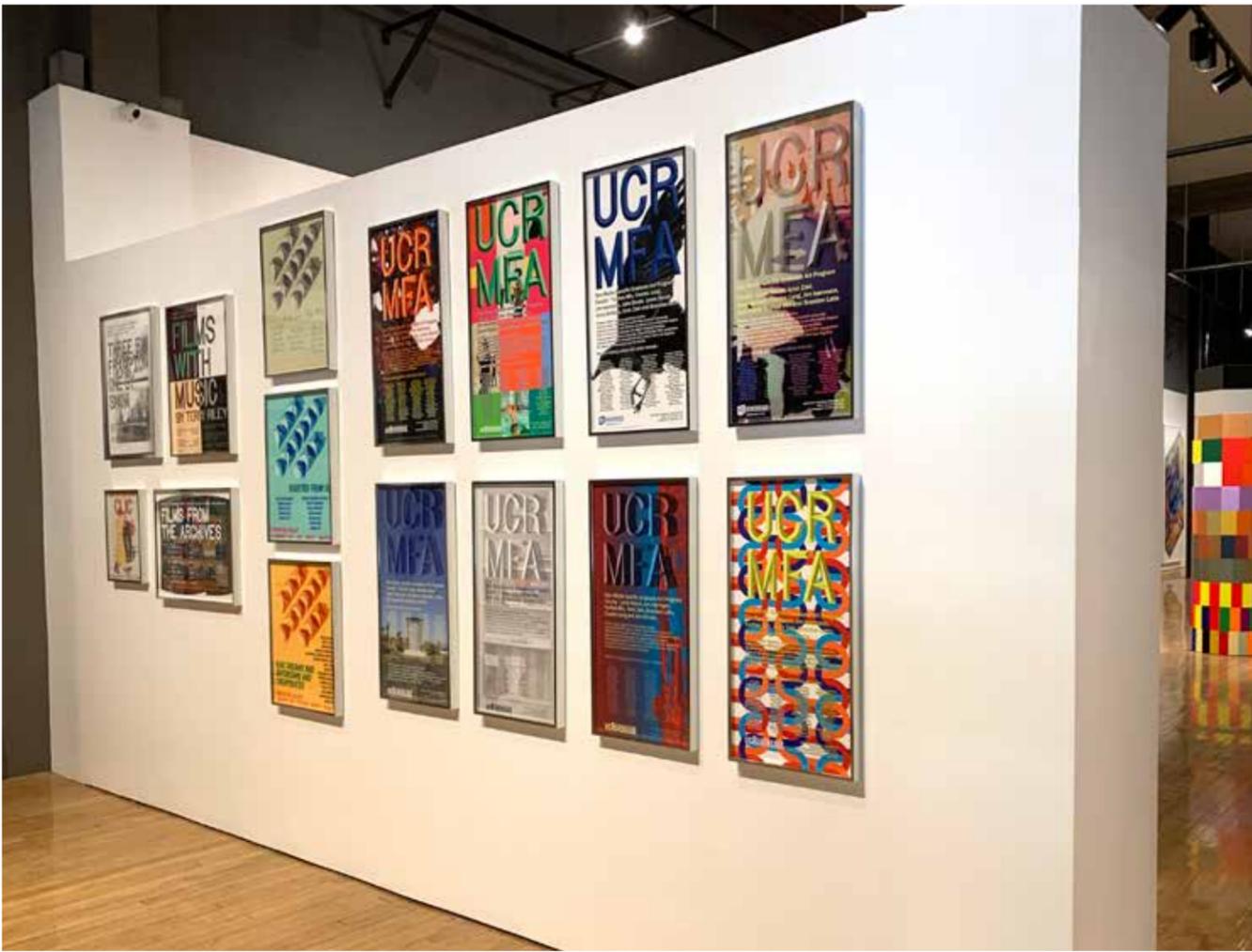
Brandon Lattu is an artist whose work utilizes photography, sculpture, and video to investigate the constantly changing state of representation in order to push beyond the conventional empiricism that pictures of the world have traditionally invoked. His work particularly addresses the social structures emphasized and enforced by models of perspective and abstraction as well as spatial hierarchies in architecture and commerce. Solo exhibitions include Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles (2019); Koenig and Clinton, New York (2013); Mak Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles (2010); and Kunstverein, Bielefeld, Germany (2007). His work has been included in group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA (2013); Powerstation of Art, Shanghai, China (2012); Fondation Jumex, Ecatapec, Mexico (2012); Museum Ostwall, Dortmund, Germany (2011); the Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam, NL (2009); Vox Centre de L'image Contemporaine, Montreal, Canada (2008); the Essl Collection, Vienna, Austria (2007); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2006); and the Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2000).



*Column, White, Natural Progression, 2016*

Latex paint, plywood

Using the natural number sequence for the number of sides per level, this work is topped by a triangular prism that is placed upon a square, four-sided prism, which is placed upon a pentagonal and then a hexagonal prism, and so forth until reaching the bottom prism that has fourteen faces.



## Assorted UCR posters, 2007–2021 Pigment prints

Brandon Lattu has taken on numerous poster designs for UCR's Art Department over the years using Prism Gothic, a typeface he designed in the early 2000s. This selection of posters was made for and in collaboration with UCR faculty and students. These posters have promoted film series, exhibitions as well as yearly designs for the Art Department graduate program, a series that displays works by professors Yunhee Min, Anna Betbeze, Amir Zaki, Lynne Marsh, and Jim Isermann.



*Girl with Image of  
Automated Teller  
Machine, 2016*  
Pigment print

A photograph of a 13-year-old girl standing before a picture of an ATM pinned to the studio wall.



*Boy with Image of  
Payphone, 2016*  
Pigment print

A photograph of a 9-year-old boy standing before a picture of a payphone pinned to the artist's studio wall.



*Potato*, 2019 [photographic component showing the continuation of the sculpture next door at the Culver Center of the Arts]

Pigment print



*Potato*, 2019 [sculptural component]

Acrylic and latex paint, resin, polystyrene, wood



*The Curse of Roko's Basilisk, 2018*

Gelatin silver print

This work shows a rhombicosidodecahedron, a geometric form comprised of 62 regular faces. Lattu has used this geometric solid as a kind of avatar for intellectual property. The form is non-obvious, something that had to be discovered but then exists inscribed in information. Lattu casts the form in a virtual hall of mirrors in reference to the multiple vectors of expression, reception and surveillance in the virtual world that parallels our physical one. The title refers to an either silly or chilling debate about artificial intelligence that began in an online community forum in 2010.



*Potatoes and Pebbles with Truffle Tumors  
(An Allegory), 2019*

Pigment prints

Over 2000 unique pebbles and potatoes are photographed and arranged, shown beset by tumors filled with truffles. The central composition matches the dimensions of Jackson Pollock's painting *Number One, 1950 (Lavender Mist)*, and calls forth the Modernist history of all-over composition in art, allegorically shown with parasitic tumors of manufactured luxury and wealth.



*Denim, Levi's 501©,  
Made in USA, 2002*  
Pigment print

The denim of a pair of Levi's 501© was scanned at actual size and printed to make the most accurate rendition of this iconic American material. Since this work was made, the production of Levi's 501© jeans has moved outside of the USA.

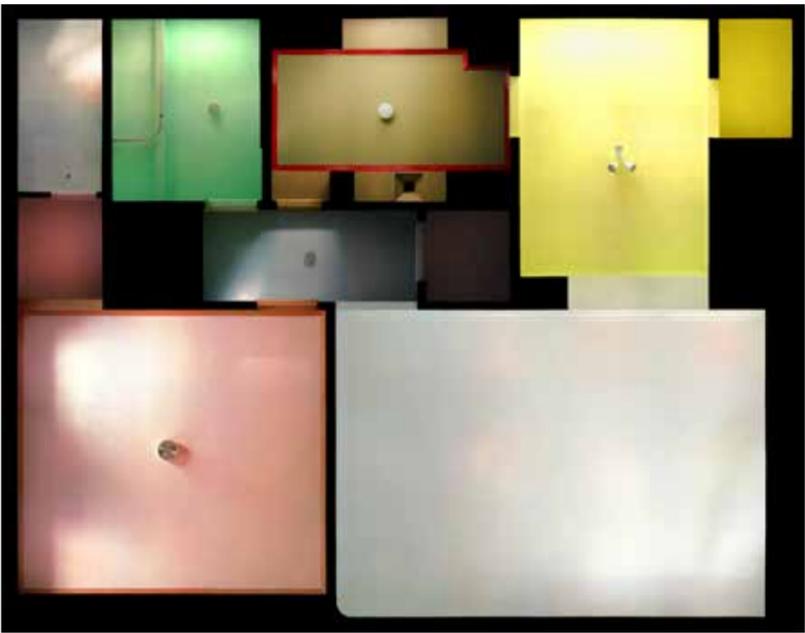


*Sand, Point Dume,  
Malibu, California,  
2001*  
Pigment print

Sand was collected from the famous beach in Malibu and scanned at actual size in the highest resolution available. The one-to-one image of the sand was printed to make the most faithful rendition possible, causing it to simultaneously register as a photograph; a readymade; and a kind of monochrome painting, tying these three primary elements of modernism together.



*THIGHS*, 2019  
Acrylic, polystyrene,  
wood



*Flat*, 1997–1999  
Pigment print

*Flat* is an early work by Lattu that conflates many of the through-lines of his practice: from its ostensible subjects of Modernism and architecture to the elaborate and laborious manifestations of photographic perspective and indexes of domestic experience. Lattu painted the rooms in an apartment where he was living and working in 1997 and photographed the ceilings of all the rooms and the tops of the doorways between them. These photographs were scanned at high resolution to depict any existing detail of the ceiling, including paint textures, insects, and dents. All 44 scans were then montaged together seamlessly to produce an image of the complete ceiling.



*Column, Stella's Dilemma, Colors 1958–66,  
Even Progression, 2016*

Oil, alkyd, enamel, and acrylic paint, plywood,  
polyvinyl chloride, silicone

*Stella's Dilemma* has an even-numbered progression of sides (from 4, 6, 8, and up to 26), with each prism painted with the colors of Frank Stella paintings, in descending order from 1958-1965. For Lattu, these years represent Stella's particular completion of the project of modern painting. The selections of colors become more and more complicated in their non-representational nature, ultimately signaling a different kind of representation through their avoidance of conventional depiction, and the first steps towards painting after modernism.



*Rampart*, 2010

Pigment print, lcd panel

*Rampart* shows a pair of images: on the left a photograph made in 2001 and on the right a ten-minute looped video from 2010. The subject of the work is the infamous Rampart Police Station in Los Angeles, which was closed in 2008 after a series of public scandals that made it a symbol of municipal failure and endemic police misconduct. *Rampart* does what the de-commissioning of the station by the LAPD made more difficult: it memorializes the site in a pictorial space by combining two divergent temporal registers: a fraction of a second from 2001 (when the Rampart scandal was being discussed in the press), placed alongside an extended view in video from 2010, after historical amnesia has begun to take hold, making the absent image from the period of corruption by law enforcement a subject as a specter.

This is one of a series of works Lattu has made using the model of a stereo pair, showing the same subject twice, but instead of using the slightly different vantage points of two eyes to activate the quasi-physiological illusion of depth, these works introduce another kind of difference.



*Archimedean Solid*, 2019 [sculptural component]  
Acrylic paint, polyvinylchloride



*Archimedean Solid*, 2019  
[photographic component showing the  
continuation of the sculpture next door at  
3674 University Avenue]  
Pigment print



*Office Gray Case*, 2007

C-type print

For the *Library* series, Lattu scanned the covers and spines of books as piled and arranged on home, work, and studio shelves and storage boxes, reconstituting these found arrangements into photographic works. *Office Gray Case* was the subject of a book that Lattu published in 2007 showing each volume individually.



## *Building Obscured by Signs*, 1999

Pigment print

This is a conventional 35mm analog photograph made without alteration of the scene as it was found in the Koreatown section of Los Angeles, close to where Lattu was living at the time. While it has been rare for Lattu to make direct, unmanipulated photographs as part of his authored works, such a picture speaks to his fascination with the nature of architecture, commerce and the idea of Los Angeles. In fact, Lattu shot a roll of photographic film most days from 1991 to 2003 and has since captured observations digitally.



*POSITIVE GOOD STUFF,*  
1999  
Pigment print



*Los Angeles County  
Museum of Art,  
Ahmanson Building,  
(Section View), 2019*  
Pigment print on  
polyester

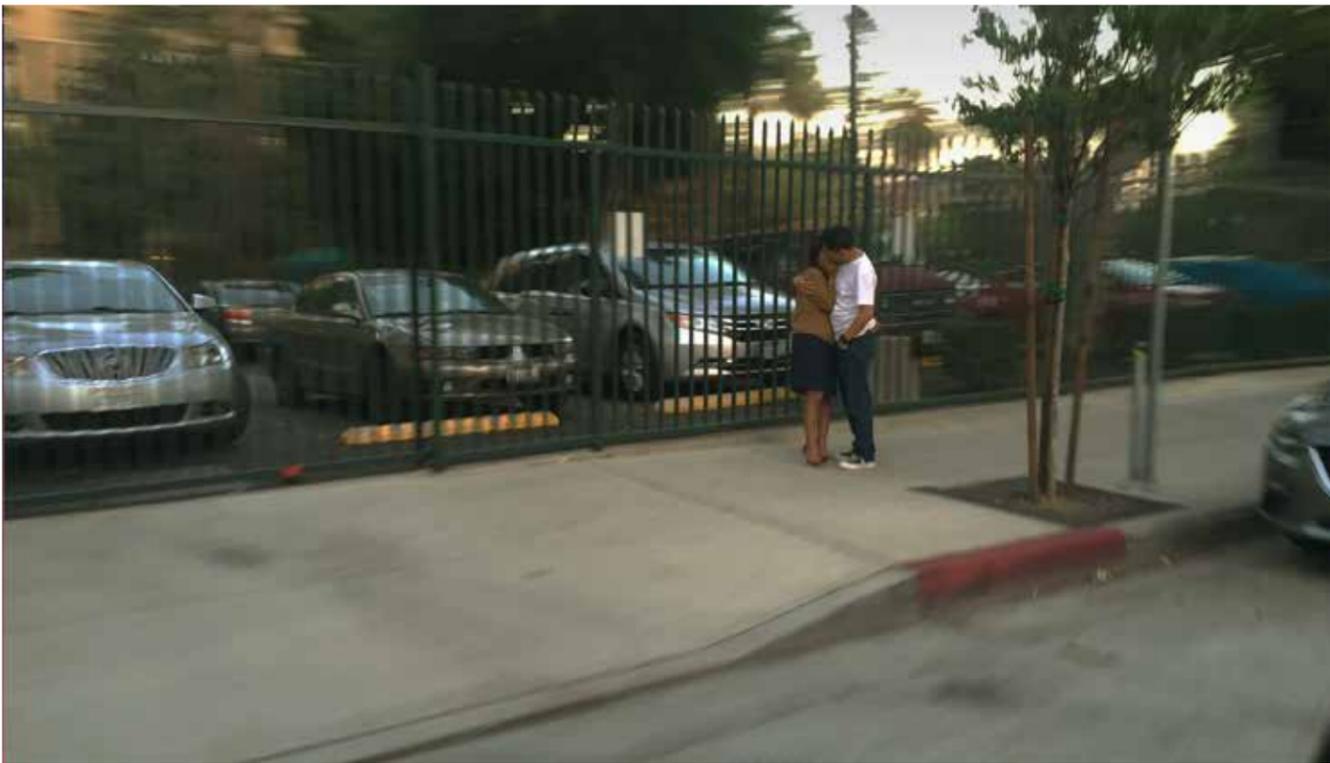
A montage view of a corner of an encyclopedic museum showing exhibition galleries in relation to non-public spaces used as staff offices, a loading dock and other rooms related to exhibition of artworks and other cultural artifacts.



## *Miracle Mile, 2000*

Pigment prints

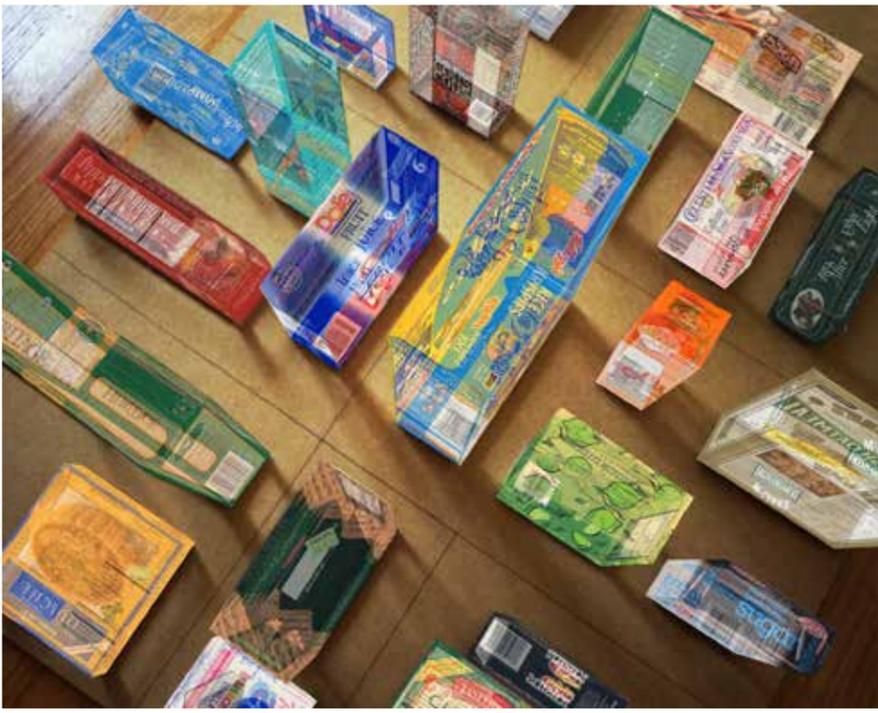
*Miracle Mile* is a sequence of images depicting illuminated signs perpendicular to the flow of traffic on Wilshire Boulevard between Fairfax and La Brea avenues in Los Angeles. An early and inquisitive use of digital imaging and composition, each section view stacks the internally-lit signs with adherence to their actual position and relative scale. In cases where signs read backwards, they are facing the opposite direction from the vantage point of the image. The signs are conflated into a pure black—digital—field, with no other formal details obfuscating the patterns and duplications of the half mile of promotional signs.



*Full to Bursting, 2021*

Image sequence, projector

This work shows every public kiss Lattu has managed to record since 2007. Capturing intimacy manifested in the public sphere, *Full to Bursting* consists of close to ninety images that range from tender to theatrical but rarely comfortably resemble the ways that public displays of affection have been idealized by commercial photography.



*Selected Products,*  
2001  
Pigment print



*Rejected Products,*  
2002  
Pigment print

*Rejected Products* simulates the process and layout of the work of the previous year, *Selected Products*. Equivalent products are chosen and arranged and strike up a dynamic of comparison and contrast between the two artworks. In most cases, the alternate products in *Rejected Products* are competing or generic versions of the same food product as shown in *Selected Products*. In a few cases they are alternative flavors.



*Photoshop and Photoshop, 2020*

Pigment print

Continuing Lattu's blurring of the boundaries between human and algorithmic perception, *Photoshop and Photoshop*, focuses on two early versions of Photoshop packaging, scanning each facet and reconstructing with partial transparency. The inherent cultural and physical anomaly of a branded package for a software product that has since transitioned to an entirely immaterial product while also becoming the default digital tool for image-making is literally given form in this work.



*Necker Products, Rice Krispies, Twelve Year  
Difference, 2016*

Laminated pigment prints

This diptych work invites us to compare and contrast the myriad shifts in the packaging design, information and visual communication between two Rice Krispies boxes manufactured twelve years apart. Lattu chose to focus upon a basic food product where the nuances of packaging design determine recognition and brand loyalty and are brought to the fore.



*Column, RGB Mirror, Triangular Progression, 2016*

Red, green and blue acrylic mirror, plywood, silicone

The RGB mirror column is comprised of a stack of twelve regular prisms with numbers of sides that follow the triangular progression: 3, 6, 10, 15, 21, 28, 36, 45, 55, 66, 78, and 91. This sculpture was conceived as an opportunity to engage in RGB additive color mixing with the quasi-zoetrope-like experience of the red, green and blue mirrored faces of the sculpture.

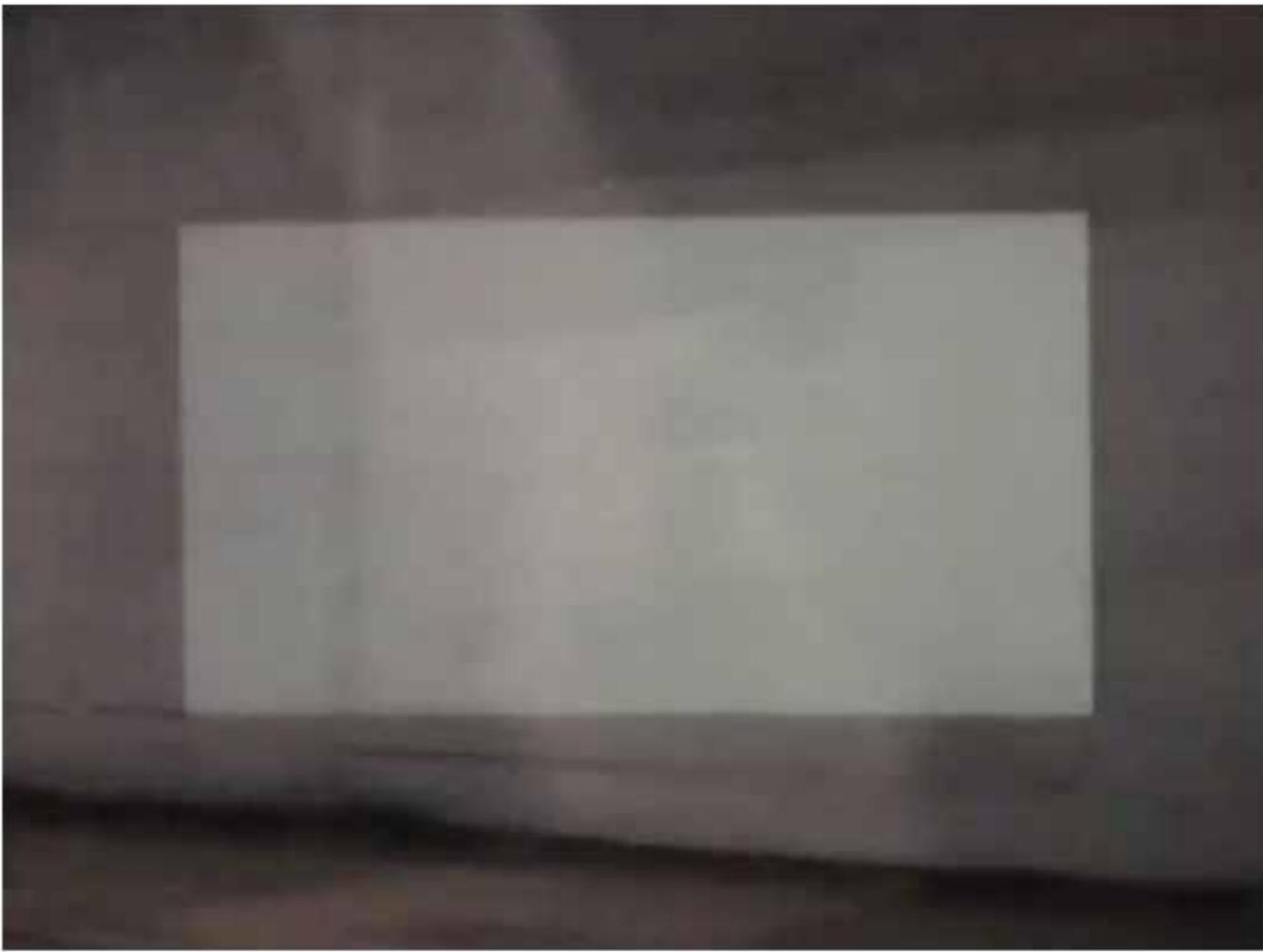


*Not Human*, 2013

Projected image sequence

Duration: 53 minutes

The *Not Human* slideshow centers on the computational failure of early biometric algorithms to distinguish between an inanimate representation of a face and an actual human being. Using Lattu's photographic archive of 120,000 images digitally captured between 2003 and 2013, algorithmic filters consistently fail to recognize human subjects and, instead, select and crop pictures of faces used in advertising that are placed in public by the commercial desires of industry. The consistent digital errors are both galling and entertaining, especially in light of the inherent biases as well as failures of our present-day biometric environment.



*Film Without End*, 1999–

Projected single channel video

Duration: 22 hours

*Film Without End* is an ongoing video project that depicts the scene passing by the right side of a car while driving through Los Angeles at night. The passenger seat is occupied by a video camera with a slide projector next to it that projects a white rectangle the shape of a movie screen onto the passing scene.



*Water Under the Bridge, 1997*

Two-channel video, silent, endless loop

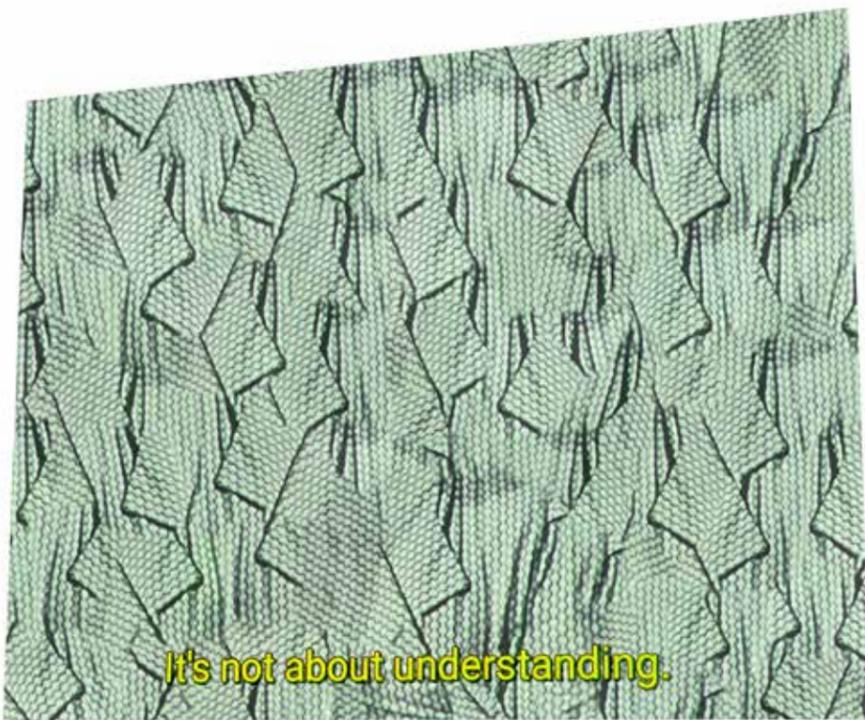
While driving across California in his final year of college, Lattu located a bridge crossing the Merced River in Yosemite Valley. He filmed the flow of the river from both directions from the bridge, edited out the surface of the bridge and stacked the two moving image frames, creating a visual analog to the verbal expression about time passing. The river's water progresses up the wall, through the rails, and continues downstream. The end of the loop fades back to the beginning, becoming invisible in the continuous rush of water.



*What are things  
coming to?* 2020–21  
Pigment print on  
polyester



*You didn't want to  
see me anymore.*  
2020–21  
Pigment print on  
polyester



*It's not about  
understanding.*  
2020–21  
Pigment print on  
polyester



*One should always  
finish what one starts.*  
2020–21  
Pigment print on  
polyester



*This is a place to die in.*

2020–21

Pigment print on  
polyester



*You think that's*

*normal?* 2020–21

Pigment print on  
polyester

*Projection Translations, 2020–21*

Pigment print on polyester

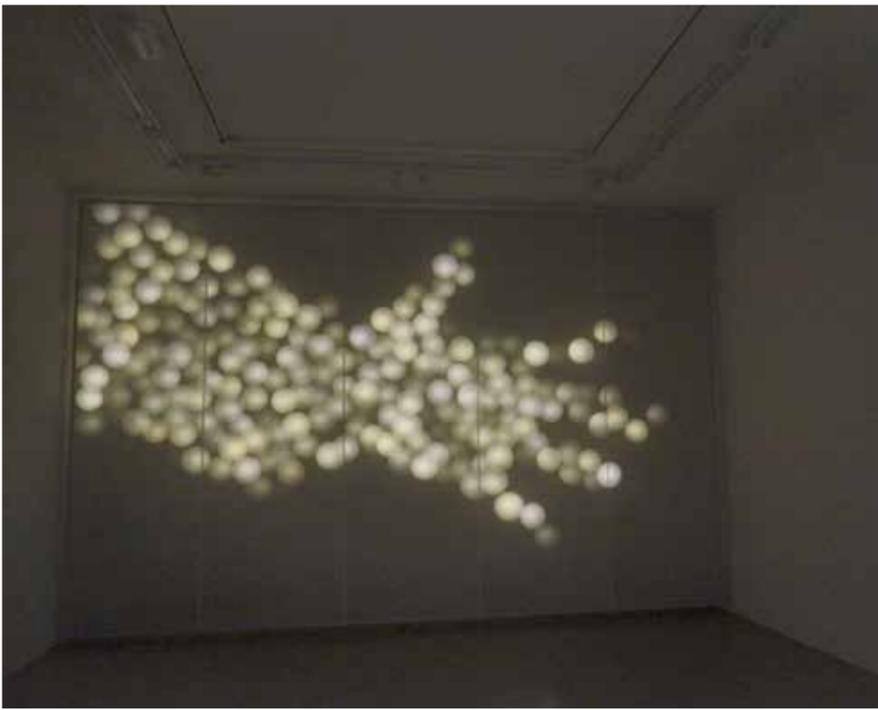
During the current pandemic, Lattu and his family set up a film projection screen in their living room for regular film nights. Often viewing films with English language subtitles, Lattu photographed moments that had special resonance for him—when short phrases from mainly historic 20th century films seemed as if imprinted with present-day cultural issues. Each work in this series is shaped by the distorted outline of the film's aspect ratio, dependent on where Lattu was seated in relation to the projection screen. Taking a fabric detail of clothing worn by an actor within the scene (typically the speaker) and applying rudimentary algorithmics to spread the pattern across the image, both visual and textual information becomes divorced from its original context and strikingly reconfigured.



*Column, Hardwood Production, Eastern United States, 1899, Odd Progression, 2016*

Oak, poplar, maple, cottonwood, basswood, red gum, ash, birch, hickory, walnut, plywood, silicone

This column is comprised of the most industrially prized hardwood species harvested in the Eastern United States in 1899. The examples used are shown from top to bottom to correlate to the amounts of hardwood timber produced in that year. Visibly missing are levels for elm and chestnut—species of wood that are no longer available due to eradication in the 20th century by diseases brought in by international trade. Each level in the wood column has an odd number of sides: 3, 5, 7, 9 and so forth to 25 sides on the walnut prism at the bottom.



*Reciprocity of Light,*  
2007–10/2021

Tracing paper, led  
lights, light  
sensor, incandes-  
cent light bulb

*Reciprocity of Light* is an artwork exploring photographic representation, architecture, and bodily interactivity. First developed by Lattu in 2007, the installation is activated by the movement of our bodies through the space, turning a viewer's shadow cast from a point light source onto an array of light sensitive cells such that the shadow is produced in a display of light, a reversal of our normal phenomenological expectation of a shadow as a denial of light. The simultaneous action of the individual cells demonstrates the indexical nature of photography by abstracting the form and motion of the body in real time. As the viewer moves, their image appears to become more resolved due to the increased activation of lights on the surface of the room—a physical and perceptual process that emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between the central light and the light sensitive surface. The presence of other people in the room clarifies this effect, allowing viewers to observe the continuity between the projected images and the illuminated shadows without the self-awareness caused by their own activity.



*Beacon*, 1996

Gelatin-silver print

A black and white photograph of the artist using an antiquated lantern to signal to the cityscape of late twentieth-century Los Angeles.