

Slipping between ideations of the real and fictive, *Thru the Roof* conjures a practice of movement. It presents scenes of imagination—sensational maps of possibilities that work to address matters of social contingency, home, and ways of and for living. Time and space are thus central pivots through which we come to access these material encounters. They lie at the crux of escape.

Curator Dan Paz describes the exhibition as “a visual meditation on exit strategies: leaving, staying, and the affective places between and beyond.” As such, the gallery space proposes modes of thinking through and beyond the present inhabitance. What lies in the present? Displacement, collective undoings, conceits of empire. In Dee Dee Collective’s production manifesto, the present announces itself as a cave of fire. How then, might we re-envision a return or re-making of a place of communal gathering? A space wherein the self finds place and forms a belonging? Herein lies the affective power of *Thru the Roof*, wherein each art form calls upon the viewer to witness by way of question, asking of her to become an imaginative collaborator, open to manifold webs of ideation and critique.

Regina Mamou’s *Kimilsungia* present the nature of a kind of “living” through movement (or rather “re-living” through imposition). Sitting over two single standing shelves of wood-painted white, the violet-pink orchids expose the nature of flourishing and re-production. The *Kimilsungia* is a hybrid orchid of Indonesian trace that emerges through cloning. Of symbolic interest is its relation to the *Kinjongilia* flower, which was named after North Korea’s commander Kim Il-sung’s son, Kim Jong-il. The bronze plaque attached to Mamou’s orchids signal toward a purposeful “framing” of the flowers, referencing the *Kimilsungia* as the “botanical symbol of the [Korean] nation.” It also renders a speculative mediation to the visual consumption of this living transplant. It supposes a “taking from” (its Korean roots) in order to reference arrival, and present visual-informational consumption. Here enters a critique of Empire’s obsessive “knowledge acquisition” from places far and away. Colonial and neo-colonial practices have ensured a continual re-framing of native objects and practices through acts of explicit and implicit appropriation. Whole genus systems are “discovered” in non-imperial nations, and “brought back” to Empire under its distinctive guise of “protection” and “science development.” Thus, Mamou’s incorporation ingeniously plays with the viewer’s perceptual field, creating a space of inquiry and displaced desire. The orchid is a national symbol with capabilities in movement—its presence doubled across the world. Yet looming over view are the present and historical diplomatic relations between the US and North Korea.

A collaboration in performance here serves to amplify or viscerally connect with these competing forces. Korean artist Bo Choi performs the *Kinjongilia* song in the background. The spectator listens through the ringing boom box, projected through an amp—similar to the experience of public service announcements, which are a daily practice in the North Korean state. Bo’s performance in national ware and tongue gestures toward cultural articulations outside of their geopolitical bounds. It calls on questions of meaning and re-production. The performance of self and culture as deliberate articulations, and at the same time, privileged ones.

If, indeed the teleological framings of Empire enter the social psyche in damaging ways, by modeling capitalism’s hold on human production and re-production, its dominance and oppression, Gonzalo Reyes Rodriguez’s sign, *Progreso* (2017), instantiates a space of question, of ideological confrontation. Standing alone, in upper-case letters, accessible as an English cognate to the Spanish word, *PROGRESO* conjures a visual wonder-articulation. It says, but what lies beyond the word? What is the psychological imprint and sociocultural and political gesture of this Middle English vocable of Latin root?

Perhaps, the work of undoing.

Draped over the gallery floor lies David Cordero’s *Type* (2017), calling the viewer to oscillate between the sign of “Progress” lit above. This rendering in opposition serves to destabilize the viewer, calling upon a rupture to dualistic frameworks inscribed in Western logic—wherein space and time are absorbed in hierarchical difference. Think progress as attached to a movement “forward,” and that which is above as being “superior” to what lies below. *Type* cuts through this colonial framing, making the ground the site of graspable possibilities, therein playing with naturalized ways of seeing. Inscripting the Roman alphabet in uppercase gothic font, Cordero plays with the possibilities of thought and language vis-à-vis the ubiquitous 26-letter code—chiseled in red, making four vertical and seven horizontal lines. The black sheeted canvas, wherein the letters stage their housing, marks a fundamental spatial quality of possibility. It gestures toward the infinite, an all-goes re-purposing of letter signs, so as to indeed re-imagine “new vocabularies:” i.e. new thought paradigms and thus possibilities for being in, with, and through, language. To re-imagine the connective tissue of letters anew, becomes a way to re-fashion life, or rather a way to re-conjure this matter of living.

The titled *A House is a House is a House* (2016) from Kirsten Leenaars, presents an architectural mapping of “homes for the working class”—a series of drawings that emerge through the artist’s collaboration with students in the project “(Re)Housing the American Dream: A Message from the Future.” Together they engage in performative quests to re-imagine belonging in a nation of multitudinous beings. The desire to hold the personal, the person within the national collective is fundamental to this project. As such, these drawings propose a pragmatic rendering to the possibility of a living within the spheres of these architectural dwellings. These are homes designed for a making possible the quotidian tasks of breathing, eating, sleeping, loving—a being through sociality, a being together. If the necessity entails a living, then these drawings work to engage with the roofed quality of what constitutes a “home,”—a desire for the thriving therein.

Portland-based Lu Yim, Maggie Heath, and Allie Hankins, are the artists behind the DeeDee Collaborative. Through performance-based acts and design projects, these artists mirror the grotesque liveliness of cities working to “re-shape” their base and “beautify” (read rebuild and destroy) spheres of living culture. Working through frames of diversion and critique, DeeDee Collaborative’s fictional pop-up shop, *Total Sell Out!* utilizes the very form of oppressive dominance and eschewal crawling through “hip” cites like Portland, in the form of gentrification. In another production, the DeeDee Collective works on body-ware. The geometric fashion designs, worn by Lu Yim, in bold and vivid colors, illustrate the ‘business’ in commodification of urban city spaces. The bright colors flash through the viewer’s eyes, evincing a lack of question for past inhabitance. The scene is bright and pretty now, and that is all that matters.

Circling through this potent critique, *Thru the Roof* invokes conditions of precarity. The exhibition calls for its viewers to attend to the current political moment, and navigate questions on what instantiates human movement. It calls one to consider what determines possibilities for departure. Who stays? Who leaves? How to make it “thru”? Access and possibility emerge as fundamental sites of inquiry here. On the horizon, the imagined “progreso” figuring like a promise, or a wound. We greet color and form, breathe with the trans-plants, imagine through signs, but what circles inside? An open room inviting unbounded navigation, fluid like blood, spilling.