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**For Immediate Release.**

**Exhibition:** *Then They Form Us*: Xavier Cha, Constant Dullaart, Cécile B. Evans, Devin Kenny, Hayal Pozanti, and Julien Previoux

**Opening reception:** Saturday, August 15, 6 - 8 pm  
**Exhibitions on view:** August 9 – October 25, 2015

**ADMISSION IS FREE**

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) presents six internationally-recognized artists whose works explore an increasingly transformative online culture, specifically in regard to notions of identity and the human body as the proliferation of personal information sharing affects our infinite realities.



**Left to right:** Cécile B. Evans, *Hyperlinks or it didn't happen*, 2014, HD video, 22 minutes, Courtesy the Artist and Seventeen Gallery, London; Hayal Pozanti, *Data Double*, 2014, Acrylic on wood panel, 40 x 40 inches, Courtesy the Artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery

***Then They Form Us***

This fall, Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) presents *Then They Form Us*, a new group exhibition that explores the precarious status of the “self” during its pixelated or roboticized evolution—as computers increasingly co-opt the human body during an age of ultra-connectivity. The six artists in the exhibition create works that question the ways in which identities are altered within this digital realm. Participating artists include **Xavier Cha** (b. 1980, Los Angeles, CA); **Constant Dullaart** (b. 1979, Leiderdorp, NL); **Cecile B. Evans** (b. 1983, Cleveland, OH); **Devin Kenny** (b. 1987, Chicago, IL); **Hayal Pozanti** (b. 1983, Istanbul, TR); and **Julien Previoux** (1974, Grenoble, FR). This exhibition is organized by Brooke Kellaway, MCASB Associate Curator.

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*Then They Form Us* refers to an adage from philosopher Marshall McLuhan's influential book, *Understanding Media* (1964), in which he writes on various technologies as extensions of ourselves that influence our position in and experience of the world.<sup>1</sup> His prescient thinking resonates at a time when the mutation of computers into humans and vice versa is being radically innovated by the intelligence of machines and their users. In recognizing the tension between both the allure and threat of new technologies—from social media to affective computing—the artists in this exhibition address the morphing body by way of the body, using performance, video, painting, and sculpture to investigate its physical and cognitive adaptations. The work on view will navigate the territory of online culture, where personal data, expressions, behavior, and emotions can be stored and processed in recondite or veiled operations that often impede authority over our own information.

“Perceptions of physicality, autonomy, and community are terrifically destabilized and challenged in this exhibition,” says Brooke Kellaway, MCASB Associate Curator. “These artists address, in acutely clever ways, complex-questions-about the transmutations happening to ourselves as we're increasingly interconnected with today's computer technologies.”

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**About Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara:**

Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is a non-profit, non-collecting museum dedicated to the exhibition, education, and cultivation of the arts of our time. Formerly Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum (CAF), MCASB is the premier venue for contemporary art between Los Angeles and San Francisco. MCASB is located at the Paseo Nuevo Shopping Center Upper Arts Terrace in downtown Santa Barbara, CA. Visit our second location, MCASB Satellite @ Hotel Indigo Santa Barbara at 121 State Street.

**Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, 653 Paseo Nuevo, Santa Barbara, CA 93101**

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Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) exhibition and education programs are generously supported by the National Endowment for the Arts; Nordstrom; Towbes Foundation; Dedalus Foundation; Ann Jackson Family Foundation; Community Events & Festivals Grant Program using funds provided by the City of Santa Barbara in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission; Mosher Foundation in honor of Barry Berkus, recommended by Dr. Bruce McFadden; Montecito Bank & Trust; High Tide Foundation; and contributions from our Board of Trustees and many generous individuals. MCASB Curator's Council is gratefully acknowledged for their support. Additional significant support is provided by The James Irvine Foundation; Getty Foundation; Hutton Parker Foundation; Williams-Corbett Foundation; Hutton Parker Foundation/Cox Communications Marketing Grant, and Santa Barbara Foundation Express Grant.

**Special thanks to:** Paseo Nuevo Shopping Center; *Santa Barbara Independent*; Artiste Winery; Sunstone Winery; Telegraph Brewery; and Wayne McCall & Associates.

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<sup>1</sup>The author writes, “we shape our tools, and thereafter, our tools shape us.” In Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press), 1994



Left to right: Yara El-Sherbini, *The Current Resistance*, 2014, Mixed media participatory sculpture (Buzzwire), Dimensions: "Current:" 75 x 35 x 55 cm, "Resistance:" 29.5 x 13.75 x 21.65 in. Courtesy Kashya Hildebrand, London. Photo: Susanne Hakuba; Yara El-Sherbini, *The Current Situation (Detail)*, 2014, Mixed media participatory sculpture (Buzzwire), 25 3/5 x 11 1/2 ft, Commissioned by the NAE, Courtesy the Artist and La Caja Blanca

### **Bloom Projects: Yara El-Sherbini, *Border Control***

Yara El-Sherbini (b. 1978, London, UK; lives and works in Santa Barbara, CA) uses humor and play to address structures of power that inform our everyday existence. From building a mini-golf course hole that represents contested territories under occupation to publicly broadcasting a series of questions on a PA system that are meant to reveal our intrinsic tendencies for cultural stereotyping, her accessible works actively engage viewers with complex social and political issues. El-Sherbini relies on this participant interaction and uses these recognizable formats, which also include bar quizzes or word searches, to explore the invisible systems and processes of knowledge production that influence culture.

For her **Bloom Projects** exhibition at MCASB, the artist will present a new interactive sculpture titled *Border Control*. Using a similar format as some of her past work, El-Sherbini will address current sociopolitical issues using popular games by constructing the U.S.-Mexico border out of Buzzwire, a steady-hand game. Participants will be able to activate both the piece and its underlying concept by tracing the wire structure, exacting their own control over the border.

Yara El-Sherbini received her MA from the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. Her work has been shown at the New Art Exchange (Nottingham), Victoria & Albert (London), Arnolfini (Bristol), National Portrait Gallery (London), IKON gallery (Birmingham), Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (Barcelona), Art Dubai (Dubai), Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva), Palazzo Papesse (Siena), and this year she will be presenting a new commission at the 56th Venice Biennale. Artist residencies include the Hayward Gallery as part of Wide Open School, in 2012, and at ZKM Center for Art and Media, Germany as part of The Global Contemporary in 2011. Yara El-Sherbini is represented by La Caja Blanca Gallery, Spain and is an Artsadmin Associate Artist.

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