

For Modern Resting

**October 16 — December 11 2020
Irvine Fine Arts Center**

**Erik Benjamins
Shannon Finnegan
Lauren Godfrey
Norma**

For Resting!

Inspired by the joy, sensibility, and humanism of mid-century modern designer Alexander Girard, this exhibition carries forward the idea that rest is an inherently vital act. Artist Erik Benjamins, in collaboration with Shannon Finnegan, Lauren Godfrey, and Norma, creates an inviting and thoughtful environment that welcomes viewers to contemplate how sensory engagement and slowness manifest in daily life.

For Modern Resting presents newly created artworks that converse with the forms of design, the rhythms of domestic space, and the performative potential of writing. Seat cushions feature embroidered text that beckon one to sit; a generously-sized shoe rack invites visitors to remove their shoes; a dual time zone wall clock alludes to the limits and possibilities of trans-atlantic collaboration under quarantine; wall text rendered in airbrushed acrylic presents transcriptions of collected representations of the sun. These works orbit the show's centerpiece, a modular configuration of sculptural doormats made of hand-pressed tiles that mimic the affect of reflexology walking paths.

The exhibition's namesake references the design exhibition *For Modern Living*, curated by Girard at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1949. This immersive show featured a global cohort of designers that embraced modern materials and technologies to reimagine objects for the home. *For Modern Resting* finds inspiration from this historic exhibition as an extension of a uniquely Girardian spirit, which emphasizes a distinct kind of moving and making under the influence of optimism, curiosity, and empathy.



FLOOR,
CENTER*Reflexology Doormats*, 2020
Erik Benjamins

30 × 18 × 2.5 in. each

Ceramic tiles, patinated steel, wood, thinset mortar, grout, rubber.



These doormat sculptures are made of hand-pressed tiles and mimic the affect of reflexology walking paths. Common, but not exclusive to cities throughout Asia, these walking paths are often found in public park space where exercisers are encouraged to remove their shoes and take ambulatory circuits on the areas where the ground is made of rounded stones half-set into concrete. Utilizing the tenets of reflexology, these paths encourage physical and mental wellness as intensely activated by the many pressure points found on the base of the feet. The placement and sizing of the stone forms on these tiles are rated at the level of Beginner.

Each doormat includes a short story, which walks around its exterior. When writing these, Erik imagined them as “islands of rest,” or anecdotal visualizations of a slow calmness. Installed as a group, the lines of each tray’s text are sometimes obscured and sometimes connect with adjacent trays to create new, poetic text-based meditations.

You are encouraged to walk on the doormats, but please do so slowly and carefully.

Individual doormat titles:

tea of linden flowers lavender peppermint valerian root

the lithuanian chocolatier will be conducting a remote tasting at noon pacific

standard time as he after dinner walks among baltic ruins

oversized armchairs in stretched bamboo for the jasmine sippers on a listening

break from the many boomboxed playlists

a queue of ceramics waiting for their postglaze footbath

a melonsized boulder of a doorstep is wearing a toque of lightly packed powder

from last nights first generous snowfall

bowl of nectarines from the farmer in fresno when cut into wedges glisten like wet gemstones

javanese landscape painted in colors that soothe like a burnt milk paleta like firm hands kneading a tender back

prized collection of stones like stars crisped up chilled out at peace in galactic nestle

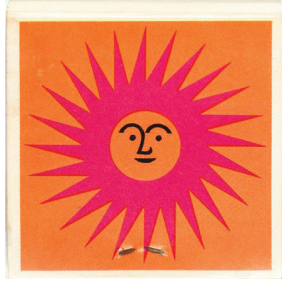
the days last rays slice and slide across the architecture to pool onto the beaming sunsitter



WALLS

Let the Sun In, 2020
Erik Benjamins

Dimensions variable
Acrylic.



Inspired by Alexander Girard's lifelong passion as a collector, Erik began collecting representations of the sun about one year ago. The suns, photographed, drawn, carved, painted, projected, etc. are collected without hierarchical value towards provenance or material (a gilded metal form that sits atop of a tower in Verona is as excitedly photographed as is a worn vinyl decal on the side of a moving van).

For the exhibition, Erik has transcribed seven suns from his collection, painting them directly onto the gallery walls in a lush gradient of airbrushed acrylic paint reminiscent of a sunrise or sunset. The font used is a redrawn bootleg version of *Alphabet*, designed by Girard in the 1960s for textiles produced by Herman Miller.

FLOOR,
ON SEATING

Stay Awhile, 2020
Erik Benjamins & Shannon Finnegan

18.5 × 18.5 × 1 in. each
Embroidered cotton, foam insert.
Embroidery by Platinum Threads, Altadena, CA.
Upholstery by Del Rey Upholstery, Los Angeles, CA.



I NEED
SOFTNESS.
REST HERE
IF YOU
AGREE.

For several years, artist Shannon Finnegan, has introduced inviting, declarative text drawings on seating interventions within museum and gallery spaces. These functional artworks utilize text to highlight what's often a lack of comfortable or available seating for visiting bodies, ie. a bench with the words: *This exhibition has asked me to stand for too long. Sit if you agree.*

Erik and Shannon have teamed up to create a series of delicately rendered embroidered seat cushions that display one of Shannon's recent drawings. The cushions rest on simple pine furniture (it was important to include seating with back rests) built by Erik and designed by Italian designer Enzo Mari. These pieces belong to his globally renown *Autoprogettazione* series of furniture created in the 1970s, which sought to empower the consumer by offering easy-to-build, reasonably-priced design objects.

FAR WALL
(FROM ENTRY)

Amici di Penna alla Finestra (Pen Pals at the Window), 2020
Erik Benjamins & Lauren Godfrey

7.5 × 4.5 × 2 in. each
Veg tan leather, wood, clock movements.



A dual time zone wall clock has been made of selectively sun-tanned leather. A collaboration between Los Angeles-based Erik and London-based Lauren, the two sought to create a functional timekeeper that reflected on the limits and possibilities of transatlantic friendship and collaboration. In sketching out ideas, they both realized their deep fondness for *I Morosi alla Finestra* (Lovers at the Window), a textile designed by Italian modernist Gio Ponti in 1930. The window'd figures in Ponti's pattern repeat felt particularly apt during a time of shelter-in-place quarantine.

FLOOR,
OFF NEAR WALL
(FROM ENTRY)

14 — *Shoe Rack*, 2020
Norma

48 × 15 × 15 in.
Cedar, powder-coated steel.



To accommodate visitors taking off their shoes to walk on the Reflexology Doormats, Erik invited Los Angeles-based studio Norma, to create a shoe rack. Their monumental, solid cedar form includes a space for one to sit comfortably as they take on and off their shoes, while a metal inset tray allows for easy maintenance.

You are encouraged to use the shoe rack.



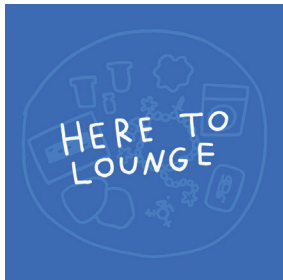
Erik Benjamins is a disciplinarily unfaithful optimist. As an artist and writer, his work forefronts body-to-body empathy, sensory engagement and duration to propose slower, messier relationships to place. Recent work includes a toilet paper holder inspired by Modernist designer, Alexander Girard, and a two-story list poem of pressures installed as a banner on the facade of an arts center in upstate New York.

Recent projects have brought him to the Banff Centre, Canada; Spring Workshop, Hong Kong; the Van Eyck Academie, Netherlands; the Institute for Art & Olfaction, Los Angeles; the Santa Fe Art Institute, New Mexico, and to Chengdu, China on a Traveling Fellowship from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Born and raised in Southern California, Erik is currently based in the west side of Los Angeles.

<http://erikbenjamins.com>

<http://avoidingthebummerness.com>

@erik.benjamins



Shannon Finnegan is an interdisciplinary artist. Some of their recent work includes Anti-Stairs Club Lounge, an ongoing project that gathers people together who share an aversion to stairs; Alt-Text as Poetry, a collaboration with Bojana Coklyat that explores the expressive potential of alt-text; and Do You Want Us Here or Not, a series of benches designed for exhibition spaces.

They have done projects with Banff Centre, the High Line, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Tallinn Art Hall, and Nook Gallery. Their work has been supported by a 2018 Wynn Newhouse Award, a 2019 residency at Eyebeam, a 2020 residency at Surf Point Foundation, and a 2020 grant from Art Matters Foundation. They live and work in Brooklyn, NY.

<https://shannonfinnegan.com>

@shanfinnegan

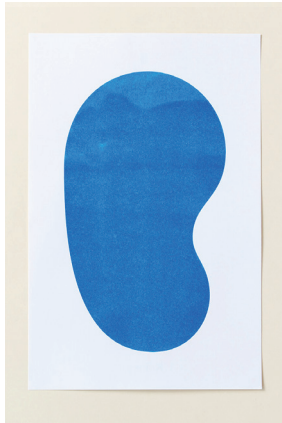


Lauren Godfrey (b. UK) is an artist based in London. Her work invites interaction and collaboration, often swerving close to furniture or the quasi-useful. In recent work, fountains and sundials—elemental clichés—meet post-modern silhouettes and pattern overload.

Recent exhibitions and collaborations include Pattern Portraits (Kings Cross) at Coal Drops Yard, London; Group Hat solo show, De La Warr Pavilion; Hidden Harlequin with Lauren Coullard at Centre For Recent

Drawing, London; Doing Easy, Outpost Projects, Joshua Tree; a swimwear display for Karen Mabon at Les Filles in Lisbon and a jewelery display for SVP at House Of Voltaire, London. Recent residencies include Villa Lena, Tuscany, 2019; Triangle, New York, 2016 and Kingsgate Workshops, London, 2015.

<http://www.laurengodfrey.co.uk>
@laurengodders



Norma is a studio for objects, moveables, and spaces. From its base in Los Angeles, the studio pursues research, fabrication, product, furniture, and interiors projects rooted in explorations of form and material. Norma seeks out commissions from and collaborations with patrons and peers both local and international, with the consistent goal of creating narrative-based outputs founded in generosity, candor, and delight.

<http://norma-studio.com>
@norma.studio



A note on **Alexander Girard** as written by the Vitra Museum...

Alexander Girard (1907–1993), an American designer with Italian roots, was one of the twentieth century's leading modern fabric designers and interior architects as well as a passionate collector of folk art. His works range from buildings, interiors, furniture, fabrics, exhibitions, and graphic design to pieces of fine art. They all attest to the great joy Girard found in creating and designing—from large projects down to tiny details and using any materials that happened to be on hand. Reaching beyond mere functionality, Girard conceived of design as a means of injecting beauty and pleasure into daily life. For him, designing could even involve creating worlds of his own. He recognized a similar impulse in folk art, based on a universal human heritage of patterns, motifs, and design techniques that transcend the limits of time and place and continue to inspire ever-new individual interpretations and variations.

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Irvine Fine Arts Center
14321 Yale Ave.
Irvine, CA
92604

Virtual Artist Talk
November 18, 2 p.m.
webex.com
meeting ID: 146 300 0547
password: RXYkK2tA5M8

By Appointment
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and
Friday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Thursday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Learn more and schedule an ap-
pointment:
irvinefinearts.org/appointment
[https://www.cityofirvine.org/irvine-
fine-arts-center/exhibitions](https://www.cityofirvine.org/irvine-fine-arts-center/exhibitions)
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For additional information about
the exhibition, the artists and its
works:
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Thank You,
Adam Silverman
Alex Reed
Ben Sanders
Benjamin Critton
Bob Dornberger
Carlos Osorio
Daniella Sanader
Dave Johnson
Elena Zachary
Heidi Korsavong
Irvine Fine Arts Center
Jason Lipelis
Jesse Pinedo
Jonathan Kawchuk
Lauren Godfrey
Manny Torres
Nicole Choy
Sam Grawe
Shannon Finnegan
Sherry & Stephan Benjamins
Stef Halmos
Tao Fei
Virginia Arce