



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Martin Machado: Fluid State

Gallery exhibition: May 30 – August 19, 2018
Opening Reception: Friday, June 8, 2018; 6-9pm

(San Francisco, CA, May 30, 2018) Nearly 1.5 million metric tons of cargo passed through the Golden Gate in 2017. Much of this cargo arrived via container ships—massive vessels stacked high with multi-colored containers arriving from East Asia to drift under the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges and dock at the Ports of Oakland, Richmond, or Stockton. These ships and the containers they carry represent a vast web of global trade, one that is easy to disregard despite the incredible volume of marine traffic cruising just past the pilings of Pier 2 at San Francisco Art Institute’s (SFAI) Fort Mason Campus.

Martin Machado is a visual artist and alumnus of SFAI who has travelled the world on international commercial vessels as a merchant mariner. His work takes the form of drawings, paintings, and photographs that offer a window into this often-overlooked system of global commerce that underpins modern life. Cumulatively, the works in this exhibition illustrate Machado’s time at sea and his deep engagement with the people, places, and historical and cultural complexities of maritime exploration and trade. The exhibition’s title, *Fluid State*, alludes to the state of flux that defines both a life at sea and the shifting tides of global capitalism.

On view in SFAI—Fort Mason’s Main Gallery is a selection of drawings that appropriate and recontextualize 18th century images from the history of maritime exploration, including the romantic primitivist drawings of John Webber, who documented Captain Cook’s third voyage around the Pacific. As the official artist on board during these voyages, Webber’s watercolors and sketches of the people and places encountered served a crucial marketing and fundraising purpose for future expeditions. As a result, these images consistently highlighted the drama and heroism of early explorers as well as the otherness of the subjects they encountered; artists such as Webber shaped the primary visual record of these early explorations through the lenses of colonialism and imperialism. Machado’s work resists this one-sided viewpoint espoused by early maritime explorers, illustrating instead the overlapping narratives and conflicting interests that define a contemporary experience of the world’s oceans.

Recent paintings are composed from the artist’s vantage point high above the colorful stacks of containers. The profile of Oahu’s Diamond Head emerges from the horizon, moonlight reflects on the waves far below, and a container ship drifts past in the distance. These works

are based on scenes in Qingdao, China; Laem Chabang, Thailand; Honolulu, Hawaii; and in transit on the Red Sea. Other paintings and drawings are portraits of Machado's fellow merchant mariners, including Phil, Angel, and Earl, all "Able Bodied sailors" by rank. Still more depict unnamed shipyard workers who agreed to a portrait session for a hand-rolled cigarette, yet another form of exchange.

In several other works on view—*The Albatross and the Shipping Container*, at the entrance to the pier, and *Flotsam and Jetsam*, two sculptures in the center of the space—containers from commercial ships have escaped their regimented place in the global supply chain and are adrift on the open ocean. They float alone in the sea unwitnessed or have run aground beneath a palm. In the drawing *Wayfarers and Fairway'ers*, the containers are repurposed as a stage for historical representation and reenactment, in which early 19th century Hawaiian officers pose with well-heeled golfers and surfers ride containers into shore.

Altogether, Machado's works reminds us that history is not a final statement, but a subjective and contested narrative.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Martin Machado is a visual artist based out of San Francisco, CA. His artwork is partially influenced by his experience with maritime labor, spending portions of his year working on international containerships and commercial fishing vessels. These voyages and the crew he works with have become intertwined with the narrative of his artworks.

Machado has exhibited internationally and select exhibitions include Festival Teatro Container, Valparaiso, Chile; Italian American Museum, San Francisco; The Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, Santa Cruz, CA; Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA; and Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli, Mexico City, Mexico. His work has been featured in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Juxtapoz*, and *New American Paintings*. Machado earned his MFA from San Francisco Art Institute in 2007.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING

Martin Machado: Fluid State is curated by Katie Hood Morgan, Curator of Exhibitions and Public Programs, and organized with Christopher Squier, Exhibitions and Public Programs Coordinator. San Francisco Art Institute would like to thank the artist, K. Imperial Fine Art, San Francisco, and Cordesa Fine Art, Los Angeles.

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About San Francisco Art Institute

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. As a diverse community of working artists and scholars, SFAI provides students with a rigorous education in the arts and preparation for a life in the arts through an immersive studio environment, an integrated liberal arts and art history curriculum, and critical engagement with the world. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context.

General Information

San Francisco Art Institute – Fort Mason’s galleries are open to the public Wednesday - Sunday 11am - 7pm and are located on Pier 2 within Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, 2 Marina Blvd., San Francisco, CA.

Galleries are free to the public. For more information, the public may visit sfai.edu or call (415) 749-4563.

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