

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contact: Charlie James

Charlie@cjamesgallery.com

213.687.0844

Charlie James Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition:

***FOCUS GROUP* – CURATED BY MICHAEL SHAW**

MAY 20 – JULY 8, 2017

ARTISTS' RECEPTION SATURDAY, MAY 20TH 2017 FROM 6-9PM

Charlie James Gallery is pleased to present *Focus Group*, a group exhibition curated by Michael Shaw, with works by Dorit Cypis, Sandra de la Loza, Kate Hoffman, Amitis Motevalli, Scott Short, Suzanne Wright, and Samira Yamin.

Inspired by writer/curator Nato Thompson's description of art that is alternately "ambiguous" or "didactic" in his book *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* — **Focus Group** presents a spectrum of work that falls between those two poles. Each artist's work is informed in heightened fashion by the proximity of its neighbors—the more 'ambiguous' works pulling the more 'didactic' works toward it, and vice versa. The cliché persists because it's true: it's all about context.

Amitis Motevalli's marker-on-photo series *Confiscated Portrait of the Artist as a Young Rebel* could and should be consumed as much for its humor and wit as anything else, but in the course of transit for an exhibition the work was confiscated by the government. Dorit Cypis's *Who Did It (alert)* text-based pigment prints are represented by three of the five colors **not** yet used by the infamous Homeland Security Advisory System. Kate Hoffman's *Dream Home* series, photographs taken from performative collage collaborations, has a malleable quality that emphasizes the viewer's own socio-political leanings; Samira Yamin's intricate patterns of Islamic sacred geometries cut into TIME Magazine photos of war oscillate between greater ambiguity and flirting with the didactic depending on the density of the cuttings; Sandra de la Loza's photographs of *Stoner Spots* underscore the politics of leisure through the exploration of pot-safe spaces, with a subtext of the not-quite-yet absorbed by development; Scott Short's 'abstract' paintings replicate multiple generations of photocopying through the prism of Walter Benjamin; and Suzanne Wright will exhibit a deftly humorous *Étant donnés*-esque collage alongside mandala targets—each salves, in their respective forms, for our tumultuous zeitgeist.

Amitis Motevalli is an artist born in Iran and moved to the US in 1977 pre-revolution. She explores the cultural resistance and survival of people living in poverty, conflict and war. Her experience as a working-class immigrant in Los Angeles, is foundational to her drive for creating art that contests stereotypical beliefs about people living in diaspora. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, exhibiting art internationally as well as organizing to create an active and resistant cultural discourse through information exchange, either in art, pedagogy or organizing artists and educators.

Dorit Cypis is an artist, educator, and mediator. Her work, which explores themes of history, identity, and social relations, has been presented in diverse cultural contexts across the US and internationally since the 1980s. Moving fluidly between the studio and the street, Cypis' career covers a varied landscape: performance, photography, and immersive media installation; curriculum development and teaching at colleges and universities; civic programs that engage conflict in order to build capacity for generative relations. At the core of all her work is an exploration of the artist's role as creator, educator, mediator, and community-builder, asking the question: "Who am I to you?" Cypis received a Master of Fine Arts from California Institute for the Arts and a Masters of Dispute Resolution from Pepperdine University. In 2014, she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Rauschenberg Foundation Residency. Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, and raised in Montreal, she currently lives in Los Angeles.

Kate M.S. Hoffman is a Los Angeles artist and teacher. Hoffman has an MFA in Visual Art from the University of California, San Diego and a BFA in Fibers from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. She is a former artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre in Banff, Canada, the Tides Institute and Museum of Art in Eastport, Maine and at Est-Nord-Est in Quebec, Canada. She has been exhibiting in LA since 2007 and has had solo exhibitions of her whaling meets the underground railroad project, *Black Gold-Liquid Gold*, *the Golden Age of Whaling* at the Greenleaf Gallery at Whittier College and at the ATA Gallery in San Francisco.

Samira Yamin's work explores the narrativization and representation of war through an interrogation of documentary war photography. Using repetitive, precisely articulated gestures, Yamin dissects, reorganizes, and often obliterates documentary images, resulting in a collision of representation and abstraction and the confusion of objectivity and subjectivity. Yamin received an MFA from UC Irvine and BAs in Art and Sociology from UCLA. She has had a solo exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and has been included in numerous group exhibitions including at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, the Camera Club of New York, Metropolitan State University in Denver, and San Francisco State University. A recipient of grants from the Joan Mitchell Foundation and the California Community Foundation, Yamin has been an Artist in Residence at the Rauschenberg Residency, Headlands Center for the Arts and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

In *Stoner Spots*, Sandra de la Loza documents the "negative spaces" of the city: abandoned lots, stairwells, hidden pathways, and undeveloped land. Momentarily occupied by youth, the marks, traces and paraphernalia of yesterday's party, ritual, or event quietly suggest unseen narratives while they provide form to transgressive architectures of youth sublimation. Born and raised in Los Angeles, de la Loza's work disrupts dominant narratives of Los Angeles as she simultaneously explores the potential of culture to affect the everyday through archival, research-based, documentary and interventionist projects.

Scott Short's works explore the relationship between the mechanical and hand-made, the original and the copy, abstraction, and representation. The genesis of these elaborately rendered paintings begins as simple colored construction paper that the artist copies on a black-and-white photocopying machine. He then takes that first copy and repeats the copying process, perhaps a dozen times, or as many as several hundred times, until the layering of copy over copy creates an image that Scott finds appealing - in effect these images emerge from the "flaws" that are inherent to this process. The final chosen image is then photographed and projected onto a large primed canvas, where Short begins a meticulous rendering of the original using black oil paint or india ink. Exhibitions include *A Study in Midwestern Appropriation*, The Hyde Park Center, Chicago, IL, curated by Michelle Grabner; *Decade: Contemporary Collection 2002-2012*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; *2010*, Whitney Biennial, curated by Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2010); and *Gerhard Richter and the Disappearance of the Image in Contemporary Art*, Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzi, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy (2010), among others. Short lives and works in Vallauris, France.

Suzanne Wright is an artist and professor presently living and working in Los Angeles. Suzanne Wright's work explores glory holes, portals, and power across collage, drawings, and paintings. She earned her BFA at Cooper

Union & MFA at the University of California San Diego & also attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She has been included in exhibitions at Stephen Friedman Gallery, Stefan Stux, Claire Oliver Gallery, Monya Rowe, Luis De Jesus Gallery, Artist Curated Projects (ACP) in Los Angeles. Her most recent solo shows were with Commonwealth and Council in Los Angeles called *"The Rainbow Control Room"* and Angel's Gate cultural center in San Pedro called *"Rainbow Warriors"*. She was recently awarded the Kraus visiting professorship in drawing at Carnegie Mellon and her work can be seen in publications including *Cock, Paper, Scissors, Feminist Landscapes, Strange Attractors, Armpit of the Mole* and *Art and Queer Culture* (Phaidon, 2013). www.suzannewrightstudio.com

About the Curator: Michael Shaw is an artist based in Los Angeles. His work has explored income inequality through the lens of wealth that is somehow flawed – whether billionaire bankruptcy auctions or immense Benedict Canyon residential developments stuck in limbo – and more recently through that of affordable housing. His current series documents officially designated 'affordable housing' units throughout the City of Santa Monica, all sustained under the umbrella of one management company. Recent exhibitions include "Like Oxygen" at Mountain Gallery in Brooklyn, and the PØST Fundraising Auction. Shaw also curates and is the host of The Conversation Art Podcast (theconversationpod.com), which was launched in late 2011 and is approaching its 200th episode.