

Sara Magenheimer

Dailies



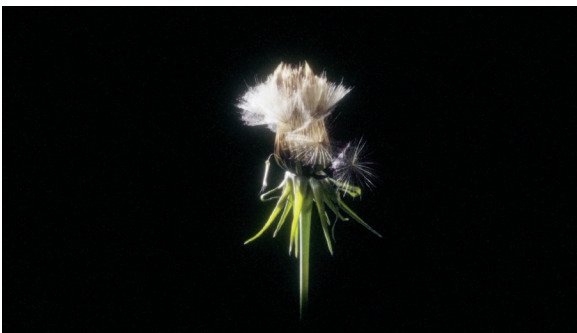
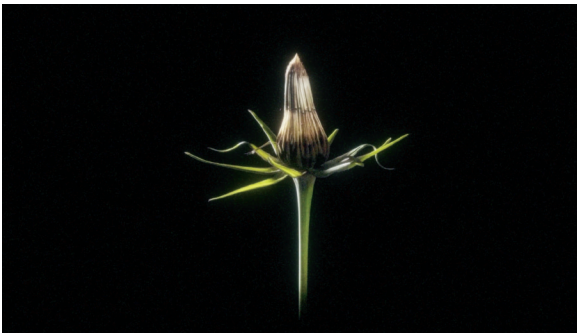
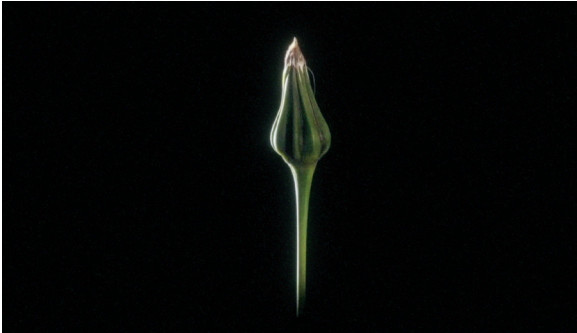
Sara Magenheimer

Dailies

Playing with words and moving through time are two crucial themes in Sara Magenheimer’s exhibition *Dailies*, whose title recalls, from a bygone era, the unedited scenes in filmmaking printed each day, as well as quotidian daily life in the present. Ever sensitive to architecture and the body, Magenheimer has created an environment of transitional spaces that affect us psychologically and physically. An artist, filmmaker, musician, and poet, Magenheimer also explored these spaces in her book *Beige Pursuit* (Wendy’s Subway, 2019), which reads as both a screenplay and long poem. We move with and through the language in her videos and vinyl installations spanning the museum walls. Reflecting on power, politics, and poetics, Magenheimer’s work asks questions—often literally—for which she has no answers, and thus invites viewers to ask them too.

As we move through the exhibition, we move through time in different ways. The projection of a twenty-four-hour video clock (2022) keeps time with the slow, often indiscernible movement of twenty-four flower species that each naturally bloom at a specific hour of the day, based on Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus’s 1751 treatise *Philosophia Botanica*. The six video monitors in *No Clock (You can’t be late twice)* (2017) each display a clock, like the line of clocks on a news or travel agency wall marking different time zones, their numerals replaced by an emphatic “NO.” Words ticking at the bottom of the screen at a rate of one per second juxtaposed with appropriated images evoke the frenetic pace of a 24/7 society.

Quoting a prompt from iPhone’s AI assistant Siri, the video *Some things you can ask me* (2022) juxtaposes our present technological moment with the past stylings of the 1980s, seen through *Architectural Digest* photographs showcasing opulent and excessive interiors. Seemingly innocuous domestic decisions about interior decor reflect something more insidious about the ways in which style carries content: What does



one’s living room say about political systems of power and control? Over the images we read queries the phone would be adept at answering, such as, “Where is the nearest sushi?” But we are haunted by the unanswerable, all-too-human questions like: “When is a good time to worry? Now?”

That kind of pathos circulates through the exhibition above a substratum of slow-burning anger: a feminist anger most clearly felt in the untitled series of found headshots of actresses prominent in the 1980s. Subverting power relationships, Magenheimer figuratively and literally turns signs on their heads, asking us to read them differently—in this case inverting the photographs and displaying them alongside edited résumés whose titles and roles read like found poems. The work reflects on the “shelf life” of actresses, particularly in comparison to their male counterparts. Similarly, in several moments of the video *Sentences* (2022), we read meditations on mirrors, such as “One’s outer self turned small and multiplied sprays all over the room,” imposed over film stills of adolescent girls in 1980s bedrooms, situating those moments within a specifically feminine experience of seeing and being seen.

The sound in *Sentences* is created from “stems”—fragments of songs—that dramatically come in and out. This fragmentation and decontextualization of the source music mirrors the treatment of the text in the headshot works. As the video’s sound permeates the entire museum, it disrupts the prioritization of a purely visual experience—an intentional strategy for Magenheimer rooted in semiotics and feminist film theories addressing sexist gazes and a patriarchal logic that associates sound in cinema with the feminine or other. Magenheimer shifts our attention to the unseen.

The initially legible words in *Sentences*—quoted from Magenheimer’s *Beige Pursuit*—warp over time until distorted into oblivion. The warped vinyl text installations throughout the exhibition, however, are paused in moments of becoming or dissolving. Towering over us as if on an oversized screen are manipulated characters “LOL / SOS”—text-messaging shorthand for “laughing out

loud” paired with the twentieth-century maritime distress call—a surface laughter that belies an interminable anxiety in a time of pandemic and political turmoil. In both video and vinyl, Magenheimer intentionally manipulates text as a way to create friction in the process of reading, to disrupt the seemingly natural everyday workings of language.

Time and wordplay operate in three earlier videos included in the exhibition’s screening room, inviting us to follow the arc of Magenheimer’s thought over nearly a decade. The countdown timer in *Art and Theft* (2017) riffs on a specious claim that it takes eight minutes to rob a house; the slow-motion airport luggage conveyer belt in *Slow Zoom Long Pause* (2015) echoes in advance of the waiting room section of *Sentences*; and musical notation for rests and ellipses in *Seven Signs That Mean Silence* (2013) indicate pauses in time that are both disruptive and generative.

We often pause in this exhibition, as we do with Magenheimer’s poignant untitled lure/peephole sculptures (2022) composed of found objects imbued with family memories and electronic “memory” keys. And in these poetic pauses, generated by video, sound, and text, Magenheimer opens a space for us to consider the constructed nature of often invisible systems and substructures that govern our days and ask how, in investigating those systems, language might be a tool, a key, or a trap.

—Robert Shane, PhD, Associate Curator

Image caption:
Is there an after-taste of life in these graves? And in the flowers’ mouths do bees find the hint of a word refusing speech? O flowers, prisoners of our instincts toward happiness, do you return to us with our dead in your veins? Flowers, how can you escape our grip? How can you not be our flowers? Does the rose really use all its petals to fly away from us? Does it want to be only a rose, nothing but a rose? No one’s sleep beneath so many eyelids? (Flower Clock) (stills), 2022, HD video, 24-hour video loop; color, no sound, courtesy of the artist

Exhibition Checklist

Brief space between breaths to finish one thing and anticipate another, 2022
Latex paint and vinyl
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

DO RE MI FA SO LA TI DO, 2022
Latex paint and vinyl
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

HA, 2022
Acrylic paint, muslin, thread, and organza on canvas
16 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist

HAHAHA/AHAHAH, 2022
Latex paint and vinyl
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Is there an after-taste of life in these graves? And in the flowers' mouths do bees find the hint of a word refusing speech? O flowers, prisoners of our instincts toward happiness, do you return to us with our dead in your veins? Flowers, how can you escape our grip? How can you not be our flowers? Does the rose really use all its petals to fly away from us? Does it want to be only a rose, nothing but a rose? No one's sleep beneath so many eyelids? (Flower Clock), 2022
HD video, 24-hour video loop; color, no sound
Courtesy of the artist

LOL SOS, 2022
Latex paint and vinyl
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Sentences, 2022
HD video, 25:00 minutes; color, sound
Courtesy of the artist

Some things you can ask me, 2022
HD video, 21:45 minutes; color, no sound
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Ava Cadell), 2022
Untitled (Ava Fabian), 2022
Untitled (Blake Lindsley), 2022
Untitled (Brooke Adams), 2022
Untitled (Gretchen Mol), 2022
Untitled (Josie Davis), 2022
Untitled (Lisa Langlois), 2022
Untitled (Lisa Marie), 2022
Untitled (Lisa Pelikan), 2022
Untitled (Marla Sokoloff), 2022
Untitled (Meadow Sisto), 2022
Untitled (Mindy Cohn), 2022
Untitled (Rebecca Ferratti), 2022
Untitled (Saffron Burrows), 2022
Untitled (Serena Scott Thomas), 2022
Untitled (Shelley Duval), 2022
Untitled (Sigourney Weaver), 2022
Untitled (Tippi Hedren), 2022
Found headshots and collaged text on paper
10 x 16 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Lure/Peep 1), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 2), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 3), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 4), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 5), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 6), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 7), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 8), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 9), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 10), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 11), 2022
Untitled (Lure/Peep 12), 2022
Materials variable (peep holes, fishing lures, thumb drive, bobby pins, copper wire, crystal, mother's earring, grandmother's earring)
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

What makes the face interesting is the skull inside it, 2022
Latex paint and vinyl
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Art and Theft, 2017
HD video, 07:22 minutes; color, sound
Courtesy of the Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

No Clock (You can't be late twice), 2017
HD video, 03:08 minutes; color, no sound
Courtesy of the artist

Slow Zoom Long Pause, 2015
HD video, 13:01 minutes; color, sound
Courtesy of the Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Seven Signs that Mean Silence, 2013
HD video, 10:48 minutes; color, sound
Courtesy of the Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

- Image captions:
1. *LOL SOS*, 2022; *No Clock (You can't be late twice)*, 2017
 2. *Untitled (Shelley Duval)*, 2022
 3. *No Clock (You can't be late twice)*, 2017
 4. *Untitled (Brooke Adams)*, 2022
 5. *What makes the face interesting is the skull inside it*, 2022; *Some things you can ask me*, 2022
 6. *Untitled (Lure/Peep 3)*, 2022; *Untitled (Lure/Peep 2)*, 2022; *Untitled (Lure/Peep 4)*, 2022; *Untitled (Lure/Peep 5)*, 2022
 7. *Sentences (still)*, 2022
 8. *Brief space between breaths to finish one thing and anticipate another (detail)*, 2022
 9. *(Flower Clock)*, 2022; *HAHAHA/AHAHAH (detail)*, 2022



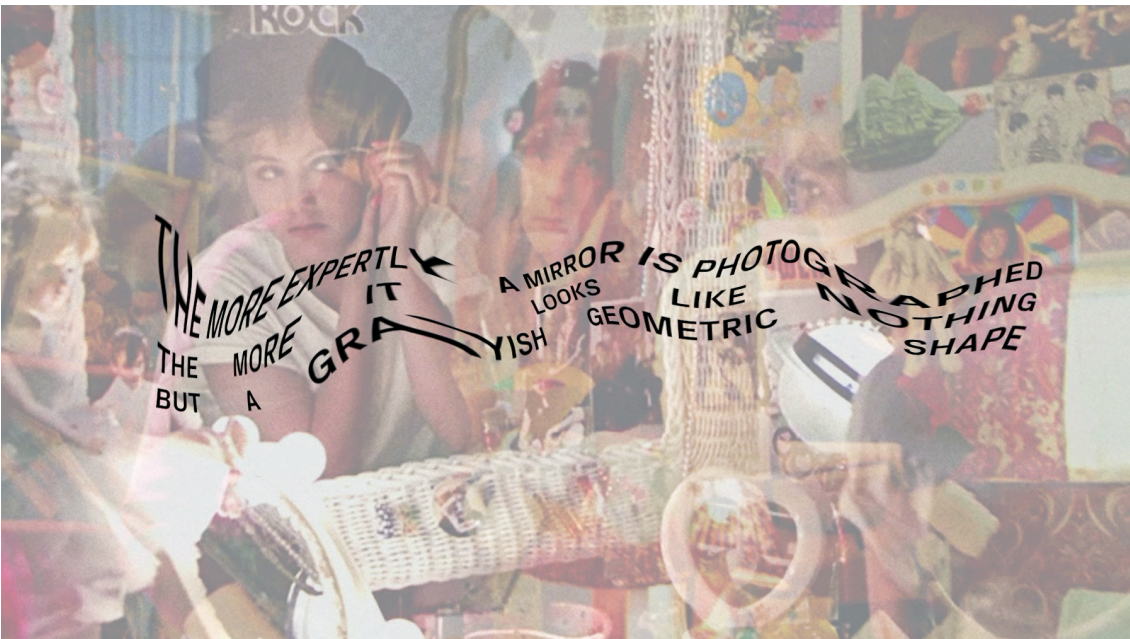
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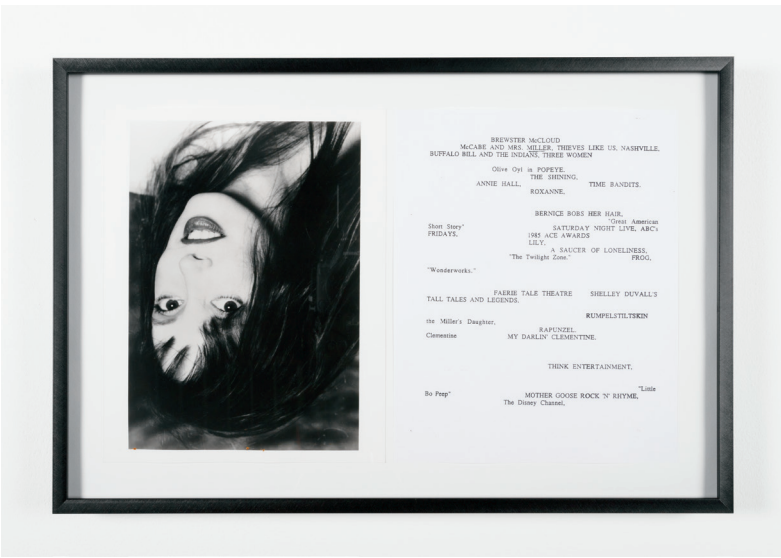
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Sara Magenheimer: *Dailies*
August 8 – December 5, 2022

University Art Museum
University at Albany, State University of New York



Sara Magenheimer is an artist whose work spans filmmaking, video installation, writing, and sculpture. She is based in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include the New Museum, NY; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), OR; and The Kitchen, NY. Her videos have been widely screened, including at the Flaherty Seminar, Oberhausen Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the New York Film Festival, Images Festival, Anthology Film Archives, EMPAC at RPI, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. She has been awarded a 2014 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, a 2015 Artadia Award, the Prix De Varti at the 2015 Ann Arbor Film Festival, a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts in 2020, and a Rauschenberg Residency on Captiva in 2021. Magenheimer authored *Notes on Art and Resistance A–Z*, in the lead up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. In 2019, Wendy's Subway published *Beige Pursuit*, Magenheimer's first book-length work of writing, which is now in its second edition. Her work is distributed by Video Data Bank.

The artist would like to express her profound gratitude to the following people and institutions who have catalyzed, inspired and otherwise supported the production of this show: Michael Bell-Smith, Nuno Enna Bellsmith, Taryn Collymore, Emma Jakubik, Joe Williams, Olga Dekalo, Margot Norton, Lumi Tan, Tom Colley, Zach Vanes, Peixuan Ouyang, Darcie Abbatiello, Berly Brown, Gil Gentile, Corinna Ripps Schaming, Robert Shane, Christine Snyder, Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, The Kitchen, The New Museum, and Video Data Bank.

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Image credits:

Cover: *No Clock (You can't be late twice)* (still), 2017
Poster: *Sentences* (still), 2022
Back cover: *Seven Signs that Mean Silence* (still), 2013