

# MOUNTAIN

## *Future Histories (One Night Stand: Common People)*

Nicholas Cueva - Robin Kang



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Opening Reception: November 4th, 2016 | 7-10 PM

He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.

Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil.

— Walter Benjamin<sup>1</sup>

The modern museum collects, archives, and designates a timeline for civilization as a linear canon. Challenging the progression of time in *Future Histories*, Cueva and Kang explore attributes of the archeological museum in a contemporary context, creating imagery that exists in its own future; time looping in on itself.

Nicholas Cueva abstracts portraits, still lives and expressionist compositions by means of archeological tropes. While at times an image depicted seems to derive from a current decade or social movement, Cueva often eludes designating which time period the works reference. And still all the images reference a passage of time. Sprawling out from the center of the canvas, the surface beneath the paint is revealed. This threadbare aesthetic teeters between a painting left intentionally incomplete or paintings worn from veneration, like rubbing the toe of St. Peter for good measure, an appendage is lost over time; the face of the portrait is abstracted and the glass of wine on the table erased. Cueva intentionally places missing space as a portal through which we can access a new (a future) out of absence; an invitation to fill and complete a missing history on our own. Alongside the paintings, a series of hand hewn materials and assemblages make-up jewelry that may well have been dug up in an archeological dig. The jewelry is composed of a mix of materials that are both iconically of a 'prehistoric' nature, such as stone or leather alongside industrial materials such machine woven cord, in effect collapsing time in one object like a magic talisman.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings*; "Excavation & Memory", Vol. 2, part 2 (1931–1934), p. 576

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Robin Kang's tapestries are realized by handweaving into the output of a digital jacquard loom. Imitating familiar angular patterns of ancient woven tapestries and carpets, Kang echoes archeological weavings with that of the digital age by programming the loom to reproduce imagery of circuit boards and computer hardware. By engaging in the world of technology through a traditional craft, one is reminded of the suppressed history of the role of women in the invention of codes and early computers. As if in response to the narrative absence, Kang inserts her own hand to interrupt a missing narrative with abstracted lines, generating her own mythology as a future history.

As they sift through the archeological site, both Cueva and Kang cross archeological materials with contemporary imagery, warping time and surface to unearth new narratives.

## **About the Series:**

"One Night Stand" is an exhibition series where an external gallery or curator is asked to present an exhibition at MOUNTAIN. For this exhibition, MOUNTAIN has selected Common People, an artist-run curatorial initiative based out of Gowanus, Brooklyn.

<http://commonpeoplegallery.com/>

## **About the Artists:**

**Robin Kang** has exhibited throughout the US, Canada, Spain, Belgium, Austria, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia. Recent institutional shows include the Queens Museum, the Essl Museum, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, U.S Embassy in Saudi Arabia and Brooklyn Academy of Music, among others. She has participated in artist residencies in Texas, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Beijing. Kang is the founder and director of Carousel Space Project, an alternative art space in Chicago, and Penelope, a project space in Ridgewood, Queens.

**Nicholas Cueva** (Born 1983, Dana Point, California) collapses current models of human perception onto para-synthetic cultural modes, often depicting false or designed losses. Each work taking the broken promise of a desired beauty, and making it not only incomplete but incompletable, The loss functions as areas of spacial reincorporation and thus emotional, psychological and physiological space.

Through a lifetime of surgeries and illness, Cueva adopted a fascination with scarification and the symbolism and credulity that any damage evokes. Growing up in creationist evangelical America, these modes reflect into spiritual and philosophical meanings for Cueva, exemplifying some necessary state of man.

Concerned with human nature, Cueva's work mixes pseudo-Caribbean symbolism with current neurological understandings of perception, memory and beauty. One cannot look away from Cueva's work, as each painting takes advantage of the eye and the brain to delight and confuse.

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The sweetness of the work is undercut with the falsity of the LACK (scotoma) within each composition, and the overall affect is to deny the sublime in favor of empyrean fervor.

## **About the Gallery:**

MOUNTAIN is an artist-run apartment gallery in Bushwick presenting exhibitions, performances, and screenings by emerging artists. The gallery is open during scheduled events or by appointment only. MOUNTAIN was founded by Michael Fleming in 2016. For more information, please visit <http://mountain.xhbtr.com/> or contact: [mountain.bushwick@gmail.com](mailto:mountain.bushwick@gmail.com). Like MOUNTAIN on [Facebook](#) to hear about upcoming exhibitions and events.

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