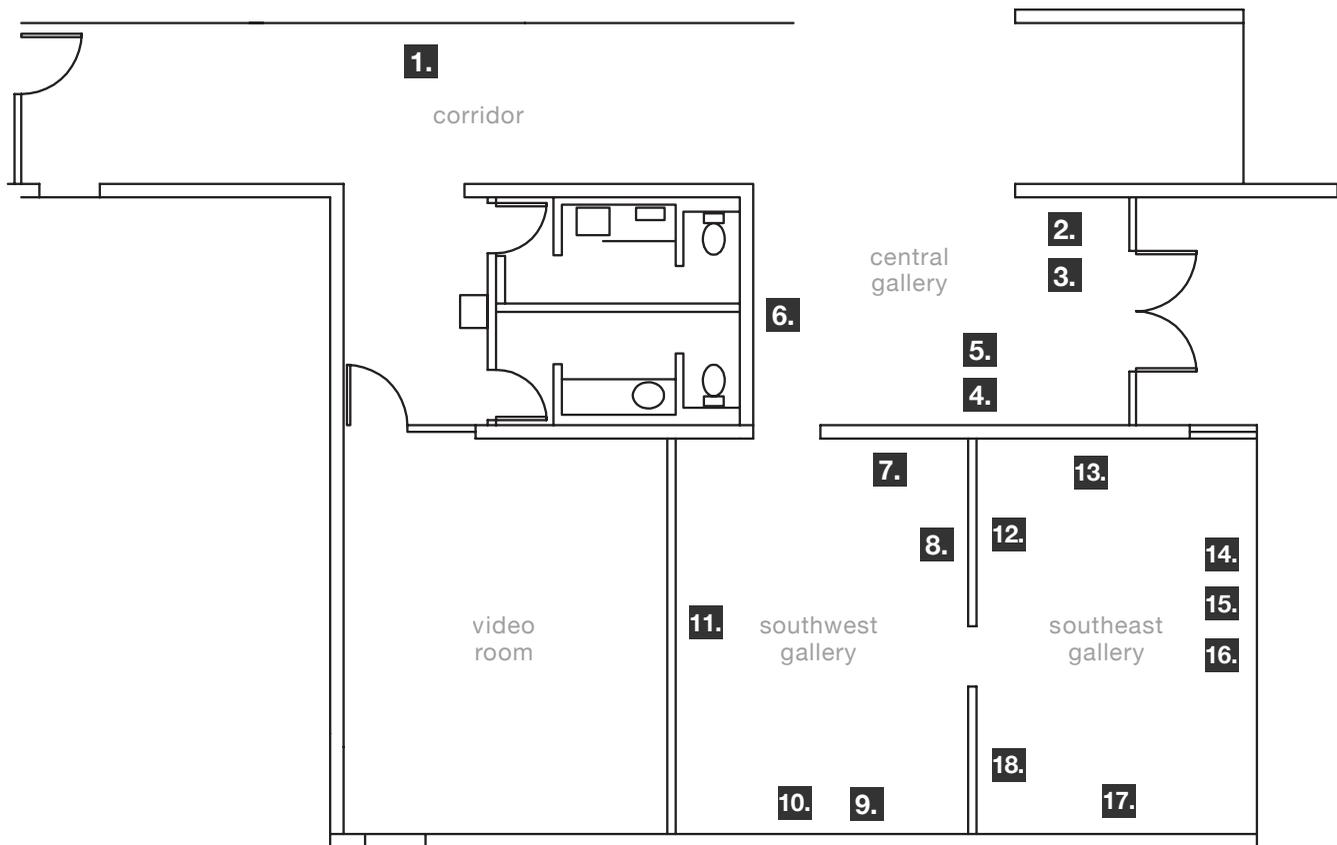


# CORRIDOR, CENTRAL GALLERY & SOUTHEAST GALLERIES

*Christopher Churchill*



## CORRIDOR

**1. *Untitled*** site-specific wall painting (2016) acrylic, 99 x 317"

## CENTRAL GALLERY

*Clockwise from north wall*

### North Wall

**2. *Untitled sketchbook*** (2015-16) Framed in acrylic, 10 ¾ x 15 ¾"

### 3. *Vitrine*

*Left to right*

***Untitled*** (2016) four-sided drawing, pencil on folded paper, 12 x 9"

***Untitled (Green)*** (2015) gouache on clothbound book, 12 ¼ x 9 ½ x ½"

***Untitled (Yellow)*** (2015) ink, pencil, colored pencil, and watercolor on clothbound book, 10 ¼ x 7 ¾ x ½"

***Untitled*** (2016) four-sided drawing, pencil on folded paper, 12 x 9"

### South Wall

#### 4. *Above vitrine:*

***Untitled*** (2016) oil, gesso, pencil & crayon on manila folder, 17 ¾ x 12"

#### 5. *In vitrine:*

***Set of eight untitled artist books*** (2015-16) photocopy & collage, 11 x 8 ½"

**6. *Set of nine drawings*** (2015-16) pencil & colored pencil on paper, 19 x 25"

## SOUTHWEST GALLERY

*Clockwise from north wall*

**7. *Untitled*** (2016) oil, gesso, crayon & pencil on manila folder, 17 ¾ x 12"

**8. *Untitled*** (2016) pencil on book, framed in acrylic, 10 ¾ x 15 ¾"

**9. *Untitled*** (2016) oil, gesso & crayon on manila folder, 17 ¾ x 12"

**10. *Untitled*** (2013) pencil, ink, watercolor on paper, 30 x 22"

**11. *Set of fourteen drawings*** (2015-16) pencil & colored pencil on paper, dimensions variable (approximately 12 x 9")

## SOUTHEAST GALLERY

*Clockwise*

**12. *Untitled (Looking Glass)*** (2015) pencil & gouache on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 14 2/4 x 9 ¼ x 1 ½"

**13. *Untitled (France I Love)*** (2015) gesso, pencil & gouache on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 11 ¼ x 10 x 1 ¼"

**14. *Untitled (Gauguin/Munch)*** (2015) oil & pencil on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 8 x 6 ¼ x 1"

**15. *Untitled (Bonnard)*** (2015) gouache & pencil on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 13 ½ x 10 ½ x 1 ¾"

**16. *Untitled (Alps I Love)*** (2015) pencil and colored pencil on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 11 ¼ x 10 x 1 ¼"

**17. *Untitled (Red)*** (2015) oil on clothbound book framed in acrylic, 11 ¾ x 9 ¼ x 2 ¼"

**18. *Untitled*** (2015-16) sketchbook framed in acrylic, 10 ¾ x 15 ¾ x 1 ¼"

**Christofer Churchill** (b. 1971, Long Beach, CA) received a B.A. from the University of Hawaii at Hilo, HI, and an M.F.A. from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, MI. He has had solo exhibitions at Franklin Parrasch and Shoot the Lobster in New York, participated in *Chris Churchill - Justin Lieberman* organized by Matt Moravec at Martos Gallery, New York, and was included in *Cave Paintings* at Fleisher/Ollman in Philadelphia, PA. Churchill stayed at MOCA Tucson as part of its residency program in the summer of 2015, and lives and works in Ojai, CA.

## Curator's Essay

### **CORRIDOR, CENTRAL GALLERY & SOUTHEAST GALLERIES**

**Christofer Churchill**

**18 June – 25 September 2016**

Christofer Churchill's exhibition begins with an anti-art work, with one side of MOCA's East Corridor painted black, before moving on to a "room of production" in the Central Gallery with paintings and photocopied publications displayed in vitrines, a gallery of drawings depicting skulls and hands, and another with over-painted vintage art books displayed in acrylic boxes. While the no-longer white wall directs the flow of viewers through the neon-lit Neo-Brutalist architecture—a site-specific monochromatic painting in its own right and absolutely site-specific—the zines and paintings are Churchill's practice and presentation distilled. And with the following overlaid, montage-like palms and articulated digits and craniums, what appears macabre at first sight is actually a celebration of our shared carnal humanity, while the exquisitely vandalized monographs speak to our collective consciousness and history.

The artwork wall refers directly to Steven Parrino, an artist Churchill has long been influenced by, whose work is on display nearby, and perhaps subconsciously (though Churchill's stay at MOCA last summer might have been a spur) has a corollary in Olivier Mosset's yellow and pink *Untitled (MOCA Stairs)* mural of 2010 in the adjoining stairwell. On one hand, the wall can be read as an artwork (which it is) or, alternately, as a curatorial device (which it is not) directing people from one space to the next, a metaphor for effectively ending the life of the piece because it's only functioning as a sign and not being read for what it is, which in a sense, to paraphrase the curator Bob Nickas' description of Mosset's early work, is a "picture – of painting itself."

The ambition here is to formally explore the relationship between drawing, painting, and photography bleeding into photolithography with the collages using Xerox copies. Works and rooms are separated based on media, though there is a holistic cohesion between all that is proof of Churchill's ongoing ambition to engage with art historical precedents and the nature of representation in all its innumerable iterations. The "maker" is conspicuous with the hands and skulls that form a loop from the optical to the cognitive, from the brain back to the hand touching the paper and making drawings of hands. A well-known X-ray of Edward Munch's fingers with a bullet lodged in a finger bone as a result of an accidental shooting during a lovers' quarrel has been a jumping-off point for Churchill's obsessive, expressionist, triple and quadruple "exposed" fingers, sometimes tented, squiggly, overlaid, almost seismographic: an intense study of anatomy converted into shaky, "natural" X-rays. They are exemplars of an almost supernatural draftsmanship deliberately related to Munch's taste for the spiritualist photography so in vogue in the late 19th century. And the repeated skulls, well, that's where all the thoughts, ideas, and compulsions come from, here laid bare, articulated.

"The hand," as in "the sign of the hand" so often ascribed as evidence of human manipulation in painting, is so important and crucial to making art; so global, that it goes almost unnoticed. Churchill literally brings our attention to this indispensable tool for making art, as he does with the heads, that other essential implement. The books that are held in the hands while being consumed by the mind are representative of a "library": knowledge and information, from the most obscure to the most accessible, resplendent of a time (particularly the 1950s and 1960s) when a utopian idealism concerning the beneficial and educational effects of art appreciation held sway. Well-crated, superlative volumes such as Bea Howe's *Antiques for the Victorian Home* published by Scribner's in 1973, for example, are desecrated with deep affection, some upside down, stained, dripped on, spotted by Churchill, on beautifully textured cloth hardcovers, lovingly reckoned with, "vandalized" in the most creative sense, with, again, a not unintentional association with Parrino's exercises in ravishing the things he held dear. Not wanton, but a directed, thought-out, calculated tussling with the art of the past and how to make it meaningful in the present. Two artists whose tomes make more than one appearance are Pierre Bonnard and Munch, purposefully, especially with their graphic work, echoes and allusions abound and the past informs the now. "Framed" in clear secular reliquaries, revered, they are an entry point into the work, just like the pages of the zines, the paintings, and the wall that "frames" the whole exhibition. Figuration and abstraction promiscuously mix, intermingling, informing, and buttressing a circulation of concepts and actions on sundry surfaces that add up to a teeming onrush of emotion and expression. A bounty of the drawing of the body below the surface, and concurrent metaphysical extrapolations, done over and over, an insistent reckoning with mortality and existence through the means of coloring, lines, and shapes, deployed with empathic intention.