

ALEXANDRA ROBINSON

---

*DELIMITATIONS, OR WORDS TO LIVE BY*



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

---

APRIL 12 - JUNE 16, 2022

AUSTIN, TEXAS

## DELIMITATIONS, OR WORDS TO LIVE BY

In Alexandra Robinson's youth, she and her family would jest over restaurant signs that proclaimed the establishment was an "authentic Mexican restaurant." It was a descriptor that left her family wondering who or what officiated the authenticity of these restaurants. In Robinson's solo exhibition *Delimitations, or words to live by* at Women & Their Work, the multimedia artist continues this familial query of authentication in relationship to the military and patriotism. The artist questions how one claims a genuine sense of identity and homeland amongst such powerful cultural structures that purposely confine individuation to a specific set of standards.

Robinson grew up in a military family and relocated 10 times between the ages of 1 and 15 in various countries and within the United States. Due to the itinerant nature of her upbringing, the artist's sense of home and self is a meld of traditions shared from her parents



*De Donde Soy (where I'm from), detail, 2019,*  
cyanotype on cotton muslin, 60" x 144"

of Mexican and Jewish heritage as well as her various environs. In *Delimitations*, the artist references this amalgamation of influences in her work titled *De Donde Soy*, where nine distinct flags made out of cotton muslin are sewn together and each represent places where she has lived. The work hangs as a traditional flag mounted on a wall, yet its exaggerated size extends onto the floor and consequently defies military tradition to protect flags from touching the ground lest they become soiled and defiled. Robinson's provocative gesture here displays how she actively makes a choice to become independent from the practices of the military, and from former home countries and states that dictated ideas of citizenry and belonging. The artist displays a similar patchwork-style artwork, *Los Intersticios (of no place/no time – Francisca's House)*, where cut-up strips of American flags are interspersed within an image from Google Earth of a home where Robinson's grandmother lived. Robinson once again breaks common flag presentation standards by extending the bottom right corner of this work to the floor. And, because the depiction of her grandmother's home is more visible within the work than the American flag, Robinson signals the power familial bonds have to inform the artist of who she is and where kinship forms rather than the regulations of a country or military entity.

For both *De Donde Soy* and *Los Intersticios*, the artist complicates her relationship with specific countries and states with her choice to use cyanotype to create the works, where white and blue colors dominate the palette and the ghostly imprints from soil, digital imagery, and rocks create the designs within the work. This process allows the artist to reimagine the color and figure symbology of flags, such as the Texas flag and the American flag, and thus challenge the varied levels of allegiance she had to perform as she relocated throughout her life. By collapsing the traditional colors and historical references associated with these flags, Robinson equates each nation and state with the same set of values—her own.



*De Donde Soy (where I'm from), 2019,*  
cyanotype on cotton muslin and flag holder, 60" x 144"

Robinson continues to deconstruct systems of authentication in her use of language throughout the exhibition. In the performance, *Generational Flag Bearer (Americana)*, held during a panel discussion led by Robinson, nine young girls raise and lower their hands in semaphore formations to spell each letter of the word "Americana" while wearing ponchos made with cyanotype and adorned with yellow fringe and small blue pom poms along the edges of the fabric. Notably, the performers do not speak the letters that they are signaling for viewers. And because semaphore is a specific communication type for those with an aviation or military background, this performance piece could remain entirely untranslatable for the majority of viewers. In addition, the word "Americana" presents a difficult term to decipher. The adjective indicates an American style or persona, yet it is unclear if Americana characteristics include the entire continent of the Americas or a specific period of time. It is here that the element of confusion enters into Robinson's work as a productive measure. In her



*Fortis Proposito*, 2022,  
cotton, tulle, cyanotype, 216" x 240"

Cover Panel: *Los Intersticios (of no place/no time – Francisca's house)*, 2020–2022,  
cyanotype on cotton muslin, cotton batting and American flags quilted, 96" x 120"

interest to connect with her Jewish and Mexican-American ethnicity, and to pinpoint her homeland, an inevitable amount of disorientation has occurred over time for the artist in terms of definitive ancestral ties and affinities. It is a difficult task to resolve such confusion when normative cultural traits affiliated with nationalism and patriotism prioritize place, language, and appearance as supposed legitimate markers that define and categorize an individual. For Robinson, none of these distinctions can be neatly packaged as her personal experience, but rather exist as an ever-evolving relationship. By immersing viewers in some semblance of confusion regarding the word communicated in *Generational Flag Bearer (Americana)*, the artist in fact translates an emotional state that she has navigated throughout her childhood and adulthood in order to manifest a sense of belonging: a lived experience that remains vulnerable and taxing.

Language continues to be explored by the artist with her pieces that reference samplers made in the late 18th century in North America. Embroidered samplers were produced by young girls to learn the alphabet, bible verses, numbers, and various embroidery techniques. Rather than attending school, a young girl's education consisted of creating samplers that helped prepare her for marriage and motherhood. In Robinson's version of samplers, she features punched holes instead of embroidery to form writing in Morse code that reads: "Hispanic," "Mexican-American," or "teacher." Similar to semaphore, Morse code is not a common communicative form and the artist investigates the role of confusion once again by implementing such text within her construction of the sampler. As an object that historically informed a young girl of her role to caretaker and nurture in society, Robinson explores the boundaries that American signifiers like samplers establish for her as well, but also how she has navigated beyond such social expectations known to Latinas, Jewish women, military families, mothers, and spouses. The artist's



*Sampler de me/mi [woman, person, mother, teacher, wife, me, mi], 2019,  
morse code punched into paper, 16" x 20"*

choice to puncture the surface of her sampler with a hole is a defiant and symbolic act that decisively leaves a gap. Such an effort displays how her body can leave room for many roles: Latina and Jewish, mother and professional, artist and caretaker.

As a unifying gesture, the work *Fortis Proposito* creates a visual aid to both see the majority of Robinson's work throughout the gallery space while also neutralizing the colors located within the entirety of the room. Made out of white cotton muslin and sheer tulle in large horizontal blocks respectively, *Fortis Proposito* is held up by wires hanging down from the ceiling in the middle of the gallery to offer a 360 degree view of Robinson's exhibition by looking through the work itself, and thus provides a throughline for Robinson's works to speak to each other. From artworks made in 2018 to the present, the artist has worked through a myriad of emotions regarding belonging, memory, and social regulations by way of the military. The large scale of the work and its stark white contrast from the blue hues throughout the gallery offers a respite

from the emotional conflicts Robinson speaks of in the other works in the exhibition space. As the *Fortis* droops downward towards a pool of fabric on the floor, it becomes a resting place and creates a moment to reflect.

When working with the structures of identity, there is a desire to approach the formation of the self with a "whole" resolution in mind as though there is one clear path where all questions are answered, kinship feels genuine, and where truth is complete. While Robinson recognizes the political and social figures who establish definitions of belonging to fabricate resoluteness, by blurring the confines of cultural and ethnic identifiers, Robinson ultimately takes solace in an existence that is multifaceted and rooted within a continuum. It is this endless unfolding that defines her barometer of authentication.

Tanya Gayer is a curator and writer based in Sheboygan, WI.

# Alexandra Robinson

## EDUCATION

2002 MFA, Painting/Sculpture, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

## SOLO AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2019 *A little accident, like any other*, Alexandra Robinson & Michael Kellner  
MASS Gallery, Austin, TX

2018 *State of Love and Trust*, Anoka-Ramsey Community College  
Cambridge Campus Gallery, Cambridge, MN

2015 *Silence of Yourself*, University of Oklahoma Lightwell Gallery,  
Oklahoma City, OK

2014 *Mineral Density*, UIU Bing-Davis Gallery, Fayette, IA  
*avatacrisco*, Fishtank Performance Studio, Kansas City, MO

2013 *PrettyUgly*, Red Space Gallery, Austin, TX

2010 *Consider the Source*, Alexandra Robinson & Michael Kellner,  
St. Edward's University Fine Arts Gallery, Austin, TX

2009 *Time Passes, Time Passes By*, Charlotte Street Foundation Project  
Space, Kansas City, MO

2008 *Pay ATTENTION*, Plenum Space, Kansas City, MO

2007 *Mixture*, University of Saint Mary Goppert Gallery, Leavenworth, KS

2006 *Untitled (Shadows)*, Underground Gallery, Kansas City Artists  
Coalition, Kansas City, MO

*Divine Proportion*, Highland Community College Yost Art Gallery,  
Highland, KS

2005 *Marking Time*, Carnegie Arts Center Stacks Gallery, Leavenworth, KS

2003 *Illumination*, University of Saint Mary Goppert Gallery, Leavenworth, KS

2002 *Thesis Exhibition*, University of Cincinnati DAAP Gallery,  
Cincinnati, OH

2001 *Mappings*, University of Cincinnati 840 Gallery, Cincinnati, OH

2000 *Paintings*, Wiedeman Architecture Firm, Kansas City, MO

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022 *ARTexchange*, Columbia College Chicago c33 Gallery, Chicago, IL

2021 *Who We Were/Who We Are/Who We Will Be*, curated by Amy  
Kligman, Charlotte Street Foundation, Kansas City, MO

*Crit Group Reunion*, curated by Andrea Mellard and Robin K.  
Williams, The Contemporary Austin, Austin, TX

*Se Ha Dicho!*, curated by Michael Anthony Garcia, Central Austin  
Public Library Gallery, Austin, TX

Making Lemonade, G-Spot Contemporary Art Space, Houston, TX

2020 *SECAC 2020 Members' Juried Online Exhibition*, guest juror Sarah  
Eckhardt, Anderson at VCUarts, Richmond, VA

*Transmissions*, curated by Tammie Rubin and Terra Goolsby, ICOSA  
Gallery, Austin, TX

*Crit Group 2020 Exhibition*, grayDUCK Gallery, Austin, TX

*Salina Biennial | Contemporary Art from the Mountain – Plains Region*,  
curated by Ksenya Gurshtein, Salina Art Center, Salina, KS

*At A Distance #4*, Online Exhibition, [www.alastriapress  
wordpress.com/exhibitions/aa4](http://www.alastriapress.wordpress.com/exhibitions/aa4)

2019 *Untitled (Open Space)*, juror Leslie Moody Castro, ICOSA Gallery,  
Austin, TX

*Hello Neighbor*, curated by vurv and Chicon Street Poets, dadageek,  
Austin, TX

*Interstellar Nepantla: Transcending Dreams, Realities, and Dimensions*,  
curated by Rebel Mariposa, Jess Gonzales, and Eliza Perez, The  
Movement Gallery, San Antonio, TX

*Tallgrass Prairie Artist Residency Exhibition*, Matfield Green, KS

*One for Us*, curated by Jaelynn Walls, Canopy, Austin, TX

2018 *Three Kinds of Order*, Dougherty Arts Center, Austin, TX  
*Gift*, Berry College Moon Gallery, Berry, GA

2016 *Not for Sale*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX  
*At the Edge*, Texas A&M Wright Gallery, College Station, TX

*Maintenance Mode*, Public Space 1, Iowa City, IA

2015 *All the Things*, Mom Gallery, Austin, TX

*Il Perception*, 2506 Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*One Cube Foot*, Texas Association of Schools of Art (TASA),  
Junction, TX

2013 *Something More Enduring*, Pump Project Satellite Space, Austin, TX  
*Limit(less)*, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, MI

2012 *Kansas City Flatfile*, Kansas City Art Institute H&R Block Artspace,  
Kansas City, MO

2011 *Art to the Making*, Stephens College Davis Art Gallery, Columbia, MO

2010 *Re-Collection*, Cocoon Gallery, Kansas City, MO  
*Kansas City Flatfile*, Kansas City Art Institute H&R Block Artspace,  
Kansas City, MO

2008 *48/3*, Walnut St. Space, Kansas City, MO  
*48/3*, Cocoon Gallery, Kansas City, MO

*Spring Fever*, Arts Incubator Gallery, Kansas City, MO  
*Kansas City Flatfile*, Kansas City Art Institute H&R Block Artspace,  
Kansas City, MO

2007 *Blue*, Arts Incubator Gallery, Kansas City, MO

2006 *Studio Residency Group Exhibition*, The Bank Gallery, Kansas City, MO  
*Video Installation*, Arts Incubator Gallery, Kansas City, MO

2003 *Every Picture Tells a Story*, Fahrenheit Gallery, Kansas City, MO

2002 *Small Works*, Arts Incubator Gallery, Kansas City, MO  
*A Formal Feeling Comes*, University of Cincinnati 840 Gallery,  
Cincinnati, OH

*Small Works*, Arts Incubator Gallery, Kansas City, MO

*A Formal Feeling Comes*, University of Cincinnati 840 Gallery,  
Cincinnati, OH

## PUBLIC ART

2017 *Butterfly Project*, St. Edward's University School of Natural Sciences  
John Brooks Williams Natural Science Center North, Austin, TX

*Butterfly Project*, St. Edward's University Munday Library, Austin, TX

2016 *Butterfly Project*, Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, TX

2009 *Nightshade*, Avenue of the Arts, Kansas City, MO

## RESIDENCIES

2019 Tallgrass Prairie Artist Residency, Matfield Green, KS

2014 Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts, Saratoga, WY

2010 Jentel Artist Residency, Sheridan, WY

2006 Cultural Project Studio Residency Program, Bonfils Studio,  
Kansas City, MO



*Generational Flag Bearer (Americana), 2022,*  
nine ponchos made with cyanotype on cotton muslin, chainette fringe, pom fringe, colonial style nails, 48" x 60"

## WOMEN & THEIR WORK

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Umbreen Ahmad**

**Emily Apollo**

**Connie Arismendi**

**Soledad Fernandez-**

**Whitechurch**

**Laura Garanzuay**

**Nicole Hughes**

**Francés J. Jones, Esq.**

**Kelley Cooper McClure**

**Margo Sawyer**

**Rose Sheehy**

**Judith Sims**

**Sally Strickland**

### STAFF

**Chris Cowden**, Executive Director

**Jordan Nelsen**, Gallery Director

**Diane Sikes**, Program Director

**Sofia Ruiz**, Design & Marketing Coordinator

*Photographs by Alexandra Vanderhider and  
Preston Rolls courtesy of Women & Their Work*

This project is supported in part by the  
National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work is a visual and performing arts organization located in Austin that serves as a catalyst for new ideas in contemporary art. Since 1978, Women & Their Work has created significant opportunities for artists and audiences to experience contemporary art through ambitious exhibitions, commissions of new work, performances and programs that inform audiences of all ages. We have actively developed the careers of more than 1,900 women artists, presenting 330 visual art exhibitions, 161 music, dance and theater events, 30 spoken word and literary performances, 16 film festivals and 770 programs & education workshops with the goal of ensuring that diverse women artists are equitably represented in all forms of art. Women & Their Work helps meet an important need in Texas providing exhibition and performance opportunities and helping to attract critical attention to the work produced here; it is the only organization of its kind in the region and one of the few organizations in

the United States that dedicates itself to the work of women artists. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *ArtForum*, and on *National Public Radio* and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2020, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art acquired the 42-year archive of Women & Their Work ensuring that our entire history of the work of women artists and our website will be preserved in perpetuity.



1311 E. Cesar Chavez St.  
Austin, Texas 78702  
(512) 477-1064  
info@womenandtheirwork.org  
womenandtheirwork.org

NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
for the **ARTS**  
arts.gov