

HEYDT

PRESS + EXHIBITION DOSSIER

Samantha Heydt

Newport Art Museum · Opens May 7, 2026

KITSCH | Art Bodega — a site-specific contribution to Play / Pretend.

installation · film · sculpture · photography · design · augmented reality

CONTENTS: Press release · Artist statements · Exhibition details · Packet manifest · Image captions · Press contact

Contents

- I Press Release**.....3
- II Artist Statements — Series Overview**.....5
- III Exhibition Details**.....10
- IV Packet Manifest**.....11
- V Suggested Image Captions**.....12
- VI Press Contact**.....13

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Play / Pretend

Featuring KITSCH | Art Bodega — a site-specific contribution by Samantha Heydt

Newport Art Museum · Opens May 7, 2026 · Reception 5:30–7:00 PM

There is a particular cruelty embedded in the act of play — not despite its innocence, but because of it. The child arranging dolls on a shelf, narrating lives they have not yet lived, is not escaping the world. She is rehearsing it. She is absorbing, without knowing it, the logic of roles, the grammar of desire, the architecture of a self that will one day be mistaken for her own. Heydt's contribution to Play / Pretend begins precisely here: at the moment when play stops being something we do and becomes something we are done by.

Heydt's practice has long operated at the fault line between the polished surfaces of mid-century American mythology and the ecological and existential rupture those surfaces were engineered to conceal. She calls this collision *Verschränkung* — quantum entanglement — the condition in which two systems, however distant, remain irrevocably bound. The dream of the good life and the reality of its cost are not opposites. They are entangled. They require each other. The nursery and the ruin are built from the same materials; the game and the ideology share the same rules.

What Play / Pretend stages as a curatorial proposition — that imagination is a lifelong act of authorship, that the child inventing a storyline and the adult constructing a public self are engaged in the same essential operation — Heydt takes as both diagnosis and subject. Her work investigates what she terms the sublime glitch: the persistence of domestic ritual, aesthetic pleasure, and the seductions of material culture precisely at the moment when their foundations are most visibly collapsing. We do not consume despite the catastrophe. We consume because of it — because the object on the shelf, the room arranged just so, the self narrated with sufficient conviction, holds the unbearable at a manageable distance. Play, in this reading, is not the opposite of reality. It is reality's primary coping mechanism.

The shop is the gallery. The gallery was always a shop. And the self, that most intimate of constructions, has been in rehearsal since the first time someone handed us a doll and said: now play.

It is no accident, then, that Heydt's site-specific contribution to this exhibition does not occupy the gallery. It occupies the shop. KITSCH | Art Bodega — her internationally itinerant pop-up concept space, with previous incarnations in Miami Beach, Newport, and Vienna — transforms the Museum Store into an immersive environment that refuses the clean separation between artwork and artifact, between the thing we contemplate and the thing we take home. Here, fine art collides with functional design. The precious sits beside the discarded. The rare is democratized, made available at every price point, stripped of the exclusivity that typically polices who gets to participate in aesthetic culture and who does not.

This is not commerce dressed as critique. It is critique that has had the honesty to admit it operates within the very system it interrogates. KITSCH does not pretend to stand outside consumption; it stages

consumption as the site of inquiry. Visitors are invited not merely to observe but to handle, to choose, to desire — and in doing so, to become briefly legible to themselves as subjects produced by exactly the forces the broader exhibition traces back to the playroom floor. The Semiotic Table of Idioms, presented within the KITSCH environment, extends this operation into language itself: idioms literalized as sculptures, dead logic made suddenly, uncomfortably material, the phrases absorbed in childhood now rendered as objects that must be physically navigated. Augmented reality elements dissolve the boundary between the institutional and the intimate, between the displayed and the lived, between the museum and the world outside it that the museum has always pretended not to resemble.

To play is to author. To pretend is, eventually, to become. What KITSCH proposes — and what Heydt's practice at large insists — is that the objects we surround ourselves with, the narratives we perform, the roles rehearsed from childhood onward, are never merely decorative. They are the mechanisms through which ideology reproduces itself as taste, as home, as self. The shop is the gallery. The gallery was always a shop. And the self, that most intimate of constructions, has been in rehearsal since the first time someone handed us a doll and said: now play.

Sam Heydt is a multidisciplinary artist working across installation, film, sculpture, photography, and design. KITSCH | Art Bodega has previously appeared in Miami Beach, Newport, and Vienna. Play / Pretend opens May 7, 2026 at the Newport Art Museum. Opening reception 5:30–7:00 PM, free and open to the public.



Artist Statements

Series overview, in the artist's words.

I make literal versions of figurative things. *A broken record. A fork in the road. A worlds-tiniest violin. The work begins where language stops being neutral — the moment a phrase you've said a thousand times starts to look strange.*

SCULPTURE

Semiotic Table of Idioms

LANGUAGE IS A SYSTEM WE INHERIT, NOT INVENT.

Our perception of reality is shaped by languages and associations given to us by society. Art offers an alternative language beyond words — one that constructs a view of the world unique to one's own understanding, outside the hyper-mediated realm of a semiotically structured society. Working literally with idioms as sculptural and material propositions, this series renders the invisible architecture of shared meaning visible, tangible, and strange.

ASSEMBLAGE

Heterotopia

THE MIRROR AND THE RUIN — A WORLD WITHIN A WORLD.

Drawing on Foucault's concept of the heterotopia — a real space that inverts or perfects society — this body of work collides two realities into a singular frame: events occurring simultaneously yet geographically estranged. We are in the epoch of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of colliding spacio-temporalities. Combining images of destruction with portrayals of the American Dream, Heydt confronts the disillusionment of our time with the ecological and existential nightmare it is responsible for. Harm here is harm there; illusion won't free us from reality.

ASSEMBLAGE · FILM

Complicit / Complacency

THE MEDIUM HAS SWALLOWED THE MESSAGE.

The world, no longer in focus, has succumbed to a blur of movement amid the obscurity of media images and endless distraction. In the space of post-history, all grand narratives dissipate as technological dependency diminishes the tangibility of experience. Our collective consciousness drifts sedated by the flickering screen and the false promises it proposes for the future it truncates. There is no reality outside representation — only a socially constructed system of meaning, ideologically encoded and semiotically spun.

ASSEMBLAGE · FILM

100 Seconds to Midnight

THE EDGE IS CLOSER THAN WE THINK.

For fifty years, corporate power has been glorified, consumption championed, and waste justified. Now we stand before a precarious future. The nature of the earnings that define late capitalism have incidentally dispossessed us of nature itself. Our time is marked by mass extinction, diminishing resources, global pandemic, and climate change. Working across film, installation, photography, sculpture, and text, Heydt presents a world on the periphery of history — one not only haunted by the ghosts of the past, but built on it.

ASSEMBLAGE

Carbon

PROGRESS IS A DESECRATION MASKED AS INDUSTRIALIZATION.

All transcendence has disappeared. The natural world has been liquidated and substituted with an artificial one. The silent landscape is a symptom of a world exploited beyond use and increasingly reduced to a bottom line. The nature of the earnings that define late capitalism have incidentally dispossessed us of nature itself — the ecological cost of progress is universal, and there is no outside to the collapse.

ASSEMBLAGE

Blind Spot

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND — BUT THERE IS A LIMIT TO EVERYTHING.

Illusion won't free us from reality, even as the sustained narrative of tabloids becomes history and the myth of progress continues to perpetuate inequality. The two-decade war waged against "terrorism" produced a mass refugee crisis; the pollution from overseas manufacturing drives global climate change. You cannot dislocate a rising sea level or reroute a cataclysmic storm. Yet for decades the West has proven successful in keeping the repercussions of its actions out of sight. Political dissidence is drowned out by the white noise of media, which sedates the social psyche with empty promises.

ASSEMBLAGE

Verschränkung

DISTANCE IS A FICTION OF THE PAST.

Taking its name from the physics term for quantum entanglement, this series collapses spacio-temporalities, abandoning the structural continuum within which reality resides. When particles exist in proximity, their quantum state becomes indistinguishable from one another. In the same vein, this work presents multiple histories and narratives within a singular frame — juxtaposing, colliding, and disrupting logical relationships between geographically estranged events, conflating the collective experience into a unified expression.

ASSEMBLAGE

Logic of Excess

CAPITALISM HAS CANNIBALIZED THE CIVILITY IN OUR CIVILIZATION.

This series critiques the excesses of consumerism and the societal impacts of late capitalism, unraveling the contradictions of modern life. In a landscape where the boundaries between lived experience and spectacle have dissolved, the simulacrum does not hide the truth — it reveals its total absence. Our indifference is the symptom of a profound moral and ecological decay.

COLLAGE

Interchangeable Faces

SUBVERTING THE PALIMPSESTIC BODY.

Colonized, commodified, and reshaped by market forces, the female body has historically been a site where cultural phenomenology and social perversions are inscribed. The state of the spectacle empties and nullifies every real identity; in its place, media offers ideologically infused avenues for identity construction. This series challenges imposed representations by embracing abstraction and encouraging a fluid understanding of gender and selfhood, insisting on more inclusive expressions of identity that refuse stable categorization.

ASSEMBLAGE

Natural Selection*THE FRAGILE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND MAMMAL.*

As humanity blindly marches through mass extinction, the economy takes precedence over the ecosystem. The complexity of conserving biodiversity is crippled by our growing disconnect from nature. A departure from reality, this series presents a visualization of harmonic cohabitation — a canonical proposition illustrating a mutual, symbiotic coexistence between humans and nature unknown to this world.

ANALOG · AR

Analog Ontologies (A/R Assemblage)*THE ANALOG WAS NEVER STABLE.*

The ideological fantasy of the physical image is its absolute fixity. In Analog Ontologies, Heydt does not simply augment static assemblages with digital movement — she exposes the truth that the analog was never stable to begin with. By layering augmented reality onto material works, she triggers a spatial short-circuit: the AR is not an artificial overlay, but the traumatic intrusion of the real, revealing the spectral machinery already operating beneath the surface. Through this dialectic, she reclaims AR to confront reality's inherent performativity.

COLLAGE · PHOTOGRAPHY

Decaying Values*MEMORY IS PRODUCED, NOT INHABITED.*

Memories of the past are dictated by the present. Although no object is counted on more for its mnemonic power, a photograph is not inhabited by memory — it produces it. A fugitive testimony to a moment lost, the image painted by light counterfeits an instance. Identity is constructed as much on the memories chosen to forget as those chosen to keep — like the photos you frame or tear apart, versions of yourself deemed acceptable or unacceptable. This series aims to deteriorate the positivist discourse of photography's relationship with truth.

ASSEMBLAGE · DIORAMA

Falling Is Like This*THE FRAGILITY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.*

An exploration of intimacy, rupture, and the space between connection and loss. Original analog assemblages in white frames, each a singular and irreducible moment. The androcentric concept of sexuality that associates penetration with the exploration of hidden depths and the achievement of power and knowledge is unmasked as necrophiliac. By constructing a lover/narrator, the series unsettles perceptions of love in an era of gender fluidity and technologically mediated intimacy. Sexuality requires a basic human sameness from which a host of differences emerge that may or may not be gendered. Perspectives of attachment, existentialism, and neuroscience would argue that individuals can only exist

within relationship and thus the notion of an autonomous self is a myth, an attempt to disavow our inherent embeddedness with others. Yet, as interpersonal dimensions of interaction expand with the rise of technologically mediated communication, 'genuine' face-to-face relationships erode while interconnectivity and digital entanglement expand.

UNIQUE ARTWORKS

Unique Artworks

SINGULAR WORKS — EACH ONE OF ONE.

A group of non-editioned, one-of-one works held outside any series and offered individually. Original analog assemblages and framed mixed-media pieces, each complete in itself and irreproducible — the singular counterpart to the editioned bodies of work, where the gesture is made once and cannot be made again.

ASSEMBLAGE · FRAMED

Apocalypse Yesterday

THE END HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

Catastrophe rendered as nostalgia — the apocalypse not as a coming event but as something already remembered, already absorbed into the furniture of the everyday. Small framed assemblages collapse the spectacular into the domestic, until the end of the world reads as one more image we have learned to live beside.

ASSEMBLAGE · DIORAMA

Do Not Inventory

THE UNCOUNTABLE, COUNTED.

A diorama series that turns the language of stock, supply, and accession against the art object itself. To inventory is to assign value, to make legible to the market; Do Not Inventory stages the absurdity of cataloguing the very things that resist quantification, the ledger as both apparatus and target.

ASSEMBLAGE

Pin Ups Pinned Up

THE DESIRABLE IMAGE, FILED AND ADMINISTERED.

Playing cards mounted on clipboards turn the pin-up into paperwork — the eroticized female figure processed, sorted, pinned in place. Heydt exposes the bureaucratic underside of desire, the way the image of woman is catalogued and circulated like any other unit of exchange.

AR · PHOTOGRAPHY

Polaroids

MEMORY IS PRODUCED, NOT INHABITED.

Augmented-reality Polaroids reanimate the analog snapshot, exposing the fiction at the heart of the photograph: that it preserves a moment rather than manufacturing one. The image painted by light counterfeits an instant; here the static frame is set back into motion, and memory is revealed as something made, not found.

ASSEMBLAGE

Sublime Glitch

WHERE THE PERFECT IMAGE BREAKS.

The sublime glitch is the persistence of pleasure and ritual precisely at the moment their foundations collapse. In the rupture of the seamless image — the error, the artifact, the break in the surface — the constructed nature of the picture becomes briefly, uncomfortably visible. The flaw is not the failure of the image; it is its truth.

ASSEMBLAGE

Women in the Middle*CENTERING WHAT IS PUSHED TO THE MARGIN.*

The female figure caught between competing gazes — hung in yellow frames, held in tension between how she is seen and how she is sold. Heydt places at the center of the frame the body that ideology habitually pushes to the edge, refusing the marginal position assigned to it.



Exhibition Details

Exhibition	Play / Pretend
Artist contribution	KITSCH Art Bodega — a site-specific environment by Samantha Heydt, sited in the Museum Store
Featured work	The Semiotic Table of Idioms (300+ literalized idioms) presented within the KITSCH environment, plus selections from Falling Is Like This, Logic of Excess, Square Dioramas, AR Assemblage, and BirdCage
Venue	Newport Art Museum, Newport, Rhode Island
Opening	May 7, 2026 · Reception 5:30–7:00 PM, free and open to the public
Works on hand	551 works across 8 sections (sculpture, A/R, unique artworks, series, collections, merchandise, decor, film) and 19 series
KITSCH lineage	Previous incarnations in Miami Beach, Newport, and Vienna
Press preview	By appointment — contact samanthaheydt@gmail.com
Hi-res images	Available on request — see Image Captions below

About the artist

Samantha Heydt (b. April 20, 1986, New York City) is an American social practice and recycled media artist. Working primarily with discarded material — newspaper clippings, photographs, magazines, advertisements — she marries images of destruction with portrayals of the American Dream, exposing the epistemological frameworks that shape how we read both. Her practice spans sculpture, framed assemblage, ceramic, photography, installation, augmented reality and film, unified by an ongoing inquiry into the gap between what we say and what we mean. The work moves between advocacy and absurdity, between the ecological-existential nightmare of late capitalism and the small, stubborn defense of the joke as a serious tool.

Born and raised in New York, Heydt has lived and worked in Paris, Venice, Amsterdam, Athens, Buenos Aires, Sydney, Reykjavík, Udaipur, and Vienna — a global itinerary that runs as undercurrent through the recycled media at the core of her practice. Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.) and the State Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg, Russia), among others.

More at www.samheydt.com.

IV

Packet Manifest

Every accompanying file in the dossier, and how to use it.

HEYDT_Dossier.pdf / .docx	This document. Press release, full series statements, exhibition details, packet manifest.	Word + PDF
HEYDT_Inventory.xlsx	Color-coded 551-row inventory. Status dropdown (In Inventory / Sold / Hold / Returned), per-section row tints, summary sheet with COUNTIF totals.	Excel
HEYDT_Contact_Sheet.pdf	Improved 38-page contact sheet with section dividers, accent colors per section, and background-removed thumbnails.	PDF
HEYDT_Name_Tags_Avery5160.pdf	531 name tags formatted for FungLam / Avery 5160 (1" × 2-5/8", 30 per page) shipping address labels. Print directly on the label sheet — no trimming required.	PDF
HEYDT_Artist_Statement_Labels_4x5.pdf	13 series statements formatted for 4" × 5" laser/inkjet labels (4 per Letter page) — wall-ready.	PDF
HEYDT_Consignment_Catalog_FINAL.pdf	Complete 591-page consignment book — every work full-page with image, label, dimensions, edition, price. Now includes Unique Artworks (sec 3) and Series (sec 4).	PDF
HEYDT_Social_Media_Pack.docx / .pdf	Pre-written posts (IG, FB, X, LinkedIn, Threads) + Reels script + hashtag library.	Word + PDF
HEYDT_Social_Pack_NewWorks.docx	Third-person social posts for the new Unique Artworks and Series — ready-to-post captions with details and hashtags.	Word
HEYDT_Gallery_Tags.pdf	Printable gallery wall labels for the new works — each piece printed once per edition unit (the x-number), 10 per Letter page.	PDF

V

Suggested Image Captions

For press use. Pair each caption with the corresponding hi-res image, available on request.

IMAGE 01 — Bull's-Eye

Bull's-Eye, 2025. Sculpture on ceramic tile, 4×8 in. From the Semiotic Table of Idioms. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

IMAGE 02 — Captive Audience — Little People in Jars

Captive Audience — Little People in Jars, 2025. Mixed media in glass jars, dimensions variable. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

IMAGE 03 — BirdCage

BirdCage, 2024. Film installation with iPhone 6, 6×14×4 in. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

IMAGE 04 — World in the Palm of My Hand

World in the Palm of My Hand, 2025. Sculpture on ceramic tile, 4×8 in. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

IMAGE 05 — Falling Is Like This

Falling Is Like This (I–XI), 2024–25. Eleven-part photographic and assemblage series. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

IMAGE 06 — Analog Ontologies (A/R Assemblage)

Analog Ontologies, 2025. Augmented-reality installation, twenty parts. Photo: courtesy of the artist.

VI

Press Contact

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Hi-res images, install shots, and interview availability on request.

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