



University Art Gallery  
712 Arts Plaza  
Claire Trevor School of the Arts  
University of California, Irvine  
Irvine, CA 92697-2775  
(949) 824 9854  
gallery@uci.edu  
uag.arts.uci.edu

Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00 – 6:00 p.m.

## PRESS PREVIEW KIT

### *Schmitt, You and Me*

### Omar Mismar

Curated by Juli Carson

On View: October 7 - December 16, 2017

Opening Reception: October 7, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm



**IRVINE, Calif.** – UC Irvine’s Room Gallery is proud to present Omar Mismar’s video installation *Schmitt, You and Me* as part of the UAG’s Emerging Artist Series, curated by Juli Carson.

Mismar’s body of work – equally influenced by conceptual art, critical studies and design – is project driven. His process entails drifting through a given city, clinging parasitically onto different frameworks and situations, wherein he forms temporary alliances to the space and the publics he encounters. His latest video installation, *Schmitt, You and Me*, is a result of one such “drift.” While residing in Skowhegan, Maine, Mismar frequented a local gun shop, hanging out with its owner Bruce and shop manager Bailey. The two eventually took their new friend to a shooting range, giving him a crash course on guns and aiming. In turn, Mismar asked Bruce and Bailey if they would read excerpts from Carl Schmitt’s 1932 text *The Concept of the Political* on camera from their shop. At times humorous, at others serious, *Schmitt, You and Me* breaks all stereotypes, providing a portal into the country’s current psycho-political conflict.

We can read this *mise-en-scène* – Mismar’s performative return to Schmitt – through Chantal Mouffe’s lens of “radical democracy,” a theory founded on the ethics of agonistic politics in lieu of moralist consensus. For Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* is that which defines friend from enemy, ultimately resulting in the act of war. However, like many contemporary nation-states, Schmitt’s text troubles the reader, oscillating between certitude and ambivalence. Mouffe’s *On the Political* argues “with Schmitt against Schmitt” to conceive of his friend/enemy relationship quite differently. For Mouffe, the antagonistic relation is an ever-present possibility that cannot and should not be overcome. Instead of the friend/enemy eradicating one another, Mouffe proposes an agonistic relation that can be democratically articulated in different ways. As Mouffe puts it: “What democracy requires is drawing the we/they distinction in a way that is compatible with the recognition of the pluralism which is constitutive of modern democracy.” Simply, when we note the legitimacy of our opponents – when

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we see “them” as belonging to the same political association and sharing a common symbolic space – we avoid war.

In *Schmitt, You and Me*, Mismar’s collaborators have great difficulty uttering Schmitt’s archaic language, but nevertheless they speak Schmitt’s intentionality. As these protagonists read and re-read the historic but ambiguous text, we as viewers sense the entrapment that Schmitt’s ideas still create for us today, a cul-de-sac that Bruce and Bailey admittedly encounter themselves. In the end, they are compelled to ask: *Does Schmitt provide a solution to the friend-enemy-possibility-of-war concept?* It’s an apt question in our current geo-political crisis. And it’s one that Mismar’s art practice poetically begs us to ponder as a *critical, ethical act* of democratic resistance.

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### About the Artist and Curator

#### About Mismar:

Omar Mismar is a visual artist born in Lebanon. He holds an MFA in Fine Arts and an MA in Visual and Critical Studies from California College of the Arts. Mismar has taught at the American University of Beirut, the University of San Francisco, and California College of the Arts.

#### Carson Bio:

Juli Carson received her PhD from M.I.T. in the History, Theory and Criticism of Art Program in the Department of Architecture. Currently, she is Professor of Art History in the Art Department at UCIrvine, where she directs the Critical and Curatorial MFA Program and the University Art Galleries. She is author of *Exile of the Imaginary: Politics, Aesthetics, Love* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2007) and curator of the archival exhibition accompanying Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 1998). Her essays on conceptual art and psychoanalysis have been published in *Art Journal*, *Documents*, *October*, *Texte Zur Kunst* and *X-Tra*, as well as in numerous international anthologies and catalogues. Her most recent book is *The Limits of Representation: Psychoanalysis and Critical Aesthetics* (Buenos Aires: Letra Viva Press, 2011). Her forthcoming book, *The Conceptual Unconscious: A Poetics of Critique* will be published by PoLYpen, a subsidiary of b\_books.



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### ***Schmitt, You and Me* by Omar Mismar Fact Sheet**

**Exhibition:**

Exhibition Dates: October 7 - December 16, 2017  
Curated by Juli Carson

**Events:**

Opening Reception: October 7, 2017, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.  
Room Gallery

Artist Lecture: October 9, 2017, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.  
Contemporary Arts Center Colloquium Room 3021

**Location:**

Room Gallery  
1200 Art Culture Technology, Irvine, CA 92697-2775

**Description:** Mismar's latest video installation, *Schmitt, You and Me*, frames an exchange the artist has in Skowhegan with a pair of gun shop owners. The exchange is that they give him gun lessons and in turn they read excerpts from Carl Schmitt's 1932 text *The Concept of the Political* on camera from their shop. At times humorous, at others serious, *Schmitt, You and Me* breaks all stereotypes, providing a portal into the country's current psycho-political conflict.

**Gallery Hours:**

Tuesday - Saturday from 12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Free and open to the public.

**Parking:**

UC Irvine [Mesa Parking Structure](#), 4000 Mesa Rd., Irvine, CA 92617

**More Info:**

[www.arts.uci.edu](http://www.arts.uci.edu)  
<http://www.arts.uci.edu/event/schmitt-you-and-me-omar-mismar>

**Note to editors:**

Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from  
[Google Drive](#)  
(Key to images attached)

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## PRESS PREVIEW KIT IMAGE KEY

Room Gallery, Claire Trevor School of the Arts

***Schmitt, You and Me*** by Omar Mismar

Curated by Juli Carson

**Press Images:**



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1 – 4 Photo credit: Omar Mismar, "Schmitt, You and Me," video installation, 55' loop, 2016-2017. Courtesy of the artist.

The images are approved only for publication in conjunction with promotion of the exhibition. Reproductions must include the full caption information, and images may not be cropped or altered in any way or superimposed with any printing.

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### About the UAG

The University Art Galleries are committed to promoting an inter-generational dialogue between 60s/70s neo-avant-garde art and contemporary visual culture. Accordingly, the curatorial mission is to keep an eye on the modernist past while promoting the most innovative aesthetic and political debates of the post-modern present. From this vantage, the projects commissioned provoke intelligent debate on the subject of art in its most expansive poetic definition. What distinguishes the program is its unwavering commitment to publishing scholarly texts in catalogue/book form in order to disseminate research-based information into the community, providing a venue for the promotion of innovative discourse surrounding mixed media production today. The UAG program provides several exhibition platforms for inter-generational and interdisciplinary dialogue. The Major Works of Art Series commissions original projects by canonical artists working today. The Emerging Artist Series features solo projects by a set of younger artists informed by the legacies showcased in the Major Works series. The Critical Aesthetics Program commissions new work by internationally renowned mid-career artists. Augmenting this inter-generational dialogue, UAG also produces larger thematic group exhibitions alternately showcasing historical and contemporary art and film projects. UAG further promotes an active dialogue between UCI residents and the local and international art communities through colloquia, conferences, visiting artist lectures and theme-based films series, all of which are open to the public. As the galleries continue to mature, they stand committed to being an experimental exhibition space different from the current - but largely traditional - art biennial and film festival platforms.

### About UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts

As UCI's creative laboratory, the Claire Trevor School of the Arts explores and presents the arts as the essence of human experience and expression, through art forms ranging from the most traditional to the radically new. The international faculty works across a wide variety of disciplines, partnering with others across the campus. National-ranked programs in art, dance, drama, and music begin with training but end in original invention. Students come to UCI to learn to be citizen-artists, to sharpen their skills and talents, and to become the molders and leaders of world culture. For more information, please visit [www.arts.uci.edu](http://www.arts.uci.edu).