“IN THE SHADOW OF NUMBERS: CHARLES GAINES
SELECTED WORKS 1975-2012”
PRESENTED BY THE
POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART and PITZER ART
GALLERIES, PITZER COLLEGE

“In the Shadow of Numbers: Charles Gaines Selected Works 1975-2012” will be on view September 4 through October 21, 2012, at the Pomona College Museum of Art and the Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College, in Claremont. The exhibition consists of photographs, sculptures, video, and drawings from several bodies of Gaines’s work over several decades, including the Explosion, Randomized Text: History of Stars, Night/Crimes, Shadows, and the Walnut Tree Orchard series. “In the Shadow of Numbers” represents a significant overview of the contemporary artist’s work to date.

“In the Shadow of Numbers: Charles Gaines Selected Works 1975-2012” will have public receptions, at both locations, on Saturday, September 15 from 4-6 p.m. On Thursday, September 20, from 7-8 p.m. the Lone Wolf Recital Corp featuring Charles Gaines will present an evening of electronic, digital, and acoustical sound at the Pomona College Museum of Art. On Tuesday, October 16 at 2:45 p.m. Gaines will present an artist lecture at Pitzer College.

Over the past forty years, Charles Gaines has investigated the relationships between aesthetic experience, political beliefs, and the formation of meaning, employing systems and rule-based procedures to explore how we experience and derive meaning from images, language, and art. Often linked with early Conceptualists who came to prominence in the 1960s, Gaines developed a practice that focuses on issues of subjectivity, as well as traditional formal and material concerns. His identification with John Cage’s examinations of indeterminacy may be seen in his use of metaphors, metonyms, and other linguistic tools.

On view at the Pomona College Museum of Art are several works that bridge the sublime and the documentary, in which night sky imagery is combined with texts or found photographs. The 1995 Night/Crimes series—representing the first of Gaines’s “Disaster Narratives”—explores how emotions can be manipulated by unsettling and traumatic images. A constellation of stars is placed below a photograph of a convicted
white man and unrelated murder crime scene, and separated by text identifying the location of both the murder and particular portion of sky. For Randomized Text: History of Stars (2006-08), Gaines pairs photographs of the night sky with textual drawings of randomly-sequenced sentences from Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.

*Skybox I* (2011), a large-scale sculptural installation, is a twelve-foot-long light box with photographs of four political texts on its surface. Spanning three hundred years and several continents, these texts combine to present a complex global perspective ranging from oppression and colonization to liberty, democracy, and freedom. As with much of Gaines’s work, *Skybox I* juxtaposes text with image, which in this case is revealed at regular intervals when the gallery lights dim, making visible LED lights that shine through thousands of laser-cut holes on the sculpture’s surface. The configuration of text and image and the arbitrary nature of their pairing generate connections and unanticipated meanings that encourage a nuanced understanding of the world reflected around us.

Gaines’s series of triptychs, *Walnut Tree Orchard* (1975-2012), each comprising three seamlessly joined panels, links the artist’s works installed at the Pomona College Museum of Art with those on view 1,000 yards away at Pitzer Art Galleries. On display at Pitzer is the fourth and most recent iteration of this larger series. Three other works in the series, which as a whole spans thirty-seven years of the artist’s practice, are on display at Pomona. Each triptych consists of a photograph of a solitary walnut tree, leafless and skeletal, followed by two drawings—the first of which traces the image of the tree while the other charts the previous drawings and photographs of trees in the series to date using a numerical grid system. Equally productive and expandable, Gaines’s *Shadows* series (1978-1980) uses four panels—two photographs, one tracing, and a numerically plotted drawing—to map the silhouette of a potted plant and its shadow turned at intervals of 90 degrees and systematically tracked over the subsequent polyptychs.

Despite Gaines’s rigorous conceptualism, mysterious and emotive elements subtly prevail and intentionally rupture the purity of his formal system. This is clearly visible in the *Explosion* series (2006-2008). These diptychs feature large-scale drawings of mysterious explosions, painstakingly rendered in pencil, paired with small, framed panels of text that phlegmatically describe various uprisings against extraordinarily cruel imperialist and colonialist powers throughout history. Similarly, *Black Ghost Blues Redux* (2008), the sole video work in the show, articulates the experience of an oppressed group transcribed through the musical form of another subjugated culture; in this case, a young Korean woman singing the Lightnin’ Hopkins’s blues song, *Black Ghost Blues*.

The exhibition of Charles Gaines’s work is the forty-third in the Pomona College Museum of Art’s Project Series and the nineteenth exhibition at Pitzer Art Galleries, Pitzer College. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition and includes writing by the artist, an essay by Michael Ned Holte, and an introduction by Rebecca McGrew and
About Pomona College Museum of Art
The Project Series, organized by Museum Senior Curator Rebecca McGrew, presents Southern California artists in focused exhibitions. A catalogue accompanies each exhibition. The Project Series is supported in part by the Pasadena Art Alliance.

The Pomona College Museum of Art is located at 330 N. College Avenue, Claremont. The Museum is open to the public free of charge Tuesday through Sunday, from noon to 5 p.m. and Thursday, from noon to 11 p.m. For more information, call (909) 621-8283 or visit the museum’s Website: www.pomona.edu/museum.

About Pitzer Art Galleries
Pitzer Art Galleries exists to provide visually arresting and memorable exhibitions that promote the value and understanding of contemporary art within a local, national and international context. The Galleries, located on Pitzer College campus, are comprised of two sites, the Nichols Gallery—committed to solo and group exhibitions by national and international artists both emerging and established—and the Lenzner Family Art Gallery—a space for risk and experimentation dedicated to emerging artists working in all media. Through curatorial creativity and visionary programming Pitzer Art Galleries seeks to provide context, support and a critical framework for artists and curators working today and by doing so inspire meaningful dialogue that fascinates, inspires and invigorates.

The Pitzer Art Galleries are located at 1050 N. Mills Avenue, Claremont. The Galleries are open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit the website www.pitzer.edu/galleries.

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IMAGES AVAILABLE
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