At UT’s Visual Arts Center, two shows are both timely in their own right.

In October 2021 President Biden issued a proclamation honoring Native Americans and their contributions to American society in what could be considered a redefining of Columbus Day. Acknowledging the historical genocide, discrimination and destruction of America’s Indigenous peoples marks a shift — between a past that celebrates a European male colonizer and a future that rethinks history, raises awareness and pushes the discourse forward.

The timely exhibition, “Carolina Caycedo and David de Rozas: The Blessings of the Mystery” on view at UT’s Visual Arts Center (VAC), probes issues relating to Indigenous people of West Texas, including
environmental activism, land rights, and how information around these matters has migrated and been defined.

Originally organized by Ballroom Marfa and curated by Laura Copelin and Daisy Nam, the VAC version (organized by MacKenzie Stevens), fills up two galleries and a video screening room. Los Angles based artists, Caycedo and David de Rozas cue their own collaborative artwork as well as a number of other historical sources, artifacts and material culture, prompting questions about the identity of West Texas and the concept of property ownership.

The show begins with two large-scale installations. Expanding across one wall is “Hanging and Quartering” (2020) made from tape, survey flags and spray paint in pink, blue, yellow, black and white. Like a massive Malevich-esque Suprematist painting, the design is dynamic, but reflects the geometrical divisions, sections and segments in Austin’s historical city plan. Flags colors represent the original color coding that indicated such natural resources as water and gas.

![Image of the artwork](image_url)

*Detail of “Measuring the Immeasurable” which hangs from the gallery ceiling. Photo by Erin Keever*
In the gallery’s center hangs a vertical multi-component sculpture called “Measuring the Immeasurable” (2020) made from what appears to be every known tool related to the measuring and mapping of land. Objects like orange safety vests, measuring wheels, poles, tripods, compasses and levels are suspended from wires, and while not fully kinetic, suggest the dance done by humans, as they survey and engineer, oblivious to the layers of history embedded in the earth below them.

An exhibition label poses the questions: “What is the exactitude of a science that reduces the land to straight lines, numbers, and economical value? What is missed or lost through this process? Whose rights are forgone when this happens?”

Also, on view in this room are some of the artist pair’s detailed pen and ink drawings of the development of fencing types as well as a large color pencil on paper drawing called “Somi Sek (The Land of the Sun — La tierra del Sol)” (2020).
Somi Se'k is a way the Carrizo Comecrudo Tribe refer to the area surrounding the Rio Grande, Chihuahuan Desert, and the Rio Grande Valley. More than a name, it represents a complex net of fluctuating ideas about time and place.

A bird’s eye view map reveals different aspects of earth and sky depicting evidence of human intervention, diverse bodies of water and animal life associated with the region and even an endangered eyeless catfish found in a cave at the Amistad National Recreation Area, able to cross borders via underground water routes.

An exhibition label states: “The drawing functions as a counter-geography that visually represents the stories of some of the human and non-human relatives that inhabit these lands.”
Adding to its pedagogical heft, the exhibition includes the loan from Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas of several 1930s watercolors by Forest and Lula Kirkland. These rarely exhibited watercolors recreate the pictographs found at rock art sites of the Lower Pecos before they were damaged by environmental threats such as flooding and erosion. Other items from UT’s Texas Natural History Collections (Billie L. Turner Plant Resources Center and Austin Core Research Center), like cuttings from different cactus specimens, jarred fish species and soil samples offer additional an understanding of the land and its biodiversity.

Collages of vintage postcards advertising West Texas attractions remind viewers of tourism’s role in the commodification of land, while a vintage edition of the Hasbro game King Oil hits home misdirected American capitalist values. (King Oil is a game in which children can divvy up land parcels on a plastic board, buy pipelines, and drill for oil as they ultimately try to bankrupt one another.)
Rounding out Caycedo’s and de Rozas’ multi-disciplinary approach is a digital video installation of 47-minute film “The Teaching Hands” (2020). The panoramic video brings together experimental visuals, archival footage, images of rock art and artifacts, and re-enactments, focusing on history and philosophies of the Carrizo Comecrudo Tribe and narrated by Juan Mancias, Chairman of the Carrizo Comecrudo Tribe of Texas. Prior to seeing this exhibition, I was unfamiliar with the tribe, but found I’m not the only one. The tribe’s site addresses their lack of representation stating,

“The Carrizo/Comecrudo has hidden well in the pages of history, as they have hidden in present day society. If the hiding was for preservation of survival, poor information gathering by early Europeans, lack of interest in a less aggressive tribe, or poor anthropological interest, or the Christian perspective of peyote, nevertheless, this little written about nation manages to leave historical trails.”

Learning about the tribe, their resistance and the complicated relationships between West Texas’ land and its people was a pleasure. Caycedo and de Rozas have helped open up the dialogue and reshape
relationships between West Texas’ land and its people was a pleasure. Caycedo and de Rozas have helped open up the dialogue and reshape our understanding of Indigenous history in one Texas region applicable to the geography beyond it.

A very different type of exhibition focusing on an individual artist’s voice is also on view at the VAC. San Antonio artist Joey Fauerso has been on my radar for some time, in name more than any real understanding of her practice. Her show “Wait for It,” puts forward an artist in her prime and making the most of what’s available to her.

The work in this show was made mostly during lockdown. It includes paintings, prints and drawing as well as a four-channel video installation. Show stealers include the two massive acrylic on canvas paintings “The Waiting Room,” (2020) awarded its own room near the back of the exhibition, and “Crawling Through Pando #2” installed on the floor at its entrance.

At nearly 12 feet long and seven feet high, “The Waiting Room” features a new type of reclining nude. On back instead of side, the monumental female subject gazes at the ceiling not the viewer, although her dog left of center gazes right at her. Like an art filled salon, framed and unframed images in the background fill up the composition. Dreamy painted landscapes, exotic collectibles and the label tells us, a painting of Eva Hesse are just parts of the collection.
“Crawling through Pando 2” lies on the ground, bent and mounted on a steel pole, so it’s kinked and rising up off the floor. Portrayed is a figure crawling towards another that leans back as if engaged in some sort of negotiation. Immersed in a monochromatic version of Utah Forest’s colony of trees, reminiscent of Wifredo Lam’s “The Jungle,” the long horizontal painting seduces the viewer while the narrative remains a mystery.
Fauerso’s primarily black and white palette continues in the absorbing video installation “You Destroy Every Special Thing I Make” (2017-2019). As soon as sets of geometric Constructivist looking sculptures are assembled and erected, they are noisily demolished, toppling into heaps. Enlisting her sons and other performers to play out actions in her studio, the artist incorporates her family and allusions to domestic attachments into unpredictable scenarios. Though staged the videos fluctuate between feeling scripted and spontaneous.

![Installation view of Joey Fauerso’s video “You Destroy Every Special Thing I Make” at the UT Visual Arts Center. Photo: Sandy Carson](image)

Many of Fauerso's work’s subtly expose facets of her experience as a mother and womanhood. Quarantining and our common experience of wrestling with the idea of having to stay in one place comes through. A group of monoprints called ”Holding Patterns” depict bound objects and human figures engaged in carrying one another, leaning on each other or on all fours.

The exhibition title comes from a 2021 poem of the same name, by San Antonio-based poet, Jenny Browne. The last lines state “Watch how she imagines herself a boarding pass to anywhere waves crash without asking or having to ask.”
Judiciously curated, “Wait for It” highlights an artist drawing from life and from an inner world in smart ways. The cogent group of work comes across as grounded in introspection laced with humor and an overall openness.

“Carolina Caycedo and David de Rozas: The Blessings of the Mystery” and “Joey Fauerso: Wait for It” are both on view through Dec. 31 at the Visual Arts Center in the Art Building, 2301 San Jacinto Blvd., University of Texas campus, utvac.org