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Catalina Schliebener's *Growing Sideways* explores gender formation and erotic curiosity

Exhibition runs through October 24 at BCA;

Closing Conversation on October 23

Boston, MA (October 13, 2021) – Using found objects like Sock Monkeys and pink erasers, abstracting Disney and Dick and Jane characters in wall vinyl and collage, and mixing hand-cut and hand-drawn original work, Chilean-born, Brooklyn-based artist Catalina Schliebener has transformed Boston Center for the Arts' Mills Gallery into an immersive exploration of gender formation and erotic curiosity in the exhibition *Growing Sideways*. Kicking off BCA's 1:1 series, *Growing Sideways* runs through October 24 with a closing conversation featuring the artist, curator, and special guests on October 23.

Curated by John Chaich, *Growing Sideways* is anchored in a series of dozens of collages that frame the pink-painted Mills Gallery space. The work culminates in a site-specific, floor-to-ceiling installation, growing across two- and three-dimensional surfaces and creating a disjointed narrative.

The exhibition takes its title from queer scholar Kathryn Bond Stockton's notion that in contrast to the normative view of "growing up", the non-straight child "grows sideways"



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through life-long, lateral interactions between childhood motivations and adult identifications. For Stockton, queer children "grow meanings by putting people and things rather oddly besides themselves." In this installation, Catalina Schliebener explores whether gender is prosthetic, time is fluid, and the past is present.

The artist culls content from coloring books, Dick and Jane books, Disney cartoons, and etiquette and craft guides to create a personal lexicon and abstract storyline through collage, accented by hand-drawings in graphite. Careful but playful, these pieces traverse the gallery walls in a consistent, clean line amid vinyl shapes that expand in scale, density, and repetition, in conversation with a range of found objects arrayed throughout the gallery. Schliebener's world grows sideways through the space, inviting contemplation and interaction.

Exhibition Closing Conversation

The exhibition will host a [closing conversation in BCA's Mills Gallery on Saturday, October 23 from 6pm-7:30pm](#). For this *Growing Sideways* closing conversation, Schliebener will be in conversation with Philadelphia-based artist Samantha Nye, whose exhibition *My Heart's in a Whirl* is currently on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In their practices and friendship, the two artists bring connected but divergent approaches to gender, queerness, age, materiality, and space. The two artists will be joined by their exhibitions' curators, John Chaich and Michelle Millar Fisher.

The exhibition also features a catalogue created by artist and designer Zoë Pulley containing specially created pull-out artwork by Schliebener.

Growing Sideways is the first in BCA's *1:1 Curatorial Initiative*, a series of shows that are collaborative projects between one artist and one curator.

Growing Sideways is on view in the Mills Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts, 551 Tremont Street, Boston through October 24, Wednesdays through Saturdays from 1pm-6pm. Admission is free for both the exhibition and the October 23 closing conversation.

Quote from the artist Catalina Schliebener:

"I play with images and objects coded with social norms, shaping them and placing them in relation to each other so they create tension and fusion in new ways. For me, that is so often what happens in childhood and in the emergence of gender identity. And by colliding and merging pedagogical objects tailored to children by adults — often meant to instill and enforce social norms — I explore the ways children then play with, subvert, and adopt them to explore and express their own emerging gender identities."



Quote from curator John Chaich:

“Catalina’s idiosyncratic choices — the playful placement of thrift store objects, intuitive cutting of printed matter into shapes by hand, ambiguous accents drawn in graphite, and the surprising reconfiguration of recognizable body parts and icons — encourage close inspection and self-reflection.”

Quote from Randi Hopkins, Director of Visual Arts, Boston Center for the Arts:

“We are delighted to present this striking, site-specific installation in the Mills Gallery. Growing Sideways kicks off BCA’s new *1:1 Curatorial Initiative* series. *1:1* is a series of one-person shows that are collaborative projects between one artist and one curator.”

About artist Catalina Schliebener (she/they):

A visual artist who works primarily with collage, installation, and murals, Schliebener’s work draws on images, objects, and narratives associated with childhood and explores gender, sexuality, and class. Their work has been exhibited in Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Santiago, Chile), Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art (New York, NY), Centro Cultural de España (Santiago, Chile), Centro Cultural Recoleta (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Center for Books Arts (New York, NY), Catalyst Arts (Belfast, Northern Ireland), Tiger Strikes Asteroid (Brooklyn, NY), Hache Galería (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Galería Jardín Oculito (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Galería Metropolitana (Santiago, Chile), and Bureau of General Services-Queer Division (New York, NY), among others.

A recipient of multiple FONDART Grants (Cultural and Arts Development Fund of the Government of Chile), Schliebener also received grants from DIRAC (Board of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Relations of Chile) and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts (New York, NY). They also received a Queer Artist Fellowship from the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art (2017), and an Artist in the Marketplace (AIM) Fellowship from the Bronx Museum of the Arts (2018).

In addition, Schliebener has extensive teaching experience, from early childhood education to undergraduate education, on topics ranging from philosophy and art theory to art instruction in schools, studios, and museum settings. They are currently working as a teaching artist with the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, and facilitates gender and sexuality trainings for the Early Childhood Professional Development Institute at the City University of New York (CUNY). They received a Bachelor of Philosophy and a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Universidad de Arte y Ciencias



Sociales (ARCIS; Santiago, Chile).

Represented by [HACHE GALERÍA](#) in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Instagram: [@CATALINA_SCHLIEBENER](#)

Website: www.catalinaschliebener.com

About curator John Chaich:

John Chaich is an independent curator and designer interested in otherness, materiality, and communication. He has curated a range of traveling exhibitions including *Mixed Messages: A(l)DS, Art, and Words*, produced for Visual AIDS at La MaMa Galleria, New York, and *Transformer*, Washington, DC; *Queer Threads: Crafting Identity & Community* at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, the Mills Gallery at the Boston Center for the Arts, and the San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles; *Vivek Shraya: Trisha* at the Ace Hotel New York; *Queering the BiblioObject* at the Center for Book Arts; and *Shaun Leonardo: The Breath of Empty Space* at MICA, MASS MOCA, and the Bronx Museum of the Arts. With Todd Oldham, he edited the coffee table book *Queer Threads*, which received the American Library Association's 2018 Israel Fishman Non-Fiction Award. Chaich received his MFA in Communications Design from Pratt Institute, NY, where he is a visiting instructor.

Website: www.chaichcreative.com.

About Boston Center for the Arts:

[Boston Center for the Arts \(BCA\)](#) supports working artists to create, perform, and exhibit new works; develops new audiences; and connects the arts to community, and has for over five decades engaged the creative community for public good. While the organization's physical residence is in the historic South End, BCA touches every part of Boston's cultural ecosystem. A leading force in the city's cultural community, BCA has supported thousands of individual artists, small organizations and performing arts companies, who add depth and dimension to the Boston arts ethos. Through residencies and programming, BCA serves as an epicenter for an expanding cohort of artists working across all disciplines, and has catalyzed careers by providing fertile ground for experimentation and artistic risk-taking.

Photography and more information:

- [Exhibition photos – photo credit – Melissa Blackall](#)
- [Catalina Schliebener: Growing Sideways](#)

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