

# UC Santa Cruz

## Refract: An Open Access Visual Studies Journal

### Title

Cough, Spit, Swallow

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3nk5h6fw>

### Journal

Refract: An Open Access Visual Studies Journal, 1(1)

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### Publication Date

2018

### DOI

10.5070/R71141464

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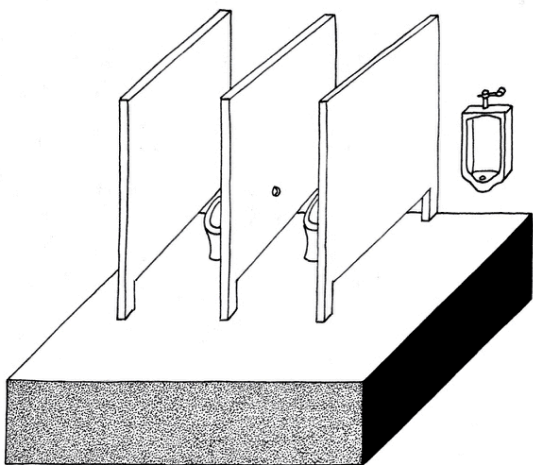
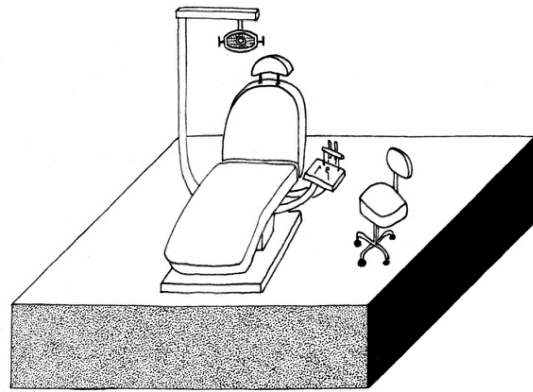
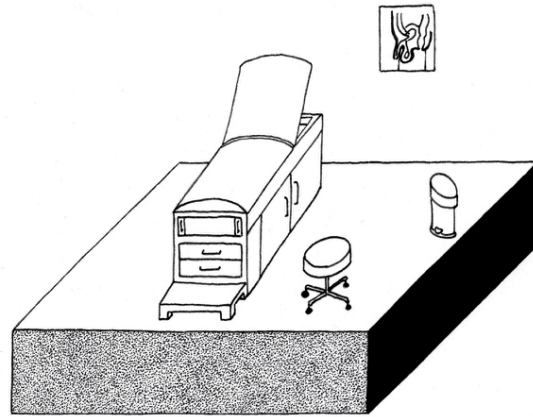


Figure 1 Mark Augustine and Joseph Carr, *Cough, Spit, Swallow*, 2018. Image courtesy the artists.

## *Cough, Spit, Swallow*

Mark Augustine and Joseph Carr

Culture is the beam of light flowing through the built environment and it is the medium that bends the stream of architecture and design. *Cough, Spit, Swallow* (2018) depicts three conventional sites of ritualized physical contact (intimacy) that have created unique, specialized, and broadly recognizable furniture: the exam table, the dental chair, and the glory hole (Figure 1). The work both satirizes conventional propriety and shows us a method of reading the messages inscribed in the seemingly mundane.

The wry title of the triptych evokes the specific activities that we may imagine in these spaces (a hernia exam, a dental procedure, and a blowjob) while the equanimity of the presentation asks us to consider these practices with impossible detachment. The technical motivations of the spaces' designers are juxtaposed with those of the marginal figure who adapts the bathroom stall for sexual purposes and who, from the hegemonic vantage point, is labeled a vandal and a pervert. Furthermore, there is a pun contained in the "professional" status of the health worker contrasted with that of the sex worker (the oldest profession). Through its humor, the work both acknowledges the prevailing distinctions between these social roles and satirically pokes at their validity.

In a Foucauldian gesture, the title highlights the activities that complement these spaces rather than the bodies that inhabit them. An exam table signals a patient where to sit, just as a stool places a medic in the scene. Likewise, a glory hole is an architectural intervention and an instruction. Nominally, public restroom partitions provide privacy to conceal people's actual proximity and vulnerability, whereas the glory hole reflects a mirror image of the partition as it provides anonymity while simultaneously exhorting exposure and contact. For observers, the architecture is a lens that draws these practices into focus, but for an imagined patient who moves through these situations, the architecture is a refractive medium that presents semiotic geometries of resistance and free flow.

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Mark Augustine is a full-time faculty member in the First Year Experience at the Maryland Institute College of Art. He holds an M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an M.A. in linguistics from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research interests include gendered and sexed spaces, the built

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A filmmaker and multimedia designer working and teaching in Baltimore, Joseph Carr received an M.F.A. in Studio from the Department of Film, Video, New Media and Animation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His creative interests are in technical photography, scientific illustration, and documentary. For the past several years, he has taught first year courses in art, design, and art history at the Maryland Institute College of Art. More of his work can be found on Instagram: biopoiesis.