

MSU BROAD

MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON: *FIELD STATION*

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY BROAD

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Matthew Angelo Harrison, *Dark Silhouette: Manifold Composition*, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Jessica Silverman Gallery.

Hybridity is a concept often invoked to describe the changing, multivalent nature of identity in the modern world. Detroit-based artist Matthew Angelo Harrison (b. 1989) engages this concept in his sculptural works, which combine disparate materials and processes, and seem simultaneously familiar and otherworldly. As an artist, Harrison works in between the fields of anthropology, cultural theory, engineering, and computer science, while he is equally versed in formal and aesthetic strategies. His sculptures often utilize or are fashioned out of found objects—specifically, wood carvings and animal skeletal remains from the African continent—which the artist 3D scans, embeds in resin, and carves using a CNC machine. Harrison also builds and programs his own large-scale 3D printers. He considers these technologies and the works he creates “prototypes”—speculative in nature, open-ended in their functionality.

Speaking to the many questions around identity his creative process raises, Harrison explains: “I think about identity on a macro scale. What is the process of forming an identity? What are the consequences of having an identity, and why do identities have the boundaries they do?” These questions manifest in the new works he created for his *Field Station* exhibition, which elaborate upon what he calls “abstracted ancestries.” Many of them move off of pedestals and onto the walls, playing with notions of the art object as commercial product, and curatorial strategy as interior decoration. Such seemingly contradictory perspectives are important to Harrison, especially when considering processes of identification. Hybridity is not always a smooth blending of sources. However, as the artist’s work suggests, the manufactured and the natural are not necessarily opposed—in art or in the formation of one’s identity.

Field Station

Field Station is an annual cycle of projects that features work by artists at different moments in their careers. With a particular focus on new terrain, the series emphasizes the importance of research by offering a space for artists to develop ideas that may be in the early stages of conception or articulation. *Field Station* approaches art as a complex language that involves many forms and draws upon different disciplines, from engineering, physics, and agriculture to literature, history, and technology. The notion of a field station specifically points to the importance of experimentation and the idea of the museum as software—a flexible structure that is constantly expanding beyond its walls (the hardware), wherein artists are encouraged to collaborate across disciplines at MSU. The exhibitions change every two months, allowing six artists to participate in an annual program. At the end of each cycle, a publication will be produced to report the “findings” from the *Field Station*.

Field Station: Matthew Angelo Harrison is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and curated by Steven L. Bridges, Associate Curator. Support for this exhibition is provided by the MSU Federal Credit Union.