

NEWCITYART

Visual Art Culture of Chicago and Beyond

✉ [Subscribe](#) ▾

60wrd/min COVID Edition: stephanie mei huang, Lexa Walsh, Dan Nelson, Beatriz Guzman Velasquez, KT Duffy and María Luisa Sanín Peña

OCTOBER 16, 2020 AT 7:00 AM BY [LORI WAXMAN](#)

In this weekly column, art critic Lori Waxman adapts her [60wrd/min](#) project to review work by artists whose practice has been affected by the pandemic. Waxman covers shows that have been cancelled, postponed, shuttered, made remote or opened by limited appointment, as well as art made during quarantine. Reviews are written in the order in which requests are received. This iteration of 60wrd/min is a democratic, good-faith effort to document more of the art making that is happening at a time when much of it is relatively unobserved.

[Subscribe](#) to Newcity to receive our print edition each month.

If you were a paperclip, what would you look like? If you were an artist, trying to make work amidst a global pandemic that led to the exhaustion of many reserves, among them financial, medical, emotional and material, what would you make art out of? These two questions find their confluence in “Oddballs,” a charming series of ninety paperclip sculptures fashioned by Dan Nelson during the COVID-19 quarantine, after he’d run out of art materials but not, apparently, basic office supplies. Every little wire doodle has been meticulously photographed, allowing the viewer to enjoy Nelson’s dexterity with needle-nose pliers, not to mention his ad-hoc creativity and determination. Each also bears a given name common in Belgium around 1900 (Pjeroo, Ysewijn, Hurbine), and while that seems appropriate to those shapes that resemble stick figures and giant noses, about others I disagree. I recognized a Calder, a yoga mom, a figure of Italian Modernism, a sidewalk bike rack, a cowboy in a ten-gallon hat, and a rower, among others. If we diverge on what, or who, they all are, on this at least we can concur: necessity may be the mother of invention, but boredom and privation are close relatives.

—2020-10-05 9:48 AM



[Subscribe](#) to Newcity to receive our print edition each month.

Beatriz Guzman Velasquez

What does land know of the lives lived and lost on its mountain ridges, its parched deserts, its rocky shores? What can buildings tell us of the goings-on behind their closed doors or of the views seen from their windows? They are aware of everything, I believe, but most of us don't seem to speak their language. Beatriz Guzman Velasquez does, she is in conversation with her surroundings in the Rio Grande Valley, near the Mexican-Texan border. It is not an easy discussion to hear, but in artworks made during the quarantine, she lets others listen in. On the windows of her home, in an inversion of her mother's practice of taping newsprint to the windows as a sunshade, she affixes the daily paper cut with letters that spell out "hoy hay más muertos que vivos." Translation: today there are more dead than alive—it is a story of now, of deaths from COVID and related factors like domestic abuse, and also of the past. At the Sal del Rey, a local salt lake, an alphabet of mesquite branches and fresh sage form "presente." Who is present? Only those whose existence has been threatened need to make such declarations. The blood-red waters beneath her words concur.

—2020-10-06 10:34 AM

[Subscribe](#) to Newcity to receive our print edition each month.