

Union Hall is pleased to present *Voices of the Desert*, the first solo exhibition of Denver-based artist Cherish Marquez (b. 1989 El Paso, TX, USA). Marquez holds a BA in Fine Arts and Creative Writing from the New Mexico State University and an MFA in Emergent Digital Practices from the University of Denver, and is currently a Redline resident artist. Working in digital fabrication, game design, and wearables, her work operates from a queer Latinx perspective and is heavily subject to speculative futurism.

In *Voices of the Desert*, Marquez presents a series of videos, animations, still images and installations exploring environmental justice, mysticism, and healing from generational trauma. Within the space of the gallery, viewers can interact with physical and digital environments that resemble a dark and futuristic desert landscape. Guided by handmade objects that act as interfaces to control the digital spaces and narratives she creates, viewers navigate through the space and engage with the video and AR works. In this hybridized environment, both rendered and real, several plants native to the desert regions of the southwestern United States present themselves; and upon investigation, open up a portal to the inner network of consciousness held within the earth. Within this internal zone there is a story being told in hushed tones. The whispers of the plants are the knowledge held within the land, as well as the voices of our ancestors. A space of deep collective memory reveals itself as viewers engage with Marquez's digital works, revealing the trauma that lives in the land and the plants' attempts to process what is happening to the ecosystem, calling forth their power to protect and heal the earth. Incorporating dried yucca stalks and devil's claw pods collected in New Mexico, as well as digital renderings of their forms, the artist reflects on the physical and the metaphysical lives of plant life in the desert, and what stories these sacred plants hold.

Marquez's ultimate goal is to call attention to issues of environmental racism, immigration, and oppression; specifically how the effects of nuclear waste have poisoned the land and the people that inhabit the communities along the U.S./Mexico border. With

this in mind, *Voices of the Desert* showcases Marquez's ability to merge her digital world with our reality, combining cultural practices and new media in the form of a truly immersive environment, allowing the viewer to navigate through a fictional landscape of uncanny beauty, danger, redemption, and the unknown.