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## SEVEN CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO IN NEW EXHIBITION

Arlington Arts Center Hosts *Take a Number: Artists and Bureaucracy* Starting Sept. 25

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DATE: September 8, 2021

Arlington, VA: Opening September 25 and running through December 18, *Take a Number: Artists and Bureaucracy*, features seven artists who explore, co-opt, and challenge bureaucratic systems and structures. They highlight the human impact of bureaucratic institutions, from the professional relationships between artists and arts organizations, to the obscure workings of financial systems, to the violent and deadly consequences wrought by global empires.



Chris Combs, *Maelstrom* (detail), 2021.

To most, art and bureaucracy couldn't be more distant. The traditional perception of Western art imagines it as a transcendent escape offering beauty, inspiration, and a departure from the mundane. Bureaucracy conjures the opposite reaction, mired by stagnation, inflexibility, and the complexity of large, hierarchical institutions. *Take a Number* challenges these rigid preconceptions, presenting artists who use the tools of bureaucracy—including archival research, photography, digital technology, and paperwork—and projects that explore bureaucracy's methodologies and its failures, both banal and catastrophic.

*Take a Number: Artists and Bureaucracy* was curated by Blair Murphy, AAC's curator of exhibitions and features seven local and national artists including:

**Sobia Ahmad (Washington, DC)**

Sobia Ahmad's work looks at notions of nationhood, home, and heritage, in an installation that draws on her own family history, including her grandmother's experience of forced migration during the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan.

**Maura Brewer (Los Angeles, CA)**

In the film-noir influenced video *Private Client Services*, artist Maura Brewer learns how to launder money, delving into the intricacies and loopholes of the financial system and highlighting the use of art objects as vehicles to obscure the source of dubiously acquired funds.

**Chris Combs (Washington, DC)**

In the installation *DataWorld 2021, booth #313: Maelstrom Networks, Inc.*, an array of Chris Combs' interactive sculptures mimics the increasingly ubiquitous technological surveillance that surrounds us.

### **Evan Hume (South Bend, IN)**

Evan Hume's series *Viewing Distance* utilizes declassified material from United States government archives, highlighting photography's use as a tool for reconnaissance and surveillance and the way these military and intelligence uses shaped the development of photographic technology in the 20th century.

### **Stephanie Mercedes (Washington, DC)**

Stephanie Mercedes explores the relationship between artists and institutions through the lens of artist contracts. These documents introduce legalistic and bureaucratic language into the relationship between artists and organizations, but also make visible pre-existing power dynamics and can be used by artists as a tool to protect their own interests and navigate their relationship to institutions and the art market.

### **R.L. Martens (Lexington, KY)**

R.L. Martens' *Material Witness* mines our relationship to waste through idiosyncratic research into the history of a specific stretch of land in Lorton, VA that has housed landfills, brick works, a prison, and, most recently, a mixed-use development project. Through the collection of archival newspaper clippings, contemporary YouTube videos, landfill design literature, and material remnants from the location, Martens unearths a largely hidden history of the site.

### **Pau S. Pescador (Los Angeles, CA)**

An artist and government worker, Pau S. Pescador created the video series *PSA* based on extensive conversations with other government employees and members of the public. Through a combination of interview clips, animations, and their own first-person narration, Pescador explores the challenges, possibilities, disappointments, and frustrations of building and sustaining a responsive system of governance.

## **ABOUT ARLINGTON ARTS CENTER**

Arlington Arts Center is an independent, non-profit contemporary arts center and gallery that enriches community life by connecting the public with contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, educational programs, and artist residencies. Located at 3550 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA, it is open Wed-Sat, 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., or by appointment. AAC is free, has on-site parking, is easy to reach by metro and bus, and is accessible. For more information about its other upcoming summer exhibitions, its summer camp and educational programs, or its event rentals visit: [arlingtonartscenter.org](http://arlingtonartscenter.org). For exhibition images visit: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j68gspu952l1de8/AACx2Qq8C75IFXSITIUn5fHla?dl=0>

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