Currents takes viewers on a Journey to different locations

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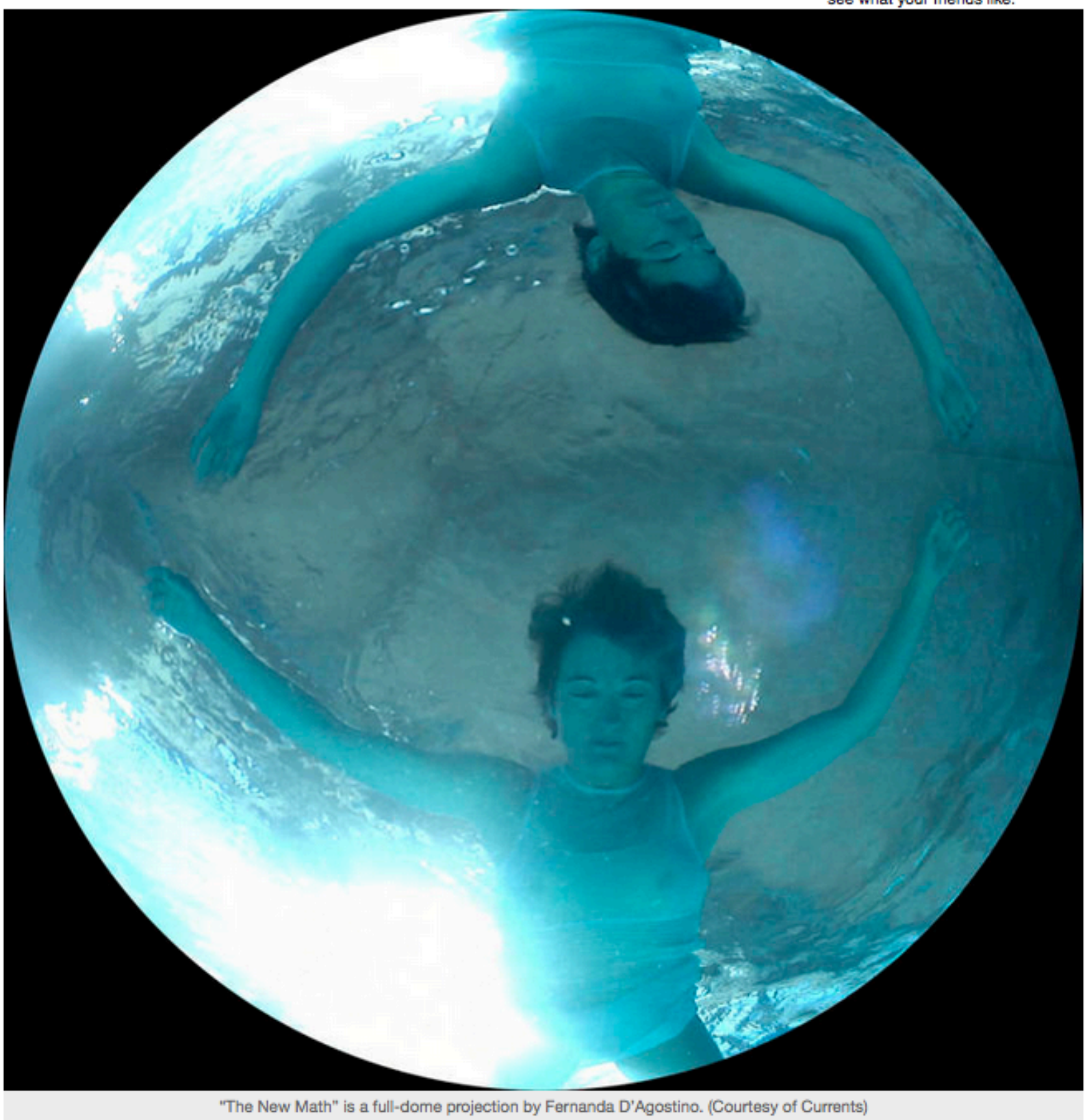

"The New Math" is a full-dome projection by Fernanda D'Agostino. (Courtesy of Currents)

By Jackie Jadrnak / Journal North Reporter

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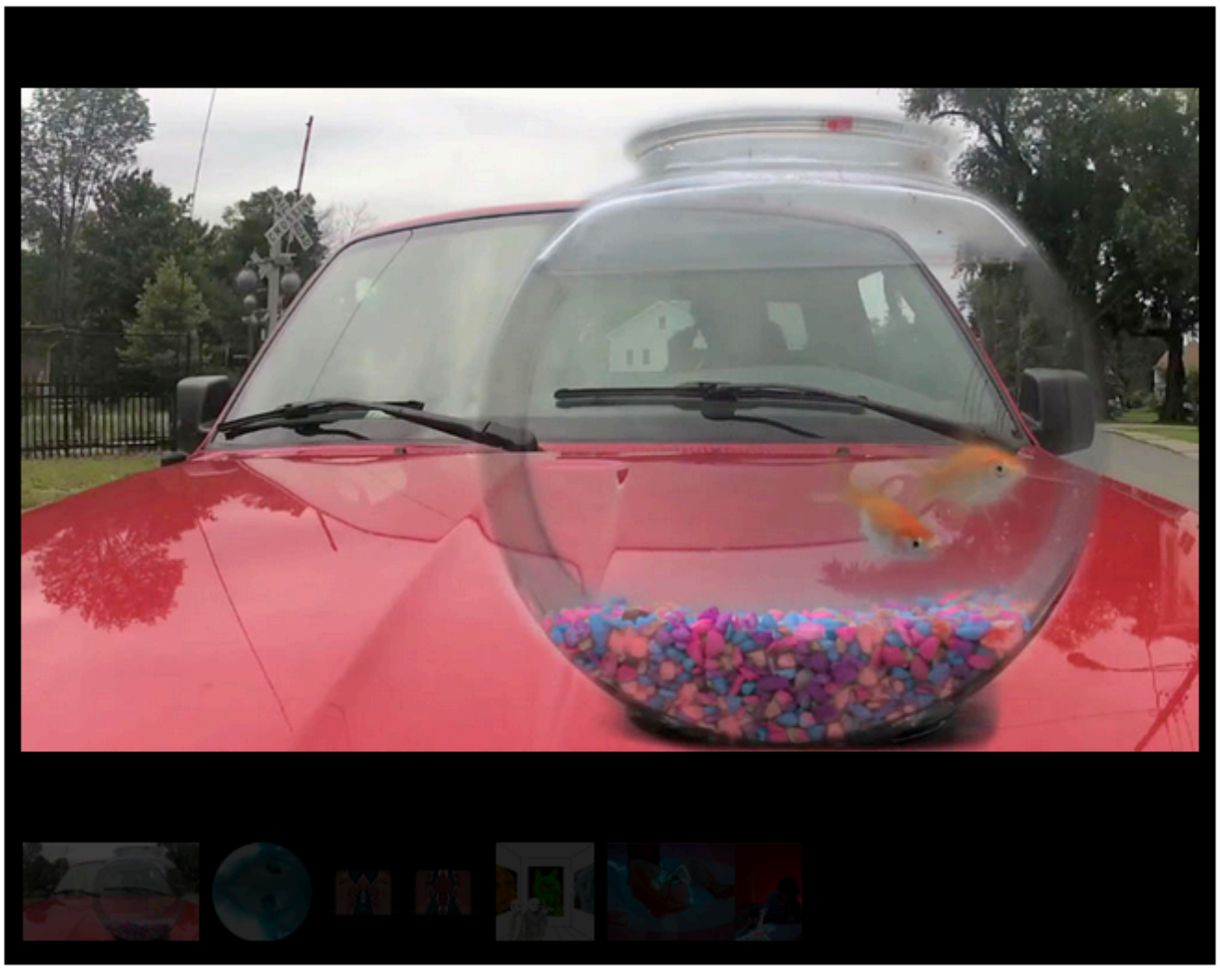


Some art shows give you pretty or interesting things to look at. Others let you play with the art, making it morph and respond to your motions, voice, temperature or nerve impulses.

And some can make you a star.

Currents offers all three.

When the new media show unfurls in the Santa Fe Railyard – and other locations – over the next two weeks, Hye Young Kim will be waiting on some days (definitely this opening weekend) to enfold visitors into her "Intimate Distances Project."

The South Korean-born artist, who now teaches at Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina and is entering a monthlong Currents residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute, will ask people to be recorded as they spend three minutes in intimate proximity with someone with whom they have a relationship. They are asked not to talk, not to touch, to close their eyes.

The result is a fascinating mix of expressions of intimacy as they vary within a family, said Mariannah Amster, organizer of Currents with Frank Ragano, both of Parallel Studios in Santa Fe.

In a telephone interview, Kim, who moved to the United States seven years ago, said she got the idea as she observed how her family relationships changed during her absence. "I was thinking about physical and emotional distance," she said. "There is no right distance – it's always wtoo far or too close."

She and her mom were close as she was growing up, although "not so much" during her teen years, Kim said, adding that the two have grown closer again. Such relationships can change not only over the years, but also in the course of a day, depending on whether two people argue over something or later reconcile.

If you go
WHAT: Currents: The Santa Fe International New Media Festival
WHEN: Opening 6 p.m.-midnight today, through June 28 (closed Mondays and Tuesdays)
WHERE: Main exhibits at El Museo Cultural, outdoor events in the Railyard Plaza, movies at the Violet Crown Cinema, digital dome media projections at IAIA, and additional exhibits at the Center for Contemporary Arts, Axle Contemporary, Peters Projects, Santa Fe Art Institute, Warehouse 21 and Zane Bennett Contemporary Art Gallery
COST: Free
SCHEDULE: currentsnewmedia.org

She began the "intimate distances" video project with her family members during her visit last year, observing how children were playful and wanted to be close to their parents, how a sister who usually followed her husband's lead in planning activities seemed to take the initiative in emotional closeness.

Since then, she has recruited participants in Hungary and in North Carolina. Kim said she's looking forward to seeing what she discovers about relationships from people who visit her Santa Fe booth, where she will edit and update her video project daily with the new participants.

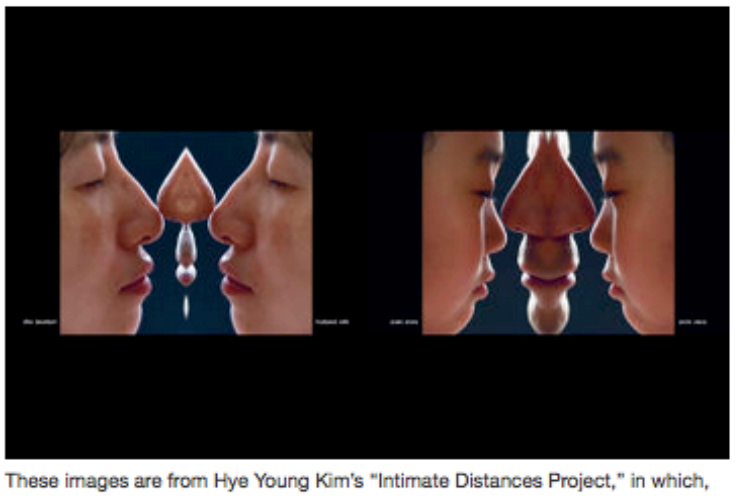
"For me, the body is a kind of medium. It's a more obvious way to show (relationships) rather than language," she said. "I'm very excited about the diverse cultures of families in Santa Fe, to understand better how they define family."

While she started her project using people in family relationships, she said she's willing to extend it to include friends and others in non-familial relationships.

She said she considers this a long-term project that may be ongoing for five to 10 years as she incorporates more and more people.

"I'm not a sociologist or a psychologist," she said, but added that she hoped her project would get people talking about their family dynamics. "I want to promote dialogue."

Linked shows



These images are from Hye Young Kim's "Intimate Distances Project," in which, starting with her family members, she has asked people to close their eyes and keep their faces close without touching. (Courtesy of Currents)

Now in its sixth year, Currents: The Santa Fe International New Media Festival is bringing more than 100 artists, performers and presenters from around this country and 13 other countries. And like the art it represents, the event slowly changes shape and scope with the times.

This year, it is linking with associated events at the Roswell Museum and Art Center, the Center for the Arts in Hobbs, Warehouse 1-10 in Magdalena and The Paseo in Taos.

Currents organizers had been talking over the years about setting up a New Media Trail in New Mexico that people can explore, similar to the Fiber Arts Trail that directs people to sites to explore that art form, from lamb to loom, Amster said. After linking to 516 Arts' Latin American show in Albuquerque last year, though, Amster said she and others thought new funding streams would have to be developed to set up a New Media Trail.

"We felt like it was a really good idea, but we didn't have the funding to develop it," she said. "But then people started coming to us." Voila – linked shows across the state.

Also this year, organizers of "motion," a conference of 18-minute TED-type talks by creative pros in the motion picture and broadcast industries, decided it would be good to link with Currents so, after eight years in Albuquerque, the group is meeting in Santa Fe today through Sunday.

A public benefit of that relocation is that, at 8:30 p.m. Saturday in the Railyard Plaza, three design pros will compete in FACEOFF: The After Effects Challenge! in which they are given an assignment for a motion design they have to complete in 60 minutes. Large screens give viewers a look at the steps they take to accomplish their tasks.

Many outdoor installations and projections are scheduled for tonight's opening on Railyard Plaza, beginning at 8:30 p.m., while indoor performances will launch in El Museo Cultural at 7 p.m.

This is a still from Orlando Leibovitz's "Dreams and Art," a single-channel video. (Courtesy of Currents)

At Warehouse 21, students from Santa Fe University of Art and Design, Santa Fe High and Moving People Dance will present "Identities," a multi-media installation with dance at Warehouse 21. Peters Projects will show an installation of robotic leaves by Ryan Wolfe and a video installation of images from Greenland by Qaaqortog Steina that will be open through the summer. Zane Bennett Contemporary will offer projects for children, including a virtual aquarium, and Axle Contemporary will be on hand with a new media installation, "Metapatterns" by Mindy McGovern.

This year at Currents, some moving images will branch out to the newly built Violet Crown Cinema, which will screen some experimental documentaries. Amster said this doesn't necessarily represent more video projects being included in Currents, but a new venue for ones that could benefit from a larger screen.

Meanwhile, the Digital Dome at the Institute for American Indian Arts will show videos constructed for that immersive environment.

Oh, and don't forget an installation exploring "amplified acoustic inactivity" with "A Room Listening to Itself" by Adam Basanta over at the Center for Contemporary Arts.

In other words, this festival is taking place all over Santa Fe, and the schedule is packed with performances, lectures, workshops and more. Visit currentsnewmedia.org for up-to-the-minute details.

And at the El Museo Cultural base, keep an eye out for the "Emoji Dictionary," the adoptable robots overseen by People for the Ethical Treatment of Autonomous Robots, the history of Santa Fe from Earth formation to the current City Different that unfolds as you walk down the sidewalk, and the installation that allows you to use light to draw on a person in another room.

The entire scope of the exhibitions and installations can be overwhelming; multiple visits are recommended. After all, admission is free.

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