

Angel Score No. 1

3601 S Gaffey St, San Pedro, California
For single or multiple performers

Mitchell Maher

Begin by the mess hall

1.

Listen for the reveille, and remember all the unused gun emplacements still dreaming of invasion

2.

Turn toward the ceramics studio in the discounted ex-barracks (Xmas sale!)

3.

Turn toward the marine layer and set a pocket watch under one rear tire

4.

Pretend you are a child again with a child's impossible tasks

5.

Absorb the radar beams tracking the ships

6.

Listen to the Minutemen rehearse in Bungalow 4

7.

Find a porpoise to let back to the sea

8.

Get your GED

9.

Mitchell Maher is a photographer and writer from San Pedro

Place Settings: Port of Los Angeles



Other Places Art Fair Sept. 14, 2024 | Schedule

7:30 am

Inspection 47-09142024

The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Infrastructure is conducting a 35/45-mile long coastal inspection of the combined Los Angeles/Long Beach port facilities and associated industries.

The purpose of this inspection is to conduct international commerce in Free Trade Zones 50 and 202. Beginning at 7th Street/Metro Center and Downtown Long Beach Station, the bike ride ends at Pacific/21st J Line Layover and Downtown Long Beach Station.

The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Infrastructure Inspections explores all the systems that facilitate the functioning of the city. More than just cyclists and walkers, the Bureau is L.A.'s interpretive center for municipal infrastructure; established in 2021, the Bureau has been active in repurposing the physical environments of L.A. and continues to model the way in novel

subjects for inspection. The Bureau investigates and illuminates many systems covered under infrastructure: airports, oil fields, underground storm drains, international borders, nuclear missile defense sites, freeway medians, pre-cast subway tunnel segment factories, fortune cookie dumpsters, etc. It is our commitment to the residents of Los Angeles that keeps us diligent in our mission of ensuring a legible and stimulating city for all.

2:00 pm

Miriam Posner, "Containers and Tinkertoys: Making Data Move" Reading and Talking Tent

Miriam Posner is an assistant professor in the Information Studies department and the Digital Humanities program at UCLA. She is currently writing a book about how data works in global supply chains.

Place Settings is an experimental lecture series in Los Angeles. The series, organized by Laura Nelson and Anya Ventura, brings together artists and thinkers to give short, site-specific lectures in a variety of forms. With places (and non-places) as our prompts, we host unexpected and generative environments for collective study.

Beginning in Fall 2024, **Place Settings** is exploring topics relating to infrastructure: generation plants, transmission lines, and distribution networks that provide electricity; systems for sourcing, treating, and distributing water for residential, commercial, and industrial use; systems for waste collection, treatment, and disposal; pipelines and storage facilities that supply gas for heating and cooking; telephone lines, mobile networks, and internet infrastructure, including fiber optics and satellites; radio and television broadcasting facilities; the social infrastructure of schools, colleges, and universities; hospitals, clinics, and other medical services; police stations, fire

departments, and emergency services; parks, sports complexes, and public spaces; banks, stock exchanges, and other financial institutions; markets, shopping centers, and commercial real estate; roads and highways essential for the movement of goods and people; bridges and tunnels that facilitate travel over water bodies and through mountainous regions; railways for long-distance freight and passenger transport; air travel and cargo transport; seaports for international trade and transport of goods via ships; buses, subways, and trams.

In Non-Places, No One Can Hear You Cry

Dispatches sent from a 130,000 ton
container ship in the Pacific Ocean
Charmaine Chua

1.

The 3rd mate's seafaring career began with a desire for basketball shoes. "When I was really young, I saw these guys coming home – seamen from my province – and they looked really amazing," he shares one afternoon as we stare across the ocean from the bridge, where he is on watchkeeping duty for 8 hours a day. "They had these fancy dresses, basketball shoes...at that time I really liked basketball, so when I saw those brand new shoes, I said, 'ok, I want that too'. The other men in my town, they were not the same. Even if they had a higher degree of education, they didn't have those things the seaman were having. So I thought, why study those courses the other guys are studying when I can go with being a seaman?"

Not that his family, in particular two uncles who were seamen, approved: it would be a very hard job, they warned him, and very painful – especially if you have a

family. One cousin had died on board a vessel that had sunk over the Atlantic. But the 3rd mate does what he sets his mind to, and so on he went to a Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation – the college degree a majority of the crew holds.

"And in reality?" I venture, "Is it what you imagined?" The answer is an unequivocal no. "If I had a chance to go back, I would not be here," he says. "Life on the sea, it's very different from what I fancied. The stories from previous generations I've heard are all quite interesting: no hardships, everything's ok. But when I got here, I found that everything is saturated. The six months on board...it's six months of hell. I am constantly missing my loved ones. When I go home, the three months of vacation are even not completely vacations for me."

This is a story I've heard multiple iterations of in the past weeks. While swabbing the deck, sitting in the recreation room playing poker, or cutting up rags in the machine workshop, these men have shared the stories of how they came to be seamen. There is the imagined life, and there is the devastating reality. Ask almost anyone if they enjoy their job, and they will tell you no. The ones who say yes, when pushed for a reason, will explain: "it's because of the pay." There is no intrinsic attraction to a life at sea; only to what it makes possible: AB Miguel has a bedridden mother he provides for in addition to his wife and two kids. AB Mendoza keeps requesting to extend his contract so that he can save up for his daughter, who is graduating in March. The fitter Ocampo has a machine shop in Manila that went out of business, consigning him to nine years on the ocean to provide for

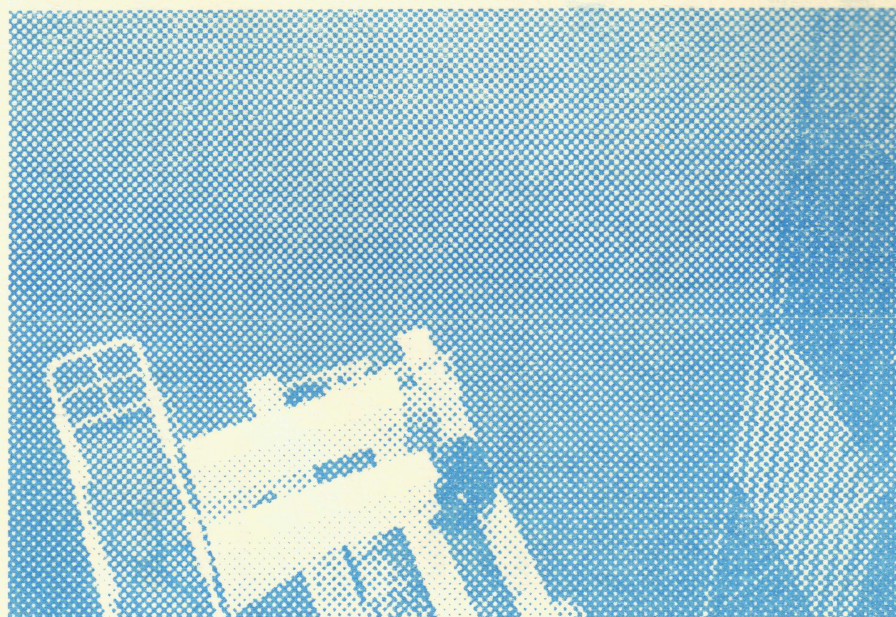
his family. "I'm not a seaman!" Ocampo exclaims. "This is not where I'm supposed to be."

Homesickness is "always there," manifesting itself in picture collages of their families on cabin walls and email communications twice a day. At night, the crew gathers in their recreation room, where they smoke cigarettes, play poker with makeshift rubber chips, and watch reruns of Filipino TV soaps and variety shows, which they get on \$1 DVDs from the seaman's mission in ports. On Sundays a warring basketball game is played between the engine and deck crew on a half-court in the lower aft of the ship, the crew yelling when misdirected throws threaten to bounce the ball into the open sea. Almost all recreational activities carry a scent of home. The longing is so acute that the ship is often characterized as a floating prison – "Traveling Alcatraz," as the oiler Eddie puts it. They will tell you that walking up the gangway with their baggage at the start of their contract is the heaviest feeling, and going down when the six months are over is the most joyful. "54 steps to freedom," says Vern as we scrub rust off the deck's floor on our quiet day at sea, "and 54 steps to prison."

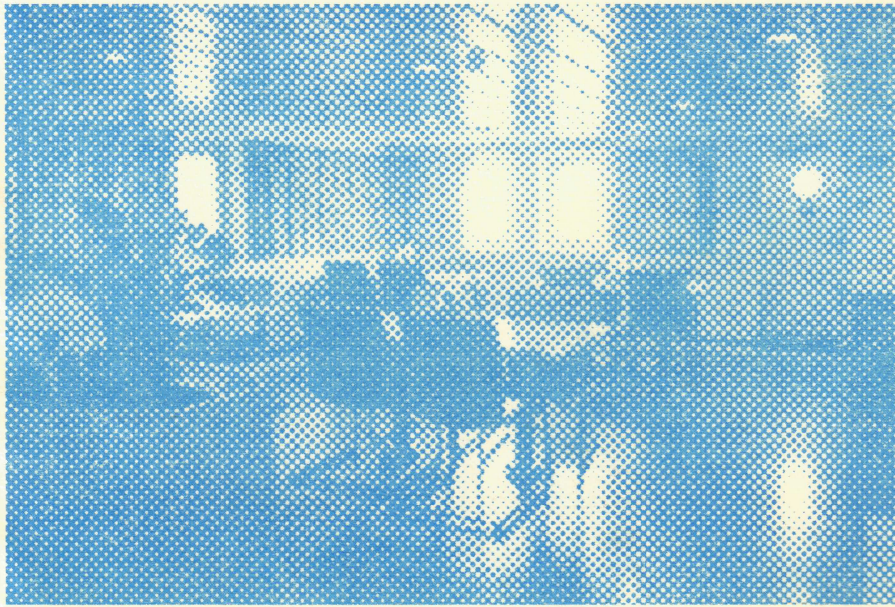
2.

Growing the pool of available low-wage contingent workers who "should be grateful for what the industry gives them" proves the most feasible and cost-effective way to solve "the labor problem." The captain tells me that the attempted solution used to be reducing the workforce by bringing crew numbers down as much as possible. He remembers that in the 1980s, one study pioneered by a Japanese company had experimented with cutting personnel on a ship from 20 crewmembers to 9. "Nine! You imagine." The captain laughs. "This was right around the time of computerization and automation," he explains, "and they wanted to see what was possible in terms of reducing the number of workers. So they experimented several times with 9 crew to see whether it was possible." Of course, the captain goes on, the study soon found that these workers were becoming very lonely. "Maybe you are eating in the mess room all by yourself, with nobody to talk to," he opines. With 9 crew members, each worker had longer hours with no substitutes to keep watch on deck and inadequate rest time – concentration levels were slipping into downward spiral, and with it, the morale of the workers.

"So do you know what they did?" Th



Worker aboard the container ship Ever Cthulhu



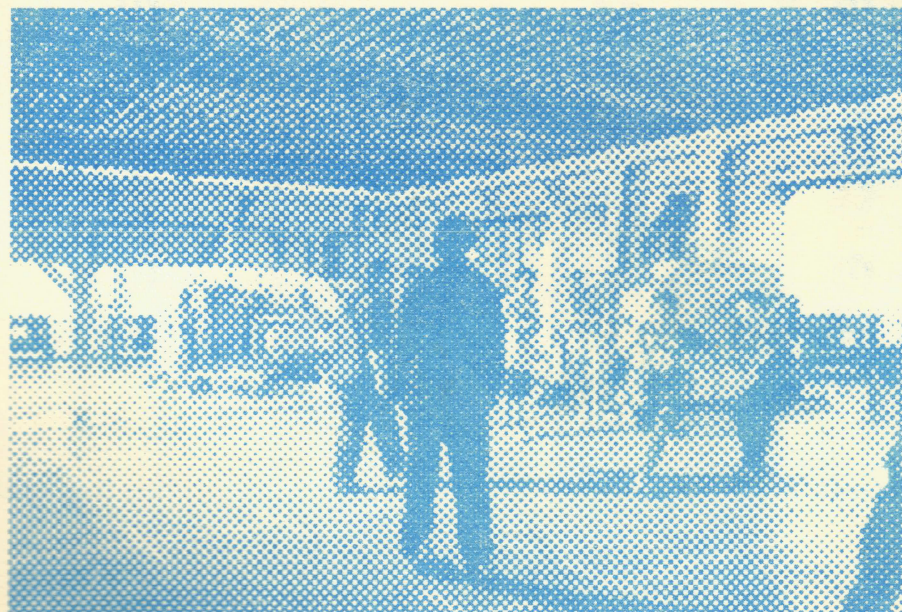
captain asks. I guess: they increased the crew sizes, they provided more recreational activities, they paid them better wages – and am wrong on all accounts. With a booming, belly-deep laugh, the captain delivers the punchline: “Their solution was: to provide the workers with *silverware*. Silverware! You imagine! Somehow, they were thinking that feeling fancy would conquer the problem of loneliness.”

Simultaneously comical and incredibly depressing, the image of workers sitting alone in mess rooms, surrounded by fancy cutlery but no companions conjures the image of what anthropologist Marc Augé has called the “non-place”: a “dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces” where no organic social life is possible, “a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and the ephemeral.”

A disclaimer before I proceed: The idea of the non-place, often invoked in writing about infrastructures of transport, provides a helpful analytical framework. But it also betrays the texture of life on the container ship – a place of transit, to be sure, but unlike other spaces of transit, acts both as workplace and living quarters to sailors who spend up to seven months at a time on board. As I write this, I feel I am betraying the richness and warmth of the people on the *Ever Cthulhu*. Most know the exact number of days they have been here, and how many are left to home – but in making do with life on board, have also learned how to treat a continuous cycle of new friends as family. There is ‘Papa’ Adem, the oldest crew member at 49, who doles out blazing nuggets of wisdom and wears only pink t-shirts, a fashion choice I assume is deliberate until he tells me everything was stained after he threw a red handkerchief

into his mostly white laundry. There is Miguel, the jcker, one of the few ABs who does not hold a maritime degree, who worked his way up the food chain by once staying on a ship for a continuous 2-year stretch, who enjoys puns, card tricks, and scanning the ocean for dolphins. And there is Jonathan, one of the youngest engine crew, simultaneously irreverent and kind, who has an 8-month old baby boy at home and has to sneak a cry in the bathroom when I insensitively ask how difficult it is to be away from his newborn.

In non-places, no one can hear you cry. Characterized by their transitory nature and corresponding social emptiness, non-places always gesture to a reality or destination somewhere else. Much of the literature on logistics take a similar tack, suggesting that logistics, as an industry invested in smoothing out the world’s surface, “pulverizes” and flattens space to facilitate (to the extent it is possible) the ceaseless circulation of money, commodities, and bodies.



3.

In a few days time, six members of the crew will end their contracts in Hong Kong and return home. The accommodations are abuzz with anticipation, suitcases are packed, and the seamen who will be returning home have a faraway look in their eyes, already somewhere else. Last night, the sailors threw a farewell party for their departing mates, and the karaoke songs belted in the recreation room were almost entirely of the love ballad variety: Scorpion, Michael Learns to Rock, Boyz II Men – set to background images of well-loved Filipino destinations and scenery. Montez leaned over once, in the middle of Fleetwood Mac’s “Landslide”. “That’s what I tell my wife all the time,” he said. “‘I built my life around you.’ Really, it’s the truth. Because all of this, all this time away, is for her, and for my family. One day, I will save enough so that they can live comfortably and I don’t have to be away.” Such desires may appear to be a far cry away from the alluring, powerful vision of worker struggles surging along and forcefully disrupting the supply chain, but they form a different fabric of desire nevertheless – one which requires us to listen, pause, and pay attention before folding radically uneven conditions into a uniform demand for universal workers’ rights.

A longer version of this essay originally appeared on the website *The Disorder of Things*. Chua’s forthcoming monograph, *The Logistics Counter-revolution: Fast Circulation, Slow Violence, and the Transpacific Empire of Capital*, frames the intersecting histories of decolonization and logistics as a story of competing projects of global resource distribution.

The crew mess room. Down the hall, with tables of white linens, is the officer mess – a division that effectively translates into Filipinos and Europeans dining separately.

A Sunday afternoon basketball game on the lower deck