

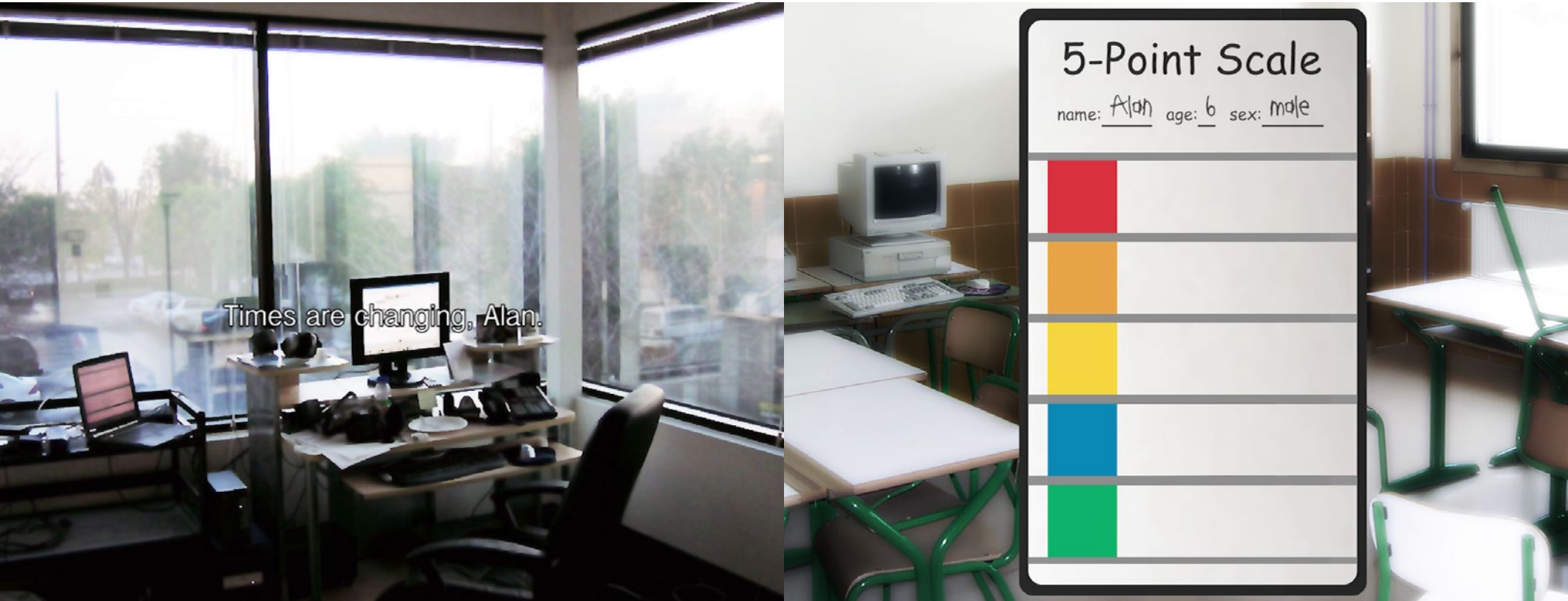
MIT List Visual Arts Center
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[LIST PROJECTS]

Andrea Crespo

January 10 – February 19, 2017



ALL PHOTOS: Andrea Crespo
[intensifies], 2016
film still
Courtesy the artist; Hester, New York; and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin



MIT List Visual Arts Center

Every year, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveillance studies estimate a greater prevalence of autism among American children. Between the years 2000 and 2012, the supposed occurrence of autism rose from 1 in 150 to 1 in 68.¹ Such a steep increase in diagnoses could suggest a number of possibilities. Some parents and pop-scientists suggest that there is an unknown catalyst triggering the spread of autism among those born between 1992 and 2004. Some social scientists suggest that the meaning of autism has expanded to define the embodiments of more and more children with every passing year. Regardless of the cause for this epidemiological explosion, it has gathered attention to autism as a biological phenomenon affecting an increasingly salient subspecies of the American population.

Andrea Crespo's semi-autobiographical animated film *[intensifies]* (2016) refers to personal experience in order to narrate the rise of the so-called 'autism crisis.' Alan, Crespo's protagonist, is a suburban autistic child whose ruminations about the 'autism crisis' preoccupy his day. He wonders to himself whether he is truly the embodiment of a crisis-event, or whether he is a misunderstood scapegoat. He is unable to quell this ambivalent anxiety, as it becomes hard to distinguish truth from paranoia, as ambient fear about autism begins to affect his life with greater and greater intensity.

Regardless of its descriptive accuracy, 'autist' is a badge he must wear for life, and Alan wonders what sorts of consequences that might have for him in the future: Will he find love? Will he become an adult? Will he ever feel human? These are unsettling questions, just as the notion of human genetic difference unsettles most of us. Perhaps this is why the lived experiences of the disabled get ignored by both psychiatry and social common sense. This practice is so widespread, it becomes mundane, invisible to most but ever-present for some. *[intensifies]* reminds us that the spectre of eugenics had never been vanquished by post-war deinstitutionalization. The rise of neurobiology nourished it while nobody was looking. For this reason, the demons of the past haunt Alan's memory as they propel him into unfamiliar territories. Crespo invites us to join Alan with compassion.

Jack J. Kahn

ABOUT THE ESSAYIST

Jack J. Kahn is an independent scholar based out of Brooklyn, New York. His current research regards the entangled histories of American contemporary art, psychoanalysis, eugenics, and biomedicine. His work has been featured by *DIS Magazine*, the *New Inquiry*, and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Andrea Crespo (b. 1993, Miami, FL) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

List Projects: Andrea Crespo is curated by Alise Upitis with Yuri Stone, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

A selection of images featured in *[intensifies]* are courtesy of Wikipedia Commons. The 5-point scale featured in the film is a system developed by Kari Dunn Buron, MS.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Film Screening and Discussion

(in collaboration with the MIT Department of Brain Cognitive Sciences)

Reading Group

For details and further information visit: listart.mit.edu/events-programs.

SUPPORT

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SPONSORS

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1. Christensen DL, Baio J, Braun KV, et al. *Prevalence and Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children Aged 8 Years — Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 Sites, United States, 2012*. MMWR Surveill Summ 2016;65(No. SS-3)(No. SS-3):1–23. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6503a1>.