

# SOFT REGARDS

INSTALLATION BY ELENA HARVEY COLLINS AND LIZ ROBERTS

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An exploded diagram of a film is a good analogy for this installation. The process of filmmaking—including research, screenplay writing, location scouting, set production, composing a shot—becomes invisible in the final production. In *Soft Regards*, the peripheral activities that go into the production of filmic space, place, and time are abstracted and extended; the play of real and unreal is centered.

Set in California's Central Valley—an already surreal, indeterminate landscape, where parched farmland abuts new housing developments—*Soft Regards* pulls from contemporary self-help sources such as survivalist instruction manuals, urban planning reports, and yoga breathing tutorials. At the heart of the exhibition is a reading room where these texts, in addition to critical theory and novels, are arranged in sequence. One book connects to the next in a corrective claiming of the practice of survivalism. In the lower gallery, the screenplay, usually a working document adhering to a strict format, is presented in skeleton form as a series of letterpress prints.

Outside the reading room, a multi-channel video installation, *Protection*, made while driving the periphery of walled and fenced neighborhoods in Fresno, California, continuously circles, combining an extended take on a location scout, dolly, or tracking shot. Video work *No. 008: Use Improvised Body Armor*, is both an earnest attempt to recreate an instructional diagram from the text *100 Deadly Skills*, and a camera blocking exercise wherein the shot is rehearsed. *How to Make Stones Weep*, a sound installation referencing a film set and the staged landscaping of housing tracts, fills the street-level gallery.

The climax of a film also doubles as a crisis; the plot of *Soft Regards* reaches its climax during the 2016 election. Addressing the election directly are four posters made during the month of November that quote our theoretical mothers. Together they form a sentence that can be read as a set of instructions to be expanded and built upon: Mother and Destroy, Refuse to Normalize, Stay with the Trouble, and Go Off Screen.

Elena Harvey Collins and Liz Roberts