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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce *Comp-art-mentalize*, an exhibition of painting in Gallery One curated by Nataliya Kotlova.

Chicago, IL, January 26, 2019 – ANDREW RAFACZ begins 2019 with *Comp-art-mentalize*, a group exhibition of painting by Benjamin Cabral, Erin Hayden, and Ian Thomas Miller. The exhibition continues through Saturday, March 9, 2019.

Comp-art-mentalize features works by three emerging painters exploring the notion of personal identity in an image-heavy culture. Each artist uses a distinctive approach, often starting with digital methods, to create works as means of processing their individual narratives and experiences.

Benjamin Cabral's unique paintings start as sketches on his iPad, and utilize Mardi-Gras beads as lines and fields of color. The imagery in his work is auto-biographical, sifting through memories of family illness and childhood trauma. Cabral often incorporates visual queues significant to his memories as characters in a larger narrative. As a former mime performer in San Diego, the artist inserts Tilikum and Shamu from SeaWorld as cohorts of forced performance. Using brightly colored beads reminds the artist of times spent at Disneyland, and the process of laying them down becomes meditative, allowing for introspection. While the compositions are animated and confident, Cabral's works exude a sense of sadness and contemplation.

Erin Hayden constructs digital collages as a surface, accentuating or masking their parts with paint. Hayden's collages use, often ubiquitous, images found on the internet; memes, photographs, inspirational quotes, and stock images. Her works explore the ways one consumes virtual information, while investigating her own experience and connection to internet imagery. Pinning images and text together, Hayden distills new meanings and narratives by creating aesthetic and symbolic parallels. The images act as containers for paint, and the painted elements give physical depth to otherwise flattened images. Hayden's works produce a deeply emotional experience within seemingly insignificant imagery.

The carefully rendered images in Ian Thomas Miller's compositions suggest a trance-like state, simultaneously constructing and deconstructing space. His works focus on assembling specific objects, and exploring their posed interactions. Often selecting the objects tied to his immediate surroundings, Miller investigates the experiences produced by his environment. These seemingly random objects take on new meaning when explored through specific framing and composition. By forcing juxtaposition, Miller produces the possibility of creating

significance whilst stripping objects of their original purpose or value. His works explore a universal experience of objects and objecthood.

Each artist in *Comp-art-mentalize* investigates the personal and universal through found, constructed, and imagined imagery. Cabral, Hayden, and Miller exemplify a moment in contemporary painting that suggests different ways of organizing information in a society peppered with images, ads, and visual stimuli.

BENJAMIN CABRAL (American, b. 1993) lives and works in Chicago, IL. He received a BA from Point Loma Nazarene University (San Diego, CA) in 2016 and will receive an MFA from the School of the Art Institute (Chicago, IL) in summer of 2019. Cabral has had recent solo exhibitions at Martha Pace Swift Gallery (San Diego, CA), Keller Gallery (San Diego, CA), and Cabrillo Gallery (San Diego, CA). Recent group exhibitions include Club Nutz (Chicago, IL), Love Gallery (San Diego, CA), William D. Cannon Art Gallery (San Diego, CA), and Museum of Contemporary Art (San Diego, CA).

ERIN HAYDEN (American, b. 1990) lives and works in Chicago, IL. She received an MFA in Art Theory and Practice from Northwestern University (Evanston, IL) in 2016, a BFA in painting and BA in Art Teacher Education from Illinois State University (Normal, IL) in 2013. Hayden has had recent solo exhibitions at the University of Illinois (Champaign, IL), UIS Visual Arts Gallery (Springfield, IL), Mana Contemporary (Chicago, IL), Randy Alexander Gallery (Chicago, IL), and Jan Brandt Gallery (Bloomington, IL). Recent group exhibitions include the Chicago Artist Coalition (Chicago, IL), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, IL), Aspect Ration Gallery (Chicago, IL), and Left Field (San Luis Obispo, CA).

IAN THOMAS MILLER (American, b.1993) lives and works in Saint Paul, MN. He received a BFA from Columbia College Chicago (Chicago, IL) in 2015. Miller had a recent solo exhibition at Leisure Gallery (Denver, CO). Recent group exhibitions include Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (Boulder, CO), The White Page (Minneapolis, MN), Dateline (Denver, CO), Yeah Maybe (Minneapolis, MN), and Gildar Gallery (Denver, CO).