

# SPOTLIGHT EXHIBITION

Anna Clowser  
Mariana Dal Pra  
Benjamin Eastman  
Molly Erickson  
Sophie Hass Schenkel  
Danielle Huante  
Bobi Knox



**2022  
ARTISTS**

**SCHOOL OF ART AND ART HISTORY**

Drewelowe Gallery  
Visual Arts Building E100

**May 16 - June 1**



This exhibition is made possible by the generous donation of Donna Friedman Curry for the Donna L. Friedman Curry Spotlight Grant Program. Each Spotlight Artist is the beneficiary of this wonderful grant.

Donna Friedman Curry (1966 BA, 1969 MA, 1973 MFA) taught art for more than 30 years and wanted to create a program for student exploration in the School of Art and Art History. Her intentions for the Spotlight Program are to inspire creativity and risk-taking among undergraduates by providing grant funding for supplies and materials.



## Anna Clowser

Through sculpture, installation, and performance I explore themes of colonialism, agriculture, and systemic violence in Iowa. I examine the structures of violence and care, both of which have historical precedent, by focusing on industrial agriculture, Iowa landscape, and my female ancestry. I am working to better understand my own ancestry, identity and body through my relationship to land. I am a fourth generation Iowan, who grew up exploring the prairies, woods, wetlands and water throughout the state, and I am currently processing the disillusionment of my homeland.

Developing these concepts through exploration of processes, materials and techniques forms the basis of my artmaking with the ultimate purpose of communicating intellectually and emotionally through my visual art. I am interested in the processes of time, ephemera, decay, destruction, and collection, and often use water, prairie, fire and my body as elements of my work. Paper, fabric, wax, beads, natural materials, found objects and electronics are the materials I use the most. I typically utilize labor intensive processes and techniques as a way to imbue meaning into the objects and consider my bodily actions as I construct a piece. These techniques are often skills that have been passed down to me through the women in my family. Sewing, beading, dyeing, and collecting have ancestral significance to me and connect to a history of women's work.

These two pieces are part of a new body of work exploring my relationship with my grandmother who has impacted me greatly though she had dementia for most of my life. I developed these works by studying her belongings and creating textile pieces that use the skills that have been passed down to me generationally.

Fragments #1 is a dress that I sewed that was similar to what she wore when she was my age. I painted each pattern piece with cyanotype solution and created a pattern by placing objects that belonged to my mom or grandmother on the surface, dried and exposing it to light. Embodying the actions that my grandmother took at my age helped me feel connected to her in a way that I was never able to when she was alive.

Fragments #2 is a tablecloth that I embroidered, beaded, and hand painted to replicate a set table, which is a tradition in my family. Food, cooking, and eating with company is an important practice that was upheld by my grandmother. These values have been passed down generationally as well. The plates on the tablecloth are designed after a set of plates that belonged to my grandmother's best friend, Teddy and were given to my mother when Teddy passed. My immediate family uses them at holidays. The painted floral pattern features plants native to Iowa. I spent many hours carefully beading, stitching, and painting this tablecloth. The labor intensive skills I used replicate the reproductive labor and care work that my grandmother participated in her whole life. The eggshells and dried flowers placed beneath these pieces represent rural life and the naturalistic perspective of my grandmother.



## Mariana Dal Pra

In my work, I am currently exploring the complications of a colonized west through the imagery and iconography of everyday objects, pop culture, luxury goods, and food. I am particularly inspired by my family's lineage, coming from Italy and Puerto Rico, these two communities of people have been known as exploited, exploiter, or a complex combination of the two. I utilize the tradition of my ancestors' pottery to create sculptural work that highlights the feelings of desire and hatred toward the American dream.

My pots are inspired by Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese Olive jars. Olive jars also referred to as tinajas, peruleras, or botijas. These jars were the ubiquitous storage and shipping containers for the American colonies used to store food for the journey to the Americas. Hundreds of Thousands of shards from these pots have been found across north, central and south America and the Caribbean and they are a physical sign and reminder of colonization.

The branding on the pots are all exploitive and controversial brands or brands owned by controversial companies. Despite how exploitive and controversial these brands are we still want and desire them. All of the companies I use, even if you would expect otherwise are owned by white people and profit off of people of color. Whether that is through branding and marketing, exploiting factory workers, or a mix of both these brands perpetuate the colonist ideal.

I hope in reading this and viewing my work you might think about how these companies perpetuate colonialism and how we entertain, praise, and loth it.



## Benjamin Eastman

This June, Iowa's 3D Design department has the opportunity to show work at *Salone Satellite*, one of the world's most prestigious design fairs taking place as part of Milan Design Week. The themes for this year's show are sustainability and local craft, prompting designers from all over to represent their contemporary vernacular design. The department had recently received admission from *Salone* when the Spotlight Grant was initially offered, so I agreed with my mentor Professor Monica Correia that the funding was a perfect opportunity to conceptualize a new project for Milan.

Given the restraints of transportation, I proposed to create a flat-packing room divider with a frame composed of solid walnut and a detachable quilted composition with a visual connection to Midwestern landscapes. In conceptualizing a vernacular visual language to represent Iowa and the Midwest, I first thought of Regionalist painting, a realist movement led by painters Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton who captured rural Midwestern scenes that highlighted the beautiful landscapes. These painters refined their compositions to thoughtful amounts of color and layering in order to capture the essence of their scenes, a quality that I knew would speak well in a textile medium. Emerging as early as the 1850s in Iowa, quilting is a technique unique to settlers of the Midwest and a tradition that is extremely lively today. With the ability to capture depth, manipulate proportions, and modernize for interior application, I figured quilting to be a great local technique to apply to my room divider.

The first step of my process was negotiating the size for transportation. The frame is 5' tall by 3' wide and is composed of six maple dowels, two stacked vertically on either side connected by two smaller horizontal dowels at the top and bottom. The frame is supported by CNC cut solid walnut feet. By inserting steel pins and drilling pockets in the dowels, I was able to make the frame deconstructable and reconstructable. The curtain I currently have displayed is a fill-in for my quilted composition which remains in progress. Created using green awning fabric, this replaceable curtain was a good study for me in the measurements and seamwork that I will have to apply to the final quilt which will be made of 100% merino wool felt. In the final quilt, I am experimenting with varying shapes, depths, and quilting linework to create a composition that alludes to the Regionalist style while remaining in conversation with the minimalist frame.



## Molly Erickson

Threadwave is a clothing brand that focuses on being bold, spirited, and unapologetically you. For most of my adult life, I have tended to dress in blacks and grays, so I, and my clothing, fade into the background. One aspect of my life where I make bold choices is in the music I listen to. I always have music playing, from classical to punk to musicals—it gives me confidence. I wanted to translate the confidence my music choices give me into presenting myself through bold fashion.

My goal with this project was to branch out, not only in my personal style, but in my artistic practice as well. I also worked on developing new fine art skills, as I dyed and screen printed all the fabric myself to achieve the exact look I wanted. Although my focus was on silkscreen printing, I also wanted to incorporate my graphic design work. In addition to creating the clothing pieces, I also created branding materials, and directed a photoshoot to better feature the brand's style.

The abstract shapes and patterns used in my textiles reflect the music I used as a starting point for my brand. Taking inspiration from both the abstract ideas present in the music as well as technical aspects of music—such as visualizers, equalizers, and soundwaves—each fabric has a unique surface treatment. Because I was working independently to print each textile, all of the fabric prints were either tessellations that could be easily repeated to create yardage, or were completely randomized designs created at the moment of printing. Each pattern has a different level of intricacy, which is toned down slightly through the monochromatic ink and dye of each piece. With big, billowy sleeves, luxury fabrics, extremely wide pant legs, and other striking silhouettes, I wanted at least one aspect of each piece to create a statement.

Clothing and the objects we choose to surround ourselves with say as much about us as a written statement might. Through the clothing and atmospheric choices in my gallery, I wanted to convey the person I want to be—confident, daring, and bright. In this project, I allowed myself and my work to take up space and be outside of my comfort zone.

Although this collection focused on my personal style and confidence, it also empowers any wearer to express themselves in a more visual way and truly be themselves. This project would not have been possible without the generous funding from the Donna Friedman Curry Spotlight Grant and support from both the Graphic Design department and the Printmaking department at the University of Iowa. Special thanks to Cailin Hall, Kate Snyder, and my loving family for all their support.



## **Sophie Hass Schenkel**

### **Plastic Flower Structure (PFS)**

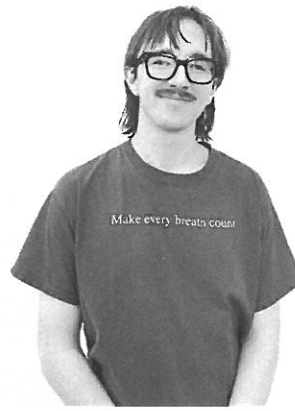
My work centers around taking plastic and artificial materials and melting them into forms inspired by nature. It is a critique of the cultural conflation of artificiality and purity, especially as it pertains to women. Nature and the concept of artificiality do not exist on opposite ends of a spectrum of purity, and women should not be placed on this constructed spectrum. I'm interested in exploring the phenomenon in which women's positions in society are deemed as artificial in a way to undermine their validity, especially post industrial revolution as women have entered the public workforce. Nature and the concept of artificiality do not exist on opposite ends of a spectrum of purity.

Made from thousands of recycled plastic bags, my process of stripping down these bags into plastic yarn was a form of purification in itself. Each flower was crocheted individually, then attached to the larger web. Through the melting process, the structure became distorted and stretched, but more importantly, hardened. My goal was to push this piece past clear boundaries of natural form or synthetic materiality into a new space where both of these concepts can coexist.



## Danielle Huante

I use art to gain a better understanding of myself and resolve things within myself. Much of my art is inspired by personal relationships and experiences which I feel have, and continue to, impact me. As a result, a lot of my work is figurative. I focus on generating psychologically charged spaces for my figures to occupy that might invoke memories or emotions. To achieve this, my work has become increasingly non-narrative. In place of common iconography, symbols, and clear characters, my work focuses on the emotive bodies and expressive abstraction within a bound space allowing the viewer to connect to the figure unbound by the confines of narrative. In this series, I employed many traditional printmaking techniques. Linocut, silkscreen, steel intaglio etching, and sintra engraving comprise the techniques used across the seven full color pieces in the series.



## **Bobi Knox**

During the spring of my last full semester of University, I used the slow process of a 4x5 viewfinder camera to capture images of my dear friends. Each photograph tells a story of a moment, but all images are under a general narrative of fleeting time.

Because of my relationships with each individual person, each of the images tells a story of a large and dynamic friendship. These relationships play themselves out in front of my eyes frequently, but this time I choose the location, time, and place. In doing this I put myself at ease aesthetically because in the formality of a photo shoot I could control the flow of agency.

Nothing lasts forever, the worst thing about time is that it never stops. I have zero idea where I am going to be in ten years, these images act as a souvenir for a time of life I will never return to. Though I do not believe I will never be happy outside of this current time. To fully embrace uncertainty, I must understand that things could go either way. These images attempt to do that: Grant, Ellen, Dom, Kinsey, Jacob, Jill, Claire, Saylor, Liv, Josiah, Olivia, Caitlin, and Grace.

In my curation of *No* and *Awaiting* alongside my digital image amalgamation *From Here On* I intended to align a similar commentary with a very different formal process. *From Here On* incorporates informal images captured with a serious mission taken on last spring vacation of my academic career. I composed this image to give a voice to what others may consider an afterthought. My goal was to take a happy accident and make it into an image with flare, which I think the 4x5 process draws out more naturally. Each of the images curated for this exhibition represents themes and principles of composition I have been exploring throughout my studies in the 2021-2022 academic year.