

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
SCHOOL OF ART & ART HISTORY

MFA2020



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CONTRIBUTORS

Melissa Airy	<i>Intermedia</i>
Huda Al-Aithan	<i>3D Design</i>
Maria Alarcon Aldrete Wolf	<i>Ceramics</i>
Timothy Alarcon Aldrete Wolf	<i>Ceramics</i>
Alexis Beucler	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>
Jenna Bonistalli	<i>Sculpture</i>
Connor Colvill	<i>Printmaking</i>
Nicole Davis	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>
Stacey Lee Gee	<i>Sculpture</i>
Scott Christian Hage	<i>Photography</i>
Donté Hayes	<i>Ceramics</i>
Nina Kintsurashvili	<i>Intermedia</i>
Mark Lanning Jr.	<i>Photography</i>
Jacob Lee	<i>Printmaking</i>
Kevin McNamee-Tweed	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>
Neva Nobles-Alder	<i>Photography</i>
Liz Powell	<i>Printmaking</i>
Jennifer Vess	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>
Faye Wheeler	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>
Claire Whitehurst	<i>Painting & Drawing</i>



Melissa Airy

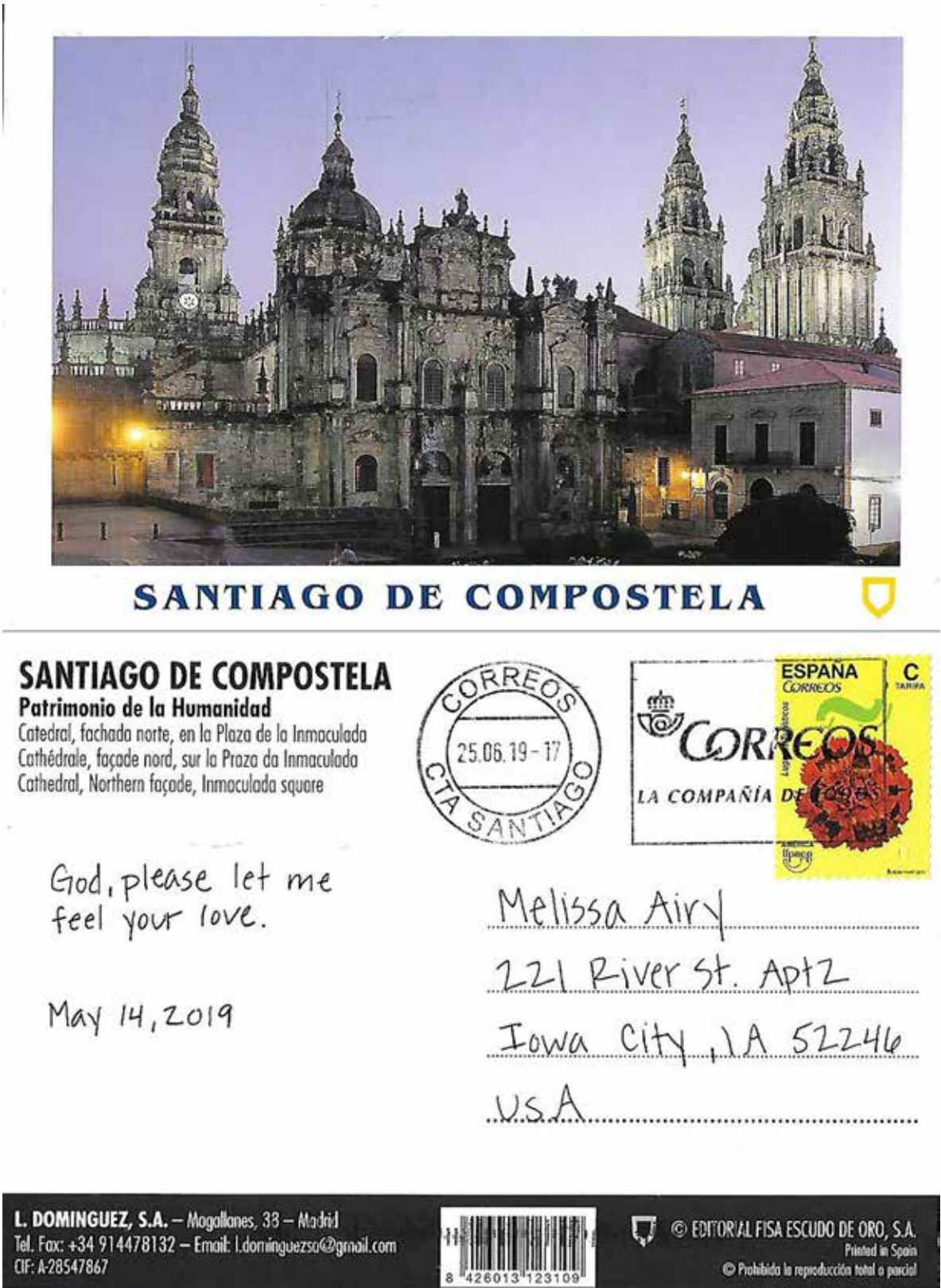
MFA INTERMEDIA

A critical aspect of my identity lies in being a pilgrim. I have traveled throughout the world on religious journeys to sacred destinations in search of understanding who and why people take on extreme expeditions of faith. My work is a visual representation of my personal experiences as a sojourner to various sacred landscapes in an attempt to understand the profound sense of purpose and awakening that I encountered along the way. Both as preliminary research, and as durational performances, I have most prominently walked the 500-mile ancient pilgrimage across Spain called the Camino de Santiago. I translate my personal emotional, spiritual and physical journey on pilgrimage into immersive works of art accessible to a secular world though utilizing performance, installation, video and audio media.

My art practice is strongly rooted in action, often created by the human body, capturing genuine interactions with time and space, provoking a sense of vulnerability empowerment and belonging. Through creating a prominent sense of narrative, I am exploring the liminality of time throughout these transformational feats. I am highlighting the importance of storytelling and the use of words, both written and spoken, as supplementary avenues in relaying the essence of an experience. The ephemerality of my work is the visual representation of the allegorical nature of pilgrimage. Just as pilgrimage is the pinnacle for the intersection of culture and faith, I strive to create spaces and encounters that are a meeting ground for diverse viewers, momentarily uniting those who choose to journey together through my work.

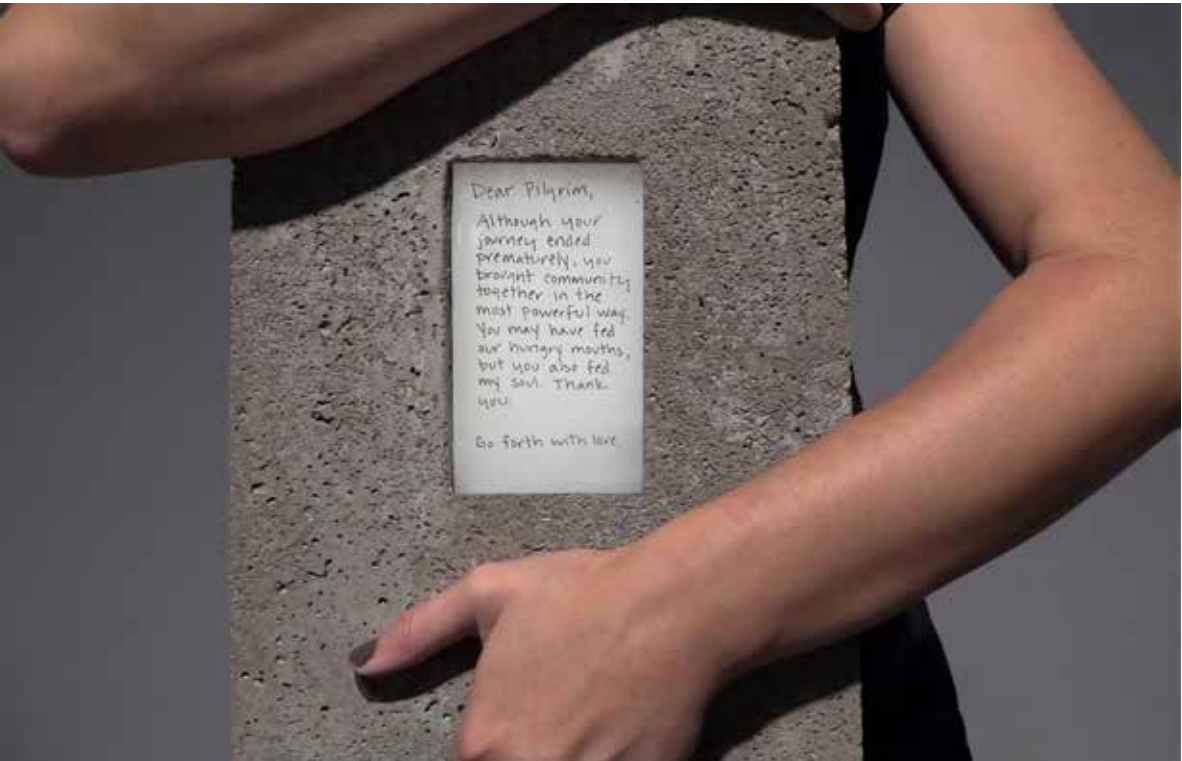














Huda Al-Aithan

MFA 3D DESIGN

In my design practice, I like to challenge widespread but unspoken assumptions about specific forms, materials, and tools. As a designer, I study all aspects of the user experience in terms of functionality, comfort and visual interest, so as to produce designs that provide my audience a dynamic experience around the objects and spaces I create. When I am faced with a new project, my first problem to solve is what is expected of me as a designer in terms of functionality? And then I look at how can I make an object or a space that is well suited for its purpose in an expressive way.

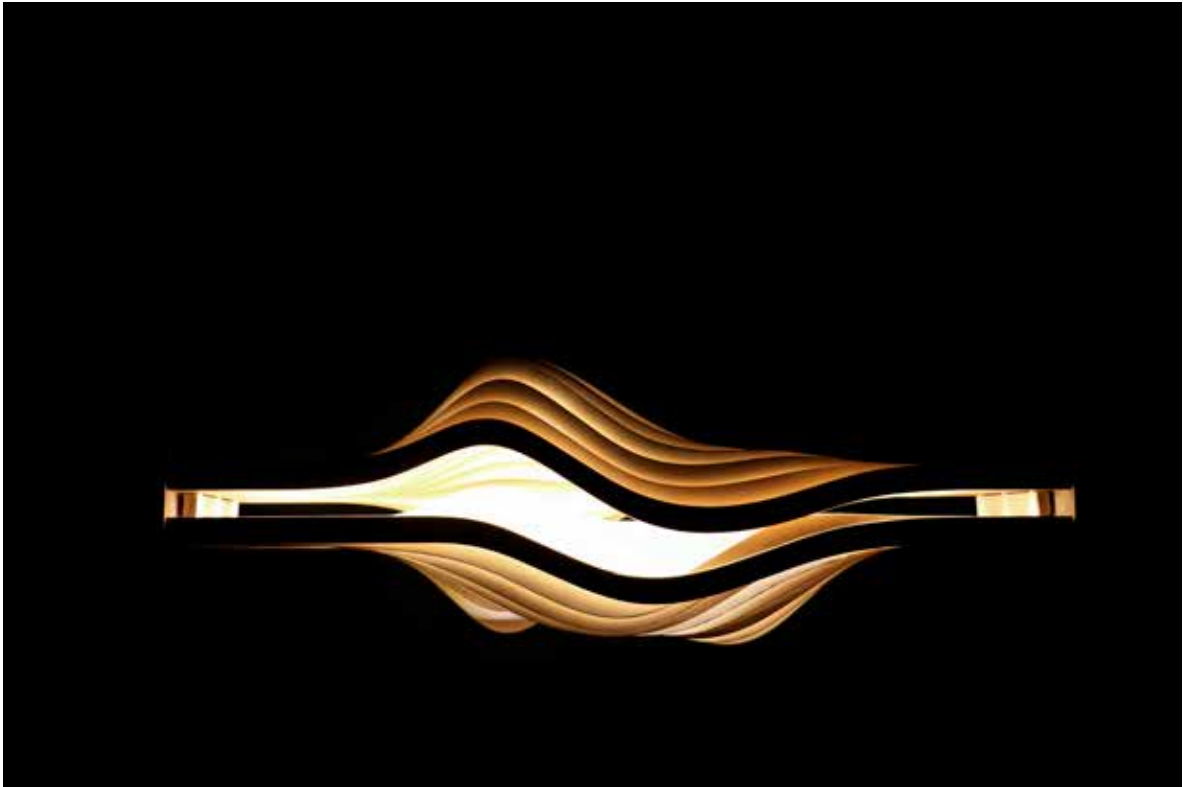
Being a designer to me isn't just about finding a "functionality" problem to solve or something to change, it's about self-expression as well. I often look for transforming my visual ideas into physical objects that are constructed from harmonious and fluid forms. A harmonious form has beauty, and beauty in itself is a function that I seek in my design work. My designs are equally about the users' visual and emotional experience as they are about the physical and functional experience.

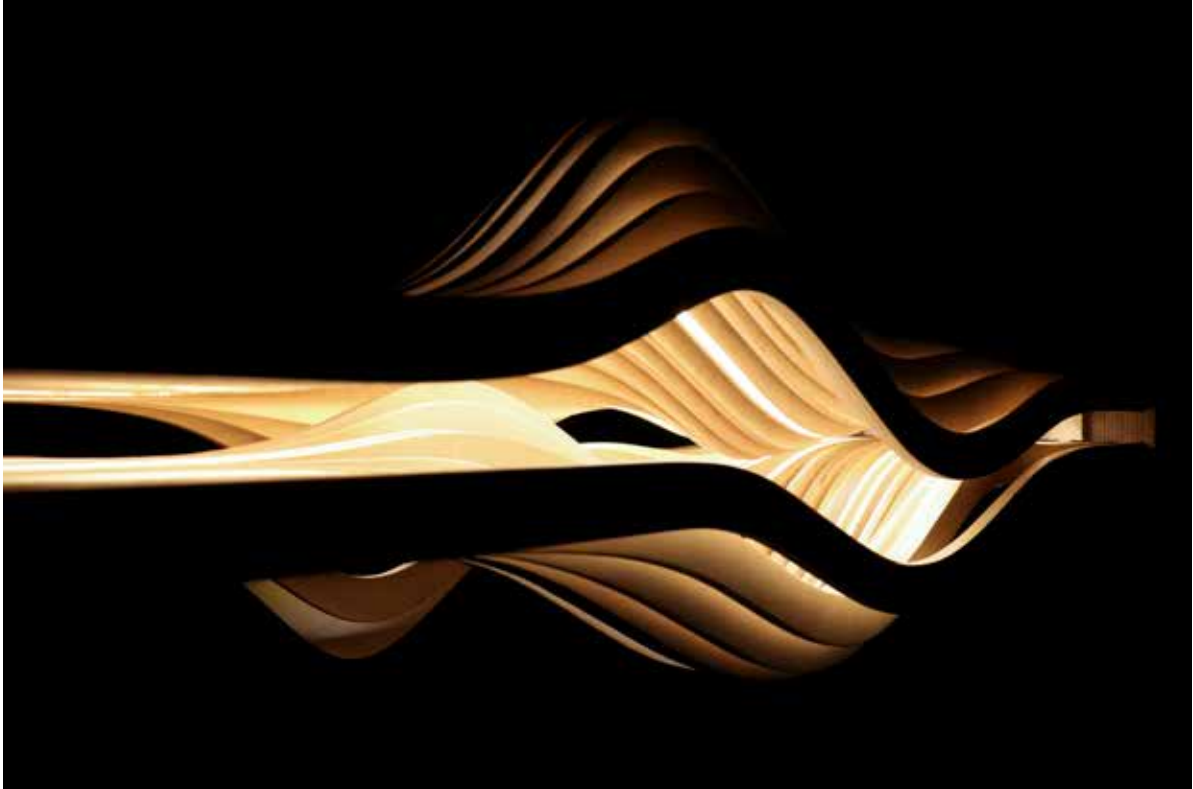
As I am faced with many projects and opportunities, I explore and develop my style and philosophy towards design. I also explore different practices and mediums to create my work. 3D modeling software, modern CNC technology and traditional crafts such as wood bending, and upholstery, provide a bucket of tools that I can draw from to achieve my purposes. The various mediums I work with played a big role in providing an opportunity to reshape materials into organic and flowing forms. It also gave room for planning and optimizing the process of constructing my work. I was able to challenge materials and processes to produce functional objects out of my visions.

As my ambition grows with my designs, I am furthering my studies not only into the design of objects but also bringing them up to life through light. Once you add light to any form, it's like giving a soul to a body. Light not only shapes and highlights the forms, it also enhances the emotional experience around an object or a space. Through colors, angles, and textures of light, I add one more line of communication to my audience.













Maria Alarcon Aldrete Wolf

MFA CERAMICS











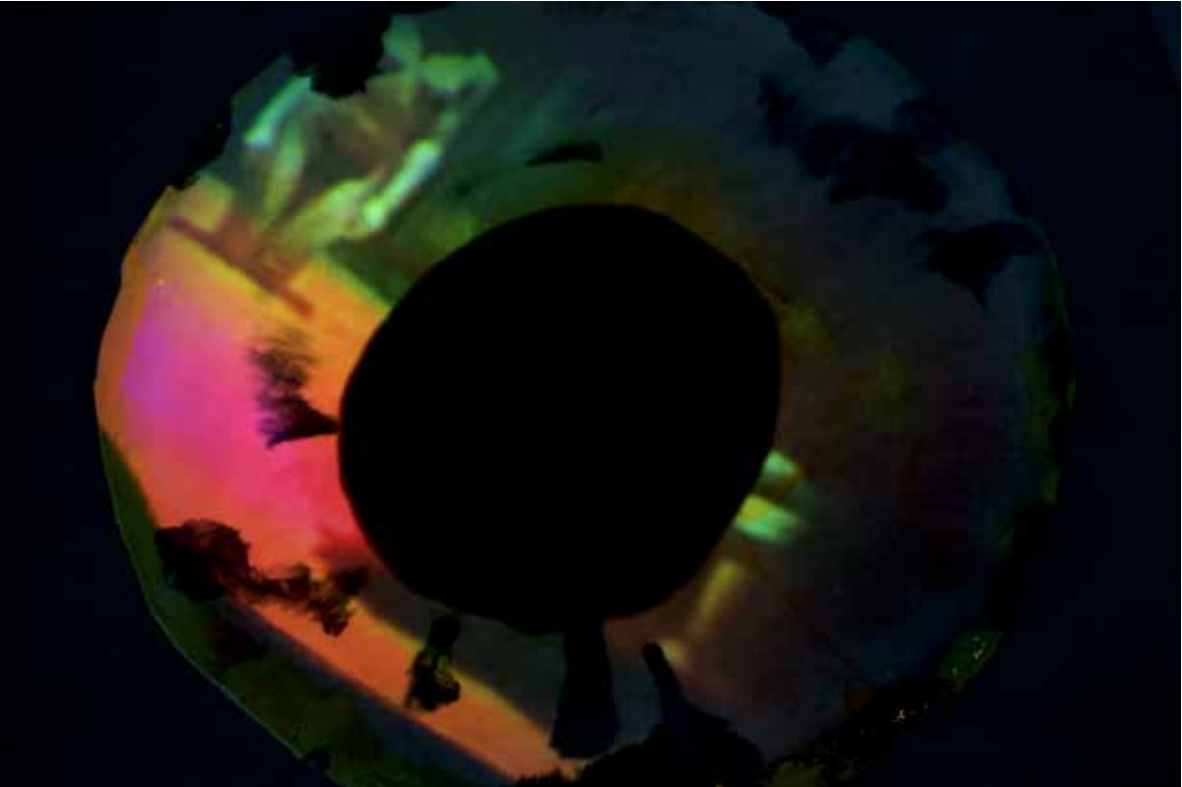




Timothy Alarcon Aldrete Wolf

MFA CERAMICS















Alexis Beucler

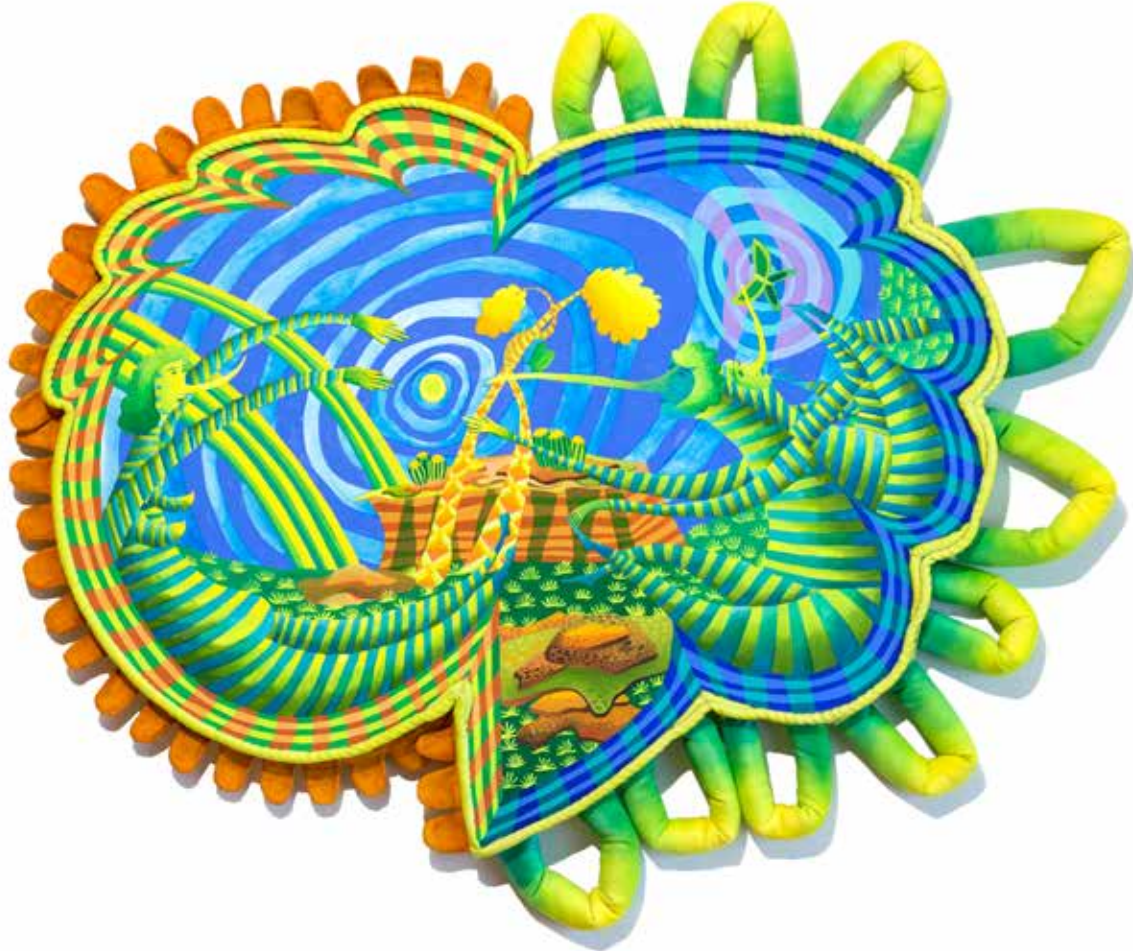
MFA PAINTING & DRAWING

I'm interested in spaces maximized with day-glow colors, patterns, and plants inspired by my hot and sticky homeland. These dense spaces simultaneously comfort and spur anxiety. Figures camouflage into the landscape around them-- they blend with their surroundings naturally or take on Razzle Dazzle characteristics with complex geometric shapes and contrasting colors, full in spectrum, that vibrate off the landscape.

Occasionally adorned with flower collars and patterned skin, figures reach out – in hopes of catching butterflies, in the warmth of another's hand, tender noses extend— ready to pollinate. These actions are both external and internal: figures reach into themselves, deeper and deeper, connecting to their unconscious— earnestly unearthing psychological terrain accessed as frequently as the flickering light of the sun beaming into the bottom of a well.

When figures find themselves occupying such a space-- one both familiar and estranged-- the excess within the landscape flows into excess of action. The landscape initiates this action and figures respond intuitively-- sometimes by indulging in a picnic and other times in vice. Here we stumble upon complex moments that examine abuse, passion, femininity, sexuality, violence, impulse; motives uncertain, rights and wrongs are displaced and challenged. Post-action and post-figure, the landscape holds secrets and absorbs the aftermath of intensity-- attention diverted, ambiguous space mirrors ambiguous motives. The futility of human action at its finest.

I think in words, in stories, in places transcending our own: liminal and intersexual. My hopes are to explore different chapters and stories of this world in paintings, artist books, and soft sculptures. Excavate the complexities of this Queer Space—delicate as a butterfly's wing, constant as the sun, and rooted in mystery.















Jenna Bonistalli

MFA SCULPTURE

My creative work explores ecological time, attention and phenomena. I wonder about a choreography of materials. Fiber, water, ceramic, thread, mirror and lens are echoes of living forms on earth. Each holds a unique capacity and potential through space, touch and time. How might they be composed to speak? What happens when a material changes shape? When the body responds? Elemental ingredients come together to create a new space, perhaps showing us disorientation, possibility and permutation. Light, sound and movement can be instruments of seeing, essential to this alchemy.

I have been collecting sound, light and video from preserves and natural areas in this region and translating these recordings through physical materials. Many pieces included here are fragments of an experience at Cayler Prairie in Lake Park, Iowa - a tallgrass prairie remnant, dedicated as a State Preserve in 1971. Using translated forms, I hope to compose moments of place. The “screens” are personalized weavings and floating paper tapestries, reflecting the amorphous shapes and forms of their reflected image.











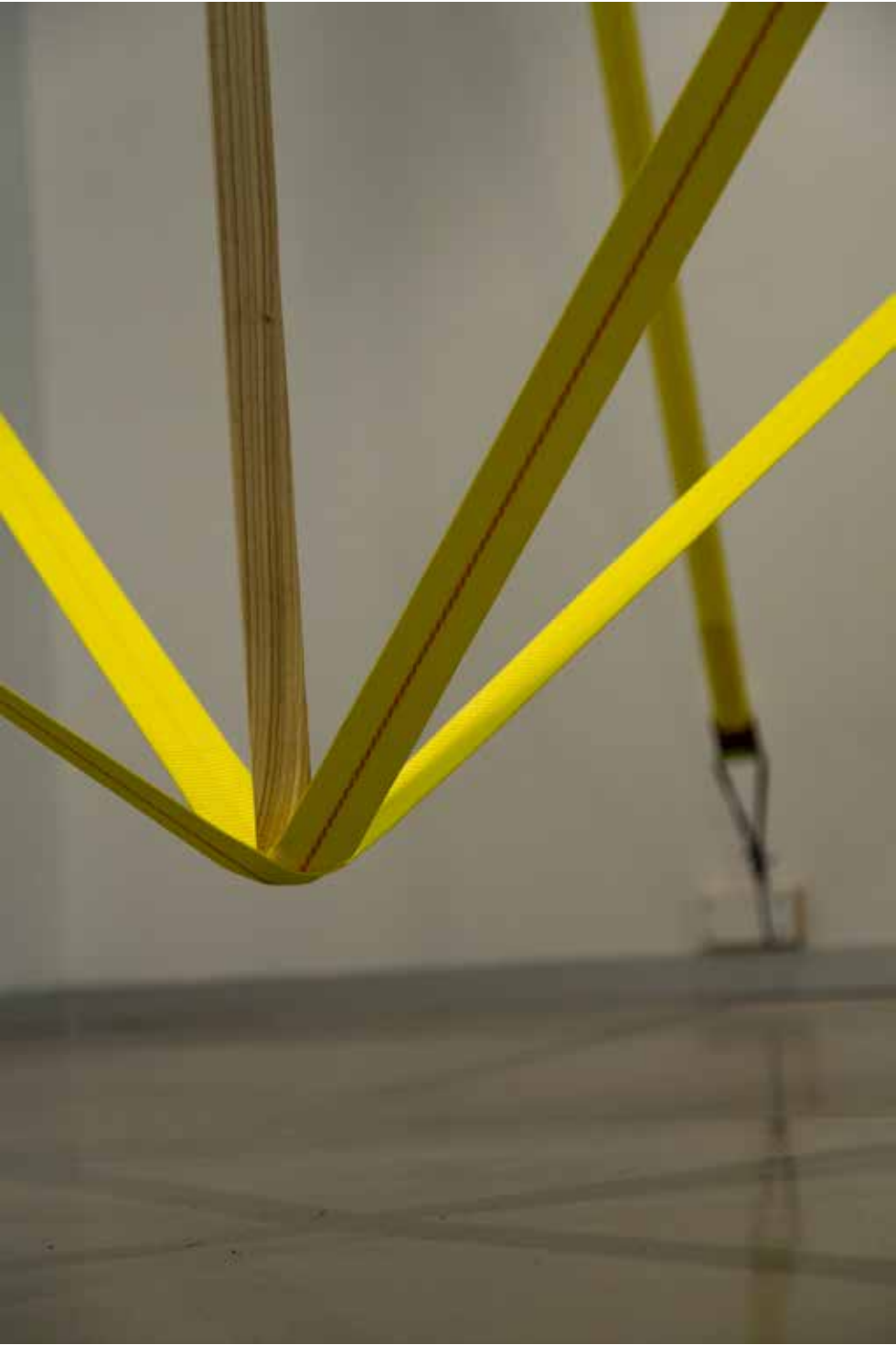


Connor Colvill

MFA PRINTMAKING

Connor Colvill uses the motion of making as a means of celebrating experience and recognizing contextual patterns. The images are created in a similar way that the brain builds dream spaces—by integrating acquired fragments of sensory input into collective mental ecosystems or circuits. The resulting dreamscapes are distorted reflections of the changing environment. Through the dreaming of these images, Connor has learned that he chooses imagery and processes in the same way a chameleon chooses color, by reflection of circumstance. The mind stands as a horizon between what ‘happens to me’ and what ‘I do.’ The effort of making images then, is similar to that of meditation—to realize the singularity of what he knows to be a duality.

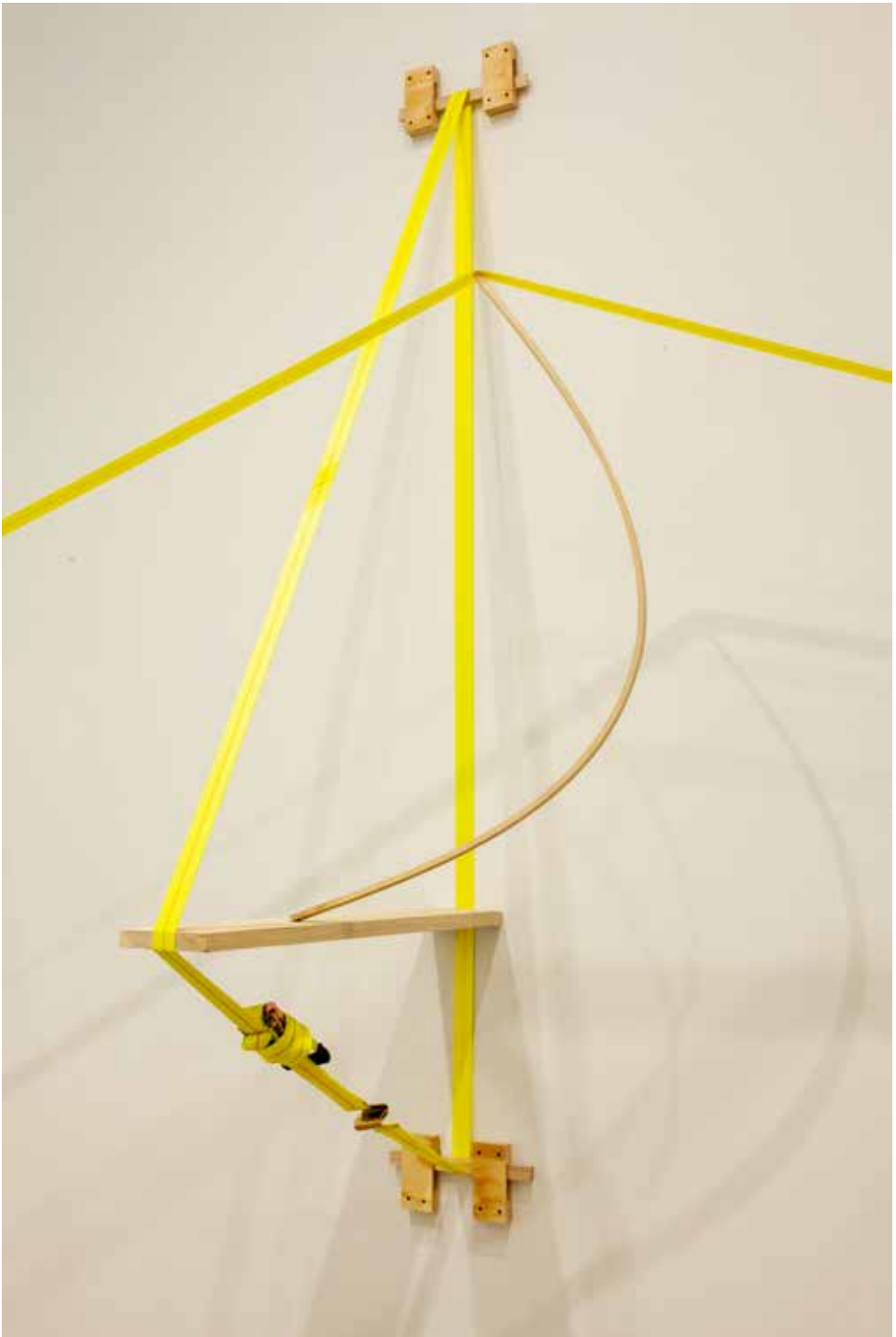
The hybrid element found in his choice of imagery and process/media seeks to provide a life-quality to the images. The exercise of shifting imagery throughout context and translating an image through stages of process turns the concrete qualities of meaning into a natural, fluid form. Printmaking, in many ways has acted this role upon him; being a vehicle to explore the company of new people, places, and ideas.













Nicole Davis

MFA PAINTING & DRAWING

Abstraction is flight. It is freedom from the immediate spatiotemporal constraints of the moment; freedom to plan the future, recall the past, comprehend the present from a reflective perspective that incorporates all three; freedom from the immediate boundaries of concrete subjectivity, freedom to imagine the possible and transport oneself into it; freedom to survey the real as a resource for embodying the possible...

-Adrian Piper

“Flying” (1987)

...the language of junk has been used for imaginative purposes, to memorialize the past through life’s humble remains and to evoke deep allusions to loss and reclamation, despair and deliverance, and the poetics of redemption.”

-Joanne Cubbs

“The Poetry of Castaway Things” in *Creation Story: Gee’s Bend Quilts and the Art of Thornton Dial* (2012)

My work uses discarded textiles assembled to evoke personal, ancestral, and cultural memory as a form of sustenance and resistance within the patriarchal, capitalist, white-supremist societal structure that we currently live in. I choose to use castaway and discarded things in the making art objects to serve as a metaphor for the people and things that exist on the margins of society. The beauty and ingenuity of making do with what you have has sustained, and continues to sustain, black folks in a world that denies our humanity. Reclaiming that which has been disposed of and/or rejected and highlighting the importance and richness of it helps to re-center my orbit around humanness as opposed to maleness, greed, and whiteness. I use the accumulated history embodied within found objects, memories projected onto these objects by myself and the viewer, to tell a story that is different than the one our larger society declares as truth. It is through this practice that I hope to sustain my humanness and resist (and ultimately transform) the forces that wish to deny it.















Stacey Lee Gee

MFA SCULPTURE

Most of my fears have come true. When the state of New Jersey charged my mother with criminal child neglect for the first time in 2003, my three siblings moved into my tiny one-bedroom apartment in downtown Philadelphia. At 23, as my peers attended grad school, I became a foster parent. When a judge placed my siblings back with my mother in 2010, I ended up in the exact spot I had worked so hard to escape: living in New Jersey surrounded by family addictions and stagnation. In reaction to these experiences, my art transitioned into a language of the senses. The memories of my life stories evolved into myths of protection and safety, of fear and nightmares.

Memory reveals inherent layers of complexity that surround reality. I am driven by the idea of a sensory narrative, the idea that a story is retold through what is most emotionally true. I believe remembering is sensual. Less than scientific, memory points instead toward a different kind of understanding.

My installations serve as a physical manifestation of the dissonance between what is observable in the world and what is remembered. Tactile materials and found objects help me explore the distorted role memory has in informing the psyche of an individual. The resulting installations and sculptural objects become new physically-realized memories, resting in-between fact and emotion—physical forms that reflect a psychological state.

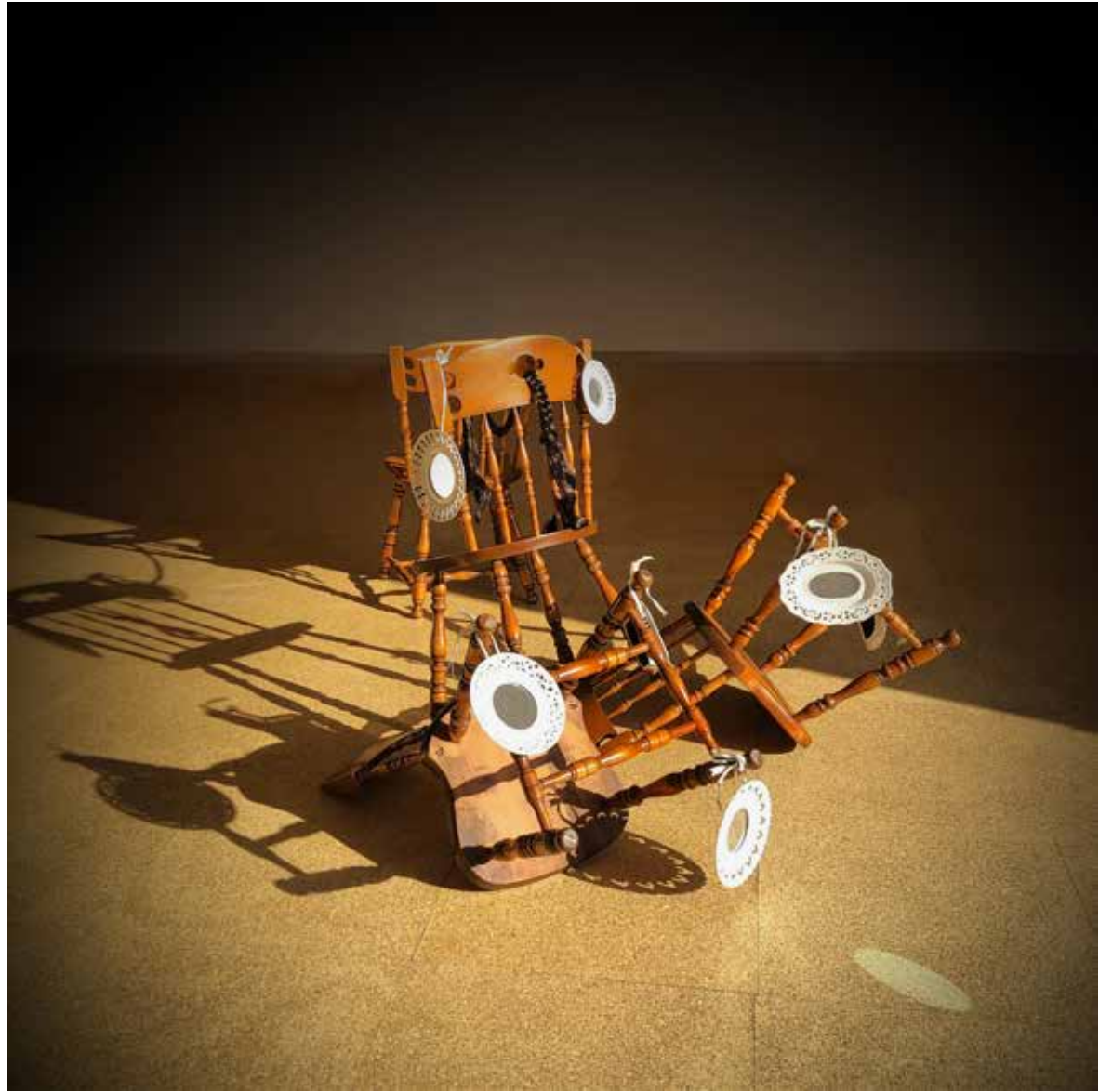
Ultimately, I view my work as a form of divination which allows me to channel pop culture across generations. In the face of exhausting personal and cultural references, resolution is created within each piece when the fragility of concept meets with objects from a specific cultural past. Discarded objects which don't make sense as separate parts combine to tell a complex story which mimics both the sheen and confusion of a dreamscape.

My new work will fill old Victorian houses, ghost towns and churches with multi-room installations designed to be experienced over hours and days. By combining collections of places with memory objects, I will recycle these decaying buildings and places into a long-story, one that bridges the history of generations to create spaces that read like omens.

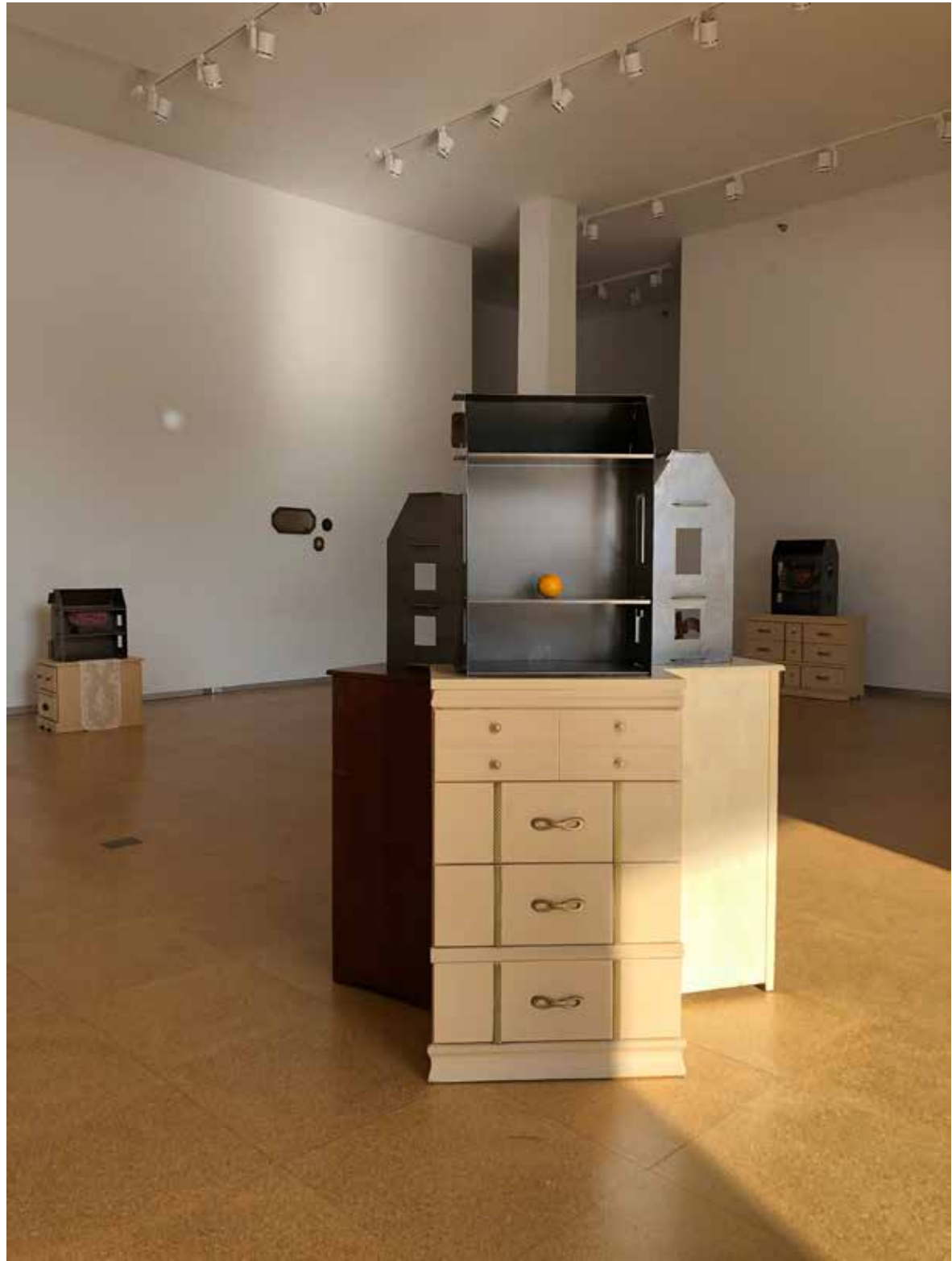














Scott Christian Hage

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY

Following the death of my younger brother during my first year back in school, I became acutely aware that my photography was changing in ways that I couldn't quite articulate. One thing that I was certain of—that since my brother's passing, I had been consumed with the idea and concept of loss—of what it does to us and how it affects us going forward. At its most basic level, loss (or being lost, for that matter) is at once relatable to all of us, and relative to each of us.

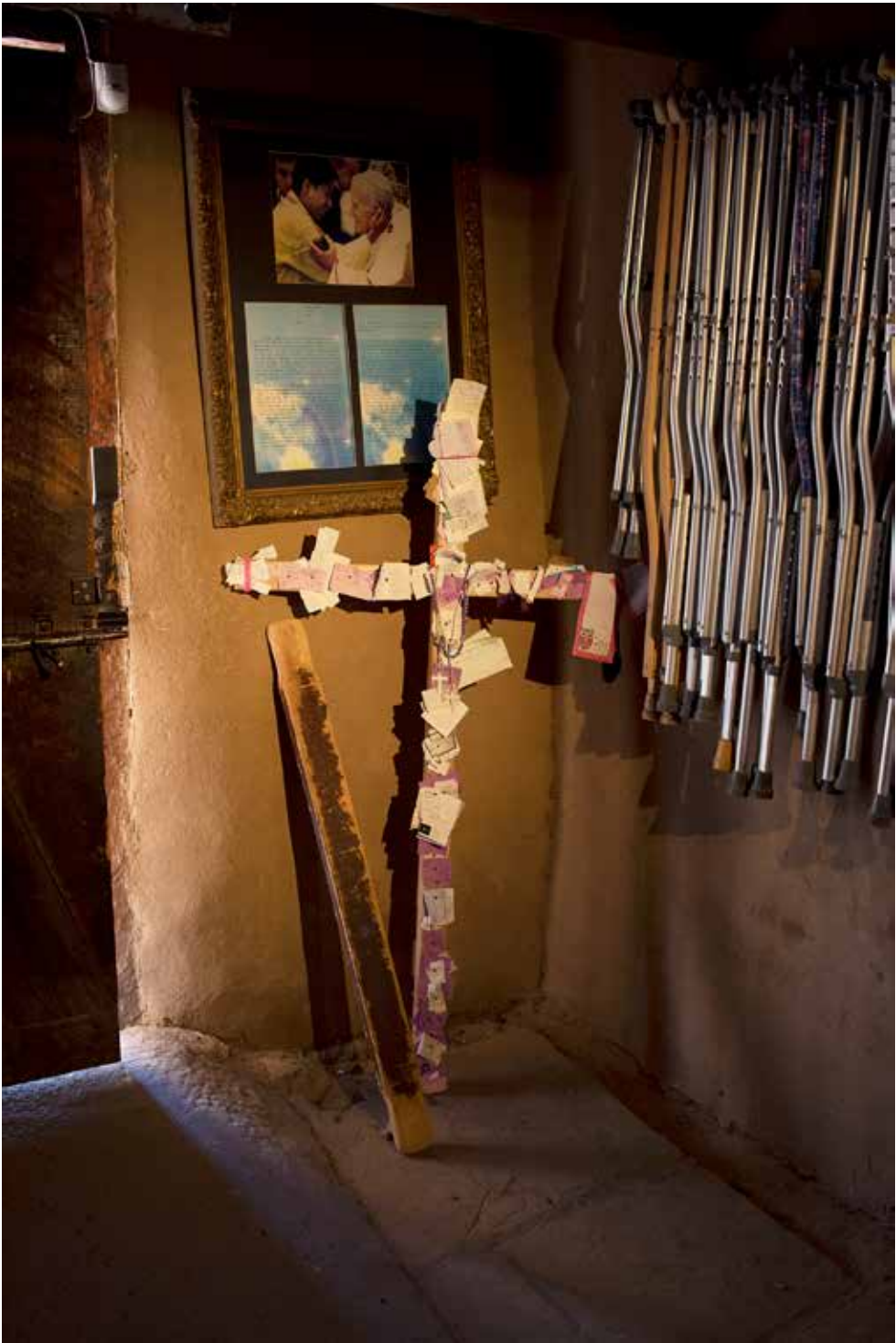
The End of Something, is about a process; encompassing a personal search to rediscover—or perhaps, to reinvent—a sense of normalcy or clarity within one's self having been burdened by such loss. The End of Something is also about the beginning of something else. It is about loss, sure...but it's about being lost as well; it's about the process of facing hardships and learning the best way one can move forward despite the ongoing “irrepressible cycle of life.” While the imagery expressed within this project might in many places fall short of assurances that better days lie ahead, there is still extant in other places a sense of lingering hope that all is not lost.

To continue to exist in spite of hardship stands as a sign of resilience and a testament to desire.

For myself, as an artist and a photographer, expressing through metaphor what had been endured internally, by a contextualization within my photographs was eventually how I saw best to navigate these uncharted seas, and how I personally chose to find my way. Photography literally became for me the best therapy, and the photographs themselves stand as witness to a diaristic performance directly relating to my personal journey in the search for meaning and discovery.











Donté Hayes

MFA CERAMICS

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Donté K Hayes graduated summa cum laude from Kennesaw State University at Kennesaw, Georgia with a BFA in Ceramics and Printmaking with an Art History minor. Recent art exhibitions include group shows at the Museum of Science + Industry Chicago, Illinois, the Association of Visual Arts in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia in Atlanta. He has also been included in recent juried exhibitions from the 2019 NCECA Student Juried Show at the Soo Visual Arts Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the 2018 River to River Midwest Regional Ceramic Juried Show at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Hayes, is a 2019 Ceramics Monthly Magazine Emerging Artists. Currently, Donté is a third year MFA candidate at the University of Iowa Dimensional Studies in Ceramics and is the 2017 recipient of the University of Iowa Arts Fellowship.

ARTIST STATEMENT

During my time in Iowa my research has been focused on the pineapple as a symbol which represents welcoming and hospitality, while also pushing larger issues of access to food, empire, and what constitutes the feeling and or act of being welcomed. Through this research I have discovered that the tradition of the pineapple as a symbol for hospitality is rooted in slavery and agricultural colonization of the Caribbean, South America, and the Southern United States in particularly, South Carolina and my home state of Georgia. When a new slave ship bringing enslaved Africans docked at port, the dock foremen would place a pineapple at the front of the dock to notify a new shipment of enslaved Africans have arrived. This creating the pineapple as a symbol for welcoming. The investigation in the concept of welcoming is also from personal struggles in moving to a new place and environment and not feeling like I belonged or welcomed. These ceramic objects are vessels, each making symbolic allusions to the black body. The human desire to find a place to belong and call home is universal.













Nina Kintsurashvili

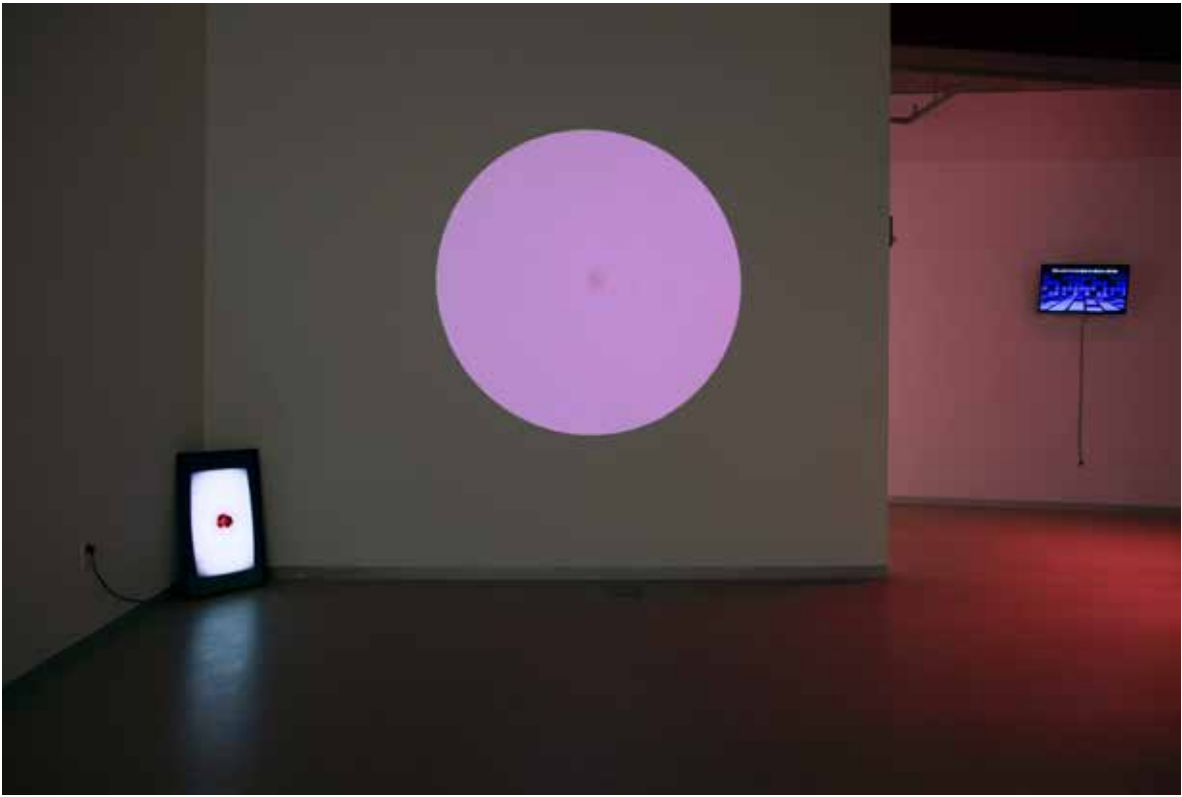
MFA INTERMEDIA

Moving through the wide range of media, such as performance, video, sound and painting, my work is an abstract deconstruction of the memories associated with growing up in the Post-Soviet Georgia in a family of Orthodox Icon painter father, working on religious Icons and frescoes. Within an autobiographical context, I attempt to excavate the subconscious and replace the familiar dogmatic narrative and imagery with new, inventive iconography and symbolism, which through repetition become part of my personal subjective mythology. The center of this imaginary world is always a female figure. I often reflect on censorship, inclusion/exclusion, a female body, The Soviet Past, the material cultural heritage, Mysticism and the collective subconscious.















Mark Lanning Jr.

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY

My thesis work, titled *the flight of the wild duck.*, was built around my learning of my grandfather's last words more than 30 years after he died. In the process of that search, I assembled family stories, collected texts, and created a material trail of my search through a series of photomicrographs sourced from my own negatives.











Jake Lee

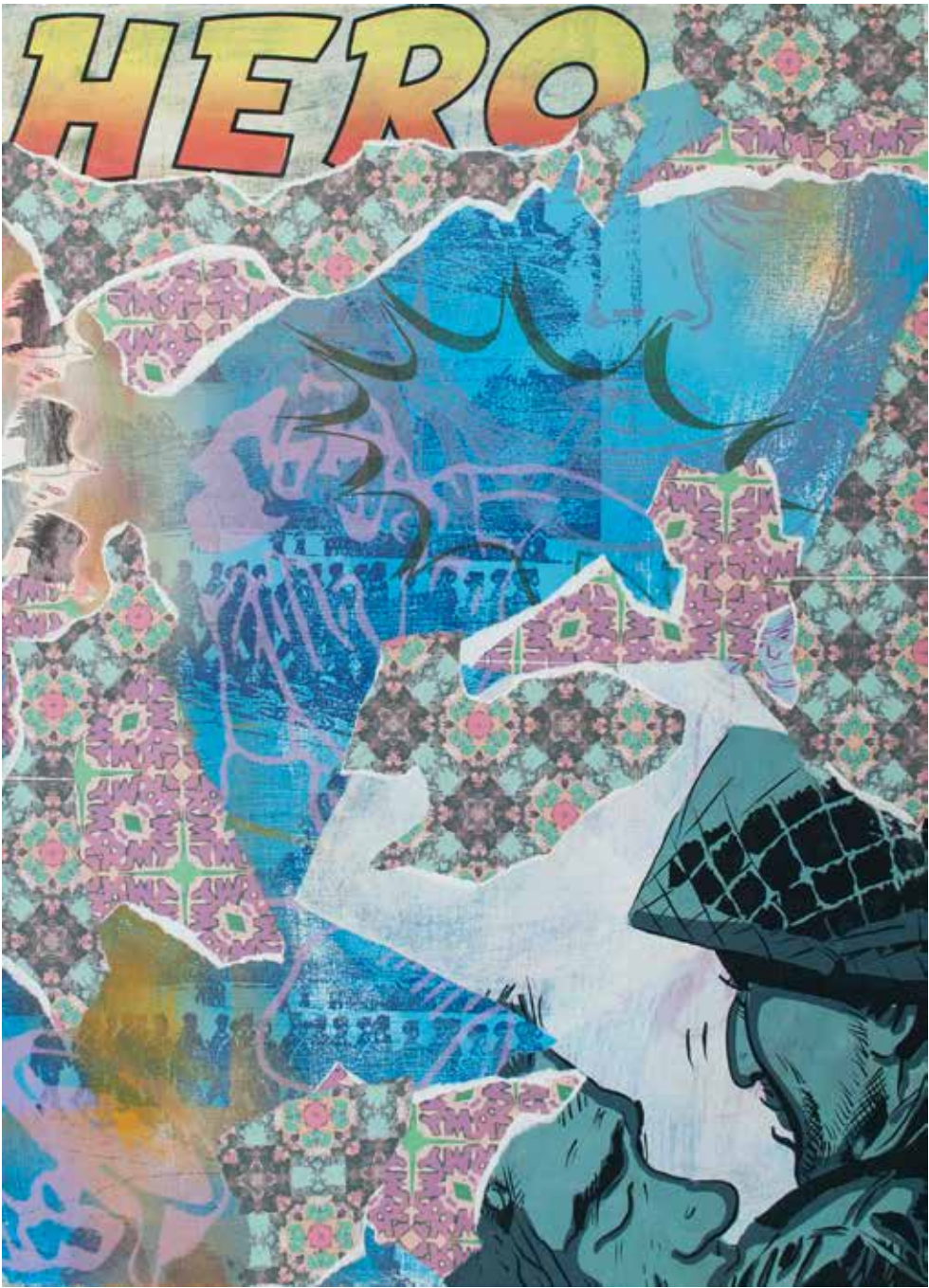
MFA PRINTMAKING

Raised outside of a military installation and early exposure to toy guns, plastic army men, and G.I. joes as a child, made the soldier an icon, a figure of idolization, playing war was a favorite childhood game. My works of art explore my young adult experiences in the military. I was a soldier at 17, raised by a mother and grandmother, transplanted into a hyper masculine world centered around killing and anger. A world that my mother and grandmother are never prouder to tell people that I belonged to.

In the work, lyrics from marching cadences are printed in repeated patterns, reflecting the mantras they become when they are recited every day. Phrases from military recruitment advertisements and campaigns are painted using a traditional Americana sign painting aesthetic. Screen and relief printed propaganda imagery in heightened, bedazzled camouflaged colors on Tyvek, wood, and tarpaulins become structures once imagined as a child, then experienced while training, in the field, or in a combat zone. Installations of sandbags and cut Tyvek camo netting are made into bunkers for protection, concealment, and surveillance but exposed through the use of garish color and overt images of patriotic propaganda.

Through the use of appropriated propaganda imagery, pop culture military references, war comics, and personal photographs, it is my intention to investigate the lust of heroism. Military icons in pop culture are used as a form of recruitment. I am actively exploring how masculine language is used to define the identity of the warrior, and supports how psychological manipulation, as experienced in the military, is used. My work illustrates a world dominated by toxic masculinity where killing is arousing, and the talk of killing is used as foreplay. A world where you bite your tongue if you disagree, because fitting into that environment for your survival is paramount to any personal moral beliefs you may hold.











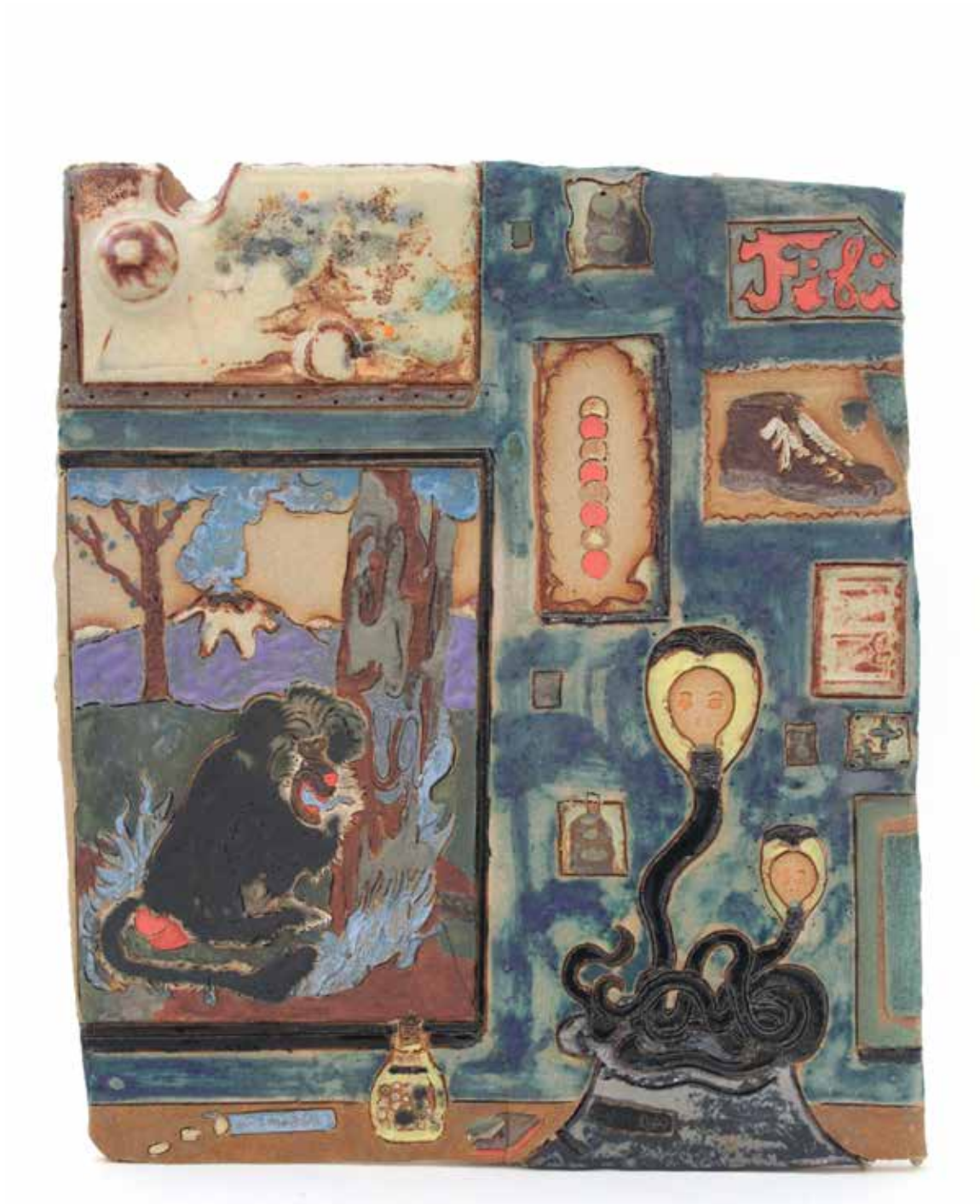


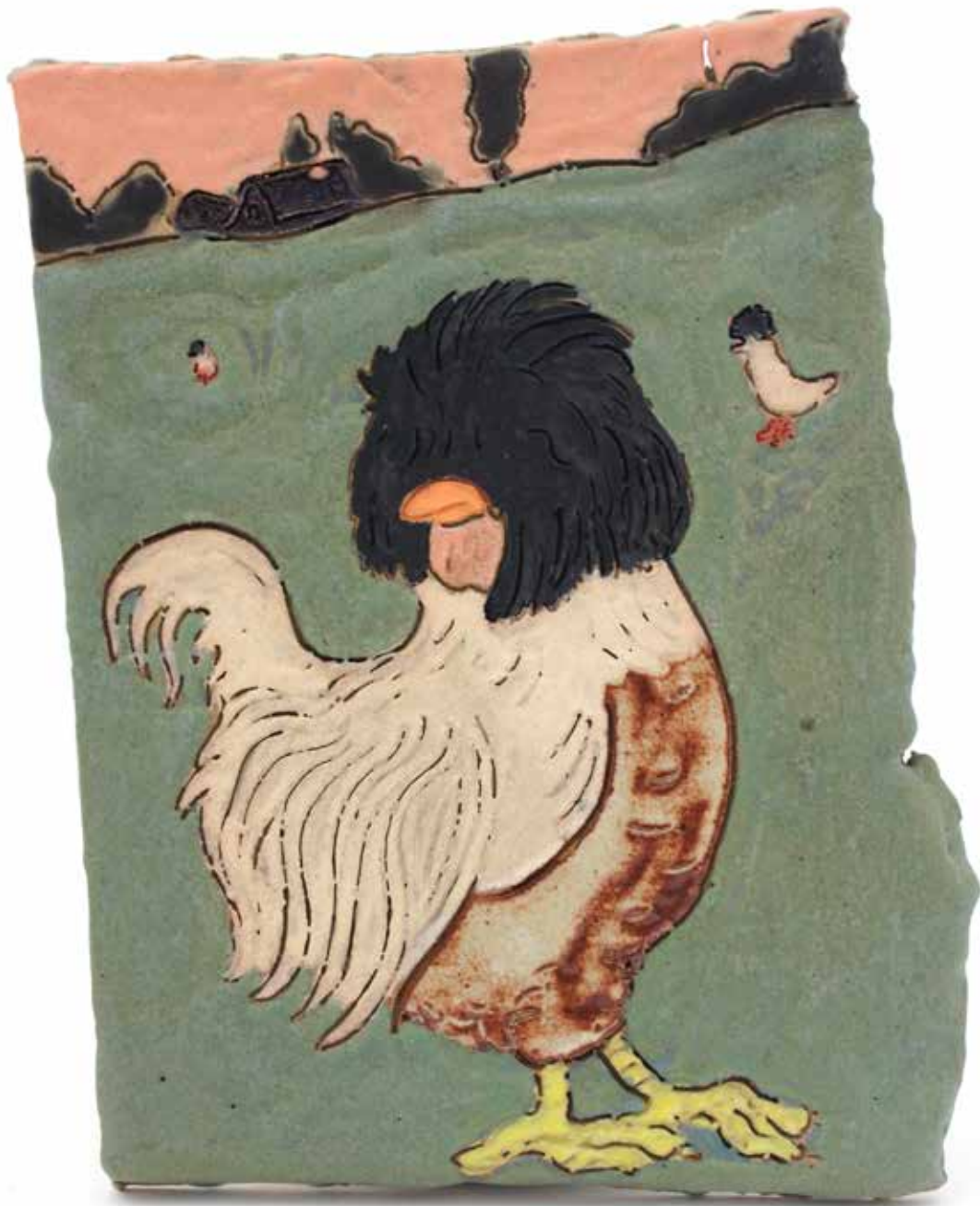
Kevin McNamee-Tweed

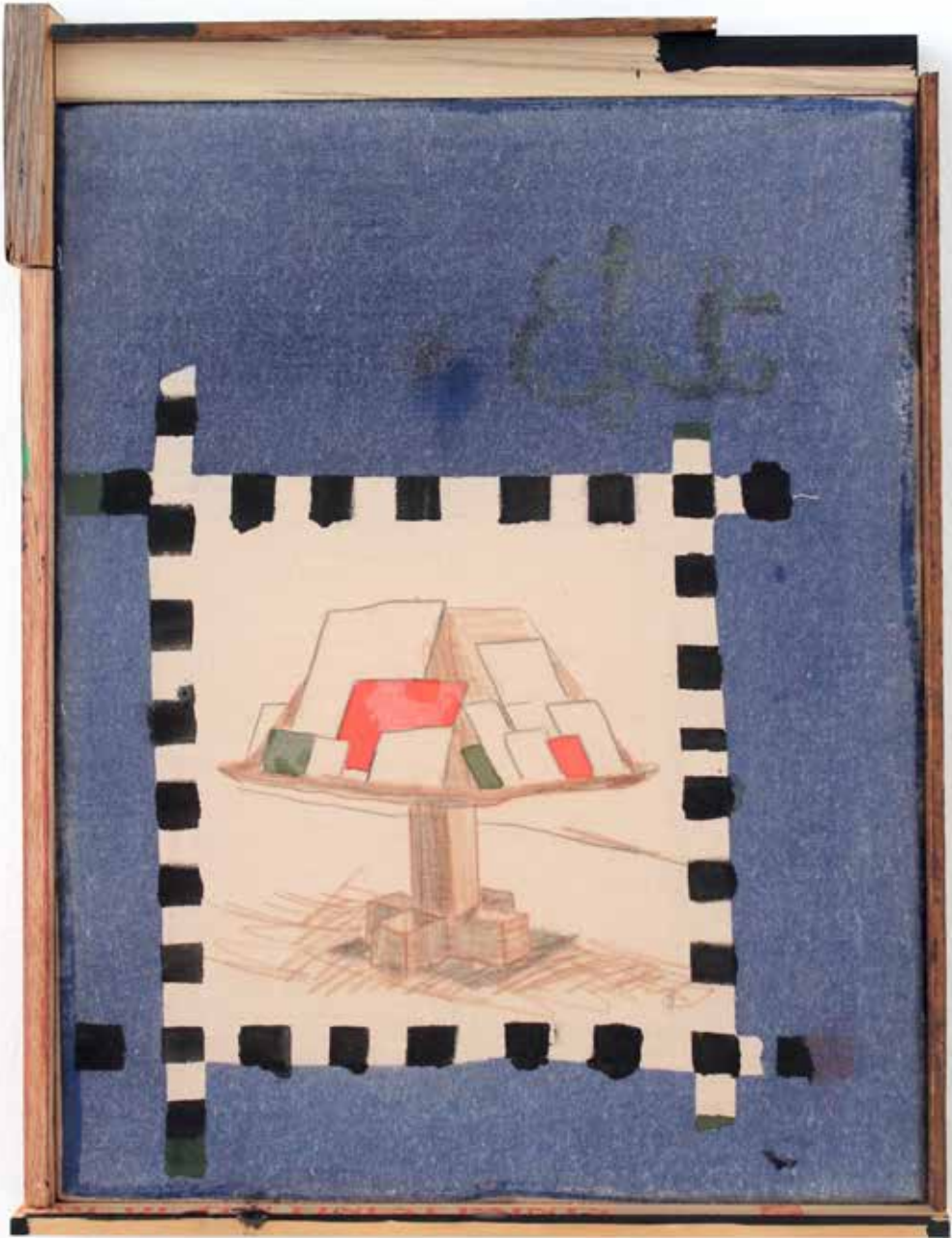
MFA PAINTING & DRAWING













Neva Nobles-Alder

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Neva works predominantly with digital photography, utilizing macro photographic techniques with specific interests in insects, arachnids, and a variety of micro flora. As a process-oriented artist, her multidisciplinary practice has expanded to the construction of 3D landscape sculptures and various other model implements made from a variety of materials.

Her work seeks to inspire curiosity and bring awareness to overlooked small scale flora and fauna through beautiful imagery. Neva completed a BFA at East Carolina University, School of Art and Design in Greenville, NC in 2017. She will have completed her MFA in photography and a graduate certificate in book studies (UICB) at the University of Iowa, in May 2020.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Whether through natural field photography or sculptural construction, I am interested in the push and pull between subjects often reviled, paired with inviting, dramatic scenery. I imagine and create worlds that stem from a lifelong appreciation of nature but cannot avoid speaking to environmental instability and loss of biodiversity.

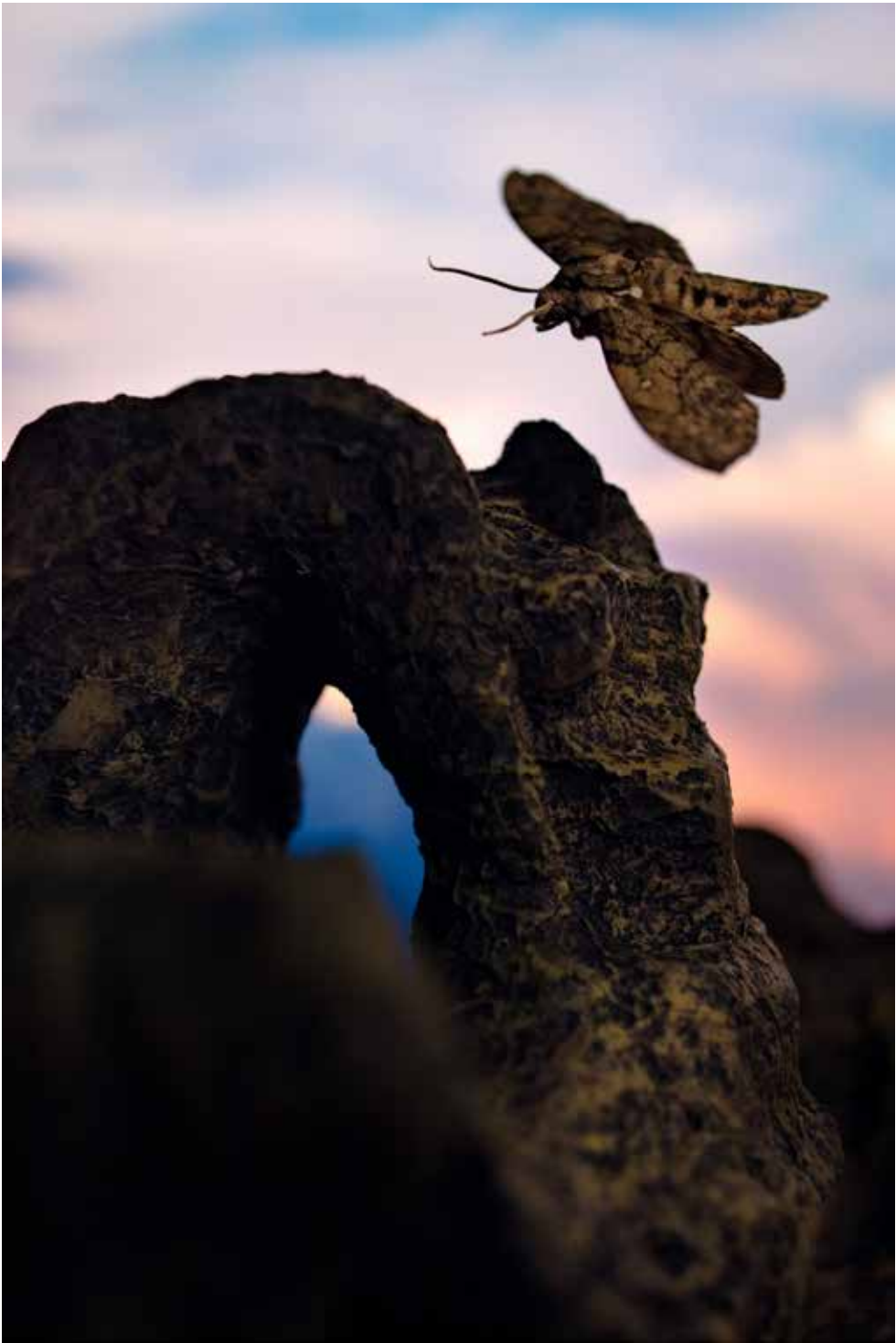
My work acts as an intermediary between scientific fascination and ideas of classical beauty within formal art.

Working with the aesthetic conventions and ideology employed by Romantic landscape painters of the early nineteenth century, the depiction of the landscape as dramatic and potent, utilizing a full tonal range of light, and a vivid color palette; through the placement of hand-carved landscape models, projection backgrounds, and controlled lighting. All are culminating into painterly photographic scenes carefully arranged, as a kind of visual poetry I place insects in roles often occupied by a human.















Liz Powell

MFA PRINTMAKING

“At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.”

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

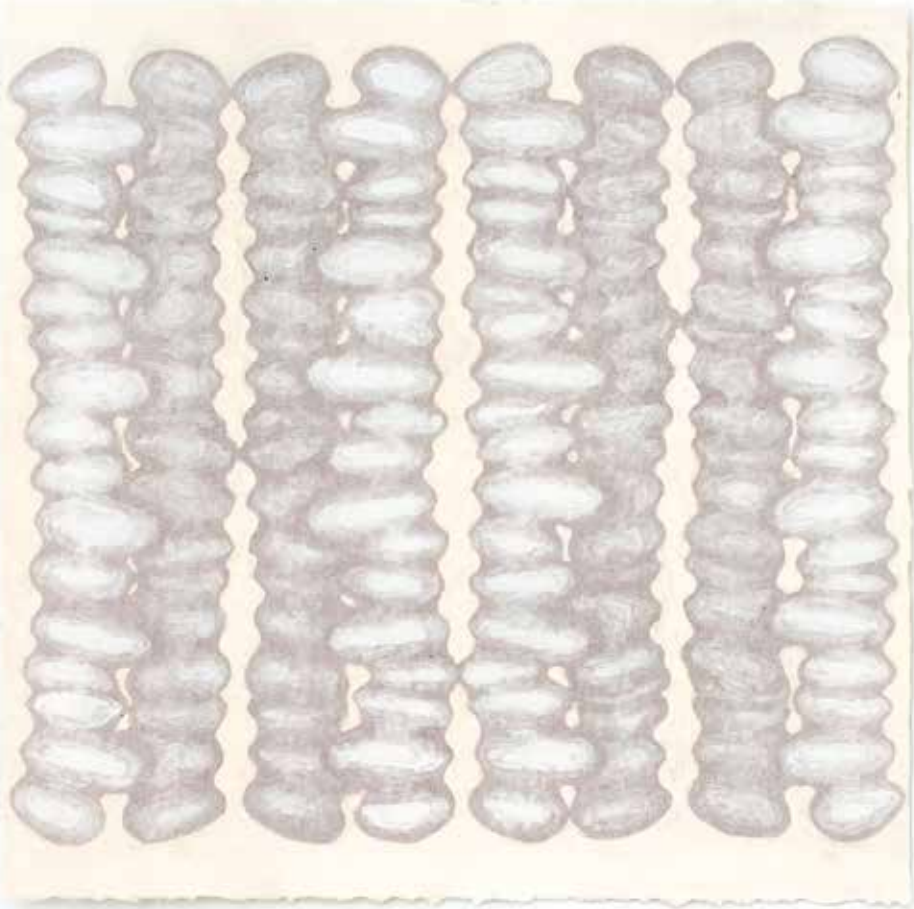
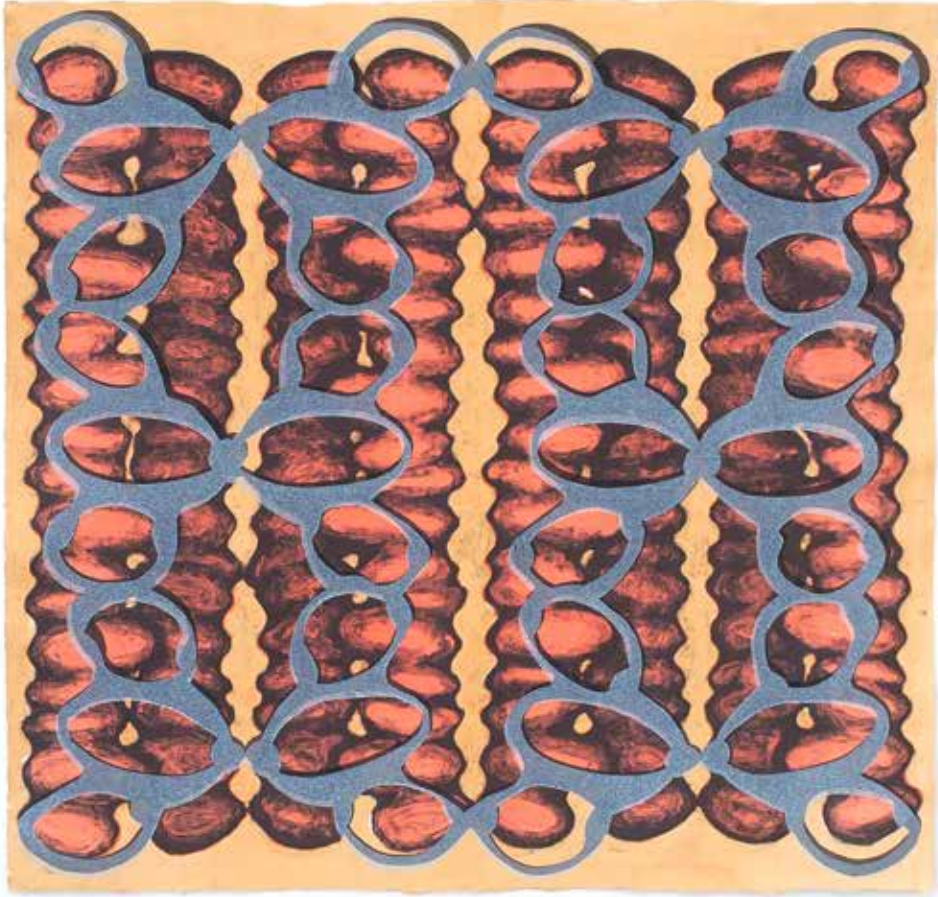
Bodily; suggestive and alluring. My work is comprised of abstract shapes and patterns. The imagery comes from a lexicon of figures that I began developing when I was immobilized by an illness. Experiencing the physical limitations my disease was imposing, I instinctively began to draw and abstract the shape of my own body to reconnect with it and to reclaim it. I now draw these forms automatically and obsessively, they morph and form into other configurations. Although, they deviate far from the figure, they remain strangely and physically interrelated. In this manner, they recapitulate: ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny (Ernst Haeckel, General Morphology of Organisms); meaning my prints go through stages of abstraction which ultimately represent the history from which they evolved.

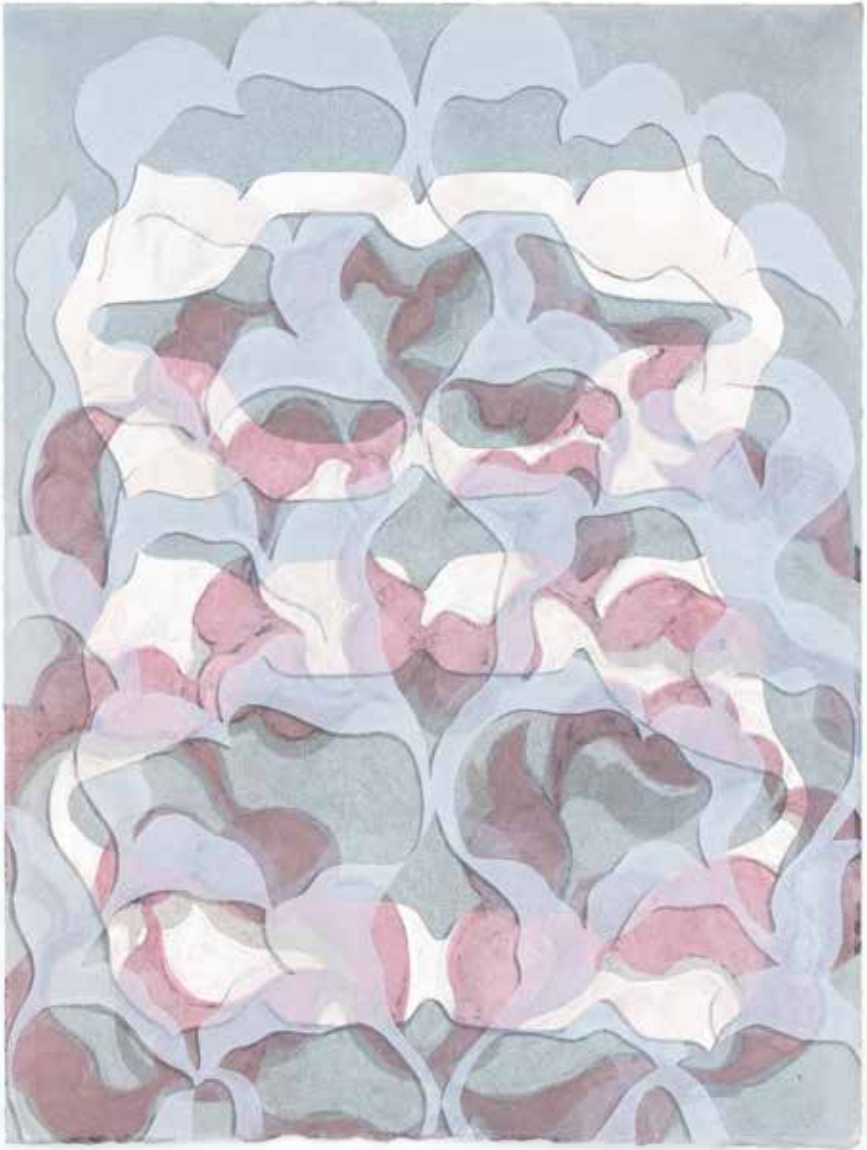
Overt references to breasts, belly, and pelvis; other times, I create things that resemble bones or organs; visceral and sinewy, swollen or emaciated. The forms are abnormal, riddled with bulbous protuberances, abject and grotesque. Despite their oddity, they are beautiful. Unexpected and sometimes disconcerting, the forms are not quite what they propose to be. They retain autonomy.

These powerful forms are contradicted by the overlying skeletal structures that often accompany them. These “cages” or “nets” entered my work when, on a quest for plain, utilitarian underwear, I was pulled into the abyss of online shopping. I am fascinated by over-the-top lingerie, which is both impractical and outlandish. I am intrigued by the way the fabric forces women’s bodies into geometric shapes, as if they are packaged into a smaller container.

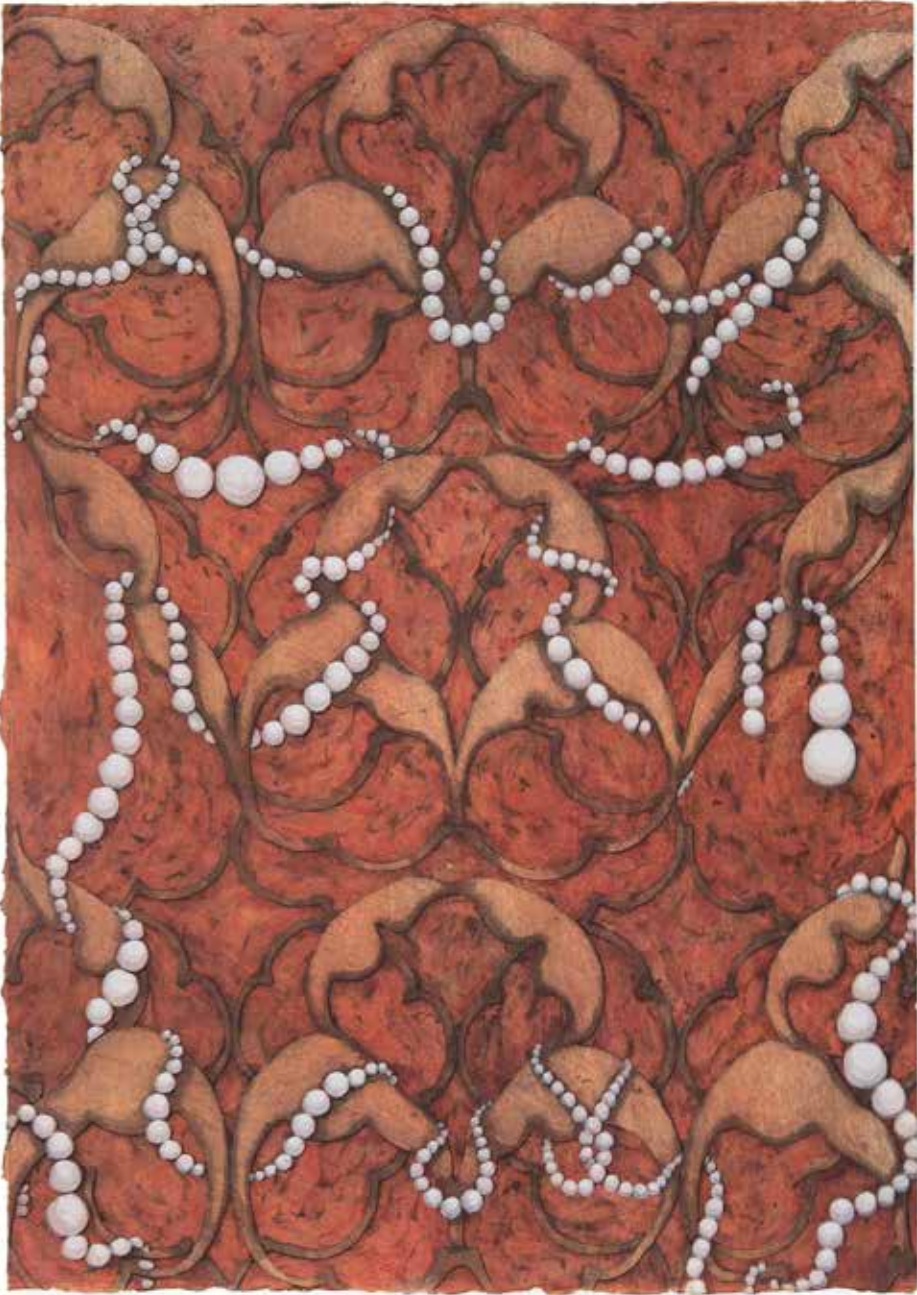
The lingerie in my work feels more manufactured than the soft organic shapes beneath. Cage and body are influenced by one another as I draw them in conjunction. The forms maintain an independence as they seek to define the objects that confine them. The superimposed structures are restrictive as they delineate the space in which the underlying forms exist; they are also a decorative adornment, jewelry amplifying what lies beneath, negating the distortion.

There is an inherent tension in the medium of printmaking, a forced flattening. This pressure materially explores what my work visually expresses. The prints are shaped by the compression of the press, just as my forms are shaped by their nets. The press acts as a metaphorical Spanx. This is especially true in intaglio where the paper has to be prepped, softened, before being squeezed into a metal plate, a mold, driven over by a large steel drum that forms a mirror image. Similar to the intaglio press, the societal decorum of feminine beauty creates a conflation of expression and repression that is installed within the female body, my work explores the tension between the biological and the psycho-social.















Jennifer Vess

MFA PAINTING & DRAWING

A FORT MADE OF SHEETS

I walk down a long hallway, passing through doors at regular intervals. I enter a room with a high, narrow table. I sit on its edge, my feet dangling above the tile floor. I am examined. I am told I will be okay. They put me back together again. I am covered with a warm blanket, swaddled and held.

I wait. I am brought to a small room with a bench against the back wall. I lean hard against it, allowing the structure to hold all of my weight. I wait. I am questioned. I answer what I know to be true. I am told he will be okay. They put him back together again. I cover him with a blanket, and hold his breathing body.

I am going to leave. I don't know how much time I have. We are outside. I allow her to burrow her head in my chest. I wrap her tightly in my embrace and wet her curls with my grief. She doesn't understand my hesitation, but she doesn't reject it either. Her smell is left on my sweater. I allow myself to break as I know this is our last moment.

I am a seeker of small spaces. I wrap myself in cyclical narratives. I revisit familiar places. I follow the sunlight. I gravitate toward warmth.

I burrow beneath, and I find shelter within the boundaries of a fort made of sheets.















Faye Wheeler

MFA PAINTING & DRAWING

Shadows emote, checkered grids ungulate, and space collapses. The table sits awkwardly, unaware of its significance. An ambiguous memory shapes their meaning. Images of grid, shadow, table, and space are made to replicate moments in memory and of consciousness.

There is familiarity within ambiguity.

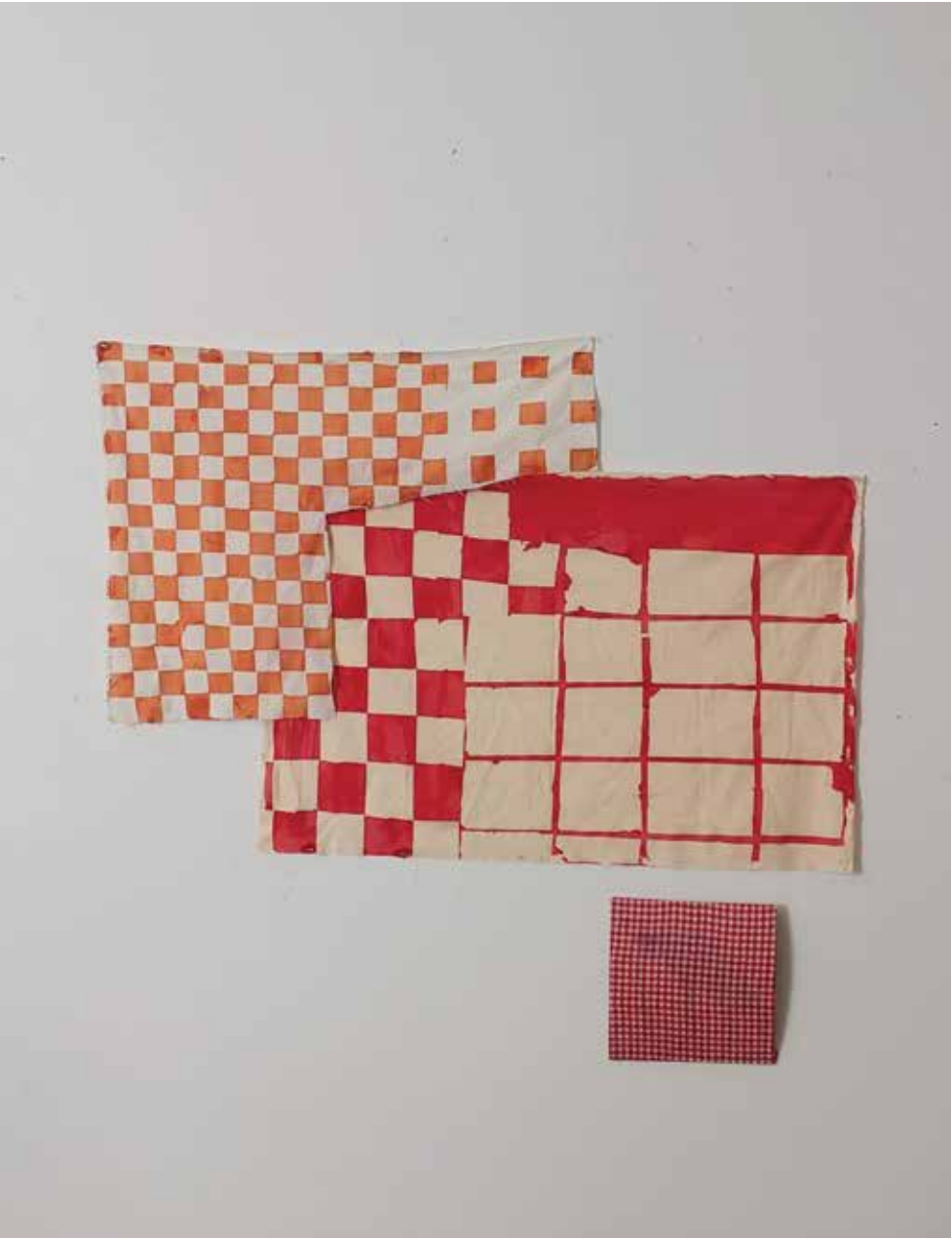
These objects are created by thought and memory of my family and my home. Memory that took place in a gridded space; spilling orange juice on my grandmother's formica tile floor, baths in the pink tile bathroom, ghosts in the kitchen, becoming friends with my shadow.

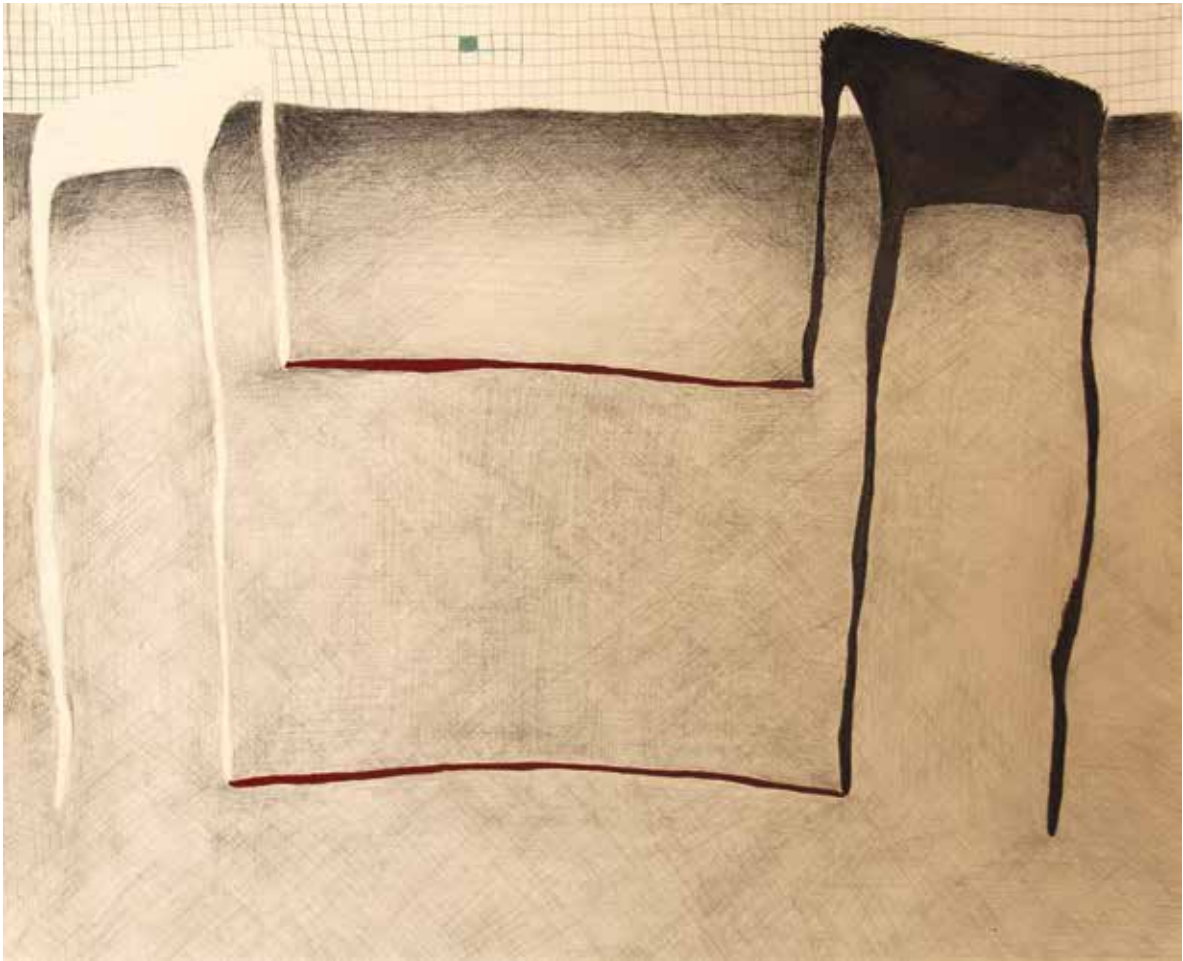
It is never the same table. A grid is a pattern, these grids repeat memory as space. Table, grid, shadow, table, shadow, table shadow, grid, grid, grid, shadow of table. These are memories of spaces, these are physical spaces, and these are abstractions of spaces. These are headspaces, domestic spaces, happy spaces, flat spaces, deep spaces, twisting, gridded, warped, unstable, dark and light spaces. These are in the kitchen, bathroom, garage, attic; home. Unsafe space occupied by anxious objects who scutter across the tile into flat shadow.

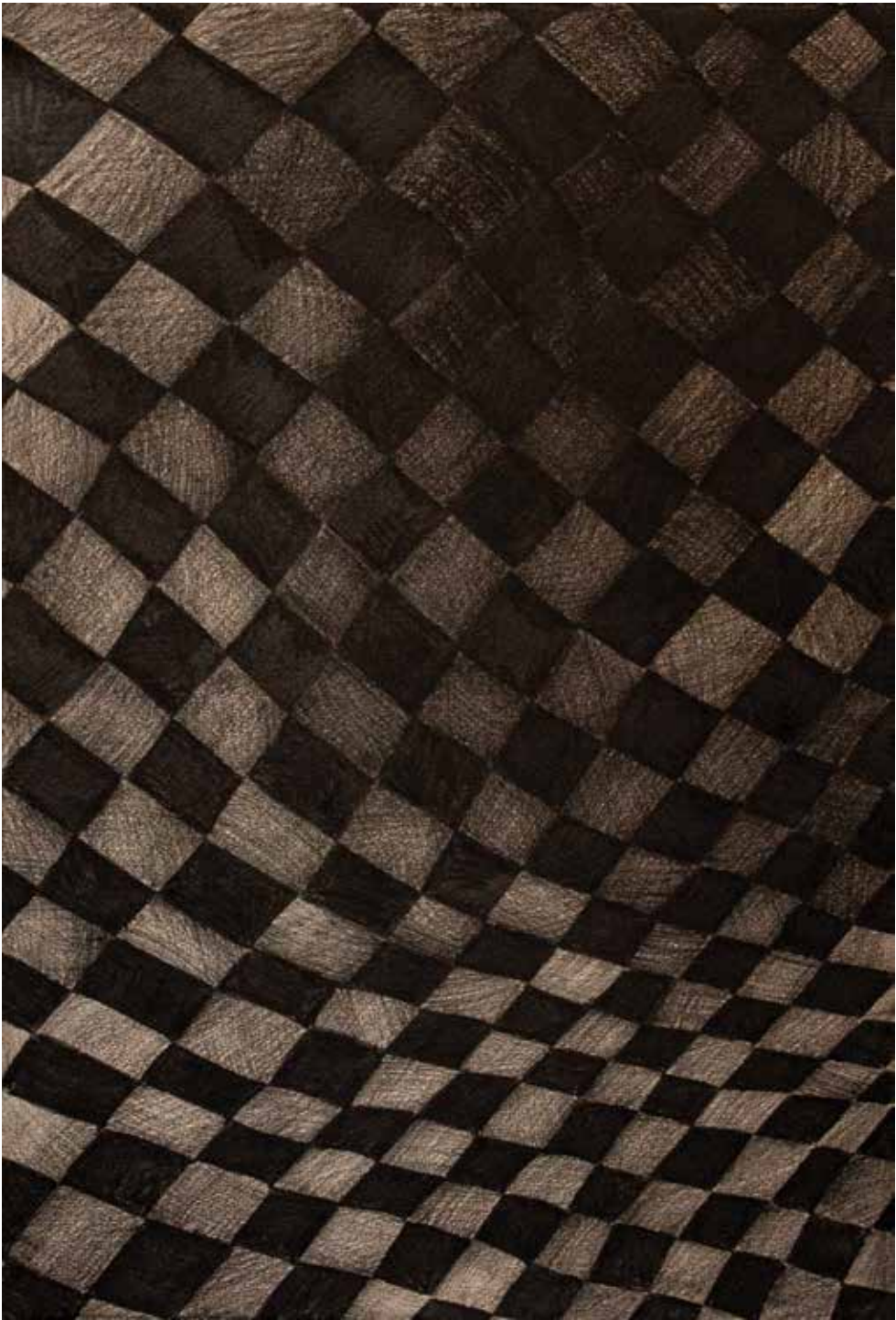
This is a world inside our world, a place for emotions and memories to linger and manifest. Sadness, anxiety, joy, and pain live here, and have created their own consciousness. This world has room for growth and room for change. There is hope in the shadows.















Claire Whitehurst

MFA PAINTING & DRAWING













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