Peer Review/

Volume I

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About the Publication

Peer Review is an experimental publication of reviews for artists by artists. Artists operate in a unique ecosystem where work and friendships are intensely intertwined: our coworkers, our competitors, and our audience are also our friends. Through Peer Review, we are trying to materialize these relationships. Instead of framing our own work within institutional art criticism, we want to play with new forms of analysis, coming from our own studio vernacular.

Peer Review is a thoughtful, text-based investigation of art that centers the artist being reviewed. As curators (and artists), we wanted to make sure this was not an arbitrary process that resulted in bad pairings of reviewer and artist. We were interested in mixing and matching people. We looked into style, medium and intent. This was not a reciprocal exercise. A reviewer was paired with an artist whose work we felt was best served by the reviewer's sensibilities. Artist statements and images from each applicant determined the best fits for this exercise. We did not take into account their c.v., geographic location or publication history.

This was an exercise of love and attention by artists for artists. Although not required, we encouraged studio visits in person, or via zoom in preparation for the writing assignment. Artists were asked to dedicate time and attention to writing about the work. In turn, their work was reviewed by another artist. Finally, volunteer editors who support the mission of reviews of artists by artists worked with the artists to assist in the process of writing for Peer Review.

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Ada Dancy. *Checking in With the Houseplants* (2022)
sumi ink on paper. 14 x 17 in

Ada Dancy

by Megan Pahmier

Aquariums make visible that which is usually out of reach to the human eye, the underwater world. They allow us a view in miniature –a living, breathing diorama of sorts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ada Dancy, artist and mother of two young children, decided to bring a piece of that natural, underwater world inside by constructing a 20 gallon, mixed-reef aquarium in the middle of her kitchen. First came the "live" rocks that would soon be teeming with microorganisms to serve as part of the natural filtration system. Then, a clown fish, snails, anemone, coral, crabs, and more. It was a metaphor for "an entrapped home life… where air turned to water" as Dancy put it, and is now a functioning ecosystem that inspires her.

Dancy sees this "tiny underwater theater of characters" as an artwork in itself, while scenes from the aquarium also form the basis for her most recent series of drawings. She depicts scenes constructed from her everyday environment: house plant cuttings rooting in glass jars on the kitchen counter, a drawing by one of her children, a rotting and deflated carved pumpkin, the reef aquarium. They are images of what she calls her "home-made microcosm." Painted with sumi ink on paper, their dreamlike quality is emphasized

through delicate but spontaneous quality of mark making, and her ability to combine disparate parts into one cohesive, albeit mysterious, picture. The limited black, white and gray tone palette is a stark contrast to the wide variety of lines, shapes, and washes she makes with ink and water. The complexity of forms Dancy paints seem to swim on the surface before settling into their watery mirage, reminiscent of depictions of waves on water. Her work exists somewhere between observation and imagination, waking and dreaming. She manipulates the scale of objects and environments to construct an unknown world. There is a clear affinity for water here, not only with the water-based media she employs but also the depiction of water and its mutable biome.

Water, as a symbol of life and transformation, is a nice companion to another one of Dancy's subjects, skeletons. To clarify, these skeletons aren't there to haunt or become the center of attention. They began appearing in Dancy's work around 2010, after her father was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. Dancy's skeletons are placeholders for people, meant to represent what she refers to as a "calmness of spirit." They are an index of life, existing outside particular markers of identity: bodies beyond flesh but full of "being."

Looking at these drawings, it is hard not to make a connection to the current pandemic and the ex-

traordinary amount of death we have all witnessed, but Dancy's skeletons represent an "everyday kind of death" – one not focused on the act itself, but what lives on. Her skeletons are often sitting, contemplating their surroundings with, I imagine, a similar curiosity Dancy explores as she conjures these worlds to the page. In *At home on a seashell*, a skeleton of questionable size sits on the edge of a snail shell, its arms stiff at its side, legs dangling into the shell opening, appearing as one does at the edge of a swimming pool the moment before slipping into the water. It sits among plants and other indistinguishable life forms, its gaze is straight forward. On the left side of the drawing there is a fish, similar in scale to the indeterminately-sized skeleton, lightly rendered in a soft wash of ink, appearing to suck at the surface of the paper. At the edges of the picture there are intricate patterns I recognize as snail trails, meandering back and forth across the page. A large fish-like form floats above, the lower outline of its body reading as a far off mountainous horizon line: it's hard to decipher though, as most of its body is off the page, like it passed us by too quickly or we weren't paying attention. It's a reminder of that constant change, life's impermanence.

In another drawing entitled, *Duncan coral with a second head emerging*, there is a similar sense of things transforming as Dancy balances her precise ability to direct the ink and water with her desire to let the ink and

water perform its own dance across the page. Is it a small coral growing a second head? Or a large volcano erupting? Or is it a series of flowing patterns set in motion by the interaction of water, ink and surface tension? In another work, *Checking in with the houseplants*, a skeleton sits pondering a forested island of houseplants, from the other side of a flowing stream. One way to interpret this work might be to see the skeleton as tenderly reflecting on a lush and verdant garden from beyond the world of the living. However, it's not that simple for Dancy. In the aquarium, cycles of life and death are commonplace, witnessed frequently by her and her family. A shrimp dies and is eaten by a fish, a snail dies and its shell becomes host to bacteria and algae until a hermit crab discovers it for its new home. Becoming present to death as a life sustaining process is grounding, and conversely can make one present to the temporary nature of life. Dancy's drawings represent a dive in-between the boundaries of the living and nonliving, or even spirit worlds, revealing the two are closer than they might seem. Matter is in a constant state of motion and that movement is felt in Dancy's artwork.

Dancy is a "water keeper", caretaker and aquarist. She is committed to continuous learning as she tends to a vulnerable yet resilient environment that includes her family, a reef aquarium, her houseplants and more. She collages scenes from these elements to construct

an entirely new world, full of vibrant matter in which rocks are just as lively as leaves, and skeletons swim through space. It is a world nestled amongst the coral and shells, where snails draw intricate patterns on the surface of the glass, crabs use anemones like pom poms to ward off predators and photosynthetic coral generates four new heads simultaneously.

Sometimes in the sunlight, boundaries between object and environment begin to dissolve. Similarly, the reflective surface of the aquarium captures and fractures domestic scenes from Dancy's kitchen. The surface of the glass reflects those fragments alongside the underwater world of the reef aquarium, where life teems at a different scale. Dancy notices it all, her work is a product of those reflections. Visions of someone who practices observation as an act of love: the everyday made sublime.

Alexis Granwell. *To Bend With Massive Waves* (2022) Handmade paper with pulp painting, papier mâché, steel. 60 x 20 x 20 in

Alexis Granwell: Open Surfaces

by Juliana Cerqueira Leite

My hand is in the pocket and then the tips of the fingers brush up against something unexpected. It is part-pocket lint, part-tissue, part-memory from the last cry or the last cold, transformed by the washing machine from absorbent sheet to rigid fossil.

When I arrive at Alexis Granwell's studio in the South Side of Philadelphia, I note that the entrance hall of the warehouse is a surprising amalgam: white popcorn-textured walls, old plaster molding, green-blue wooden door, and mustard-yellow pipework. I recall some of the colors I'd seen in her sculptures online. Alexis shows me into her studio, her sculptures and wall reliefs people the space and there is color. She tells me how one relief's hues remind her of winter, how a sculpture's purple reminds her of childhood, and how some purples have more dignity than others. Coming from a background in painting and printmaking, she has a particular relationship to color. Hers are often mixed tones, a subtle emotional register. In some of her works, confettied chunks of pigmented paper are reminiscent of multicolored chewing gum furtively but proudly smooshed onto the underside of a table.

The paper pulp and sheets that Granwell uses are worked wet, and drying changes the vibrancy of the pigments, which are embedded into the material. It makes the works opaque, thirsty, and inviting to touch. The fibrous surface of the sculptures seems to materially "cross-fade" into the negative space surrounding it as opposed to presenting a finite skin. Hazy, like felt, or gauze, or tissue, or dense cobwebs, the surface is or appears to be in some sort of motion. Harder boundaries emerge only between tectonic segments of colored paper whose edges are crumpled, pulled apart, the same material appearing again in other parts of the same work. Sheets of soft, pliable paper appears to be pushed onto a resisting form concealed underneath—I imagine fingertips pressing and water running, and the limits created by something unseen.

Granwell's concern with the tactility and "hapticity" of her material, its supports and abstract armatures, raises questions that have traditionally been associated with sculpture. Earlier works I see in the studio are composed of organic, pierced forms that could be the lumpy grandchildren of modernist sculptor Barbara Hepworth. The more complicated relationship between form and surface seen in Granwell's recent works engages a less stable alliance between support and surface, image and plastic form—especially as the paper surface appears to slip downwards from the sculptures to coat the folding chairs and other recog-

nizable metal forms that act as their supports. Her hollow armatures are shaped from metal mesh and welded metal rods, yet these materials are entirely concealed. I ask her how she determines their shapes, and we talk about memory, our shared experiences of landscapes and touch upon the visualization of emotion as form.

The torso-sized volumes harbor craggy topographies, caves that occasionally pierce clean through the sculpture's body, and thin, line-like protrusions that loop and ring the space surrounding the work. Granwell's finely made dimensional lumber supports suggest painting that has had to adapt to a new freestanding reality. The canvas has crumpled into a three-dimensional form, color jets outwards independent of surface, and the whole event rests on stretcher bars reconfigured into a plinth.

The objects that artists make when they move from painting to sculpture frequently evidence their negotiations with medium-specific tropes. I think of Eva Hesse's *Hang Up* from 1966, the empty wrapped frame supporting a large wire loop that juts out awkwardly into space like a jumping rope or lasso inviting a body. Or Franz West's *The Unconscious (2010)*, monumental loops snaking into the streetscape and terminating at a little nubbin of a seat. Granwell's handle-like ejections tentatively meander out from, and then back to, the main body of her sculptures. They bring surrounding space into the sculpture while their scale invites a body

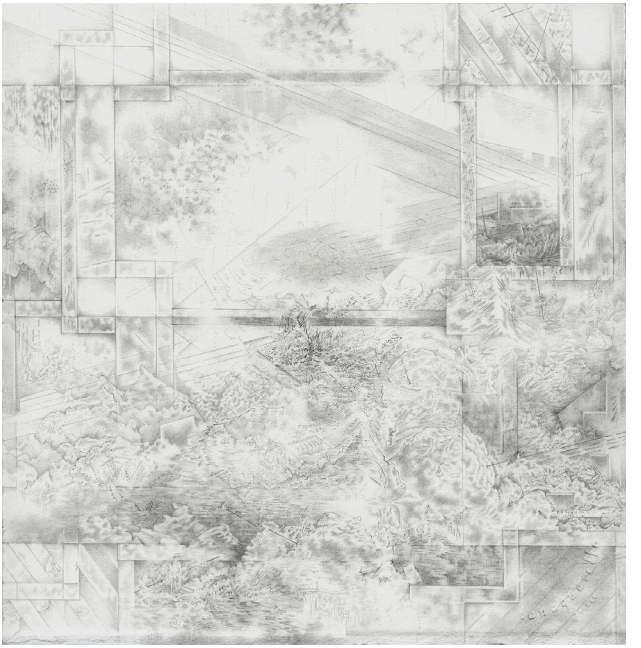
to grab or lift the artwork as if it were a pitcher, small body, or amphora. These "handles" add a layer of contingency to works that are already materially sensitive to their environment.

Her materials are kept wet. Granwell opens the door of her studio refrigerator exposing a colorful world of plastic bottles filled with waterborne pigment and fiber. Wrapped in thick, black plastic, her raw materials are large, handmade paper sheets cast in bulk, with color. Stored wet, the paper is sensitive to mold and fungal spores—even as they are present in our breath, she tells me. She wears a mask while working to protect not herself, but her material. I am reminded of how wearing a mask while making my own very dusty and dry work brings attention to the breath, and with it a certain state of mind.

The intimacy of pulped paper can be felt in the mouth, in the memory of tissues and how they relate to moisture and the body, the feeling of rain and what it does to a newspaper. Granwell tells me how she enjoys seeing the paper go from fiber to sheets and back to fiber, cyclically, as if it is digested and then reconstituted. The wetness dissolves the paper into something that remembers touch. Unlike the stable structure of the dry pages in a book where touch is largely unreadable, moisture turns paper into a quilted fillet of clay. What it remembers now are not words but other forms of pressure.

The finished sculptures are unsealed, open to touch and therefore need care. Granwell explains that she initially sculpted with expanding foam, but her desire to be closer to her work made the use of toxic substances problematic. I think of how many sculptures I saw at the Venice Biennale this year directly referenced Donna Haraway, engaging an eco-conscious vision of the future, only to reveal themselves to be made with toxic petrochemicals. Granwell speaks of her excitement in recently seeing the work of Rosemary Mayer and Ree Morton, women who also chose to work with accessible and highly tactile materials at a time when artists like Donald Judd and Richard Serra were no longer fabricating their own work.

It's tempting to think of certain material choices as related to gender—especially as exclusion from Dia-scale production budgets has historically limited women, queer, poor, and non-white artists to the aesthetics of what they could find at home, the local art shop, or the dollar store. But I'd like to flip this narrative and consider the impact of choosing such tactilely well-known materials. Granwell's choice proposes that art happens within the reach of everyday life, in the beauty of a crumpled page, the napkin colored by spilt juice, the way that light looks in winter or a purple appears undignified. Accessible to material and tactile memory, her work considers the ways in which we write ourselves daily without words—and read our unwritten histories through careful touch.



Alyssa Fanning. *Projected Landscape III* (2012)
Graphite pencil on paper. 12 x 12 in

Alyssa Fanning
by Katya Tishkevich

After witnessing the devastation of Hurricane Irene on the Hackensack River watershed in 2011, Alyssa Fanning began to explore the consequences of the disaster, its scale, and impact on the environment and those living through it.

Catastrophe and its aftermath became the subject of her fractured, disrupted works. Alyssa created a series of canvases, *Mounds Off the Hackensack (2012)*, as well as the graphite drawings *Post-Irene: Projected Landscapes: Polymorphic Disasters of the Mind (2012)*, in which she worked from photographs of debris and destruction, combining collaged elements with soft layers of graphite tone, often done on a very small scale (3"x 4" to 12"x 12").

"In making this work I aim to create pieces that are at once formally complex, beautiful and fundamentally disturbing," she writes in her monograph *Disaster Off the Hackensack*.

When looking at Alyssa's graphic works, fragmentation, collage, and subtle tonal gradations catch the eye. Her deconstructive imagery creates confusion and instability in perception: the absence of a harmonious

whole that should calm and pacify us. The fragments break apart, shift, spread out, and disappear in tones of graphite barely hinting at their original state.

Her works do not show a classic landscape with a horizon line, but chaotic imagined realms. She disrupts the predictable visual order with a mixture of architectural fragments and natural motifs. She builds form with graphite and then unbuilds with erasure, echoing how disaster dismantles the world. She does not make illustrations of reality, but creates sensual worlds.

Alyssa's working method is both intuitive and analytical. She starts by putting shapes together, shifting and juxtaposing them, without predetermination, and then forming interconnections. "In working with collage, I consider notions of the illogical versus the seemingly logical," the artist explains.

The small-scale format of her works forces the viewer to inspect the surface, closely contemplating the graphite's tones and traces. Catastrophe itself is an overwhelming experience. Her scale gives the viewer the distance to perceive the work on an intimate level, as a holistic visual narrative. Perceiving the details and uncovering the layers of Alyssa's works takes time; she wants the viewer to move through the work and stay inside it.

Not all of Alyssa's work explore the state of catastrophe and destruction. In *Projected Landscape III*, straight parallel lines, like Mondrian's compositions, structure the image and the absence of strong tonal contrasts creates a sense of stasis and calm. The structure is disintegrated by soft tonal transitions of plant motifs that envelop a geometric grid. Through the geometry, diagonals of light in the background offer a sense of hope.

Our world is a disaster site, according to Alyssa, but you can still see beyond it.

Andy Ralph. *Thought-Forms* (2022) Cast Latex, Cast Tin, Sanded Grout, Tar, Wood, Ceramic Tile, Mirror, A Burnable CDR, and an Altered Sony Discman. Little Sahara, Nephi, Utah

Andy Ralph: Returning Thoughts

by Sidney Mullis

"Each definite thought produces a double effect—a radiating vibration and a floating form."

— Annie Besant & C.W. Leadbeater

Thought-Forms (2022) by artist Andy Ralph is a site-specific installation in the desert of Nephi, Utah. It is supported and published by the contemporary art gallery Final Hot Desert, a nomadic operation with locations in Salt Lake City, London, and Los Angeles. This installation—created over two years—was discussed, planned, and designed to be viewed solely and indefinitely through its documentation online.

With *Thought-Forms*, Ralph has done more than make a perfect union between objects and landscape. Ralph has made invisible presences, present. Through his intentional thought-form making, he has offered us the chance to see what has always been there. Hidden, but just on the other side.

Thought-forms, as described by clairvoyant theosophists Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, are entities created by thought that exist in the mental or astral plane. In their 1905 book *Thought-Forms*, Besant and Leadbeater explain how thoughts produce non-physical thought-forms in the supernatural realm. They specify that each thought-form has a "double effect," or two outcomes. Existing intangibly in the beyond, each thought-form results in "a radiating vibration and a floating form."

In Ralph's desert sculptures, he offers a physical look at those invisible "double effects." He materializes his personal thought-forms, to be perceived in our world, in our dimension. Five black vibrations bubble up from the desert sand like escaping air. Each one is paired with a floating companionate creature. This installation is one spot of divination within 60,000 acres of sand dunes and flats.

Each black vibration is jagged and crusted—like an expanding breath that has hardened. Pushing up from the heavy sand, the breaths look like they have been practiced—done again and again for relief. Yet, through that repeated breathwork, aged. They are matured, perfected, but close to exhaustion.

Later, after I wrote this observation, Ralph shared with me how art-making is a compass for him to navigate life's hardships. To cope with his younger brother's hospitalization for a sudden and unexpected traumatic brain injury, he implements anxiety-reducing breathwork called the 4-7-8 technique. The patterned breathing supports Ralph's escapist art practice—to not abandon difficulty, but carefully, earnestly, and wearily work through it. In *Thought-Forms*, Ralph's breathwork shows up formally in the black vibrations. These worn shapes swell up and heave out repeatedly across the desert sand, reminding Ralph, and those looking, to keep breathing.

Each hard breath is partnered with a fantastical creature. A two-headed sparrow, tentacled sea urchin, four-clawed crab, winged cobra, and bullfrog embedded with a CD player. Astonishingly, there are no markings

in the surrounding sand. It is, instead, entirely rippled by wind. There are no animal (or human) tracks to indicate movement anywhere in this endless terrain. One can only believe these creatures arrived by floating—just like Besant insisted. Alongside radiating vibrations, she wrote, are flying forms.

These creatures—made of cast latex and cast tin—have also evaded any sand sticking to their skins despite the desert wind. Latex, for Ralph, is a material that relates to bodies both fictive and real. For imaginative endeavors, latex quickly resembles flesh. Under life-threatening circumstances, it is in the equipment that helps heal bodies—gloves, tubing, syringes, stethoscopes, dressings, and bandages. It is a material that holds, heeds, and helps bodies through medical intervention. It is the material that uncomfortably reminds Ralph of the somber and stressful time he spent in hospitals caring for his brother. Latex, for Ralph, triggers harsh memory and dimension-defying possibility.

The cast tin provides physical support to the latex creatures. Despite being metal, the tin retains a look of malleability and regrowth, similar to bones. The tin offers the vulnerable characters, now visible in the hot desert, protection. It helps the tentacled sea urchin cling to its crusted companion while somehow breathing comfortably out of water. It gives wings to the hooded cobra, no longer confined to the ground. And for the crab, it supplies four pinching weapons capable of defending all sides of its otherwise soft yellow body.

For the balloon-sized, latex bullfrog, though, the tin bones stretch its large mouth jarringly open. Is it forced? Forever? Is it to catch whatever may come by?

To tempt and trick a lone and greedy passerby? In the open mouth is a blank, burnable CD that is set into a modified CD player. Under the brutal glaring rays, the bullfrog takes the songs of the sun. As the sun revolves around the frog, it records and rerecords the hot star. Because of the reflective silver bones, the sun burns not only the bullfrog, but the CD.

According to Besant and Leadbeater, thought-forms last as long as they are energized by collective thought. While most dissipate, those imbedded with sufficient energy can become anchored on the astral plane and to the physical one.

Thought-Forms has eternal presence.

Thought-Forms can be viewed online at https://finalhot-desert.com/thought-forms.

Christine Stiver. *Dog Whistle* (2022)
papier-mâché & colored pencil. 25 x 13 x 9 in
image credits: Kuoheng Huang

Christine Stiver

by Lidija Ristić

As the artist says in her own words:
"Neither a sculpture nor a drawing but both."

Yes. The series, *Paper Caves (2022)*, by New York-based interdisciplinary artist Christine Stiver, is precisely that. And so much more.

Fetal, proto-forms, still jostling- reconfiguring- within the confines of a thin chrysalis. These intimate, biomorphic, portals protrude from neutral white walls. They teeter there, dancing between liminal realms of multiple possible realities; deftly implying intimate interiority. With this series, Stiver invites us to bear witness to delicate moments of suspended metamorphosis. She is presenting us with neither and both, all at once.

The bust-size, abstract forms call to mind sacred tribal objects. Some of the pieces are reminiscent of anthropomorphic ceremonial masks. This is most apparent in the case of *Dog Whistle (2022)*, a work lined with a shell of intricately twisted white paper coils laid one over top another. The resulting effect is that of fur, of icicles, stalactites, gently undulating fields of tall grass. This level of delicate detail is present throughout the series. The word *careful* continuously comes to

mind. But "careful" in the sense of something being cared for: cherished, lovingly adorned and appreciated. This attentive construction draws one in. The viewer feels inspired to lavish their own care on the objects in the form of thoughtful gazes and tender inquiry. And the rewards for such slow analysis, are an ever-unfolding landscape of aesthetics revelations.

The majority of Stiver's practice is performance. She has been dancing since she was three years old. While living and working in Maryland, she was part of the Baltimore-based, experimental performance ensemble, Effervescence Collective. It was during her time with the collective that she began to direct and choreograph pieces that broke from traditional conventions of performance, specifically the stark separation between performer and viewer. This was typified by her 2015 durational performance, *Dank*, where, in a vacant, city lot, five performers, dressed in white, covered themselves with foam padding, jostled over kiddie-pools filled with colored liquid and proceeded to become progressively more coated in those liquids. The work was completely free to audience participation, and members of the passing public took advantage. It was a liberating and challenging moment for Stiver. She had achieved her aim of breaking down barriers between the audience and performers. Yet without that division, she relinquished a great deal of control over how the final work came together.

Stiver describes the production process of *Paper Caves* like "playing a game of telephone with [her]self." The elements from one piece inspire the creation of new additions in the series. This metaphor is particularly significant here. The whole series is motivated by a desire to explore the mechanics of listening and the architecture of both human and animal ears.

Although there is nothing especially new about a sculptural work hanging on a wall, the particular nature of these pieces' construction makes this manner of display feel very site-specific. Like work from Stiver's earlier practice, these sculptures are also responding to their environment. The artist isn't just hanging a work on a wall. She is transforming that wall into a body. The addition of an ear-like element – a swirling twisting form, one that appears to be contorting under the influence of the vibrations it is receiving – mutates that wall and consequently the entire space into a unified entity. Like *Dank*, Stiver creates a situation in which elements are interacting with the surroundings they inhabit. As her sculptures take their place on the wall, they become performers. They are taking on the role of the space's listening apparatus. We are again met with a body responding to its environment. However, here the body is the environment and the environment is the body. And the two are being simultaneously created through the influences of their surroundings.

Paper Caves are made from a familiar combination of materials: a cardboard armature layered with papier-mache. Some of the works contain discarded paper collected from the artist's own studio. Others include scraps saved from her students' abandoned assignments. These "accidental" surface designs are thoughtfully arranged and seamlessly integrated into the sculptural object. In other instances, Stiver applies 2d surface graphics specifically for the work. With the piece *Cauliflower Ear (2022)*, this comes in the form of golden-orange and purple-tinged abstract hair-like ribbons that swirl over a field of black and white collaged paper. Each finished work is a cohesive mixed-media form where textured paper, black sumi inks, vibrant acrylic paints and soft-hued colored pencil marks intermingle harmoniously. The motivation for this choice of salvaged supplies may have begun because it was an immediate source of material inspiration. However, here we see another instance of Stiver "playing telephone" with herself. By using materials that are remnants from her workspace, the artist establishes a direct tie between these new pieces and the artworks that came before them. *Paper Caves* carry within them the legacy of Stiver's artistic and pedagogical experience.

They are steeped in all the accumulated instincts of an interdisciplinary artist's impulses over the course of a multifaceted career. These approachable objects

gracefully transcend their original material nature and tenderly draw us in to discover their transformative, visual landscapes.

Cozette Russell. *At the beginning of sound (From The distance between us is made up of earth)* (2022) Photograph 16 x 19 in

Cozette Russell

By Alyssa Fanning

Photographer and filmmaker Cozette Russell is a seeker. Deeply perceptive, she observes the world around her with tender inquisition. She captures found moments of quietude in her surroundings, and communicates feelings and personal experiences in skillfully executed and often playfully experimental black and white photographs.

In Russell's current body of work, *The distance between us is made up of earth (2022)*, many of the photos are fragments of self-portraits, capturing fleeting moments. We see obscured images—never a full portrait, always parts of the whole: a blurred rendering of the artist sitting barefoot in the grass; cropped from the neck down; the artist's hands sorting through delicate sheets of paper; the artist with her back to us, holding her son.

In the first image of the series, from behind Russell's head and torso, we view the wave of her long dark hair flowing seamlessly into the undulating line of the landscape she faces. The image is reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's nineteenth century sublime landscapes, which often feature a lone figure gazing toward the horizon, lost in contemplation of the landscape's

wild enormity. In another scene, Russell lies against the wooden floor of her unfinished barn, covered in branches and leaves. Her body is propped against a large mirror so that the image is doubled, splintered, and complex. Throughout Russell's photographs, wonder and awe of the vastness of the natural world pulsate, punctuated by a sense of lonely isolation.

A deep familiarity with the land permeates Russell's photographs. She introduces us to a landscape she knows well, living just one town away from where she grew up in New Hampshire. The introductory portrait from behind Russell's back invites us to look toward the horizon, suggesting that the subsequent frames are glimpses into what she has seen–collected memories of her lived experience in this place. Fragments of the terrain punctuate the work: a galaxy of astral white flowers against a field of dark leaves; branches of a blossoming cherry tree dappled with spring rain outside a window; a nest like patch of tall dry grass captured in its textural glory; and then, the same patch of grass, now with Russell now lying in it, rooted. Reminiscent of the twentieth century *Earth Body* works of Ana Mendieta, in which the artist lies on the land, almost becoming one with the landscape, Russell's poses suggest that the landscape of her childhood, where she now raises her son, is also an extension of herself.

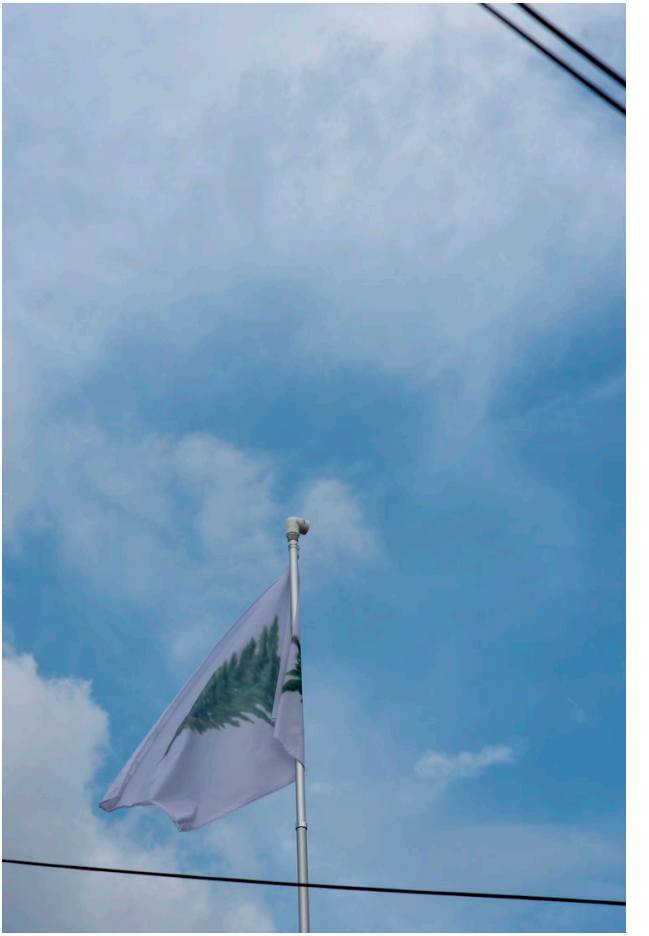
The images are formally beautiful, richly saturated

with crisp details appearing against blurred depths of field, poignantly hinting at the fragility of life. Intimate yet immense, the scenes reflect a pondering of our place in the cosmos. In one photograph, tiny spots of light on a dark wooden floor resemble a dancing constellation. In the next image, Russell reveals the magic: her hand perforating a sheet of paper to make small holes through which the light projects to create the cosmos in miniature. Another self-portrait that follows features a semi-sheer white curtain onto which Russell projects her face which is covered in dots of light from the perforated paper, creating a constellation on her face. The curtain acts as a screen, displaying an ethereal portrait, an illusion. The viewer is left to feel that with a waft of breeze and sway of the curtain, the face will disappear into thin air. Now you see it, now you don't!

Besides herself, the only other person Russell features in the series is her young son, Jasper, who has multiple disabilities, including neurological blindness, hearing loss, and limited use of language. In these portraits, the artist explores everyday interactions and intimacy. In one photo, Russell kneels on the floor of an interior space with her eyes closed, sunlight falling on her face through a windowpane, as her head rests on Jasper's lap while he rumples her hair. The image captures a sense of how fleeting and precious this moment is—a drifting cloud outside the window could cause the warm sun

to vanish in an instant. In yet another image of Jasper, he kneels in a lake with his eyes closed, his head bent down, captured in the precise instant his hair touches the water. Later in the series, Jasper appears outside in a sundrenched landscape of large stones and a pebble walkway. The light hits the stones with such intensity we can almost feel the texture of the rocky terrain. Jasper's right hand is lifted, as if to check the air around him. His face is nearly obscured by the light of the white-hot sun that appears above his head like a halo. His mouth, barely discernible in the glare, appears open as if caught in the moment he's about to speak. In these photographs, the camera becomes a means for Russell to explore how she and her son uniquely process their daily experiences. She captures the space between camera and subject, and between mother and child. In the latter, it is not only physical space but also psychological.

How do we accept that distance between is "made up of earth" and how can we try to bridge the gaps between? In her deeply personal and maternal explorations, Russell considers the role touch, sight, and sound play in helping us to make sense of these relationships. We come away with a greater awareness of the subtleties of perception, and a reevaluation of how we experience the world between and around us.



Emily Janowick. *An Appeal to Heaven* (2022) site specific collaboration with Sam Cockrell. Walter's, Rockaway Beach, NY

Emily Janowick

by Murat Cem Mengüç

We live in an era of fake truths and unsubstantiated realities. A good portion of our experiences are virtual and we often can't tell them apart from the real ones. Moreover, every aspect of life seems to be politicized too; nowadays you can't even talk about the weather without getting enmeshed in a debate about the reality of climate change. Within this current context, Emily Janowick asks us to question reality too, but from an entirely different perspective. Through site specific installations, she deconstructs the present moment to make us reevaluate history, memory and our most individualistic convictions.

Take her latest piece, *An Appeal To Heaven* (2022) for example, realized in collaboration with Sam Cockrell, her partner. The name of the piece refers to George Washington's unrealized dream of gathering a libertarian army to topple the government in the name of individual freedom. It is a popular phrase among the right wing insurgents, and was frequently used in propaganda from protest convoys in US and Canada in 2022. In Emily's work, the phrase refers to a flagpole erected in the garden of an art gallery in Rockaway, New York. Although the flagpole is waving a mock version of Washington's proposed flag, we soon discover that it is

not just a pole but also a periscope which looks towards the Atlantic Ocean. The irony of having to look for the ocean with a periscope when you are on a peninsula – as opposed to the submarine where it lives – is coupled with the flagpole's references to territoriality and protectionism. Given that in the near future the island may be submerged by the ocean due to the climate change, the whole thing becomes a bitter joke on point of views.

An Appeal To Heaven is similar to another work of Janowick's, *Solid State* (2020) also exhibited in collaboration with Cockrell. Through this work we discover that with Janowick, it is always a family affair. *Solid State* is a scaled down replica of the Washington Monument, painted white, toppled down and lying on its side on a slanted gallery floor. Produced prior to the wave of protests which toppled colonialist monuments during the summer of 2020, it is somewhat prophetic. Climbing up the slanted gallery floor, one realizes that there is a video hidden inside the monument. In the video Janowick's daughter and father are talking about the beginnings, the middles and the ends of the things. The dialogue is completely staged, and taken from a movie called *Hope Floats*, a white American family drama which, according to an online review "sinks under a deluge of melodramatic turns and syrupy sentimentality." Janowick says she is chronically ill and nothing really gets done without the help of her family and oth-

ers. But upon becoming involved, they are transformed too. In the video, the grandfather and the granddaughter (Janowick's father and daughter) represent the link between the toppled mythology of white nationalism and the shallow Hollywood representations of that society produced by Hollywood. But the staged dialogue concludes with a remarkably insightful quote from the film suggesting nobody is fooled; "We don't just gather the physical, we narrate our world through the stories we carry. It's how we build history. How we tell our stories fundamentally changes who we are and how we think of ourselves. We are like Matryoshka, vessels within vessels, carrying stories, culture, genetic material and cellulite."

As a historian and artist, *An Appeal To Heaven* and *Solid State* speak to me because they are both about instances where collective history and personal memory become inseparable. I believe such instances represent deeply emphatic and dialectically transforming moments.

An earlier piece by Emily called *Water 3 Ways* (2018), is probably her most minimalist and strongest work, and brings the whole family together, including yours and mine. Unlike *An Appeal* and *Solid State*, which both start from the premises of public space and collective memory (a monument and a flag pole), *Water 3 Ways* starts from a very private and domestic activity, a bath. The work consists of a bathtub filled with water and

invites the viewers to dip their hands into it to read a waterproof booklet titled "I Am Your Mother." Anchored to the bottom of the tub with a brick, and coupled with the idea of giving birth in a bathtub, the book functions both as a metaphor for a baby and as a manual for the mother(hood). Its title simply suggests that in order to know your mother, that is the mother, you must dip your hands into the tub and become engaged in your own birth water, that unique mixture of amniotic fluid and bathwater.

Janowick erases commonly held convictions that separate private from public, individual from society and memory from history. But more importantly, she reminds us that every human experience represents a dialectical moment, an opportunity for becoming rather than just being. For me, these moments are Hegelian forks in the road. Most of us miss these forks as we rush and bulldoze through life, thinking who and what we are as permanently fixed phenomenon: Emily's works are stop signs that make sure at least some of us don't miss the turn.

Erin Woodbrey. *The Carrier Bag Series* (2022) Single-use containers, ash, plaster, gauze, and steel wire. Various dimensions

Erin Woodbrey

by Ada Dancy

During a fellowship through School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, Erin Woodbrey traveled to a former dig site in Binz, Zurich to work with the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research where scientists had unearthed an astonishing 256 subfossil pines, presumably preserved in clay from a mudslide, and dated their origins to 13,000 years ago.[1] Woodbrey's daily communion with these ancient and yet intact wood stumps, a physiological phenomenon generating more questions than answers, trained her mind to repeatedly travel in thought to a time just after the last ice age. Woodbrey's work invites her viewer to do the same. She prompts us to consider the possibility of time as nonlinear with all moments happening at once, or perhaps existing only in relation to one another, to be able to shift in an instant outside of ourselves, beyond the unbending confines of birth and death. Woodbrey envisions exhibiting the fascinating Binz pine specimens alongside her sculptural work. Her art then inquiring, what other time-defying objects could exist and what can we learn from them.

In *The Carrier Bag Series (2022)*, Woodbrey takes cues from Donna Haraway's "Staying with the Trouble" concept of sympoiesis, or simply, "making with," as

an imperative to not being left out of the narrative.[2] She resurfaces piles of her own recycling—yogurt tubs and bottles, laundry jugs, and other contemporary packaging—using gauze strips to wrap them in a workshopped concoction of wood ash, plaster, and methylcellulose. Material production details are of great interest to Woodbrey, the temperamental qualities of the wood ash depend on the burning conditions in which it was produced and the species of tree. These slight differences in conditions are now all that isolate one container from another as if layering clues for a future archaeologist. Stepping back, the forms slip away into wood ash-cloaked uniformity.

Woodbrey's process mummifies present culture, releasing it from the moment and preserving it outside of time. As the title of this series references, Woodbrey embraces Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*: to nurture an expanding story of process, to celebrate the gathering of meanings, to endlessly mount questions; to tell "the life story."[3] *The Carrier Bag* series is Woodbrey's collection of intriguing accounts. Tomato cages suspend the objects and demarcate space for each unique thread of inquiry. As described by Woodbrey and suggested by their titles, the viewer is presented with sculptures that represent, from left to right, a swan song about her mother's retirement, the earth and satellite debris drifting through space, a complex system of parts, a vestal virgin tending to the

flame of Rome, a directional request, an expression of the bodily experience as inspired by the novel *Breasts and Eggs* by Mieko Kawakami, and the god Janus with two heads—in order to see both the past and future. No object, no story is of greater significance than the next, and all hold nuanced suggestions between each one's title and precarious yet calculated arrangement of containers.

The upended presentation of the steel vegetable armatures inverts the expectation of growth, suggesting objects remapped from an unknowable underground, a wintering stillness. The resulting scene is a raised garden bed of artifacts, a personal tale emerging alongside ancient lore, all spoken in a language of newly-ancient and freshly-foreign consumer packaging. As a garden nurtures seed into bountiful sustenance, Woodbrey's wood ash-wrapped container figurations transform into a confronting cultural product, a future conundrum standing before the present viewer. What have we done to our world? For what reason have we sacrificed nature? What will grow from the unknowing of our stories?

Woodbrey's commitment to sympoiesis leads to another magical material exploration in her production of shadowgram anthotypes—mixing hand-ground plant pigments with vodka, Woodbrey produces a light-sensitive plant-based emulsion that, when applied to paper

and exposed in sunlight, captures haunting shadows of her container menagerie. The anthotype itself has a delicate, ephemeral quality; the image is sensitive and would bleach if protected from sunlight/left out/not protected.

Woodbrey safeguards a collection of color tests in a journal that resembles a field notebook more than a portfolio. Beside each swatch, she notes such details as when the plant pigment was harvested in the seasonal cycle, the location, as well as recent geological occurrences like drought. Fittingly, some of these anthotype exposures are done while traveling. The resulting image is a nostalgic souvenir of the trip's findings arrested in glowing natural color—a fantastic gold shade reminiscent of a dusting of pollen from a batch of peak harvest red marigolds, a flower that is rich in legend also known as the herb of the sun. Woodbrey's shadowgram anthotypes can't escape their cosmic connection, the mystical prints resembling ghosts passing through, the days descending into darkness, or even smoke drifting from a row of houses. They whisper about the more intangible qualities of the found objects, the messages that dance around their forms as they stand in the sun and engage with the sky.

Woodbrey welcomes the viewer inside and around the hearth with her installation *Illuminators for the Geologic Afterlife*. In a similar fashion to *The Carrier Bag Series*,

a council of sculptural witnesses is presented before the viewer in conversation, each one a found object fixture emitting its own character through its distinct temperature, material, and posture. Here Woodbrey explores the ubiquitous nature of electricity but not without reference to the revolutionizing advent of the campfire with a noticeably extinguished mound of wood ash positioned near the center. There are remnants of domesticity littered throughout: a clothes-drying rack, a potted plant, a photograph, a pair of flip-flops, swim goggles, a pile of cracked eggshells, and the cords of each "illuminator" snaking around the floor. Despite the familiar references to modern life, the viewer is left to contend with the "afterlife" mentioned in the work's title. The lightbulb that once had been a symbol of knowledge switches to a signal of perilous survival. Through her resourceful merging of found objects, Woodbrey suggests an increasingly unnatural and desperate course of existence. A utility lamp pointed directly at a paper circle taped to the wall emulates staring directly at a searing sun. Who approaches the limits of existence first- humans or the earth? Can the two timelines be separated?

In Woodbrey's work, there are no answers put forth, such is the unfolding of life. The viewer finds joy in the mysteries surrounding inquiry, closer inspections lead to a web of repurposed objects assigned new functions. Woodbrey rewards an imaginative participant, guiding

sensitive minds to merge past and future into a single moment of experience. Her practice acknowledges that there is no single explanation or person at fault in our present predicaments but infinite threads to fearlessly take in hand and responsibly carry onward.

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1. Subfossil wood in Zurich, Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research. Https://www.wsl.ch/en/forest/tree-ring-research/subfossil-wood-in-zurich.html.

2. Donna Haraway. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin with the Chthulucene*. London: Duke University Press. 2016.

3. Ursula K. Le Guin. *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. Dancing at the Edge of the World, Women of Vision, 1986.

Fernando Pintado. *7* (2022) silkscreen ink, acrylic medium and oil stick on canvas. 8 x 10 in

Fernando Pintado

by Christine Stiver

Fernando Pintado was talking about his curiosity around the Kennedy Assassination as I was snapping pictures of a particular orange and black painting in his studio. With sudden clarity, but through the pixelated image on my phone screen, Kennedy's head came into view. Looking back at the small 8 x 10 inch painting in front of me, I could see what had initially resisted being seen: that's Kennedy's ear, his mouth, oh god, the top of his head. I let out a small gasp. I was looking at one of the autopsy photos. Ironically, this gruesome revelation revealed smiling Kennedy duplicates all over the room—that's Jackie holding a bunch of roses, over there JFK is getting off an airplane, here is a candid family photo. Just moments before I stepped into the studio Pintado mentioned his renewed interest in Seinfeld; and now that I was in the studio, I'd locked eyes with George Costanza, who was peeking out from a corner of one of the larger canvases. I smirked and kept scanning, in search of other familiar faces.

These moments of recognition continued to happen throughout our conversation, but at differing speeds. Pintado would mention something he was thinking about and then—sometimes seconds, sometimes minutes later—an image would manifest in the work: a

toppled statue of Juan Ponce de León, hummingbirds, a cat sitting in front of a wrought iron gate. In order to make sense of the picture on my own I continually moved in and out of proximity to the work.

Studying the surface satisfied my desire to figure out how the work was made, while gaining distance gave me the sense that I was trying to watch the evening news through a bad TV signal. Standing in the middle of Pintado's studio meant I was surrounded on all sides by large unstretched canvases, stacks of small paintings, handmade canvas art books, and nearly a dozen screen printing screens.

I began inquiring about his process because I wanted to better understand how he was creating the peculiar experience of seeing almost nothing, and then suddenly, many things all at once.

Pintado creates the sensation of static, he told me, by applying black ink to the surface with a screen printing screen so that patches of sublayers peek through. In one of these sublayers he prints photographs onto raw canvas using image transfer, occasionally leaving the fuzzy paper residue behind. In another, sometimes adjacent layer, he patches together found papers like nutrition labels, maps, and pages from magazines in an off-kilter grid. Next, he screen prints other pictures with black ink, and then cuts and glues red, yellow, or blue gingham teardrops in loose columns that streak

down toward the bottom of the canvas. Along the edges he scrawls (mostly) legible text in oil pastel: urban sombrero, lingo, todo, 5. The largest works consist of unstretched canvas, which he layers and staples askew, affixed directly to the wall with urgency rather than precision. These canvases serve as evidence of Pintado's seemingly inexhaustible interest in materials and process.

Pintado invites us into his work with small moments of recognition, draws us in closer by leaving residue of his process behind, but ultimately thwarts our efforts to understand by concealing so much of what's beneath the surface. The effect of both revealing and obscuring reminds me of conceptual artist and writer, Luis Camnitzer's, notion of erosion: the idea that inherent to any material practice is an escalating loss of information from concept, to object, to audience.

According to Camnitzer, "In conceptualist work, the task is usually about revealing the intermediate step, hence so-called process art, which is one form of avoiding erosion."[1] Pintado seems acutely aware of the role erosion plays in his work—and is in fact, employs it to undermine the assumption that images—or symbols—can be trusted to convey a singular message or meaning.

It was only after leaving Pintado's studio that I recognized my own vain attempts to find a meaningful relationship between those hummingbirds and that

gingham, that overturned colonial statue and this "urban sombrero." Pintado's unique mix of quotidian snapshots, archives of collective trauma, and pop humor are specific to his interests and life: growing up in Puerto Rico, formative moments in his parent's lives, his cat, a label from his recent Whole Foods haul. But rather than provide an autobiographical narrative through distinct images, Pintado is doing something much more complex: he's using our desire to see and understand as a means to reveal its futility. Reflecting upon my visit, I'm left waffling between a smirk and a gasp—and that's just as it should be. Our desire to create meaning (possibly where there is none) is the work. As a viewer, I'm left waffling between a smirk and a gasp.

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1. Camnitzer, Luis. Conceptual Art and Conceptualism in Latin America. pg 32. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007.

Juliana Cerqueira Leite. *A Potential Space* (2016) 83 pages, laser cut, coptic bound hardcover. Edition of 75, 6.5 x 5.5 x 2 in

Juliana Cerqueira Leite

by Fernando Pintado

"Paper cutting is the prelude to writing"

– Hans Christian Andersen, 1867

Juliana Cerqueria Leite is a Brazilian artist based in New York. Cerqueira Leite's work investigates the limits of the body and the spaces it creates. In her book, *A Potential Space* (2016), eighty-three pages are individually cut with mechanical precision by a laser, a substitute for Cerqueria Leite's scissor. *A Potential Space* is a small, square book of cutout shapes on each page that forms a topographical map of the female organ. Removing in order to showcase absence or, as the Danish children's book writer Hans Christian Andersen stated, "to cut, it's the first beginning of the Poetry".

The book is a wall, knowledge, information: the vagina becomes the book. Cerqueira Leite makes her book because there isn't one out there. A book housing a 3D rendering of the vaginal anatomy. In true DIY fashion, Cerqueira Leite aims to illustrate, as she states, "the lack of ability to represent this anatomy. Since there is no book with such illustrations, then I must make my own."

Cutout shapes for Cerqueira Leite are, like the paper cutouts Andersen made, "an unpretentious pastime." The author of *The Little Mermaid* was well known for his talents with paper and scissors, and would entertain friends and family at parties with them. There is no straight connection between his paper cutouts and his fairy tales, but Anderson used to accompany his paper cutting with a fantastic tale, and ended the tale with unfolding the paper to the amazed listeners. Like Andersen, Cerqueira Leite draws via cutting – the laser acting as a magic wand – preferring, as she says, to "think through materials instead of 'about' them" to create an "elegant overarching structure."

Unlike Andersen, Cerqueira Leite is cutting from a need to create a more accurate and complete portrait of an inaccurately depicted region via a "simplicity of form, a pared-down style that gets to the heart of things with strong lines and a powerful central image." Time and time again she proves how less is more: the economy of means (albeit, a laser cutter is not an economical medium) where the act of cutting is as simple as cutting through the dotted line on the back of a cereal box.

A carnival moving picture box where a nickel was dropped to watch a world come to life in front of your eyes. "What's the shape of the inside of a pocket?" asks Cerqueira Leite. Empty pockets are seen and felt as a

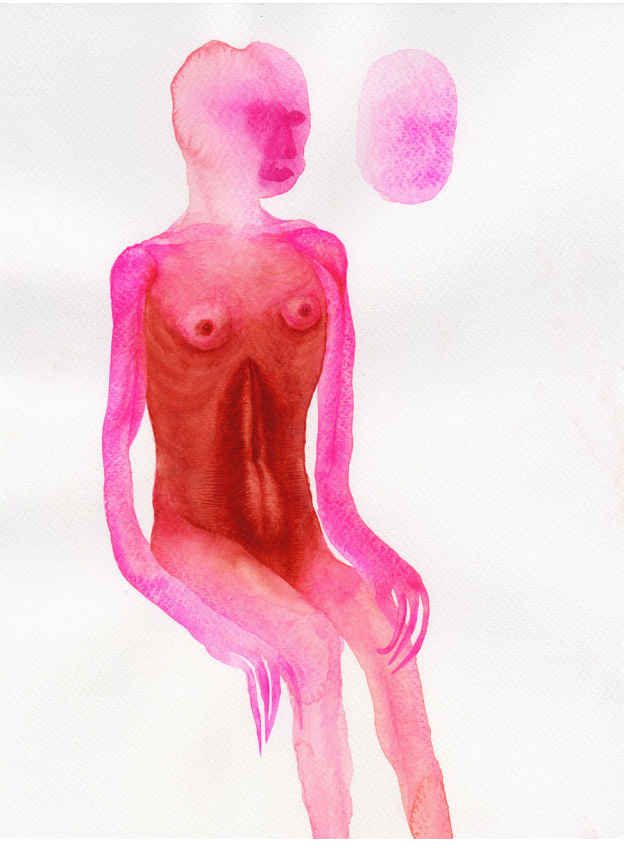
comfortable and quiet satisfaction: the satisfaction of being free of excess weight. A full pocket, performing its actual function as a storage space, feels cumbersome and awkward or, as Cerqueira Leite describes, embodies the nature "of hoarding, of the disposable and of dirty combustion."

In order to represent something, it has to take up space. In this case, Cerqueira Leite creates "a potential space" for representation of genitalia and answers the question, how do you represent what is misrepresented.

The book is a dive into an unexplored realm. The same way readers escaped when reading *10,000 Leagues Under the Sea* or *Robinson Crusoe*. Escape in the form of discovery. Here Cerqueira Leite cuts in through the pages to reach the center of an unseen core. Books, especially pop-up and game books, have a masterful ability to transport a child to another place. A place where the world is one that is built for them and represents them. But instead of portraying an idealized portrait rooted in superstition rather than facts, Cerqueira Leite aims to share her landscape with the viewer because "this fiction is the only way to show it."

Throughout history, fairy tales have acted as morality tales, tales of caution for the young and foolish. Cerqueira Leite reminds us that truths like treasures must be dug up to better understand our present. *Cinderella's*

glass slipper becomes an empty space at the stroke of midnight and *The Little Mermaid* must give her voice in order to attain human form. An empty vessel, where all that remains is a memento of what was once there.



Katya Tishkevich. *Clutches* (2021) watercolor on paper. 24 x 32 cm

Катя Тишкевич (Katya Tishkevich)

by Nicholas Cueva

"I once found a dead cat by the side of the road that had been lying there all day," Katya explained to me. "I buried him the next day."

Katya Tishkevich's work presents disgust, dark delight, and pathos with a cold hand akin to Marlene Dumas, disinterested brushwork with almost a holding back of violence. The type of empathy she makes available, high-octane and heady, is a little haunting. Her palette is closer to Louise Bourgeois's spare watercolor musings, not straying too much from monochrome, in a severe way.

I see struggle and an uneasy knowing in Katya's works. An unpaid karmic debt of sorrow, unable to be changed, focused into vignettes. It is the skeleton of hope left to freeze.

Illustrations of final moments and portraits of regret.

Katya's present pieces, with the stark relationship between marks and the forms they encompass, give her figures an alien feeling. In her watercolors, the body is laid bare with an analytic eye, its internal secrets and sinew pulled out and spread for the viewer's consideration. In her oil creations, there is more weight in the

marks, portraits seem blurry with the same anger and sadness that the depicted faces carry.

Her more figurative works often have skeletal-thin bodies strewn about like pro-life propaganda. An aura of repugnance confronts the viewer, a specter of self-examination. There is something of the sensation we get from *Mulholland Drive*, the scene where a man describes a nightmare that unfolds exactly like the moment he is experiencing. He recalls seeing something terrible, just behind the building. Slowly, his elaborating and narrating march him forward into his dread, to fulfill his own prophetic vision, to meet his own terror.

Katya gives us moments to reflect on our own fragile existence, the miracle of life and the miracle of love, by showing us their limits and absences.

She often places central figures and forms in simple and solid backgrounds, further reiterating a clinical consideration, alienating and dehumanizing. This composition sets up a deeply charged focus on the by-product of violence implied by her forms. The lifeless body doesn't belong to anyone anymore, strewn like trash across a road; it is now a matter of image and metaphor, waiting for the viewer to gather it all back up again.

Her rare works with multiple figures feel somewhat like Leon Golub's detached examinations of violence,

with a haunting twist. Violence isn't being carried out at the moment, per se, but its effects aren't being addressed either: a passive form of post-torture torture. A huddled, naked, and injured man surrounded by cloaked figures actively ignoring him. Neglect, either through fear or apathy, barricades the relationships between figures, in opposition to the empathy teased out of the viewer. It is the story of the good Samaritan, without the Samaritan.

Her sculptures often reference burials, with bodies in rubble, forms like grave markers demarcating space among chaos, dead plants, soil. When I asked her about the possibility of life after death, she said, "I couldn't even imagine something beyond the decay." I suspect that's not from a lack of imagination, but from her overwhelming sense of the chaos around her.

Her portraits often have the sympathy of the sternly painted faces of Rouault: half-shadowed, half-abstract expressions framed with dark and direct brushwork. Many of her figures are so eviscerated and abstracted that recognition of a person seems almost beyond us. Stiff brushwork like a slap. Haunted.

"My favorite purpose of art is to provoke, disturb, force people to think, empathize, and develop empathy." She talks about Albert Camus's *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Alienation, revisited in a post-Disney world.

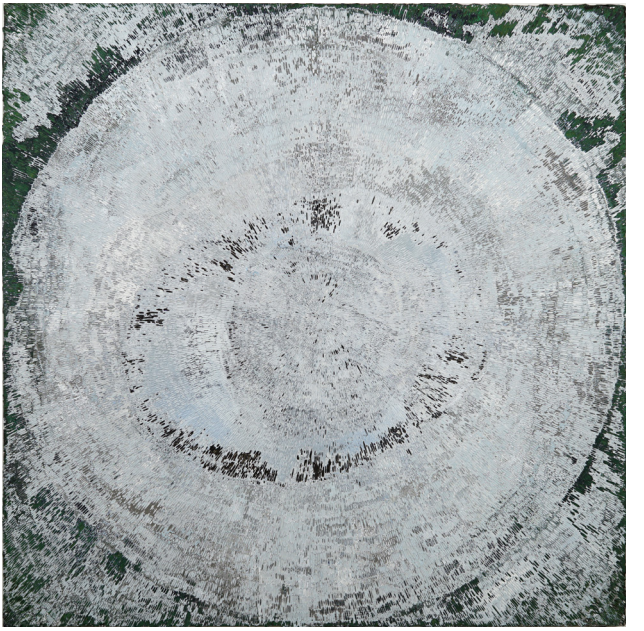
The poverty of color and reliance on reds echo her post-Soviet background. Sparse, economical mark-making, for the highest emotional return. When asked about her color choices, she remarked, "They deeply agitate me. While working with these colors they echo my emotions, such as anger, pain, passion, struggle."

She lives near the beginning of possibly the "last war," in the way they meant it during the first world war: the "war to end all wars," the eruption of which threatens all. This brief peace and order we have all come to take for granted, now seemingly paper thin, stretched like Katya's figures.

Paying deep attention to negative emotions is rewarding (a sentiment that seems alien to the American mind).

We must imagine Katya happy. Returning over and over to the viscera and violence. Like Sisyphus pushing the rock, Katya puts a strong brush up against a nightmare and pushes back. There's literature supporting the practice of returning to the image of trauma in an informed and controlled way, to alleviate the stress of memories.

Can we empathize? Do we squeeze into the surgeon's theater? Does the execution chamber have another seat? Do we stop to give change to the man holding up his sunken face? Can we look in the mirror one more day?



Kerri Ammirata. *Dissolving Boundaries* (2022) acrylic on wood. 48 x 48 in

Kerri Ammirata: A Subtle Offering

by Andy Ralph

Kerri Ammirata would never call herself a spiritual guide, but the movements traced in her artwork allow us to breathe deeply and meditate on what's essential. As we further surrender to technology in the current climate, many of us are developing or revisiting spirituality. Given our techno-dependence, the search for meaning outside of digital networks seems daunting without some guidance, and specific maps can help us navigate our way to a natural center. Declaring an intention is where we start our journey and in the work of Ammirata, setting an intention is foundational.

Stepping into Ammirata's luminous storefront studio in Ridgewood, Queens, you encounter several square-formatted abstract paintings determined to offer a path to an ecclesiastic experience. Yet, unlike any immediate answers found in our pocket computers, her work requires a devotion-like faith. This investment in observing Ammirata's work illuminates our relationship between the spaces inside and outside of self.

Faith always requires a letting-go moment. Ammirata builds up the acrylic surfaces with a masonry trowel, one layer at a time, then utilizes an arsenal of chisels to carve back into the layers revealing an anonymous

tantric image. This sculptural deduction—as opposed to additive brushwork—asks the viewer to question what a painting is.

Rarely is the concept of painting-as-portal brought to life and brought from source more clearly. The square format of Ammirata's work is a critical ingredient in creating a boundless alchemical experience similar to the way artist Jack Whitten gave voice to his work: "...when I speak of space in painting, I'm speaking in terms of multi-dimensional space. A space that is infinite in all directions."[1] *Dissolving Boundaries*—the most recent work in Ammirata's studio—is a large 48-inch x 48-inch wood panel built-up from concrete-like sanded and carved layers. With this work, Ammirata creates meditative spaces and evokes harmony.

Like any fervent action that leads one to a quiet place, Ammirata's paintings behold an elaborate building process, belied by a minimal palette of earth tones. Layered and tooled acrylic paint and finely carved fissures demonstrate the passage of time as the ultimate investment. And, after, we are compelled to investigate the meticulously inscribed markings and contemplate the material associations, Ammirata's faith-based compass guides us on our way to a calm embrace.

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1 Goldsmith, Kevin. "Jack Whitten by Kenneth Goldsmith," Bomb (magazine), July 1, 1994.https://bombmagazine.org/articles/jack-whitten

Lidija Ristić. (Detail) *Intentional Assured Mortality* (from the series: *An Age of Memory Abundance*) (2021) mixed media. 56 x 31 x 34 cm

Lidija Ristić: Walking Hands

by Emily Janowick

Knowing when to leave is a honed skill, and Lidija Ristić's family knew, in 1991, it was time to leave their native Serbia. They fled to Cypress, and then to the United States. Ristić is a refugee, from four generations - a century - of refugees. Now, after nearly twenty years, she has found a new kind of refuge back in Belgrade, and has begun speaking to the past directly through her work.

Ristić employs both tactility and immateriality, developing an ability to communicate in all five senses. Her newly established artist collective is building bridges between disciplines, bringing experts outside of the arts to create knowledge together. In a current project, she is exploring a combination of moving images and perfume. While collaborating with a hundred-year-old perfumery in Belgrade to make a new scent by traditional means, she is also working with psychologists, neuroscientists, and otolaryngologists to examine how scent affects deeper senses.

Contemporary humans overly rely on visuality, and frankly, overuse it. Our eyes are tired. We aren't blinking enough. Scent connects to different areas in the brain and uniquely, rapidly, takes us back in time.

In this work, memory and place are examined, separate from visuality. These somatic experiences, distinct from the mind, activate a different kind of learning.

As a woman, assimilating, she has learned to fall in love with what is available. Her sculptures spill over tables and plinths, tornadoes of cultural signifiers, pearls and fur and dollar store pigment (literally) dripping with meaning. Vivid color, patterns, and textures form the backbone of her practice. She draws materials from dollar stores, where people from all walks of life become equalized: leopard-print jackets, artificial fruit, glitter and beads, faux marbling. Pairing these ubiquitous materials with objects that contain deeper, ancestral significance, like animal bones and blood-red liquids, Ristić forms assemblages that mimic and hyperbolize the art object. Ribbed and patterned fabric herniates the confines of wall-mounted rectangles and colorful plastics spill over spindly, vertical pedestals, themselves adorned with a bridal train of patterned acrylic sheeting.

These physical objects are rendered into digital form as she weaves pixels in video-making. She translates parts of her tangible sculpture into digital imagery, trimming their facade into geometric forms, overlaying them and introducing them into cyberspace, replete with time, sound, and movement. Ristić's work spans across as many mediums as you and I can fathom, each drawing upon and considering one another like one would

draw reference from a known language like Spanish while learning Portuguese, or build upon any previous knowledge to learn a new skill.

Her sensual explorations are a natural overflow of being diasporic: feeling everything all at once, too many cultures trying to fit into one body, or breaking free of one body, a mind which is at once intrigued and offended, a body which can be simultaneously repulsed and stimulated. These are not cold museum sculptures meant to be touched with gloves — they are trying to touch you.

When the Turkish government expelled the Greeks in the early 1900s, Ristić's grandmother's family found safety in the kingdom of Serbia. The unmarried women in her family, like many women before them, used their hands to save their lives. They were carpet weavers. Like Penelope from Homer's Odyssey, weaving and unweaving her burial shroud for years, they used time to save themselves. Sitting on the sidelines of history, they participated in this 'women's practice,' quietly weaving through past and future during times of war. I imagine this somatic practice altering their nervous systems, building in calm for the next generation. It is not surprising, then, that tactility and bloodlines are central to Ristić's work. She pays homage to her ancestors and the history of carpets in Balkan and Eurasian culture with contemporary interpretations of weaving during times of crisis.

According to anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, in the process of finding a home in a new culture, migrants often negotiate many identities: amalgamations of their home culture and the ones that are becoming home. These amalgamations and hybridized identities are endemic to Ristić's practice. Not all refugees get to go back home, and home is never how you left it. But Lidija Ristić is back in Serbia, granting corporeality to what would otherwise not exist. In her blood, Ristić carries not only traces of generational trauma, but traces of survival.

Megan Pahmier. *Fountain* (2017)
steel, grapes. 32 x 24 x 2 in

Megan Pahmier: Curiosity Care

By Alexis Granwell

INVISIBLE MOMENTS

Megan Pahmier's sculptures are temporary monuments that commemorate the ordinary. Her process begins with a close observation of objects. She works from materials of the everyday like food, cotton, mirrors, needles, shells, and window screens.

Pahmier tends to her forms as if seeing them for the first time—to get closer to their materiality and to reimagine our perceptions. Arranging and rearranging, she creates tactile conversations with her objects. Tactility connects to all of our senses, jarring memories and sensations. In Pahmier's work, texture relates most specifically to movement and how touch can shift objects over time.

touching
to be touched

These works show the loss and growth of their own structures. In *fall out* (2021), a window screen is cut and layered to describe a whole system and its entropy. A world exists within this window. As the pieces fall and bend, light acts as painting, filtering through the gridded surface. The darkness emerges through overlaps.

New shapes appear. New languages can be read. I forget scale and I am both outside and inside the window's space. In this back-and-forth, movement can become a place of memory.

Pahmier's humble materials begin to feel lifelike through arranging and rearranging with sculpted and found forms. At times, some of the forms can be animated or theatrical, transforming into anthropomorphic creatures.

In an earlier work titled *tears* (2017), two copper pipes filled with museum gel are embedded inside a wall with the tunnel of the pipes exposed to the viewer. Throughout the course of the exhibition the museum gel flows out of the pipes and down along the wall, never reaching the floor. The viewer only sees two holes in the leaking museum wall. The circular openings transform into eyes, portals, or punctures that visually lead us inside. The architecture becomes an invitation to look into the emptiness, meditate, and be with our grief.

smoke
clouds
apparitions
gesture
response
rest

DIFFERENT HISTORIES

Pahmier's works are ephemeral but tender as she responds to how objects shift and age over time. She asks us to quietly pay attention to a certain slant of light on the floor or to moldy wrinkling fruits. Each object has a life of its own, life beyond its utilitarian value. Dailyness alters objects, and she is studying what is underneath the surface. When these found forms are removed from the ins and outs of the day, they become their own expansive worlds.

In *fountain* (2017), a steel, spine-like rod extends from the wall, stringing together a line of grapes. The sculpture floats in space like a broken necklace. From the photograph, the grapes looked cast. When I learned they were real grapes that would shrivel and rot throughout the exhibition, I was moved to think of the expressions of my own aging skin. As the viewer, we must make space and time for the encounters with these works and their individual time scales. The objects, their shadows, and their skins illuminate a new sense of time.

cut
pinched
moving
to be moved
staring/ waiting
silver spirals like fingerprints

making sense of a moment
many traces
build to something

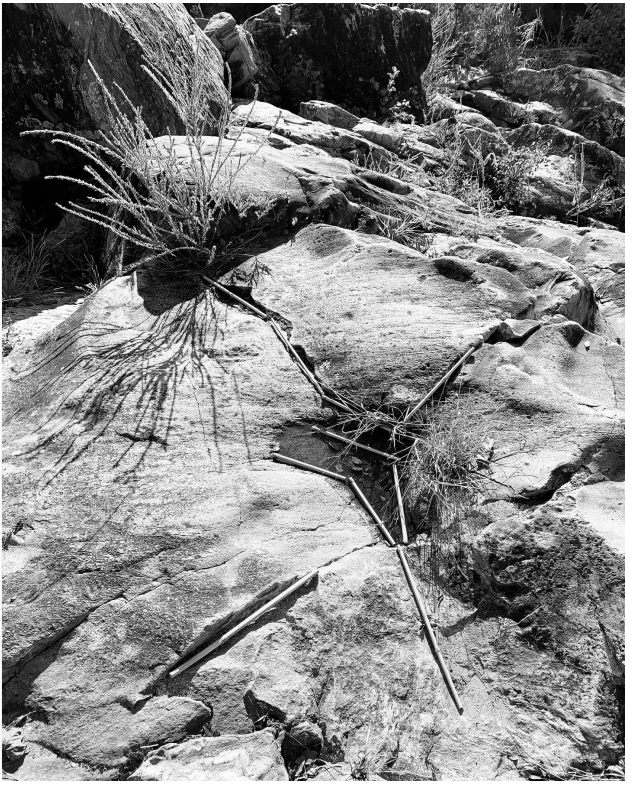
EVERYDAY FUZZ

Everything is in a process of becoming, and Pahmier culls ideas from the garden, the house, and her body.

Sculptures like *handtofootinmouth* (2016), an arrangement of two cut-open and upright compression socks, teach us about healing. What is needed to feel well in our bodies? Where can we mend and become more expansive? These socks have a resilience in their gestures despite their gaping holes.

two mouths
eyes staring
muscle and bone
an opening
a reminder
two socks
like scribbles
on the floor
looking at me

Megan Pahmier's practice carries a desire to remember something that holds weight and a desire to remember something small.



Murat Cem Mengüç. *River Drawings 10.07.2022*, bamboo sticks, site specific. Billy Goat Trail, Potomac River, MD.

Murat Cem Mengüç

by Cozette Russell

What is being recorded here? Slight traces of impact: of water on rock, of the sun watching the movement below, of the lightest touch, of a bamboo stick placed on the land, on the rock, at the riverbed. Of time passing in a day, seen in the way the rocks warm and wrinkle into shadows. Of time chronicled in the smooth and glacial markers, a geologic duration, a history.

In his *River Drawings (2022)* series, artist Murat Cem Mengüç makes minimalist compositions using bamboo shoots of various lengths, cultivating a relationship between lines, surface, and a deep sense of time. He employs bamboo as a material guide, like a brush or a pen, and refers to these compositions as drawings—although the final works take the form of black and white photographs. Mengüç, with roots as a historian, presents us with this documentation, but the photographs are not the art, rather the record of it. The drawing itself is a process layered with inquiry, an event with the land.

Here in this nebulous place between the temporal and the documented, I'm thinking about the weight of permanence and impermanence. What do we hold tightly to, and what do we let go of? We are deep in

this river gorge, deep in the refrain of shadows, cracks, and curves. Here are old rocks and old water.

In the Potawatomi language, a rock is not spoken of as an inanimate object, as Robin Wall Kimmerer explains in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Not what is this rock? Instead, who is this rock? In Mengüç's series, he asks, who is this rock, this riverbed, this bamboo? He reminds us there is breath in the landscape.

Mengüç's images evoke an exploration, something learned and unlearned—a movement away from ourselves. There is a human song in these lines and shapes, a whisper to the ghosts in the Caves of Chauvet, an ancestral call and response from the Paleolithic artist to one making work in the Anthropocene era.[1]

Along this river, what grows distant when viewed from above? The relational way rainclouds sense and graph the mountains. From the hawk that circles. The ruffle of feathers. The cool darting eye. The way flight is supported in the flow and the plunge. And what grows closer when viewed from a step back? Pebbles underfoot, a set of hands, a human eye full of curiosity and desire.

The Paleolithic artist made work of mud and sticks, compositions fleeting under the same sun, exposed to the same wind as ours. We will never know these

works. But the drawings contained in caves, cradled in temperate conditions, remain. Can we again consider permanence and impermanence?

Today we document furiously. Mengüç has me thinking about the role of photography here. About the way light is received through the camera, and how making photographs is a collective action. We do not take photographs. We do not make photographs. We receive photographs. The light is received through the camera. The light is present. But photography isn't a permanent record—like a drawing in the sand, it will eventually be lapped away by a rising tide. What will remain in a future without us?

Mengüç's work is an invitation to a mystery. I think about the bamboo's soft wood and distinct borders, mapping another land, another memory. He brings us into a space, a collaboration, an investigation. What do we trust? And what do we know?

Nicholas Cueva. *Rough* (2019) acrylic on fabrics 9 x 12 in

Nicholas Cueva

by Zach Van Horn

Nicholas Cueva uses fabric as the canvas for his paintings. Heavy weaves and outdoor/indoor furniture fabric encourage different surface treatments. Thin layers of paint allow the texture of the fabric to show through. Elsewhere, he leaves entire sections of fabric completely bare. Cueva's use of color, texture, and pattern are reminiscent of the static from an old CRT TV. This effect offers a sense of nostalgia: I'm reminded of older versions of technology I associate with being young at my Grandmother's house, watching Bob Ross paint, but due to the picture quality, being unable to fully see what he was doing. In Cueva's work, the fabric as canvas simultaneously acts as a barrier to a clear interpretation of the information provided, while also functioning as the support for which the painting sits on.

The dynamic between the recognizable forms Cueva paints and the texture of his fabrics begins to reveal his relationship to his subject matter. Cueva says he draws upon his personal experiences in his pieces, but the textural, low-resolution effect leaves me with a sense of detachment from his paintings' narratives. The static marks upon the texture of the fabric omit key information and details of (otherwise potentially) recognizable

forms. Are these Cueva's memories that he's slowly losing connection to, or are these parts of his life that he's re-examining—hence the reveal of the underlying structure of the paintings?

Cueva's paintings often explore how the internet and social media can build new narratives through everyday images: cats, coffee, closely framed portraits, people surfing. His choice of iconography is specific but banal, giving viewers just enough information to begin to construct their own narrative. (In his *Peru Residency* (2022) project, Cueva took the idea of constructing new narratives from minimal information a step further with the use of A.I.—ultimately convincing his online followers that he was in a residency where odd, absurd, and eventually catastrophic events occurred.)

Cueva also paints abstract compositions. Vaguely cubist in approach, these paintings are dense with recognizable symbols and forms, such as the evidence of a face in the background or the outline shape of a hand. Cueva paints different parts of his subject from multiple perspectives in one painting. For example, in his painting titled *Favorite Podcast (2022)*, Cueva repeats the left hand in three different configurations, suggesting that the hand is moving through space and time. Cueva's exploration of time and its relationship to technology makes me think of how the speed of technology influences culture, society, and our ability to process

information, often leaving us with very little—but erratic—information with which to make sense of the world.

Cueva's paintings are provisional: made to risk their own destruction for the possibility that their destruction will reveal something new. Cueva is aware that his paintings will potentially warp or even completely fall apart because he paints directly onto the fabric. The seeming "quickness" that his paintings relay, asks us to consider painting's relationship to technology. Because of technology's ability to produce images at increasingly faster speeds, it applies an unprecedented pressure and urgency on artists.

Cueva tells me that he believes painting is an infinitely explorable medium. Painting continues to persist despite the numerous declarations of its end due to technological advances. Cueva's investigations to understand how the mind constructs itself and make sense of the world continues through his mediums, imagery, and an insight to its provisionality.

Sidney Mullis. Image of solo show, *Of Ash and Ice at Wick Gallery* (2020) handmade paper pulp, gravestone dust collected from a gravestone carver, wax, sand, dry rigatoni and manicotti pasta, pleather, black food coloring, black streamers, teddies that people did not want, olive pits, dried carrots and olives, paint, wire, rocks, wood, shells & coins from my childhood collections, Curated by Christine Rebhuhn and Sam Branden.
Image Credit: Matthew Sherman

Sidney Mullis

by Erin Woodbrey

In the work of Sidney Mullis, we encounter the thresholds of childhood, adulthood, and the intermediary, in-between stages. In an ongoing series of interrelated sculptures and installations, Mullis builds fragments of an imagined forest. Setting up scenarios to relocate and resurrect childhood selves, Mullis asks the question—where do our past selves go?

There is a playground in a clearing. You have to walk through the woods to get there. It is a space made of openness and experiment. There are boundaries but we don't know where they are yet. It is an embodied place, sometimes physical, sometimes immaterial. It goes by many names, and they are not common. They are specific to us and for us. We are learning the words and matching them to space, form, and feeling with flexibility and conviction.

The playground is an adorned mound surrounded by trees, rounded up from the surface of the ground amid protruding tentacles of organic forms, arms, branches, and handmade objects scattered about. The forms are bulbing, blooming, withering, and reaching out. They teeter, wave, and tick with a clock-like rhythm—metronomes keeping their own time.

The trees are dense, the playground, seemingly sparser, but just as activated. Everything that was brought here was carried in by hand. The objects look as though they could be talismans for safety on the walk through the forest—a bell to signal our location, a coin collection, beads, marbles, and buttons. Things held tightly and close to the body—a stuffed bear for companionship and protection, toy figurines to play out emerging scenarios through storytelling, candles stolen and melted over everything signal warmth or ritual, the altarpiece for a seance to reach out into something unknown.

Some objects serve another function, as essential building blocks—wire, cable, cut wood, construction paper, and glue sticks. Foodstuffs carried in initially as snacks are now building materials too—pasta, olive pits, nuts, and carrots. Some materials are gathered on the way into the clearing: twigs, branches, lost toys from previous treks through the woods. Raw materials are collected from the surrounding environs: sand, gravestone dust, shells. The playground is comprised of organic and loosely architectural objects and forms arranged, seemingly haphazardly, capturing a moment of movement, play, a game left mid-inning, detritus, and aftermath. The placement possesses its own logic.

We don't need instructions here. We know exactly what we are doing. The forms are decisive, fixed, but also movable. The playground is built through play—a way of mak-

ing, learning, rebelling, remembering, and forgetting. Make-believe, making belief.

This is a liminal place, a sanctuary of exploration, celebration, joy, and lost time, or time unmeasured, marked only by the passing of light—daylight, dusk, the hour before night. The playground is a space of creation and imagination where new selves are made and where nightmares and anxieties can be placed and re-molded. The playground is more than the sum of its parts; it is a living entity, as is the surrounding forest.

An active agent, the forest offers its own perspective. It is an environment where risk is built into play, a place of safety, sanctuary, danger, and peril. With enough respect, the forest will offer care. If we move too fast or without consideration, it will catch us by our ankles. The forest possesses a time that predates the playground and will carry over to a time when the playground no longer exists.

Mullis' work is of the playground and the forest. Examining the presumed stages of life where certain benchmarks are expected to be reached, Mullis considers social scripts, gender roles, and the processes of learning with subtlety, candor, and humor.

Questioning a hierarchical understanding of experience, Mullis proposes alternative ways of knowing by creating communal spaces for playfulness, recollection, and world-building. Her work offers a sequence of thresholds, each object a monument, a landmark on

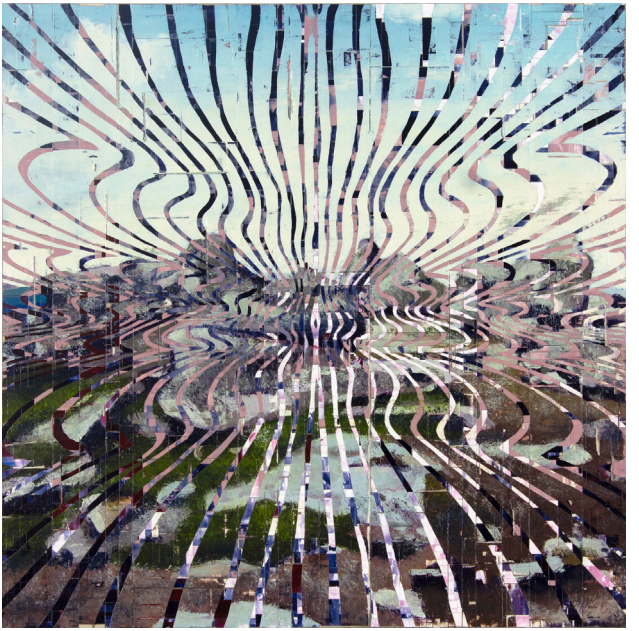
the way. A trail of breadcrumbs in the woods. They may be eaten up as they are dropped, but they also trace a path.

Connected through recurring forms and the use of materials, Mullis' installations feature the interplay between objects, narrative, and spatial navigation. Circles, spheres, modular elements, and stackable forms build a lush cosmos. Each work in this ecosystem operates as a different season and microclimate. Fluctuations of temperature and local flora and fauna build a space where ideas, selves, pasts, presents, and futures can flow freely and where objects can be re-discovered and recontextualized. Subverting the standard function of material through reuse and transformation, Mullis underscores the malleability of experience and meaning.

Mullis reminds us of the experience of childhood using the things around us to make sense of the world. She conjures the things lost to adulthood, and asks: What can we unlearn? How can we carry curiosity, storytelling, and wonder with us as we age?

Her work may not literally resuscitate, retrieve or resurrect, but offers a space for sitting with the memory of a time/place and setting up the circumstances for change. Getting to the essence of childhood, Mullis reminds us of the selves we shed—all the times we're made aware of our time, the things that disappeared,

the futures we made through play, stories, friends-real and imagined and that we can find our childhood selves living in the materials our bodies and the spaces we inhabit/ed. I am not sure if we can get back to the playground in the woods, but the feeling and action of imagining might be enough.



Zach Van Horn. *Another Time Where The Plan Fell Apart* (2022) oil and acrylic on paper on wood panel. 24 x 24 in

Zach Van Horn

by Kerri Ammirata

Zach Van Horn's painting glitch and reform in a world of dreams and memories that live within reality. The works have undulating, hypnotic lines that flit across the surface, compressing two images into one. The paintings are put together, pulled apart, cut, torn, dissected, and then painstakingly rebuilt. Each process is a small step on the journey to create a whole.

His work is built with a set of rules. Van Horn starts by dripping, dragging, and pooling acrylic paint across the paper surface; allowing the paint to flow and act naturally. From here, he cuts the paper into small tiles and pastes each individual tile onto the panel. This mosaic, ritual-like step creates the backbone of the work. It creates the texture, the lines, and grid that he contends with for the rest of the painting. When the glue has dried, he tapes out a symmetrical, undulating pattern on top of the mosaic. The taped pattern starts from the center, creating a focal point, and gradually gets larger as it reaches the panel's edges.

At this half-way point of the process, Van Horn does a subversive act and paints a realistic scene on top of the mosaic abstraction, and taped patterns. In a sense, abstraction is dropped and his subconscious and dreams

dictate the scene. The work is psychologically charged and his introspection and desire to dive into his past informs it – Van Horn has a few years within a therapy that posits the mind is made up of different subpersonalities, each with its own unique viewpoint. This, to me, is the essence of the work. The intense personal becomes the subject and the process of separating viewpoints, the disparate parts of your internal life, unify into one scene. It's as if he has two separate memories of the same moment that need or are compelled to be together. For instance, you and your sibling have different memories of the same event.

How can they both be true and accurate? Our mind is always playing tricks on us, and our individual personalities can alter our memories.

Van Horn pulls up the tape to reveal a Rorschach-esque pattern to achieve this sense of a disjointed memory. All these layers create different textures and tones, each unique and able to stand on its own. After all this labor, he sands the entire piece. This process compresses and harmonizes the textures and tones created in each layer. It is a ruthless act. It is also dramatic, as he lets go of all control. The sanding is democratizing as it decides what stays and what needs to be revealed.

After he finishes a piece, Van Horn creates a poem for the painting. This is an important step. Since he has let go of control of the final image in the sanding

step, he is now confronted with the disjointed scene. Is it how he remembered? Is it similar to the dream it came from? What has been shown to him that he didn't know before? The titles *Placed Before My Time (2022)*, *Another Time Where the Plan Fell Apart (2022)* and *A Place Passed by a Thousand Times (2022)* come from these poems and are elusive and nostalgic. They reference time and how we fit into that space. I believe these titles are an invitation from Van Horn to sit and meditate with these works, and to allow them to slowly show you an event from every angle. It is no surprise that the works made during the pandemic are complicated visually, in terms of truth, have a dystopian edge, and wriggle outside of grasp, making it all too hard to hold all thoughts and feelings into one space.

Thank you.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Alexandra Hammond, Danyel Ferrari, Julia Baron and Robert Silva for giving their patience, intelligence and talent to this whirlwind project during a crazy time of year. Special thanks to A.I.R. Gallery, and curator of the 50th AIR Biennial Eriola Pira for supporting and providing our first public platform for this publication -- we are proud to be part of this event. Lastly, thank you to all the artists who agreed to participate in this project. We truly hope you had, overall, a good experience and learned from each other. We certainly did. Respectfully yours,
Kat & Priscilla.