

**LIFT** *OFF*

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY  
MFA EXHIBITION 2020-2021



Cleia Dantas (p. 29)  
*Recollection Series #5*,  
 1500×1125 pixels



▲ Alana Rios (p. 67)  
*Superbloom*, 2020  
 Hand-cut archival  
 inkjet prints  
 54×180×18 in.



◀ Omar Farid Harb (p. 39)  
*Girl Asleep*, Oil on Canvas,  
 30×48 in.



▲ Kat Mergens (p. 51)  
*Tailings*, 2020,  
 foraged pigment  
 in foraged ceramic  
 vessels

Lacey Nein (p. 63)  
*I'll Remember This  
 Moment Forever:  
 Objects*, Digital print  
 on muslin fabric,  
 stitched onto muslin.  
 36×60 in.



◀ Mape Andrews (p. 23)  
*I Am Your Adam*,  
 2019, Digital Prints  
 on Transparencies,  
 36×42 in.



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## A Note From the MFA Graduate Coordinator at San José State University

This document serves as a showcase and archive for the combined Fall 2019 – Spring 2021 graduating MFAs from San José State University.

As with so many things in our lives, this trajectory was disrupted in Spring of 2020; the production of the exhibition and catalogue was put on hold while the world grappled with the global pandemic.

In Fall of 2020, graduates elected to combine their efforts in a joint exhibition and catalogue featuring work from a selection of artists from the graduating classes of Fall 2019 through Spring 2021 who were able to participate. This catalogue reflects the combined curatorial, administrative, creative, and scholastic efforts during a period where hard stops in the timeline softened; the culmination is a blending of shared resources and efforts.

As a component of their degree, MFA Candidates at San José State University mount two exhibits housed within one of six University Galleries; one exhibition in their second year of study and a culminating Thesis Exhibition at the end of their third year. In addition to the Solo Thesis Exhibitions installed on campus, MFA Candidates have the option of participating in a group exhibition hosted off-site & pairing with an MA Candidate in Art History and Visual Culture to create an entry in the annual, Lift-off Catalogue. Past exhibitions have been installed at Root Division (SF), Incline Gallery (SF), Pro Arts (Oakland), and the San José Institute for Contemporary Art. Recent Curatorial advisors for the exhibition include Chris Gurnder & Cléa Massiani (Co-Directors of Bass & Rainer, SF), Kevin Chen (Independent Curator), and in this iteration, Marcella Faustini (co-Director of CLOACA Projects, SF).

Art students at San José State join a legacy of thinkers, activists, and innovators dedicated to the public good. They test ideas through experimentation in the university's robust fabrication studios, which support the technical components of artistic production in ceramics, digital media, metals, glass, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. Individual studios create space for deep thinking and artistic creation; adjacent communal work areas engender peer-to-peer dialogue and foster innovation and intellectual rigor.

Students combine their in-class experiences, faculty mentorship, independent research, and individual studio practices to produce these exhibitions. The transformations that occur through interdisciplinary dialogue and pedagogical stewardship are nowhere more evident than in these markers of educational maturation.

The culminating group exhibit and accompanying catalog, produced at the end of students' final year of study, reveal the synergies that emerge from the diversity of learning practices. The artworks speak to critical issues far beyond the University grounds; that inevitably direct graduates' thinking, making, and far beyond their time at San José State University.

### **Rhonda Holberton**

Assistant Professor, Digital Media Arts  
Art Graduate Program Coordinator  
San José State University  
College of Humanities and the Arts



Every year since 1985 Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Candidates at San José State University have showcased their work, a culmination of three years of study, in a professional group exhibition. Each year, the exhibit is an opportunity for visitors to see the innovative creations of a new cohort of graduates who have come together to present their art to the public. This year, we are hosted for the second time by San Francisco non-profit arts organization Root Division. Once again, 12 MFA students take the final step of their graduate studies, and lift off, going out into the world beyond San José State University.

Taking part in such an exhibition is an act of bravery, but at this moment in time, that bravery looks and feels different. In the midst of a global pandemic, when public spaces have emptied out, when cities and suburbs alike stand silent, their residents waiting and watching behind closed doors, this group of young artists has created a locale that resists the notion that physical distancing should mean keeping oneself isolated from the world outside. Instead, their group exhibition is a true polis, in the Arendtian sense of the term, a space where speech, action and creation liberate the community from oppression, and where memories turn to words, then stories, and ultimately become testaments for future generations.

This group of MFA students had the unprecedented and unimaginable task of coming together to create an exhibition all the while never knowing when it could open and whether it would be possible for it to take place in a public space. Students and faculty had to come together virtually, to think beyond the physical location of the studio and art gallery to create a space for art making in the midst of a global pandemic. Many of the participating artists were working towards solo thesis exhibitions in our student galleries when the

semester unexpectedly went remote. Others had to abandon art works, supplies, and personal belongings at short notice, and relocate their practice into their homes.

Indeed, all aspects of a culminating group exhibition changed a mere two months before the show opening. Studio visits, typically an intimate conversation between curator and artist and a rare opportunity to see artists in their work space, turned into Zoom meetings, phone conversations, and back and forth emails. While at times I could not help but lament that I was at such a physical distance from the students and their work, I am grateful to have heard their voices, sometimes anxious, other times determined, and to have witnessed their creativity, their intense concentration, and their infatigable desire to keep pushing the boundaries of their medium and craft.

An MFA exhibition is unlike any exhibit that most artists take part of in their lifetime. The effort of three years of study, individual work, and close collaboration with faculty and fellow students at the university, this last showcase is not only a rite of passage, but a revelation of the collective effort and communal links that bring works of art into being.

Surrounded by creations of their peers, each work in this exhibition presents a unique perspective, a stand alone composition, and yet, at the same time, they reach towards each other, offering links of community, shared concerns, and of course, a history of a moment in time that many of us will not soon forget.

Alena Sauzade, PhD  
Lift Off 2020 Curator

Natalie and James Thompson Art Galleries  
Director and Collections Manager  
San José State University







**“how are we to speak of these ‘common things’, how to track them down rather, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are.**

**what’s needed perhaps is finally to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we’ve been pillaging from others. not the exotic anymore, but the endotic.**

**it matters little to me that these questions should be fragmentary, barely indicative of a method, at most of a project. it matters a lot to me that they should seem trivial and futile: that’s exactly what makes them just as essential, if not more so, as all the other questions by which we’ve tried in vain to lay hold on our truth.”**

► **georges perec, *the infra-ordinary* (1973)**

the very unexpected circumstances of this past year created situations where we found ourselves having to negotiate what it means to turn inwards, physically and spatially, along with finding out the repercussions of this necessary act on our psyches.

it is not new territory for artists. the act of turning the domestic and the interior life into medium and subject has been a constant in art making. artists as disparate as kurt schwitters, mark leckey, andrea zittel and carlo mollino have all used interiority as a way to create a personal mythology in their work.

for the 2021 sjsu graduating mfa exhibition a thread of interiorities made itself instantly apparent. this grouping of artists all looked inward as a means to investigate their relationship with this very particular moment. a variety of approaches were surveyed by them, bringing about pictures of what making art work while being inside and isolated meant during this past year.

#### **looking out the window:**

when faced with confinement the immediate instinct is to look outside. windows serve to create a continuum between the spaces we inhabit and the promise of possibility in what is out there.

*sashiko*, the work of **kyoko fisher**, allows her to create a timeline between past and present through the formal relationships of shapes and lines. she makes use of her observations acquired while studying japanese history and culture, particularly with an eye on mingei—or art objects made by ordinary people during the edo period. the artist utilizes an intricate process of etching prints with sewn sashiko (a form of decorative reinforcement stitching on traditional japanese clothing). the technique employed by her is a means to achieve connection with the timeline of her personal narrative, while anchoring it in a contemporary perspective.

### **bringing the window to the kitchen wall:**

**alana rios'** series *the calendar project*, speculates on the possibilities of an outdoors rendered flat. through photographing an ansel adams photo calendar of national parks placed on her domestic walls, the artists creates a definite tension between the outside and inside in a variety of ways. the calendars are filled with personal notes while depicting a very public environment. the 20<sup>th</sup> century classic cannon of landscape photography from the calendar is reframed by shadows created from light hitting surfaces in her surroundings, as well by the contemporaneity of the artists' conceptual intentions.

### **i'm sitting in a room:**

alvin lucier's seminal sound art piece, *i am sitting in a room*, explores the degradation of resonance encountered in a room when the same recording is played and re-recorded over and over to the point of unintelligibility. it becomes a sound portrait of the space achieved by means of repetitive translation.

in thinking about ways where repetition and rendering are used as formal strategies, **omar farid harb** paints portraits of his domestic spaces, finding in them new textures and dimensions to bring forth onto the canvas. objects, rooms and people are focused upon and re-arranged. they become the main characters of a narrative filtered through languid brush-strokes. the visual translation that develops from these negotiations with his surroundings, shows the unfolding of a personal lens expressing both a familiarity alongside an unexpected strangeness, which cohabit in these paintings.

**monica valdez'** drawings show textures becoming building blocks for a personal architecture made by conglomerating shapes of everyday objects and turning them into imagined ones. the drawings take on a sculptural quality to bring forth the possibility of a phantasmagoric, alternate realm where such artifacts would exist.

*i'll remember this moment forever* is the body of work **lacey nein** created while spending the past year occupied with all the minutiae (and grandiosity) that having a newborn entails. her sculptures made out of the muslin cloth used to swaddle her child integrate prints portraying moments of her past year's experience as a first-time mother. given the isolated conditions we were all experiencing during this time, these were moments only witnessed by her. the pieces work as a register or mementos of these private happenings

### **fantastic architectures:**

wolf vostell and dick higgings edited a book, first published in 1969, where they included works by artists utilizing architectural extrapolations. at the time they felt architecture was not moving along with the revolutions happening in the culture. they thought the artists featured in the book,

were utilizing the language and form of architecture but imagining new ways needed for it to have a dialogue with the socio-cultural needs of that time.

through researching other disciplines that inform their work, artists will often take liberties that can result into new methodologies pertinent to moving a canon forward.

**megan moriarty's** exploration of interiority delves into microscopic levels making visible hidden biological landscapes. utilizing experiments with space, light and sound she brings forth a visualization that shares territory with philosophy, art and science in their quest to manifest the unexplainable. moriarty's technique echoes arcane methods such as wabi sabi, alchemy and scientific photography. she creates abstract, fractal patterns to bring forth the unseen surfaces that surrounds us.

**(e)inter-immensity:**

a chapter in gaston bachelard's *the poetics of space* regarding interior immensities may have not been conceived with the digital realm in mind. however, it is not a stretch to consider it as an adequate lens for surveying contemporary inner locales. in that chapter, bachelard suggests that "since immense is not an object, a phenomenology of immense would refer us directly to our imagining consciousness."

**kiki wu's** digital art project, *the release*, proposes delving into such immensities and imaginings. exploring human traditions related to death, the ir| realm is transposed to the virtual realm. in many cultures funerary objects and offerings to the dead are part of the rituals surrounding death. participants in this project, are asked to share a personal object to the virtual space of the project. these objects are turned into 3d files that become a nft and take part of an online exhibition extending the spiritual body and intention into the digital space.

**marcella faustini**

lift off 2021 curator  
co-director of CLOACA projects

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# ANDREW ANDRAWES

*Roots and Routes* is the title of Andrew Andrawes' 2019 exhibition, a mixed media project that encompasses the main tenets of his work: memory, history, and identity. As is evident in the title, his work explores the relationship between the past and the present through a documentation of a two-month trip to his home place of Africa. Fittingly, his approach to technique is parallel to his exploration into history and memory, as he combines analog and digital photographic methods. The process becomes symbolic of his ideology.

The project is both personal and interpersonal. Included in the project are images of his family tree going back nine generations from the year 1683 and scans of stamps that belonged to his grandfather, created in the shape of an envelope. He delves into his family history as a means to understand where he came from, and contemplates how background will play into his future and distinctiveness. While the subject matter displays an eclectic collection of

personal images-objects for Andrawes, his intention is to prompt discussion of both our individual and collective histories. What moments are captured in a frame and how do we interpret or interact with this memory? How has technology influenced our look at the past? The answers to these questions are left open-ended and ultimately provoke contemplation for the viewers.

Andrawes' art process plays with how the past can be contextualized and reconstructed in a current place in time. A picture can exist across generations but still displays only one moment in history. This idea is analyzed throughout his process. The artist juxtaposes analog image capturing with digital methods of photography. The mix of collaging and combining multiple methods of photography to create one new frame is reflective of his approach to memory and history. The images are fragmented and recomposed in a different order, reflecting the disjointed parts of memory and how events and people are remembered.

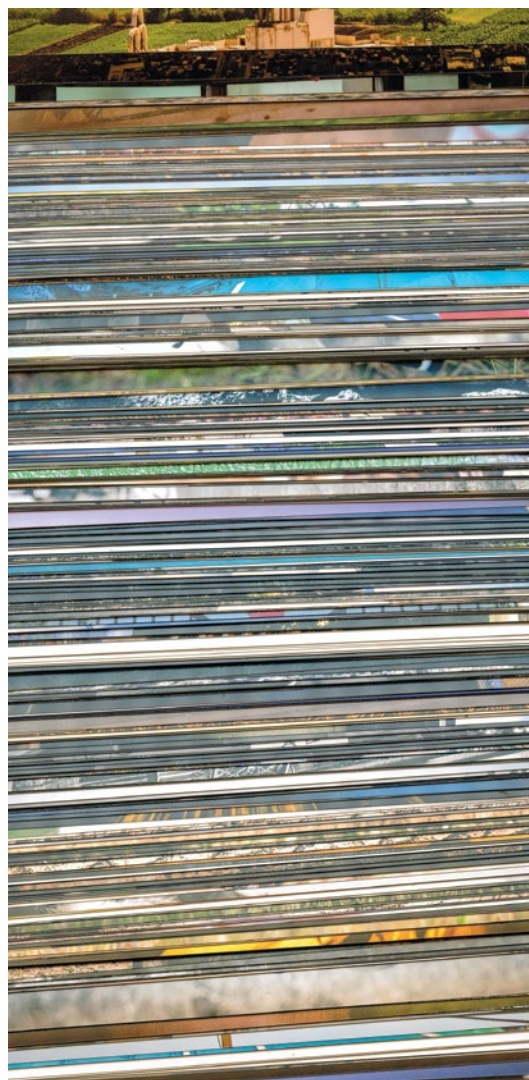
▲ Ana Borlas-Ivern



*Record*, 2019, digital photograph on archival inkjet print mounted on masonite, 24 × 36 in.



*Coptic*, 2019, digital photograph,  
cyanotype on archival cotton paper,  
13 × 19 in.

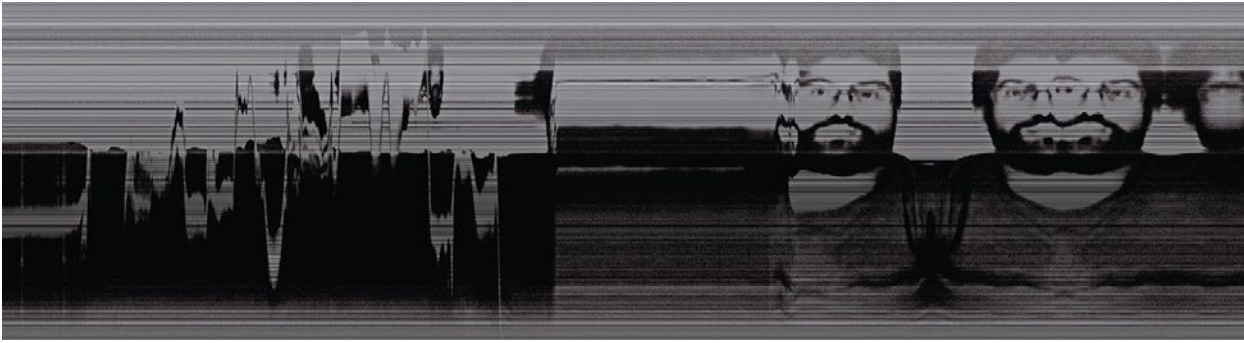


*Strata*, 2019, scan on archival inkjet  
print mounted on masonite, 24 × 48 in.





*Route*, 2019, digital photograph on  
archival inkjet print, 20 × 30 in.



*Untitled 1*, scan on archival  
inkjet print, 40 × 5 in.



*Untitled 2*, scan on archival  
inkjet print, 40 × 5 in.





Growing up in the nineties as a third-culture child in Africa and becoming a first-generation immigrant to the United States has deeply influenced my artistic perspective. Through this multicultural lens I explore poetic connections to the larger systems that both define and connect us within themes rooted in memory, history, and identity. Memory is a composite of so many pieces of lived experiences. In my work, I lean into the layers and flexibility of how we remember and how it is changing based on our relationship with technology. I search for meaning between visual symbols which are both deeply personal and anthropological. I mix analog and digital techniques to create images that represent the relationship between the past and the present.

Combining the use of scanners and old cameras as part of my process allows me to play with expression of time and space. My goal is to contextualize my own ritual of engaging memory and history through the still image. By examining personal, meaningful objects and photographs from the past, I endeavor to integrate these timeless and universal themes to visually portray meaning for record.

Andrew Andrawes



*The Melts - Couple*, 2019, digital print  
on Aluminum, 30 × 40 in.

# MAPE ANDREWS



Mape Andrews is an experimental process artist. In her practice she designs, and invents new processes to use with her materials. Andrews is interested in universal flux and transformation, and how an object's aura moves through time while transitioning through form. Andrews' processes create transformed artworks that contain residue, and decay. The artist's process of creation is to intercept materials as they transition into other aspects of themselves. She is an instrument that provides a tunnel for objects to move through while on their journey into an unknown, and unseen realm. The objects as art begin with the artist's ideas. Andrews stages materials in an environment which allows them freedom to continue to evolve through their life cycle. As a process artist, her role is that of a conduit in the objects' transition. Andrews removes her hands, relinquishes control, and submits to how the objects have decided to evolve. Once the objects enter metamorphosis, Andrews is neutral, and abstains from intervention. Although the materials have been mediated by the artist, they transform according to their DNA. As a process artist Andrews engages in an open dialogue with the artworks she creates, giving them permission to guide her into their unknown mysteries, and unpredictable transformations into new organic forms. Ultimately, her processes offer a view into the intimate workings of the macrocosm, a glimpse of the constant flux of matter as it transitions into the unknown and unseen.

In the artwork, *The Impossibility of Erasing a Quantum State*, Andrews' materials are found gelatin silver prints as well as her personal color C-prints. With this artwork the artist explores how photographic images can be altered but not obliterated. The word erasing surfaced as the process she would use in mediating change upon the photographic prints. Andrews designed a method using abrasive and sanding tools commonly used by metal and wood workers. She places the generated residue of each image in a glassine bag to display together with the photograph. Perfecting her processes is time consuming, challenging, and often brutal. The artist discovered that erasing the surface of a photograph involved degrees of violence, denial of the pain inflicted upon the photographs, and the struggle of surviving the abrasion. The ultimate surrender to their transformations are abstracted fields of color blends and images that appear as white chalk drawings on black paper. Andrews states that "history is implicit in erasing, as well as life's instinct for survival." Andrews always likes to establish a system for her processes; however, she relinquishes control and allows the processes to create the final outcome.

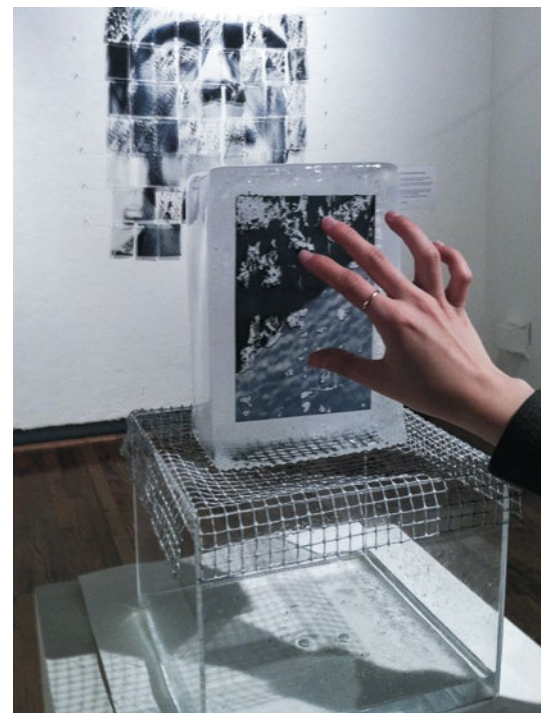
Andrews' process of mediation and relinquishing control is central to her work throughout the exhibition. She approaches transformation as time in constant flux; viewing it as a living phenomenon that pauses then languishes in an unknown form that mirrors birth, life, and death. The stabilized objects suggest the end of transition; however, time never ends, and transformation continues slowly or quickly depending on one's perception of time.

▲ Vickie Simms





*Perihelion - Solstices*, 2019, organic residue and matter on matboard, 52 × 108 in.

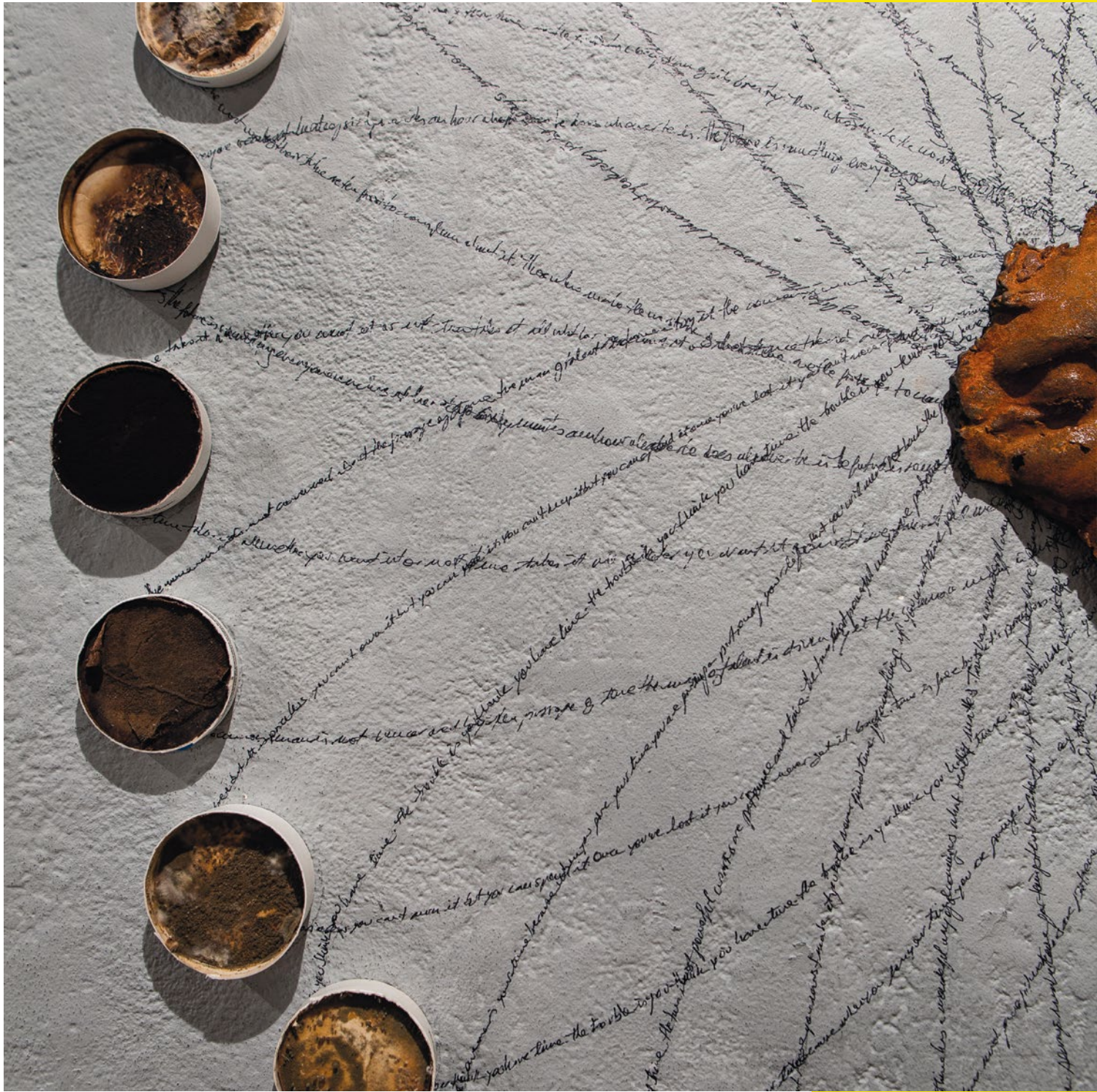


*I Am Your Adam* (interactive piece), 2019, ice and photographs printed on transparencies, 36 × 42 in.



*I Am Your Adam* (interactive piece), 2019,  
photographs printed on transparencies,  
36 × 42 in.





Selene Starbuck Goddess (detail),  
2019, cast iron, paint, markers,  
Starbucks cups' bottoms with fungi  
growth, 48 x 48 in.



**"The only constant in life  
is change"  
-Heraclitus**

Transformation as a manifestation of time is a recurring theme in my work. Transformation is ever present and fundamental; everything perpetually becomes something else.

My work entices the viewer to manufacture their own thoughts and interpretations of the concepts and ideas I present. Successful pieces have an ability to communicate instantaneously, acting more like a smell, a song, or a poem rather than a story.

I design elaborate new processes and use unorthodox techniques and materials to create artwork. Starting by making an original piece, and then designing processes that will drastically transform it.

Once I initiate these transformative processes, I like to have little control over their outcome; loss of control, risk, and unpredictability, are absolutely essential for the integrity and honesty of my work. I need to be shocked and surprised by my creations.

I film and photograph these processes, and collect their residues, which become part of the transformed originals.

Through these rituals my work bears witness to the instant when one thing becomes another, reflecting on the nature of transformation, and how it relates to existence and derives meaning.

Maape Andrews



*Selene Starbucks Goddess, 2019, cast iron, paint, markers, Starbucks cups' bottoms with fungi growth, 48 × 48 in.*





Recollection #7, 2020, digital image



Recollection #4, 2020, digital image



# CLEIA DANTAS

My interdisciplinary media practice flows from the intersection between technology and art, which allows me to develop concepts and models that connect to my own role as an artist in the world. At an early stage in my career, I experimented with digital processes that expanded my knowledge and understanding of the different forms of media. Through my research and experimentation with computer generated imagery and interactive media art, I started creating visual representations of important ideas related to social issues.

Using my role as an artist, I initiated conversations around issues that deeply impact society which resulted in my most recent artwork, *Recollection*. It is a visual record of change and its influence on one's personal life, whether it is driven by external or internal factors, with each new change a new identity is shaped. For instance, immigration to a new country with a new set of societal rules can result in a sudden change that affects an immigrant deeply and pressures them to create a new identity. However, many immigrants tend to hold onto past values, leading them to resist change subconsciously as they cling to distorted memories of the past. Nevertheless, migration has the ability to shape and transform destinations, which leads to change in itself.

Although societal changes tend to be slow and gradual, they are easily recognized through observation of the behavior and values of those who return after having been away for long periods of time.

Therefore, *Recollection* explores the transformation of individuals and their resulting society, while still maintaining a link between past and present values. Using a combination of photographs and graphs while mixing idealized views with sharp contrasting realities in separate spaces, I aim to provoke my audience and their perception of the past. This idea was deterministic in the selection of my medium, and I was especially challenged with the responsibility to recall images from the past while still maintaining a view of the present. The resulting juxtaposition of composite images achieved through digital image processing resulted in a photography comprised of a multitude of images which invite the audience to explore and discover a transformation of values between past and present.

Lastly, *Recollection* takes a visual record of the past and merges it with a visual record of present, allowing for the viewer to reflect on the impact of change on their own life. The juxtaposition of photographs compels the viewer to study each component of the final composite, which leads to exploration and discovery.

▲ Cleia Dantas



*Recollection #8*, 2020, digital image



*Recollection #9, 2020, digital image*



*Recollection #3, 2020, digital image*





*Recollection #6, 2020, digital image*



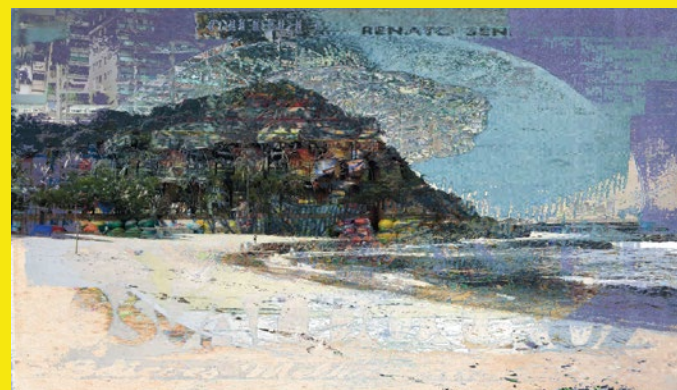


*Recollection #5*, 2020, digital image





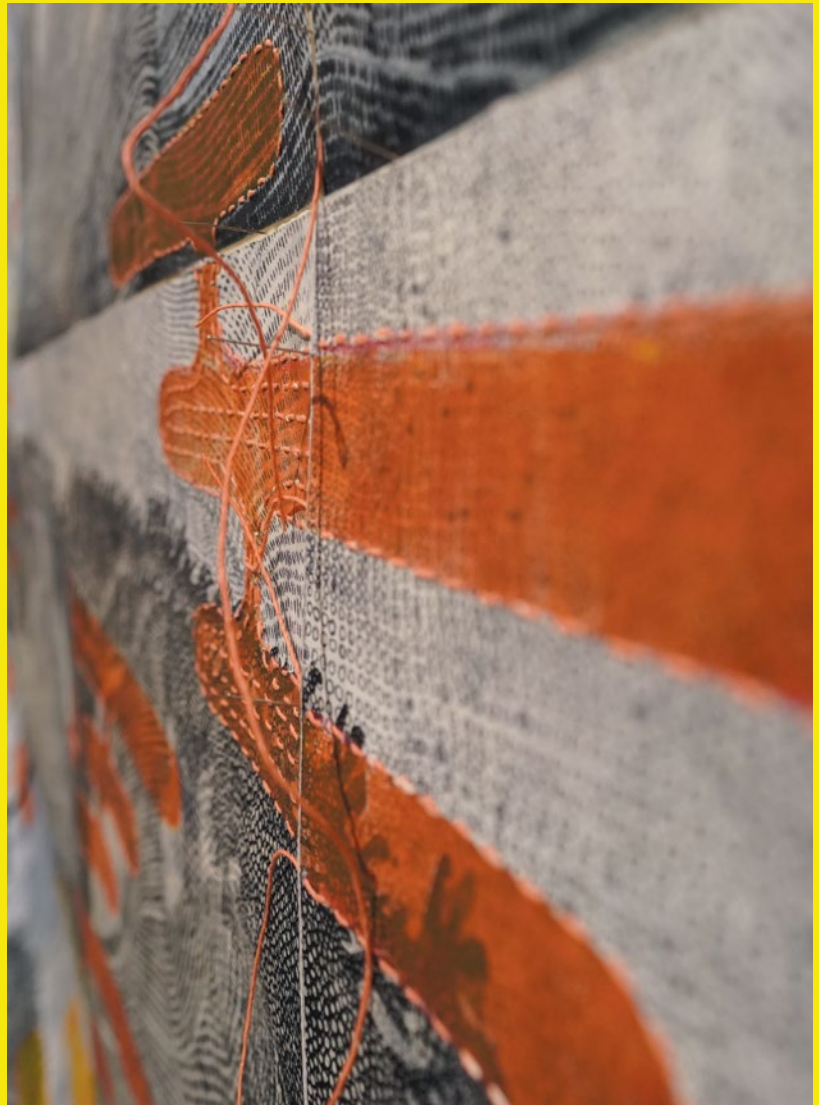
*Recollection #2, 2020, digital image*



*Recollection #10, 2020, digital image*



*Sashiko: On Paper (detail),*  
2019, Lithography, intaglio,  
paper thread, 48×90 in.



*Sashiko: On Paper (detail),*  
2019, Lithography, intaglio,  
paper thread, 48×90 in.



# KYOKO FISCHER



*Sashiko: On Paper*, 2019  
Lithography, intaglio, paper thread, 48×90 in.

Kyoko Fischer’s piece hinges on the artisan craftwork that people in the Edo era (1615–1868) of Japan used daily, called *mingei*. As the art and craft of ordinary people, *mingei* refers to everyday or “normal” objects—such as toys, brushes, clothing, or furniture—that people adore. Most *mingei* art was done by ordinary craftspeople who never signed their name onto their work. The practice is practical and utilitarian, not commercial, and *mingei* art is a companion, something that grows on you affectionately through daily use.

Fischer deeply connects to this era. These ordinary objects had surrounded her growing up in Japan, but she had never noticed then. Perhaps in the realization of how long she’d been in the US, she found herself drawn back to *sashiko* (literally translated to “little

stabs” or “little pieces”). *Sashiko* is a form of decorative reinforcement stitching on traditional Japanese clothing that started from a practical, functional need during the Edo era. *Sashiko* typically has a repetition of short lines from the stitches, a pattern she had already subconsciously incorporated from the start in her oeuvre.

At a high level, *sashiko* is centered on the *mingei* concept, translating the traditional Japanese work that people cherished in the olden days into a modern expression. With an installation of etching prints with sewn *sashiko*, Fischer has not only recreated the atmosphere of the Edo era but has also reimagined *mingei*, and specifically *sashiko*, as modern fine art.

▲ Kyoko Fischer





*Sashiko: On Paper (detail)*,  
2019, Lithography, intaglio,  
paper thread, 48×90 in.





*Sashiko: On Paper (detail)*,  
2019, Lithography, intaglio,  
paper thread, 48×90 in.



*Sashiko: On Paper (detail)*,  
2019, Lithography, intaglio,  
paper thread, 48×90 in.





*Girl Asleep (Detail)*, 2021,  
Oil on Canvas, 30×48 in.

## OMAR FARID HARB



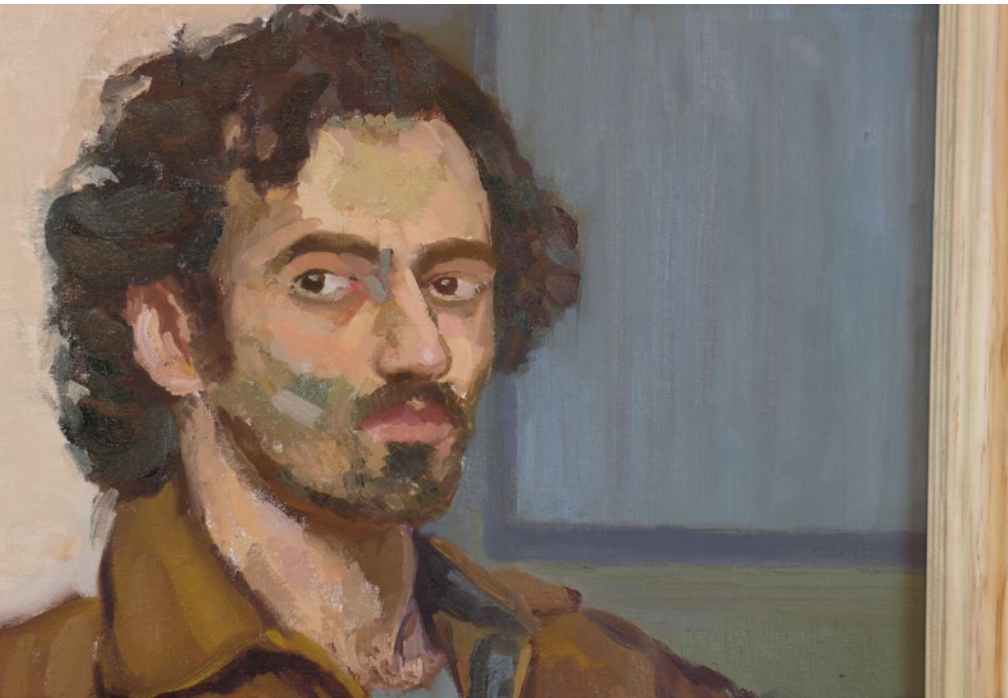
*Still Life with Ham (Detail)*, 2021,  
oil on linen, 20×24 in.

Harb's work is about intimacy. It is about what is hidden and what is laid bare. His portraits and still life paintings are investigations of unconcealment in which the metaphorical identities of everyday objects become implicit participants in a universal language of comfort and familiarity. Harb's paintings are invitations to collaborate in a shared secret that transcends the specific and hints at a universal feeling of the private and personal.

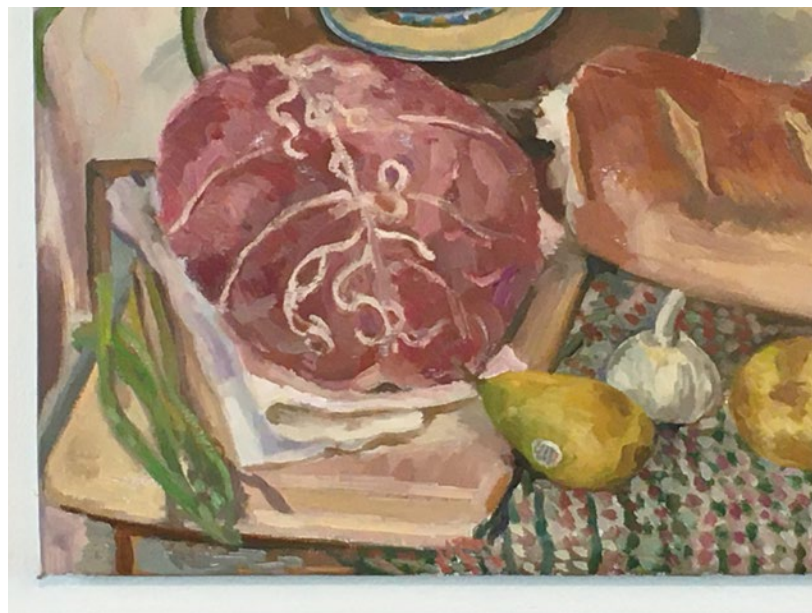
Harb's work asks what does it mean to be a person? To have a body? What is hidden from view and what is revealed? What is familiar? What is home? How do the various elements of your life work to create a sense of beauty and calm in our disharmonious world? By revealing his own inner world, Harb invites us to connect to a larger world of comfort and familiarity; a sanctuary within ourselves that is revealed in the elements of universal comfort and beauty.

▲ Laamsha Young





*Self Portrait with Brown Jacket*, 2021, oil on board, 16×20 in.



*Still Life with Pork Butt (Detail)*, 2021, oil on linen, 20×24 in.



*Still Life with Flowers (Detail)*,  
2021, oil on linen, 20×24 in.





*Girl with Perennial*, 2021,  
oil on canvas, 30x48 in.



In my recent work I have been painting from direct observation, based on my current situation and daily surroundings. I mainly have been working from the human figure and objects. In my current body of work, my girlfriend has been my main sitter, making for a more intimate intention in the way I paint. I also have been making still life paintings from objects I have been assembling together in my own home. In this way, I hope to find a universal subject matter in my own intimate situation. I also paint myself, focusing on how my appearance changes throughout the day. The main focus in this work is a very familiar human body, and very familiar objects/surroundings. There is a sense of collaboration when working from another person, regarding what they are willing to contribute into the painting I set forth working on. Also, my own home space has been sort of like a central figure in my current work. Perhaps, especially during the time of COVID-19, making your home life a primary focus of concern, seems to hit the nail on the head.

Omar Farid Harb





*Untitled 7*, 2020, pigment  
print, 45 × 30 in.



*Untitled 5*, 2020, pigment  
print, 45 × 30 in.



# MASON HERSHENOW



*Untitled 3 (What Now),*  
2020, pigment print,  
45 × 30 in.

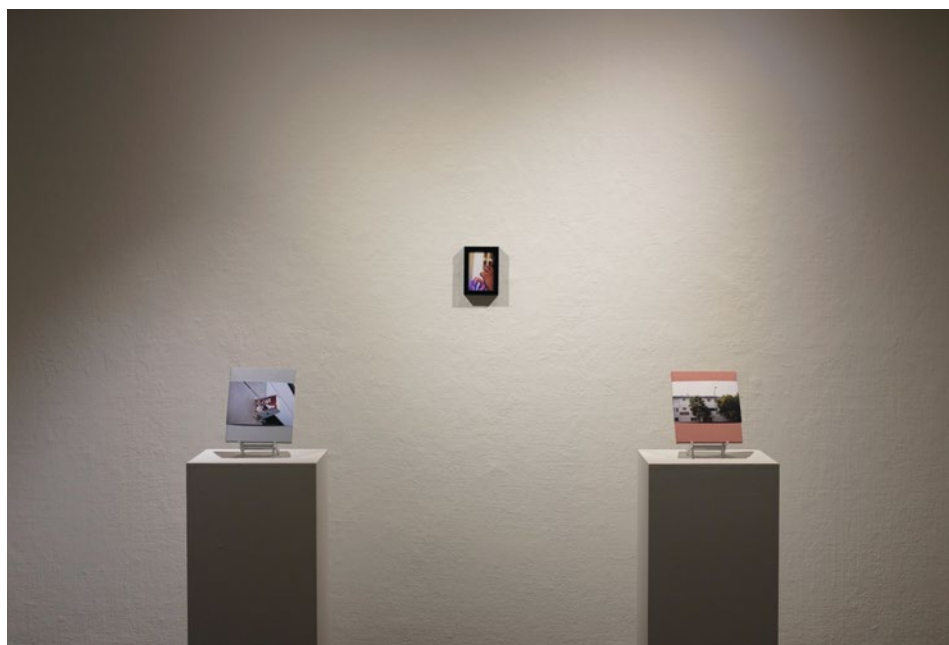
The central focus of my art practice is the examination of social and institutional practices and systems, particularly where widely-practiced beliefs, traditions, and/or decorum create absurd or dangerous norms. While I am a classically-trained photographer who maintains a constant street-photography practice, I rarely shoot for any specific project; instead I tend to treat my image archive as a something more akin to a found-photography collection. I'm fascinated by how the meaning and purpose of images—particularly those which are clearly personal or candid in nature—changes quickly and dramatically when context is shifted or omitted entirely.

Book arts, text, and graphic design have long played a large role in my process, and over the past couple of years I've begun to incorporate elements of traditional printmaking, performance art, and site-specific installation. While my work is often a pointed critique at one or many institutions, my goal is always one of reform rather than annihilation. I want to inspire conversations about why we do the things we do and who we let set the terms—this is most often the first step in creating real change.

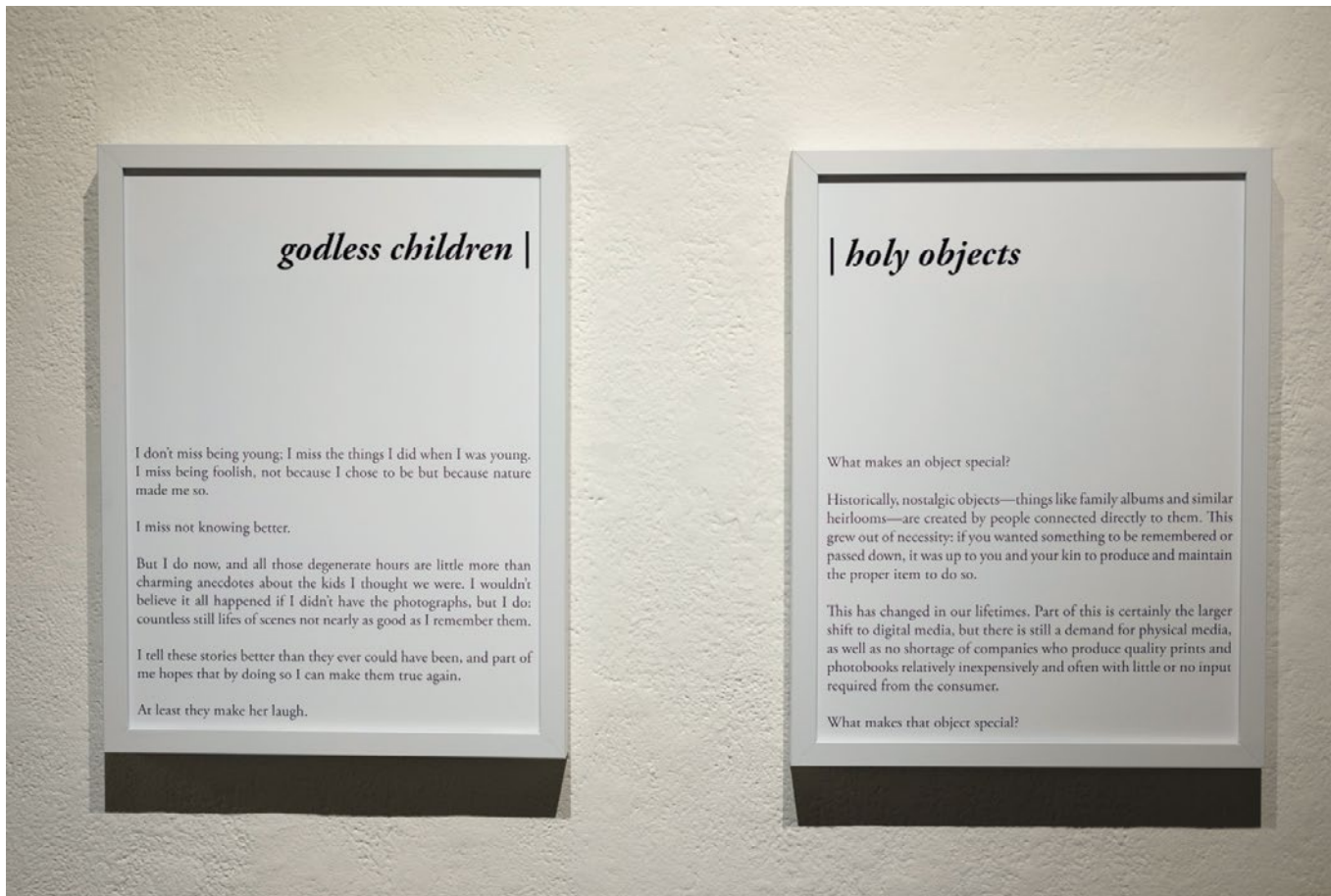
▲ **Mason Hershonow**



*Revitalized Art Theory*, 2018,  
photocopy, 8.5 × 11 in.



*holy objects*, archival pigment print,  
books, dimensions variable



*godless children*, archival  
pigment prints











*Tailings, 2020, foraged pigment  
in foraged ceramic vessels*



*Tailings Process,  
2019, foraged pigment*

# KAT MERGENS

As the gold encrusted land of California was claimed forcefully—by men feverishly obsessed with wealth and domination corroborated by Manifest Destiny—so today Mergens identifies a parallel albeit contemporary mining economy interested not in land but of psyche. Kat Mergens is a California-based interdisciplinary artist whose project *EUREKA!* is a topical investigation of what increasingly defines our contemporary lives—data and surveillance. Sincere, smart, and oriented around the desire for self-determination, Mergens' artwork puts plan to action while providing a hopeful glimpse into the pursuit for personal sanctuary.

Routinely visiting the site of a retired gold mine in rural Northern California, Kat forages for discarded minerals she can use as material and conversational tool. Mergens' artwork invites conversations about surplus and stewardship. Her self-reliant supply chain subverts the traditional system for providing manufactured products. Within ceramic pinch pots are found various colored powders (pigments) that Mergens identified and ground from mineral deposits. The small unglazed pinch pots are fired from clay Mergens also collected at nearby sites

taking on the form of gentle handmade vessels that imitate the gesture of cupped hands. The spectacular display of handmade pots and colored powders reminds me the surplus and value overlooked in a life tethered to polished corporate goods and services.

Kat continues to forage for surplus mining materials in another piece however this time in the virtual landscape. Processed data is a precious commodity regularly weaponized against us via highly curated and manipulative corporate messaging. Mergens co-opts her raw Google data and makes prints into neat stacks making physical the incomprehensible quantity of surveillance information that which is ordinarily buried. The long list of repetitive—often seemingly redundant—surveillance data that which includes “timestampMs”, “latitudeE7”, “longitudeE7,” Mergens searched keywords, all equate to the methodical and obsessive observations of a cold machine that is more ominous than I could have imagined. The piece is effective, the viewer is left feeling genuinely uncomfortable with the idea that their otherwise banal lives are being continuously recorded for corporate interest and future influence. My response was also characterized by a frustration of powerlessness and a curiosity to decipher the engineering jargon encoded. What does a future life completely entangled with surveillance capitalism entail? And at what point does free will fall victim to the ubiquitous influence of corporate messaging? Mergens' Google data piece sounds the alarm at a moment that feels like a crossroads for our culture.

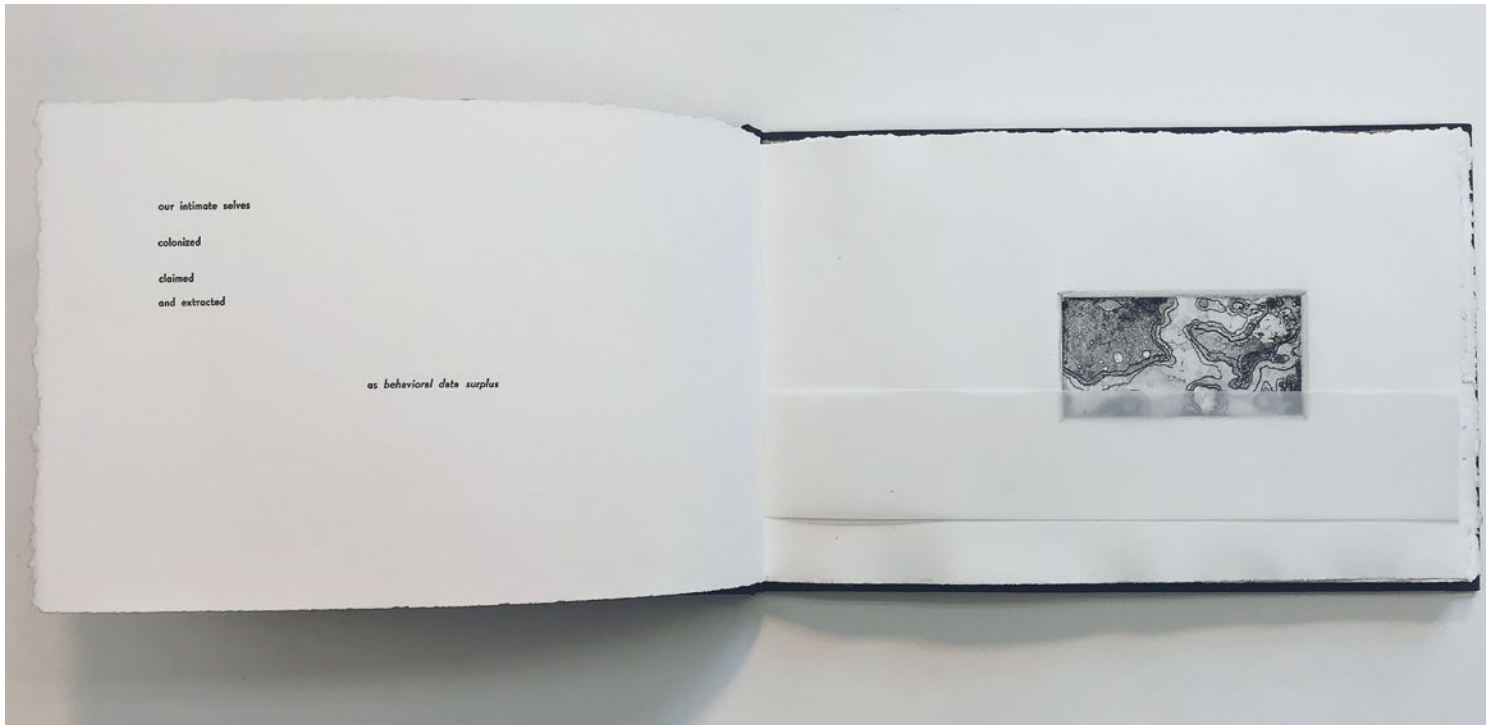
In a sense Kat works like a miner, finding surplus and transforming it into precious materials. However, whereas historically these operations exploited land, people, and psyche for profit, Mergens provides value through personal and communal conversations about alternative and subversive lifestyles that are cautious of surveillance capitalism without ever feeling utopian. Mergens shows us how our contemporary lives—heavily mediated and relentlessly connected to corporate services—can be a life less tethered to that which makes us implicit in exploitation, surveillance, and unhappiness, and more connected to the hyper-local self-determined labor-responsible practices of the artist—eureka!

▲ Sean Peeler



*Tailings*, 2020,  
Foraged Pigment  
in Foraged Ceramic  
Vessels

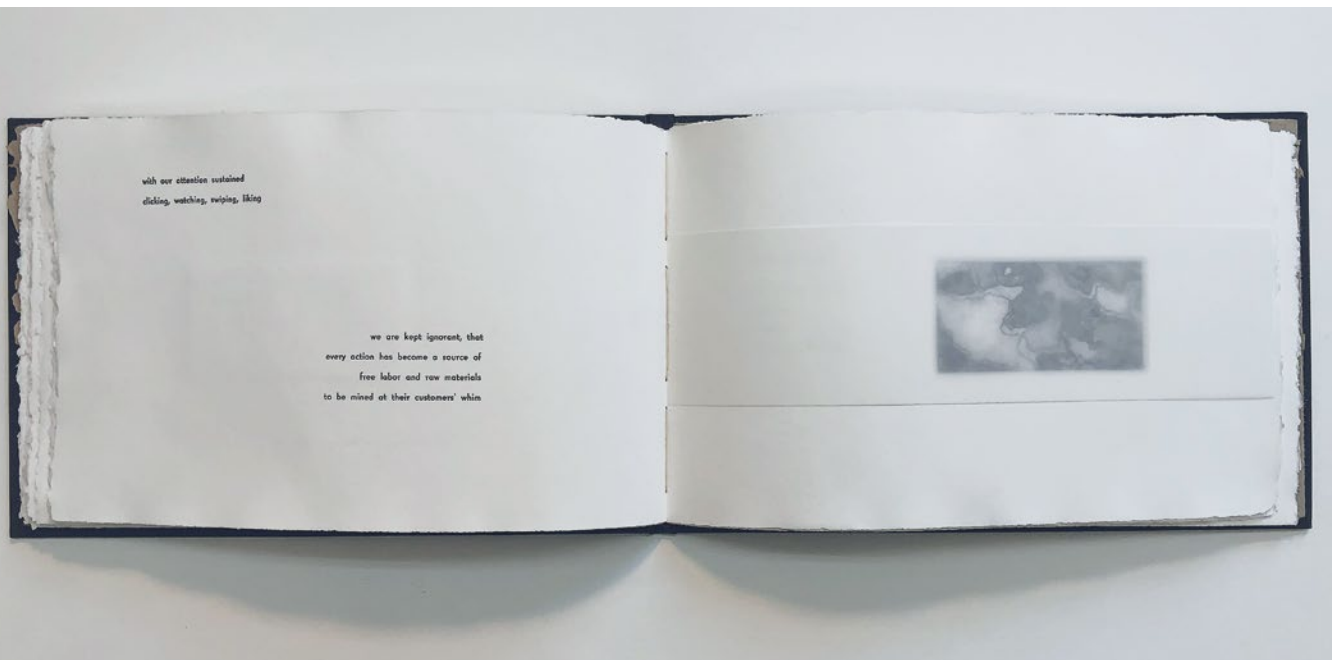




*Erosion*, pages 8–9, 2019, artist book,  
handset type and aquatint on paper,  
7 ½ × 11 ½ in.



*Malakoff Diggins California State  
Historic Park, 2019*



*Erosion*, pages 20–21, 2019, artist book,  
handset type and aquatint on paper,  
7 ½ × 11 ½ in.





*Tailings Process*, 2019, foraged pigment and drawing on paper

My interdisciplinary practice examines the aesthetics of knowledge, surveillance, and land-use politics through a range of traditional art practices including painting, printmaking, bookmaking, and pigment foraging.

Rapid network exchange has brought on a knowledge crisis, stoking uncertainty in objectivity, empirical evidence, and scientific authority. I address one conspiracy, the NASA Hoax, which asserts space is a complete artistic fabrication, through two parafictional museums. Leveraging authoritative tone, these works play at the blurry boundary between scientific images and art to interrogate the entanglement of scientific theories, images, and culture.

Eureka! comes from a recognition that the same colonialist principles that guided the

geomorphing of the American West have been mapped onto the psychic frontier with the rise of surveillance capitalism in Silicon Valley. With the promise of wealth, both claim territories beyond government oversight, yet are scaffolded by economic disparity and environmental devastation. As a counterpoint to these extraction processes, I present my own data, an artist book, and ochre archive foraged at a defunct hydraulic gold mine. Foraging the remnants, I connect to their source, providing a counterpoint to digital life and exploitative industrial processes. This collection of materials is an offering – a physical remediation to claimed land through stewardship.

Kat Mergens





*Inner Landscape*, 2018, installation view of projected cast-glass, acrylic ink slides, and suspended acrylic mobiles, varied dimensions



*Figment (detail)*, 2018, lasercut acrylic mobile, 32×18×6 in. Detail from *Inner Landscape* installation, 2018.

## MEGAN MORIARTY



*Figment*, 2018, lasercut acrylic mobile, 32×18×6 in. Detail from *Inner Landscape* installation, 2018.

Megan Moriarty is one of the most promising artists to be working in the San Francisco Bay Area today. Moriarty, originally from Minnesota, has recently received the distinguished San José Dublin Sister Cities Pat McMahon Post-Graduate Exchange Scholarship and for two years was an integral part of Root Division's Studio Artist Program, art educational classes, and fabrication shop. Her artwork's conceptual and compositional strength, its relevancy, and her multifaceted artistic practice demands today a keen, observant eye.

In *Liftoff 2020* Moriarty employs the language of laboratorial investigations— molecular fractal phenomena and optical illuminations— to apply a study of natural mysteries to the study of the sacred, the scientific, and the spiritual.

Her approach is interdisciplinary; the sculptural, the photographic, and the immersive give methodological structure to her investigation of wonder and the intangible, both in the natural world and in the self-reflective, introspective world. Turning to the microscopic to expose the macroscopic, her artwork applies largely expansive techniques— illumination,

shadowing, and enlarging— while retaining elaborately delicate forms and materials. By comparing the scale of minute intimacy within material objects themselves and the scale of their astronomical amplification through luminescent projection, Moriarty complicates the notion of sight, belief, and place.

As much as the work leans on the conceptual impalpable or the unknown, it also concretely examines presence in tangible space. Her work takes the form of venerable objects rooted in ceremonial procedures, presentations, and actions. Transparencies of glass and acrylic become involved texts, skillful fabrications of wood become altarpieces, and mounted prints become luminaries or celestial maps. Light and shadow become directives for wonder, portals to glimpse potential. It is Moriarty's double aesthetic of spirituality and physicality that provides potency and— citing the artist's tools of biomimicry and abstraction— a deft and timely inquiry into the unprecedented microenvironment, both seen and unseen.

▲ Sherwin Rio

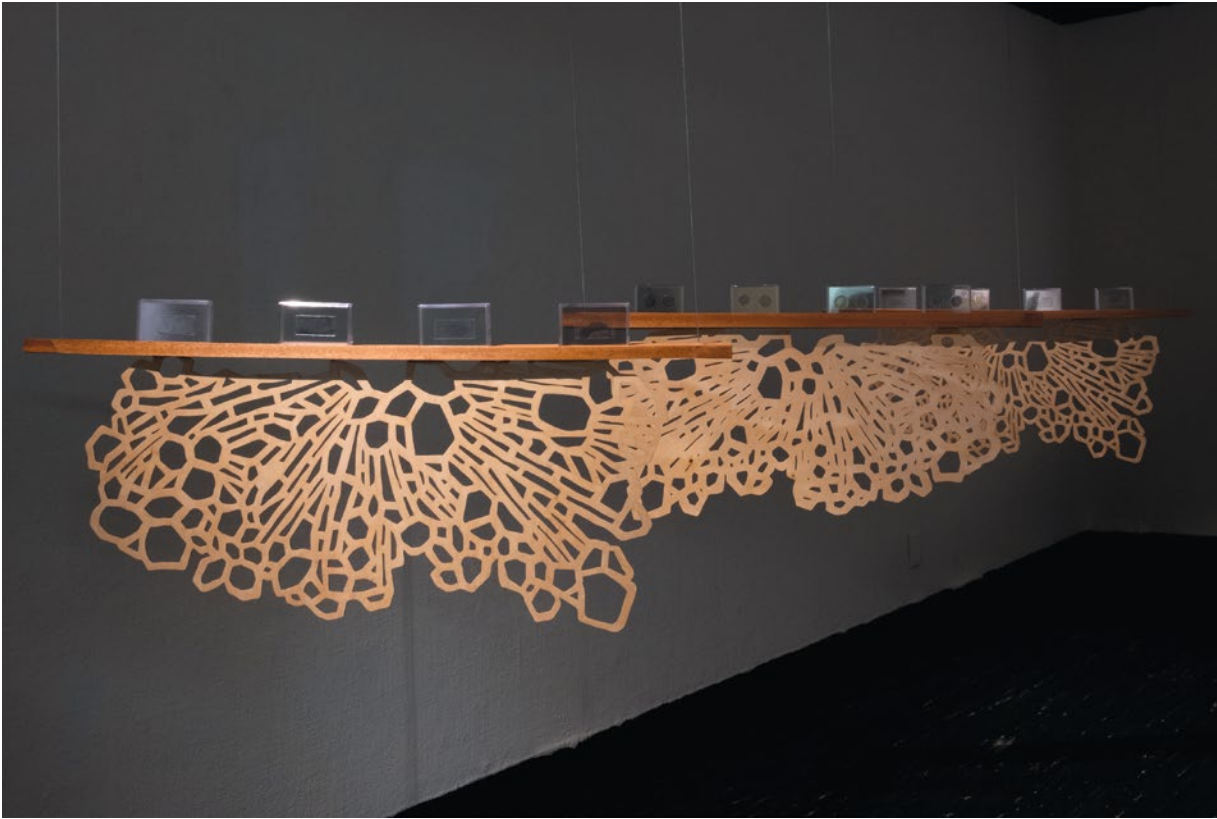




*In Golden Hours*, 2018, cast-glass on overhead projector, 8×8×10 ft.



*Inner Landscape* installation (detail), 2018, cast-glass on overhead projector plates, 8×8 in. (each)



*Curiosities (A, B, & C)*, 2019, twelve glass enamel slides with wooden floating shelf and laser-cut acrylic encasements, 52×24×2 (each). Detail from *Plato's Cave* installation, 2019





*Our Bodies*, 2020, digital print of enamel on circular microscope slides, 24 x 24 in. *Are Landscapes Series*.

Through biomimicry and abstraction, my artwork is a way of managing the intangible messiness inside myself – visualizing the part of nature that no microscope can magnify or psychiatrist verbally structure. In sculpture and image-making, I turn to the patterns found in nature and rethink how experiences of wonder can coincide with this moment of crisis. How do we visualize the microscopic landscapes of our own bodies? How do we rekindle our emotional attachment to an overwhelmingly sick planet? Through experimental practices in space, light, and sound, I explore possible answers to these enduring questions.

In tandem with my practice is a wide breadth of scholarly research on the periods of visual history when the known universe came into question – when artists and philosophers and scientists did not have the language to express the unexplainable. In these moments, great minds turned to the vocabulary of the philosophical and spiritual. The philosophies of Wabi Sabi, Alchemy, Theosophy, Islamic patterning, Christian stained glass, and scientific photography created an interwoven legacy of expressing the intangible. Each body of work I produced is part of this inheritance and seeks to redefine visions of the unknown for our time.

Megan Moriarty



*Within Us #B5004*, 2020, digital print of enamel on microscope slide, 24×11.5 in.  
*Are Landscapes Series.*





*I'll Remember This Moment Forever,*  
2021, digital print on muslin fabric,  
stitched onto muslin, projection.



# LACEY NEIN



I'll remember this moment forever. This is a phrase many of us say to ourselves at a given time. Closing our eyes and soaking in the surrounds; only to forget the small details later down the years. I'll Remember This Moment is a reflection of the past year spent in pandemic lock down with a newborn.

As much as these moments are to be cherished, over time the memories will fade and degrade. Remembering only bits and pieces, reflected within the 3D images. Printed on Muslin swaddles that once wrapped a small infant, they now hold 3D scans of times that I told myself I'll remember this moment forever.

Having been lock down in an apartment for the past year with a new child, the time seems to be blurred into one continuous moment. Through the sleep deprived fog, this work tries to string together these objects and moments in a more coherent thought. Trying to make sense and work through the trauma of a year that only exists within my own memory. This past year is one that is usually spent growing a support system, spending time with family, and sharing the joys of a new life. But instead, by building this work, it hopes to give glimpse into a year that no one saw.

▲ Lacey Nein

*I'll Remember This Moment Forever:*  
*Objects (details)*, 2021, digital print on  
 muslin fabric, stitched onto muslin,  
 36 × 60 in.



*I'll Remember This Moment Forever:*  
*Self*, 2021, projection, 60×72 in.



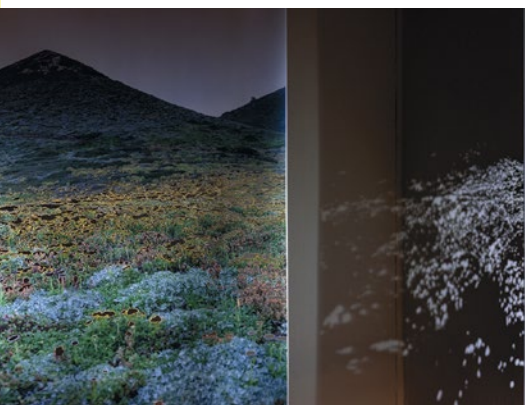
*I'll Remember This Moment Forever:  
Infant, 2021, digital print on muslin  
fabric, stitched onto muslin, 24×36 in.*





*Superbloom*, 2020, hand-cut archival  
inkjet prints, 54×180×18 in.

# ALANA RIOS



*Superbloom (detail)*,  
2020, hand-cut  
archival inkjet prints,  
54×180×18 in.

Landscape photography is as much about mythology as it is about documenting the visible features of a particular place. Myths about beauty, nature, and civilization are preserved within the canon of landscape. Moreover, these mythologies historically have been planted into the zeitgeist by a particularly homogenous group of men. Alana Rios works diligently to generate new conversations about this exclusive history while staking her own claim as a critical artist of landscape in the 21st century.

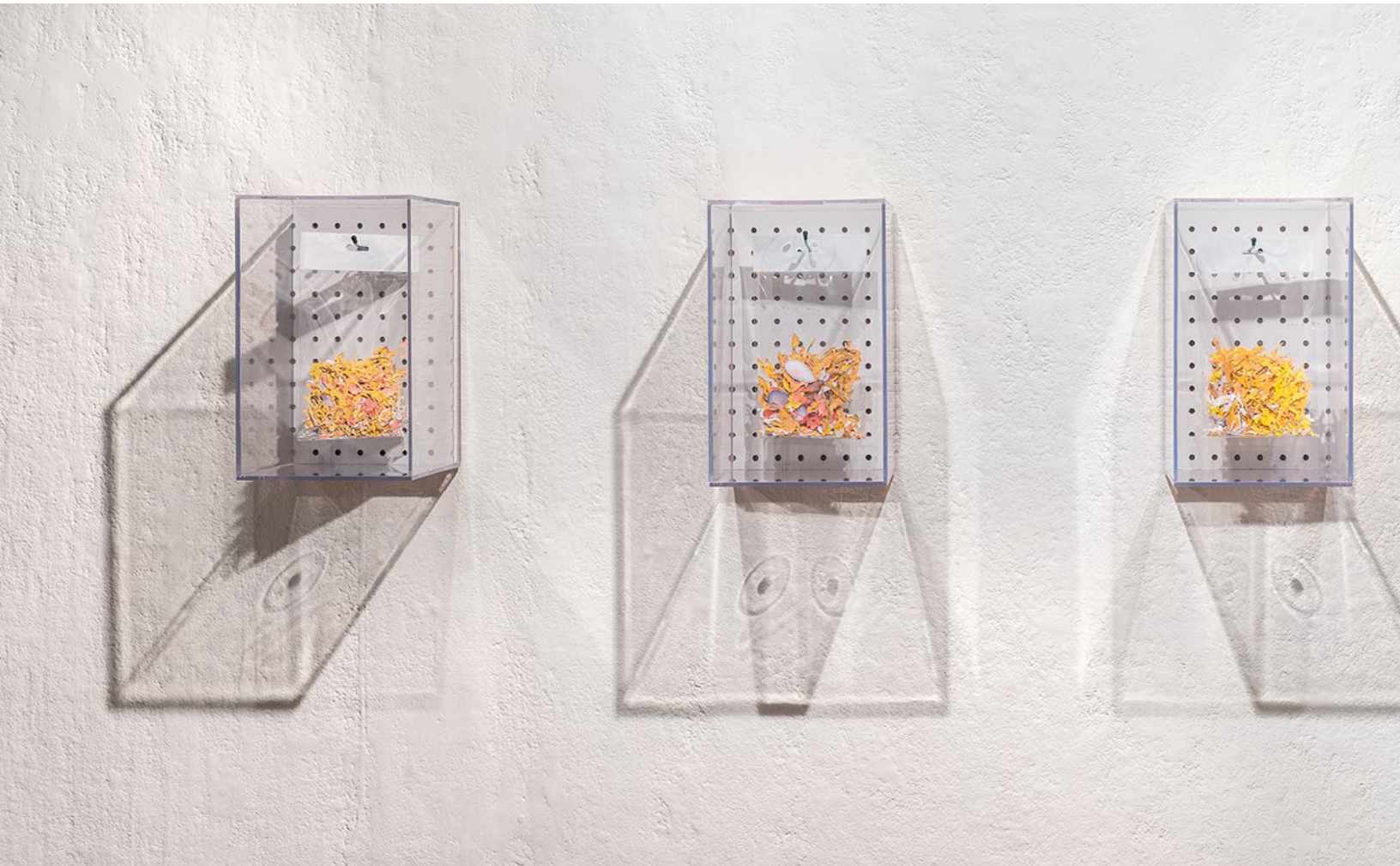
Frustrated and unsatisfied by the scarcity of women represented in the field, the Christmas gift of a bargain-store Ansel Adams calendar from her mother was a sea change moment for Rios's art practice. Rios's resulting calendar series is an evocative body of images that showcases the subtle yet glaring ubiquity of a singular vision of landscape photography in popular culture. Additionally, the calendar series confronts a history of confinement and immobility. The historical domain of a Western woman was not in the sublime valleys of colossal granite and dramatic sandstone but limited to the domestic spaces and immediate surroundings of their household. Imaginatively Rios recontextualizes her inscribed Ansel Adams calendar into a critical photographic series that possesses incredible range. With great care and manipulation of light and shadow Rios (from the kitchen of her tiny Oakland apartment) forms spectacular light sculptures cast against her calendar that at times mimic the forms found in Adams's monochrome pictures, as well as, brings to mind the darkroom techniques of dodging and burning. The colorful inscriptions of her

everyday life, deadlines, birthdays, community obligations, work schedule, and importantly her artistic plans and aspirations produce in the series of images an earnest and intimate depiction of the artist, a wonderful contrast to the otherwise austere (and stunning) photographs. This series of images depict an individual navigating the difficulties of being a working artist while confronting a history in photography that—while close to her heart—leaves her feeling as an outsider. We witness in this work both the self-reflexive, subversive character of Sherrie Levine and the sincere adoration of photographic form that Ansel Adams accomplished. Rios's calendar series is dynamic, evoking feelings of solitude, loneliness, aspiration, creativity, community, and rebellion. Within the larger context of gender, art, and access, the gesture of making photographs of an Ansel Adams calendar from her kitchen is both beautifully melancholy and telling. Today the calendar series takes on additional paths as we all experience the disheartening reality of being homebound, calendars and schedules everywhere haunt us of a life profoundly altered, cancelled, or postponed.

Rios takes a long look at the landscape genre to get outside its troubled archetype. And while as a logistical consequence I have left out a review of Rios's remaining thesis artworks, all artworks are equal of the same curiosity, creativity, and intelligence. Traditions are difficult to break, nonetheless Rios reimagines a future for the genre and in doing so delivers an inspired experience that disrupts the conventional model of landscape photography.

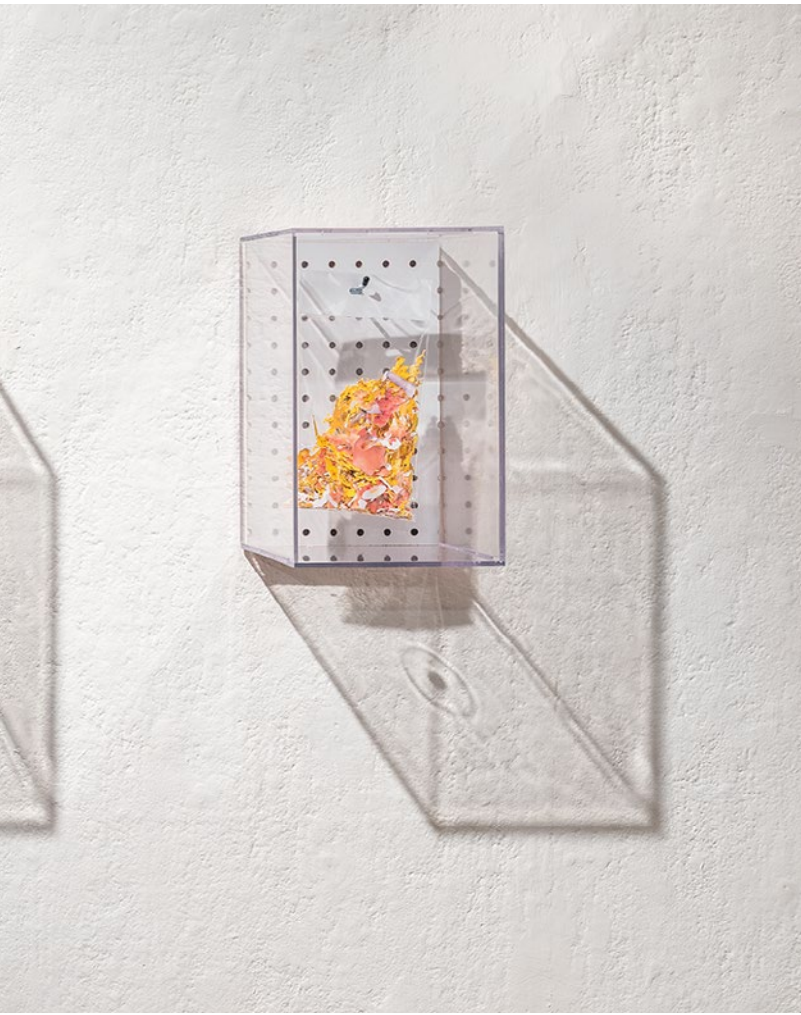
▲ Sean Peeler





*Cut Flowers #1, #2, #3, #4, 2020,*  
hand-cut archival inkjet prints,  
cellophane bags, pegboard, drywall,  
acrylic box, 7.5×7.5×11.75 in. (each)





*Postcard Stand, 2020, rotating postcard stand, 4 editions of double-sided, 5×7 postcards of images of Cut Flowers, 20×66×17.5 in.*





The romanticized view of the landscape of the American West did not happen by accident. It was crafted by a tradition of mythologizing the sublime wilderness that has forged a collective American fantasy of possibility and conquest. These visual records trace a history of objectification and possession of the land that often excludes marginalized voices and sanctifies patriarchal systems. And those iconic images are everywhere—from the souvenirs sold in National Parks to calendars hanging on our walls — they stake a claim in our psyche. They drive a desire for a proof of experience that dates back to tourists borrowing hammers to chip away pieces of Plymouth Rock before it was

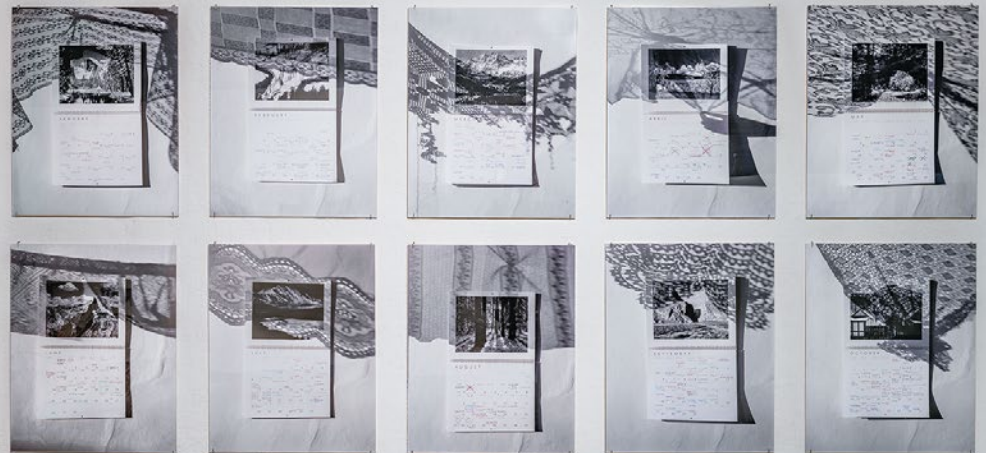
memorialized behind ropes in 1880. The answer to this craving was met by mass-produced photographic curios that cross boundaries between personal memento and fine-art object. My photographic practice calls attention to the relationship between the early use of landscape photographs as propaganda and the social media influencers who seek out growing singular phenomena like Super Blooms that bring destructive volumes of visitors to small towns in California.

Alana Rios



*Thesis Exhibition: Postpicturesque,*  
Fall 2020, Jo Farb Hernandez Gallery

*Superbloom* (left), *Calendar Project*  
(center), *Vista Point Project* (beyond  
curtain on right), *Fake Rock Bean Bag  
Chairs* (left: lichen covered boulder from  
Pinnacles NP, right with sitter: monzo-  
granite boulder from Joshua Tree NP)



*The Calendar Project,*  
2020, archival inkjet  
prints, 16×20 in. (each)





*Cake Cathedral (detail)*,  
2021, graphite and  
colored pencil on paper,  
66×54 in.

# MONICA VALDEZ



*Cake Cathedral (detail)*,  
2021, graphite and  
colored pencil on paper,  
66×54 in.

I am interested in creating objects constructed out of fragments from everyday reality. Picking from parts of reality: whether it be pastries, plant-life, clothing, architecture, and then transforming them into something other. Aiming to create some sort of unknown sculptural presence in a pictorial realm. Also, transforming these objects into something twisted and unusual, in order to re-orient ourselves with very familiar objects. In this way, the relationship between the known and the unknown world of objects is what I find fascinating. Furthermore, drawing from aspects of architecture connected with a walk in a grove, and witnessing a dead tree wrapped up in fungus. Experiencing the heaviness and solidness of an intense color of a flower while combining the roundness of a soft fondant wedding cake. When I think back about experiences it is the characteristics that have become memorable and not the object itself. These aspects form a whole image in my work derived from reality and transformed into something that even I can't recognize at times, which is what I enjoy about my work.

▲ **Monica Valdez**



*Crimson Square*, 2021, acrylic gouache and graphite on paper, 34 × 34 in.

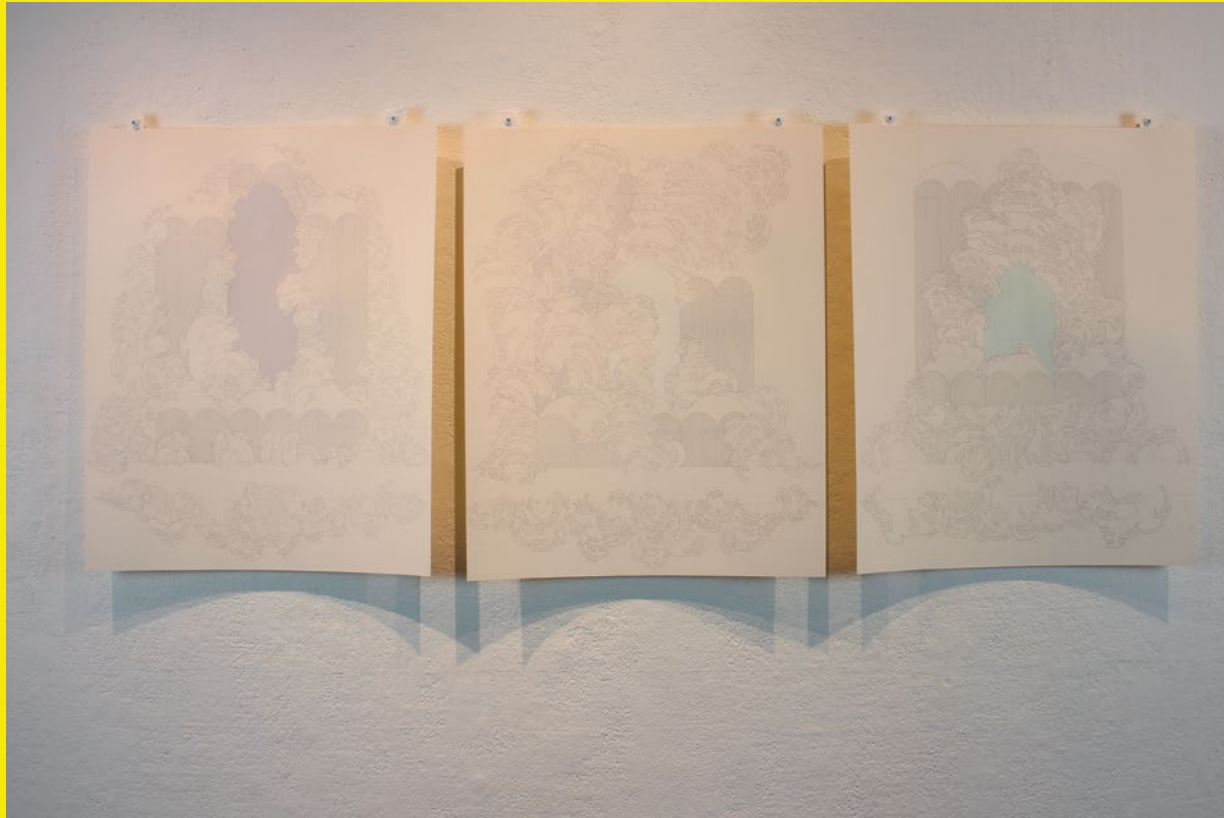




*Green Square*, 2021, acrylic gouache and graphite on paper, 34×34 in.

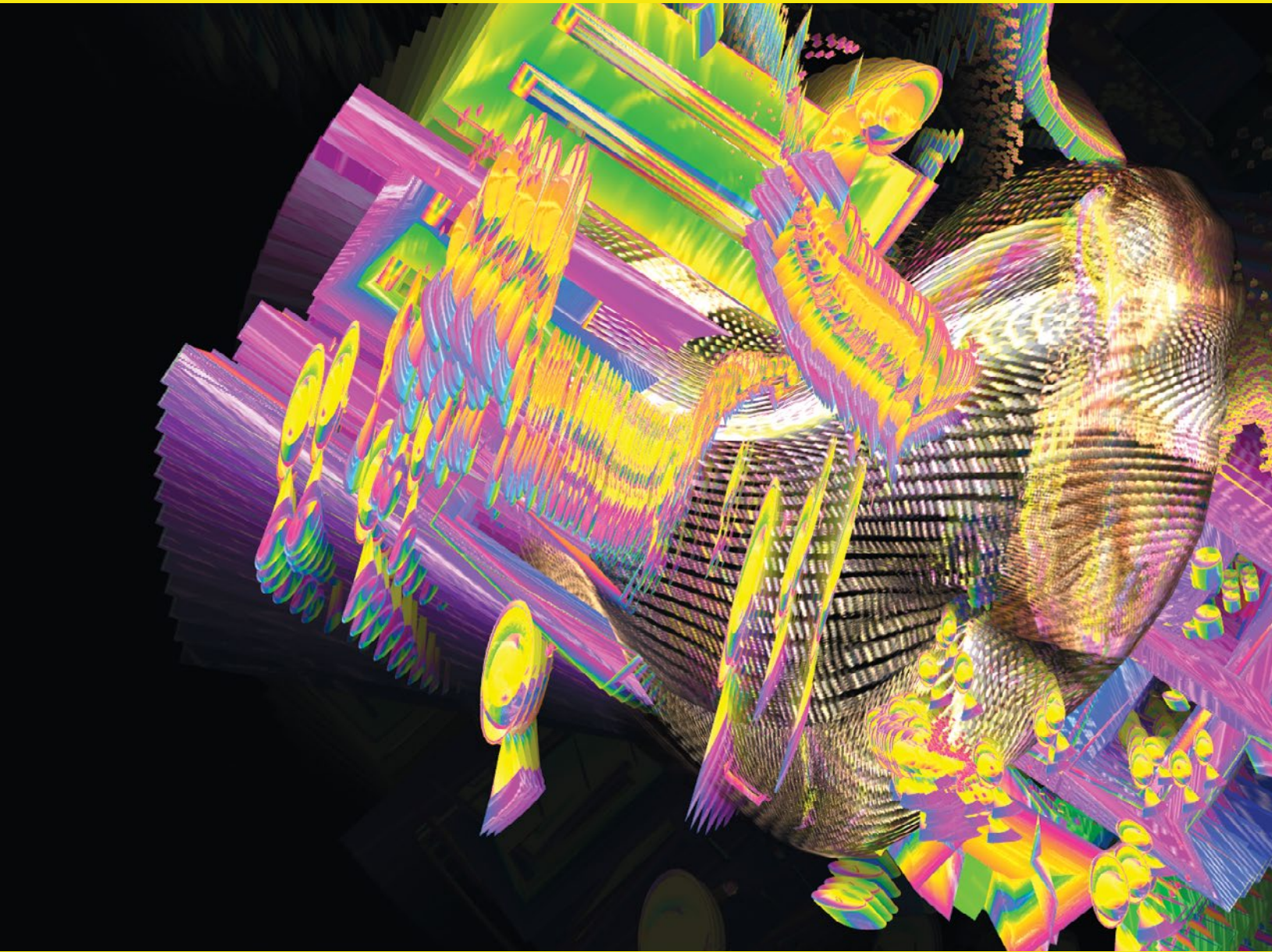


*Willowleaf Ruffles*  
1, 2 & 3 (detail), acrylic  
gouache and graphite  
on paper, 25×20 in.

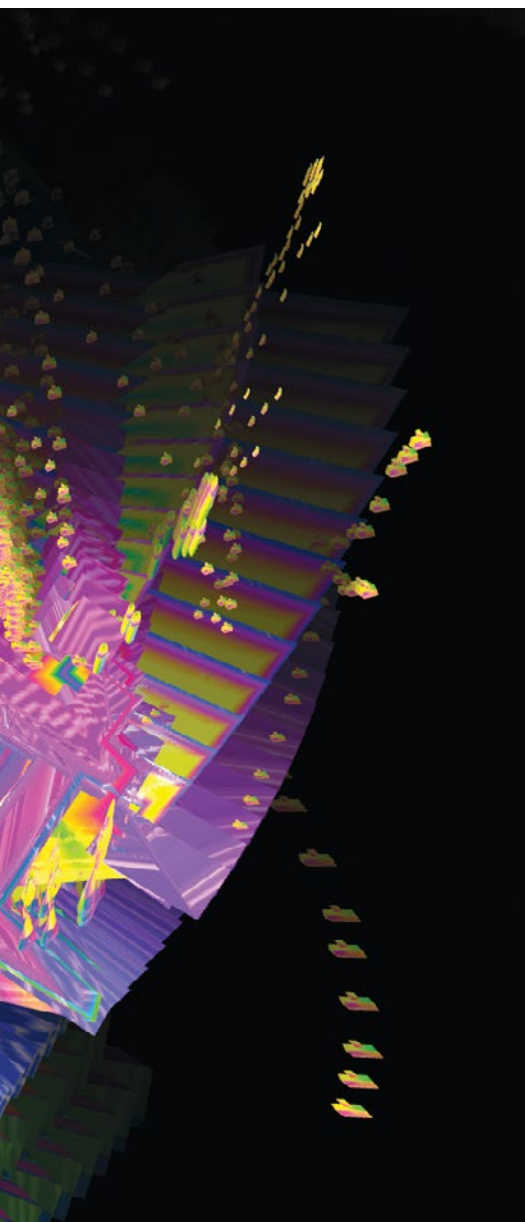


*Willowleaf Ruffles*  
1, 2 & 3, acrylic gouache  
and graphite  
on paper, 25×20 in.





# UGLY KIKI



*The Release 無量 / Ceremony, 2021,*  
screenshot of virtual installation,  
1920×1080 px.

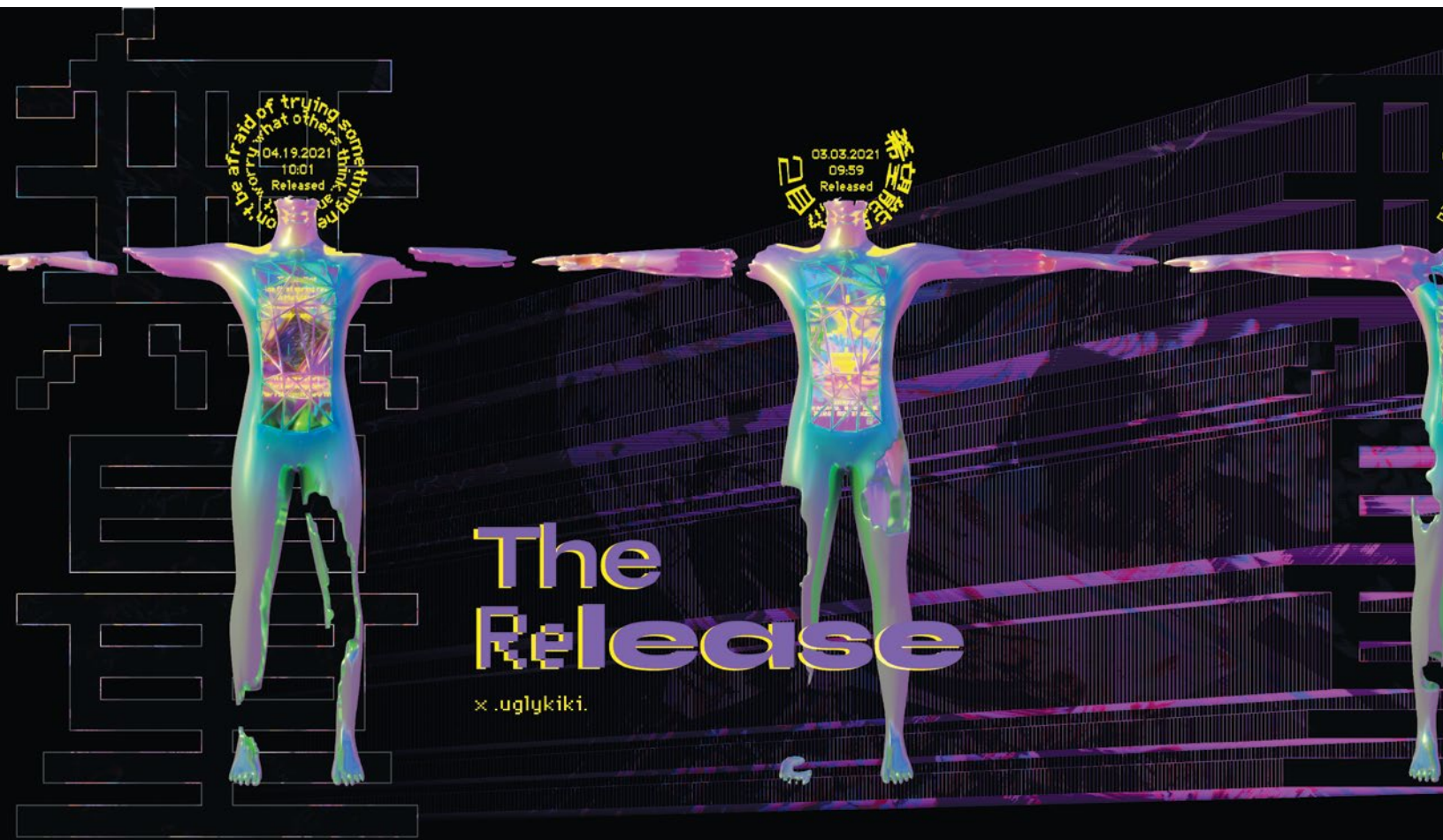
<https://newart.city/show/therelease>

Kiki's work, *The Release* asks us to imagine a transcendent world in which our consciousness exists without body or identity. Kiki investigates the connection between spirituality and technology, placing the concept of disembodiment in the liminal space between these.

She invites participants to imagine themselves in a purely digital, non-physical world, and asks: what would you most want to keep of the physical world? The scent of summer rain, your sense of self, your memories, your children? As you travel through her gentle, boundless world, the undulating imagery, text and soundscape evoke empathy, memory and a state of tranquility...she is here to guide you, to remind you of what you truly love, she is an artist-medium and your only task is to dissolve into the beauty of her vision.

▲ Laamsha Young





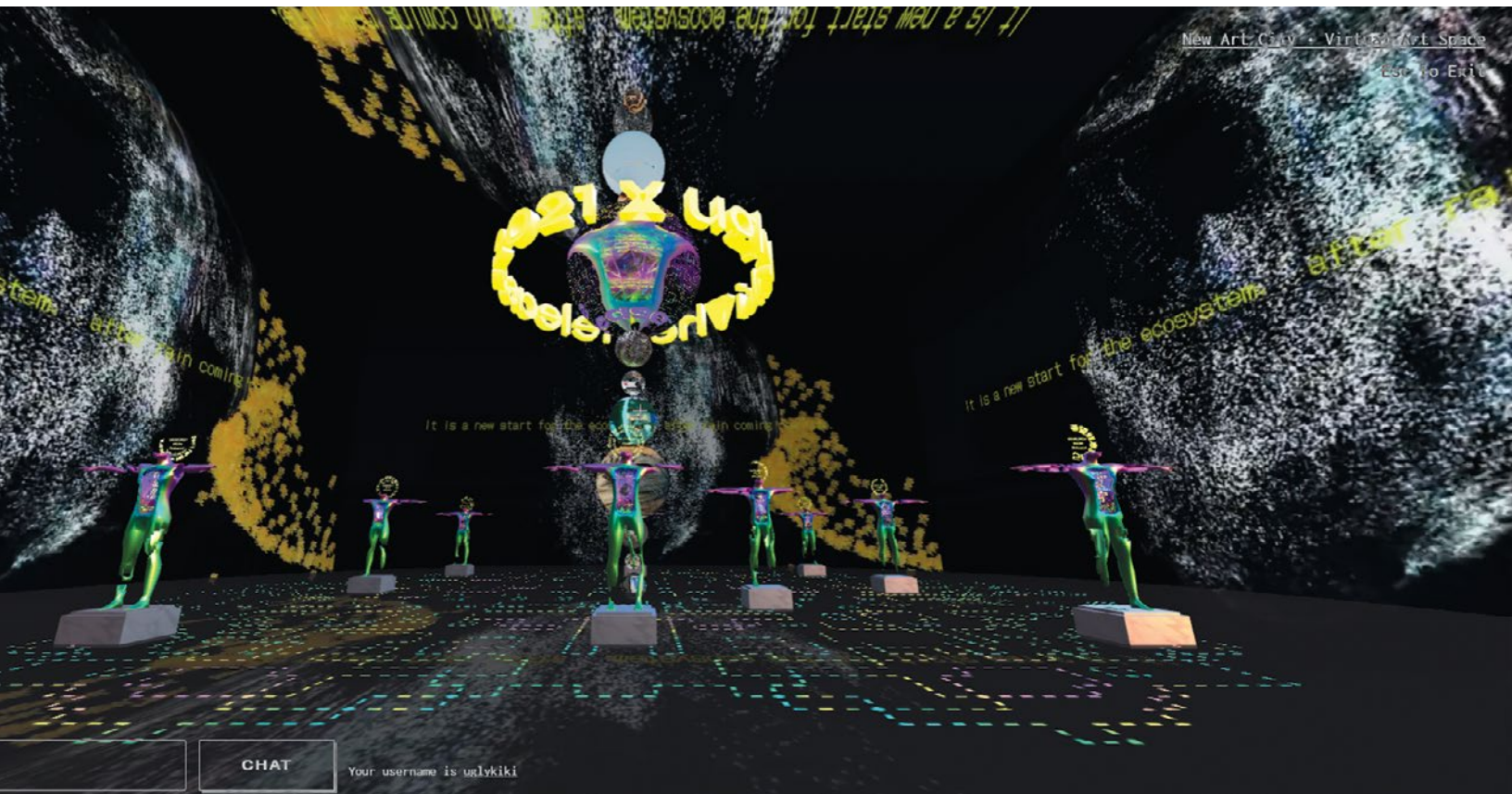
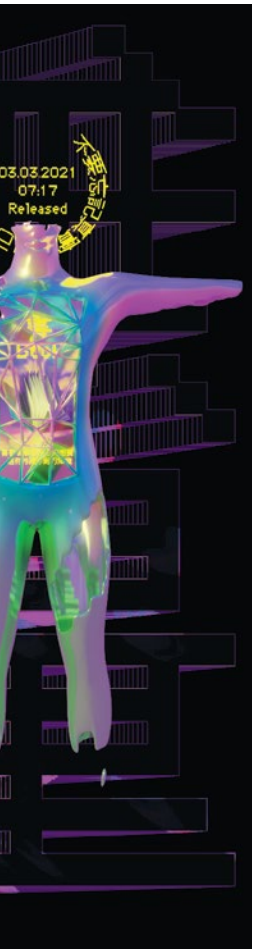
*The Release* 無量 / Dedicators, 2021,  
3D render, 3000×1500 px.

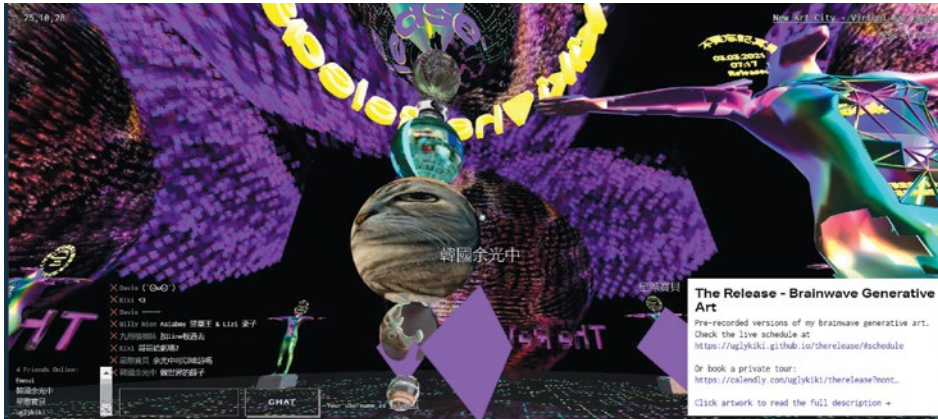


*The Release* 無量 / Ceremony, 2021,  
screenshot of virtual installation,  
1920×1080 px

<https://newart.city/show/therelease>

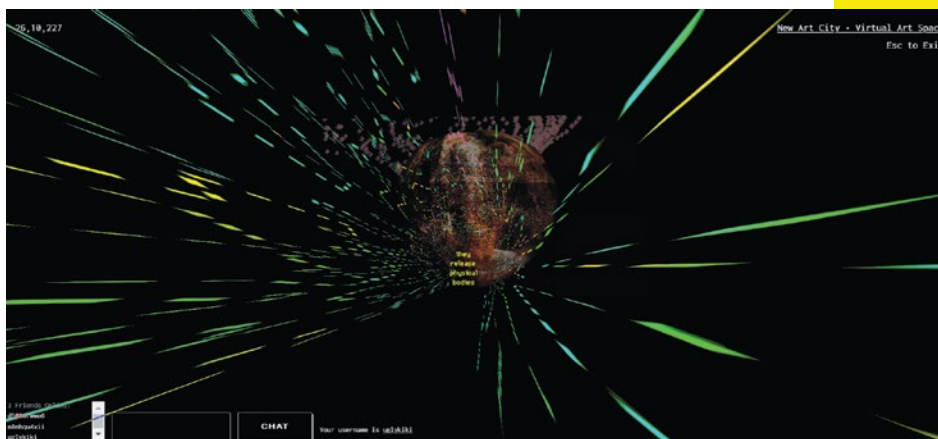






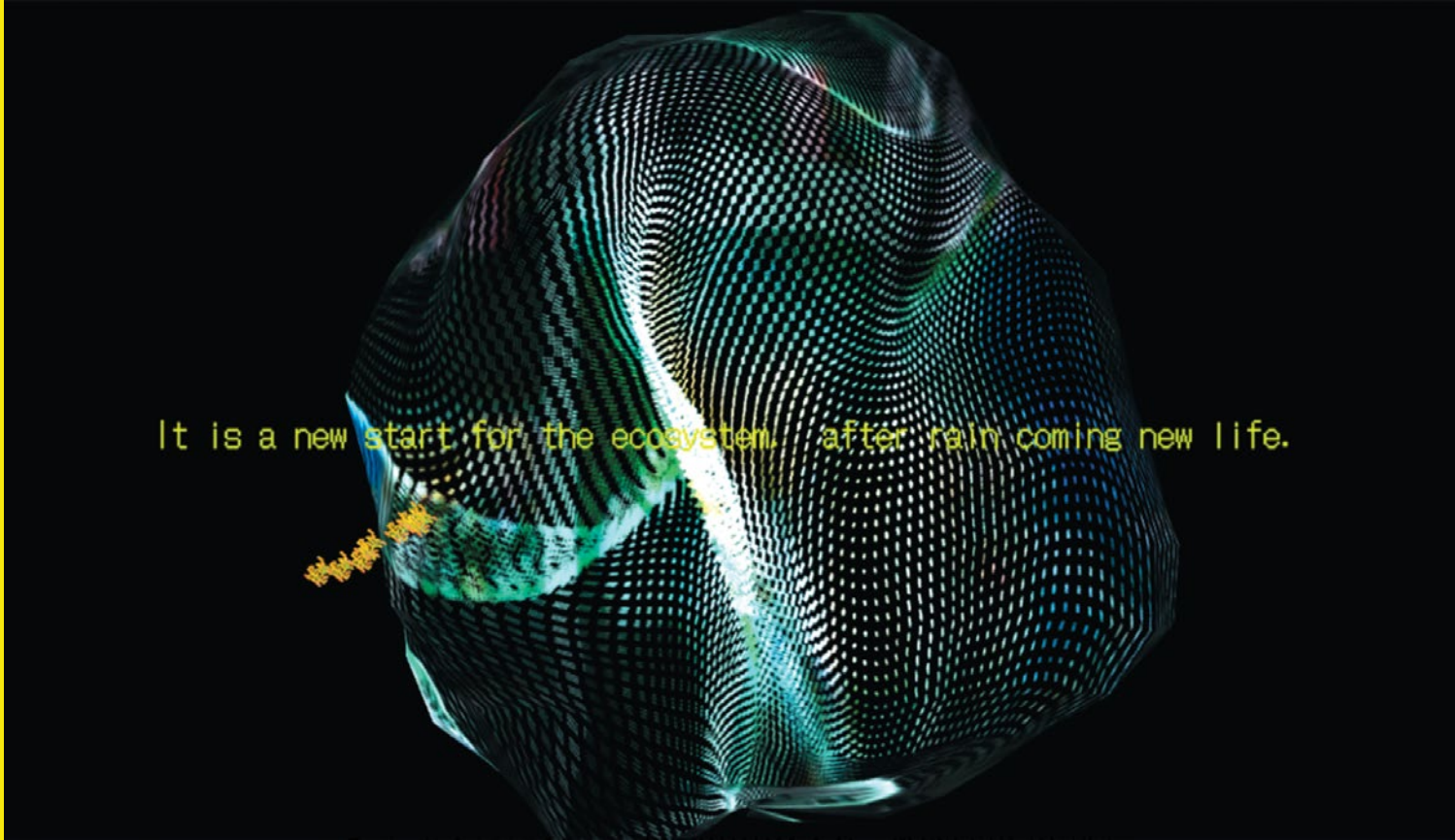
The Release 無量 / Ceremony (Live Mode), 2021, screenshot of virtual installation, 1920 x 1080 px.

<https://newart.city/show/therelease>



The Release 無量 | Ceremony (Entrance), 2021, screenshot of virtual installation, 1920 x 1080 px

<https://newart.city/show/therelease>



*The Release 無量 | Collective  
Consciousness, 2021, screenshot  
from video, 1920×1080 px.*

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLh3T8YJCbyBs7a2mR2Ty-3izUc6s-0r8BH>



# CONTRIBUTORS

## ANDREW ANDRAWES

Andrew Andrawes is an African born artist, educator, and photographer currently living in Northern California. His family originates from the Asyut region of Egypt and he was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. Andrew moved to the United States when he was 18 and got his citizenship in his late twenties. He has worked in the photography industry for many years. He received a bachelor of science from the University of Virginia, a post-baccalaureate from San Francisco Art Institute and is completing an MFA in photography at San José State University. His work has been exhibited in the Diego Rivera gallery in San Francisco, Beltcher in San José, and the UVA school of Commerce in Virginia.

[www.andrewandrawes.com](http://www.andrewandrawes.com)

## MAPE ANDREWS

Mape Andrews grew up in Barcelona, Spain. She moved to California to attend the San Francisco Art Institute where she received her BFA in painting and photography. She has also received an MA from San Francisco State University and an MFA from San José State University. She has studied with Larry Sultan, Jim Goldberg, Binh Danh, Robin Lasser, Richard Shaw and Inez Storer among others. Her body of work ranges from photography to installations. She is an experimental artist that does not feel constrained by media or materials. As a member of the Visual Aid exhibition committee she curated several exhibitions in San Francisco. She has exhibited her work widely in the United States and internationally. For the past twenty years she has been splitting her time between San Francisco and Barcelona. She has recently been awarded the Åland Archipelago Guest Artist Residence in Kökar, Finland.

[www.mapeandrews.com](http://www.mapeandrews.com)

## ANA BORLAS-IVERN

Ana Borlas-Ivern is an art history graduate student at San José State University. Her research focuses on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Netherlandish regions, historical economy, and the circulation of art. She is currently working on her thesis which explores the works of the Antwerp

painter Jan van Kessel I and the development of the animal genre. This is her third year writing for the Lift Off exhibition catalog.

## CLEIA DANTAS

Cleia Dantas Muggler is a digital media artist and educator who enjoys experimenting with innovative mediums, ranging from creative coding to image processing, often focusing on real-world issues, such as climate change and societal growth in an ever culturally-diversifying world. Her current installation, *Recollection*, is a digital image processing installation aiming to present individual transformation as a response to societal changes, while maintaining a link between past and present perspectives.

Believing that the right medium is key to any artwork, Cleia uses her diverse cultural background to incorporate unique perspectives within her works while exploring the wide range of artistic mediums.

[www.cleiamuggler.com](http://www.cleiamuggler.com)

## KYOKO FISCHER

Kyoko Fischer graduated SJSU with a BFA ('98) and MFA ('19), studying different forms of printmaking and painting. During her graduate studies, Fischer found herself drawn back to Japanese artistic traditions and came to recognize the influence of mingei—Japanese arts and craft by ordinary people—in her imagination. In her most current work, Fischer now incorporates elements of Japanese mingei culture in her prints and paintings.

Fischer has received numerous awards for her work, the most recent being 1<sup>st</sup> place from Pacific Art League National Print Competition and Exhibition (juried by Valerie Wade) in 2012. She was also selected as a semi-finalist for the prestigious 2021 Fulbright grant to more deeply research how various regions in Japan practice mingei. Complex and contradictory, Kyoko's recent abstract art seek to expose the past and present intersect to a meeting point — and what tensions emerge as a result.

[www.kyokofischer.com](http://www.kyokofischer.com)

## MASON HERSHENOW

Interested in the systems we build and use to interact with ourselves, each other, and the world around us, Mason Hershenow's work serves to both celebrate and critique the academic and social institutions which define contemporary art and culture. While he defines himself primarily as a photographer and a writer, his work often incorporates elements of performance art, traditional printmaking, graphic design, machine writing, and sculptural installation.

Hershenow earned his BA in photography from CSU Sacramento in 2014 and is currently pursuing his MFA at San José State University, where he has also taught introductory photography courses.

[www.mhershenow.com](http://www.mhershenow.com)

## KAT MERGENS

Kat Mergens is an interdisciplinary artist who examines the aesthetics of knowledge, surveillance, and land use through material and somatic understanding. Her research-based practice draws inspiration from planetary science, from astronomy to geology, and takes on the forms of painting, printmaking, and pigment foraging. Mergens is currently a MFA candidate at San José State University and holds a BA in Mathematics from UC Santa Cruz. She has exhibited her work at institutions throughout the Bay Area including the San José State University Galleries, Social Policy, and Root Division. She is currently an instructor in Pictorial Arts at San José State University.

[www.katmergens.com](http://www.katmergens.com)

## MEGAN MORIARTY

Megan Moriarty is a Bay Area artist who uses new genres in sculpture and image-making to rethink the interconnections of spirituality and science in 21<sup>st</sup> Century art. In 2019, she was awarded the San José-Dublin Sister Cities Pat McMahon Post-Graduate Exchange Scholarship, in which she spent eight months as a Public Art Specialist within the Dublin City Arts Office. Moriarty holds an MFA from San José State University, an MA and BFA from Minnesota State University Mankato, and an AS in Cinema Production from Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Her work has been exhibited at Root Division,

Social Policy, San José State University Galleries, and the 410 Project. Moriarty currently lives and makes art in San Francisco, California.

[www.meganmoriartyart.com](http://www.meganmoriartyart.com)

## LACEY NEIN

Lacey Nein is an interdisciplinary artist who work focuses on the human experience, technology, and pedagogy. More specifically how these worlds collide and merge with one another. Her practice ranges from creative coding, digital exploitation, and textiles. She seeks to bridge the digital gap by creating work that sparks curiosity in the viewer, causing them to seek further knowledge and self exploration.

[www.lacey9.com](http://www.lacey9.com)

## SEAN PEELER

Sean Peeler is an interdisciplinary artist and educator with one eye focused on the history of photography and the other on popular photographic culture. Peeler received his MFA in Photography from San José State University in 2019. As an educator Sean has taught photography at Cabrillo College, California State University, Chico, Foothill College, and San José State University.

Sean's eclectic art practice is of seemingly disparate qualities. Humor, play, and novelty counterbalance theory, resulting in conceptually informed works that use non-conventional strategies for challenging traditional pictorial aims. Today his interests in photography are ontological and routinely he considers the complicated way photographs inform our understanding of history or construct consumer culture. His interest in material and process results in a variety of photographic activities from wet plate collodion to non-silver to digital imaging systems.

## SHERWIN RIO

Sherwin Rio is an interdisciplinary artist-curator. He is currently based in San Francisco where he is a Graduate Fellow artist at the Headlands Center for the Arts, Curatorial Committee at Root Division, and Associate Editor and Curatorial Committee member for the 2021 *“Carlos Villa: Roots, Rituals and Actions”* UC Press publication and retrospective. He has received awards including the 2019 International Sculpture Center’s Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award, 2018 Ella King Torrey Award for Innovation & Excellence in the Arts, and the 2017 Jack K. and Gertrude Murphy Fellowship Award. Rio received a dual MA / MFA in History and Theory of Contemporary Art / Studio Art from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2019 and a BFA in Printmaking with a minor in Art History from the University of Florida in 2014.

## ALANA RIOS

Alana Rios is an artist using historical and contemporary photographic processes to explore the relationship between traditional landscape images, gender, and power. Her 2020 thesis exhibition *Postpicturesque* included three bodies of work, *Superbloom & Cut Flowers*, *The Calendar Project*, and *Vista Points: Overview & Time-Lapse*.

Her work has been exhibited at Root Division, Embark Gallery, and Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts. In 2019, she co-moderated a panel discussion at the SPE West Regional Conference titled, *A Feminist View of the Landscape: An Intimate, Political and Emotional Relationship to the Land*. She earned a BA in photography and printmaking from Bennington College in VT and an MFA in photography from San José State University. She is currently living and working in Oakland, CA. [www.alanarios.com](http://www.alanarios.com)

## VICKIE SIMMS

Ms. Simms is an Art History and Visual Culture student at San José State University. Ms. Simms holds an MBA and a BA in Family and Consumer Science. She has worked in consumer products, banking and retail industries. Throughout her life art objects have been markers along the path that ultimately led her to study art history. She decided to pursue a degree while working as a docent at the Diego Rivera Pan American Unity Mural at City

College Of San Francisco. Originally interested in Western art, she changed to contemporary art because of her interest in the rapid changes in the art world created by technology. She has worked as a teaching assistant, in internships at NexusArt-Reach supporting emerging artists, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and de Young Museum Get Smart With Art School Program. Her goal is to work in community, school, and museum art education programs.

## MONICA VALDEZ

Monica Valdez is a California based mixed media artist. She works primarily in graphite, gouache and monotype printing. She creates pictorial objects that are constructed out of visual everyday fragmentations. Such as dresses, pastries, bouquets and fungus. Valdez attended Evergreen Valley College where she became involved in metalsmithing and painting. There she developed an urge to have an art making practice. She continued in painting and then later was introduced to serigraphy monotypes at San José State University. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts at SJSU in 2013. Monica curated an exhibition at Art Ark Gallery and also co-curated an exhibition at Works Gallery, located in the Bay Area. Her current work has been leaning towards multi-panel drawings that explore ideas of architecture, cake decoration, and abstract formations. She currently resides in San José, California, and is pursuing her Master of Fine Arts at SJSU. [www.monidez.com](http://www.monidez.com)

## UGLY KIKI

UGLY KIKI (Kiki Wu) is a digital media artist, an earth-woman, and a visual shaman who channels humanity through XR, generative art, glitch art, and video art. Inspired by the metaphysical relationship to her family’s memory from Taiwan, she has been investigating the transformation of cultural symbols across dimensions from physical space, virtual realm to psychological matters since 2017.

Kiki Wu embraces topics that contribute to social changes and believes art can connect people from different cultures. In 2020, she worked on *VISA — Virtual Institute of Simulation Art*, a web-VR virtual exhibition with artist Leily Khitibi and CADRE Lab for New Media at SJSU. She was also selected



in an AR experimental project, *Hidden Histories of San José Japantown* curated by Japanese American Museum of San José in 2020. Recently, she is assisting with interdisciplinary artist Mel Day in the collaborative project, *Wall of Song Project: Feeling Good*.  
[www.uglykiki.com](http://www.uglykiki.com)

## **LAAMSHA YOUNG**

Laamsha has a BFA in painting from Sonoma State University and a Masters in Information and Library Science from San José State University. She has worked with several Bay Area artists and has exhibited her work all over California and in Japan. She is currently a Librarian. She lives in Santa Cruz with her husband and two kids and is enrolled in the Masters of Art History program at San José State University.  
<https://laamsha.wixsite.com/website>

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Works in the exhibition and/or the catalogue by San José State University Master of Fine Arts Candidates:  
Andrew Andrawes, Mape Andrews,  
Cleia Dantas, Kyoko Fischer,  
Omar Farid Harb, Mason Hershenow,  
Kat Mergens, Megan Moriarty,  
Alana Rios, Lacey Nein, Monica Valdez,  
and UGLY KIKI.

With essays from San José State University Masters Candidates:  
Ana Borlas-Ivern, Sean Peeler,  
Vickie Simms, and Laamsha Young.  
Additional essay by Sherwin Rio.

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Department of Art & Art History

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▲ **Andrew Andrawes** (p. 17)  
*Route*, 2019, digital  
 photograph on archival  
 inkjet print, 20×30 in.



▲ **Kyoko Fischer** (p. 35)  
*Sashiko: On Paper*  
 (detail), 2019,  
 lithography, intaglio,  
 paper thread,  
 48×90 in.

▼ **Megan Moriarty** (p. 57)  
*Our Bodies Are*  
*Landscapes: Nine*  
*Scenes*, Digital Print,  
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*Untitled 3 (What Now)*,  
 pigment print, 30×45 in.



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*Green Square*, 2021  
 Acrylic Gouache and  
 Graphite on Paper  
 34×34 in.

▶ **UGLYKIKI** (p. 79)  
*The Release 無量*  
*Dedicators*, 2021  
 3D render.  
 1920×1080 px.





ANDREW ANDRAWES

MAPE ANDREWS

CLEIA DANTAS

KYOKO FISCHER

OMAR FARID HARB

MASON HERSHENOW

KAT MERGENS

MEGAN MORIARTY

LACEY NEIN

ALANA RIOS

MONICA VALDEZ

UGLY KIKI