

SENIOR EXHIBITION 2019

DEPARTMENT OF ART
COLBY COLLEGE, WATERVILLE, MAINE

2019 Senior Exhibition

May 9 - May 26, 2019

Opening Reception: May 9, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Colby College Museum of Art

Waterville, ME

ART DEPARTMENT
2018-2019

AR 401-402 / STUDIO CAPSTONE STUDENTS

Jake Abbe-Schneider / Painting

Carlos Beason / Sculpture

Keenan Boscoe / Photography

Meg Forelli / Painting

Max Guerra / Photography

Heidi Minghao He / Painting

Wiley Holton / Painting

Alice Yutong Hua / Painting

Wendy Li / Photography

Ekaterina Nikiforova / Printmaking

Shanzhao Qiao / Photography

Andrea Velazquez / Painting

STUDIO FACULTY

Bradley Borthwick

Bevin Engman

Gary Green

Amanda Lilleston

Garry Mitchell

ART HISTORY FACULTY

Marta Ameri

Daniel Harkett

Charles Orzech, Chair

Véronique Plesch

Tanya Sheehan

Juliet Sperling

AR 356 / WRITING ART CRITICISM STUDENTS

Bennett Allen

Keenan Boscoe

Katie Herzig

Tim Hood

Jane MacKerron

Sarah Rossien

Hannah Springhorn

Caroline Webb

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Deborah Thurston

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

As the new chair of the Art Department, I am deeply impressed by the collaborative learning process embraced by students and faculty that has resulted in the Senior Exhibition and its catalog. Seniors participating in the 2018–19 Studio Art Capstone, coordinated by Professor Garry Mitchell, spent the year reflecting on their art in conversation with their peers and guest critics. This spring each of them created a final body of work and an artist statement that places words in dialogue with their material practices. Members of Professor Daniel Harkett's Writing Art Criticism course engaged the studio students in a further series of conversations about their work and developed rich responses to it in their catalog essays. Now in its third year, this collaboration brings the Art Department together and shares its commitments with a public audience.

The Senior Exhibition and catalog would not be possible without the contributions of many people. I would especially like to thank Garry Mitchell, who managed the production of the catalog and the assembling of the exhibition; Megan Carey, Stew Henderson, and Greg Williams at the Colby College Museum of Art, who installed the show; Eli Decker and Joseph Bui, who assisted with the catalog; Heidi Minghao He, who designed the cover of the catalog; Jennifer Liese, director of the Center for Arts & Language, Rhode Island School of Design, who worked closely with the students in writing workshops she conducted this spring; and Pat Sims, who copyedited the catalog with great skill and patience.

Charles D. Orzech
Professor of Religious Studies and Chair
Art Department



Words and Images

Jake Abbe-Schneider's *Snowy Owl* (Kansas Winter 2018-19)

by Tim Hood

Portraits are not all bad. There are many good portraits and fewer great ones, but much of our time is spent around the bad ones. They pervade the mahogany sitting rooms of our admissions building, fill the museum's store-rooms, and burden our storied figures with a rosy nostalgia that feels more limiting than honorable.

Bad portraits have nothing to do with a portraitist's technical capacity for creating the illusion of animated flesh. The virtue of many a bad portrait is its uncanny recreation of the subject as we, the living, prefer to imagine the person existed. But often the artist favors banality, preferring to memorialize those we hold dear with a stiff, regal posture and piercing gaze. The stark disparity between this posturing and a natural appearance can be seen in early examples of photography. In these portraits, subjects held rigid by posing stands, forbidden from smiling, stare blankly out at their viewers.

Jake Abbe-Schneider bases his paintings on taxidermied birds from the Biology Department that he found in the attic of the Arey Life Sciences building on campus. I guessed he would use the taxidermies as a starting point for giving new life to birds whose natural lives have ended and, in the case of the Carolina parakeet, gone extinct. In conversation, he quickly brushes off that assumption as "ventriloquizing," a pursuit of little interest. Instead, he mutters about the best way to render a red-tailed hawk's fractured neck. On watercolor studies for his paintings he writes meticulous notes that stress the birds' fundamental brokenness. "Bleak" is underlined, for example, next to a snowy owl's sketched

plumage.

In *Snowy Owl* (Kansas Winter 2018-19), Jake's "bleak" snowy owl perches atop a rotten stump, surrounded by dense evergreens that envelop the viewer to create a silent, isolated encounter. Pearlescent snowbanks appear shadowy and flat in contrast to the owl's deep and empty eye sockets, highlighting the bird's fundamental flaw. The bird is blind but its pose and setting nevertheless give it a damaged grandeur.

Even if the snowy owl could see, it would have difficulty hunting during the snowstorm represented in Jake's picture. While traditional portraiture often draws on contextual settings to supplement a sitter's implied virtues, Jake approaches this relationship differently, using landscape to highlight the vulnerability of his taxidermied subjects. Like the snowy owl, Jake's red-tailed hawk would go hungry in its wildfire-scorched landscape, even if its head were fully attached. The same can be said for an exiled blue heron or a Carolina parakeet surrounded by red tide.

In painting his subjects as they still exist, stuffed and broken, Jake lends them a dignity and an authenticity that feel critically absent from standard portraits. Emphasizing temporal success and invulnerability, such pictures often feel empty and repetitive. Jake's paintings, by contrast, honestly acknowledge the world as it is. ✨



JAKE ABBE-SCHNEIDER / *Snowy Owl (Kansas Winter 2018-19)* / 2019 / oil on canvas / 44" x 24"

Carlos Beason's *Uptown*

by Sarah Rossien

My footsteps echo. I enter the sculpture studio wearing low-top Nike Air Force 1s. The soft thuds of my shoes contrast the sawing of wood and drilling of marble booming within the studio. I start my timer and begin to interview the artist. 00:00.

00:29 *Carlos drags over a stool.* Tucked behind the noise is a set of twenty sheet-metal abstractions of Nike Air Force 1s. The reimagined shoes lie on the counter, uniform in size but varying in detail.

01:40 *A drill presses into marble.* The rumbling recreates the sound of the subway passing through Harlem. Carlos uses Nike Air Force 1s to embody his neighborhood and the people he grew up around. "The real challenge is trying to accurately portray the lifestyle of a group of people without any hiccups."

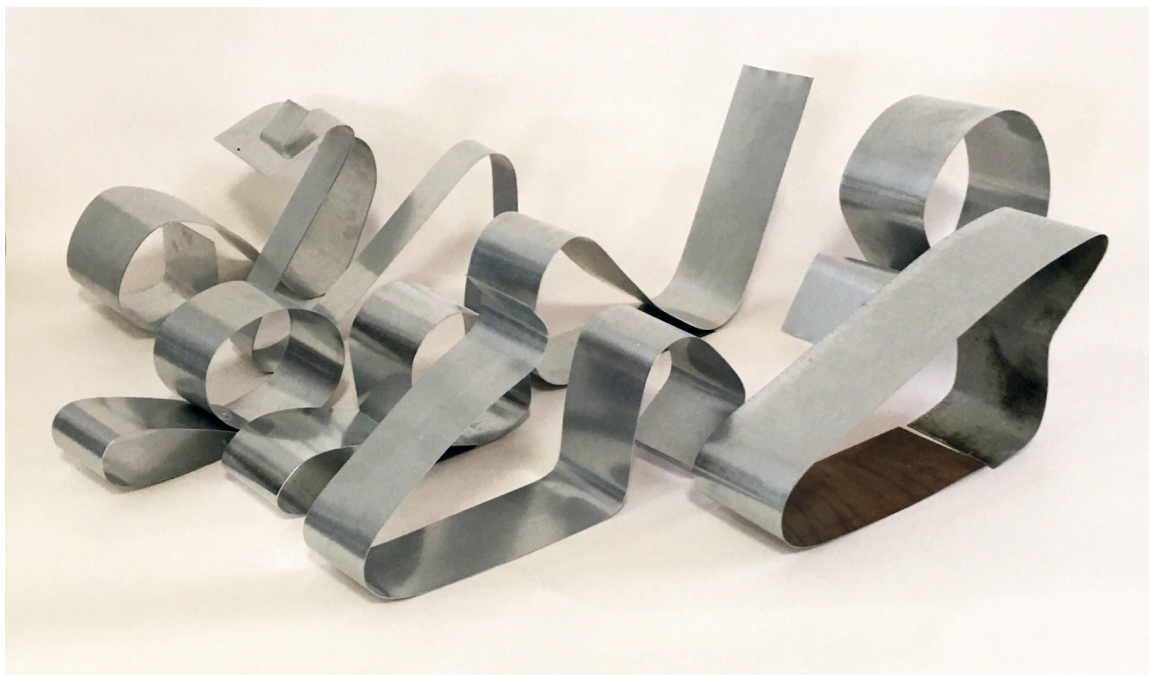
03:47 *Music blares.* Carlos explains, "The studio is a place I come to late at night. I have a hard time coming in here when there are twenty people chiseling . . . but I'm here 11:30 until 2:00." The silence of the studio at these times provides a blank canvas to recreate the soundscape of the city that never sleeps. While working, he will either listen to music by artists from Harlem or FaceTime a friend in New York.

09:10 *Wood hits the ground.* Upon falling, the clash of metal shoes on concrete would be softened by the material's shock absorbance. Metal's memory seems temporary. The shine of the metal in Carlos's sculptures reflects the sleekness of the Air Force 1 shoe.

14:23 *A shoe scuffs the floor.* The noise imitates a game of basketball in Rucker Park or on top of Theaster Gates's *Ship of Zion*, a gym court reimagined as a wall sculpture on view in the Gordon Gallery. Gates's work archives black culture and serves as a catalyst for discussion on race, equality, space, and history. Viewers interact with the history of black Americans through images and the recreation of common objects. Carlos's work likewise represents history through a relatable object and also invites viewers to reflect on relationships between everyday life and identity.

21:56 *Steel is hammered.* Like Carlos, Richard Serra creates metal sculptural series that stand out against their environments but yield over time. Serra's *4-5-6*, a freestanding set of three Corten steel boxes in the Paul J. Schupf Sculpture Court, weathers slowly, gradually changing in response to its context. Shoes likewise pick up traces of place as they scuff and wear. In his abstracted sculptures, Carlos tries to arrest the process of change but these shoes too will evolve through a nick here and a scratch there.

30:19 *The door slams.* Through the sound of the studio, Carlos is transported back to 135th between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. The variation in form across his sculptural series is a metaphor for the diversity of a neighborhood, while the series' consistency in material and size creates a community. This work invites the representation of culture into the Colby College Museum of Art by redefining an object so common that you may be wearing it on your own feet. ✨



CARLOS BEASON / *Uptown* / 2019 / sheet metal stock / dimensions variable

Keenan Boscoe's *Self Portrait Series #08*

by Caroline Webb

Self Portrait Series #08 was made in the midst of bad weather, by which I mean during a storm, because in Maine, “weather” is not a catchall but an allusion to storms. “There is weather expected,” people often say, meaning, *Stock your pantry, ready your shovel, prepare to stay inside.* KB, however, heads outside; he seeks out storms.

Many months ago, as leaves began to turn and wildflowers began to bend, KB revealed to me that he had met an impasse. Thinking about the images he wanted to make, KB, exasperated, encountered himself in that all-consuming field of creative block. But one morning, something shifted. “I got up, put my boots on, walked to Runnals. That was the first snowfall of the season. Then there was a gray fox that ran across the meadow—and it looked at me. I thought, *This is it.*”

Is silver now with clinging mist. So writes Robert Frost in “My November Guest,” a poem that KB recalls while we stand at the top of Runnals Hill during the golden hour, which is 3:00 p.m. in Maine in March. KB is captivated by this atmospheric silver. “When the sky is in the way, and it has to filter through all that air, the light becomes so muted, so gray. The gray makes every influx of color pop in a way that you can’t experience otherwise.”

In *Self Portrait Series #08*, brittle umber grass is diagonally dissected by traces of fertilized athletics fields, dusted with fresh snow. A patch of ice extends in the left of the frame. In the center, a shadowy evergreen stands tall with a branch extended. To its left hovers a spectral blur.

This is not a specter but a snowflake plastered onto KB’s lens. KB’s encounter with the fox precipitated a new process, one in which KB accepts weather and its contingencies, even if that means confronting the technical limits of his camera functions. This is, for KB, “a process of letting go.”

Self Portrait Series #08 is a trace of a storm, now past. When I ask KB about French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson’s “decisive moment,” he smiles softly. “The decisive moment was all about *taking, capturing.* I like to think that I am *making* my photographs.” Or he lets them be made.

KB treads softly, leaves little trace, and does not take anything from these landscapes. Yet KB is inevitably present in his photographs. By inserting himself into the landscape and framing the photograph, KB clouds the distinction between landscape and self-portraiture. The subject in *Self Portrait Series #08* is both the central evergreen and the self, an ellipsis.

As material beings, we are tethered to our physical obligation to take up space. Like KB, I am intimately aware of the intrinsic connection between body and environment. Barometric pressure changes provoke debilitating migraines; extreme cold or heat induces a lingering neuropathy. There is no secret passageway that circumvents these environmental factors. KB’s *Self Portrait Series #08* evokes the knotted ways in which we are always within the frame. We may gaze upon nature, but nature—like the wandering fox—is always gazing back at us. ✨



KEENAN BOSCOE / *Self Portrait Series #08* / 2018 / archival pigment print / 20" x 24"

Meg Forelli's *Darcey*

by Keenan Boscoe and Jane MacKerron

Memory is remarkable. When we summon a positive memory from our past it comes in glowing with emotion but without specific details. Psychologists tell us that once a memory has moved through the sensory and short-term processes into long-term memory, it loses the distinct senses of taste, sight, sound, and smell. Meg Forelli tries to resist this fading by preserving the sensory richness of her past experiences in her multimedia collages.

Each collage is a portrait based on snapshots Meg took during her time studying abroad in the Chilean Atacama Desert. Meg uses charcoal and pen to convey the energetic personalities of her close friends, sketching across the paper with dark contrasts and unexpected patterns. Pieces of cloth, bold newspaper headlines, and miscellaneous magazine scraps evoke the worlds the subjects inhabit. Each portrait is a carefully crafted memory that nevertheless looks spontaneous and unfiltered. In Meg's *Darcey*, we find Marcel Duchamp's avant-garde *Fountain* on a thigh, a newspaper clipping boldly stating "Judgment Day" as a belt, and an unfinished charcoal leg striking into the white of the paper. The portrait is a memory made accessible, summoned by the artist and poured onto the page.

In Meg's off-campus home, stacks of raw materials clutter the floors and walls. She explains that she works in creative bursts of energy, sometimes drawing and gluing deep into the night. She recalls with joy how her roommates once had to explain to a friend: "Meg can't go to dinner right now, she's

taping things on her wall." When reflecting on her work, she describes her time abroad as when "I really became comfortable and confident with who I am. . . . this project is a reflection of who I am and who I'm not." Meg uses the act of making as a kind of meditation, immersing herself not only in material but in memory.

Meg's collages echo the qualities of twentieth-century Surrealist artworks, in which interior worlds of dreams and desire are suggested by the juxtaposition of everyday objects and texts. In Salvador Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory*, for example, ordinary clocks become extraordinary as they melt in an unlikely coastal setting. When the Surrealists created their puzzling works, they imagined they had in fact discovered a kind of logic that shapes the unconscious mind. Meg's surprising combinations of fragments are likewise underpinned by a logic, the intuitive logic of memory. She synthesizes her varied materials into one distinct dreamlike moment that transcends the seemingly arbitrary nature of the collage's construction and brings the past back to life. Her works are the products of a deep introspective meditation and are graciously shared as stunning portraits. ✨



MEG FORELLI / *Darcey* / 2019 / charcoal and collage on paper / 28" x 16"

Max Guerra's *Renndog*

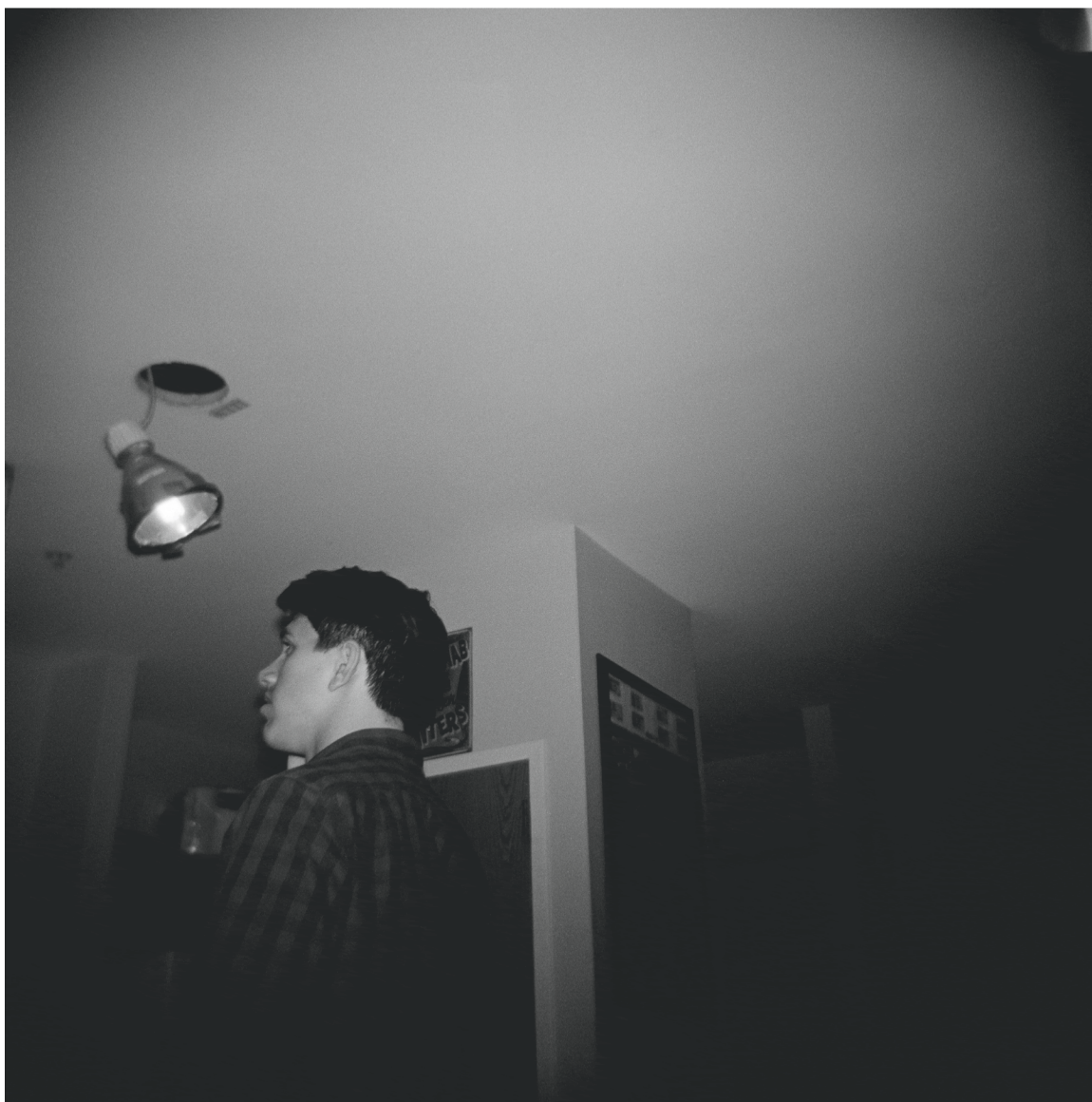
by Katie Herzig

Max Guerra's photographs exist somewhere along the confluence of technical perfection and college-aged spontaneity. The sudden upward glance of an artist at work, a backward-capped figure sipping from a red Solo cup, a joint effort at smoking a cigarette: these are some of the unplanned moments of social interaction or individual human emotion Max witnesses in his daily life as a college student and records in his photographs. Yet Max admittedly retains a cautious distance from his subjects, describing the "disconnect" often generated when shooting social scenes. Fixating on the operational minutiae of form, frame, light, and contrast, Max boxes these moments in for later contemplation.

One photograph, *Renndog*, shows a friend standing under a broken light that is dangling down from the ceiling, remnants of duct tape around it signaling a failed attempt to hold it in place. *Renndog* was shot in a room that Max has been in every day of his senior year, and he relied on his knowledge of its layout as he framed the photographs captured within it. As his friend walked by him, Max turned from his position on the couch and clicked the camera the instant his friend stepped perfectly into view. In these moments of chaos and movement, Max grounds his work in the pursuit of formal precision. Casual subject matter and rigorous technique coalesce to give Max and the viewer the most genuine and aesthetically pleasing account of what he sees in front of him. But while a fixation on photographic craft guides Max's work, a different sort of process is detailed through his subject matter.

This is his process of saying goodbye.

In an apartment, a light has been broken and someone decided to fix it by anchoring it back into the ceiling with duct tape. In time, the light fell back down and now hangs like a spotlight shining on what lies below. There is a distinctively "college" quality to this image of the broken light and the figure underneath it. In what other time and place in one's life is the appropriate solution to a broken appliance a strip of duct tape? In *Renndog* and Max's other photographs, "collegeness" is always present. Figures drinking, smoking, and socializing in hallways exemplify the messiness of college life. Yet college also serves as a time and place in which one is prepared for entry into the "real world"—a world where broken lights will be screwed back into walls and social interaction will be relegated to a select few hours in the evening. On the cusp of entering that more structured life, Max uses his camera to hold on to the simpler moments he will never get back. ✨



MAX GUERRA / *Renndog* / 2018 / photograph on enhanced matte paper / 20" x 20"

Heidi Minghao He's *Drowning* by Hannah Springhorn

I feel like I have to hold my breath. If I exhale too strongly, the barely visible pages in *Drowning* might slip further under the surface. Their words and characters, already blurred, might disappear entirely into a well of empty space. Heidi Minghao He's work suggests something captured in time. It is a window into a quiet and thoughtful soul.

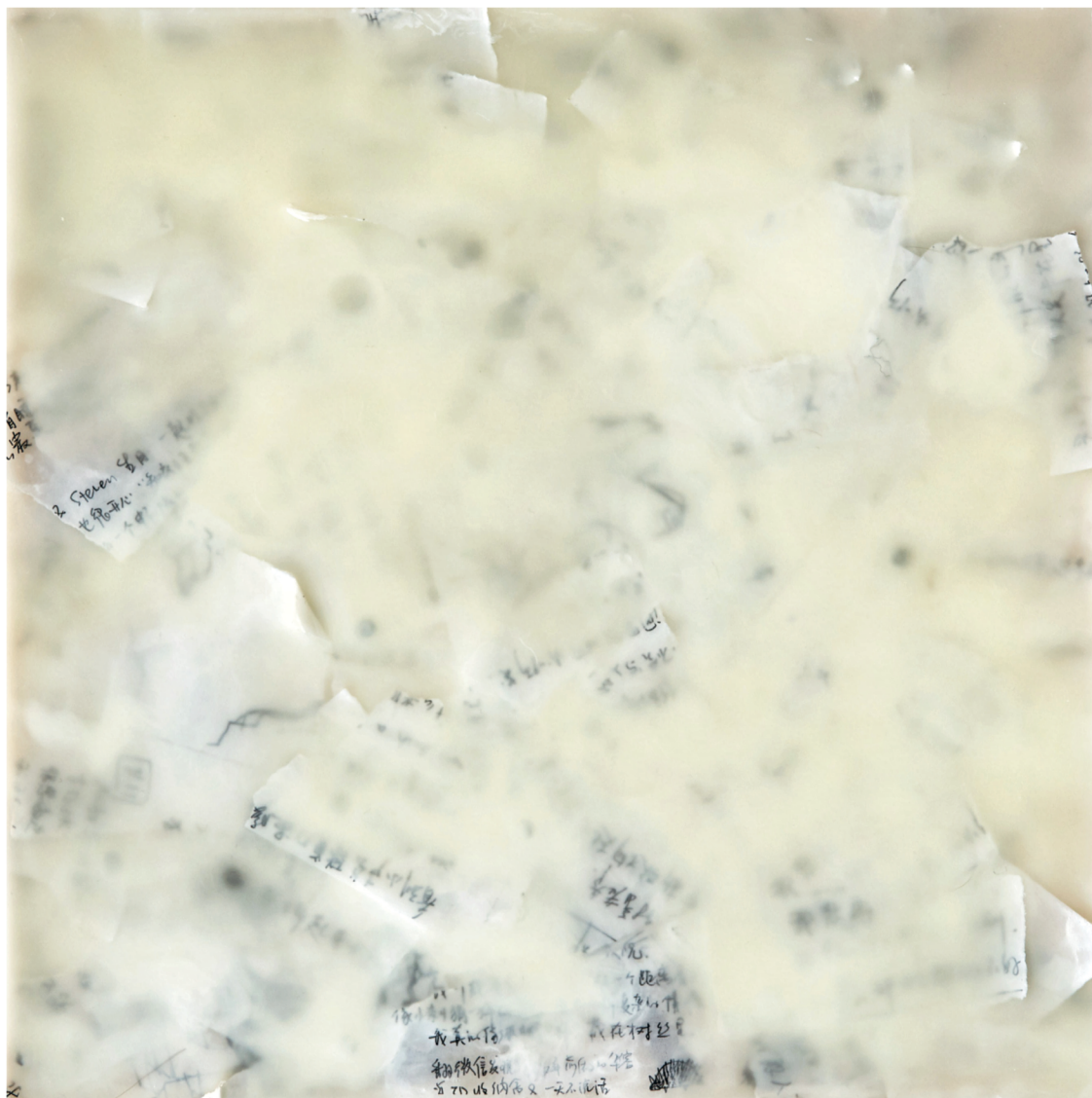
Although seemingly fragile, the textured surface of Heidi's work tempts an inquisitive hand. And for once we are allowed to touch. My fingers run smoothly over the waxy shield, every once in a while touching the corner of a page. What lies beneath, under the layer of wax? A story of love? How about one steeped in tears? What tales do these pages tell?

There is a notebook somewhere sitting on a bookshelf, with a couple of pages missing. The practice of keeping a diary is not a daily ritual for Heidi, but an occasional means of recording life's ups and downs. "I wrote all of the things that in the future I wouldn't want to look back to. These are not the moments I want to face," she says. In *Drowning*, the lines on the page became a stream of running thoughts, a cascade of emotion now captured in a pool of opaque wax. Once hidden in their bindings, shielded from the judgment of outsider eyes, the diary pages are now exposed to a world that can't stop talking, ringing, and buzzing. Yet they remain protected, unreadable—a glimpse of intimate thoughts, offered graciously.

Drowning is soft and porous. It feels almost alive. You can see the characters and the stories sink beneath the surface, like a stone dropping to the bottom of a murky lake. The layer of wax obscures what lies below. It tempts the viewer

to come closer, take a deeper look, and slow down.

The memories were carefully selected from the diary. They are the saddest moments from the past year. These are the moments that everyone has, the ones that guide our lives but the ones where the details get a little fuzzier each time we try to recall them. Heidi extracts them, nails them down on hardboard, covers them in beeswax, and leaves them to fall away. It is an intimate process of remembering and forgetting, a meditation on revealing and concealing. The finished object asks us too to pause, be quiet, and reflect on what we may be hiding behind our own opaque walls. ✨



HEIDI MINGHAO HE / *Drowning* / 2018 / encaustic and paper on panel / 12" x 12"

Wiley Holton's *Circumferences of the Void*

by Bennett Allen

Wiley Holton wants you to feel uncomfortable. Painted in black, covered in concentric circles and triangular forms drawn in graphite, her six-foot-square canvas demands attention from across the room as its kaleidoscopic forms break up and sprout anew at random.

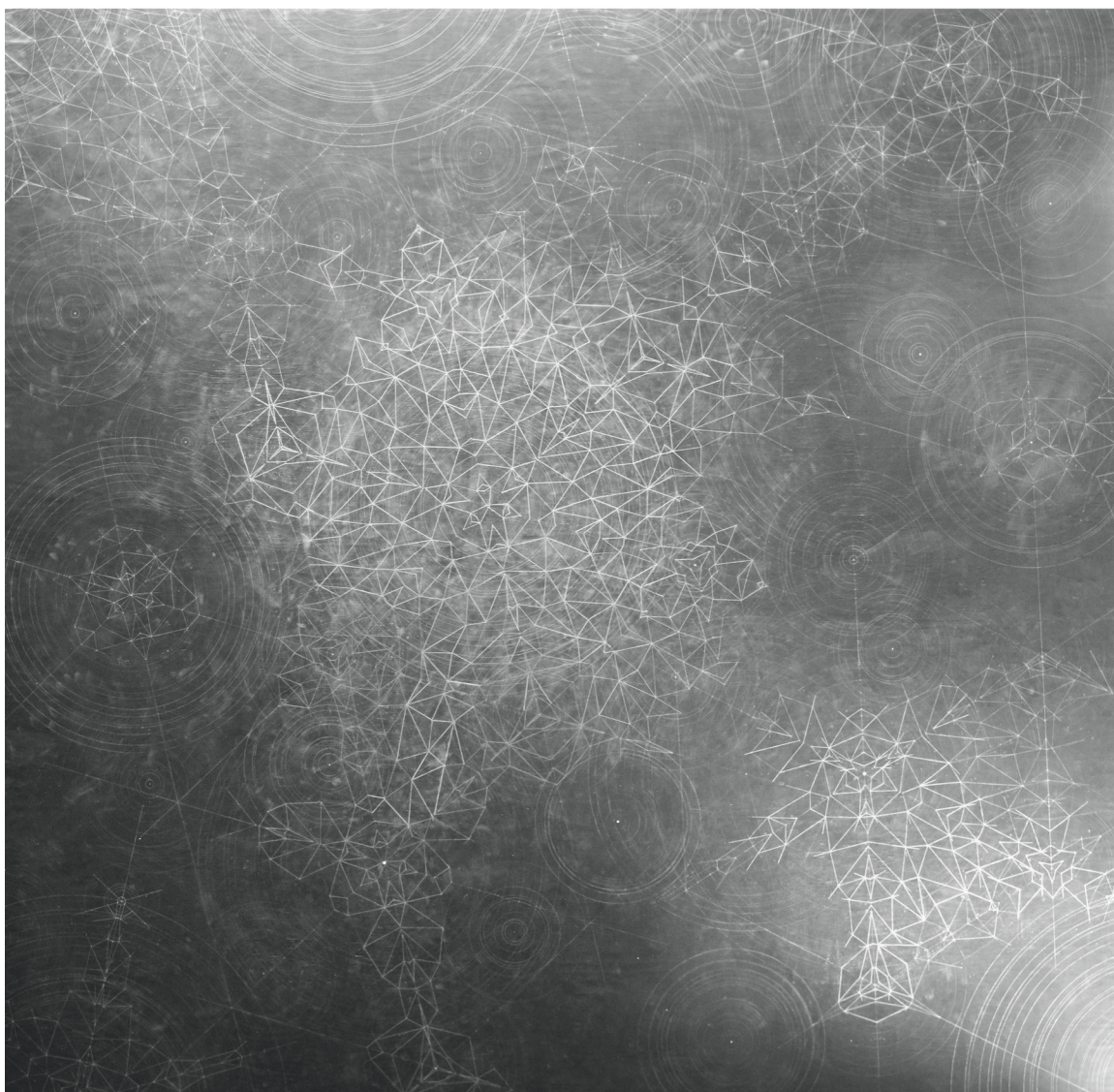
Circumferences of the Void deliberately disrupts pattern and symmetry to create a sense of chaos. The surface reveals a silvery scaffolding crawling outward in broken tendrils, reminiscent of an android spider's web or the sporadic detritus of postapocalyptic organisms. Viewed from afar, the lightly drawn circles of once lively but now forgotten importance fall into the fields of empty space. The whole composition creates a depth that sucks us into the picture plane. It's an experience similar to plunging through space, narrowly missing the outstretched branches of a decrepit bionic forest on the way down. This effect leaves us uneasy and searching for an escape. The painting has power in the way it holds us hostage: it forces us to feel the anxiety within it.

Yet when you approach Wiley's painting the agitation goes away, replaced by a sense of calm. The sketched circles that faded into the empty space of the piece are now fully visible. The silvery web settles into a stable framework, allowing each individual triangle to be contemplated. It's easy to imagine Wiley's hand beginning each geometric center and methodically spreading outward.

Wiley lies on her pieces while she works.

She prefers to be eye to eye with her paintings as she builds out the geometric patterns. Multiple centers are composed all at once as she slowly finds the right balance where one should stop and another begin. The creative process calms Wiley; it is a reprieve from her anxiety and ADHD. Wiley wants her work to make you feel some of this anxiety, and I certainly do when viewing the picture from a distance. But up close, the piece allows you to share some of the serenity she finds in making it. This is an effect Wiley says she hadn't intended.

We are outsiders viewing *Circumferences of the Void* in its most organic form. Wiley paints for herself and her authenticity is innate. She can't help but reveal her whole hand. ✨



WILEY HOLTON / *Circumferences of the Void* / 2019 / chalk and graphite on panel / 70" x 70"

Alice Yutong Hua's *Scape*

by Katie Herzig and Sarah Rossien

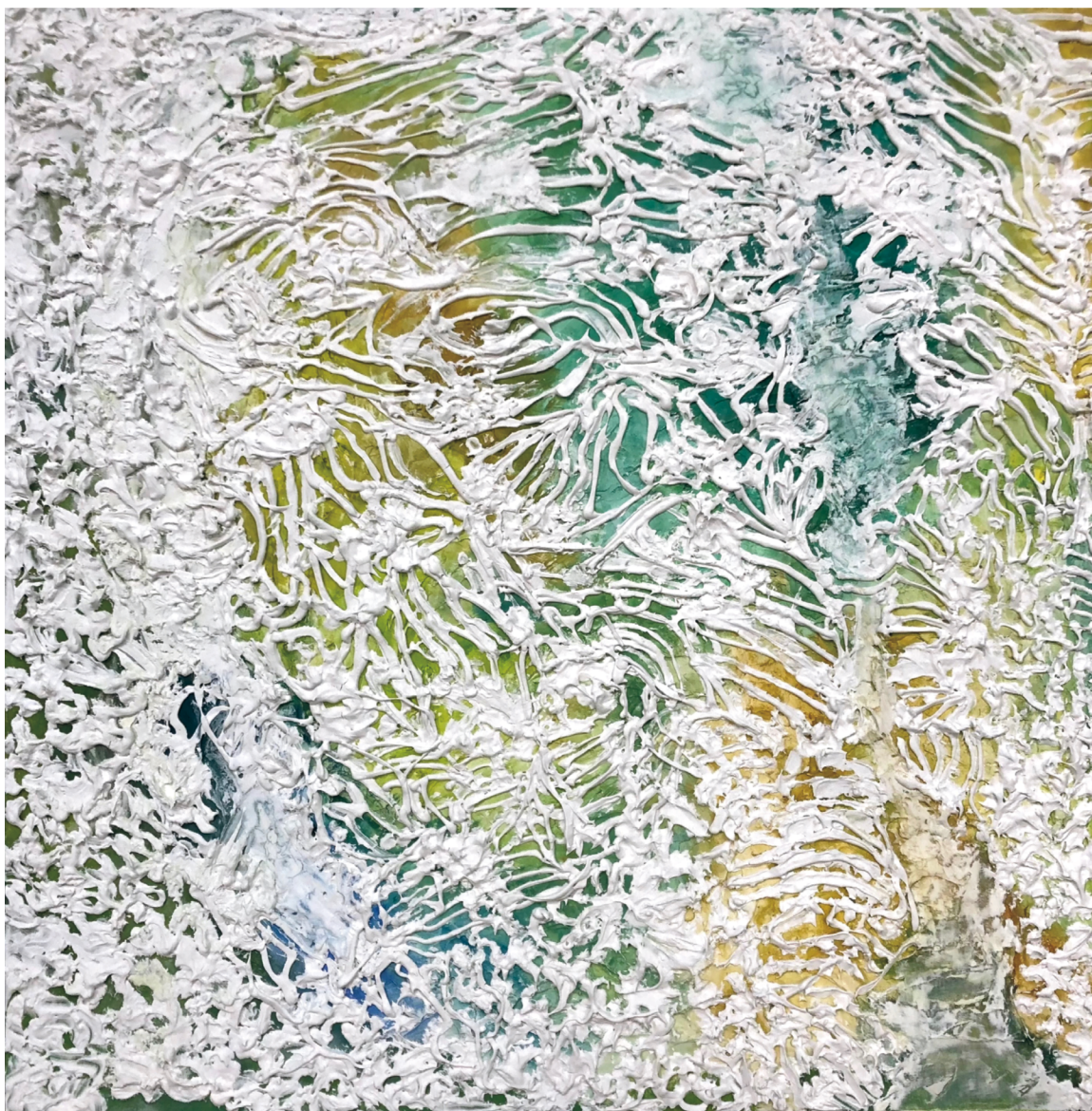
What determines an artwork's medium? For Alice Yutong Hua, a painting is not solely defined by its material base. Take, for example, her work *Scape*. It consists of layers of paint and joint compound—a paste made from gypsum dust and water that has the consistency of cake frosting—applied to the surface of a plywood board. Her base materials are commonly used in construction work, but Alice uses them to create fine art instead.

Turning joint compound and a plywood board into art requires experimentation, spontaneity, and a lot of patience. In *Scape*, Alice first selected a piece of plywood—a base made from multiple thin layers of wood veneer. She then added colors—grassy yellow, sea-foam green, burnt orange, and cerulean blue—to the board, creating nebulous swaths of pigment upon which she could develop her painting's textural element. Using a piping bag to squeeze the thick joint compound onto her painted board, Alice created multiple textured layers. While these piped forms were still wet, Alice used a Popsicle stick to reshape them, leaving some areas more or less smeared with white joint compound and others with a swirling, stringy pattern. As a result of the continued layering, the joint compound jumps off the panel, tempting the viewer's touch. But while her materials rise off the surface, Alice asserts the two-dimensionality of her work by hanging it on a wall. Unlike a sculpture, the painting is made to be viewed only from the front.

The elevated lines of joint compound in

Scape mimic patterns found in nature. At the beginning of her sophomore year, Alice began experimenting with the subject of ice, painting colorful interpretations of the patterns she observed in ice's crystalline structure. Her early attempts at abstracting these natural patterns informed her creation of paintings like *Scape*. Like Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Nets*, *Scape* is an infinite landscape; the plywood base on which it rests is a limited space, yet we can imagine the patterns of nature that are recreated in the painting as extending well beyond the board's confines. The irregular strands of joint compound create a pattern that is neither random nor systematic, mimicking forms that Alice sees in nature. Patterns resembling grass, coral, stone, and cracked ground can be seen in the composition, and Alice welcomes these varying interpretations.

The use of joint compound has given Alice a new ability to represent different aspects of the natural environment, like those we observe in *Scape*. And for Alice, materials have nearly as much agency in the development of a final product as she does. Her process relies heavily on the way that the materials she uses move and settle, and therefore she is often surprised by her own results. In much the same way that we cannot predict the course of nature, Alice cannot always predict how her work will turn out. She embraces her own passivity in this process, and lets nature take its course. ✨



ALICE YUTONG HUA / *Scape* / 2018 / joint compound and oil on panel / 24" x 24"

Wendy Li's *I Had My First Smartphone in My Seventies*

by Bennett Allen and Tim Hood

Wendy Li spends a lot of time with her grandmother, teaching her how to use her phone. Mainland Chinese cities are increasingly integrating digital payment methods into daily life, making a smartphone necessary to purchase everyday things. The exponential advancement of technology means that much of the older generation is being left behind. Wendy speaks of this phenomenon with a certain inevitability, as if people in her home country are being forced to choose between rapid technological advancement and bringing everyone along for the ride.

Wendy has a close relationship with her grandmother, and doesn't want to see her lost in the technological revolution. Her grandmother's challenges are characterized poignantly in *I Had My First Smartphone in My Seventies*, in which her hands tentatively approach a touch screen, fingers curled with exploratory apprehension. In another photograph, however, those same hands are represented differently—in a flurry of considered action, manipulating torn cloth and a threaded needle with reflexive dexterity.

Compassion for people and objects that appear to have been left behind runs through all of Wendy's work. Among her subjects are a rusty railway neglected until green shoots sprang from between the ties, deteriorating gates that have more business providing horror-film sound effects than keeping anyone out, and an old school bus whose mobile life has long since passed but which now serves as home to two Mainers of Wendy's grandmother's age. A large portion of Wendy's favorite pictures were taken at the Common Ground Fair and highlight the weathered

hands and functional crafts to be found there. Wooden marionettes and hand tools, well-worn and resharpened, bear witness to the skills of an oft-overlooked generation.

Wendy's photographs are black and white, but they aren't made with film; they are digital images turned black and white. This is a process that echoes other aspects of Wendy's artistic sensibility: she is rooted in the present but appreciative of the past. She tries to shed light on forgotten people and things and the lives they inhabit after falling from public consciousness. She expresses respect through her pictures and also hope for a future in which new technology and accumulated experience will be equally valued. ✨



WENDY LI / *I Had My First Smartphone in My Seventies* / 2018 / archival pigment print / 14" x 21"

Ekaterina Nikiforova's *The Magical Gift of Amazing Life: An Educational Jigsaw Puzzle for Kids of All Ages*

by Keenan Boscoe

Young people love witchcraft. For those of us who have come of age in a world saturated with algorithmic information and who have been taught highly corporate definitions of fulfillment, there is an attraction to embracing the mythic. Something as simple as looking up your horoscope is a way to briefly escape the predetermined data sets of our capitalist dystopia by embracing that which cannot be reasoned. I doubt many of us who turn to crystals or moon charts genuinely believe in their abilities to divine the future, but these nonscientific practices open a window into our humanity and make space for empathy and intuition. As *New York Times* writer Amanda Hess puts it, "These methods of revealing fate are less about understanding our future, and more about understanding ourselves."

Ekaterina Nikiforova's *The Magical Gift of Amazing Life: An Educational Jigsaw Puzzle for Kids of All Ages* offers us an opportunity to experiment with witchcraft. Approaching the work, we encounter a box of colorful blocks and are invited to touch and study the odd-shaped carvings, messy with glitter and coarse with colored pencil. As we sort through the piles of abstract shapes, distinct images are revealed: a lamp, a book, a scale, and a toilet, as well as human figures. While puzzling over the meaning of these incongruent forms, we experience a deep sense of childlike wonder. In a gallery space normally characterized by somber distance, this tactile play unexpectedly unlocks a part of ourselves often kept tucked away. Ekaterina draws out this sensation and shepherds our minds away from the expectations and conventions we associate with art. As the sharp contrasting patterns

interlock, these wooden bones join together into complete forms. A roman numeral at the top of each puzzle reveals what the blocks are meant to represent—tarot cards—with each card depicting a vice Ekaterina associates with modern life: Hangover, Internet, Self-Isolation, Weekend, Junk Food, Masturbation, Sleep.

Ekaterina allows us to consider our own fortunes, a process that lets us understand our deeper selves. Contemplating the Hangover card we might think back to our last Sunday morning, or forward to future lost hours. The Internet card reminds us of our looping reliance on phones, with which we dissociate from what is present and tangible. Each card, gently but pointedly, suggests reflections like these. To sit with the cards is to conduct our own tarot reading, to connect the signs on the cards to our own lives.

The experience of *The Magical Gift* is non-judgmental. Instead, Ekaterina opens a space for us to think and to feel. As we slowly assemble the puzzle revealing our vices, we're implicitly asked to resist blanket condemnation of ourselves and others and to simply acknowledge the world of imperfection we live in. Ultimately, Ekaterina suggests we might need to treat ourselves and the flaws of others with empathy—that is the gift the work offers. ✨



EKATERINA NIKIFOROVA / *The Magical Gift of Amazing Life: An Educational Jigsaw Puzzle for Kids of All Ages* / 2019 /
plywood, ink and glitter / dimensions variable

Shanzhao Qiao's *121 Main St., Waterville ME 04901*

by Jane MacKerron

"What if I can capture a period of time instead of an instant?" This is the challenge Shanzhao Qiao gives himself as he sets up his camera equipment on the edge of a bustling nighttime sidewalk. Shanzhao methodically opens the tripod, adjusts the height, clicks the holder in place, and directs the camera. Finally, he opens the shutter and the six-minute exposure time begins.

In Waterville, a small city, the pace of life can appear sedate. However, in the span of six minutes on Main Street little remains the same. People walk casually to a dinner with friends, adults rush home from work, and kids meander up and down the street. Despite all this motion and interaction, there are no people in Shanzhao's long-exposure photograph. Only the trails of white headlights and vermilion brake lights remain of cars that have passed. The time on the crosswalk sign has changed so much during the exposure that we are left with an all-encompassing eighteen. Although we know that the scene takes place at night, we have almost no sense of time passing. We don't know if people walked the street during those six minutes or whether it has always been as it appears to us, deserted.

Unlike a snapshot, Shanzhao's photograph doesn't capture a moment in time, but rather records those things that stay constant, those things that create a place. We see Joe's Smoke Shop in front of us, a restaurant down a side street to the left, and street signs. But the generic street name in the title of the photograph—Main Street—invites us to think about other places as well, including, perhaps, our own hometowns. The bright lights of the smoke shop and the reflection of the

Key Bank sign in the upper-right corner of the photograph could be found nearly anywhere in the United States. These details are like those in our memories of familiar places—not great landmarks but small markers of home. Shanzhao finds a way to situate us somewhere and everywhere at the same time.

Shanzhao's work is reminiscent of Edward Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning*, in which—even though there are no people or identifiable signs—there is a feeling of home on the anonymous street. In *121 Main St., Waterville ME 04901*, the neon OPEN sign reminds me of a twenty-four-hour diner I used to go to when I was younger, while for Shanzhao, the lights from the cars are reminiscent of his street at home in Beijing. Shanzhao always knew he wanted to come to the United States for college. Now here, he reflects on what it means to find home in a new place and the way our sense of home draws together our present experience and our memories of the past. ✨



SHANZHAO QIAO / 121 Main St., Waterville ME 04091 / 2018 / archival pigment print / 20" x 24"

Andrea Velazquez's *Women's Work* (Blue Series)

by Hannah Springhorn and Caroline Webb

(HANNAH and CAROLINE are sitting together over tea in the William D. Adams Gallery in the Colby Museum of Art, reclined in deceptively comfortable chairs.)

HANNAH. Should we talk first about Andrea or her paintings?

CAROLINE. I'm interested in her academic background. Her studies in biology and art seem distinct, but I feel they engage each other in *Women's Work* (Blue Series).

HANNAH. It is amazing how we see them come together on the canvas. Look at how she treats color—introducing lighter hues to an otherwise shadowy figure. Andrea is using color theory in a calculated way, but it allows us to feel the life of this work.

CAROLINE. Calculated is right. I remember that Andrea said that painting, for her, is a thoughtful—almost “scientific”—process. She even said that the blending and mixing of colors, when done carefully, allows them to react to each other on the canvas. I see this in her process of planning the colors for the illuminated background and shadowy foreground in *Women's Work*.

HANNAH. Her process is meticulous. It's as if each step informs what comes next and directs her to where she wants to make improvements. I imagine this is like each step of an experiment—a sort of scientific process for the artistic method.

(As CAROLINE leaves to fill her cup of tea, HANNAH contemplates how much patience it must take to work through the

colors in such a thoughtful way. Was it all the hours in the lab that taught Andrea patience?)

HANNAH. How do you think Andrea transitions from the biology lab—where the work is often collaborative—to the studio, a space associated with intimate reflection?

CAROLINE. It seems like the subject of her paintings allows her to bridge this gap. In *Women's Work*, the figure adopts a posture that runs contrary to expectations for normative gender roles. Look how she sits in a powerful tripod position, dangling a hammer. She becomes monumental. She takes up space. And her gaze is striking—both steady and defiant.

HANNAH. Remember when Andrea told us about her experience facing gender bias in the biology lab? It seems as if working in the lab made her intimately aware of traditional gender roles, and pressed these questions of performance and sense of place.

CAROLINE. And in *Women's Work*, the canvas gives Andrea a place—a room of her own, if you will—to freely play with and resist that rigidity of gender performance.

(HANNAH and CAROLINE sit quietly, sipping their tea. CAROLINE remembers that Andrea, in the painting studio, shared her perspective that anyone could be an artist with the right instruction. CAROLINE considers the pedagogic qualities of Andrea's paintings: how they invite viewers to think about themselves—and the social worlds in which they exist—in unfamiliar ways.) ✦



ANDREA VELAZQUEZ / *Woman's Work (Blue Series)* / 2019 / oil on canvas / 40" x 32"



Artists' Statements

JAKE ABBE-SCHNEIDER



When I was sixteen, I scraped down the corrugated plastic walls of a bald eagle's enclosure. Her name was Wocawson, and due to a wing injury she couldn't fly anymore. Her caretakers told me, "Move through her enclosure in a unidirectional circle, so she can see where you're going at all times." I moved from wall to wall in a large, clockwise ring, occasionally catching sideways glances from a bird the size of a man. In those brief moments, I could no longer classify her as a subordinate creature; her gaze was humanlike, and I was encroaching on her domain. We were the same: full of fear, curious, moving in a slow, circular waltz.

However, Wocawson is lucky. Many birds are threatened. The US government is in the process of rolling back migratory bird protections dictated in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The current presidential administration has reinterpreted the term "incidental" in the act to limit corporations' accountability for injuring birds. Companies that drown gulls in oil spills or leave warblers homeless through deforestation will no longer be liable for the massive losses of life they cause. Rollbacks on protections like this exacerbate the effects of the global climate changes we are currently experiencing, pointing us toward a bleak future. In painting, I attempt to use the bird as a manifestation of climate change and the species destruction in which we find ourselves.

Red-Tailed Hawk (California Fall 2018), 2019,
oil on canvas,
36" x 24"

CARLOS BEASON



One of my favorite things about the city is this interesting phenomenon I've witnessed throughout my years of riding the train. Whenever you're on the No. 2 or No. 3 train going downtown, something special happens. As you're passing 110th Street and 96th, it's almost as though you're going through a portal. Coming from Harlem, your world is full of life, full of culture; it's essentially everything you need in the world. In fact, that is your entire world as far as you know. But as you go from 110th to 96th on the train, the world changes. It goes from fun to very rigid, it's a lot quieter: fewer tracksuits and more suits, a lot more hard bottoms and a lot fewer Air Forces. Noticing this trend made me realize that the world is much bigger than Harlem, but to me . . . Harlem is much bigger than the world.

*Uptown, 2019,
sheet metal stock,
dimensions variable*

KEENAN BOSCOE



These photographs are self-portraits.

At the start of the school year I was frustrated chasing the concept of meaningful work. This pressure flooded my head with apertures and shutter speeds and criticism. I spent entire days driving across Maine and would return with an SD card full of nothing. I knew failure was a part of the process but somewhere along the line the ability to make photographs had gotten entangled with self-worth.

I fought my missteps with dissociation and hardness, mechanisms that I had learned in adolescence. I exhaustively combated myself to the point of violent thoughts—until a friend showed me it was okay to break down. I let my anxiety, my fear, my self-hate wash through me, and the next morning I awoke early. I gathered myself and stepped out onto Runnals Hill.

Treading those muddy paths, my breath fell from my lungs like small fogbanks echoing the sky. The air was damp and I wore the autumn morning like a woolen sweater. As I brought the camera lens to my eye, the tension looming in the clouds broke and stiffened my knuckles in a rush of cold air. It began to snow, for the first time that fall. My hands grew too numb to manipulate the technical dials on my camera, and I was forced to let go.

This landscape was the first I made in the series. It is the one that allowed me to embrace my intuition and forgive my frustration. It showed me the power of trusting my sight, of finding the latent beauty in the gray sky that suffocates Maine before winter. It was the place I went to when the waves of self-doubt rushed back, or when those I care for similarly stumbled. By letting go, I could witness that nameless phenomenon, and through my lens I could hold myself in reverence.

Self Portrait Series #01, 2018,
archival pigment print,
20" x 24"

MEG FORELLI



the process

These mixed-media portraits came to be through pivotal relationships, failures, and informal explorations. Each portrait endured tribulations from my peculiar process, which included glue stains, lawless erasing, changes in marks and lines, rips, variations of materials, cuts, crops, restarts, charcoal fingerprints, and incalculable doubt. Each welcomed fortunate happenstance and rejected over-worked clutter. Each tried to learn from the mistakes of the others and sought out my attention for reevaluation. Each is a manipulated reflection of who I am in the moment. Each wants to be better.

the intelligent ladies

Before I met the women I chose to illustrate, I ignored my intuitive pull to art.

We met abroad in Argentina, where I ventured solo with reluctant intentions of completing my Spanish major. It was my first fresh start and I was afraid I wouldn't be comfortable in a foreign city. Somehow, within days, I latched on to a cluster of girls, initially drawn by their funky sunglasses and interest in good food.

Over the following six months they encouraged me to alter my educational and emotional course: Sonia, the loud diva, taught me that strange is important, and I must unapologetically be myself. Layla, the hugging artist, taught me to live with empathy—for everyone. Darcey, the always-late writer and dancer, taught me to work for what I want and believe I am good enough to get it.

Back at Colby, with just three semesters ahead, I dropped my Spanish major with the newfound determination to pursue a studio art major—what I have always secretly wanted, but believed I couldn't do. I chose the women as my subjects to thank them and to encourage myself so I could complete this project.

Sonia II, 2019,
charcoal and collage on paper,
18" x 16"

MAX GUERRA



The darkroom is a quiet place and rarely has visitors late at night.

I am writing this statement there because it is the only place of clarity on this small campus. I can print my images, play with my negatives, and get warmed by the red light. It is a refuge where I can come to terms with aspects of my life that I do not want to face around professors, family, or friends. The darkroom has always been a safe haven since high school. It is where I went when I found out that one of my friends had died. It is where I went when an ex cut herself, trying to show her love for me. It is where I went after I cut good people out of my life. My relationship with this place is ingrained in every cracked smile and every tear in my work.

It's hard for me to articulate how my mind works to create these photographs. I could bore you with the technical process or what photographers inspired me but I won't. And I wish telling you my majors and three to five basic facts about my life might explain the process but they won't. You know—the fun facts that you tailor through trial and error throughout the years to make yourself stick out—just like those images you post on social media. They are facts that aren't truly who you are. It's just an image you are trying to sell. My images are found through personal exploration, taking risks in that place of clarity. They may not speak clearly to you, but they are authentic.

Nice to meet you.

Kanon, 2018,
photograph on enhanced matte paper,
20" x 20"

HEIDI MINGHAO HE



I lay down in the snow, facing the sky. Some long-lost memory deep down in my head started to pop up, play, and cycle like a zoetrope.

I was sinking.

....

The lights shined directly into her eyes. There were six of them in a group, which she was already familiar with. Some cold fluid passed through her chest and settled at her neck. Voices bounced in her ears: "Anesthetic injected." Ah. "It was blood," she soon recognized.

Winter night, Grandma was making corn porridge in the kitchen. The window was covered with mist from the steam, blurring the faces of passersby and turning them into moving blocks of colors. For no reason, sorrows began to envelop her. She woke up, realizing Grandma had passed away years ago.

The little girl sat on a bureau next to her window. She was staring at the leaves in the empty street. A streetlamp cast a shadow on the falling ones. "Will Mother come back home? Will she ever come back again?"

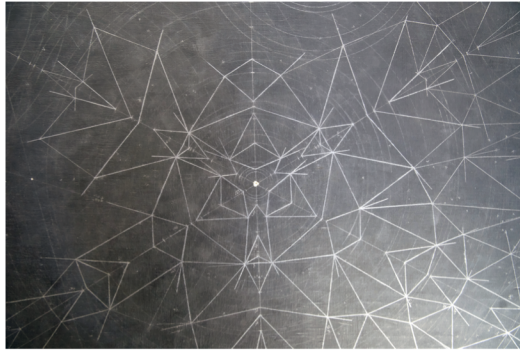
...

Was I drowning, or had the memory floated up to the surface?

I heard the noises of the tears slipping down my cheeks. But my crying was soaked up by the white world, echoing in a complete silence. I got up, walking back to the crowd, hiding and sealing the memory into eternity. Like tears dissolved in the snow.

Dissolved, 2019,
encaustic and paper on panel,
12" x 12"

WILEY HOLTON

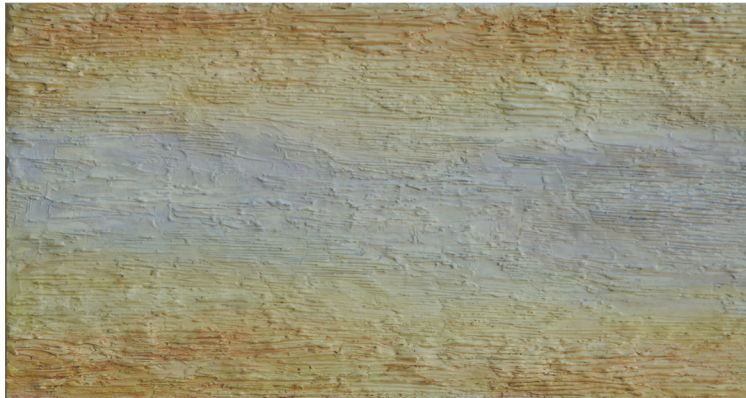


I grew up in an old house—one where the stairs would creak of their own accord, one after the other in ascending order. For as long as I can remember, I would lie awake at night, listening to the sound of invisible footsteps climbing the stairs. My mind would race. My heart would beat in my chest. My breathing would become shallower. I would convince myself that someone was climbing those stairs. Infinite “what-ifs” spiraled through my brain. My parents always told me to call for them if I couldn’t fall asleep. I’d call for my parents every single night, but they never heard me. My voice never seemed to be loud enough. So I’d just lie there, at six years old, doing multiplication tables in my head until I got tired enough to fall asleep.

2 times 2 is 4, times 2 is 8, times 2 is 16, times 2 is 32, times 2 is 64, times 2 is 128, times 2 is 256, times 2 is 512, times 2 is 1024, times 2 is 2048, times 2 is 4096, times 2 is 8192 . . .

Circumferences of the Void, detail, 2019,
chalk and graphite on panel
70" x 70"

ALICE YUTONG HUA



Empty valley—no man in sight,
But some voices echo, far and light.
Deep woods—the light of the parting day
Returns, tingeing the green moss gray.

—Wang Wei, *Deer Park*
Translated by Chunsheng Zhu

Looking at the image in my head is like looking at this poem. It is my first memory about a piece of art, such a strange view to me. The poet talks about the sunlight, trees, moss on the rock . . . but says nothing about himself. The purity and objectivity of his language are intriguing. His words depict mood, color, and sound, but never give directions as to how to interpret these elements.

The idea of an image or object is often the starting point for me. On the way to my adventure, my material sometimes fights against me and sometimes encourages me. Every time I put down a layer of plaster or paint is like planting a seed: I never have a clear vision about how it will turn out. Every segment of material records both conscious and unconscious mark-making gestures. The gestures are varied and repeated multiple times. During the making process, the previous layers tell the next layer where to go and what to show. If the layers work together better than I had expected, then it may be time for me to reconsider my original plans.

Withering, 2019,
plaster and oil on panel,
12" x 24"

WENDY LI



"Wen, how should I increase the volume on this iPad when watching shows on it?" "Wen, could you teach me again how to scan the QR code when I'm checking out at the store?"

This is my grandma asking me questions about her iPad and smartphone usage, and she asks this kind of question at least twice a day as long as I'm by her side. This is my beloved grandmother, one of the most respectable people in my life, asking me questions in such a strangely polite way. Her tone becomes careful whenever the questions are about any tech stuff. My answer gets unusually brief and impatient when she's asking those questions repeatedly. I guess I am tired of her asking.

Many elders are computer illiterate. Ageism in the time of digital technology seems quite common nowadays, at least in my neighborhood.

The elders are trying so hard to fit into this digital era that our generation was born into, but how about the other way around?

Everything Comes Back to You, 2018,
archival pigment print,
14" x 21"

EKATERINA NIKIFOROVA



Directions:

Believe in yourself. Everything is possible. Take chances. Stay positive. Be true. Have faith. Express yourself. Spread your wings. Reach out. Be wide awake. Rise up. Have a firm grip. Shoot for the moon. Breathe. Trust your senses. Let go. Work hard. Dream big. Do your best today. Try, fail, try again. Have discipline. Live in the moment. Have courage. Have no fear. Have no regret. Take steps. Enjoy the journey. Life goes on. Change your story.

Be awesome. Be inspired. Be grateful. Be rebellious. Be persistent. Never give up. Focus. Fall in love. Listen. Forgive. Be your own hero. Believe in magic. Slow down. Meditate. Do small things. Appreciate what you have. Make the best of everything. Smile. Take risks. Travel. Balance. Every day be the better person. Follow your heart. Stay away from negative people. Accept yourself. Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud. Be humble. Be honest. Take the next step. Find your own fullness. The sky is not the limit, your mind is. Be yourself. Commit. Succeed. Choose the speed. Listen to the clock of life. Learn from mistakes. Be tough. Stay cool.

Don't be afraid to fail, be afraid not to try. Keep everything peaceful and positive. Learn from the mistakes of others. Prove them wrong. When one door closes, another opens. Remember the past while still looking to the future. Not all who wander are lost. It's never too late to be who you might have been. Attention and intention are the mechanics of manifestation. Be strong. Happiness depends upon ourselves. Intelligence without ambition is a bird without wings. Remember—even if your chance is only one in a million, you still have a chance. Have no fear of perfection. Everything you can imagine is real, All you need is love. Lose yourself. Drop it, drop it, drop it like it's hot.

The Magical Gift of Amazing Life: A Jigsaw Puzzle for Kids of All Ages, 2019, plywood, ink and glitter, dimensions variable

SHANZHAO QIAO



How do cameras view the world differently from our eyes?

I have wondered about this since I took my first photo. In a general sense, we invented photography to help us see and document the world by looking through the range finder and pressing the shutter. But does it always work as we expect?

According to the persistence of vision theory, an optical illusion occurs when the visual perception of an object does not cease for some time after the rays of light reflecting off it have stopped entering the eye. In this case, we retain a visual impression for approximately one-thirtieth of a second. In my pictures, I prolonged that moment by ten thousand times to see how different the world might look through these long exposures, and how time could shorten the distance of sixty-six hundred miles, from Beijing to Waterville.

It is great to work with landscapes again, slowly, solitarily, and quietly.

*No. 32, Chenfang St, Xicheng District,
Beijing 100800, 2018,
archival pigment print,
20" x 24"*

ANDREA VELAZQUEZ



When I take my palette knife and scrape a pale yellow paint into a white canvas, it might at first appear to be mundane. However, if I place another color beside it, like a gray blue, the yellow will transform. Our eyes absorb these two colors together, adjusting and relating them to each other.

When manipulating hues, I am able to invent edges where none previously existed and destroy existing edges. I can be forceful in placing colors and edges next to each other. My work can become loud and overwhelming. Or, by looking closely and mindfully, I can allow the paint to work with neighboring paint in a more harmonious manner.

People are very similar to painting in this way. When I look at my family, my parents are reversed in traditional family roles. My mom goes to work every day, and my dad stays home and takes care of my sister and me. I remember feeling as though my family was normal, even if it was “nontraditional.” But the people around me were a constant reminder of how odd our dynamic was. They shrugged off my parents and judged them as unhappy or unfulfilled.

Think of how we approach someone who has a genuinely different lifestyle than we do. When we talk to another person who may have opinions coming from a different background, we can be forceful in our conclusions, creating needless conflict. Or we can try to communicate with compassion and open minds. We are capable of learning to be more accepting of people who challenge our biases. Maybe by doing this, we can learn to become more respectful. Painting and color communication have enabled me to express this sense of gender-bending and acceptance.

Male Gaze, 2019,
oil on canvas,
40" x 28"

2019 Senior Exhibition Catalog

This catalog was published on the occasion of the Art Department's 2019 Senior Exhibition at the Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine.

All images and text are ©2019 by the authors and artists of the original works as credited. Images and writing may not be reproduced in any form without the prior written consent of the author/artist involved.

Printed by Penmor Lithographers, Lewiston, ME, USA.

—

|

|

—

—

|

|

—





—

|

|

—

—

|

|

—