

RE CLAIMED

VICTORIA ALVAREZ

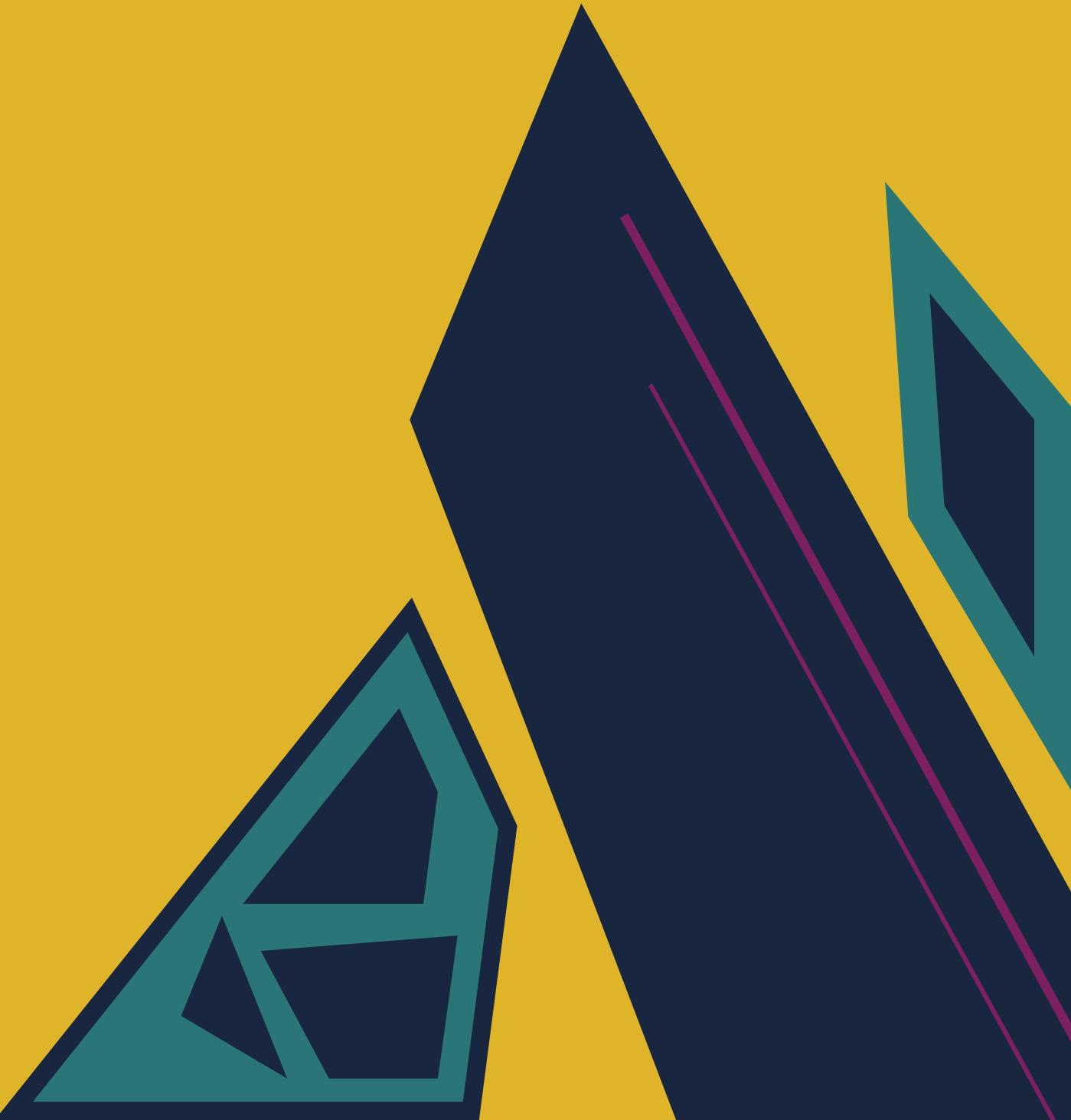


A show that speaks to
finding your own voice
and sense of belonging
in the world of art



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The Artist

Victoria Alvarez is a recent graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in Youth and Social Innovation and a minor in Studio Art. Originally from Peachtree City, GA, Victoria cherishes her hometown as the place where she began nurturing her interest in art. Victoria has continued to feed her passion and skill set through formal training with the University's Studio Art program. Though she has gained experience creating in drawing, digital media, graphic design, printmaking, etc, Victoria finds her strongest avenues for expression through sculpture and painting. Victoria is a Miller Arts Scholar with a Visual Arts concentration, a role that has allowed her to explore creative collaboration with a network of peer artists. Her work has been featured in the student-run UVA Arts Magazine, *V Magazine*, and the McGuffey Art Center in Charlottesville, VA.

The Work

Allowing exploration, play, and curiosity to drive her works, Victoria's creative identity is grounded in an intuitive form of artmaking. Her early works express a search for artistic agency and desire to develop her own conception of what art is and what purpose it serves in her life. Her earlier process transitions from using art as a means for exploring and gaining footing in the art world to now engaging with art as a tool for reflection. Her current body of work arises from her reflection upon salient aspects of her life and personal identity, such as her recreation in the outdoors. The work serves as a vehicle for her to "talk through" these reflections and examine how these salient aspects of her life shape her being, perspectives, and engagement with the outside world.

Victoria's current body of work is inspired by her extensive travels and adventures in the outdoors. The work is grounded in a sense of place, communicating her reverence for the physical landscapes of the Blue Ridge mountains and various outdoor meccas she has grown to call home. Throughout her time in Virginia, Victoria's most transformative experiences have stemmed from her devotion to the Outdoors Club at UVA and her summer work as an outdoor Trip Leader for youth. Her exposure to activities like backpacking, rock climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, and wilderness instruction has allowed her to form a close relationship with nature and examine it from the lens of an adventurer. This lens allows her to observe and explore the diverse textures, colors, light, and sensory interactions of natural landscapes. She absorbs these observations into her works, letting them guide her play with abstract organic forms, tactile 3D space, and earthy materials. This play calls back to her roots in adventure and invites her work to arise from intuitive and emotive responses to the outside world she observes. Victoria relies on sculpture and painting to share these responses and bring life to her experiences and memories in outdoor spaces. Her sculptures invite viewers to receive the work through multiple senses and viewpoints and engage with something that feels tangible and real.

Not only has Victoria formed a relationship with nature itself, but also with the communities of people devoted to living and playing outside. The influence of these "dirtbags" and tree huggers, those who share a deep appreciation and protectiveness towards the outdoors, has sparked her curiosity about the meaning that nature can hold for someone's life. As she reflects upon how strongly her life and perspectives have been shaped by the outdoor community, she explores the broader human relationship with the outdoors. She questions how humans think about their natural world, interact with it, and form ideas about the purpose it serves. As a multicultural artist, her curiosity extends to examine how factors like culture, privilege, and dependence can influence how people connect with and form biases about nature. Just as she considers nature's impact on her life, so too does she consider her human impact on the natural world. Her work explores this physical imprint as a starting point for understanding an individual and collective human responsibility towards caring for nature. The intention of Victoria's work is to invite others, whether or not they consider themselves adventurers, to contemplate their individual relationships and shared human coexistence with nature. She urges others to think about their impact on the natural world and to notice how their observations can shape their actions and attitudes towards it. Her work primarily functions not as a call to action, but as a nudge towards awareness - an understanding of where we are and where we want to arrive in our relationship with nature.

Abstract gouache

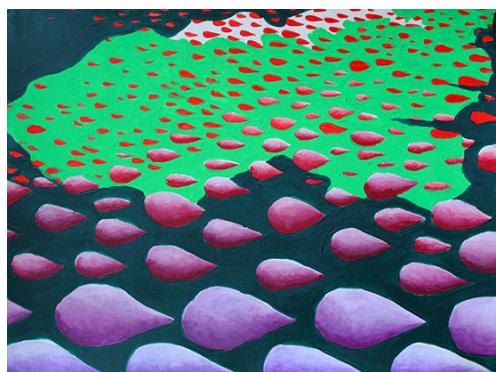


VICTORIA ALVAREZ

Bullseye
Gouache
Spring 2018
3'x 3'



Unbridled
Gouache
Spring 2018
12"x 16"



Mint Green
Gouache
Spring 2020
12"x 16"



Saturday Night
Gouache
Spring 2020
12"x 16"

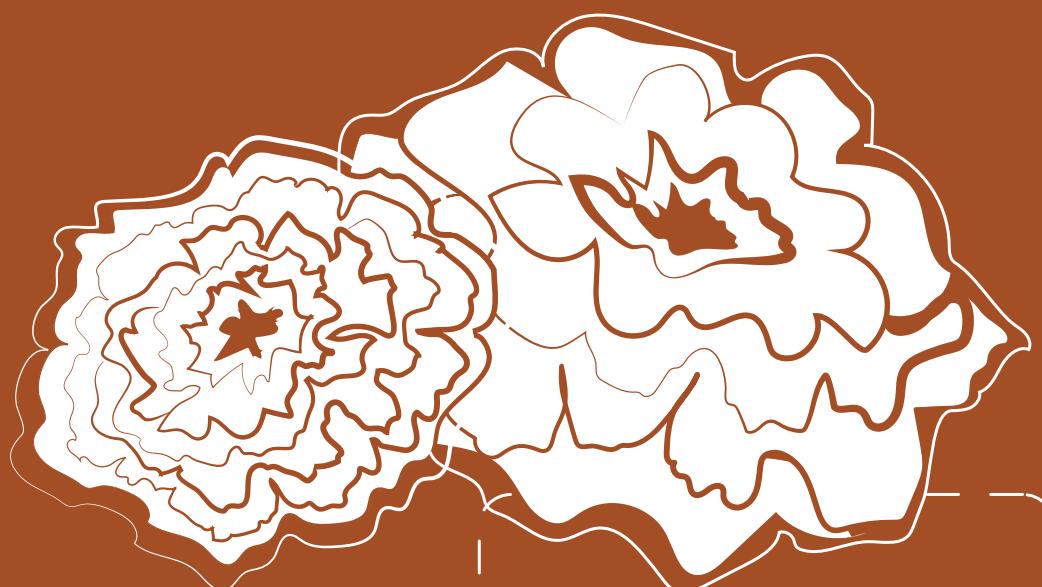


To Orbit Space
Gouache
Spring 2020
12"x 16"

Fractured
Gouache
Spring 2018
12"x 16"



CABEZA



The marigold is a traditional flower used in Mexican "Día de Los Muertos" or Day of the Dead, celebrations. Just as this Mexican holiday serves to commemorate and honor the life of lost loved ones, so too does the flower here celebrate and call attention to the sacrifice of the animal. It symbolizes the elevation of an animal's death to that of a cherished family member or friend - a death that deserves offerings of respect and care.



The muzzle of the cow is one of the few areas left untouched in a cow skinning. This soft, textured element preserves the "warm and fuzzy" nature of this once-living creature. It recalls a time when the animal could be touched, interacted with, and could confirm its gentle presence through a breath. The feeling of the muzzle is recreated here through shreds of fur-like cloth.

Like the muzzle, the cow's eye is also left intact when the animal is skinned for market. In Mexico, it is typical to see "strange" body parts such as animal eyes, brains, tongues, or intestines incorporated into the daily cuisine. This practice contrasts greatly with American culture where many edible parts of the animal are deemed unfit for consumption. The striking nature of the cow's shining black eye against its raw flesh forces the shopper to confront the harsh reality of the animal's sacrifice. Here, the eye is recreated through a mosaic of black glass shards, a decision that plays up its reflective quality. This functions as a reminder for us to reflect upon the origins of our food and understand our culture's approach towards harvesting animal products.

CABEZA

Cabeza is a sculptural clay piece inspired by my visit to a food market in Morelia, Mexico. Specifically, it recounts my encounter with a raw, skinned cow head in the market's meat section. Resting on the corner of a booth for sale, the head was surrounded by other animal parts like intestines, chicken feet, and pig ears. The head stood out to me, however, because of the striking nature of its bloody and striated flesh. I felt like its black eye was staring right at me.

Strangely, I didn't feel disgusted or offput at this. I had never seen a skinned head before. It's not typical of American farmers' markets or grocery stores. But in that moment, I felt strangely comforted. I realized that the head would likely go to a poor family, to people who would eat it, share it, and value every piece of it together. The animal's sacrifice would not be wasted.

My experience at the market encouraged me to think about how humans approach killing animals and relying on nature for food. It made me curious about how this approach changes with culture and privilege, specifically in Mexican and American contexts. For some, it may be "gross" to eat certain parts of an animal or popular to rebel against eating meat entirely for various personal reasons. These attitudes however, are a luxury for certain populations and cultures. Food security and tradition are more important.

It is these conflicting ideas about the human reliance on nature for food, and subsequent reverence for nature's sacrifices that motivates Cabeza. Cabeza honors the Mexican culture's approach and idealizes a more mindful relationship with nature - one in which its sacrifices are deeply respected and valued.

Red clay, acrylic,
glass, cloth
Spring 2020
1.5' x 1' x 0.7'



Going Home

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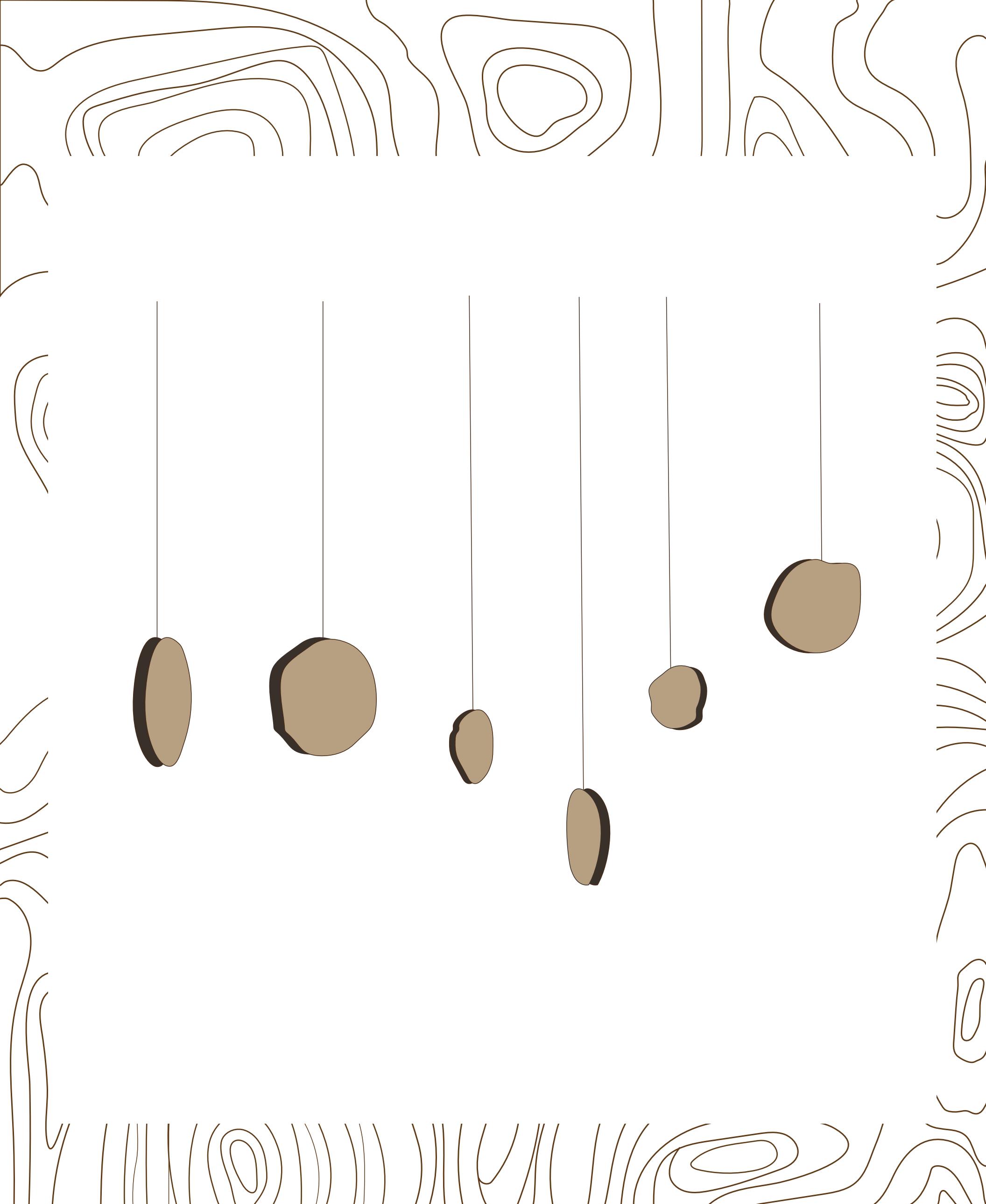
Druid Arch New River
Canyonlands Shenandoah
Old Rag GW Forest
Blue Ridge Bryce
Angel's Landing Smokies
New River Gorge Grand View
Long Point Trail Three Ridges
Devil's Marbleyard Seneca
Mt. Rogers Goshen Pass
Zion Fayette Station
Dragon's Tooth Corona Arch
Cascades Trout Creek
Moab North Mt.

Going Home is a project that focuses on the beauty aspect of nature. It captures nature's potential to mystify us and give us scenes, views, and powerful experiences to remember. Here, beauty is our point of access for forming a relationship with nature.

Going Home argues that this relationship can both begin and end with a simple reverence for nature's beauty. Our interactions with nature don't have to be involved or long-term to have meaning.

These woodcuts and simple line burnings document the beauty and meaning I have found in outdoor spaces during my life in Virginia.

They call back to my favorite landmarks, parks, and scenes - the landscapes that were once foreign to me, but now feel like home.



The installation design for **Going Home** serves to elevate the flat, line wood burnings to the character of a sculptural piece. Though each piece depicts a distinct landscape or outdoor space, the pieces function together as a unified collection of memories. Their suspension from the ceiling steers viewers away from a narrowing, straight-on view and allows them to engage with all sides of the woodcut. Included in this are the blank backs and untouched sides of the piece, which preserve the integrity of the grain and material. The installation highlights these less obvious features as key components of the work that contribute to its overall investigation of beauty.



Do
You
Feel
Better
Now?

Plaster
Spring 2020
5.5' X 3'

Do You Feel Better Now?

Drawing upon inspiration from social media, **Do You Feel Better Now?** comments on the culture around celebrating and documenting hunting conquests in American society. The piece uses the hunting culture and relationships between hunter and prey as a broader metaphor for societal violence against women. The piece specifically examines the power dynamics between men and women, addressing issues like dominance, predation, and sexualization.



Reminiscent of stuffed deer heads, the headpiece alludes to the societal objectification of women. It argues that we regard women just as we might a dead animal - a passive "thing" devoid of feeling, thought, or a need for respect. The blank face of the figure illustrates how, in objectifying them, we detach meaning from women and animals as sentient creatures. We strip them of their identity and it becomes irrelevant to us. We replace this identity with sexualized symbols such as the lips and the parts of them that we deem societally valuable. This fact parallels a hunter's pursuit of animals solely for their hides or antlers. It is these surface-level pieces of them that are used to judge their worth.

The breast in the piece furthers the notion of valuing women (and animals) for their "usable" parts. The piece frames women as literal targets of desire and lust and affirms their position as victims of man's dominance, aggression, and abuse. The target functions as a foreign symbol in the work, something stamped on the prey by its hunter. The animal doesn't seek to be hunted any more than a woman seeks to be abused or assaulted.



Similar to the lips, the figure's crossed legs are also a heavily sexualized feature. However, this "suggestive" appeal is overshadowed by a closer examination of the legs' resting position which supports passivity. This ironizes the notion that women "ask for it," as if prey beg to be fed up by a hunter. This misinterpretation of attention-seeking behavior addresses societal beliefs about women's own attitudes towards the violence against them. It reveals the accepted idea that women, like prey, must passively and obediently sit around and wait to be assaulted or killed. The resting legs illustrate a forced acceptance of their role as prey in a male-dominated society. They have been made to believe that they exist to be hunted and pursued and statistically, they will be.

Artist response piece to **Do You Feel Better Now?**

gaping holes

bullet

towards the camera

true feat of the KILL

| the creature's flesh |

gawked at, obsessed over, hungered for

sacrifice

DISREGARD

take / and / conquer

plotting, stalking, manipulating

his dominance

beckons no call for change

we c.e.l.e.b.r.a.t.e.

your mother

natural

your daughter

his "right"

sister

like he has won something

SPEAK UP, FIGHT BACK

pushing boundaries

spaces we were never welcome

cartharsis

right where they want us

our numbed souls

picked on / by the predators

| **What then would give us pause?** |

we show our friends what we have done

glimpse of the glory

a MAN

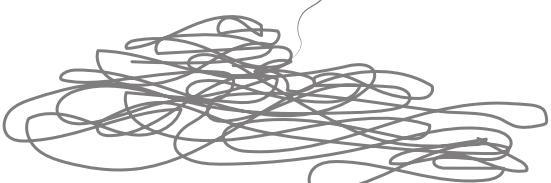
r.e.m.i.n.d

**powerful
we truly are**

Better now.

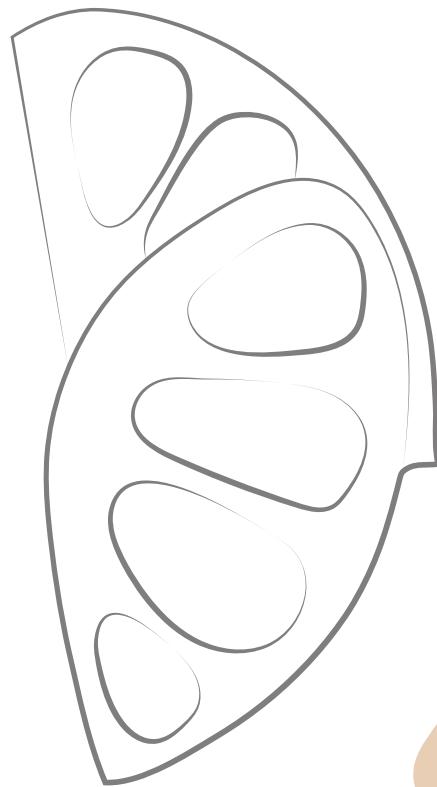
A number eight

Paper, wire
Spring 2020
7'x 5'

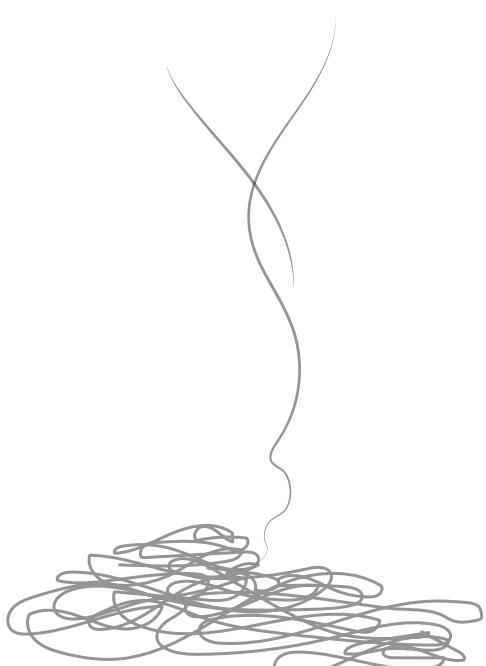


A Number Eight dramatizes and speaks to the inevitability of confronting death and contemplating human mortality in outdoor adventuring. It contrasts the rewards of thrill-seeking activities against the potential for error and danger. The sculpture explores the roles of fear and trust in encountering and wrestling with our own human vulnerability.

Modeled after the design of a climbing cam, this sculptural piece focuses on gear in outdoor adventuring. It specifically represents gear failure and the capacity for error outside of human control. It comments on human's reliance upon gear for safety and performance and our ultimate vulnerability in trusting it. The piece reminds that this dependence on gear can be risky and filled with fatal consequences.



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The coiled wire at the bottom of the piece parallels a pile of climbing rope. The rope is shown unraveling as it slowly breaks down the line between safety and danger, life and death. These contrasts play off of each other in the work as security, risk, and reward are juggled for the sake of adventure.

<http://victoria-alvarez.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/index.html>