

Disruption Invites Reconciliation

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SJSU Masters of Fine Art 2024

**Disruption Invites
Reconciliation SJSU Masters of Fine Art 2024**

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Curator's Statement

Disruption Invites Reconciliation showcases the work of nine outstanding 2024 MFA graduates of San Jose State University working in a broad range of media and utilizing diverse conceptual approaches. Brought together for this exhibition, the work presents a reciprocity of vision and energy catalyzed by the artists' engagement in the program.

Working as a curator to pull together the various thematic strands from each of the artists into a cohesive structure has provided an exciting challenge. The creative autonomy and unique individual approaches of each artist—in form and content—remains notable and keeps the show surprising. Out of one advanced academic experience, nine compellingly divergent body of works has resulted. Isn't that the best possible result for a masters program? Create a cohort, provide the foundation, the spark of intellectual inquiry, the space, support, and materials to allow emergent artists to follow their own paths.

As the artists have worked to describe their own work, they acknowledge a distinctive push-and-pull informing their process—abstraction/figuration, process/product, personal/political, mystery/knowing, chance/control, constraints/expansive. At the same time, they have identified an intention to reconcile these polarities through the forces of harmony and unity. In a time of increasing uncertainty and discord, I found this desire for integration so appreciated and hopeful. And also optimistically reassuring for a group of artists emerging from the aegis of academia.

Out of these forces, key themes emerge in the work. Two of the artists in the show explore identity with distinct approaches.

Larisa Usich unravels traditional gender norms through work that investigates the

relationship of clothing to body autonomy and identity. Strips of donated, loved, and discarded fabric—suggesting so many personal and collective narratives—find new meaning in compelling sculptural works that add elements from the natural and contemporary world. Usich's social practice project Who Wears the Pants actively engages us, interrogating the loaded symbolism and history in this everyday garment.

Julia Peng draws from traditional Chinese painting techniques in her evocative silk portraits. The sensuous fabric, depicting stylized faces, contrasts sharply with the coarse and weathered craft-paper ghosts behind them. These works, and the accompanying wood sculpture, reflect the multifaceted identities we are constantly negotiating within ourselves and in our engagement in the world.

Two of the artists in the exhibition take inspiration from the seemingly mundane worlds of the **domestic and everyday**, elevating the routine through new approaches to material and form.

In her series, *I'll keep you safe, you keep me wild*, **Laamsha Young** imbues an Instagram meme with new creative life in vibrant works on paper. Populated by piles of patterned fabrics that suggest dirty laundry or heaps set aside for Goodwill donation, these works speak to domestic spaces and hint at social class. These fabric masses also allude to covered figures, reflecting our often futile attempts to keep our children safe. Dramatic gestural marks compete with more subtle, carefully rendered details, highlighting the artists interest in exploring the tension between the domestic and wild.

Roston Johnson's installation takes the familiar and distinctively nostalgic format of the Polaroid photo for his mixed-me-

dia installation. He remains fascinated by technologies from bygone eras, contrasting the relative informality and ease of snapshots with his laborious handmade compositions. In these numerous abstract and figurative vignettes, the artist remixes scenes from his own life and popular culture, in the process performing a range of process experiments with watercolor, drawing, even photocopying. The work reflects the nonlinear process of documenting and remembering, archiving, and recalling.

Spirituality can describe a loose theme that connects two *Disruption Invites Reconciliation* artists working to explore some of the fundamental questions around the universe and our place within it.

Craig Sanborn brings the lived experience of an entire career in technology to his work, crafting impeccable drawings that explore sacred geometry. Spheres, cubes, circles, hexagrams, and other seemingly familiar shapes emerge and recede in these works, alluding to an underlying structure that is slowly being revealed. The drawings are both of this world—reflecting forms and shapes in nature—and ethereal, suggesting a way we might visualize the invisible. His selection of prints, *Pilgrim's Process*, sees the artists pushing the process of lithography in new directions as he works against the impulse for certainty and polish, towards a looser, more gestural and expressive approach.

At first glance, the paintings of **Mark Porter Fisher** may appear prescriptive, with their dominant text rendered in assertive capital letters. But closer examination and inquiry reveals an insistence upon the role of the viewer in determining meaning, and the influences of 'pataphysics (a philosophy of imaginary solutions developed by absurdist playwright Alfred Jarry). These compelling, cryptic, and in some

cases outright funny messages, mostly composed from the artists' musings, hover in amorphous cloud-like bubbles, intending to represent epiphanies. Underneath the artist paints a field of color, the sublime, and anchors a modernist grid upon it, representing the structure of community that connects us.

A few of the artists in the exhibition are actively engaged in processes that transform **viewers into participants**.

Sam Crookston Herschlag's sculptures materialize concerns around disability, pain, and illness, in the process making the invisible tangible. Often relying on natural materials for their production, Herschlag highlights their inherent vulnerability to decay and decompose, further referencing conditions of the body. Pushing his work into monumental scale, he promotes engagement and also empathy. This installation reflects not only his interest in duality—and his experience of living with two distinct selves—but also sharing, community, and healing. Reflecting a greenhouse, this minimalist space creates a liminal environment in which participants can reflect, respond, and recover.

Popular Culture provides creative fodder for two of the artists in *Disruption Invites Reconciliation*.

Brian Anderson cunningly employs conventions from video games, horror movies, adult cartoons from the 1990s, and artificial intelligence to call attention to our allegiance to social media and warn about its dangers. His work is so deeply multifaceted, so obsessively researched, and so diverse in its inspiration, it is seemingly impossible to classify. Yet unifying all the work is an emphasis on both the power and fragility of humanity, and its necessary value in our current age of digital saturation.

Cynthia Yadira Gonzalez creates work that challenges art world distinctions between “high” and “low,” mashing up diverse materials and for this exhibition, even co-mingling work produced for commercial street fairs with their “fine” art production. Integrating a punk/goth sensibility with life experience growing up in Juarez, Mexico, the artist explores influences from Mexican folk art to pre-Columbian art and folklore. Candy colors and toy-like forms from childhood morph into nightmarish creatures in these works, transmutations recalling alchemy, creation and ultimately catharsis—asserting art’s rich potential for individual and community healing.

Each of the artists in *Disruption Invites Reconciliation* have expressed a deep appreciation for the community of the cohort as a resource for intellectual, aesthetic, social, and pragmatic inquiry. One of the works included in the exhibition is a collaborative piece created by three of the artists, demonstrating that commitment to reciprocity as a concept and a practice. In their collective statement, the artists share, “We have taken different paths, yet arrived at a place that feels familiar to us.” We hope that viewers are able to experience these diverse and distinct journeys, ultimately coming to their own place of comfort and connection as a result.

Karen Kienzle
2024 Exhibition Curator

Faculty Advisor Statement

I met Laamsha in the art office one morning while I was photocopying. We exchanged thoughts on the art history program, which she was once a part of. Months later she tried to resurrect the Art History Association with my complete support, accepting, at last minute, the passed-down role of president. Laamsha and I continued to intersect, mostly in gallery shows. She is the first artist I know to make bonnets and hang them in an exhibition. She danced and performed in Mark Porter Fisher's Mime video piece, a small but vastly meaningful and hilarious contribution to a friend's work. Laamsha is well-known for her fierce belief in the importance of the work of her fellow MFA colleagues. It was her and Craig who asked me to come on as faculty advisor of this exhibition.

Craig is hard to miss, partly because he towers over everybody, but also partly because he is, like Laamsha, everywhere at once. I ran into Craig countless times in gallery shows, the hallway, and at the last department picnic where he unflinchingly talked to me about art while I ate barbecue with my fingers. I got sick the next day and he calmly reassured me it had nothing to do with eating with my hands. I sat in Craig's studio one afternoon and was struck by his precise lines and strong compositions. We talked about Anni Albers---knots was a common theme between them both. Craig is a powerful advocate for the arts and has steadfastly led the development of this exhibition in a profoundly humble way.

Brian Anderson and Julia Peng took my speculative design course. For Brian, this made sense. His work speculated a lot, particularly about the implications of media, TV and the internet. Both skeptical of cults and the occult but also curious about their inner workings, Brian embraced a kind of obsessiveness

with documentation that spectacularized fantasies, induced by media. He took his approach to art everywhere; creating a wildly bizarre and humorous YouTube video in which he read Yayoi Kusama's work as a new kind of capitalist formalism or something like that. Everybody loved it. Julia, you could count on to always be present, physically and in terms of attention. She makes careful art and thoughtful statements. She is tuned in but somehow manages to stay out of the limelight. Making art is something Julia, I think, will always do, and probably did since birth.

Roston Johnson, like Mark Porter Fisher, I encounter in stairwells: they move through the building, mingling in all the events. Both participated in the Critical Art Salons, which Carla Schwarz Fisher and I jumpstarted in fall 2023. Roston also teaches. Mark presides as Treasurer of the Dirty Brushes painting club. Both painters are softspoken in person but massively bold on canvas. Neither hold back and it's because they care about their work and have found their groove. In talking with Roston and Mark in their gallery thesis shows over the past year, I promptly realized there was nowhere else I would rather be.

Larisa Usich and Cynthia Gonzalez shared studios next to one another. It always makes my day to walk into their studios. They are art installations of the highest order, filled with idiosyncratic materials and visual culture on the walls, floor, and what felt like the ceiling (emphasis on felt). Cynthia does art all the time. She brings her projects to lectures and meetings. She is surrounded by colorful fibers and engrossed in crafting techniques most all the time but never fails to participate in conversation. Larisa is the Judy Chicago of the art program: feminist social engagement is what she does and what

she embodies. She will ultimately push it to a new level by asking different questions relevant to the 2020s and 2030s. Pants will definitely be involved.

Samuel Crookston Herschlag is someone who I have not spent a lot of time with, but he has a wickedly cool name. I suspect him of being a quiet and passionate champion of his colleagues' art practices and other work; he expressed his appreciation to them many times over our exhibition planning zoom meetings.

It brings me great pleasure to introduce the work of the 2023-2024 graduating MFA cohort in Art and Art History at San José State University. This exhibition represents the culmination of their work over a sustained period of study in the program. It conveys the ways they have developed together and as individuals. We could not be more pleased.

Dr. Sarah Mills
Assistant Professor of Art History
San José State University

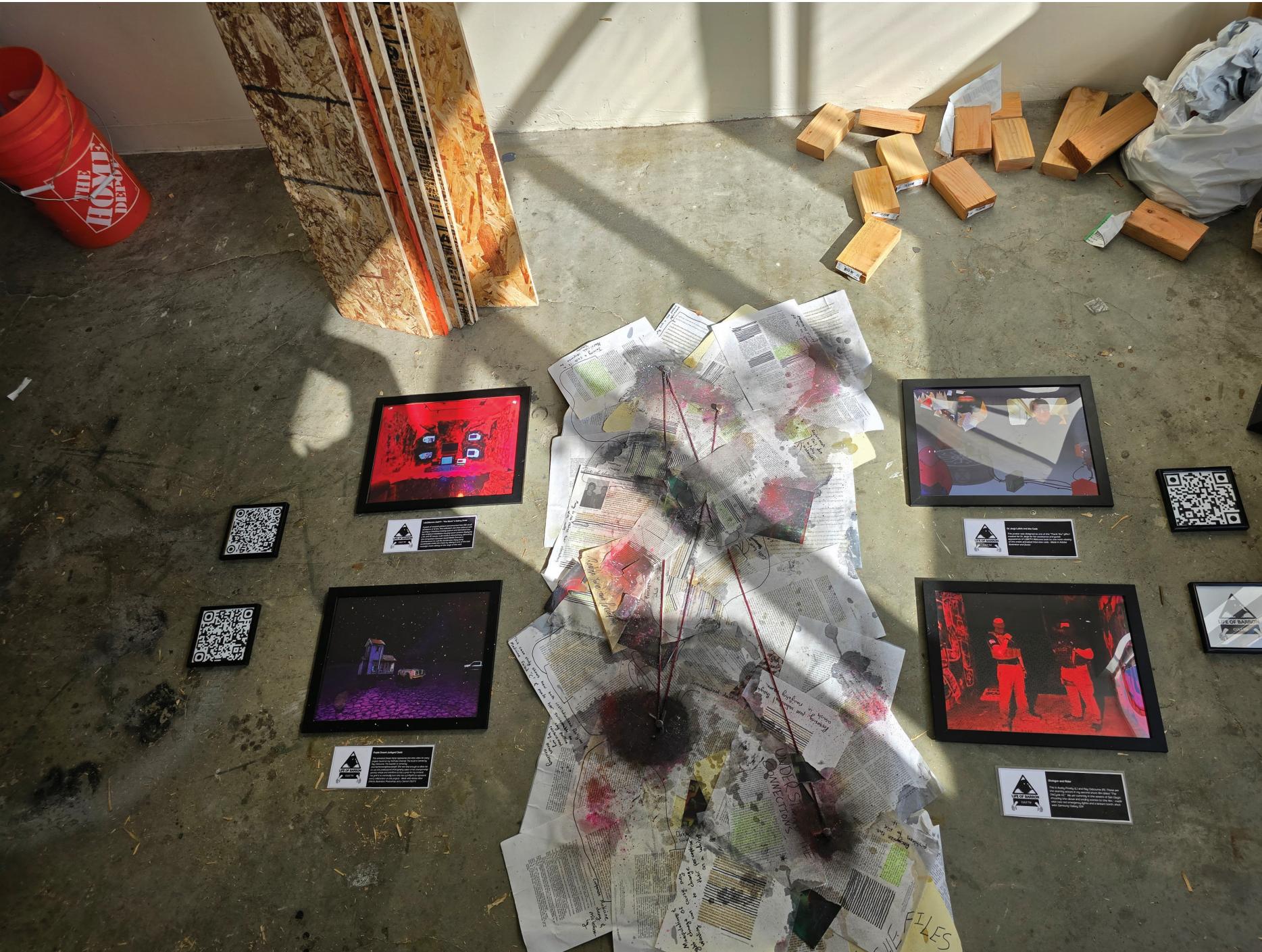
Brian Anderson

Digital Media Artist Brian Anderson MFA

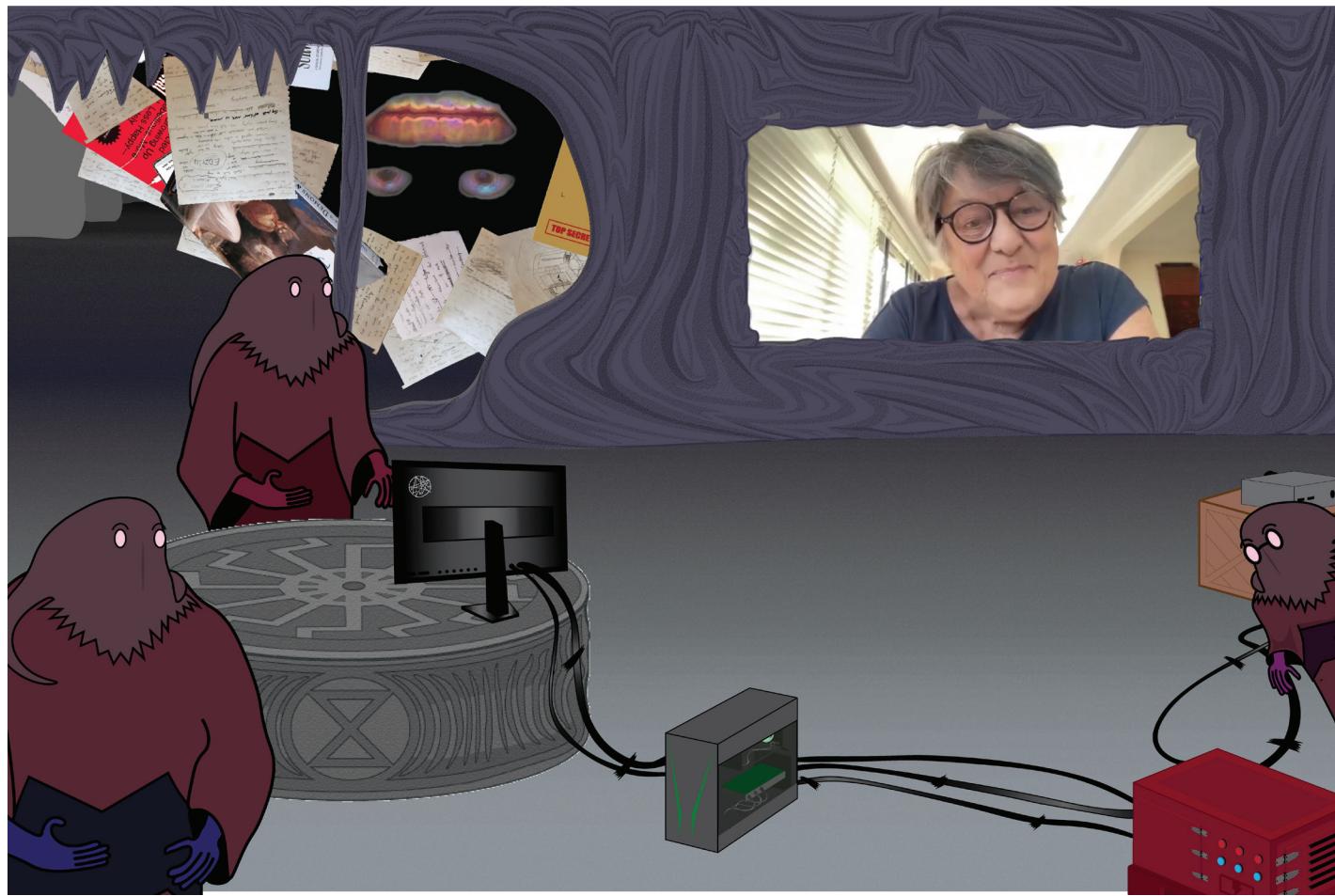
Digital media artist Brian Anderson combines levity, technical skill and a passionate forthright focus to his multi-media art making. In his 2024 MFA thesis installation *Life Of Barron: Cult TV*, Anderson draws on popular culture and psychological references to deliver his poignant message. His installation's video component compares the operational controls and psychological effects that closely parallel both predatory religious cults of personality and social media apps. Anderson delivers an amused insightful and sobering viewpoint of social media as it relates to individual emotional health and the long-term risks to contemporary culture.

The result of an eight-year investigative journey, his 2024 thesis presentation transformed the gallery space into an obscure esoteric cave environment complete with a berobed minister *Barron Bartholomew Burns The III*, who sat whispering Luciferian mantras during the video. Using stock cult footage, cultural references, academic interviews, digital animation, and his dry humor, Anderson thoroughly engages the viewer in his thesis presentation. Despite this playful approach Anderson broaches the sobering topic of manipulative psychological and social design shared by both social media platforms and religious cults. His work explores the relationships between the social media user and the social media platform and process' and its psychological and social ramifications. In the video he illustrates the process by which the social media participant creates a separate digital on-line persona, while the algorithm determines how that user will interact with society after analyzing the users' compiled data. The result of which can blur the psychological reality between the synthetic online depiction of the participant, and her actual physical and social reality.

By: Jeevan A. Kracht



"Eight out of ten videos in the algorithm's feeds are made for monetary value... without consideration for their personal or cultural impact." Anderson told me over the bellows of a chanting *Barron Bartholomew Burns The III*. Clearly Anderson is having fun with his installation's audience, but his intent clearly shows a universal concern for the health and safety of the global community. As a California native with a background in animation and graphic design Anderson's research brings a timely awareness to this profoundly relevant, global topic considering the recent deployment of Artificial Intelligence technologies into the public domain and pending government lawsuits against Instagram's parent company Meta for using addictive algorithms that specifically target children. Anderson's installation-as-conversation is adding powerful insight to an urgent community dialogue about the personal safety and the mental health effects of chronic social media overuse.



Artist Bio

Anderson is a multimedia artist and designer working in San Jose, CA. He received his B.F.A. in Graphic Design and Digital Media 2019 at Champlain College in Burlington Vermont. Upon completing his first fall semester, Anderson forged several bonds within the local art community and developed multiple relationships with online start up brands and began creating, curating, and producing art shows in the heart of the Green Mountain State. He mentors his fellow cohorts and encourages their ability to create by hosting pop up curations and group exhibitions for them to participate in.

In addition to his studies, Anderson contracts as a Freelance Graphic Designer working for local small businesses on brand and web design projects. He is continuing an 8 year historical research project to discover new information about family heirlooms. This has unleashed a passion for marketing research and design. This has refined Anderson's critical process therefore enhancing his production for his artwork and clientele. At the beginning of 2021 Anderson moved back to his hometown of San Diego, CA and continued his endeavors with his personal brand: Arctic Frost Design. By continuing his research into the darker sides of humanity, his manifesto *Life of Barron: Cult TV*, was born. Anderson is now currently story-building a cartoon world with the use of 3D Modeling, 2D Animation, Primary Research, and Videography. He is projected to graduate from San Jose State University in the spring of 2024.



Writer Bio

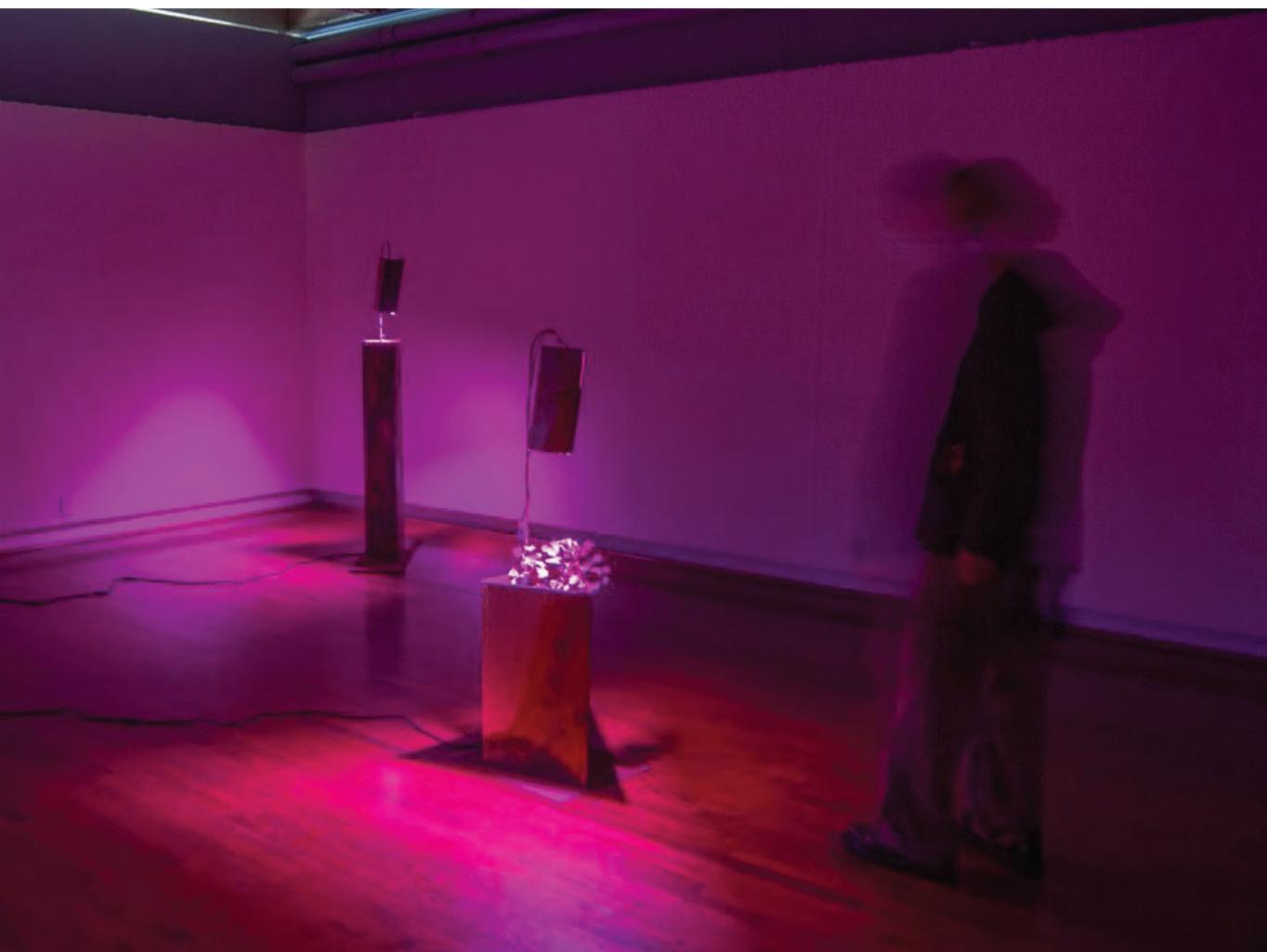
J.Kracht is an interdisciplinary artist and writer from the Bay Area whose work explores where line moves into a momentum of texture and image. Whether his focus is painting, ceramic sculpture or found object assemblage, his work is always a physical conversation. Kracht's work is informed by the writings of Carl Jung, Indian Miniature Painting, pre-Hellenistic sculptural art and architecture, geomorphology, the sacrosanct object, and elemental patterning, to name a few inspirations. Kracht believes that the art process is an inherently spiritual and energetic process. Always an avid advocate for the environment, his interdisciplinary 'Aquífero' Series references California's indigenous history and its sacred and vital water cycle. With a BA in Painting from San Diego State University, Kracht is currently an MFA candidate in Pictorial Art at San Jose State University.



Samuel Crookston Herschlag

The Man of Taste

A Place Called Home,
2023, Steel, Plexiglass,
Lights, Plants, Soil,
9'x8'x8' ft.



A Place Called Home,
2023, Steel, Plexiglass,
Lights, Plants, Soil,
9'x8'x8' ft.

By: Zaixin Hong

Samuel Crookston Herschlag studied philosophy in college before he declared the major in studio art, sculpture in particular. That hands-on emphasis shifted the life of meditation to the life of action, which is identical to Sam's winning character to his family, his community, and his art as a lifestyle. Those who know him well can't think of Sam without mentioning his connoisseurship of coffee-drinking. As an art historian, I was privileged to have Sam in my classes at the University of Puget Sound, including Asian art, Japanese art, especially East Asian calligraphy, in which Sam demonstrated his sincere curiosity toward something that often went beyond the course contents.

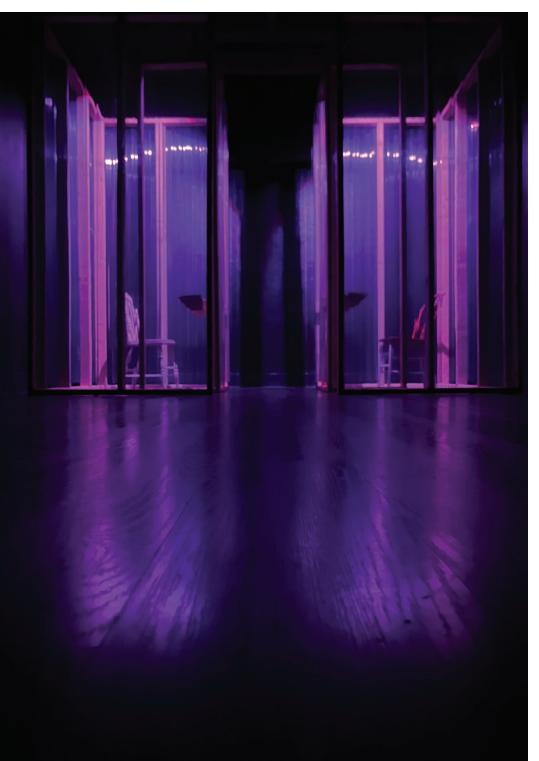
What is that? I once questioned myself about it when Sam was in my class. Now, as we are exposed to his exhibited works, his audience, I think, can figure it out. It is about taste.



Tend Your Garden, 2024,
Redwood, Pine,
Corrugate, Plexiglass,
Lights, 9'x12'x6' ft.

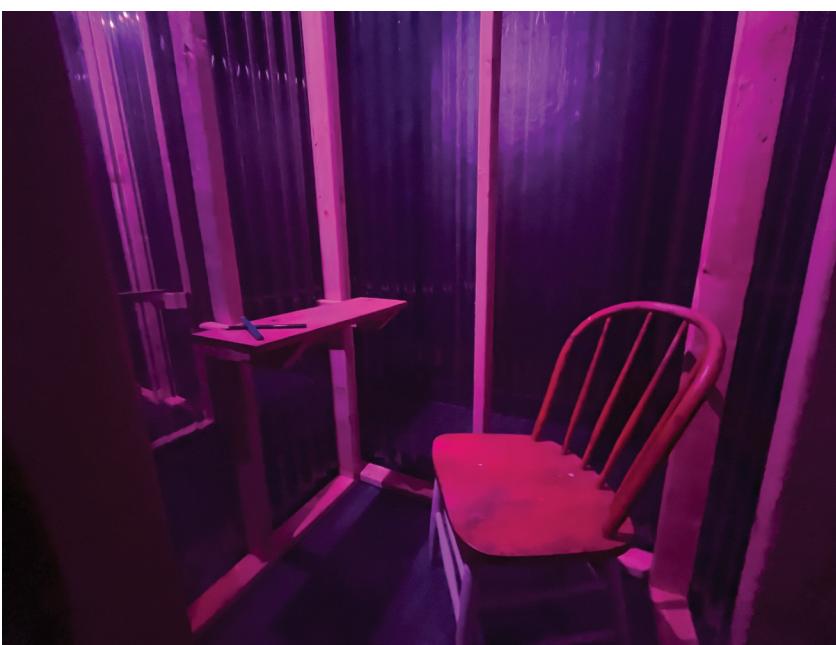
As the saying goes, "In matters of taste, there can be no disputes." I am reminded of "the utility of uselessness", a phrase coined by one of my Economics majors in a term paper. In fact, taste matters, for its value lies not only in its usefulness but also in its uselessness. Sam's everlasting curiosity about his craftsmanship activates his beholders' amazement at his creative works. Whether I take a close look at the sensuous surface of the materials as seen in *Shou Sugi Ban*, assorted wood with copper leafing, steel, and paint, rustic metal, etc., or imagine the changing space embodies in different objects, mostly in a minimal style, Sam's artistic inquiry enables him to expand the horizon of sculpture by integrating Japanese aesthetics with American art and architecture. I thought of a photo of *Falling Water House* by Frank Lloyd Wright that Sam took and sent to me, which became an illustration in my book manuscript, entitled *The Tree of Life: Art and Sustainable Development in Modern and Contemporary Japan*. As we see in Sam's artworks, a shared sense of empty space becomes so organic that it permeates his life of action, full of inquisitive adventures.

Apparently, to participate in the MFA culminating group show, for Sam is more than a retrospection of what he has been exploring in the art of sculpture from a liberal arts college to the graduate program, because after all he is the man of taste. Old fashioned? I don't know. I do know, however, people enjoy coffee-drinking, just as Sam enjoys art-making with his exquisite taste.



A Place Called Home,
2023, Steel, Plexiglass,
Lights, Plants, Soil,
9'x8'x8' ft.

Tend Your Garden (detail),
2024, Redwood, Pine,
Corrugate, Plexiglass,
Lights, 9'x12'x6' ft.



Artist Bio

I was born in Stanford, California in 1995. I struggled immensely in school as I attempted to fit an academic system that did not work for me and many of my peers. I utilized special education programs and individualized education plans in an attempt to learn in a system that was failing me. Graduating High-School was a feat in itself. Working with my hands became an act of resistance to societal expectations I knew I could not fulfill.

Despite my struggles in academia I attended the University of Puget Sound, graduating in 2019. There I studied sculpture, and African American History. Sculpture provided me with the means of

freeing myself from the rigid academic mold I grew up in and African American Studies filled gaps in my understanding of American history and society.

I received my MFA in Spatial Arts at San Jose State University in 2024. At SJSU I was the treasurer and president of the Foundry Guild and worked as a lecturer of record for three semesters. I created immersive and participatory sculptures that addressed themes of disability, chronic illness, and mental health. I am currently pursuing my own artistic goals of showing art in public outdoor spaces and looking at teaching opportunities and artist residencies in the bay area.



Tend Your Garden, 2024,
Redwood, Pine,
Corrugate, Plexiglass,
Lights, 9'x12'x6' ft.

Writer Bio

Dr. Zaixin Hong is Professor of Art History at the University of Puget Sound. He did research at the University of California Berkeley (1992) and the Harvard Center for the Studies of World Religion (1998-1999). His research interest focuses on Song-Yüan (960-1368) and modern Chinese painting. He has published widely on these subjects focusing on global art collecting such as From Private Space to Public Space: Three Essays on Audience of Qian Xuan's Wang Xizhi Watching Geese in Its Provenance of Seven Centuries (Hangzhou: China Art Academy Press, 2020). In addition, he authored an award-winning Chinese college textbook, A History of Chinese Art (China Art

Academy Press, 2000, 2013 revised and expanded version), and compiled Essays on Chinese painting by overseas scholars (1950-1987) (1992). A 2005-06 ACLS and NEH fellow, he is working on a new book, Shaking Hands with the Future: The Transformation of Chinese Painting through Overseas Collecting.



Tend Your Garden (detail),
2024, Redwood, Pine,
Corrugate, Plexiglass,
Lights, 9'x12'x6' ft.

Roston Johnson

ROSTON ON THE REMIX

By: James William Moore

Roston Johnson's artistic endeavors beckon viewers into a realm where the boundaries between tradition and innovation blur, and where humour and satire dance with profound commentary. In his pivotal *GENEROUS ORTHODOXY* series, Roston boldly eschews the confines of the archival, instead embracing a fluidity that allows him to embrace that which isn't permanent, akin to the unpredictable nature of non-archival substrate. This rejection of permanence paradoxically contradicts time, presenting his artwork as ephemeral yet enduring.

What sets Roston apart is his adept infusion of humour and satire, reminiscent of the editorial artists gracing the pages of newspapers. His work echoes the sharp wit and intelligent commentary found in these mediums. Yet, he elevates it with a deft skill as he remixes humour, form, and aesthetics into a cohesive whole. The result is a body of work that pulsates with life and vitality, inviting viewers to engage

visually, intellectually, and emotionally. His artwork becomes a mirror reflecting society's absurdities and complexities, inviting viewers to engage in a dialogue that transcends the visual realm of seeing a painting as more than a pretty picture.

Like a skilled DJ mixing together disparate sounds, Roston remixes time and memory as vignettes with the agility of a maestro. His compositions pulsate with energy, drawing the eye to every corner of his substrate where humour lurks in unexpected places. Each brushstroke is imbued with intention, creating a tapestry of visual delights that captivate and challenge in equal measure.

While Roston regards his work as a remix rather than outright appropriation, an undeniable connection exists to the soul of appropriation, particularly evident in his thick, sumptuous impasto strokes, as seen in *Roston Cremes*—a homage to one of his inspirations, Wayne Thiebaud.

The essence of Roston's artwork serves as a testament to the fluidity of artistic expression and the transformative power of humour. By rejecting the archival and embracing impermanence, he invites viewers to question the very nature of art and its relationship to time. His pieces exist in a state of perpetual flux, evolving with each viewing uncovering new layers of meaning.



*GENEROUS
ORTHODOXY: THE
THESIS SHOW
(Michael's Calf),
2023, Watercolor,
10" x 12" in.*

*GENEROUS
ORTHODOXY: THE
THESIS SHOW (Pair
of Shoes Beats Ace),
2023, Oil on Canvas
Paper, 10" x 12" in.*



Roston's work underscores the importance of humour as a tool for social commentary and remixing the ideas of art. In a world fraught with uncertainty and division, his playful yet incisive observations offer a respite, encouraging viewers to see everyday life's absurdity and confront the uncomfortable with a smile.

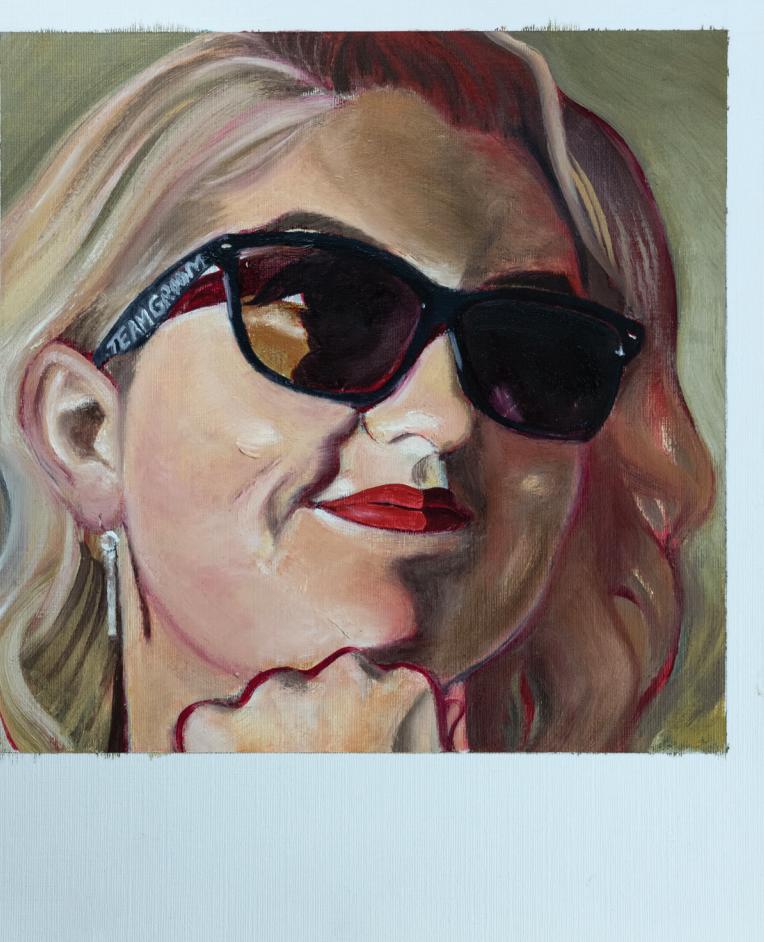
Roston Johnson's artwork transcends mere visual representation, inviting viewers on a journey of introspection and discovery. Through his rejection of the archival, infusion of humour, and adept remixing of form and content, he challenges us to reconsider our perceptions of art and its role in society. In a world where time is fleeting, and nothing is permanent, Roston's creations stand as enduring reminders of the power of laughter and the limitless possibilities of artistic expression.



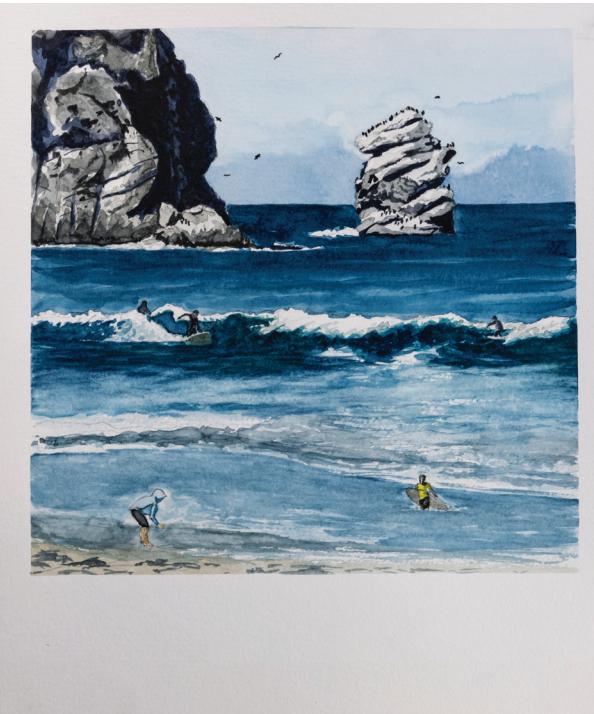
GENERALISMOUS
ORTHODOXY: THE
THESIS SHOW, 2023
Mixed Media,
96" x 156" in.

Artist Bio

Roston Johnson is a mixed-media artist and college art instructor. He received a master of fine arts degree in pictorial art from San Jose State University, and a bachelor's degree in graphic communication from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. His work transforms the mundane through painting and other media, and is notable for its subversive, contradictory, and experimental qualities. Roston's master's thesis, *Generous Orthodoxy* in Art, shows the breadth and trajectory of his artwork, and appeals to moderation in fine art.



**GENEROUS
ORTHODOXY: THE
THESIS SHOW**
(Team Groom), 2023
Oil on Canvas Paper,
10" x 12" in.



**GENEROUS
ORTHODOXY: THE
THESIS SHOW**
(Morro Bay Strand),
2023, Watercolor,
10" x 12" in.

Writer Bio

James William Moore is an award-winning lens-based artist and curator internationally known for his innovative blend of camp and kitsch aesthetics. He crafts surreal and thought-provoking cinematic experiences across various media: including photography, video, projection mapping, and installations. With a keen eye for appropriation, Moore's work navigates the realms of politics, American pop culture, and everyday life while weaving together a visual tapestry that is both humorous and deeply resonant.

Completing his Master of Fine Art at San José State University, Moore's artistic journey extends beyond creation to education, teaching photography courses at SJSU and Gavilan College. His portfolio boasts a rich array of group and solo exhibitions, including showcases of *Clang, Clang, Clang went the Trolley* at Rayko Galleries (San Francisco) and *Madame B's Tarot Readings* at Fotonostrum (Barcelona). Moore's public art contributions include pieces in the San José Japantown Mural Project and Expo Metro's Billboard Art Projects, underscoring his commitment to engage audiences through his imaginative storytelling.

Julia Peng



Translucent Trunk, 2023,
Glass,
4" x 4" x 4" in.

Julia's Art By: Elizabeth Koss

Meet Julia, a soft-spoken, gentle, graceful, and reserved person. These qualities flow into her art, where she blends Eastern cultural depth with Western techniques, resulting in a unique aesthetic. From painting and woodcarving to ceramics, digital media, and glass, Julia flows across mediums. Her versatile approach is playful yet deeply insightful, reflecting a keen observation of the world around her.

In her exploration of different mediums, Julia's artistic journey is characterized by a consistent thread of innovation and introspection. Her wooden doll sculptures, for instance with their interchangeable heads, are reminiscent of childhood paper dolls. Yet beneath their whimsical exteriors lies a profound exploration of human emotion and identity, echoing the themes she delves into across her various works.

The quest for deeper thematic exploration is further seen in Julia's oil landscapes and watercolor landscapes, which are imbued with elements of traditional Chinese ink painting and modern composition. These evoke a sense of poetic enchantment—a return to primal purity. Beyond mere representation, Julia's brushwork captures the essence of the natural elements. She loves to present her glassworks alongside her watercolors to highlight the similar spontaneity and fluidity of the two processes. For Julia, watercolor's permeation reflects the organic unpredictability of natural elements, whereas glass, with its transparency and responsiveness to flow and gravity, offers a parallel display of nature's dynamics.



Mistry No. 1, 2023,
Watercolor,
30" x 22" in.

Julia's recent watercolor work of bigger-than-life beautiful women transformed the traditional Chinese art of silk painting into a multi-dimensional experience, blending art and reality. The installation consisted of suspended large panels of beautiful women rendered in silk with delicate brush strokes. Walking through a labyrinth of translucent veils of soft silk gently swaying in the breeze created a participatory meditative experience. The dynamic movement invited the viewer to connect with and experience the mystery of the narrative. In the subtle interplay of light and shadow, the graceful and mysterious women seemed to come to life. Their flowing forms suggested a harmony between humanity and the natural world. The luxurious silk feeling and its elegant flow guided the viewers toward the fleeting beauty of women and life, offering a new appreciation of their inner world. Through this kinetic experience, the artist gently guided the exploration of one inner self of the essence of "her". Subtle imprints left by pigments seeping through to the underlying kraft paper accompanied these portraits—a metaphor for the enduring imprints etched in our souls. Thus, Julia invites viewers to embark on a reflective journey of their own, contemplating the depths of their personal experiences and the lasting impressions they leave behind.

Untitled, 2024
Watercolor on Silk,
90" x 70" in.



Artist Bio

My creative inspiration is deeply rooted in my connection with nature, often explored through hiking and camping in the hidden gems of the South Bay area. Intrigued by the human experience, I paint figures, drawn to the stories reflected in people's eyes. By blending my ancient Chinese cultural heritage with contemporary Western art influences, my creations reflect a unique fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, embodying my personal journey and perspective.



Untitled, 2022,
Ceramics,
7" x 13" x 9" in.

As a South Bay area-based artist with years of experience in the film industry, my path to artistic expression has been influenced by years of immersive experience. Pursuing my MFA at SJSU, I experiment with painting, ceramics, glass, and woodworking to find my creative voice.

Writer Bio

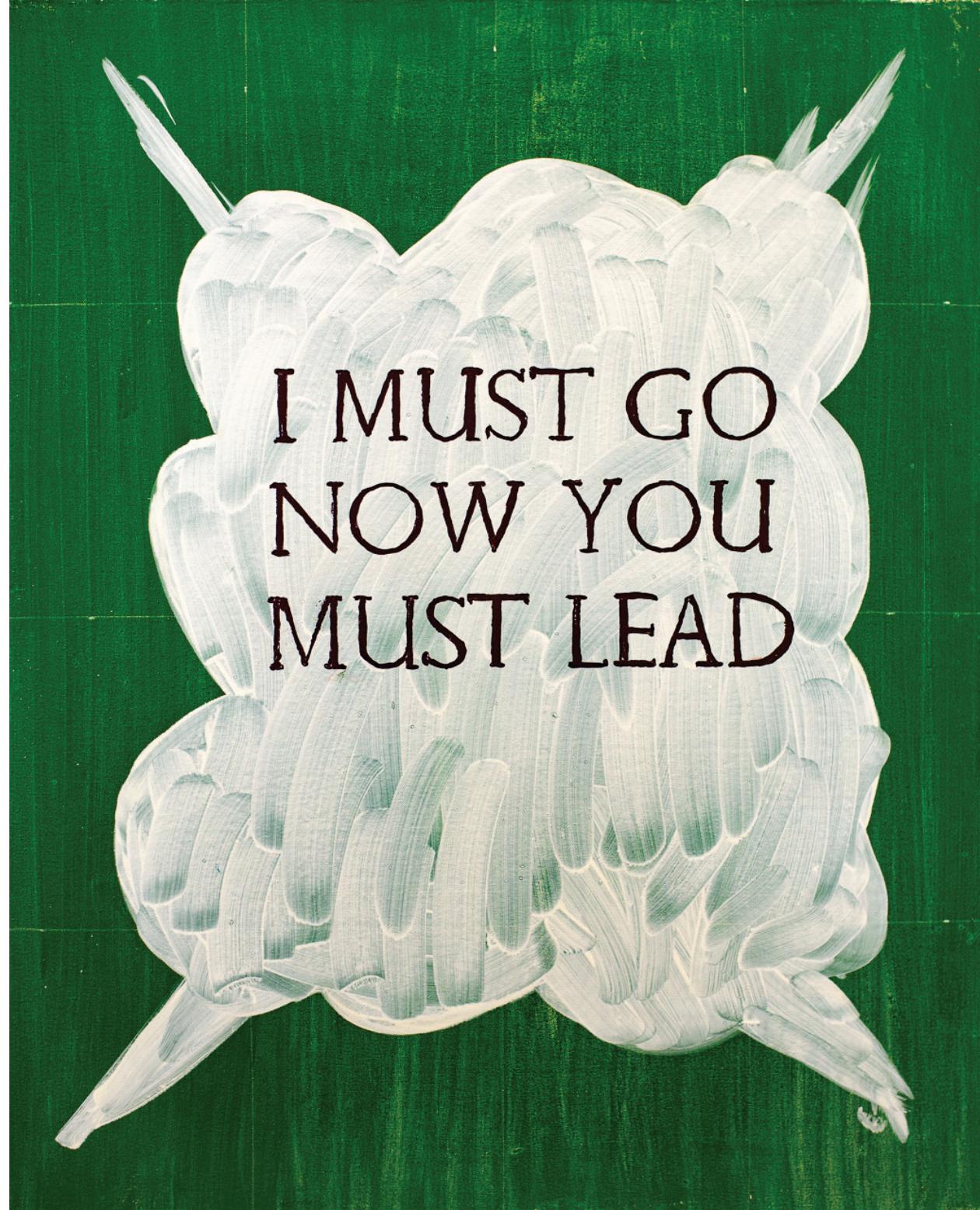
Growing up in Belgium where the weather is often too gray, Elisabeth Koss became fascinated by the interplay of sunlight, reflections, and shadows. After retiring from an academic career as a neurobehavioral scientist, she is now a full-time MFA student at San Jose State University. Her journey to artistic expression was far from typical and is laden with an innate insistence to create despite receiving little to no artistic training in her formative years. Her inspiration often comes from everyday life, and how the ordinary can be transformed into the extraordinary when seen through the prism of art. She punctuates her works with a deep-rooted love for the California Art and Space movement, a key influence that informs her artistic approach.



Wood Doll, 2022,
Wood,
9" x 10" x 7" in.

Mark Porter Fisher

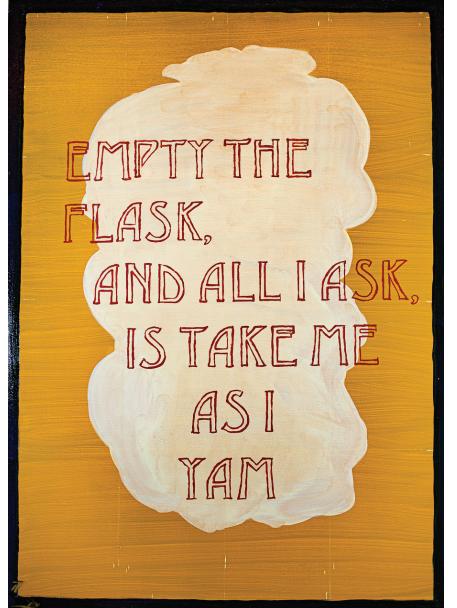
I Must Go Now You Must Lead, 2024, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 30" in.



By: Roston Johnson

Mark Fisher is a witty, charismatic conversationalist, a versatile musician, and a modest painter who works from the heart. It has been a pleasure to share an art studio with him for the past two and a half years at SJSU. Troves of art supplies and knick-knackery cover every surface of his space: Stacks of paintings, heaps of paint tubes and brushes, an interior rug, a bookcase crammed full of sketchbooks and reference materials, a small radio on the windowsill, art exhibition posters, hand-painted diagrams, a plexiglass etching with an LED, a rubber chicken, and an unopened set of Angry Mob figurines with torches and pitchforks. Slow, elegant, piano music with hints of phonograph static plays in the background—*The Caretaker*.

Born into a family of artists and musicians, Mark has always treated painting as a fun, safe space full of promise and quiet vitality. Painting allowed him to “just play,” but also to make authentic, original statements. “The promise of light and form turned into a sense of play, and from objects came stories built around interesting people, like Jackson Pollock,” says Mark. He cites Jackson Pollock’s *Guardians of the Secret* (1943) as an early influence that blew him away for its direct, intuitive manner of painting and its layers of meaning. “There are traces of imagery buried underneath layers of paint. There are literal secrets in that canvas that give it mystery.” Mark would later go on to write



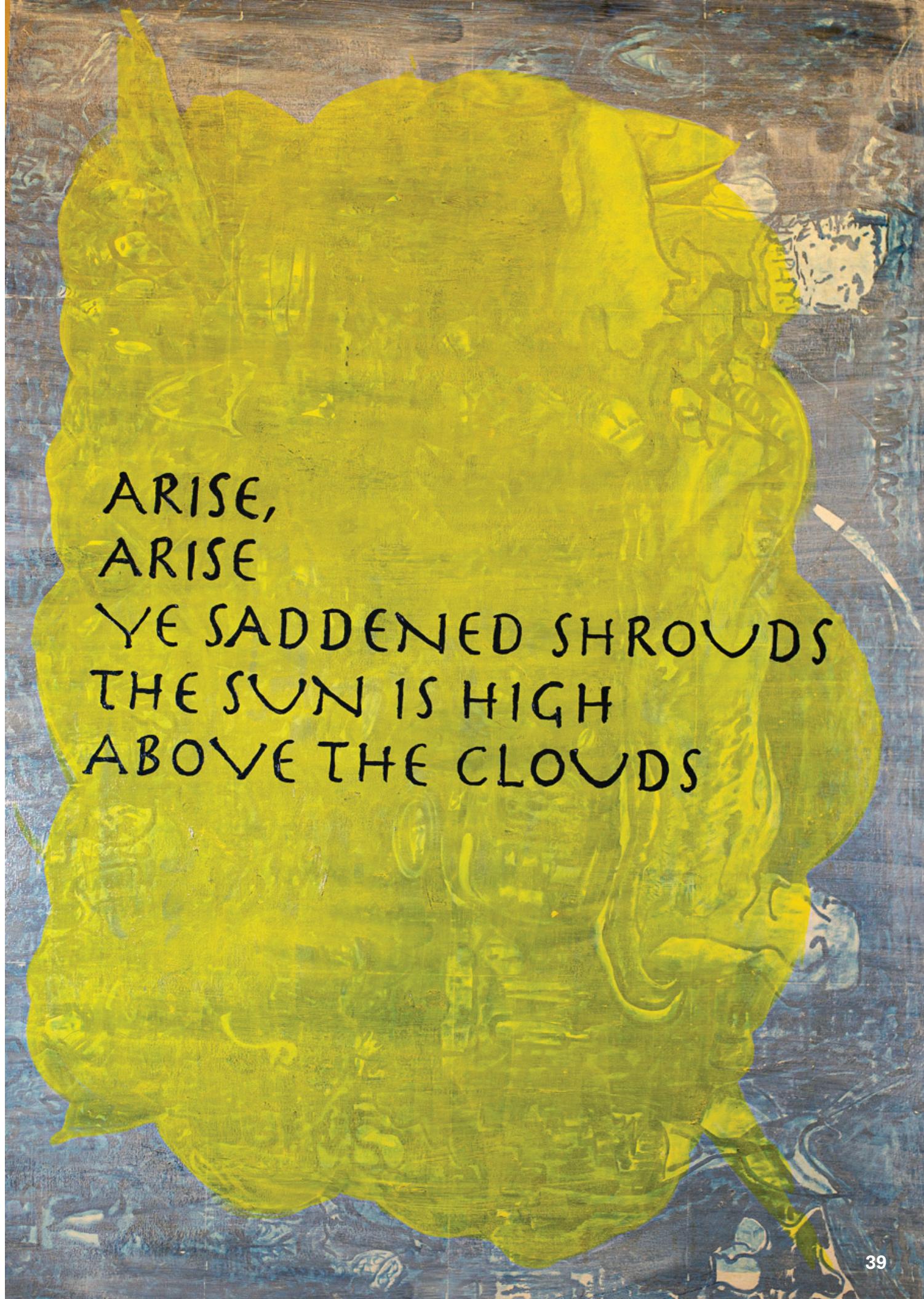
Empty the Flask, 2024,
Oil on Canvas,
30" x 42" in.

the 10-minute play, *The Mimes of Palopan*, that includes Jackson Pollock as a character.

The Mimes of Palopan is a science-fiction play that inspired a series of large-scale, graphite drawings, *The Mimes of Palopan I-IV*, as well as a short film adaptation by James William Moore. "The play itself was an opportunity to create a narrative to inspire the creation of drawings and paintings." This series proved that a work ethic and commitment to an idea are valuable because of the time and labor required to lay down dense, graphite material over a large area.

Like *The Mimes of Palopan*, Mark's *The Gas Series* explores the sublime, tribology, and mimesis in their many layers of meaning. Tribology is the study of friction between two or more surfaces. Mimesis, for Mark, has to do not with not only imitation, but the quest to discover how to see the physicality of an idea so well that it returns to its origins, as affect, in a field of potential that is nonphysical.

Arise, Arise, 2024,
Oil on Canvas,
34" x 48" in.



Beat as Location, 2024,
Oil on Canvas,
32" x 42" in.



Artist Bio

I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1955.

My father was artist James A. Fisher, who first introduced me to art with a capital "A," via his work in papier mache and mural painting. My mother was an accountant with the U.S. Maritime Administration.

My family moved to Palo Alto, California in the Summer of Love, June, 1967. There I made wonderful friends who made me aware of folk guitar music.

In 10th Grade, I went away to boarding school where I had a hard time academically, but comforted myself with activities such as drawing, sculpture, acting in theatre, and playing bass guitar.

Too stressed to continue at boarding school, I returned to Palo Alto to graduate from high school and play bass in small rock outfits. In 1975, I joined a lounge act. In 1982, I began my painting practice.

Working mostly at restaurants, in 1989, I finished my B.A. in Art at San Francisco State University.

Continuing to paint, I had a wonderful ten years or so exhibiting paintings at Turn

of the Century Fine Arts, a sunny and fun art gallery, in Berkeley.

In 1997, I found steady employment in accounting for Royal Coffee Inc., an Emeryville coffee importer, I worked there 24 years.

Since 1988, I intermittently studied painting and drawing with David Hardy and Andrew Ameral at The Atelier School of Classical Realism in Oakland.

In 2019, I continued my contemporary art education at UC Berkeley, Extension Post-Baccalaureate in Visual Arts program, graduating in 2021.

Now, I am lucky enough to be part of the SJSU MFA in Pictorial Art program, and grateful to be here!

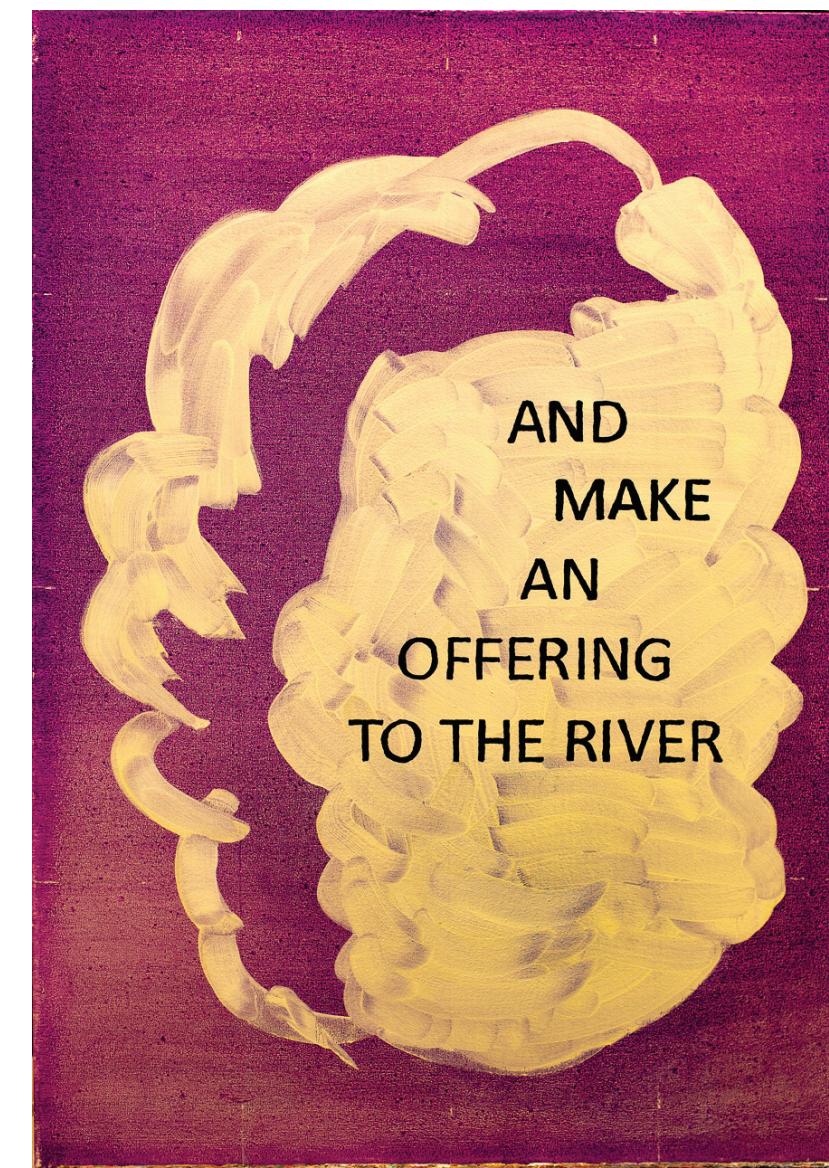
WHERE BIRDS GO
AT NIGHT
WHEN POINTS
OF TRIANGLES
COLLAPSE
THEIR TELESCOPES

Where Birds Go as Night,
2024, Oil on Canvas,
32" x 40" in.

Writer Bio

Roston Johnson is a mixed-media artist and college art instructor. He received a master of fine arts degree in pictorial art from San Jose State University, and a bachelor's degree in graphic communication from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. His work elevates the mundane through painting and other media, and is notable for its subversive, contradictory, and experimental qualities. His master's thesis, *Generous Orthodoxy in Art*, shows the breadth and trajectory of his artwork, and appeals to moderation in fine art.

And Make an Offering to the River, 2024, Oil on Canvas, 30" x 42" in.



Craig Sanborn

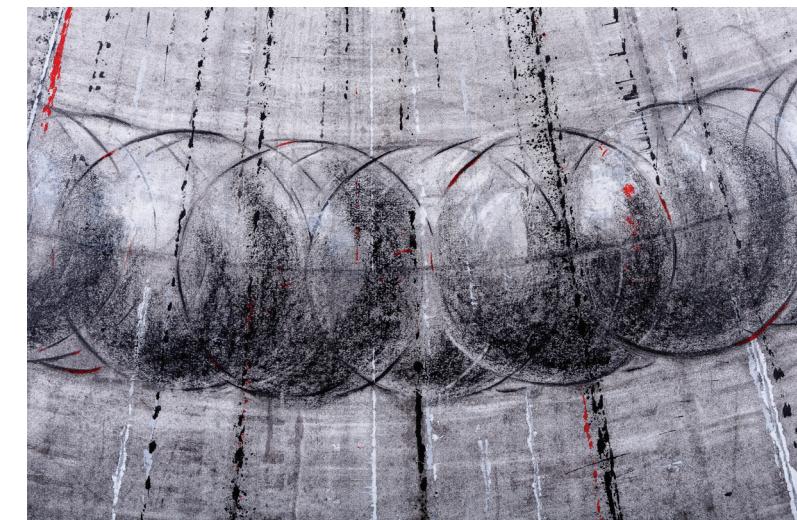
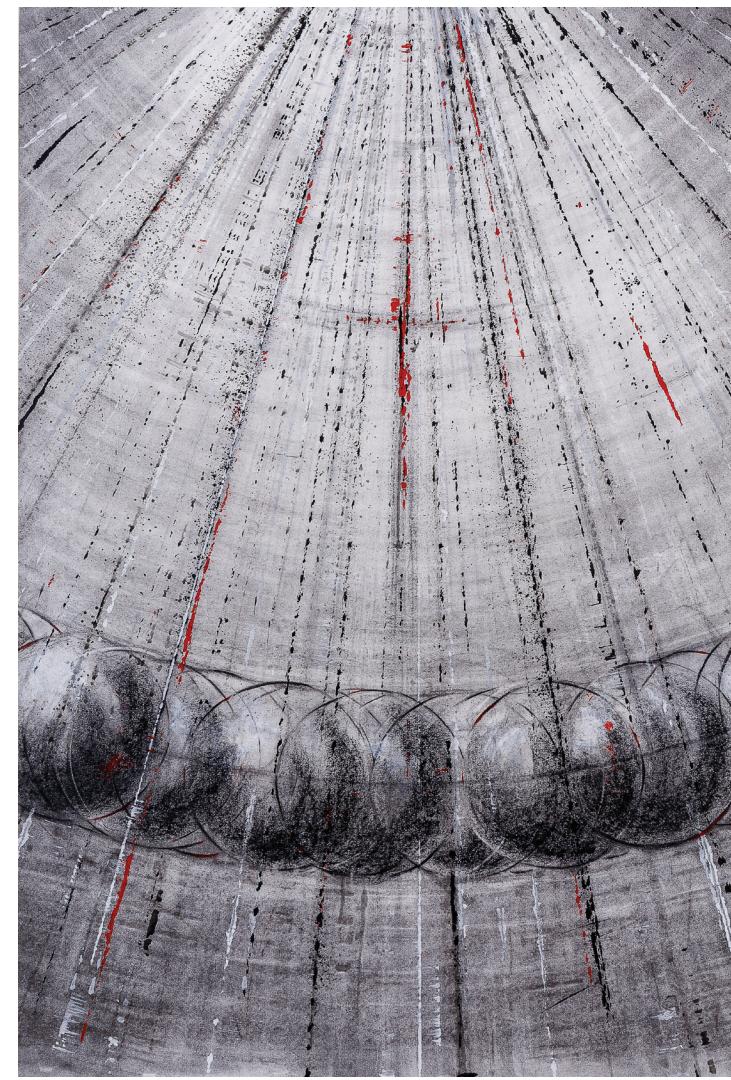
By: Donald FeaséI

Stumble and Fall, 2023
Lithograph on Rives BFK,
11" x 15" in.



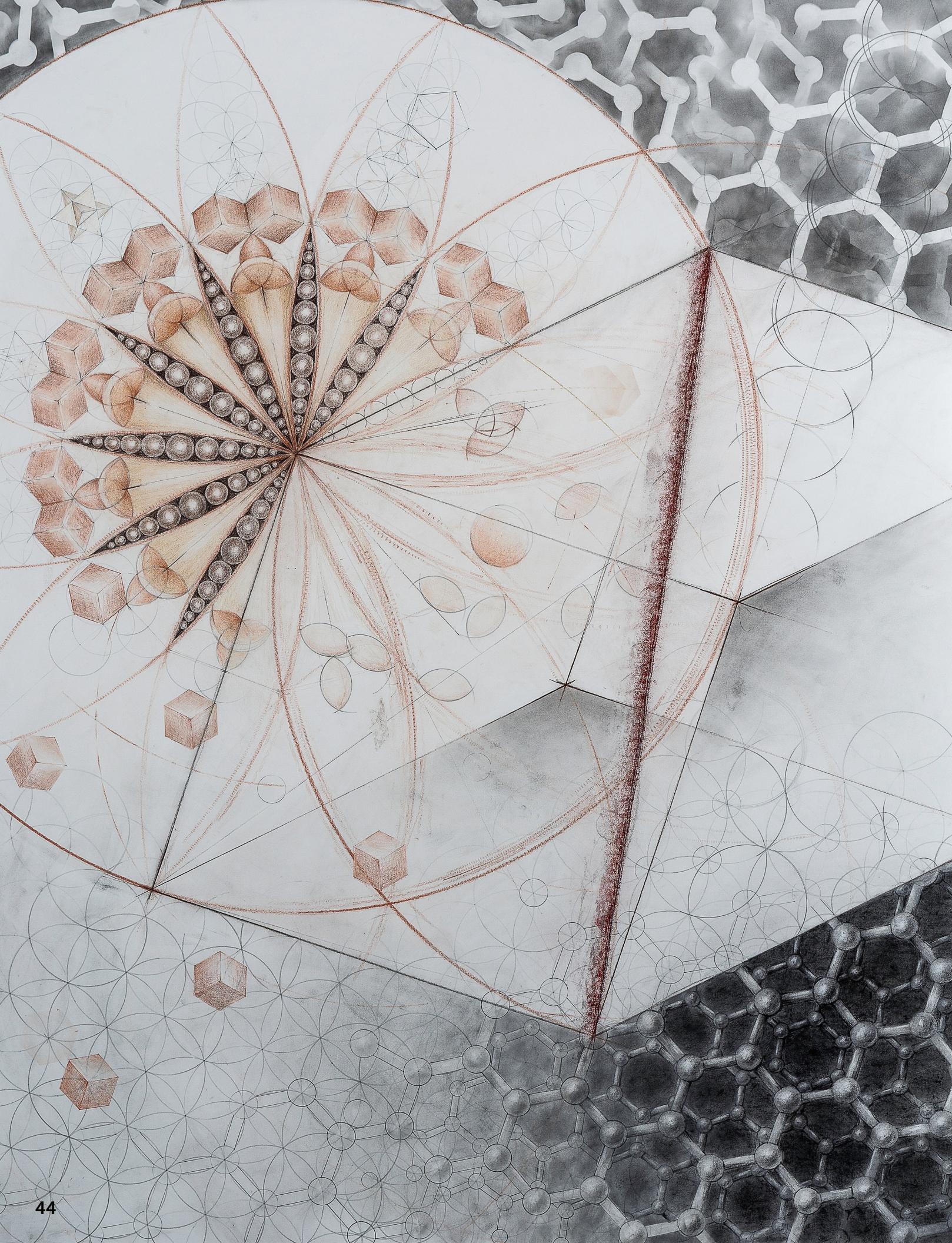
During the Renaissance, the boundary between Art & Science was blurred to the extent of disappearance. Leonardo and Dürer used their observational skills and drawing abilities (inventions) to probe deeper into the surface of visual appearance to investigate how nature operates beneath its optical surface. Age of Enlightenment artists continued this tradition, culminating in such masterpieces as Joseph Wright of Derby's *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1786). Nineteenth century American painter Thomas Eakins worked out the intricacies of his major paintings with meticulous studies that display an obsession to understand as well as represent. The many mid-century exhibitions devoted to the joinery of art and technology attests to the popularity of this merger.

For most viewers encountering Craig Sanborn's work, the aura of this marriage of Art & Science will, undoubtedly, seem readily apparent. The images we confront in Sanborn's paintings and drawings weave a story that gives clues to a destination, of which the author might be only dimly aware. The search is the thing. The thing is the object for contemplating a future search ad infinitum.



To and Fro (detail), 2023
Charcoal, Ink, Gesso, and
Acrylic on paper mounted
on panel, 27" x 40" in.

To and Fro, 2023
Charcoal, Ink, Gesso, and
Acrylic on paper mounted
on panel, 27" x 40" in.



Pneuma, 2023
Graphite, Charcoal, Pastel,
and Colored Pencil on
paper, 60" x 77" in.

Pneuma (detail), 2023
Graphite, Charcoal, Pastel,
and Colored Pencil on
paper, 60" x 77" in.

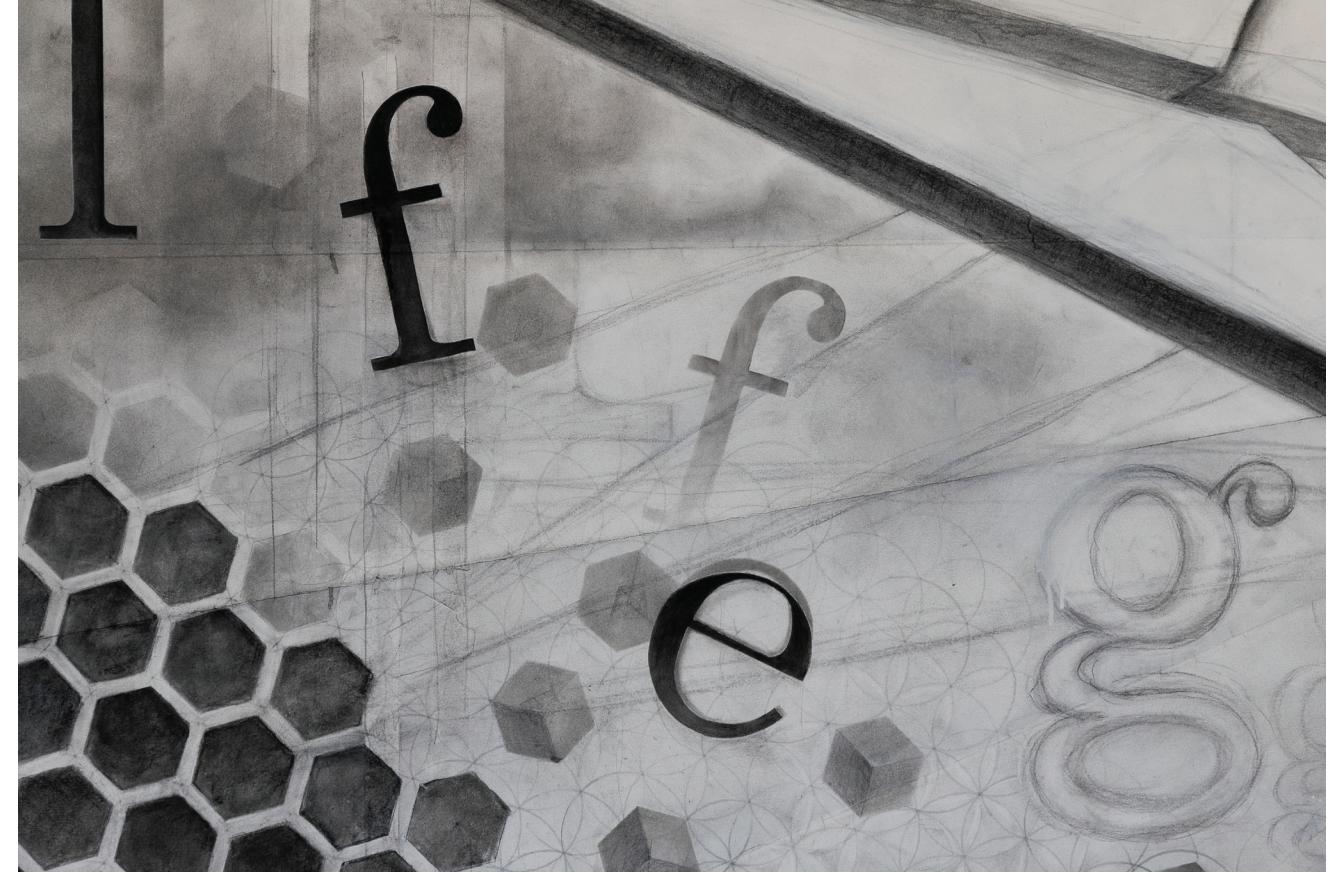
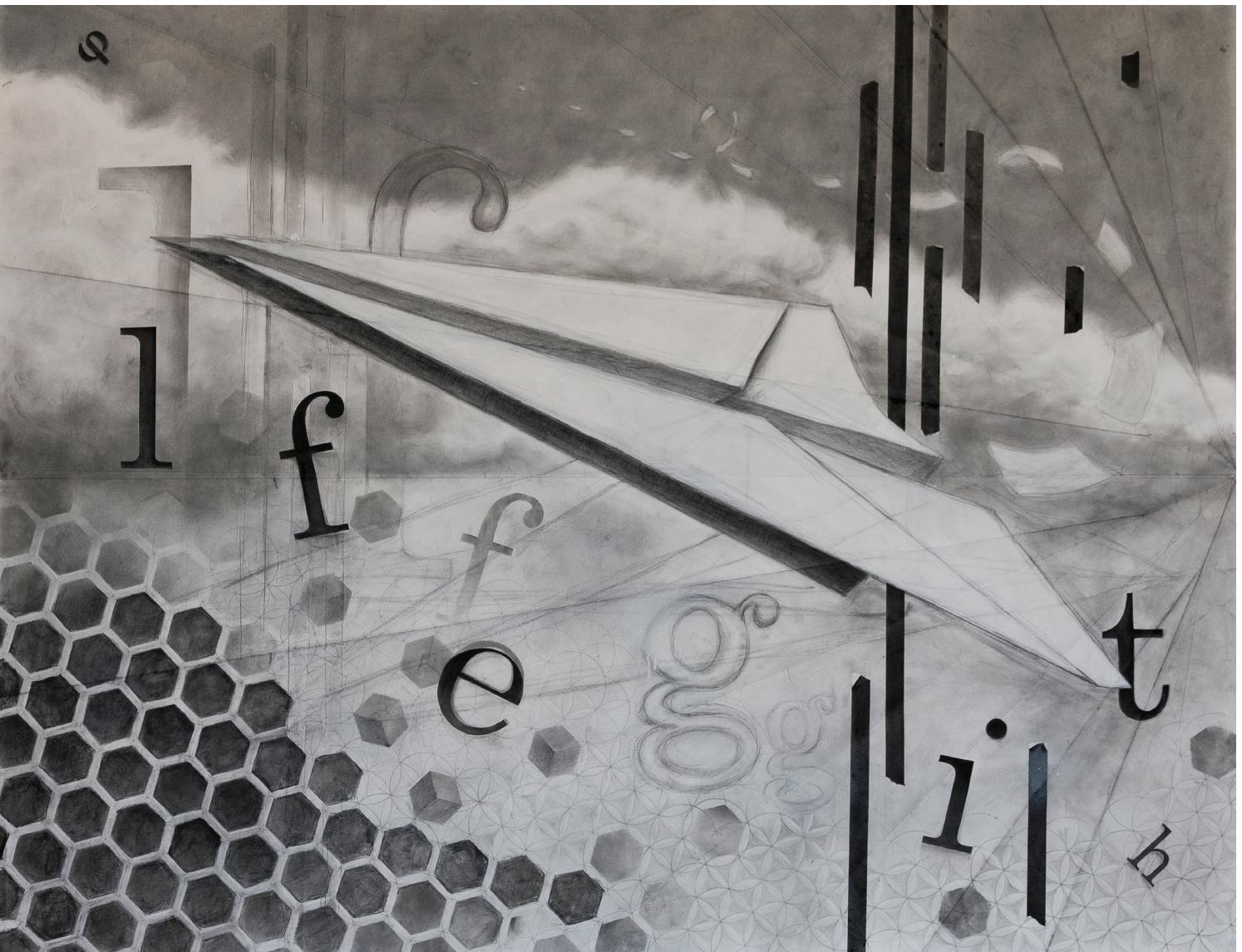


Artist Bio

Craig Sanborn is a visual artist and arts educator. Growing up in various cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, he eventually settled in San Jose, California. While enrolled at San Jose State for his undergraduate degree, he started his own company in 1991, providing integration services to the top companies in Silicon Valley. After what he calls a spiritual awakening in 2005, Sanborn's passions turned toward art. As an artist, the intersection of philosophy, theology, and science is a primary influence in his work. He uses drawing, painting, and print to investigate culture, identity, and our place in the universe. Mr. Sanborn has exhibited locally throughout the Bay Area as well as internationally and has received various awards.

His work is collected privately and is in the permanent collections of the University of Costa Rica, Teorética, and Casa del Artista in Costa Rica.

Paper Space, 2022
Graphite, Pastel, Charcoal,
Gesso on Stonehenge
paper, 63" x 50" in.



Paper Space (detail),
2022, Graphite, Pastel,
Charcoal, Gesso on
Stonehenge paper,
63" x 50" in.

Writer Bio

Donald Feasél received his BA from UCLA in 1976 and his MFA from UC Berkeley in 1984. After appearing in *Introductions '87* at Gallery Paule Anglim, his paintings were included in numerous Bay Area exhibitions, including eight solo shows at Brian Gross Fine Art and two at Triangle Gallery. In 2024 he was featured in the group show *In a grove* at Anglim/Trimble. Reviews of his work have been published in ARTnews, Art Ltd., Artweek, San Francisco Chronicle, and Squarecylinder.

He is currently a Senior Lecturer at San Jose State University, having previously taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, California.

Larisa Usich

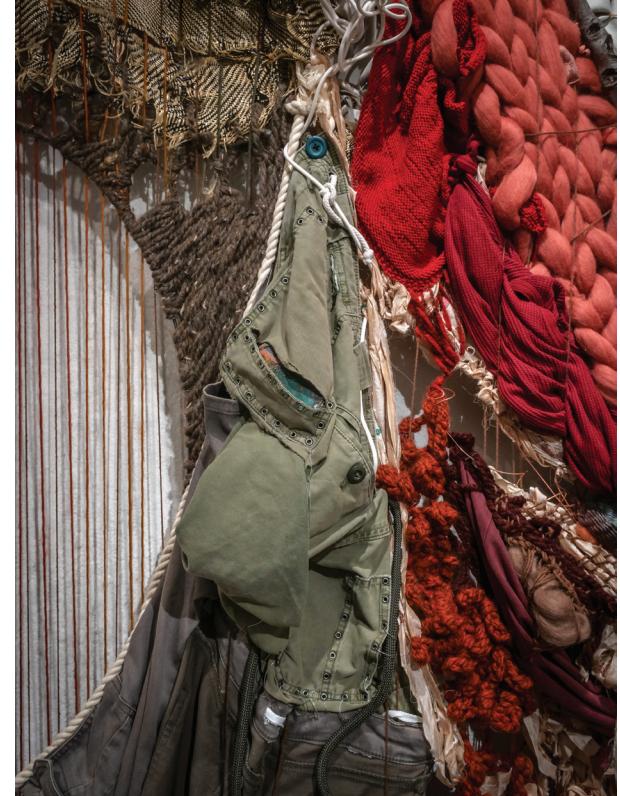
Under (Social) Construction: Larisa Usich weaves us back together



When I first met sculptor and social practice artist Larisa Usich, we spent a long time weaving while discussing pants; who wears them, how they are constructed, and the gender politics of clothing. Drawn in by the music, the wall of woven pants, and the table full of participatory art materials, I had stumbled upon Who Wears the Pants, Usich's 2023 two-week-long research workshop wherein the artist invited visitors to deconstruct pants and weave new forms while engaging with the opening question "How do you wear pants?" The deceptively simple inquiry allowed for anyone to be able to participate, bringing as much or as little complication to that topic as they felt comfortable exploring. With her wild curly blonde hair and welcoming disposition, Usich created a space that fostered curiosity, facilitated play, and allowed for vulnerable introspections about the body within the pants and the societal enforcement of gendered and socio-economical values around clothing.

Woven Between, 2024,
donated contemporary and
antique clothing, steel, Kevlar,
yarn, rope, wire, twine, lace,
wool, ceramics, redwood,
eucalyptus, camphor, pine, wolf
lichen, insects, stories,
9' x 12' x 1' ft.

By: Nicole Rudolph-Vallerga



Woven Between (detail),
2024, clothing, yarn,
kevlar, ceramic, wool, cord,
rope, sari ribbon, copper
wire, 9' x 12' x 1'



Woven Between (detail),
2024, ceramic, wool, rope,
redwood, eucalyptus,
camphor, wire.
9' x 12' x 1' ft.

Through discussion and open creation, the exhibit tapped into a vital human phenomenon that has been lost in the modern era: that of gathering people to create and converse. With the invention of industrialization and fast fashion we have been removed from this type of gathering. Instead, a fierce individualistic narrative has been enforced, removing us from opportunities of important social discourse and deep time with our greater community. Usich's feminist approach invites all to contribute to the narrative, removing ego and even ownership of the work as the participant becomes a collaborator. In this way, Usich becomes the gentlest of tricksters as she coaxes us back into our communal selves.

In Usich's thesis exhibition, *Unraveling*, the artist reflects on what she collected from the participants of *Who Wears the Pants*, incorporating specifics into her interactive multi-material sculptures. Visitors who enter the eight-foot tall, arm knit *Changing Room* hear audio vignettes selected from over 20 hours of recorded workshop conversations. *What We Hold*, a collage of cast glass and pants pockets, invokes an inquiry into the gendered history of pockets and asks the viewer to consider what we hold and have access to. Finally, her key piece, a large-scale multi-material sculpture *Woven Between* connects the natural world to the construction of gender and clothing history. Antique and modern garments, eucalyptus, camphor, wire, ceramics, and wool roving are woven between an aged steel beam and a large redwood tree branch asking the viewer to consider their connection.

Following along the lines of feminist social practice artist Suzanne Lacy, Usich begins with political questions as a basis of the work, elevating craft into vital conversation. Usich utilizes the language of weaving within her sculptural art practice, extending the idea of what can be woven and by who. In this way Usich contributes to the contemporary movement of recontextualizing weaving and fiber arts as a fine art practice, combining it with her large-scale metal sculpture and reframing how we see art practices that have historically been categorized as "craft" or "women's work." The "women's work" in this case is Usich's valuable dedication to challenging systems of inequity through critical inquiry and radical social discourse.



The Womb in the Room, 2023,
steel, wool, eucalyptus bark,
porcelain, 8' x 13' x 3' ft.

The Womb in the Room (detail),
2023, fibroid made of hospital
gown, 8' x 13' x 3' ft.



Artist Bio

Larisa Usich is a sculptor and social practice artist exploring the ways in which immersive installations and human interaction can open the mind to different realms of experience. She works in mixed materials including metals, textiles, ceramic and sound, weaving both an intimate and collaborative encounter between viewer and environment. Through a feminist lens she asks questions about what is needed to create an equitable public life, unraveling gender norms and issues of body autonomy. Abstraction and experimentation appear regularly in her practice which uses intuitive expression and immersion in the natural world as a foundation.



What We Carry (detail),
2024, cast glass, pants,
steel, led lights,
24" x 36" x 3" in.



What We Carry (detail),
2024, cast glass, pants,
steel, led lights,
24" x 36" x 3" in.



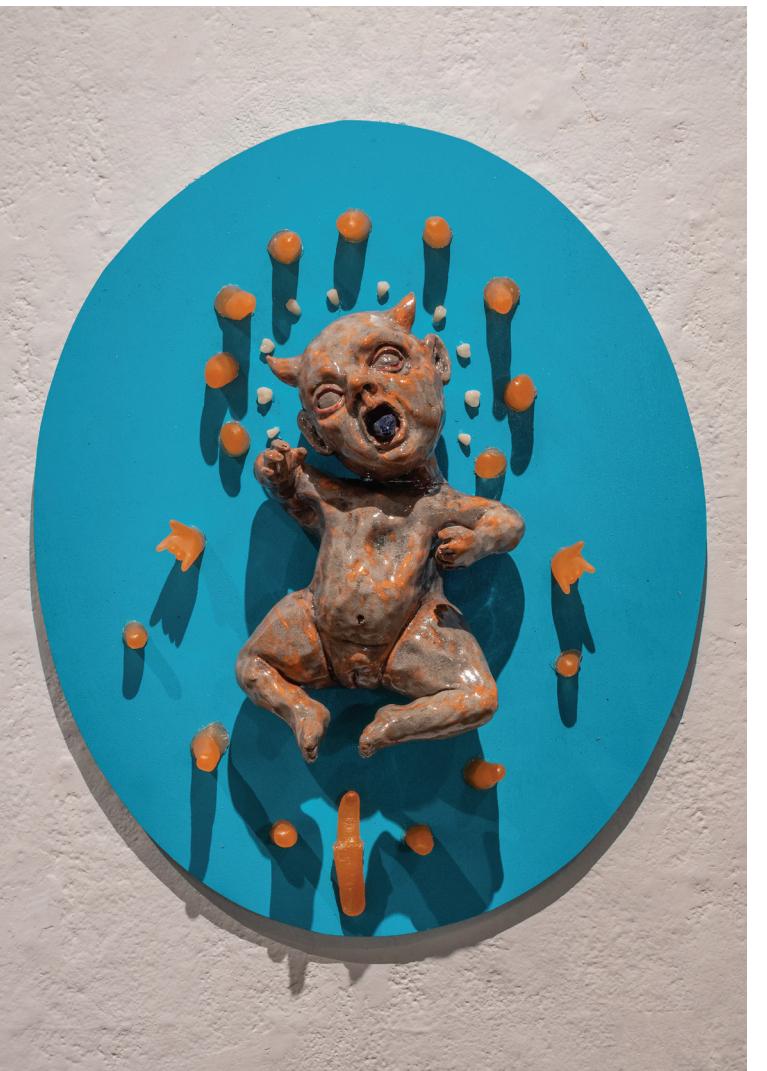
What We Carry, 2024
cast glass, pants, steel, led
lights, 24" x 36" x 3" in.

Writer Bio

Nicole Rudolph-Vallerga is an Art History and Visual Culture graduate student at SJSU as well as a curator with Museo Eduardo Carrillo, and an award-winning multimedia Social Practice artist. She has found that her experiences as an artist, art historian, and curator enrich one another allowing her a deeper perspective when working within each discipline. Her main area of interest is that of liminal spaces and “in-between” identities. As a queer, multiracial, Chicana, Intersectional Feminist, Nicole has a unique perspective as someone who lives in-between definitions and is intimately aware of the complications that this can have within rigid societal expectations and categorizations. Within her artwork and her writing she employs the use of “Soft Space,” which can be characterized as a flexibility of the mind where the reader or viewer can work through rigid societal constructs that demand binary views.

Cynthia Yadira Gonzalez

Nonlinear and Spiraling



Baby On Board- Orange
On Blue, 2024, Mixed
Media, 19" x 15" x 4" in.

*Self Portrait "FUCK", 2024,
Mixed Media,
22" x 14" x 10" in.*

By : Timna Naim

As a self-described mess, Cynthia curates using bold colors and a wide arrangement of mediums and display methods. Often working in an installation format, the work fills the space, often with several conversations happening at once, all connected through personal narratives. Their sculptures emerge from an emotional exploration of self-reflective narratives and take on their own character with drippy, colorful glazes. Clay is the medium that is clearly where Cynthia is drawn to for their introspective, allegorical creatures, clowns, and babies. Baby forms, clowns, and creatures are forms used often as motifs of childhood, abuse, and mental health. They also use textiles in the making of soft sculptures, wood in making toys, and found objects in both decorating and creating many of their sculptures. The happy and sad clowns, and morphological approach to babies and creatures are used to mitigate traumatic experiences through humor and sarcasm. There is an emphasis on playing in the process of making, and some of the objects are made with the expectation that they will be played with. Cynthia has been featured in several art shows in and around San Jose this is what Alyssarhaye Graciano the Curator at Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana has to say about



Cynthia: "Cynthia's work is personified chaos. Through lowbrow materials and masterful hands, their energy and spirit shining through their sculptures. MACLA is honored to have shared Cynthia's queer experience through art in multiple exhibitions. Their self-reflective narratives are imperative to today's culture."

Cynthia's work is personal and yet relatable as they take taboo conversations around mental health and lay them bare. Their self-deprecating humor is destructive by design, making pinata sculptures only to dress as a sad clown and destroy them in live and recorded performances. Clowns are a personal motif to Cynthia, they often use the happy/sad clown dichotomy in their two-faced clay and soft sculptures.

Cynthia's Thesis show titled *Play Things* is both overstimulating and awe-inspiring by design; it invites the viewer to make connections between their many conversations each represented as a series of work. The show is also a celebration of all they were able to do, access, and create as part of being a MFA student at SJSU. Cynthia sees their work as "nonlinear and spiraling" meaning the work makes jumps to new topics but is always self-referential and building and yet fracturing into more nuanced versions of the original narratives.



Enjoy/Suffer, 2024,
Ceramic, 11" x 11" x 7" in.



*Baby On Board- Blue
On Orange*, 2024, Mixed
Media, 19" x 15" x 4" in.



Bits and pieces, 2024,
Mixed Media,
19" x 11" x 18" in.

Artist Bio

Cynthia Yadira Gonzalez (they/them) is a Mexican-American artist who has been painting since 2003 and sculpting since 2009. Their work is vibrant in color and incorporates found objects and non-traditional mediums, like felt and caulk, to create eccentric and unusual objects packed with sibylline symbolism. Inspired by dreams, nightmares, and mental illness, their work serves to visually communicate the anxiety and daily dysphoria that is a familiar recurrence in their everyday life. They received the International Sculpture Center's 2022 Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award, the Belle Foundation grant, and

was the recipient of the Murphy Cadogan Award in 2022. Raised in San José, Cynthia Yadira Gonzalez earned their Bachelor's in Fine Arts in Spatial Arts (sculpture) from San José State University in 2020 and is currently working on their Master's in Fine Arts at San Jose State University.



To Be Gendered Is To Perform- Clown Wall,
2024, Various Media,
Various Sizes

Writer Bio

Timna Naim holds a BA in Dance from UCLA, and is a dual degree master's student at SJSU for an MFA in Spatial Art focused on sculpture, interactive installation, and performance and an MA in Teaching focused on learning through introspection, play, and community. The diverse nature of their bi-racial, multi-ethnic, and trans-national identities has given them insight into how cultures and contexts interact to inform identity formation. The themes in their work explore both social norms and material relationships. In their artwork, they support others in exploring their relationship with play and improvisation to define their relationship with themselves and their world through community.



And Yet Again- The Beginning Of My Oral Fixation Was A Game I Liked To Play, 2024, Mixed Media, 36" x 16" x 8" in.

Laamsha Young

Poetry of Play

By: Chelsea Stewart



Roses are planted where thorns grow, And on the barren heath Sing honey bees (From The Argument: The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, by William Blake), 2023, Acrylic, colored pencil, oil paint, charcoal, printer's ink on unprimed canvas, 48" x 48" in.

Play. Light. Love. Messiness. Chaos. Poetry. These are all the words that come to mind when viewing Laamsha Young's work and practice. Not only does she dive straight into the work itself and encapsulate herself and the viewer within the realms of the domestic mundane and the world we surround ourselves with in the nature of the chaotic everyday, but she pinpoints the emotive qualities that come from motherhood, from exploration, from understanding the material at its core and working within it rather than making it do something its not.



Vase/Urn for Dead Flowers, 2023, Cast aluminum, spray paint, patina, 12" x 6" in.

Known to her friends and cohort as "Laamie", she exudes consistent joy and desire in her practice. When viewing her work, you want to touch, feel, and understand the materials just as the artist would. You feel welcomed into the organized chaos and playfulness that is the everyday of a painter in her studio. The viewer can imagine themselves just as the artist would, being hugged by her hometown woods of the Santa Cruz forests. In Laamie's work, you experience the warmth of motherhood and a wanting for understanding something more than what is portrayed on the canvas. An emergence of the inner artist and the way she depicts her daily life. There is a poetic domesticity that comes through in her ever growing portfolio. Canvases will literally layer upon one another. When talking with Laamie, you see her personality is fluid through the work. The artist is not separate from her brush. There is not one without the other. You feel a warmth, a hug, and a compassion meshed with a drive for learning, understanding, and wanting to better encapsulate the mess we call life.

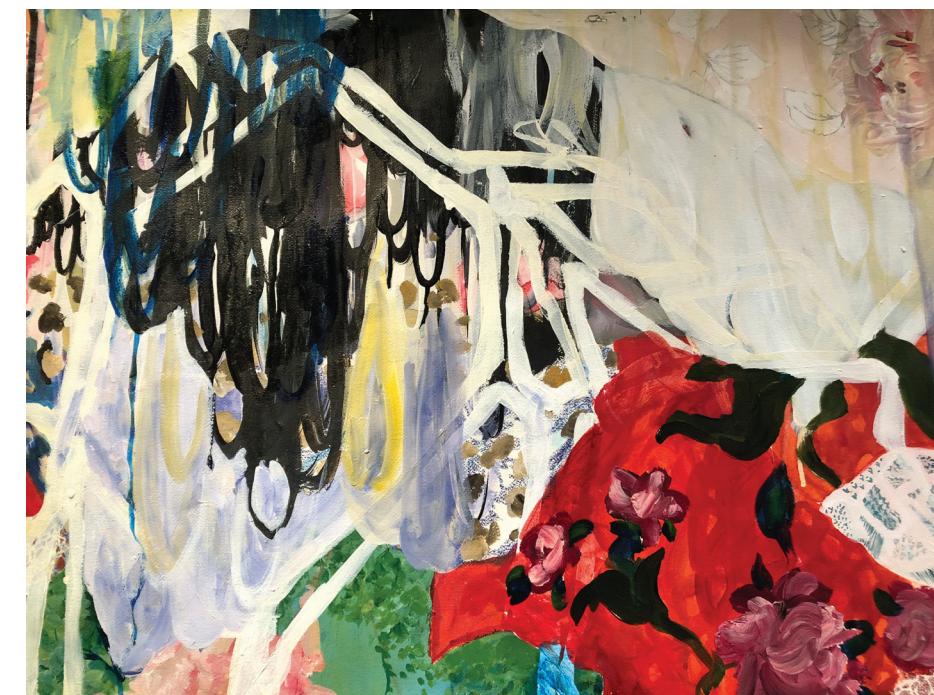
*And pull down the covers.
We're in this season's
floral print jammies and
feeling very sleepy. Turn on
the machine that muffles
the ghosts that waft. (From
"Rock and Roll is Dead,
The Novel is Dead, God
is Dead, Painting is Dead"
by Mary Jo Bang),
2023, Acrylic, colored
pencil, Sumi ink, charcoal
on Watercolor paper,
68" x 44" in.*



Her work is continuously explorative and holds raw truth in each stroke and delicate touch of the pencil to the paper. Each work is its own stanza into the day-to-day, the week-to-week. The application is meditative mixed with sudden candid movements that are harmonious, genuine, messy and vibrant. The best way to describe the nature of the everyday. The touches of black ink seen in her pieces: *At night / the voices on the patio / sound like small / darting birds / we set sail... (From "Marco Polo" by Michael Dickman)* and, *From the distance where / the smell of earth is different / and the twilight comes weeping / in the / shape of dark poppies... (From "Phantom" by Pablo Neruda)*, bring a focal point to the composition that draws the viewer into the painting. The black ink pierces the canvases in a soft volcanic motion. Contours give form to the watercolor fragments- of which the paint and pencil battle with candor. The paintings emerge from the paper and into the white cube they are displayed in, and they grow into the space and ground themselves off the paper and into the wall. Blending in purples and soft pinks of the paper, the artist's hand is prominent in each wave of the brush. There is honesty and sincerity in the vignettes of the paper. There is an emergence of pencil through the fogs of paint, clearing up the longer the viewer looks at the work. Bursts of color and impulsive understanding in the brushstrokes and drips of each piece. And to think, it's exciting that this body of work gets to be the catalyst for more in the coming years of her emerging artistic practice.



*From the distance where
the smell of earth is
different and the twilight
comes weeping in the
shape of dark poppies...
(From "Phantom" by Pablo
Neruda)* (detail), 2023,
Acrylic, colored pencil,
Sumi ink, charcoal on
Watercolor paper,
44" x 76" in.



Artist Bio

Laamsha Young got her GED at 15 and spent the next 12 years studying art at 10 different colleges throughout the country including Villanova University, Johnson State College, Santa Rosa Junior College, and The Academy of Art College. In her teens, she worked in the studios of Michael Tyburski, Lucia Antonelli, and David Best. She graduated with a BFA from Sonoma State University and, soon after began her company Blank Verse Jewelry. Young, the daughter of a potter and a blacksmith; the grand-daughter of a furniture designer and a watercolorist, grew up making things and feeling at home in the world of art. Young received an MILS in 2020, and an MFA in pictorial arts in 2024, both from San Jose State University. She lives in the Santa Cruz Mountains with her husband and two children.



*They have spoken
in a sleeping tongue
for a long time
They are posthumous
as the echoes of the
thunder's flower
And the same as
perfumes (From "The
Song of the Death Life"
by Vincente Huidobro),
2023, Acrylic, colored
pencil, Sumi ink, charcoal
on Watercolor paper,
44" x 79" in.*



*Vase/Urn for the Ashes of
Plastic Flowers, 2023,
Cast aluminum, spray
paint, patina, expandable
foam, 12" x 8" in.*

Writer Bio

Chelsea Stewart is an interdisciplinary contemporary artist working in metal, textiles and papermaking. Her practice focuses on themes of anxiety and ADHD, familial relationships and exploration of process and play. The relationships between feeling grounded, the action of erosion, and the human body and mind form the fundamentals of her work. The feeling of being grounded in life, and the fragility of the human experience is visualized through installations and paintings in her own narratives.

Chelsea Stewart lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area. Stewart is currently attending San Jose State while working towards her MFA in Spatial Arts, and she currently works as the Gallery Manager at the Pamela Walsh Gallery in downtown Palo Alto, CA.

Artist Statements

Brian Anderson

I have always enjoyed exploring, planning for, and creating new patterns. There is always a calming consistency to experience an expected change. Latching on to this mindset gave me the confidence to set, attempt, and meet any goal my professional career would be able to provide. This became successful for me when pursuing my Master's of Fine Arts in Digital Media Art at San Jose State University. Now several months shy of walking across that stage in a gown with a second degree in hand, I must prepare to defend my Thesis on how social media overuse can mimic cult-like behavior. My ARTillery consists of a multimedia art show constructed from 8 years of defaced research and a self made feature film titled *Life of Barron: CultTV - The Movie*.

The creation of this project stems from personal and familial experiences with media in general. In essence I am creating this project for them despite the chaotic nature. However, I have clawed my way out of many research holes during this process and have discovered multiple strategies and patterns I can easily mold into my practice. The majority of my influence stems from the creative minds of Alex Toth, Thomas Hirschhorn, and John Baldesari.

Toth, is a cartoonist that worked for the entertainment network Warner Brothers to produce cult classics like *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*, - a cartoon based late night talk show interviewing live personas of famous actors and public figures. Toth's work inspired me to produce my own cartoon podcast show, interviewing live authorities in cult theory, and beginning the process of producing educational entertainment.

Hirschhorn inspired me to cover my space,

find the balance between intentional placement and junk pile. This perspective allowed me to understand that to really submerge my viewer into any gallery space, I need to print and deface every single article, text, and resource I have discovered. Not only did this allow for the film to have a unique, on-theme, sculptural display; it also provides the viewer the chance to see my interpretation of how social media and the internet devalues and defaces information for monetary purposes.

Finally, my core inspiration is John Baldesari. Both he and I are San Diegans and at heart are driven to embrace the culturally weird and anything that's not boring. His soulful anecdote and film project titled *I will not make any boring art*, will always echo in the back of my mind till the day I stop making art. It stands as a permanent testament to find the fun, the weird, the experimentation, and the balance of yourself in the work and simply create for yourself. Plus the happy accidents that occur will always make your work "not boring." This mindset forced me to challenge myself technically and produce a full feature film starring myself, the many people who I collaborated with along the way, and finally guest star Dr. Janja Lalich PHD (World renowned sociologist and cult researcher).

I now challenge you to wallow through the gray matter and venture into my brain. The main topic of study being conducted is a deep dive into the dismissal of the human experience. With a background and artistic practice engaged in animation, visual effects, stage design, and video production I am conducting case studies into how we as a species have fallen victim to the same rhetoric and tools developed to aid in our technological evolution. I then convert these studies into multimedia based horror cartoons displayed on 5 television

monitors. These monitors are then framed in monstrous research sculptures drowned in stark redlight capturing how social media encourages the defacement of information. Surrounding the sculptures are more of this infectious research texture eating away at the space to create this digital toxic void I am describing. Then in the unaffected space I offer the opportunity to sit next to a model of my own social media character *Barron Bartholomew Burns The III*, holding a tablet linked to his "true form" screaming at you to let him out of his digital prison. Choose between 1 of 2 nostalgic upholstery chairs on either side of Barron's annoyance. Here's the chance for you to tune out his noise and finally experience how scrolling through thousands of virtual posts a day has a huge effect on basic mental health. A recreation of a casual doom scroll.

The algorithms hovering at every cell phone user's fingertips is designed to confuse, dissociate and separate all for monetary value. Why else does one keep scrolling for hours on end? It brings about more personal trauma, both mental and physical, causing a separation with the people who surround us. I see how many overuse this social device as a means of positive reinforcement when in reality, it's sucking the life out of the human experience and replacing a user's personality with a digital avatar. This avatar is designed to help navigate users through the virtual hellscape. Instead it works with the Algorithm to also subject them to streamlined chaos. Almost like a filter on a shopping website. My goal is to call these situations to action through my work and encourage people to put their phones down and remember social media is a tool.

Samuel Crookston Herschlag

Sculpture provides the medium through which the individual, subjective experience becomes physical. My work channels the

fortitude required to live with invisible illness, in pain, and otherwise at odds with the perceptions of others.

My work is an unvarnished interpretation of surmounting the hardships presented by the body. Having experienced the limitations of the visual, due to my experiences with unseen disabilities, I seek to create a tactile representation of the subjective. Through the occupation of physical space, the invisible becomes tangible, and the subjective becomes undeniable, inviting the viewer to partake in the previously inaccessible experience. My practice as an artist is a manifestation of my bodily experiences in an attempt to process them and connect with others who share similar stories.

The natural world is prominent in my work, but I don't rely on its inherent beauty. Using wood, metal and other materials that have been subject to change through natural elements, I preserve and transform the temporary, the decomposing, into hybrid industrial creations. Oxidation, degradation, and preservation of all forms is a means of connecting the ordinary to the complex experience of living with pain.

Roston Johnson

Should artists learn the rules of art in order to break them, or can artists break their own rules and defy others' expectations?

Generous orthodoxy is a phrase coined by the twentieth-century theologian, Hans Frei, and brought back to light by acclaimed author and Revisionist History podcast host, Malcolm Gladwell. "To be orthodox is to be committed to tradition; to be generous, as Frei defines it, is to be open to change," says Gladwell. Generous orthodoxy conveys Frei's belief that people ought to live life in moderation. I apply this same notion to fine art.

GENEROUS ORTHODOXY: THE THESIS SHOW is a series of Polaroid-formatted paintings that appeals to moderation, unifies eclectic aesthetics, and is intended for the viewer's enjoyment and edification. Despite the cookie-cutter format and choice of ephemeral substrate—paper—some pieces within the series are given more care and attention than others. These parts of a whole are as methodical as immediate, and as conventional as unorthodox. It is an anti-archive of people, places, food, and things more abstract—not unlike the roll of varied images stored on every smartphone. The lack of titles encourages viewers to make their own inferences and connections between individual pieces, and suggests that seemingly disparate content could actually be more related.

Whether I paint from observation or imagination, my impulse to create is the same: To elevate the mundane, to put time and energy into an activity that I love, to paint the people and stories from my life, and to reveal the gray tones of this world's checkered landscape. Although the final artwork and its conversation are important, it is the physical act of painting that nourishes me.

Julia Peng

I embrace various mediums such as wood, ceramics, glass, digital media, watercolor, and oil paint for my creations, each offering unique qualities. I believe these mediums have their own soul which enhance my expression and convey the purity and primitiveness I seek to capture in my work.

In my creative process, I use the inherent qualities of each medium to establish an intimate connection between the subject and the material. For example, I paint portraits on silk. Silk's ethereal quality allows the portrait to subtly shift with the

breeze, capturing the dynamic essence of human faces and the ever-changing nature of reality. Similarly, I employ watercolor and glass to convey the nature of the woods; the diffusive quality of watercolor captures the misty atmosphere, while glass refracts light and shadows to mirror the intricate interplay of light and darkness found in the depths of the woods.

In my shows, I display the paint penetration on kraft paper in my creation process as it symbolizes the passages of life imprinted upon us. Kraft paper, with its unassuming simplicity, serves as a metaphor for the mundanity of everyday life, while the paint marks on it represent enduring memories, often unnoticed yet profoundly present. Inspiration stems from everyday beauty and emotions. Through my art, I aim to capture these moments and infuse them with vitality, inviting viewers to delve into the rich meanings within.

Mark Porter Fisher

Completed in 2024 at a studio at San Jose State University, this selection of five oil paintings comes from a larger set of twelve pictures called *The Gas Series*.

Rather than complete one painting before moving on to the next, I went round and round all 12 paintings so they could better grow together.

The different background colors applied to each canvas represent the sublime.

The warp and weft of the broad grid drawn on each canvas represents contact and interaction within the weave, or matrix of an individual person of a civilization .

Atop the grid, a bubble/cloud emerges as a space for a thought or an epiphany to dwell.

The top, final layer is the text within the bubble/cloud. The text is the articulation of a thought or epiphany in words.

The words on the paintings are mine, with the exception of "I Sat Down by a

Sparkling River," which is a line borrowed from a lecture on quality by Robert M. Pirsig, author of the classic book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

Each painted line of text on the canvas aims to convey compositional balance and feeling.

There is no hidden meaning within the text.

From these words, may the viewer find their own meaning.

In these last three years, it has been an honor to be given the time and space to study art at San Jose State University. I thank my fine cohort of Master of Fine Arts students, professors, administrators, and our curator, Karen Kienzle.

Craig Sanborn

I endeavor to cultivate a space for discovery, exploration, and, when the stars align, encounter. I am captivated by the mysteries and paradoxes of existence and what it means to be human. Recognizing that not only the order of reason and logic but also the mystery of the spiritual and metaphysical are vital when searching for a deeper understanding; both exist within my work.

My first love is drawing, but painting and printmaking are always close by. Using formal design elements, specific materials, and geometrical structures as symbolic elements, I place these concepts in a dialog as an investigative process with little certainty of what the final imagery will become. False starts, cover-ups, reworking, new directions, stray marks, and blemishes become the artifacts of the process. The work that emerges becomes a record of the precarious and mysterious journey of searching for an encounter. An encounter that ultimately leads to more questions than answers.

Larisa Usich

My work emerges from the intersection of the personal and political, currently engaging in discussions of body autonomy and gender norms. Using social practice and mixed-media sculpture including textiles, metals, ceramics and glass, I reflect on the vulnerability and power of living in a female assigned body and engage with others to explore communal societal experience.

Participation is central to my work in which I create space for introspection to consider each of our own relationships to gender, power and body autonomy. Gathering and sharing oral and written responses brings specificity to broad topics and weaves together common themes and points of connection. Experimentation and abstraction appear regularly in my sculptural installations which are guided by intuitive expression. I am not a purist when it comes to materials, combining what feels relevant to a given work whether clay, metal, textiles, found objects or natural matter.

Influenced by immersion in the natural world, there I find both deep calm and riveting chaos. While in these spaces I don't feel a separation between mind and sky, body and bark, spirit and wild. This merging with the rhythm of the natural world is a through line in my work. Currently, my participatory weaving and listening practice invites people as well as trees and textiles as collaborators in the creation of mixed-material installations.

Cynthia Yadira Gonzalez

My work tackles the line between the perceived reality and the inner philosophical and unpremeditated world of thought; where a child-like imagination is tainted with adult themes. With my sculptures and paintings, I narrate the inner workings of the mind exploring

things we might want to forget, but also things that formed us; the innocence and the trauma that congeals into a personality. My current work dives into materiality and the unnecessary gendering of craft and skill. With clay, wood, polymers, and fibers I produce small glimpses into other worlds. Through lowbrow materials, I create powerful exchanges of situations and thoughts.

Laamsha Young

Art-making is a practice of creating opportunities for unexpected connections, it is like poetry. Painting speaks in line, color, shape, and layers of recorded action. It tells stories of the alchemy of control and release; of chance and will, of clarity and obfuscation. As I paint, I imagine that I am creating poems and short stories. I repeat patterns and draw familiar objects like quilts, animals and figures as a form of storytelling.

My earliest childhood was spent in rural Tennessee; I was raised on hippy values and Appalachian spirituals in a dirt floor cabin. I began my life-long mistrust in the delineation of inside (domestic) and outside (wild) at this early age. When my family moved to a tiny rural farming town in Vermont, I spent my time reading fairy tales, playing in the woods, and tuning into scratchy Canadian radio to listen to punk rock. All of these experiences continue to form the vocabulary of my paintings.

Painting is my act of self-recognition; a dialog with my own skills and inadequacies. I express this through quick, unmediated brushwork, trusting the unknown to be wiser than I am. I push against what I know with curiosity and excitement, recording all of this in my paintings. In this way, my paintings become my own lexicon of lines and colors, and my vocabulary of familiar poetic symbols.

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