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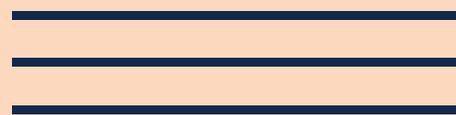
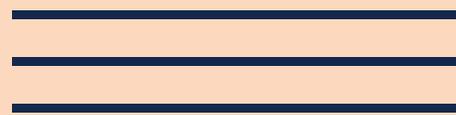
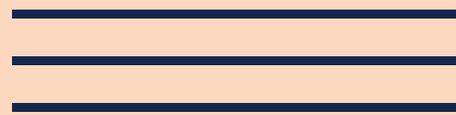
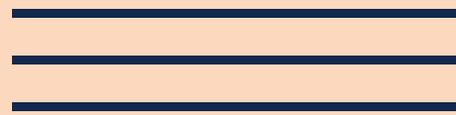
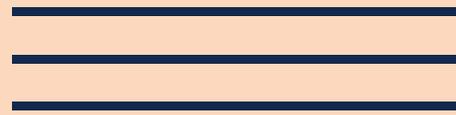
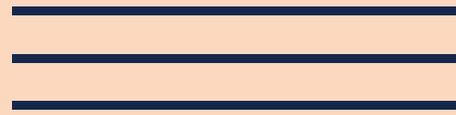
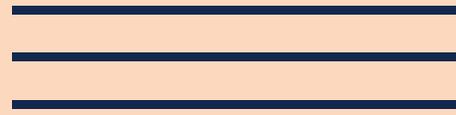
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A HUNDRED

MFA 2020



BATTIN' A HUNDRED

USF MFA 2020

With essays by students in the graduate Art History program
University of South Florida School of Art and Art History

Published on the occasion of
BATTIN' A HUNDRED: 2020 MFA Graduation Exhibition
April 3 – May 9, 2020
USF Contemporary Art Museum



FOREWORD

This compendium features the collaborative efforts of the graduating Master of Fine Arts students and the Master of Arts students in Art History at the University of South Florida's School of Art and Art History. It is indicative of the steadfast commitment to transdisciplinary research and learning in the College of The Arts and throughout the University.

The students self-selected the pairings of one studio graduate with one art history student based on writing preferences and research backgrounds. Once decisions were made, the artist and scholar shared dialogue, studio visits, written drafts, and edits—back and forth—until the final artworks and essays reached the ideal form and tenor.

The MFA at USF is acknowledged as a premiere program among its peers nationally. Students create artworks that embrace a vast range of materials and diverse, innovative conceptual strategies.

The USF MA program in Art History is unique in that the curriculum is based exclusively on small, writing-intensive seminars. Students engage in advanced research on current issues in art history.

Our eminent faculty in both disciplines are internationally distinguished for their scholarly and creative research achievements and as notably outstanding, inspiring teachers.

Sincere appreciation is extended to publication designers Don Fuller and Marty de la Cruz, and to the generous donors who made the endeavor possible, the MFAO student organization and Neil Bender + the team at Quaid, site of the fundraising auction.

Congratulations to our incredibly dedicated, gifted and talented graduate students for the entire production—from the original inception to this dynamic record that you hold in your hands!

WALLACE WILSON

Director + Professor, USF School of Art and Art History

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MAHYA AMINI

TRANSCENDENTAL ATMOSPHERES

WRITTEN BY: GINA LANE

Mahya Amini's work delves into the psychological, exploring themes of anxieties, murder, and death as a mode of exploring her own fears. Portraiture comprises the corpus of her work, a genre that lends well to her expression and interest in understanding what lays beneath the surface of not only herself and other people, but of the world around her.

The concept of fear ebbs and flows within much of Amini's art. Early cave painting greatly inspires her work. For her, these historic paintings exemplify how early humans struggled with and expressed their fears of the large and ferocious animals they needed to hunt for survival. The same need to express inner turmoil and terrors can be found within her work. She describes that her art often helps her not only give life to her greatest fears, but additionally lets her face them. In her *Ted Bundy* series, she investigated her anxieties about dying and death by creating a portrait series of Ted Bundy's victims. Through her display technique, in which the victims' portraits were hung across from portraits of Bundy, she sought to provide a way for the young women to face their apprehensions. Throughout this process she found herself drawn to the psychological workings of killers and questioned what fueled them or what frightened them.

In her thesis project for *Battin' A Hundred* she explores her childhood in Iran and its influence on her personhood. She describes, "I grew up in a country that teaching about religion is a requirement of your education. You start from first grade until you graduate and even in college you are "REQUIRED" to pass religious courses in order to graduate. But on the other hand, I grew up in a family that doesn't exactly believe in that."¹ She struggled with the differing religious and nonreligious views that varied while at school and at home. The fear of God's watchful eye and of going to hell, mixed with her vexation of the often-hypocritical actions of those around her are themes within her works.

Growing up she always felt deeply connected to painting, seeking from a young age to make real what she imagined. As a child inspired by her favorite movie, *Mary Poppins*, she believed if she

became a good enough artist she would, like the characters in the film, be able to jump into her paintings. In her piece, *Dard* (the Persian word for "paint"), a section of the work is displayed on the floor harkening back to the paintings she placed on the floor and sought to jump into as a child.² Her tactile paintings then—and now—became a means of expressing and exploring the impalpable.

The faces in the portraits she produces manifest in some cases through her fears but in others through her interpretations of the already existing world around her. In a series titled *My Boogeyman* she gave life to a male figure that haunted her nightmares and hallucinations; his face with "half circle eyes and a square mouth [and] showing... his creepy teeth"³ emerges from the canvas embodying the very ambience of horror. In other works, such as her *I, Who...* series, faces blur into focus. In a process of paper, black paint and water she began to see faces and through further manipulation aided in the emergences of these faces. Animism is the religious or doctrine of belief that "every natural thing in the universe has a soul,"⁴ a concept that Amini is drawn to and finds resonance in. Growing up she often would see faces in both living and nonliving things and sought to capture this. In one of her largest book projects she has helped faces materializing from its pages, pages that were once a living tree.

Mahya Amini is not afraid to venture into the uncanny of the psychological realm in her art. Through reconnoitering experiences in childhood her work speaks to her own inner qualms, ones that resonate with audiences. In exploring her own fears and animistic qualities of the world she brings the intangible into the corporeal, all the while creating the very atmosphere of the ethereal.

1. Mahya Amini, Artist Proposal, (University of South Florida, 2020).
2. Mahya Amini, Interview with Gina Lane, December 3, 2019.
3. Amini, Artist Proposal.
4. Amini, Artist Proposal.







1. *Untitled*, 2018
mixed media on paper
12 X 18 inches
2. *The Boogeyman*, 2017
mixed media on paper
12 X 18 inches
3. *Teddy*, 2018
mixed media on paper
12 X 18 inches
4. *Untitled*, 2018
mixed media on paper
12 X 18 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.



MOHSEN AZAR

REGARDING THE INVISIBLE PAIN OF OTHERS

WRITTEN BY: RICHARD ELLIS

Through his image-based work, interdisciplinary artist Mohsen Azar endeavors to process the unending trauma of the world that is witnessed by the digital constituency on a daily basis. In the romantic futility of such an insurmountable goal, Azar finds a place for critical meditation through photography on his, and our, relationship as observers to the horrors repeatedly played out on the world's stage.

Azar's approach to handling loaded photographic material is informed by ideas put forth by Susan Sontag in her book-length essay, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. The work displayed in this exhibition keenly expands on the issues that Sontag investigates in her book, that most of those who view images of atrocities lack the capacity to empathize with the experiences that the images present. Sontag explains that this is because the disturbing nature of the photograph's content is all too foreign to the viewer's own experience.¹ But what happens when the images become familiar? What happens after we are lifted from our state of shock? A consideration of the established norms for distributing and displaying graphic images through news outlets led Azar to remove the very thing that characterizes this typology of photographs. Through the digital erasure of appropriated pictures, Azar blurs the captured moments of history and creates something new in their place in an effort to reconcile, in some small way, the injustices that the pictures commemorate.

The photographs on display here are from a series of landscapes taken at places where battles of war had been fought in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Depictions of war have been a staple of Orientalist art since the academic renditions of Napoleon's military incursions in the Middle East and North Africa, and this genre maintains its preeminence in contemporary representations of the Islamic world as portrayed by the media, which often focus on the violent conflicts that, for innumerable reasons, unfortunately persist throughout the region.² The original photographs that these works are based off of contain the limp and bloody corpses of fallen soldiers. Unlike the pictures used for Azar's earlier series, these images never appeared in the media because they were deemed too graphic for the public audience. In defiance, Azar displays the photographs here, but in compliance, he has made the graphic content disappear. Removing the bodies and replacing them with the earth through Photoshop is a gesture of reverence towards these anonymous, hapless individuals, who were slain in senseless violence. Their veiling is a humble way of offering a digital burial for the bodies of the men who were left dead and exposed, who could neither consent to nor decline their final portrait. The absence of the dead soldiers virtually manifests the artist's intention to wish for a peace that could have been, and to advocate for a peace that can still be.

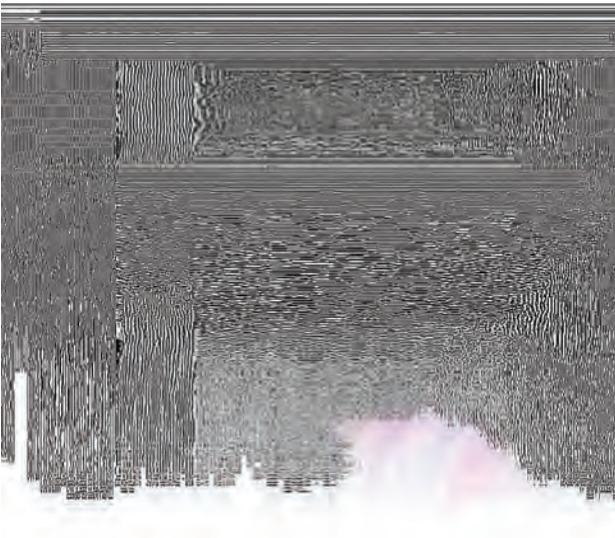
1. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 7.

2. Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, (New York: Harper Row, 1989), 33-59.

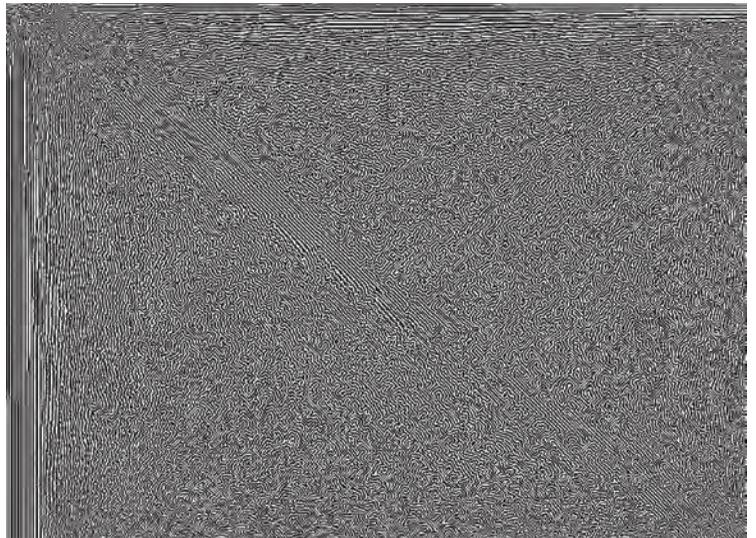




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1. *Iraqi Landscape No.9*, 2020 digitally manipulated photograph inkjet print on archival paper 65 X 44 inches
2. *Yemeni Landscape No.17*, 2020 digitally manipulated photograph inkjet print on archival paper 58 X 44 inches
3. *Alan Kurdi As of Now.*, 2020 JPEG file uploaded and downloaded 3853 times on Instagram 44 X 44 inches
4. *Syrian Landscape No.31*, 2020 digitally manipulated photograph inkjet print on archival paper 125 X 44 inches



Images courtesy of the artist.

MATTHEW CAMPBELL

(DIS)ORDERED

WRITTEN BY: CLAIRE ANDERSON

In his art, Matthew Campbell examines the space in between order and disorder. There are three assumptions at play in Campbell's artworks: all art is made by a human for a human, all art is assemblage, and anything can be used as material.¹ These presumptions allow a great deal of freedom and flexibility in his artistic practice. His assemblages—essentially three-dimensional collages—allow him to transform everyday objects into art. Campbell's works highlight the poetic nature of the in between and tension of a world that is continually shifting from order to disorder and back.

In Campbell's practice, there is a focus on shape and repetition. The geometric nature of the patterns alludes to a complicated geometry that cannot be solved. Crucial to his work is Campbell's belief that "humans are machines of pattern recognition and prediction. The brain is hard wired to evaluate situations and to guess at potential outcomes. Humans cannot fully understand and predict the universe, so there will always be uncertainty inherent in our lives."² The human mind is meant to try and understand the patterns of the world around us. In an attempt at understanding, the mind will try to delineate all of the possible outcomes, yet no brain can know everything. It is out of this uncertainty that Campbell's work is made. Instead of working from uncertainty towards certainty, Campbell's work begins at certainty and moves towards the uncertain.

The artist's background and experience in architecture and furniture design inform his works through formal elements like intersecting lines and organic and geometric patterns which are combined with contrasting colors in unexpected arrangements. Campbell uses these formal elements of color, line, shape, and texture to demonstrate the experience of uncertainty and dissolution of patterns. Color and shape blend together to create patterns that the human mind tries to understand. His artworks echo this fundamental contradiction as his formula is the same yet the convergence of structures is different in each piece. Each piece is a study of forms and their three-dimensional existence.

Campbell's work is concerned with the experience of experiencing, the poetical space in between order and disorder that can be seen in nature. Campbell cites rock formations as an example of this.³ Rock formations occupy the space in between order and disorder that Campbell is fascinated by—they are an example from the natural world of this movement towards disorder. They are constantly moving towards disorder through natural phenomena such as erosion. He is inspired by the world around him, and he seeks to create objects that are grounds for exploration.⁴ Though his assemblages are not forms that mimic the natural world, they embody the space in between order and disorder that so many natural forms exist in.

Campbell's site-specific culmination of his graduate schooling, is made up of several assemblages, which he feels "allow us to shift the sphere of importance away from formal, historic, or ideological classifications and toward a human centered comprehension of interfering relationships. It allows us to deconstruct and analyze art within the pattern recognizing source code of the human mind." This shift away from the traditional, historic tradition in art allows Campbell to have more freedom in his combinations of form and content. While his works are not representational, they are able to be understood through their repeating and disrupting patterns. In the future, Campbell hopes to continue this project into the realm of artificial intelligence, creating computers that can make artwork themselves. Through investigating the possibilities of artificial intelligence, Campbell hopes to apply his art making theory to machines that can create art.

1. Matthew Campbell, Artist Proposal, (University of South Florida, 2020).
2. Campbell, Artist Proposal.
3. Campbell, Artist Proposal.
4. Campbell, Artist Proposal.





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1. *Origin-Terminus*, 2019
plywood
92 x 31 x 150 inches
2. *Ray*, 2019
wood, metal, fabric
30 x 180 x 36 inches
3. *Trifurcation*, 2019
wood, metal, fabric
38 x 49 x 40 inches
4. *Real Orange*, 2019
mixed media
102 x 57 x 80 inches
5. *Waxy Jackie*, 2019
wood, metal, fabric
47 x 19 x 18 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.



5

JENAL DOLSON

THE SPACE IN BETWEEN SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW

The three paintings exhibited by Jenal Dolson for the MFA Thesis exhibition: *Battin' A Hundred* greet you with a beaming gaze upon entering the Contemporary Art Museum, at the University of South Florida. Highly saturated and chalky mid-toned motifs exude their dynamic color palette in a way that calls upon the familiar, a certain je ne sais quoi. Dolson's work aims to challenge singular definitions and art historical binaries and provides a space to analyze, and ultimately joins the criticisms of abstract figuration today.

The forms that occupy the picture plane refuse to be defined as purely abstract as they lean into the histories of biomorphism and exude a puzzling energy of their own. While space is not portrayed explicitly through shading or linear perspective, it is implied through strategic positioning and a juxtaposition of each painting's characters. Terrazzo, as a recurring motif, exemplifies themes of reconfiguration and sustainability within the dynamism and trends of contemporary material usage. By recontextualizing a common style of flooring, perceived dependent on climate and context, it is elevated to display its format with an altered sense of responsibility. The support and frame create associations for the viewer, encouraging relationships between utility and place, form over function; yet still revels in a pleasant ambiguity calling upon aesthetic treats like nougat and headcheese.

A sense of liminal space can be garnished within the painting's eager presentation. Like floating sculptures that have been flattened into a painted environment. Confined within the soft terrazzo frame, Dolson engages complex ideas surrounding 'psychic structures and spatial metaphors.' Associations take on a psychosentimental aura as she abstracts source imagery gleaned from chance findings. Like word associations, objects and materials feed into a thematic aesthetic based in formalism. Material reinterpretations are portrayed through a layering of shallow picture planes; akin to flowers pressed in a book. A sense of fleeting moments and folding time holds as the imagery nudges you to come in for a closer look. The alluring palette and emotional forms beckon the viewer to slip in and question the momentary breaks in surface. Limb like appendages, pillars, and

eyes compete to be nearest the viewer, seemingly confused by their own colour vibrations, which send them backwards and forwards simultaneously. The large scale works speak amongst themselves with this continuity of movement that blushes, bumps, and waits, in the space in between.

Age lives from hair to hair
Across the orphaned air
It lives like an egg
Hatching a fruit
On a tightrope between two wings
The air has the age of the wings
The fruits are born of the wings
The leaves of the wings bleed
On the hems of the air

Jean Arp, *Spotches in Space*. 1936¹

1. Jean, Marcel. *The Autobiography of Surrealism*. Jean Arp 'Des Taches dans le vide:16.' (New York, The Viking Press, 1980) p.354.







3



4

1. *bump dream*, 2020
latex, oil and enamel on canvas with foamular frame
72 x 72 inches
2. *jenal*, 2019
latex, oil, enamel, on wood with foamular frame
50 x 50 inches
3. *jenal* (detail), 2019
latex, oil, enamel, on canvas with foamular frame
50 x 50 inches
4. *bump dream* (detail), 2020
latex, oil and enamel on canvas with foamular frame
72 x 72 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.



RHONDA MASSEL DONOVAN

WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

WRITTEN BY: TESS ARTIS

Looking at Rhonda Massel Donovan's paintings, one cannot help but long to touch them. The various textures of her supports and the ways in which they are draped, folded, and puckered provoke a desire to walk through her studio space with fingertips splayed, like a child casually upsetting the curtains. As she explains her process, it becomes apparent that Donovan is both a maker and a thinker. To say that she does both simultaneously would be an over-simplification; for her, thinking is a kinetic activity, an action verb in the most literal sense. This multisensory cognition allows her to create work that is both process-driven and conceptual, work that is deeply thoughtful while wholly uncontrived. Donovan's style is the direct result of her ability to dwell within interstices, to find 'and' rather than settling for 'or'.

In a modern day sacralization of the mundane, found and reclaimed fabrics and surfaces are gathered from no-where in particular and allowed to become Art. First, however, they must pay their dues as drop cloths. Only after a proper seasoning will they be permitted to ascend to the status of Painting. Once promoted, Donovan transitions from passive to active making while still leaving space for chance. Every swath of painted fabric is an opportunity: for wholeness, for attachment, for division. Every division is an opportunity for mending, and every mend is an opportunity for tension or slack. Every fresh application of pigment to a painting is also an application to the drop cloth below it, a decision that impacts the character it will take on after its symbolic ascension. The paint application is so tangibly thick in some areas that it is sculptural, while in others it is a wash that acts more like a dye, a translucent window into the beginning of Donovan's process. Often, lines will come forward from within the compositions and wander through the chaos. These lines are so organic that they appear to be poured when in fact they are most often painted. While tender, these lines are not tentative. They are not sketched with obvious care but applied with confidence.

The careful mending of tears in the supports is a reference to Japanese Kintsugi, an artform in which broken pottery is repaired using adhesives containing precious metals. The result of this process

is that the repairs are emphasized rather than hidden. The same can also be said for Donovan's paintings. The emphasis placed on mending is another nod to the nature of human relationships, where breeches are often repaired but seldom forgotten. The stitching together of opposing shapes and textures to make new compositions is reminiscent of the ways in which human lives intersect and affect one another. The fact that the supports are usually acquired by chance yet are deliberately cherished is further evidence of the connection to human relationships, particularly those with family. Most of us do not have the ability to select our families. Similarly, Donovan's ability to mend or not to mend tears in her paintings mirrors our own agency within relationships.

At every stage within this life cycle, Donovan wields the element of control to its fullest potential, that is, by sometimes choosing not to act, by occasionally leaving a window. Every action or abstention from action is thoughtfully considered, instinctively felt, and carefully enacted.





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1. *Feast*, 2019
oil and acrylic paint, fabric, thread
12 x 12 x 10 inches
2. *Hold On*, 2018
acrylic paint, glue, thread, canvas, linen
66 x 75 inches
3. *Taboo to Tableau*, 2018
oil and acrylic paint, wood
24 x 24 inches
4. *Avanti Avanti Avanti (detail)*, 2020
oil and acrylic paint, tape, thread, glue, linen curtain panel, and canvas
11.5 x 8.25 feet
5. *A Moment*, 2019
graphite, acrylic paint, fabric, wood
5 inches (round)

Images courtesy of the artist.

5



JEZABETH ROCA GONZALEZ

POR LO NUESTRO

WRITTEN BY: KARLA AGUAYO

Jezabeth Roca Gonzalez is an interdisciplinary Puerto Rican artist whose work focuses on her Latinx identity as explored through the socio-political power dynamics between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Born in the town of Añasco, Jezabeth works both in Tampa and her hometown in collaboration with her family on video, photography, installation, and sculptural projects. She graduated from Pennsylvania College of Art and Design in 2017 with her BFA in Photography and studied Political Science at the Universidad Interamericana Recinto de Aguadilla in Puerto Rico. Jezabeth's work stems from her commitment to family, their collaborations, and the island of Puerto Rico, as well as the complexities that she and her family confront within colonial spaces. Her hometown of Añasco is historically recognized as the land "*Donde murieron los Dioses*" ("Where the Gods Died"). It was here that Indigenous Tainos drowned a Spanish soldier, Diego Salcedo, in the Rio Grande de Añasco to prove that the colonizers were not gods. Jezabeth's artistic practice carries on this heritage of independent sensibilities from contemporary colonizers.

Although post-colonialism has prevailed in Latinx art and criticism, Jezabeth's work directly challenges the notion that we live in a progressive age. Simultaneously, Jezabeth investigates what a decolonized Caribbean world could be, one free from exploitation of outsiders in search for Paradise. This focus on decolonization stems from her critique of Puerto Rico's ongoing colonial status with the U.S. This issue is explored in Jezabeth's video montage *House Tour* (2019) where the artist has merged the audio recording of a real estate agent selling a beachfront property in Puerto Rico with videos of her grandparents' home. Although the real estate agent is from the island, her voice is cold and her selling of the unit furthers the systemic violence between social classes—that of Puerto Ricans living on the island versus American interests.

Intertwined within this critique of postcolonialism is Jezabeth's role as both a participant and observer of trans-national and translational metamorphoses. While Jezabeth initially resisted her acclimation to American life, she now reluctantly accepts her tenth

anniversary of living in the U.S., or as she terms it "Gringolandia." As such, she has negotiated her participation in the Puerto Rican Diaspora, the collective of Puerto Rican immigrants who spend the majority of their time away from the motherland. Coming to terms with this, Jezabeth is also a part of the trauma experienced by displaced Puerto Ricans. In 2017, at the beginning of her MFA career at the University of South Florida, she was faced with one of the most traumatic challenges in both her artistic practice and personal life: the devastation of Hurricane Maria on the island of Puerto Rico. As a response to the impact the natural disaster had on Puerto Rico, and especially Jezabeth's hometown, the artist began integrating sculptural approaches and fused them into installation. In works such as *Desde la sala se ve la Isla* (2020) the artist began with the transportation of dirt and *platano* seedlings from Añasco to Tampa. The clay bricks imitate the foundations of her *abuelos'* home while the *platano* plants remain potted in soil from Añasco thus, to remain free from American land. By growing and creating these sculptural elements, they serve as a metaphor of protection from assimilating to American culture. This thesis work is her attempt of not letting go of the island. *Desde la sala se ve la Isla* has been installed and re-installed in various exhibition spaces, each time taking on a new layer of metamorphosis much like Jezabeth's identity. Although she identifies as Puerto Rican to the core, the artist's identity is constantly shifting because of her migratory narrative still unfolding between Gringolandia and Añasco. Akin to many Latinx living in the U.S., Jezabeth is now challenged with a sense of displacement feeling like she is neither of here, nor there (*ni de aquí, ni de allá*). Jezabeth offers an investigation based on new de-colonized landscapes sensible to the search of utopian resolutions for her island.



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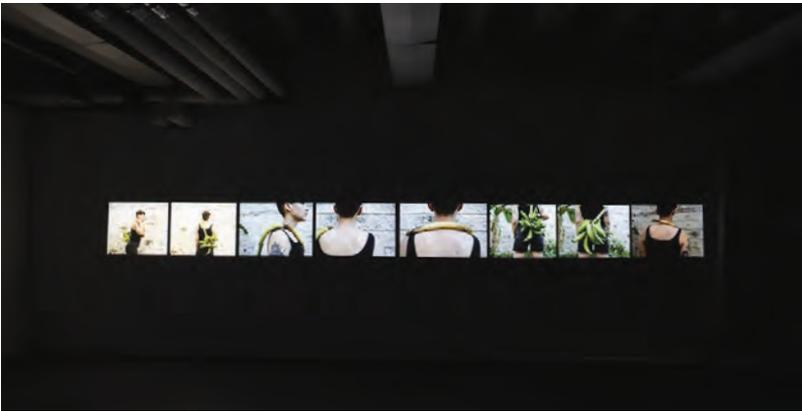
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1. *Bo. Espino (Barrio Espino)*, 2019
photo documentation of multi-media installation.
variable dimensions
2. *La Diana*, 2019
video
1 minute 45 seconds
3. *Explaining Power to a Five Year Old*, 2019
photo documentation of performance in *Barrio Espino* installation
7 minutes (performance)
4. *House Tour*, 2020
video
53 seconds
5. *Rituales*, 2020
photo documentation of video installation (detail)
variable dimensions

Images courtesy of the artist.

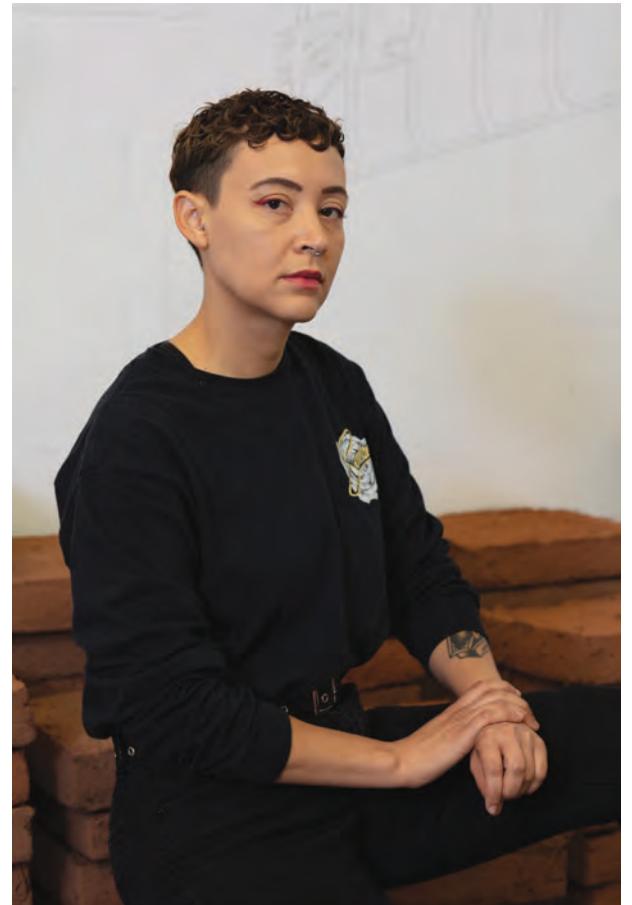


Photo: Pat Blocher

ASH LESTER

WIGGLETOWN

WRITTEN BY: GABRIELLA ALBRITTON

Ash Lester's installation work encompasses different techniques and methods of display that are inspired by her rural upbringing in Plattsburgh, New York, and more specifically, in an area called Wiggletown. Wiggletown cannot be found on a map and there are no official borders or boundaries. The town has its own Walmart, which is not actually a Walmart, but a bottle redemption center that sells expired snacks. It is home to the DUI 500, a race that takes place on private property, where a driver must drink at least a six pack before getting behind the wheel. There are not many rules because Wiggletown does not like The Law, and the feeling is pretty mutual. The idea of Wiggletown, and wherever a place like Wiggletown may be found, is a cultural phenomenon of any isolated community, usually specific to lower class, and this is isolation is what fuels her work.

By creating sculptures and fabricating everyday objects, Lester tries to process her identity of being from a small town through memories. When compiling her uncanny and intriguing objects, a scene akin to a rural gas station emerges, amongst many differing scenarios. Objects normally illuminated by fluorescent lights such as Mountain Dew ads and dusty trucker caps are recreated and multiplied. This energetic and eclectic work reflects a deep commitment to engage in the world of the surreal and High Art through mediums that are usually considered "low brow" and kitsch, which is essentially art that does not fall into the Fine Arts realm of painting and realism and is centered on topics such as pop culture and generally non-academic or classical. By being intentional to the materials used and their symbolism in the Art World, and hence the divide between traditional High Art and "low art", she is creating a dialogue that mirrors her relationship with higher education and the privilege associated with it, while still feeling deeply connected to her rural roots. She continues to merge high and low art by pairing her interest in poetry and wordplay with clichés and dialects from isolated areas that are often overlooked.

Lester's exploration of the dichotomy of low and high art through practice is her way of beginning a conversation about social class

in America and her attempt to figure out where she situates herself as a person from rural New York who went on to pursue higher education. From her standpoint as a first-generation college student from such a small town, her interaction with art materials and her relationship with higher education is constantly evolving. Accents, diction, food, décor, advertisements and cartoons can be unnoticed details of life in the social strata. However, these seemingly unimportant minutiae are often the most glaringly large differences amongst social classes. Lester highlights these aspects of her experience by making them into art objects for the gallery space and confronts the viewer with these products of her past, elevating them from everyday life to the realm of high art.

Ash Lester lifts the veil into rural America in a way that feels like home. By recreating everyday objects with fine art skills and other methods she is recreating familiarity. Regardless of the viewer's relationship with rural areas, Lester brings the outside in. For those in tune with the outskirts of America, her work might bring back memories of bonfires out in the backyard. For those unfamiliar, enjoy your peek into the backwoods in a gallery setting.





4



4 3



1. *Betty Beaver*, 2019
wood, paint
72 x 60 inches
2. *Knock Down Knock Off*, 2019
cowboy pillow, sandbag, paint, wood
36 x 42 x 24 inches
3. *Wintergreen Long Cut Bean Dip* (Installation Detail), 2019
mixed media
168 x 120 x 120 inches
4. *Real Heavy* (Installation Detail), 2019
ceramic, paint, vinyl, wood
96 x 32 x 96 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.



Photo: Forrest MacDonald

JON NOTWICK

WHITE LIGHT, WHITE HEAT

WRITTEN BY: ABIGAIL JENSEN

Realized through thorough research regarding current military activity and fueled by anxieties surrounding the revival of nuclear war, Jon Notwick's work aims to call attention to today's political climate under the Trump administration. Notwick, who works primarily with photography, grew up in Levittown, Pennsylvania, a small town that was a victim of 1950's Red Scare hysteria. Evidence of the extent of that fear lingers, as memories of fallout shelters being unearthed in people's backyards loiter in the community's consciousness. The mythology of the town formed an impression on the artist that always stuck with him.

Notwick is drawn to the practice of appropriation, specifically recycling works already in existence in military archival imagery. He cites Michael Light's series *100 Suns* as a stimulus for his own nuclear project. Light used archival imagery of government nuclear tests and compiled them in an epic collection which related directly to the natural environments where the explosive experiments were carried out.¹ Notwick wishes to investigate the environmental effects of government nuclear testing through photography, and has set out on an ambitious project which involves rigorous research and travel; venturing across the United States and photographing the numerous sites used in nuclear testing. Such projects are heavily reliant on declassified military reports which has only added to the swelling emotions of anxiety and unease felt by the artist as he delves further into global political unrest from past decades; unrest that continues to persist into the present like some kind of ominous inexorable beast.

Notwick seeks to uncover what has been concealed, to bring to light what has been forgotten. Most importantly, he encourages the viewer to look at a possible future through examination of the past. Through his series *Burial Ground* (2019-2020), he reveals the land erosion and chemically contaminated soil long forgotten by both military personnel and civilians. This aspect of Notwick's work adds to the commentary on government secrecy and public distrust. Through his research, he discovered a map generated by ProPublica, a non-profit investigative journalism organization, using data from the Department of Defense that color coded levels of arms testing contamination

in the state of Florida. There are over 1,000 contamination sites in Florida, with 60 posing high-risk threats to people inhabiting local areas.² Notwick traveled to a select number of these locations where he took black-and-white photographs of what now exists at these former testing and manufacturing sites. Using colored plexiglass, he then color codes his photos to correspond to the level of contamination provided on the ProPublica map. With these studies, Notwick aims to investigate and document the decaying grounds and lingering dangers of these testing sites. His work *Trinity* (2019-2020) features the first nuclear testing site in the United States, known today as White Sand Missile Range. Biannually, the grounds are opened to tourists, who naturally take photos to document their experience there.³ Using these tourist images, Notwick's life-size photo-sculptures capture the dichotomous irony of humor and horror, as the reverse side of these sculptures mirror the white flash of light released by a nuclear explosion.

Notwick's work reflects the suspicions and anxieties of the average American under the current presidential administration. Across the country, citizens have varying levels of trust, and distrust, regarding the government and military. Notwick addresses issues of safety and burial of the past in ways that lodges itself in the minds of the viewers. His art forces one to reflect on reality with the actual ability to visit these contaminated sites, some of which may be in one's own backyard. A cathartic and conspiratorial endeavor, Notwick embarks on an ambitious survey of past military activity in light of an increasingly threatening present.

1. Jon Notwick, Interview with Abigail Jensen, November 22, 2019.

2. Notwick, "We Got The Neutron Bomb," (Artist Proposal, University of South Florida, 2020).

3. Notwick, Interview.





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1. *Long Boat Key Gun and Bomb Range*, 2019
archival inkjet print
18 x 24 inches
2. *MacDill AFB*, 2019
archival inkjet print
24 x 36 inches
3. *00000000*, 2019
Video
1 minute 28 seconds
4. *Brooklyn, NY*, 2018
silver gelatin print
8 x 10 inches
5. *Weeki Wachee, FL*, 2017
archival inkjet print
30 x 36 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.



Photo: Kim Darling

KYLE TIMBERMAN

FOR WANT OF A NAIL. STRUCTURE, STABILITY, AND THE BODY

WRITTEN BY: WILL RUSSELL

A study in polarities, the juxtapositions present in Kyle Timberman's sculptural pieces force the viewer to confront their anxieties surrounding the schism that can often be found between the expectation of what one would perceive as stable, and realities of experiencing his work. Timberman's work explores the notions of stability and instability, and the precariousness of striking a balance between what seems impossible yet is not. Securely anchored to the fulcrum between endurance and destruction, Timberman's work feels as though such binaries were constructed around his work, rather than the work being inserted into the already extant dichotomy.

In addition to notions of fluctuation, Timberman's work is also informed by a condition he lives with known as Chronic Venous Insufficiency, or CVI for short, which can cause pain and swelling of the legs, making standing for extended periods of time difficult and painful. In this, Timberman has long been fascinated with the idea of furniture perpetually standing, unaided, despite the thinness of a leg, or the delicacy of material, often bearing support for the body which can fail. Through his pioneering use of a technique he calls 'shake casting', the artist is able to give form and substance to his interest in the perception of stability and instability, and the misconceptions that can be found therein while further employing the often-chaotic nature of ephemerality and permanence. Timberman begins each shake cast piece by creating a 'mold' from wax paper, old newspapers, cardboard, and duct tape which he then fills with random scraps of wood, and many bottles of wood glue. To access the piece however, he must cut away the mold, rendering it useless, and due to the random nature of the process, the result of the work is unknown until the moment its paper shell is removed. From these relatively weak and often overlooked materials, he is able to create mound like structures that often have the durability to function as foundational supports for much larger pieces that can be upwards of fifteen feet tall.

Timberman also works on a more intimate scale, for example, *Compunction* embodies many of the juxtapositions and dichotomies present in his larger body of work yet sits at only approximately eighteen inches high. The piece consists of two hand built ceramic

bottles representing action and consequence, the larger of the two bottles is plugged with a carved stopper with a nail set into it and from which dangles a hammer. The hammer, held upside-down in an act that perpetually defies gravity evokes many of Timberman's larger pieces that seem to be forever caught in the moment of collapse, or on the very precipice of that moment of destruction. Where the larger bottle can be understood as that precarious moment of collapse, the smaller of the two is the consequence of the destructive moment. *Compunction* is in itself also allusion to the trouble one can get into from saying the wrong things under the influence, and the dish soap it is meant to recall as representative of the consequences that follow those actions.

Timberman deftly employs various techniques, many of his own creation to explore the tension between the expectation of what should not be possible, and the reality of what he has created. In doing so, he has created works that are much stronger than they would ever have been thought was possible, thus enabling transcend the limitations of a body in pain. Timberman's work retains the aesthetic of chaotic unreliability yet maintain a structural integrity that leaves the viewer questioning their perceptions of stability.







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1. *VICISSITUDE*, 2019
pallet wood, cast wood, cedar shingles, various plywoods and exotic woods, water putty, holographic vinyl, stains, polyurethanes and oils, steel hardware
150 x 79 x 104 inches
2. *BUT AT WHAT COSTS*, 2019
ceramics, polyethylene tubing, PVC piping, rope, steel handle, gauze, wire, Shellac, rubber coating, pallet wood, glaze, graphite powder, milk paint
72 x 38 x 38 inches
3. *JEJUNE*, 2019
altered shopping cart, steel, powder coating, red wheels
76 x 49 x 64 inches
4. *JUST TO TREMBLE*, 2018
steel, pallet wood, polyethylene tubing, plastic chains, Don Featherstone yard flamingos, ceramic, vinyl, PVC piping, painted beer cans, hand towel rods, electrical tape powdered graphite, Shellac, polyurethane, paint
80 x 41 x 28 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.

RACHEL UNDERWOOD

APOCALYPTIC INFLECTIONS

WRITTEN BY: SK WEST

Rachel Underwood has compiled an “Incomplete Lexicon of Fear, Prophecy, and Thoughtfulness” which contains a range of entries from alligator to zombie.¹ Her definitions meld straightforward facts with poetic streams of consciousness, re-writing the expected tone of a dictionary with the compelling revelations of the artist’s perspective. This text reflects Underwood’s desire to learn more about the world via questioning what is deemed unquestionable, like the definitions found in a dictionary which, too, have the capability to change. Language is malleable; Underwood’s writing manifests as just one version of infinite possibilities, reminding the reader of this precarious fixity and allowing them to interpret or invent how they move through the world around them.

This desire to shift perspectives and complicate static presumptions translates to Underwood’s painting, too. Her massive canvas encompasses the viewer in a manner that overwhelms and immerses them into her prophetic devastation. In using anamorphic perspective, defined by the artist as entering into a distorted image and finding there is a specific viewing point which clarifies the imagery (see also: *Distortion and Vantage Point*), Underwood supplies the viewer with shifting realities coalesced in one painting.²

The scene is post-apocalyptic and devoid of humankind with flood waters and the aftermath of a blazing fire on the horizon surrounding the viewer. Dogs, “a perpetuation of humankind’s impact on the planet even after our seeming demise,” appear stretched and mangled from a dead-on point of view yet proportionate and playful from the designated vantage point. Both perspectives are real and exist in the painting, but the viewer must recognize and shift their bodies to account for each one. *Fire’s* entry reads “The heat will come and there will be flames. It engulfs all, no matter its importance, worth, or creed. It is all consuming. Sometimes it is an essential, natural, and necessary process.” Situated in sincere and coincidental irony, *Flooding* follows *Fire* and is registered with the poignant phrasing “It stretches out toward the horizon and I know it reaches beyond. The water is dark and infinite. It is now and it is forever.” Underwood’s descriptions enforce and enhance her

pictorial narrative of an enduring ending as the sum of our global action and persistent inaction is our ultimate conclusion: death by climate change.³

Death and Denial go hand-in-hand for Underwood, so much so that they share an entry. She writes, “The terror of death is so overwhelming that we attempt to keep it unconscious...People desire safety and normality. No one wants to be reminded of a massive and growing global threat.”⁴ The inevitability of climate change and the widespread corporate and government resistance to attempt any reduction of environmental impact further fuels Underwood’s practice, mingling with utter resentment of how the planet is abused. The wealthiest 10% produce half of all emissions without respect or forethought of Earth’s future, blinded by extreme capitalist greed to extract and consume as much as possible all at once by exploiting human resources. Billionaires were quick to pledge boatloads of money to restoring France’s Notre Dame when it caught on fire last year yet fundraising efforts for the Australian fires—where the devastation has been exponentially worse—have been slow for the same echelon to open their wallets. Why this discrepancy in covering the cost of a cultural icon but not in recovery efforts for millions of acres and billions of lives?

Underwood is tired of feeling the helpless angst of watching the world burn; now she’s training to be a firefighter, so she can answer the call for resources when the next apocalyptic event hits. And indeed, there will be another. Underwood is actively processing the immediate past, educating others on the endless present, and preparing for the end of the world in every way she can.

1. Rachel Underwood, Artist Proposal, (University of South Florida, 2020).

2. Underwood, Artist Proposal.

3. Underwood, Artist Proposal.

4. Underwood, Artist Proposal.







3

1. *The Bacchanalia*, 2018
acrylic on wood
190 square feet
1. *Intracourse*, 2017
oil on wood
48 x 96 x 36 inches
3. *Funeral Carriage*, 2019
refurbished Murray go-kart, steel sheet metal, 1/2' and 3/4' steel tube,
aluminum flashing, aluminum cans, lace fabric
48 x 74 x 168
3. *Potts Preserve*, 2019
motor oil on BFK
30 x 44 inches

Images courtesy of the artist.

4



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WRITTEN BY: SK WEST + EMILY CAMPBELL

The publication of the 2020 exhibition catalog, *Battin' A Hundred*, was an invaluable learning experience made possible by the network of dedicated people who supported the process of bringing this together. This catalog built upon the foundation laid by the efforts of previous years to produce a collaborative body of essays written by graduate art historians about the graduate fine artists. They volunteered their valuable time to write, edit, organize, and fundraise for this catalog. Its success is due to their committed teamwork and determination.

As this catalog commemorates the exhibition *Battin' A Hundred*, we would like to thank the staff of the Contemporary Art Museum (CAM), a branch of the Institute for Research in Art (IRA), for generously hosting the exhibit and providing additional support and guidance. Thank you to Margaret Miller, Director (IRA), and Noel Smith, Deputy Director (CAM), for opening their doors and allowing us this opportunity. Thank you to Shannon Annis, Curator of the Collection / Exhibitions Manager, and Anthony Wong Palms, Exhibitions Coordinator / Designer, for their work in designing and managing the exhibition. We are truly indebted to Vincent Kral, Chief Preparator, and the support staff at CAM, including Eric Jonas, Jessica Barber and David Waterman.

Also, we would like to extend a special thank you to the fantastic Don Fuller, New Media Curator, and Marty De la Cruz, New Media Assistant, who designed the layout for this catalog and additional promotional materials for the exhibition. Thank you for the time and energy you put forth in making this catalog so exquisite!

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Finally, this publication would not have been possible without the financial backing of many donors. You recognize the significance of this endeavor and the value of art historical writing to complement the work of this graduating class of artists. We hope you treasure this catalog and take pride in knowing you were essential in bringing it to fruition.

To anyone, anywhere who supports the arts: thank you.

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Karla Aguayo is a first generation Mexican American and received her M.A. in Art History from the University of South Florida in 2019. Her research interests include Renaissance art and cross-cultural exchanges from the early modern period, especially the translation of consumer and material culture. Aguayo has held various education roles at The Harn Museum of Art in Gainesville, The Salvador Dalí Museum, and the Tampa Museum of Art. She plans to pursue her passion for diversity in the arts and art education in a museum setting.

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Claire Anderson is a master's candidate in Art History at the University of South Florida and is a recipient of the William and Nancy Oliver Fellowship. She received her B.A. in Art History from Elon University in 2018. Her research centers on the medieval experience of liturgical objects such as reliquaries, manuscripts, and portable devotional scenes. Prior to starting graduate school, she was the Curatorial Assistant at GreenHill Center for North Carolina Art and interned at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, NC.

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Tess Artis is a master's candidate in Art History at the University of South Florida. She earned her B.A. in studio art from USF, during which time she participated in several exhibitions and interned at the Salvador Dalí Museum. Currently, her research focuses on the art of late medieval and early renaissance court culture.

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Richard Ellis earned both his B.A. and M.A. in Art History from the University of South Florida's School of Art and Art History. He is a historian of Islamic art and architecture. His area of study spans from Late Antiquity to the Modern era and he primarily focuses on painted manuscripts from Persian lands.

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Abigail Jensen is a master's candidate in Art History with a focus on Medieval art at the University of South Florida, where she graduated cum laude with her B.A. in Art History in 2018. Jensen is a recipient of the Armstrong Family Development scholarship, and her research interests include Medieval manuscripts and monastic culture. She has worked as a research intern at the USF Contemporary Art Museum in Tampa and the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg.

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SK West received both her B.A. and M.A. in Art History from the University of South Florida. Her research interests center on contemporary art and criticism, and its intersections with philosophy. She is a published writer, critic, and poet.



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