

ALTERED TRAJECTORIES

UC DAVIS **ART STUDIO** MFA EXHIBITION 2020

Caz Azevedo

Zeina Baltagi

Brenda Gonzalez

Dongwan Hong

Orang Hutan

Brett Melliar

Jessica Eve Rattner

Julia Edith Rigby

Altered Trajectories, the 2020 Art Studio MFA Thesis Exhibition, represents the culminating work of eight artists committed to grappling with the complex and wide-ranging world(s) they inhabit. Approaching each practice through strikingly varied media—from sculpture, video and painting to installation, performance and photography—their art merges diverse material processes with conceptual concerns distinct, personal and abruptly intersecting.

The essays in this catalogue were written by:

Kelli Clifford for Caz Azevedo

Jesse Aylsworth for Zeina Baltagi

Havilah Aos for Brenda Gonzalez

Jake Rose for Dongwan Hong

Chastine Madla for Orang Hutan

Polo Lopez for Brett Melliar

Lucy Hilmer for Jessica Eve Rattner

Kelly Thomas for Julia Edith Rigby

The Master of Fine Arts Degree in Art Studio, established in 1969, is a two-year, critically engaged studio program that provides an opportunity for interdisciplinary study in the visual arts. As part of a small tight-knit community, students explore a wide range of media and approaches to studio practice. The Art Studio Program faculty share responsibility for the graduate program. Current faculty members engage in a broad range of disciplines including sculpture, photography, time-based media, painting, drawing, printmaking, ceramic sculpture, and include Darrin Martin, Hearne Pardee, Shiva Ahmadi, Lucy Puls, Annabeth Rosen, Young Suh, Robin Hill, Tim Hyde, Graham McDougal and Gina Werfel. For more information: arts.ucdavis.edu/art-studio-graduate-program

Professor Shiva Ahmadi
Graduate Chair
Department of Art and Art History
Art studio Program

Professor Annabeth Rosen
Arneson Endowed Chair
Department of Art & Art History Co-Chair
Art studio Program

In memory of Freemond E. (Pete) Gadberry, a retired fine-arts teacher at Vintage High School, in Napa, Calif., who gave a \$1-million bequest from his estate for the Art Department. Mr. Gadberry, who graduated from the university in 1967 with a Master's degree in Fine Arts, died in 2006 at the age of 69.

My art is a collaborative relationship with the space, body and material. I work in the process of *matter-flow*, the transition of matter between stages, and movement while researching the materiality of the land and body. Through gestures I find relationships among the rituals of farming and dance, and how we, and they, relate to the Earth and our previous generations. I include ideas about *nature's law of the land* which includes, but not limited to, the right to work the land with the responsibilities to take care and replenish the soil, but never over exhausting it, and never claiming ownership of its body.



Caz Azevedo

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Previous Page Detail from, **Resting Generations**, 2020, installation: dirt, clay, water, ceramics Size: 14'x20'x12'

Left Image Detail of **Generation One**, 2020

Detail of **Generation Three**, 2020



Top Left Image Detail of **Generation Two**, 2020
Bottom Left Image Detail of **Bleeding River**, 2020
Still from **Blink**, video, 2019



Caz Azevedo

By Kelli Clifford

Caz Azevedo was born and raised on a small sustainable family farm just shy of four acres in the rural area outside of Lodi and Stockton, California. He has built an artistic practice based on growing up the child of working farmers whose interactions with the land formed the basis for everything. His mother, Carol, first inspired Caz as an artist even though she mostly painted before he was born, and with the busy life of a mother of two on a farm, she did not have much time. She would draw pictures for him to color, and he would try to mimic her drawings. There was a painting of hers that hung over the mantle that he used to look at all the time as a child growing up that sparked the desire in him to paint. At an early age, around fourth grade, he found Bob Ross and his “happy trees” and found it fun to experiment with materials and paint on the outside of the house by mixing up mud. After his mother noticed this she bought him his first oil paints and canvas. In high school art class, he became attracted to Salvador Dali and surrealism.

Azevedo pursued higher education which has taken him on a journey from Sacramento City College to UC Berkeley for his dual bachelor’s degrees in Art Practice and History of Art, and UC Davis for his Master of Fine Arts degree in Studio Art. He has won several merit awards throughout his studies and has been teaching since 2015. During his Art History studies, he found historical interests in Spanish painters Francisco de Goya and Diego Velazquez.

His tool of choice is the body, yet he also prefers shovels, rakes, sticks, and hatchets. His favorite materials are natural, organic ones especially dirt, clay, and water. When interacting with the material, he thinks about his relationship with his body and how it relates to space and material. Through his process he finds relationships among the rituals of farming and dance, and how we, and they, relate to the Earth and our previous generations. He uses video to capture the *matter-flow*, or the material in certain transitions from one state to another. He then layers other forms of performance into his art to complete his pieces.

His movement interests are focused around instinct, muscle memory, and the sub-conscious, and his research and exploration comes from improvisational style dance: specifically, in Contemporary, Belly dance, Flamenco, and Butoh.

His influences now include Ana Mendieta who worked with body and its relation to Earth. Nuno Ramos is a Brazilian artist who works with “matter-flow” which Azevedo first heard about in a lecture Ramos gave at UC Berkeley. He has also been influenced by the Gutai Artists, a Japanese art collective that was founded after WWII, who worked with the idea of the body’s relationship to the material, without changing the material. Asco (1972-1985), a Los Angeles based performance group co-founded by Harry Gamboa Jr. who continues to provide influence today, and Unmata, a Tribal Fusion Belly Dance company founded in 2003 by artistic director, Amy Sigil.

Oposite Image **Detail** Still from ***Mud Bathers***, 2019

Next Page **Detail** Still from ***Work is Living***, 2020





My work examines mobility in the collision of physical, emotional, racial and economic identities. I explore materials that carry collective memory and symbolism in relation to my personal experience with walking in my perceived collective surroundings. Objects such as currency or the national flag hold collective memory through time because it is a shared symbol with real consequences. I study objects that carry layers of memories that can-not be erased although unseen.

I turned thirteen years old, on September 11, 2001. Overnight the political landscape of America changed. At that time, I was undergoing an experimental knee, tibia, and femur titanium endo-prosthetic replacement. I was asleep the entirety of the day, but what is important is the days after. I had to re-learn how to walk with my new limitations, including a newly sexualized and exoticized form as a teenager, a new political landscape, a new leg and a new urban environment now visible from a different bodily perspective. This is also where I discovered my mobility as a means of being connected with and vulnerable to others. Sidewalks are a delineated separation from moving traffic to provide an adequate buffer space and a sense of safety for pedestrians. But for whom? The sidewalk is where most of my work is pulled from and performances are held. It is the space between the private and the public. It is where we talk to our neighbors, where children play, where protests are made, and where the resistance is discussed, and many people are assaulted and arrested.

The ability to walk freely is a privilege often taken for granted. Our ability as to how far we can mobilize ourselves is dependent on ability, race, gender perception, and class. Whereas the perspective of one's body walking through space in relation to landscape and other bodies was once undervalued is now at the forefront of our thoughts via an airborne global pandemic. The individual walking through space and on the ground brings their own self-perspective and interpreted interaction with the urban landscape.

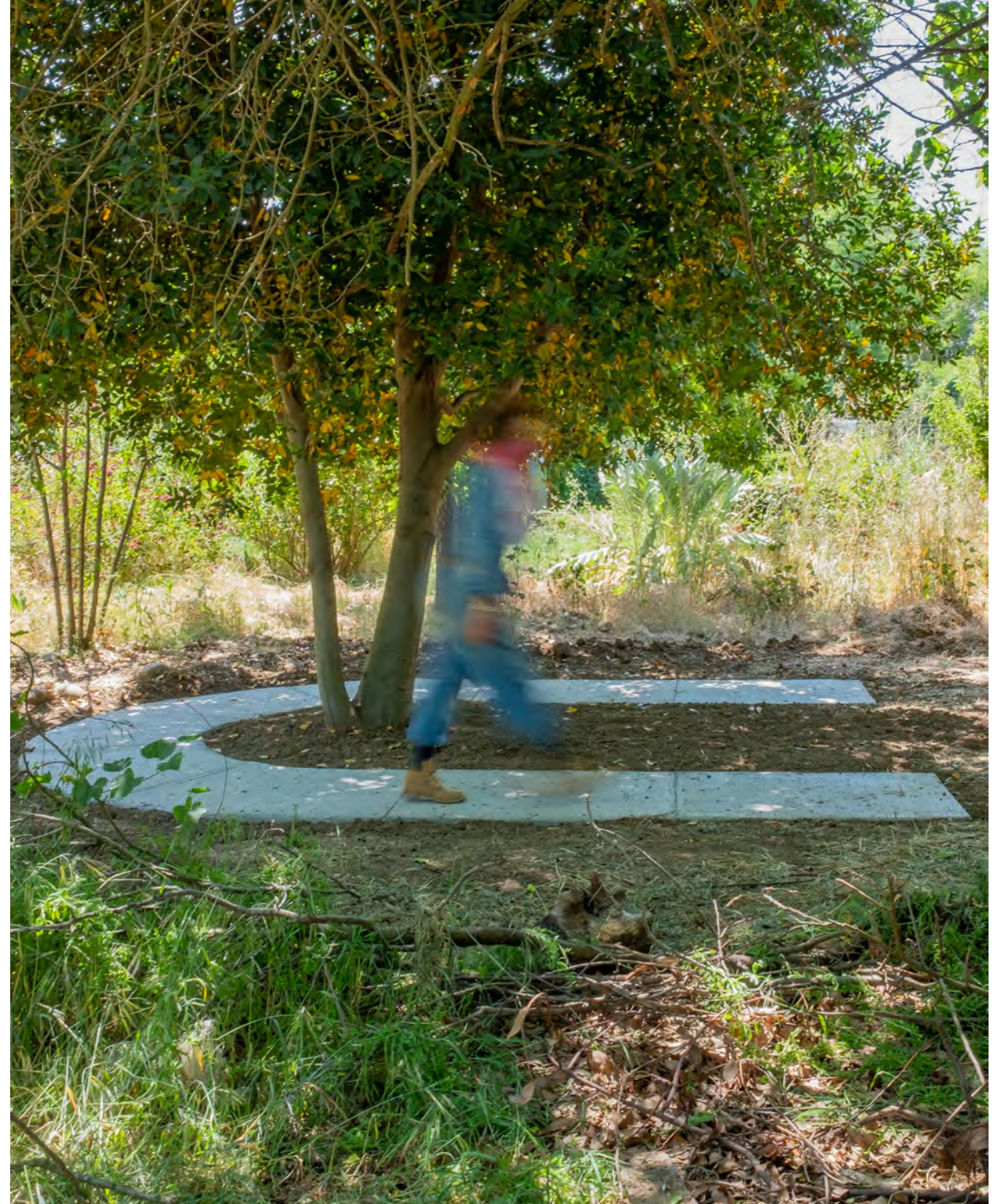
Zeina Baltagi

UC DAVIS **ART STUDIO** MFA EXHIBITION 2020



Daphne

Concrete, rebar and sand. **Location:** The Domes, Baggins End, Davis, CA 95616 Coordinates: 38.543143,-121.765510





I'm Spinning

Concrete, rebar, steel spinning wheel, and kiffeyeh scarves, 50"x50"x8"





Layers of Resistance

Concrete, rebar, kiffeyeh scarves and embedded ¢ents w/ 1¢ent dated 2001 on the surface, 60"x130"x3.5"

Zeina Baltagi

by Jesse Aylsworth

Zeina Baltagi is a generous creator, wanting nothing more than to share her experience, her space, her food, her thoughts, her feelings, and her desires with you. It is within this intimate generosity that her work shines. There is no concealment, no secrets, only your willingness to sit with her artwork and unravel your own place within the visual story she has created. Zeina's laborious material art production is steeped with indexical signs, all of which point towards personal themes of mobility, both physical and cultural. An intense emotional energy is bound within her sculptural objects and performances that stems from her lived experience as a Muslim Southwest Asian North African (SWANA) American with an endo-prosthetic leg.

Zeina's MFA-thesis sidewalk works are a culmination or perhaps a sedimentation of all her previous works & highlights how charged this unassuming, yet demarcated "safe" sidewalk space really is and for whom. She asks us to reconcile just how densely connotational sidewalks are in regard to protest, resistance, revolution, crime, and death. All of which she shows layered together in this dense concrete aggregate. A notable cultural signifier included in the sidewalk works is the Keffiyeh. It is a traditional Arabic headdress, of which western appropriation as a fashion statement by non-SWANA wearers has been the subject of controversy in recent years. Today, it is well known that the keffiyeh is a symbol of resistance and solidarity in the SWANA region, and in Palestine in particular, however the western appropriation has been thought to separate the Keffiyeh from its political and historical meaning. Zeina has embedded this charged cultural symbol as a physical layering of her SWANA identity and the SWANA struggle of resistance from colonialist oppression.

Zeina's lived experience dealing with issues of mobility places her as a young child with a prosthetic leg, being told by doctors, "Be careful walking down alleyways you can't run." Growing up to have a sexualized body and being cat-called on the sidewalk; while simultaneously having a Middle Eastern body and being racialized on the sidewalk. She knows she cannot run; so she walks. Zeina is vibrant and unafraid because while all of this may be true, she has faith in the community she engages in and the sidewalk connects her with them all. It is with this community that she reimagines her sidewalk space in the work, Daphne as a neighborly cul-de-sac wrapped around a bay laurel tree. The title a reference to the nymph of the same name who was transformed into a bay laurel tree to flee the pursuits of Apollo... "a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost in the canopy. Only her shining beauty was left." Within this, Zeina is elucidating a metaphor that again speaks to concepts of mobility, feminism, and agency.

Zeina's sidewalk shows us that we often live each day moving through our built environments generally unaware of the histories and privileges that create the foundation for us to stand. Zeina Baltagi has been challenging that passive place of privilege for over a decade, while illuminating her lived experience surrounding physical, economic and cultural mobility through a laborious material art practice that cultivates inclusivity and love.



Trip Hazard

Concrete, rebar, keffiyeh scarves and yellow detectable warning tiles, 36"x115"x48"



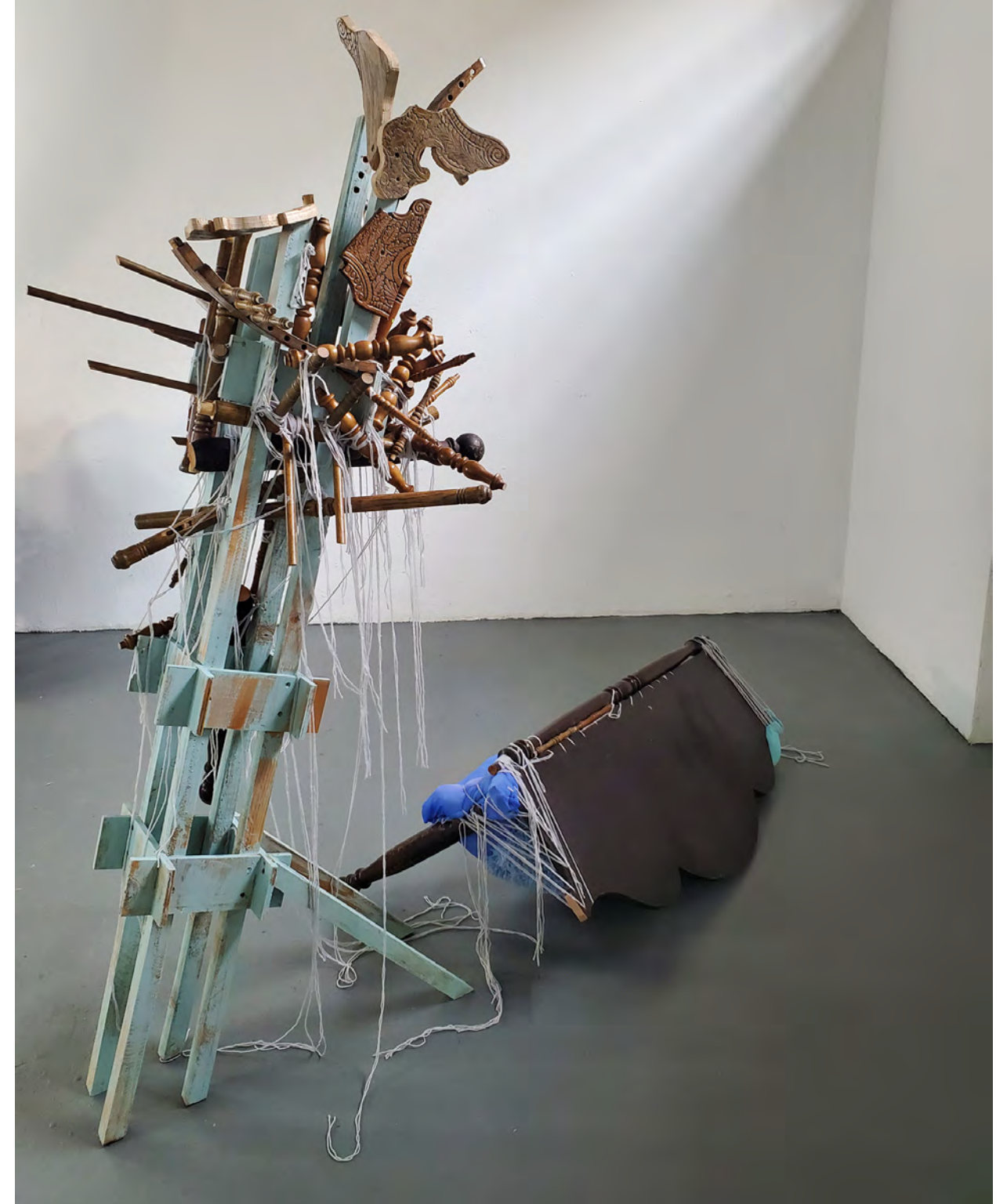
I am a mixed media artist working primarily in sculpture. My work investigates memory with regard to the passage of time and the context of Home. I strive to connect rose-colored nostalgia with elements of an imperfect present. Growing up in a low-income household in East Los Angeles and finding myself longing for a home that changes while I live miles away grounds my work. I often use inexpensive materials sourced from thrift stores and dollar stores that could easily be found in a low-income American home, such as the one in which I grew up. My work explores the idea of “making-do” or “getting by” by seeking to imbue these deserted or nearly obsolete objects with new life. I try to use the textural qualities of objects such as placemats and bathmats or the worn-out nature of an arm chair’s claw feet to invoke the flora and fauna-like qualities that inform what I call my “creature” sculptures: amalgamations of objects stitched together by the idea that perhaps an entity that is half memory and half make-believe may quell present-day anxieties. At times, I activate the malleable components of my sculptures to further explore the type of spaces these creatures inhabit and why I feel these creatures need to exist in the first place. I wonder if the combination of objects imbued with memory could have the same soothing effect as a stuffed animal, for example, and question what it is that may make a home, even if at times unkempt or deformed, a safe space worth investing in emotionally.

Brenda Gonzalez

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Top Left to Right **Roomie 1**, 10 1/2" x 11 1/2" x 13", Placemat, abrasive sponge, vinyl wall decal, grip mat, acrylic yarn, plastic basket, hardware cloth, 2020
Roomie 2, 10 1/4" x 14" x 12 3/4", Metal door racks, plastic strainer, abrasive sponge, assorted fabric, towels, acrylic yarn, hardware cloth, 2020
Roomie 4, 10" x 13 1/2" x 5 3/4", Wire basket, assorted fabric, adhesive carpet floor tile, acrylic yarn, hardware cloth, 2020
 Bottom **Roomie 6**, 11" x 12 1/2" x 8", Plastic soap dish, placemat, wire basket, assorted fabrics, acrylic yarn, hardware cloth, 2020
Roomie 7, 11" x 14 1/2" x 9", Steel wall/ceiling register, fabric, acrylic yarn, hardware cloth, 2020
Roomie 8, 8 1/4" x 11 3/4" x 9 1/2", Assorted fabric, dolomite toothbrush holder, microfiber rug, vinyl tile wall decal, acrylic yarn, hardware cloth, 2020
 Oposite Image **Eat and Sleep**, 30" x 25" x 75", (tall sculpture) and 53" x 29" x 18 3/4" (smaller sculpture), 2020







Brenda Gonzalez

By Havilah Aos

Brenda Gonzalez' creature sculptures appear to have self-assembled, having built their own bodies from overlooked or forgotten objects and materials scattered about her childhood home. They seem to lurch, careen and scramble, only frozen still in the moment the viewer locks them in an inquisitive gaze. The sculptures are formed from commonplace household objects that act as a library of information about familiarity and home. The objects reveal some of that information in marks of wear and tear that index a history of movement and touch. The remaining mysteries they hold are obscured and altered as they are reformed for a new purpose. When the pieces and parts come together as a whole, they transform from sculptures into creatures that express the emotions held in their material archives in strange and whimsical ways. They are uncannily familiar, full of expression and jaunty humor but they point to something deeper.

Gonzalez' work references the ideas of object-oriented ontology, where independent objects hold agency in their existence apart from their connection to us. Her sculptures attempt to supplant the dominant human perspective for a different view - from inside the creature's own self, within its being, looking out. Despite beginning as collected odds and ends, the lashed-together forms exert a unified will for liveliness, disregarding their maker's wants and needs.

As we approach, the creatures express emotions of comfort but also of uncertainty. They remind us of how we feel and how we react, how we deal with the big world once we graduate from the familiarity of home and step *out there*. As existential helpers, they seem to cross over into our reality from unknowable places, stumbling awkwardly, only half remembering their power and what they wanted to tell us so desperately. Displaced, they beckon us.

Left Image **The Collector**, 37 ¾" x 31" x 56", Acrylic yarn, plywood, oak furniture, placemat, assorted fabric, 2020

Detail **The Collector**

Next Page **Afraid to Unfurl**, 33" x 34" x 40", Assorted fabric, acrylic and polyester yarn, bathmats, placemats, oak bar stool, assorted found objects, 2020





My practice strives to find relationships between the labor of art-making and my daily experiences with people and places. One of my new experiences has been living in the United States. States of longing and remembrance have been essential for me to explore through my practice. The separation of being missed or missing someone from your home country is inevitable. I consider my time here to be a given circumstance that is not in my control to change, and therefore, I feel it makes the separation more tolerable. This experience of daily life here is an essential component of my art practice because it affects me physically and emotionally. When I first arrived in the United States, the only things I had were my body, a huge empty studio space, time, and language that took time to understand and communicate. These became my material elements. Through my practice I explore these elements, aiming to capture every moment of small particles of memory and experience through the labor of art-making. This forces me to be present and self-aware in my surroundings, allowing a genuine pursuit of my happiness through my physical presence and experiences around it.



Dongwan Hong

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Salted Messages

Inscribed Texts on Carpet with Sprinkled Salt, variable dimensions, 2020



Banners
Paint on Clothes, variable dimensions, 2019



Chocolate Bars, Tempered Chocolate, variable dimensions, 2020



Dongwan Hong: Art as Survival

by Jake Rose

When I first visited his studio late on a Friday night for an MFA event I laughed out loud and felt like crying. If you have ever felt dismayed at art “for arts sake” or art whose purpose is so esoteric that it feels inaccessible, then you will feel an immediate joy in seeing the work of Dongwan. Nothing could be more obvious than the feeling that his work is for you. Unquestionably. Dongwan makes the same pact as an actor stepping to the edge of the stage for a dramatic aside— his words are private but meant to be overheard. As a result, viewing his most recent work, *Salted Messages*, feels much like sitting in a theater audience— that the room is dark, our friends are near, and the secret is for us.

Central to Dongwan's art are the concepts of labor, longing, and love. His current series, *Salted Messages*, was made by installing wall to wall gray carpeting on the floor of his studio. Think of welcome mats at Walmart, CVS, or Walgreens, but also granite sea cliffs, mourning doves, and overcast skies. Upon this carpet Dongwan has poured salt, white salt, enough to obscure the carpet. It is up to the viewer to determine whether this is the salt of purification, the salt of bitterness and remembrance, or the salt of preservation and life— or perhaps all three. Once the carpet is salted, he inscribes his text by kneeling on a small rectangle of red fabric and scraping away with a dinner knife. Letter by letter, using only his hands as references for measurement, he carves his messages.

But what are the messages and who are they for? Coming to this MFA program for Dongwan has meant traveling far from family and friends and *Salted Messages* seems to inhabit the negative space in between long distance phone calls from home. They represent words you meant to say, wished to say, or knew you could never. They talk about getting used to being alone and the joy of learning how to ride a bike with no hands. The labor it takes to produce this writing honors the words themselves. At a time when language can feel cheap and misused for political, social, and commercial gain, at a time when the global scale of economic production feels limitless and yet the labor of this production is often concealed, Dongwan's art suggests for us a new kind of ethics: optimistic to the core, transparent beyond doubt, and as patient as any labor of love. Dongwan's art is overwhelming in its clarity and engaging in its profound depth as it attempts to reclaim labor as a connective force— connecting body to earth and through its messages, body to body. In this way, his art has become more like survival than anything else.

Next Page **Eating Chocolate**, Tempered White Chocolate Cast from Wooden Sculpture 4"x8"x11", Artist and Image of the process, 1 channel video, 7'20", 2020





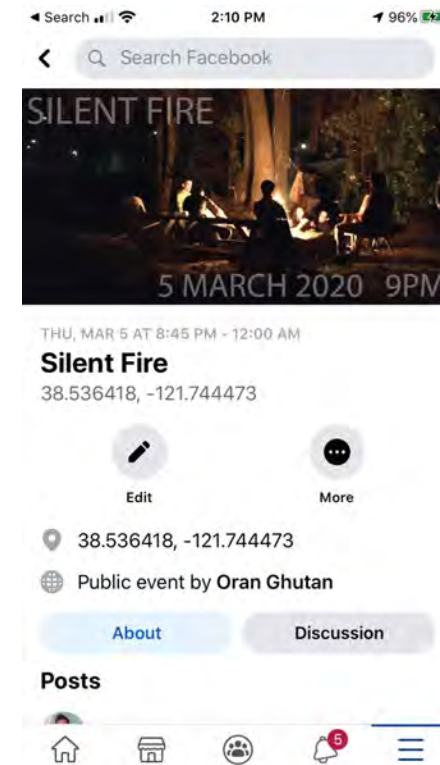
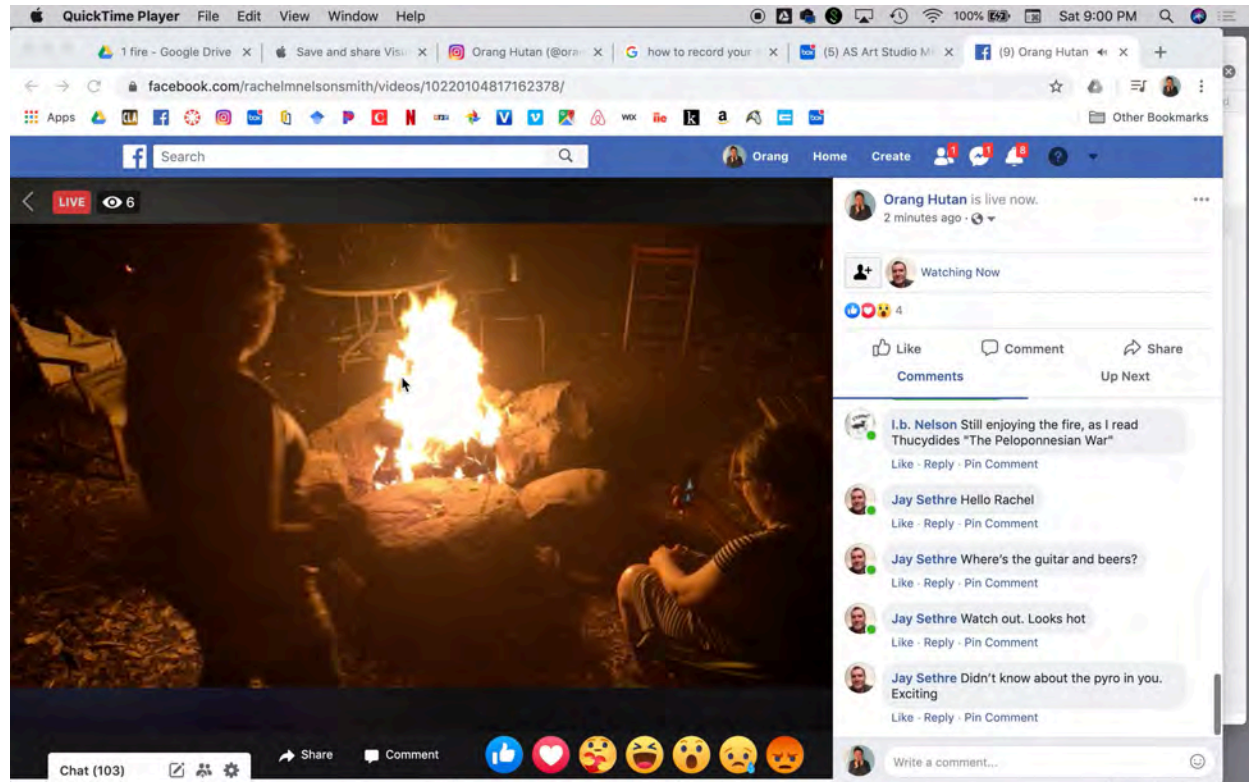
I am a visual artist exploring the ephemerality of meaning through social practice, happenings, and performance where the art is in the gesture. What most interests me is the radical loss of meaning which occurs in communication, and that no thing remains but memory and residue. Positioning myself as a post-studio and post-disciplinary artist, my creative output generates questions rather than objects and attempts to understand the nebulous in-betweenness of what is normal-abnormal, permanent-impermanent, and known-unknown.

How human comprehension is represented in images and language, outlining what is real, strikes me as most urgent. This work is an attempt to understand the gap between the visceral and the designed—that is, the space between what is felt in the internal organs of the body involuntarily and what is devised for a specific function. The work is manifest in fire events which are concurrently real-live and live-streamed. The work considers the evolution of human cognition as it parallels fire technology beginning 2.6 million years ago and that the same fire continues to affect us albeit through digital screens.

Orang Hutan

(formerly **Rachel Maryam Smith**)

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is this fire

Laptop screen capture, variable dimensions, 2020

Smartphone screen capture, variable dimensions, 2020

Digital video still, variable dimensions, 2020



is this fire

Digital images by Zoe Reinhardt, variable dimensions, 2020





is this fire

Digital images by Zoe Reinhardt, variable dimensions, 2020



Orang Hutan: On Fire

by Chastine Madla

It's 4 A.M. in the morning and I am still talking to Hutan. Questions echo through the rift between our texts. Is fire safe? I wonder about her safety. It is almost as if Hutan was a torch that was suddenly snuffed out and replaced with a different fire, a smartphone instead of a person.

Nearly 2.6 million years ago, our ancestors discovered that fire was control. It was our greatest achievement. It is our greatest achievement. When we start fires, we call back to the way our ancestors felt seeing it for the first time. We do not need words. We are content. We are home where all things fall silent, where things are just. They are. Our joys and sorrows are embedded deep into us, empathy the link between past and present.

A simple question: is fire safe?

We make it so. We keep the fire alive and we stoke the flames. It is our hands that keep beautiful chaos contained. But this cannot be not enough. Humans want to know. To understand. To decide things. But how can we? Our knowledge is bound in the visual, in the observable. But light is a wave that travels ceaselessly from its source in all directions. If time and place were to have a meaning, it would be found in between those waves.

Hutan says, "How can one person understand what another is expressing given the spaces between them? Face to face, phone to phone, the same word repeated in different contexts can have—what seems to me—infinite meanings."



is this fire

Smartphone digital image by Sean Marlow, variable dimensions, 2020



My work for the past two years has explored the topics of competition, hierarchy, mastery, and greatness. In the current climate where “winning” seems to be very important, I find myself continually reflecting on the time I spent growing up playing competitive sports year-around for twelve years. Even at a young age, the concept of winning was engraved into my persona, molding my competitive spirit. However, winning extends beyond just sports and the arena. It is something I see present in all aspects of daily life.

My paintings take a critical view on the implications winning can have on the individual and society; from joy to disappointment, from drive to fatigue, and to the physical and mental toll. What does it look like to win? Perhaps winning is formulaic. Simply, mastery + competition = winning = hierarchy = greatness.

The body of work I have created for my thesis project reflects on the aspect of mastery. How does one define mastery? What does it mean to be a “master” of anything? For being nonsensical, the idea of mastery, like winning and greatness, motivate many people to pursue their passions. Why? Isn't mastery a knowing pursuit of a life-long commitment to the unattainable?

In the paintings, my thoughts are conveyed through a visual language developed from my imagination and consisting of images, formal art elements, text, and materials. I utilize all painting mediums, and collage materials into my work to create complex visual statements. Arising from the improvisational aspect of my making process and the manipulation of materials, my vision is busy, fragmented, frantic and dense with visual stimuli. Through the repetition of elements, characters emerge, from which the paintings become visual narratives. Yet, the works are always grounded in my desire to, and affinity for, paint.

Brett Melliar

UC DAVIS **ART STUDIO** MFA EXHIBITION 2020



Left Image **Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 3**, Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 14x11 inches, 2020
Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 1, Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 24x18 inches, 2020
Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 10, Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 18x15 inches, 2020



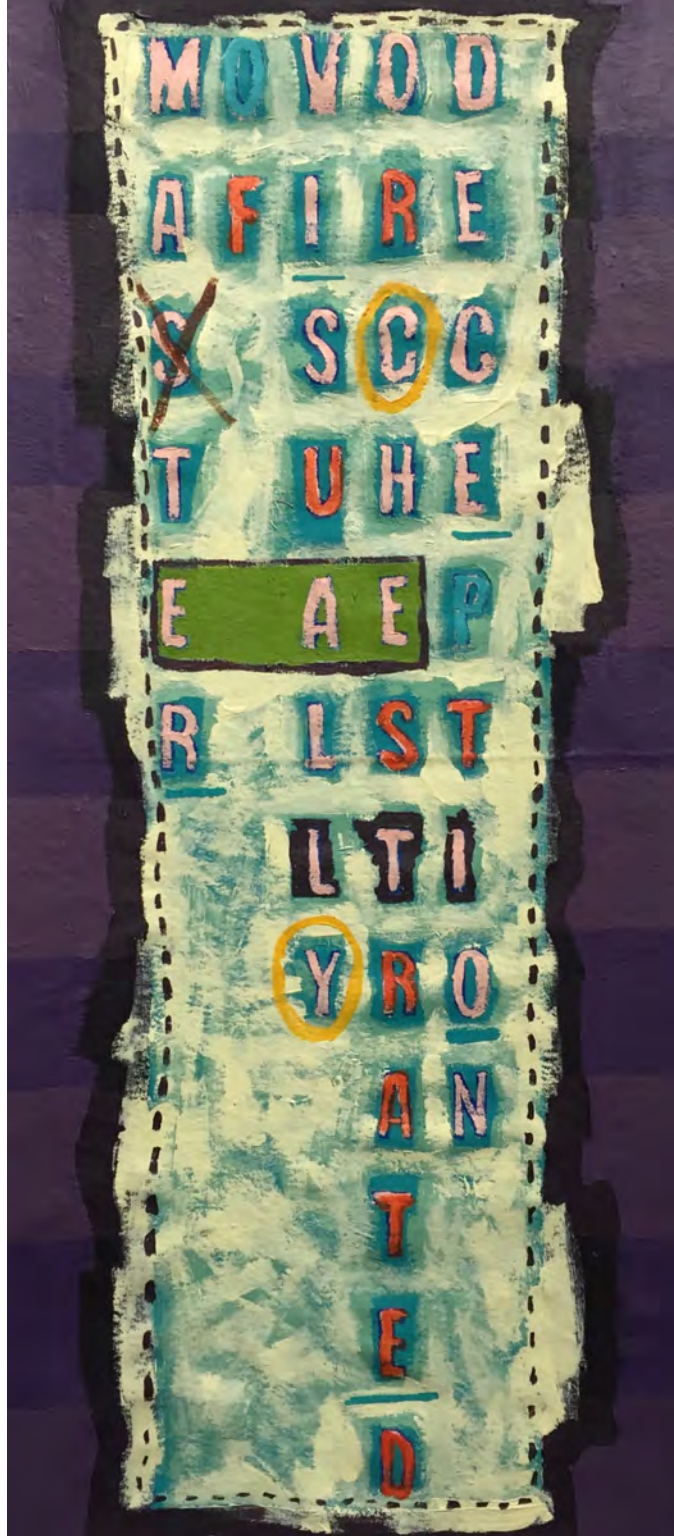
Just Hit Somebody! (Strategy Has Long Since Been Abandoned)

Oil, acrylic, oil stick, collaged fabric, charcoal, collaged linocut prints, googly eyes on canvas, 72x84 inches, 2019



Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 6

Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 18x15 inches, 2020



Brett Melliar

by Polo Lopez

It is the role of the artist to question. A role taken on by many but only fully investigated by few. For questions do not always lead to answers and if they do, the answer itself may not be satisfying. There is a courage to asking questions and also a folly. It takes the skepticism, obsessive nature, and critical analysis of the artist to navigate this. Through his thorough research and undeniable labor in the studio, Brett Melliar gives us *Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception*. This body of work is an investigation of the seemingly simple question, “What do I do as a painter?”.

Melliar’s work unapologetically, and quite literally, explains its intentions. With the text “Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception” emblazoned across his canvases, he exposes the nature of his exploration: the intersection of virtuosity of the formal elements, conception, and construction of a painting, and a tongue-in-cheek exposé of a self-aware, perhaps self-deprecating, painter. If you cannot question your own products how can you validate them? Humor permeates Melliar’s work and in a sense brings an ease and digestible quality to a rather big and complicated definition of a painter and his paintings. By traversing the fine line of authenticity and parody he has brought a very real and relatable angle to his work.

Informed and influenced by predecessors such as Mel Bochner and Gerhard Richter, Melliar concerns himself and his work with its interpretation. Pushing the boundaries of visual elements of the words themselves, he uses their structure to get at something more: a sincere, concise reflection on being a painter. It is this conceptual quality that stays with the viewer. Through his carefully calculated “visual deceptions” Melliar has allowed for a broader conversation on artists, in particular painters, and their role. By asking questions and presenting his credentials as “Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception” he invites the viewer to examine the qualities of a painting and the definition of a painter.

Brett Melliar has *always* questioned.

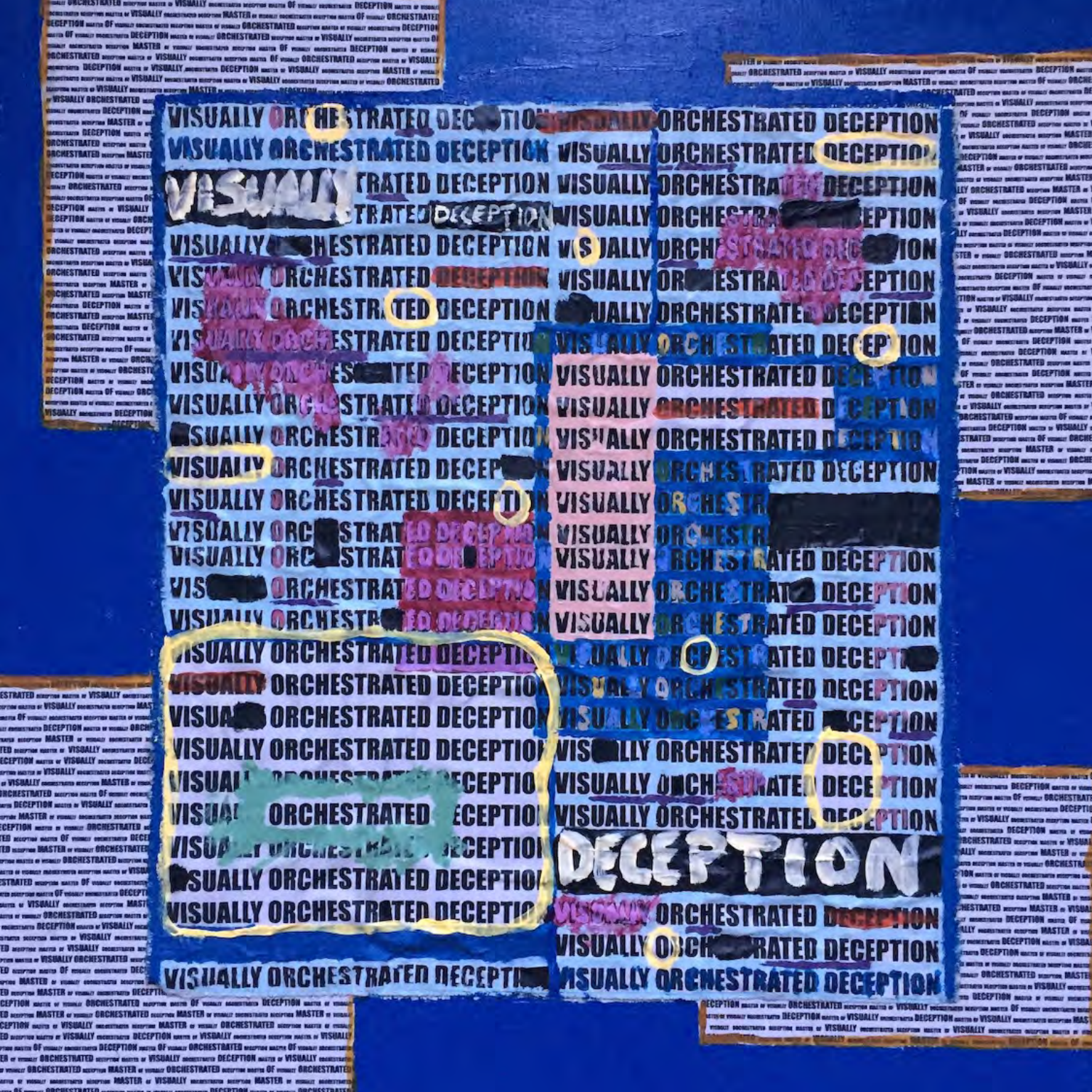
Left Image **Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 7**, Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 18x15 inches , 2020

Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 11, Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas, 36x16.5 inches, 2020

Victory, and the Price Paid, Oil, acrylic, oil stick, charcoal, collaged fabric, pigment powder, shellac, googly eyes on canvas, 60x48 inches, 2019

Next Page **Master of Visually Orchestrated Deception 4**

Acrylic, collaged paper on canvas mounted to wood panel, 24x24 inches, 2020





I am a photographer and visual storyteller

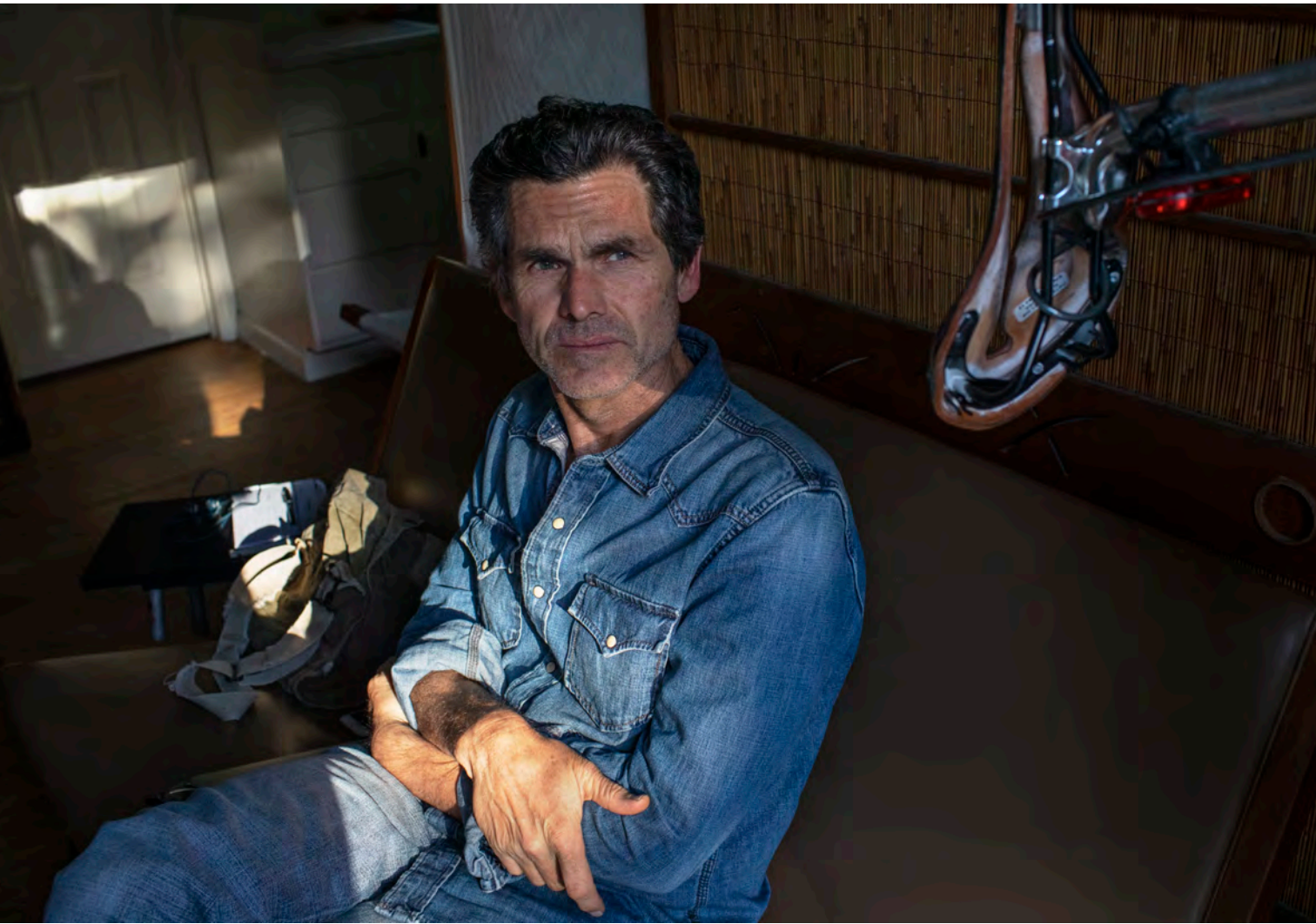
who has concentrated on long term, collaborative portrait projects, often with people who are marginalized, misunderstood, or whose lives challenge society's norms. Over the past two years, in a shift from my previous work, I've focused my camera on my own life, rather than on the lives of others.

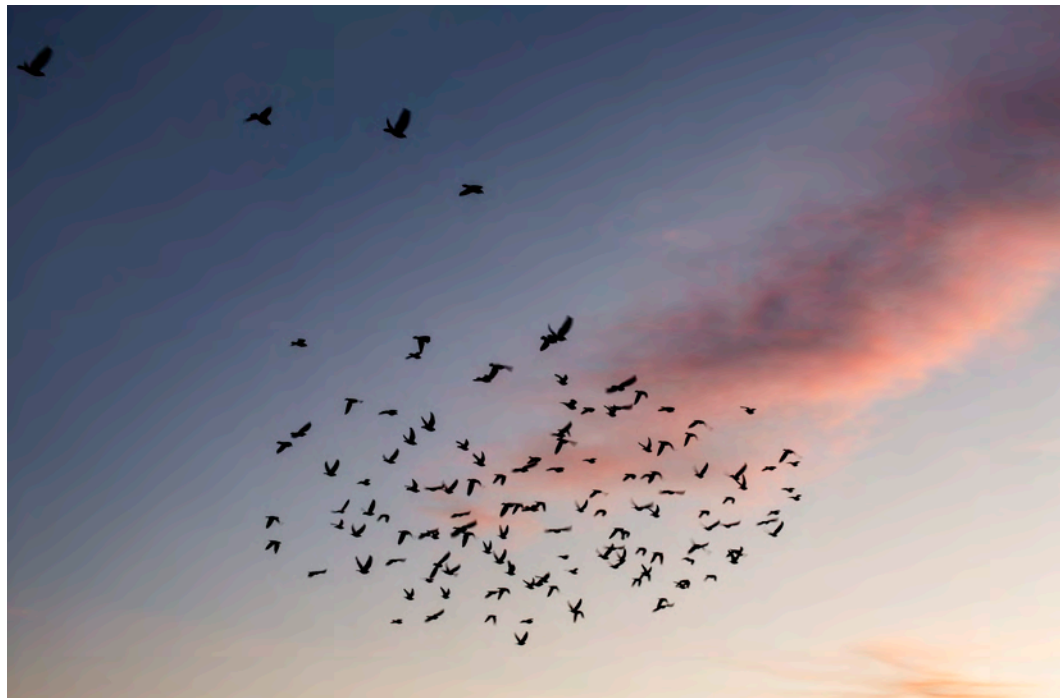
I see my current project, *The End Is Where We Start From*, as a self-portrait: an autobiographical story of the events, memories, and emotions that have shaped my own recent history. It is my record of an uneven journey through grief and isolation, and a peek into the unknown territory that exists beyond great loss.

Jessica Eve Rattner

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Jessica Eve Rattner

by Lucy Hilmer, Photographer & Poet

Jessica Eve Rattner is a passionate visual artist who explores the vulnerable edge of the human predicament with a poetic, unflinching eye. She's best known for her long-term projects about marginalized people in unusual environments. In the past, she devoted time and talent to learn more about eccentric old women who dared to be different. With curiosity and compassion, she created memorable images of meaning and metaphor, visceral stories of disquieting beauty and profound truth. She focused on aging bodies, cherished possessions, interiors and exteriors of houses in which her subjects lived and died. Each of Jessica's images is imbued with empathy and a refined sense of color and light. When gathered together, they form a kind of stained glass window into the lives of these unusual women. The intimacy of her portraits reveals a deep trust she established both as friend and photographer.

My guess is, Jessica approached these women as she first approached me—with open-hearted enthusiasm and respect. Five years ago, we met as fellow photographers when Jessica ran up to me out of the blue during the intermission of an event we both attended. She was excited to meet me, she said, because she already knew my work. And then she won me over immediately with her ebullience and excitement about photography and Art. In the years that followed, we became friends, and the reasons for our friendship deepened. Suddenly, we were both women in the midst of tumultuous change, facing long-term marriages breaking up unexpectedly. Luckily, we both had our art to express the ineffable pain we both felt.

For her final MFA project, Jessica gathered the courage to make heartbreak and the home she no longer shared, the subject of her work. She photographed intuitively whatever was in front of her—the yellow yolk of an egg sunny side up; uneaten on a plate, its empty shell; a peeling portrait of an unknown woman; pills taken to calm her nerves. She photographed the dead bird she found, and those alive in the sky, as well as a little bride and headless groom discovered in a neighbor's backyard. When she trapped a fly under a glass, she went for her camera. She also photographed her teenage child's troubled hands, windows in the rooms of her house, the smoky sky from a nearby fire, a house in the distance, shrouded in darkness, and another bright in sunlight. And all the while, Jessica was in extreme physical pain, needing back surgery. So she photographed her own x-rays, and then the stitches sewn into her back. Later she photographed the men in her life, both friends and acquaintances. Each portrait revealed a kind of wounded vulnerability and tenderness. Could these portraits be self-portraits, she wondered. She found old images of her husband from when they were still together, and another of children's outgrown shoes. By facing the depth of her own loss and pain, Jessica Eve Rattner has created a brave, visual poem of self-discovery and transformation.





I am an artist who thinks about cycles of growth and decay, production and waste. My work follows local waste streams and the movement of matter. I explore ideas about matter flow and matter metamorphosis through sculpture and installation. I search for relationships among material circulation, ecology, and the waste stream. I am curious about the journeys that materials undergo from disposal to dump, the ways that they are transformed in the process, and what they say about society and the environment. Studying the usefulness and obsolescence of objects reconfigures my understanding of time. I walk waste sites, tracking natural phenomena as they act upon objects in flux. I'll follow the life of a filing cabinet which I once knew as shiny and clean and who now lies broken and scattered, meticulous labels still intact. I'll follow an office chair as it rots into a haven for lizards that dart across the landscape of busted metal and of broken glass. A sofa morphs into a mouse nest; steel drums shade weeds and jackrabbits. I am curious about ways that matter breaks chronology, and the ways in which matter is marked by its placement in and interaction with the world.

I research waste sites as ecological landscapes, as protean places of poieses and rewilding. They are places that serve as opportunities to collaborate with my surrounding environment, to place work in dialogue with industrial and social-scale forces so that they undergo continual kinetic and conceptual metamorphosis. They are places to map psycho-geographical relationships, digest the residue of the Anthropocene, and reconfigure my understandings of the natural world.

I consider myself a scavenger. I make regular visits to my local dump to study the shifts in the landscape. I stick my hand into the waste stream, select my material, and drop it back into the waste stream in a transformed state. I often follow and document the work for weeks afterwards as it becomes transformed by its volatile and ephemeral environment. My sculptures exist in a fluid state of constant reconfiguration.

I am curious about working with natural elements to subvert natural processes. I experiment with ways to catalyze processes of material transposition, sublimation, regeneration and reinvention. In the process, I explore relationships between rhythm and movement, decomposition and re-composition, nature and industry, climate change and waste.

Julia Edith Rigby

UC DAVIS **ART STUDIO** MFA EXHIBITION 2020



Upwelling, found steel drums (welded), 108" x 72" x 48", installation view at the UC Davis Waste Water Treatment Plant, 2020



Shelter in Place, found wood, found rebar (welded), 144" x 180" x 84", 2020





Julia Edith Rigby

by Kelly Thomas

DRUM

We don't care about art, but that's not to say that we don't like the delicate lace she burns in us with the glance of a welder flame, that we don't love the surface of the charred tree slice that she places beneath us.

We don't have to love this wood just because it holds us up. But we do: its saw-ridged slope, and under that, the spun curl of rusted rebar.

WOOD

I stood there for years before I was felled, not by fire but by sweating crews in the aftermath. You might feel sad for me. Well, let me tell you about the sweet flames licking at my bark, picked up by hot, dry wind, gusts that the flames made themselves, racing fast and then slow, eating deeper into my core and leaving a blackened surface of cooled coals, stretches of newly textured skin, newly nerved bark, so sensitive to the air that eventually brushed past.

You ask me if I like it here, between these white walls? Well, do you?

I am not only my grief. I am yours, too. Not your grief for flattened forests, for land that never should have been called yours in the first place, but for the fact that however much we don't believe in linear time, as long as we are in this room, or that room, we go forward. Or at least not quite back.

Regardless, I can see the lust in your eyes. You think I look like a human body, muscly in movement. Hot, yes. But oh the heat I've felt that you can't know.

DRUM

The stretch of our cutting and opening felt good. Pried away from industry, from purpose. Today, we sit feeling the cool air of the shore blow through our many lacy holes. We see our mirror image in the foam. We feel the sand sink with each wave and decide that holes like this make more surface, not less. With the sea air, we dance. And later/before, in the busy dump, under that pitch blue sky, we dance.

We reach up and out. It feels good. But we hear, too, the voices asking for more from us, from her. They don't say industry, but we know the word so well, we hear the signs.

Can we say again that we've never danced like this before.

WOOD

Ok, you're right on that one. I live/die for the decay. Go ahead, trace it like I know you want to.



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