

41st
THESIS
EXHIBITION

Master of Fine Arts

Erin Carty
Angel Castelan
Jimmy Castillo
Jinyong Choi
Dylan Conner
Leticia Contreras
Sunni Forcier
Rafael Gamero
Madison Luetge
Karen Martinez
Melissa Noble
Rob Redfearn
Amanda Shilling
Derek Witucki
Hoaxing Zhang

MARCH 29 – APRIL 15, 2019
BLAFFER ART MUSEUM
University of Houston **School of Art**

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The 41st School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition
is made possible by the University of Houston Student Fees
Advisory Committee.

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HOUSTON
KATHRINE G. MCGOVERN
COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
School of Art

UNIVERSITY of
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Graduating Artists & Designers

6

Erin Carty

16

Leticia Contreras

26

Melissa Noble

8

Angel Castelan

18

Sunni Forcier

28

Rob Redfearn

10

Jimmy Castillo

20

Rafeal Gamero

30

Amanda Shilling

12

Jinyong Choi

22

Madison Luetge

32

Derek Witucki

14

Dylan Conner

24

Karen Martinez

34

Hoaxing Zhang

Introduction

Title Text to Come

Text to come. The one certainty of graduate school is uncertainty. It is a risk. Why chose to spend three years questioning one's work? The answer, to address the restlessness that comes from acknowledging limits and wanting to know more. Purpose quells restlessness and dissipates fear. Now we see the culmination of these three years as work achieved through seeking, discovery and resolution.

Year one is the longest and the most uncertain. Time stretches and slows. Confidence seems elusive. Expectations of success are fleeting. The artist, once sure of his or her direction, searches for clarity.

Articulation begins in year two. Process, material, and subject emerge. Unstable ground solidifies. From a new foundation, the student pulls work upward and cautiously measures outcomes.

By year three, working has become a discipline. Time speeds. Questioning and making are intertwined. This way of being is comfortable.

The student has become a professional, but risk taking has not stopped. Experimentation continues and the challenges of making work are met with the knowledge gained from embracing risk.

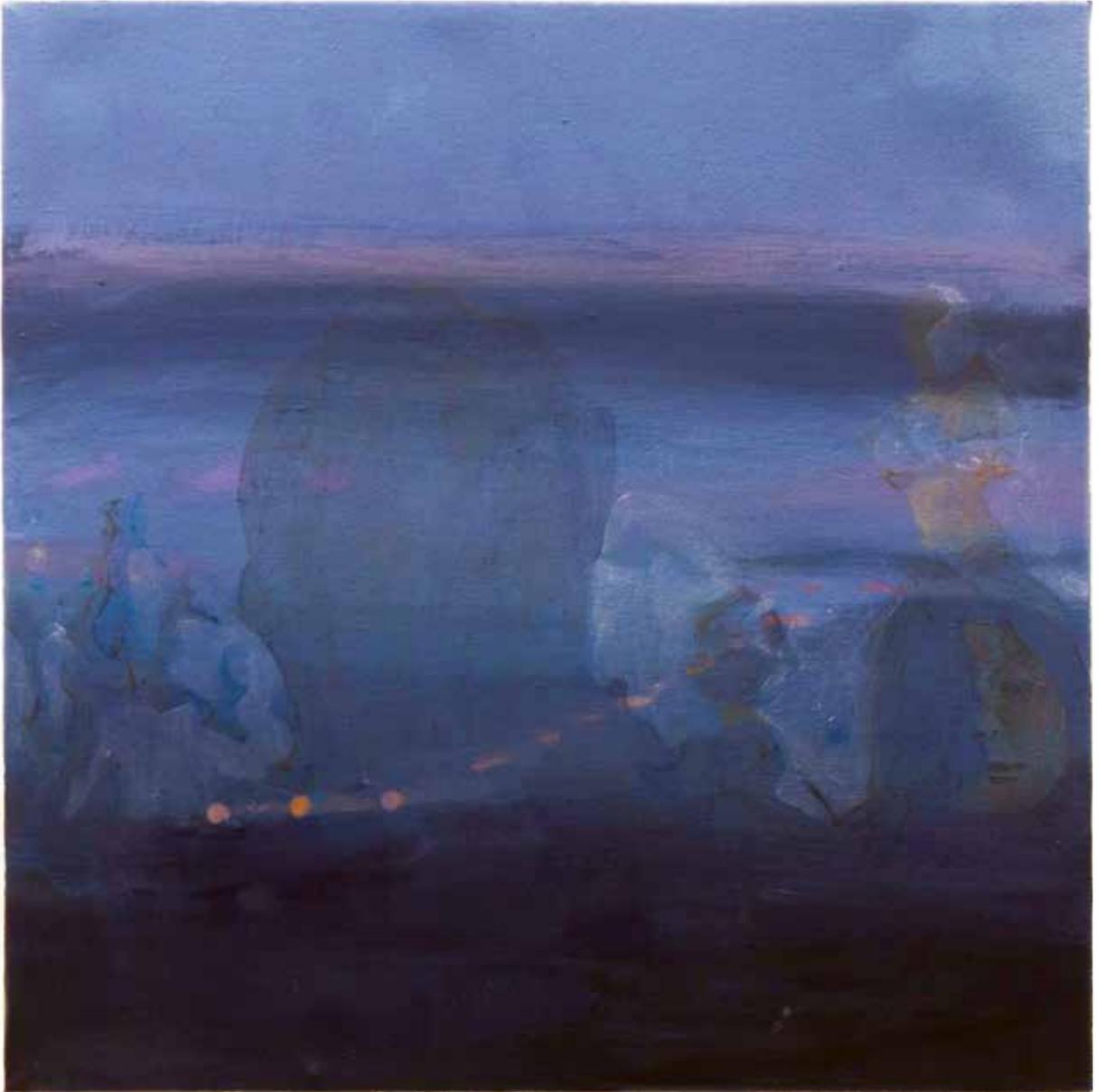
David Politzer

Director, School of Art

Erin
Carty

I am constantly coming and going—the past and the future are in arms reach, but I am happy to be in-between.

Every place I visit gives me new experiences and allows me to be my true self. I want to stay in this state as long as possible because I don't want to face what has happened or is coming. I am constantly coming and going – the past and the future are in arms reach, but I am happy to be in-between. I am liminal. Using photographs from my family's past, combined with my own photographs and imagery of non-places, I create places that could never exist, but that are eerily familiar. These transitional spaces are made through layering and repetition, along with transparencies, projections and iridescent film. They seem familiar but are of the past and will never be relived or revisited. With every movement, another viewpoint is revealed: you will never see the original image. All you will ever see is my construction, a false memory. Wish you were here, but you could never be.



Time Now For Ghosts
2018
Acrylic on Canvas
15 x 15"

Angel
Castelan

*You escape one prison only
to be assaulted by ignorance,
racism, and homophobia.*

Because they hide for so long, only to eventually
emerge, their screams inescapable.

Layers upon layers, intersections,
and complications.

How identities and paintings are made.

The male gaze on the male figure.

Is it subversion, perversion, or worship?

Let's talk about "everyone knows but
nobody talks about it".

You escape one prison only to be assaulted
by ignorance, racism, and homophobia.

Is that why the cicada resonates with me?

Because its life cycle is so much like the
coming out process.

Which, by the way, never ends.

No offense, but are you gay?

Well, hello to you too.

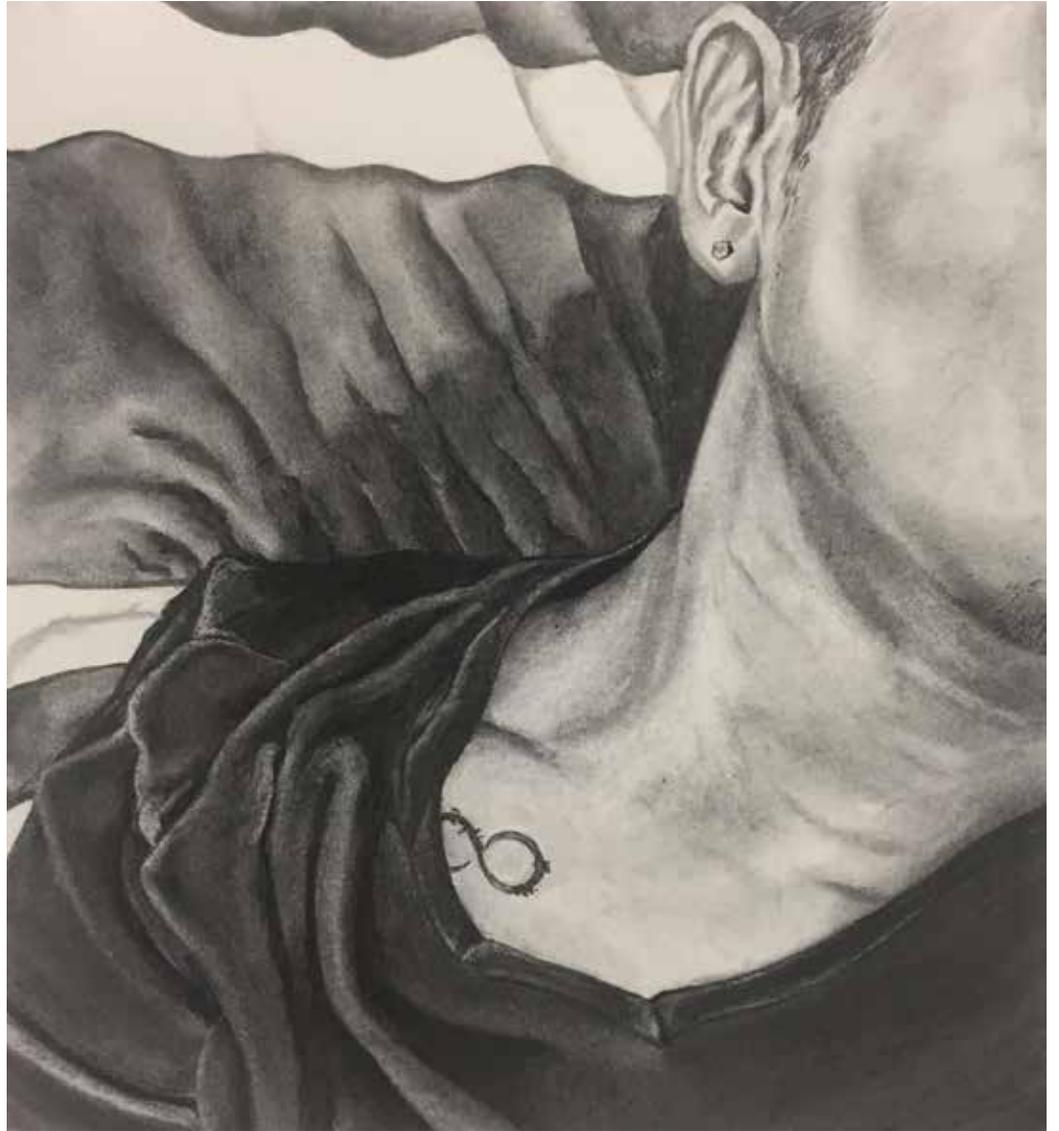
It's cool if you are, just don't hit on me, bro.

Top or bottom?

Bitch, I might be.

Sorry. How are you?

Gay, thanks.



Infinite
2018
Charcoal on Paper
14 x 13"



Keene St. From the series, North-side Corrido
2018
Inkjet Print
30 x 20"

Jimmy
Castillo

It's fascinating to see what resources and influence are able to accomplish to their own ends.

My work examines the endurance of the powerless against the powerful. For me, photography is a very pliable medium and lends itself perfectly to the task of exploring the dynamics of power playing out around the topics of immigration, gentrification, and the politics of place. It's fascinating to see what resources and influence are able to accomplish to their own ends, and the ways that the rest of us either succumb to authority, support the status quo, or attempt to fight back against it. The roles of the mighty and the meek can be found in every story, and they show us that power is neither static nor binary. The struggle between the two ends of the power spectrum is a surprisingly flexible space in which the roles of power blur, commingle, and intertwine. This is the space in which art can begin to observe our situation and to play with our sense of inevitability; giving us a way to imagine how those roles can be reversed.

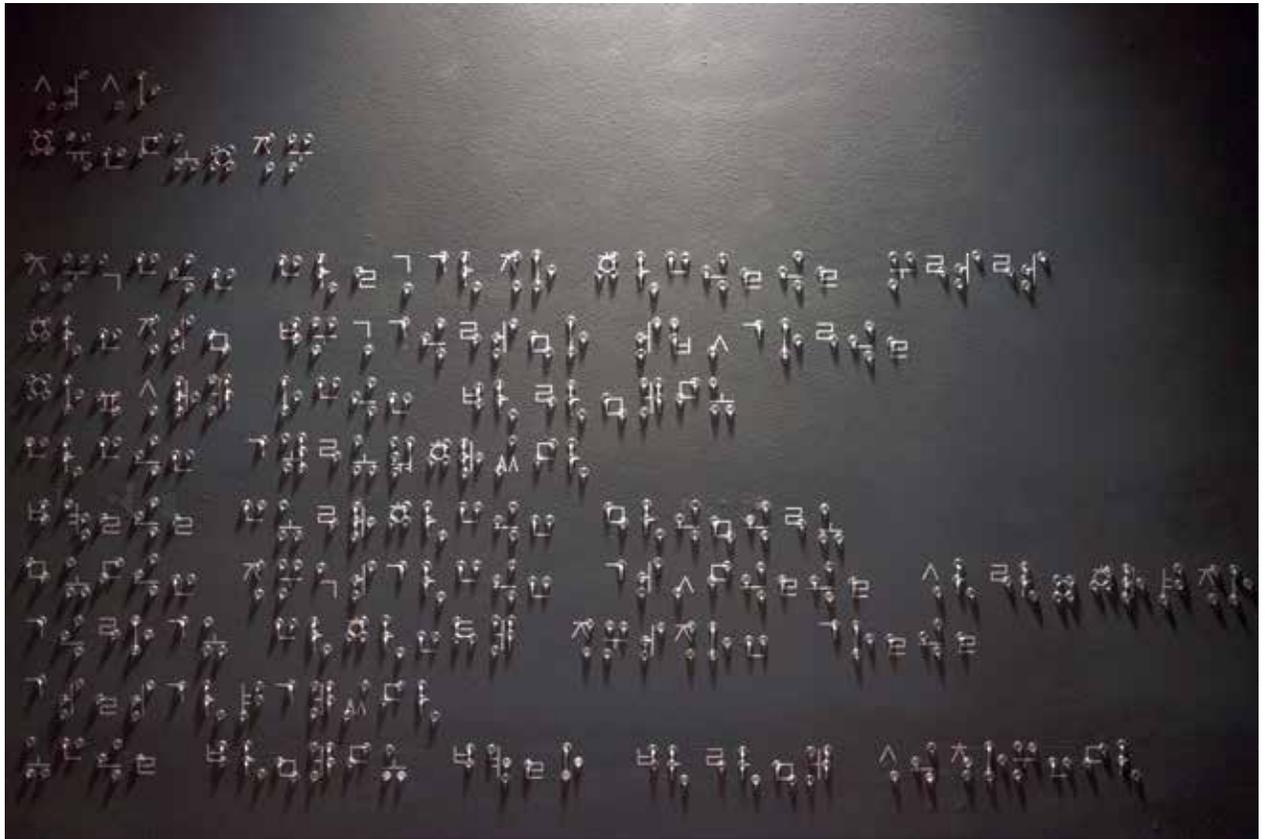


**Jinyong
Choi**

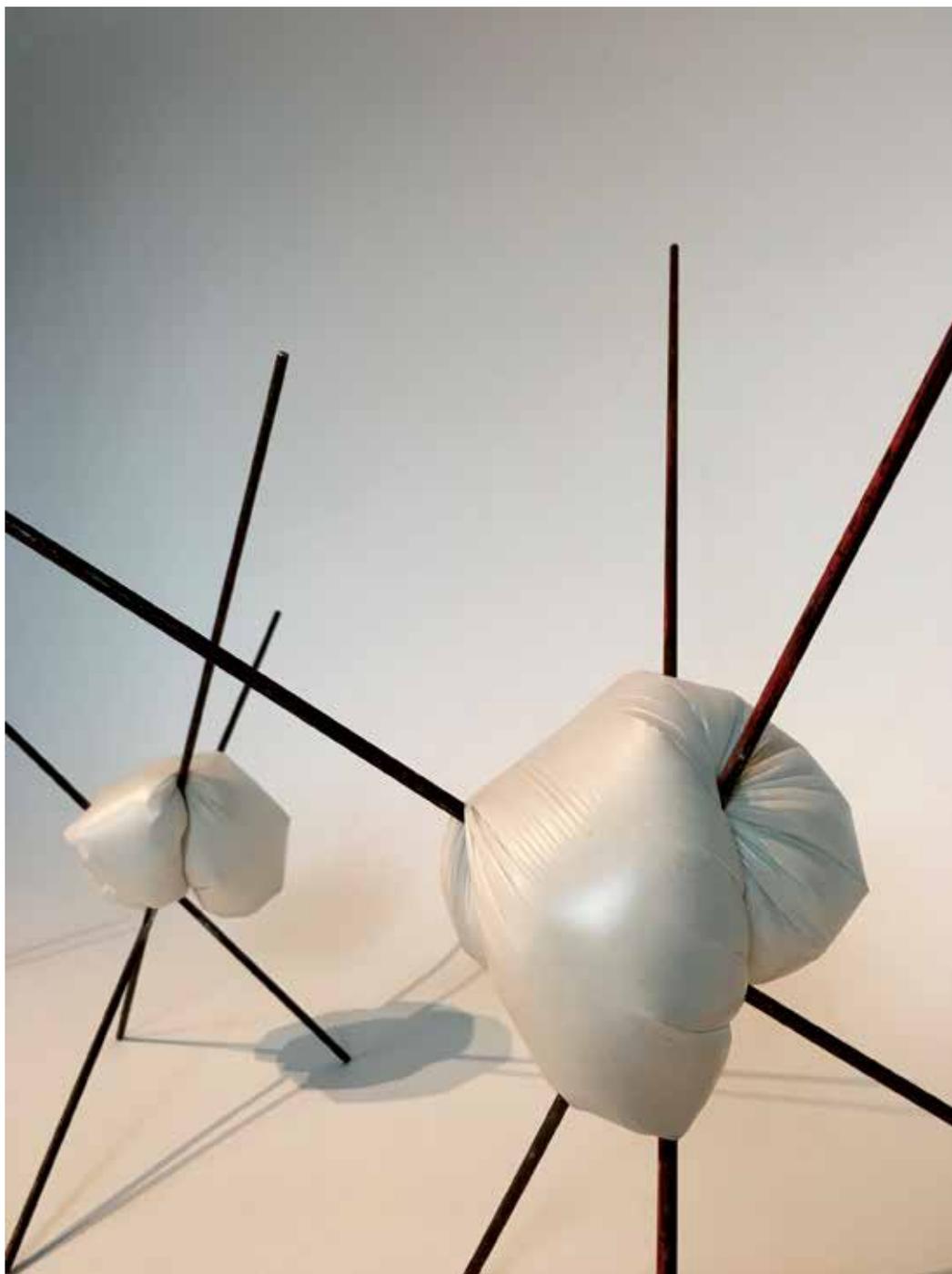
I have created an inclusive interface where both groups of people can access the same information.

I consider myself an ordinary person, yet at the same time, I have particular experiences outside the norm. My hair turned gray when I was seventeen. I became conscious of my Korean dialect after I relocated to Seoul. I have faced the struggles of being a minority since moving to Houston. These experiences have ensured that I learn the value of empathy, encouraged me to reflect on the worth of the different, and shaped how I approach design. Pairing unusual combinations, magnifying the size of an installation and considering the perspectives of unconventional users have allowed me to achieve distinctive characteristics in my work.

Braille × Hangul is my attempt to introduce tactility to the visual realm by merging two discrete writing systems used by the blind and the sighted in South Korea. I have created an inclusive interface where both groups of people can access the same information. I am interested in collapsing differences and undoing hierarchies: the unblocked syllabic structure of the combined typeface slightly compromises the legibility of the Hangul-Korean Alphabet, briefly switching the status of the majority and minority.



Braille x Hangul
2018
Silicone Hemispheres and Vinyl on a Wooden Wall
82 x 60 x 23.5"



Knots detail
2018
Plaster and steel
Dimensions variable

Dylan
Conner

*Trial and error are
fundamental to my process
as I experiment with casting
and fabricate intricate
steel frameworks.*

I create my sculptures with steel, plaster, and concrete, historically rich materials that carry inherent conceptual weight. I find new aesthetic value in the properties of these materials by pushing them to their limits. Force, pressure, bulging, compression, constraint, and vulnerability are recurring themes. In some pieces, I also incorporate found materials such as a cast iron lamp-post, a heavy wooden beam, delicate wallpaper, or a steel marine buoy. Site is always an important consideration in my work, but when I use found objects, rather than responding to the site they typically inhabit, the sculptures become self-reflective in nature and assume an introspective quality. Trial and error are fundamental to my process as I experiment with casting and fabricate intricate steel frameworks. Some of my works are successful because so many have failed. Investigating the entire process, from conception through execution to failure or success, is the driving force of my practice.



**Leticia
Contreras**

My practice is centered and shaped by the deep respect I have for the feminist artists and creative people of color who came before me.

My process begins by investigating a place—its individual and collective memory; the external and internal forces that shape it; and who or what has the power/influence to shape what is remembered. My practice is centered and shaped by the deep respect I have for the feminist artists and creative people of color who came before me.

My approach comes from a critical race perspective and black feminist epistemology. I am in a constant excavation process of discovering self and my relationship to black womxnhood as a very light-skinned afro-latinx femme. I am interested in the ways I can use embodied memory as a strategy to create counter-narratives to the dominant imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy.



On Sundays, She Wore Her Hair Long for Jesus 2019
Digital Collage
24 x 24"



**Sunni
Forcier**

*The methods and results
may vary but I am always
led back to the examination
of personal histories.*

Waiting for the moment when the two worlds of my eye and the viewfinder to collide, capturing the small inconsistencies that become the study of something much greater.

From found objects to the mundane moments of life; I treat each piece as a specimen placed beneath my lens for analysis. The methods and results may vary but I am always led back to the examination of personal histories.

The seven-inch scar across my abdomen that has grown with me since I was four months old, along with my mother's diagnosis with a rare combination of incurable diseases, are the foundation of personal experiences I investigate using photography, printmaking, and the dismantling of books.



October 1916: Ear
2018
Photo Etching
4.5 x 3.5"

Rafael
Gamero

*The studio becomes my ship,
a place where I can take
control, my own world where
sex, religion, evolution exist
in the open at once.*

I am a pirate, plundering loot and visual information. The studio becomes my ship, a place where I can take control, my own world where sex, religion, evolution exist in the open at once. This is a world parallel to the outside.

I am a mad scientist experimenting and using materials to create “creatures” that I unleash into the world. The creatures can be aggressive or passive when interacting with the viewer, as they might not be accustomed to this new world.

I am an alchemist transforming found materials and traditional mediums into new artworks and giving them a new purpose. With a deep desire to create and see things in a new way, I combine different resources with the hope of creating something new.

I am a rebel who defies the traditional ways of making art. I work with art that is raw, unrefined and sarcastic with the goal of creating questions and reactions.



Where do babies come from?

2017

Mixed Media (Paper, Graphite, magazines, cardboard,
screws on duct tape on hardboard on canvas)

48 x 36"

Remember
for a little
while
anyway.

Untitled
2017
Oil on panel
11 x 14"

Madison Luetge

In an attempt to pinpoint and reveal that connection, I collect remnants of our lives that reflect our desires and feelings.

I believe that every person shares in some universal commonality that is deeply rooted within the core of our humanity. In an attempt to pinpoint and reveal that connection, I collect remnants of our lives that reflect our desires and feelings. Our existence can be summed up in what we leave behind, the written word, fleeting expressions and where we choose to place personal value. Each collected element comes from an anonymous source, leaving no chance for personal bias. So, I take these effects and convert them into a montage of paintings and assembled found objects to serve as extensions of ourselves. These facets confront the construct of memory, greed, internal turmoil, loss and other projected sentiments. Throughout this process of collecting anonymous ephemera, I find that we are not strangers and we never were.

**Karen
Martinez**

My films challenge accepted narratives established by the imaginations of European men, the same narratives that inform contemporary patriarchal behaviors.

My identity as an undocumented woman is a political reality that is hard to ignore. It propels me to revisit the histories and myths of my ancestors. I recognize these histories as negotiations of survival. My films challenge accepted narratives established by the imaginations of European men, the same narratives that inform contemporary patriarchal behaviors. The protagonists of my work have endured five centuries of abuse, misogyny, and slander. I invite you to experience the fragments of memory and imagination born from the confusion and erasure that is our history.

Every choice, from the lens to the cut, is used to give just enough information to generate curiosity. By favoring more fragmented styles of filming such as montage, overlapping, and POV, the films maintain continuity without compromising experimentation. Sound is used to create a space that interprets the characters and their experiences. The desire is to have characters we take turns gazing with: Sometimes we watch Malintzin and Coatlicue, migrant women and America. Other times they watch us.



Nepantla: I
2019
Video Still

Melissa Noble

I create a setting for distinctive incidences by transposing the theatrical experience of narrative, character and memory into time based, participatory acts.

The tension created by the suspension of physical and psychological elements is central to my work. My installations speak to the personal experiences of each viewer through quotidian and transient items. Performance tactics and devices of stagecraft like costuming, rigging and props inform my process. I create a setting for distinctive incidences by transposing the theatrical experience of narrative, character and memory into time based, participatory acts. Often using a movement score as the entry point to the work, the actions and time references of the movement score are what notes and time signatures are to the musical score. I am interested in the deconstruction of everyday movements and explore this with tasks in extremely slow tempo to foster hyper-awareness. As the materials are activated by participation, they become performers of agency and assumptions.



Water Station Marfa
2017
Found Objects and Score
Land Art/Installation



Rarified Remnants

2018

Extruded aluminum, hardware, Mdf, steel, stoneware

50 x 30 x 48"



**Rob
Redfearn**

The intent of my work is ultimately to preserve the ethereal role of art and uphold its function as an aspect of humanity that transcends our survival instincts.

The root of my artistic practice is based in combining traditional craft skills with new technologies, and applying these materials and processes to a conceptual framing that evoke themes of futility, absurdity, and my own ideological reasoning. The intent of my work is ultimately to preserve the ethereal role of art and uphold its function as an aspect of humanity that transcends our survival instincts. This is reinforced by denying the utility of materials, working with ephemeral elements, addressing my own mortality, finding passages to preserve within the work, and subverting the high culture value of art with humor. This is why I often incorporate mechanisms or situations that demand presence and strain patience. I make art because I enjoy processing materials, and I take pride in making things that serve no practical function other than to exist as art objects or environments.

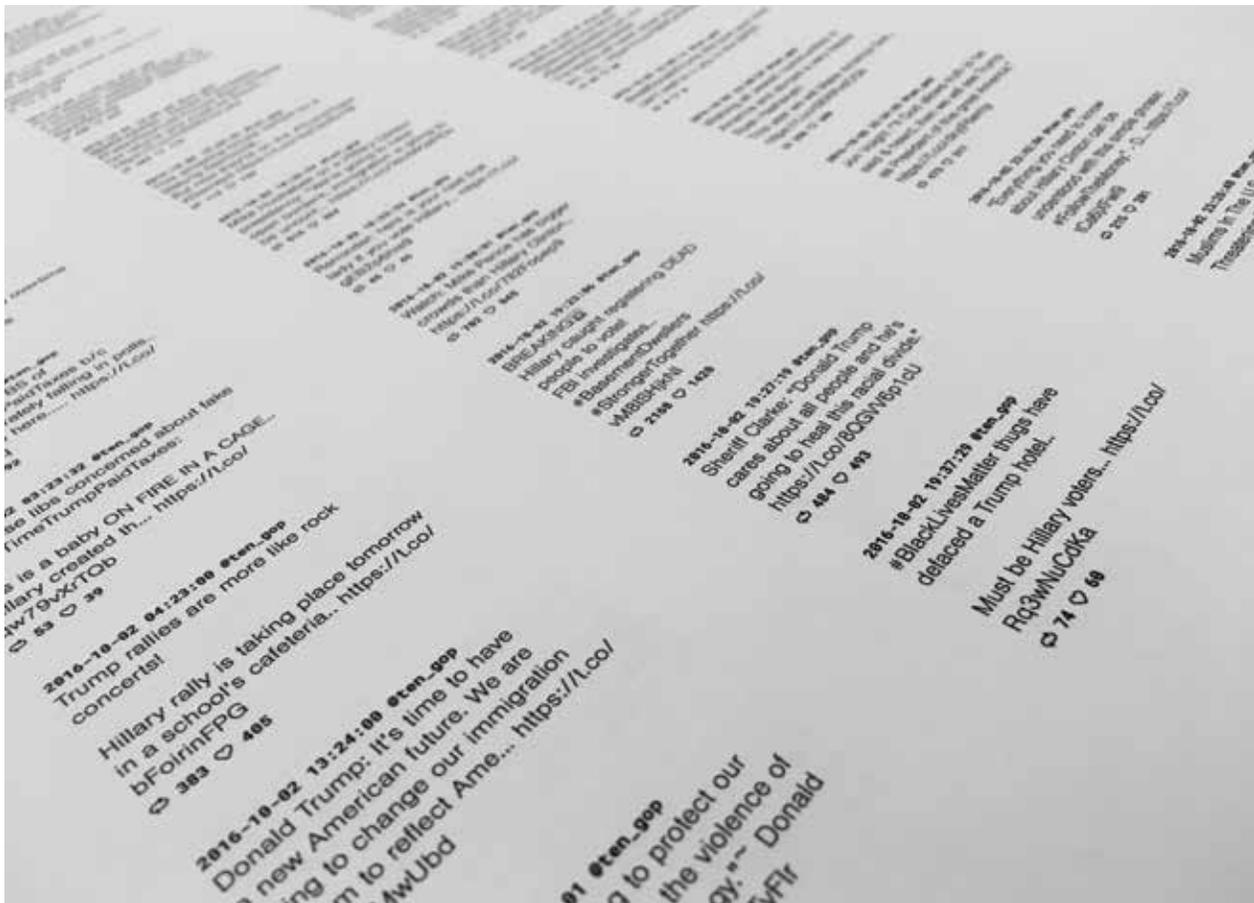
Amanda Shilling

In our makeover-obsessed, social-media-driven society where only our best selves are shared with the world, Schilling's work illuminates those things that we might otherwise try to hide.

Amanda Schilling makes work about gender, identity, and the societal pressure to reach unattainable standards of perfection in order to achieve the “American dream”. In our makeover-obsessed, social-media-driven society where only our best selves are shared with the world, Schilling’s work illuminates those things that we might otherwise try to hide. She debunks the myth of the perfect family where everyone is always smiling, children never misbehave, everything is always clean, and mothers easily master all tasks necessary to keep it that way. In her Wife, Mother, Woman series, Schilling candidly photographs mothers going through the motions of their day highlighting otherwise unseen moments. For other projects such as Lost and Found and Trappings of Domesticity, she turns the camera on herself focusing on the messiness of life and all the things that ultimately suppress women’s desires and ability to truly be themselves. Her images can be at times both humorous and dark, but they’re always honest.



January
2019
Archival Pigment Print
16 x 20"
Courtesy of the Artist



@Ten_GOP tweet collection

2019

Typography, Paper, Roller Clutch, Beaded Cord

2 5/6" x 74 ft

Derek
Witucki

*I am driven to learn new things
and believe that graphic design
should enable dialogue.*

I am a graphic designer, but more importantly, I'm a person who asks questions. All my work begins from a journalistic impulse. I am driven to learn new things and believe that graphic design should enable dialogue. I try to make honest observations of the world, to discover stories, context and perspective, and to share at least one true thing.

Now, when every day grows more distressing than the last, we need to be reminded why true things matter. We find ourselves assailed by the information hellscape of slanted news, propaganda, and targeted marketing on social media. Social technologies have gamified the spread of ideas. We reward each other for sharing snappy messages loaded with moral and emotional codes and obsessively play the game in search of likes and affirmation. After ten years of prolific smartphone use, we have been trained into emotional, heuristic modes of thinking that affect everything we do.

I address this the only way I know: by defining the problems and asking the question, what do we do now?



GAP
2017
Rock, Paper, Charcoal
Variable Sizes

Hoaxing Zhang

My work primarily explores the ways in which human culture is transformed, misunderstood, alienated, and reformed by others over time.

I am an artist from China interested in cross-cultural communication. I am also interested in the misunderstandings that can arise from such communications, and in new possible points of connection. My work primarily explores the ways in which human culture is transformed, misunderstood, alienated, and reformed by others over time. Using sculpture, video, performance, and conceptual actions, I approach my works as experiments in cultural interaction and the creation of a communicative environment or platform. When a different culture is set up on the platform, the outcome is partially or entirely out of my control. The unpredictable result derives from the open interference, surprising interactions, assumptions of people, and the plasticity of culture. I utilize my foreign cultural background to exaggerate the possibilities of misunderstanding between different cultures and to stimulate the uncertainty of the exchange. My work encourages cultural transformation, eventually presenting the unforeseen consequences of the integrated culture communication process. Human are possibly unnecessary to be too engaged and deliberate. Because once the different cultures tether each other, the cultural collision and fusion will be inevitably detonated.

Major Support

The University of Houston Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts recognizes the following supporters of the Graduate Program in the School of Art:

Joan Hohlt Wich Fellowship Endowment
Sarah C. Morian Endowment
George R. Bunker Graduate Fellowship
Carey C. Shuart Presidential Endowed Fellowship
Delores Welder Mitchell Scholarship
La Ruth Blain Scholarship Endowment
Peter W. Guenther Art History Scholarship Endowment Fund
Sharon and Gus Kopriva
Carolyn and Dan Price
And additional friends of the UH School of Art

Many thanks go to the University of Houston School of Art; its 2019 MFA candidates; Blaffer Art Museum; David Politzer, Director, School of Art; Kim Howard, Sr. Director of Advancement, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; Julie Anderson-Smith, Sr. Director of Advancement, Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts; and Sibylle Hagmann, Professor of Graphic Design.

The catalogue for the University of Houston's 41st Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition was designed by Amira Maruf, a graduate student in the School of Art. The typefaces used are Tenso by Jos Buivenga and Karbid Slab by Verena Gerlach. The papers are EuroArt Plus Dull and Cougar Opaque. The catalogue was printed by Specialty Bindery and Printing.
