

# RYAN LUCAS

2023 ART AND ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

May 9 – May 20, 2023

# 2023 ART AND ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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The *2023 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* presents the graduate thesis exhibitions of Young Kim, Ryan Lucas, and Melanie Miller-Silver in Columbia College Chicago's Art and Art History Department.

**Young Kim** presents *Shall We Go to The Happy Land?* is an immersive installation and performance that materializes a sanctuary where audiences experience comfort, serenity, transcendence, hope, or a moment of respite.

**Ryan Lucas** examines the ideas and perspectives of popular societal views of masculinity in *Our Sins and Where They Take Us*, through a sculpture and a series of paintings.

**Melanie Miller-Silver** exhibits *Women and the Invisible Labors of Ritual*, a series of ritual regalia incorporating beadwork designs common to many cultures around the world.

The *2023 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Department of Art and Art History, and Paul Catanese, Director of Graduate Studies for Art and Art History.

# RYAN LUCAS

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My artwork focuses on the relationships between identity, religion, and pop culture. Through paintings, found objects, religious symbolism, and textured patterns that correspond to sexual identity, I seek to question in what ways our individual surroundings have formed us and how we can break free from those formations.

**Ryan Lucas** is a painter based in Chicago. He received his BFA in Studio Art at the University of Missouri Saint Louis in 2020. He has been featured in select exhibitions throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area including Express Scripts Headquarters, ECC Art Gallery, and Art Saint Louis. He is completing his MFA at Columbia College Chicago in Spring 2023 where he is co-director for Porous Gallery.



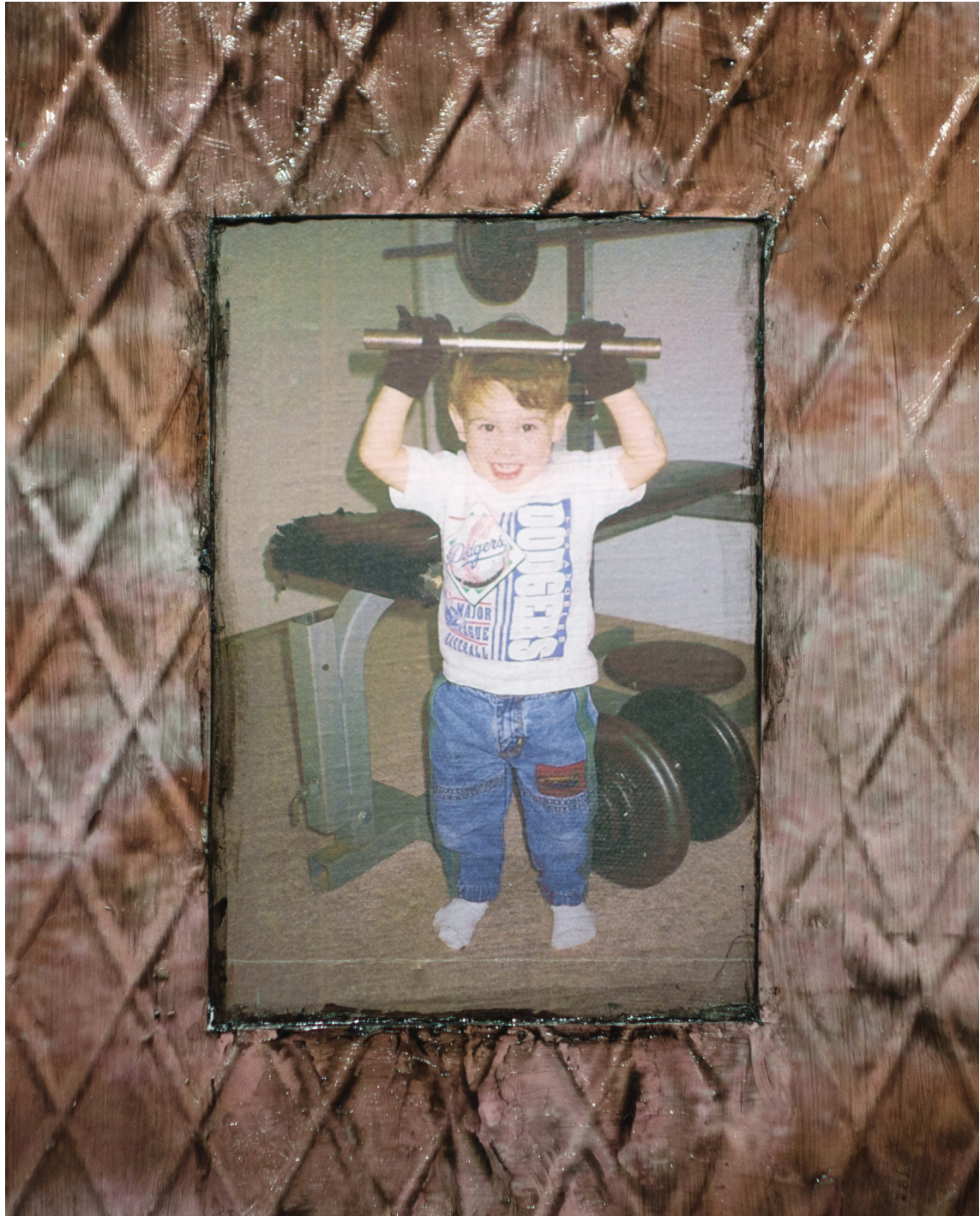
*Dying Star*, 2023, dodge ram hubcap, wood, cast acrylic, 41.5" x 41.5"



*Dying Star* (Detail), 2023, dodge ram hubcap, wood, cast acrylic, 41.5" x 41.5"



Untitled, 2022, acrylic, print, and photograph on canvas, with cast acrylic and plexiglass, 29.5" x 24"



Untitled (Detail), 2022, acrylic, print, and photograph on canvas, with cast acrylic and plexiglass, 29.5" x 24"



*Frail Hero*, 2022, acrylic and print on canvas, 31" x 26"

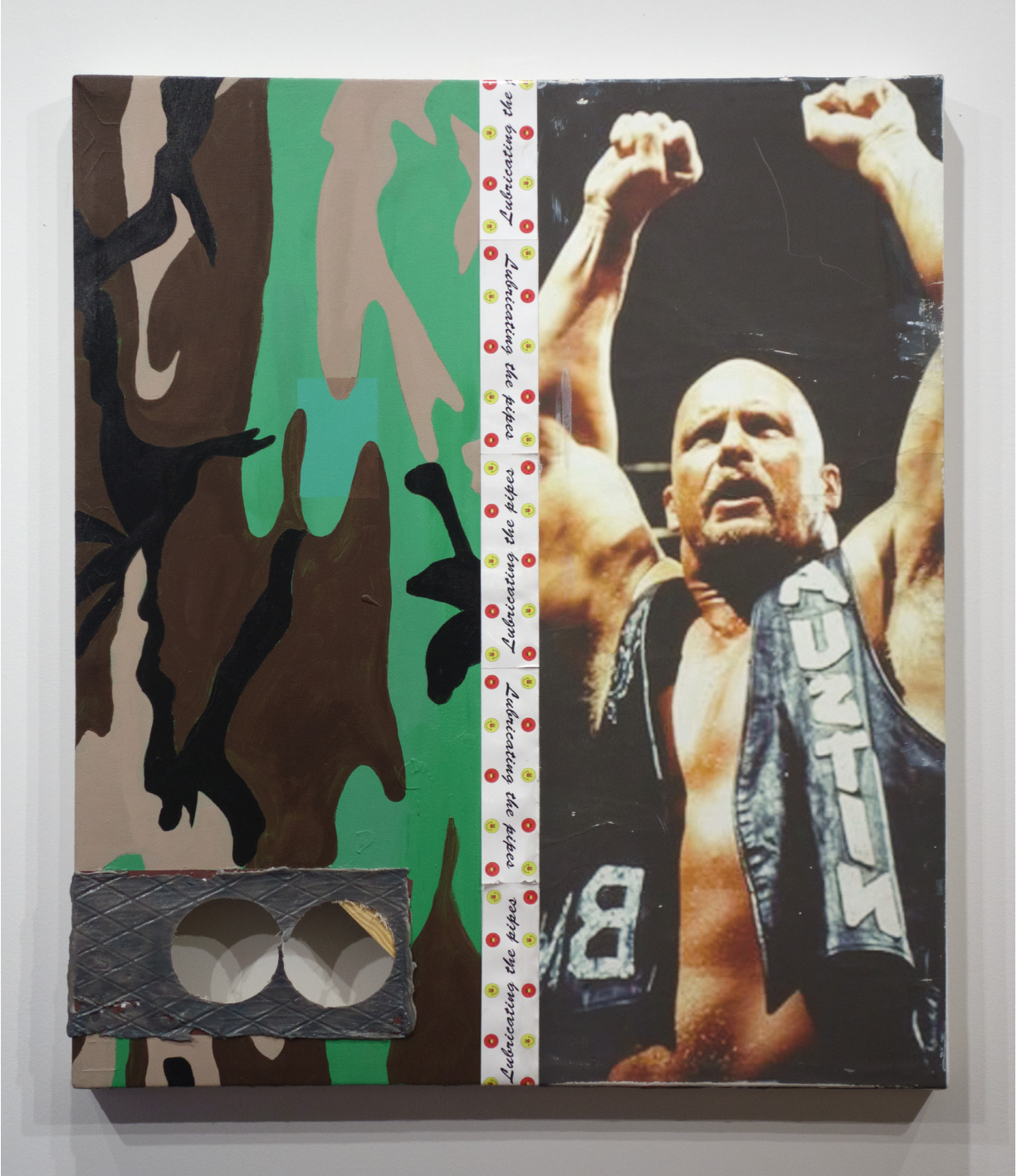




*Frail Hero* (Detail), 2022, acrylic and print on canvas, 31" x 26"



*Frail Hero* (Detail), 2022, acrylic and print on canvas, 31" x 26"



Cold Stare, 2023, acrylic, print, adhesive printed paper, wood, canvas, 35" x 30"

# INTERVIEW WITH RYAN LUCAS

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

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**Rachel Manlubatan:** Your artwork incorporates grungy and dark palettes, with noticeable textures accompanying them. Do you find that the colors and patterns you use represent the societal stereotypes of masculinity, the despair you've experienced from them, or both? How do you balance the relationship between these two ideas in the aesthetic you display?

**Ryan Lucas:** The term "grungy" really sticks to me. In a good way. Using dark palettes, I want to show the emptiness one can feel when hiding elements of yourself to fit in with the crowd. Textural elements within my pieces become the barriers that are put up to keep the truth at bay while still maintaining the illusion that you are the man you say you are. These barriers are sometimes see-through or have cracks or holes in them in order to show you there is something more than first impression.

**RM:** What questions do you ask yourself when deciding what mediums you want to use for each piece? How does changing materials provide insight into the relationship between your identity and what pop culture wants you to be?

**RL:** I usually question who and what was around me that influenced my thinking of masculinity. I was told to toughen up a lot and that I shouldn't cry, to remain stoic. I sometimes use more rigid material, like wood and concrete. While extracting the rigid textures from a brick wall or steel, I use them to create the false barriers. What seems rigid isn't really rigid at all.

**RM:** The elements used in your artwork utilize abstract imagery, negative space, and contrasting designs. What do you imagine your audience pulls from these components? How do these stylistic choices work together to represent your idea of masculinity?

**RL:** I hope that they can understand there is complexity to every person and one individual shouldn't be pushed to fit into certain societal expectations.

**RM:** How did you decide to create pieces that spoke towards a large, mainstream issue? What was your artistic journey like while getting to this point, and what challenges have you faced and currently face as you confront the harmful consequences of the masculine appearance?

**RL:** I was always interested in people and was painting portraits before this body of work. The portraits themselves dived into the hidden emotions behind these blank faces. I was happy with these, but I decided to pivot towards why these hidden emotions and characteristics of a person were hidden. One of these reasons is because of societal expectations. It's weird to think now, but I was afraid of what my parents would think when I got my earring. I used to have body dysmorphia and sometimes catch myself still thinking about my body. This is just due to these hierarchical expectations. The biggest thing that I have been facing is being able to confront my own emotions in a healthy manner and not bundle them up as I was told to long ago.



## THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is also managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

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Gallery hours: Monday-Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.