

# ELI GICLAS

2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

# 2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

5th Floor Student Center May 6–28, 2024

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*The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art I Design and Photography Departments. The exhibition, which includes paintings, prints, drawings, photography, sound, and installation, captures the extensive research, exploration, critical analysis, creative inquiry, productivity, practice, and achievement these emerging artists have maintained throughout their time in the programs. With varied approaches to subject matter, distinct methods of creation, and a unique blending of personal, political, and historical narratives, the artists in this show weave together the nuanced strands of the contemporary moment.

**Participating Artists:** Andre Barker Jr, Nora Benjamin, Callie Clark Wiren, Noah Fodor, Eli Giclas, Ash Huse, Hillary Irene Johnson, Adam MacArthur, Giselle Mira-Diaz, Grace Papineau-Couture, Arrietta van der Voort, and andrew vogelpohl

*The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Art I Design Department, and the Photography Department.

# ELI GICLAS

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**Eli Giclas's** work investigates the complicated relationship that we have with our environment through direct references to the extractive and refining industries that power our lives. The visualized landscape exists between progress and collapse, between construction and ruin.

His work points to the disarming awe that he finds in these dispiriting realities as a means of exploring the anxiety he feels for our uncertain future. In the shadow of these subjects, Giclas considers our relationship to our planet and what must change to make a better, more thoughtful future possible.

**Eli Giclas** is a Chicago-based photographer, graphic designer, and educator. His work responds to notions of health and the environment, and he works across various mediums to grasp for some order in the chaos. Giclas received his BFA in graphic design at the University of Arizona and is currently an MFA candidate in photography at Columbia College Chicago. Most recently, he was published in Fraction Magazine's 15th anniversary issue (curated by Leo Hsu and Bree Lamb) and exhibited at Perspective Gallery in Evanston, Illinois.

**Website:** [eligclas.com](http://eligclas.com)

**Instagram:** [@eligclas](https://www.instagram.com/eligclas)



*April 19, 2022, archival Inkjet print, 24" x 30"*



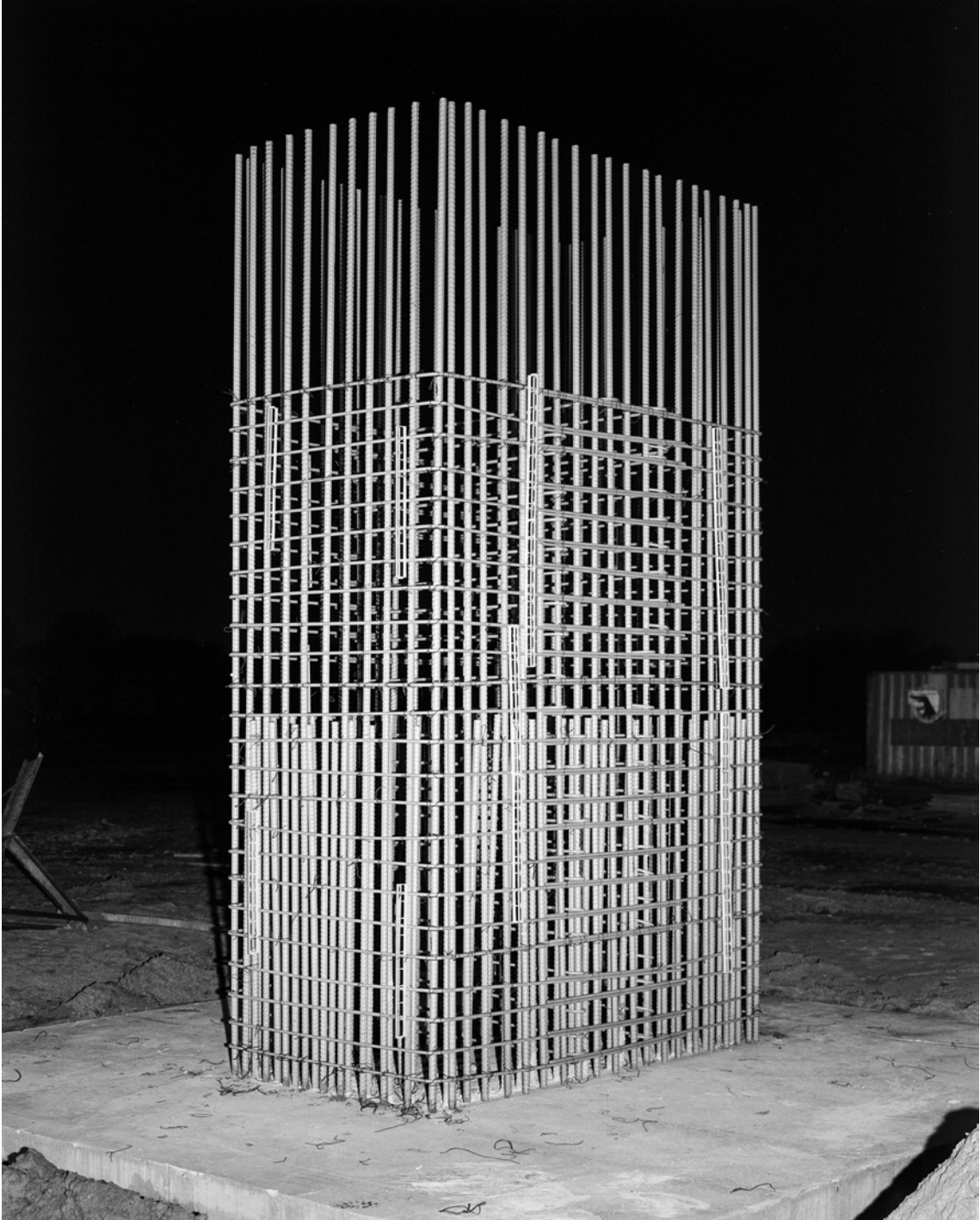
*February 10, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 16" x 20"*



*February 26, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 50"*



*April 20, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 30" x 24"*

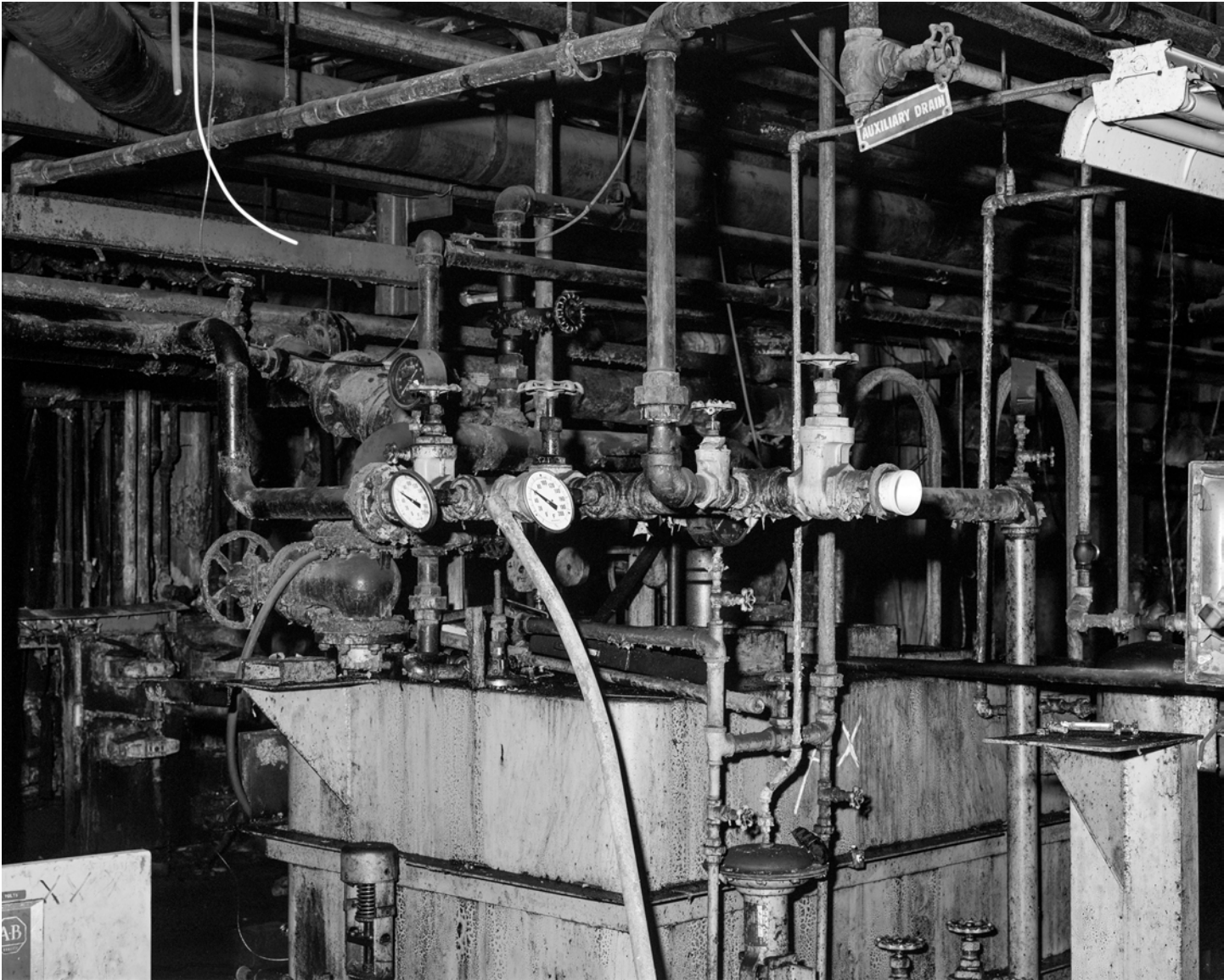


*April 20, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 30" x 24"*





*July 4, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 50"*



September 26, 2023, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 50"



*January 25, 2024, archival Inkjet print, 30" x 24"*



*February 3, 2024, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 50"*



*February 12, 2022, archival Inkjet print, 40" x 50"*

# INTERVIEW WITH ELI GICLAS

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

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**Rachel Manlubatan:** Why do you choose to display your photos in black and white? How do the shadows and highlights of your photos collaborate with the symmetry of your subject matter to convey the anxiety you have about our future?

**Eli Giclas:** That's a really thoughtful question. I have a couple of answers—one that's fairly practical, and another that's based on a bit more conceptual thought.

First and foremost, I shoot black and white film because it's less expensive and more straightforward to develop; the pace of grad school is pretty unrelenting, so being able to process film at my apartment has been important. That said, and more related to the project, black and white is rooted in photographic tradition. When I started the edit for this work, I had been making photographs that were direct references (and sometimes challenges) to photographers who came before me. People like Bernd and Hilla Becher and Robert Adams were majorly influential on my early development as a photographer.

The duality of black and white simplifies and reduces reality to its most basic opposition, while also indicating my voice as the image maker. We don't see in black and white, so images that utilize that visual language imply the intervention of the artist, thereby centering the aesthetic experience of the work on something more personal. I feel that, with today's inundation of color images meant to reflect reality, black and white's altered state aligns tonally with my interest in expressing my anxiety about our uncertain future.

There's also something so enjoyable about seeing the world wholly anew every time I develop a sheet of film. The image appearing on the negative will never not be magical for me.

**RM:** What intrigues you about the specific locations and materials frequently captured in your photos? How do the busier, more complex structures that act as subjects in your work evoke the intended feelings you want your audiences to experience?

**EG:** When I moved to the Midwest from Arizona, I found the presence of large-scale industrial sites to be profoundly affecting, and I'm interested in exploring the stark duality of what these structures signify today. Their symbolic opposition to a viable relationship with nature is dire, but their human origins and sheer scale tie them to us and how we live and work together. Even though the structures I picture play a necessary role in our lives and our potential for a more sustainable future, they ultimately reinforce an impossible status quo.

Regarding the busier and more complex structures, I've always struggled with the question of how to get still images to express urgency and dread. Both emotions are derived from a sense of the passage of time, and single photographs only really represent a specific moment. A series of photographs seemed more fitting, and that got me thinking about ways to vary the images to create different emotional and interpretive experiences for the viewer. One emotion that I wanted to express was that of panic, of a certain overwhelming loudness, so I made pictures that operated more like frantic abstract paintings—bent machinery and broken bricks fill frames to imply disaster.

**RM:** What shapes and motifs do you look for when photographing industrial sites? How do they represent ties to nature and human life?

**EG:** To be honest, when I'm photographing industrial sites, I rarely think about nature. I experience those places and structures as

## INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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disconnected from the “natural” environment, or at least as their own distinct landscape.

I often find myself seeking out experiences that allow for direct contact with industry, so much of what I look for when photographing industrial sites is a way into them.

**RM:** How does displaying your photographs at a larger scale transform the message of your pieces? Once the process of photographing concludes, what other choices do you make afterwards that change the piece entirely, and how do they relate to the complicated relationship society has with the environment?

**EG:** I like to exhibit my photographs at a variety of scales to create opportunities for different relationships between the pictures, and different interpretations of the work as a whole. Larger scale prints have felt like a way to indicate the real-world scale of some of my subjects, and in so doing relate my experience(s) making the photographs to my audience. It's often true that my experiences making these pictures are fairly intense, and making the resultant images larger in relation to the viewer communicates some of that intensity.

I also shoot large format film, which allows for an often-astonishing amount of descriptive detail in the pictures. The bigger the print, the more it invites viewers to spend time engaging with all of that detail. The more time people spend with the project, the more power the photographs have to affect how we perceive these subjects in relation to us and our future on this planet.



## 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 and graphic design is 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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754 S. Wabash Ave., Fifth Floor, Chicago, IL 60605  
Gallery hours: Monday–Saturday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.