

NOAH FODOR

2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

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5th Floor Student Center May 6–28, 2024

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.

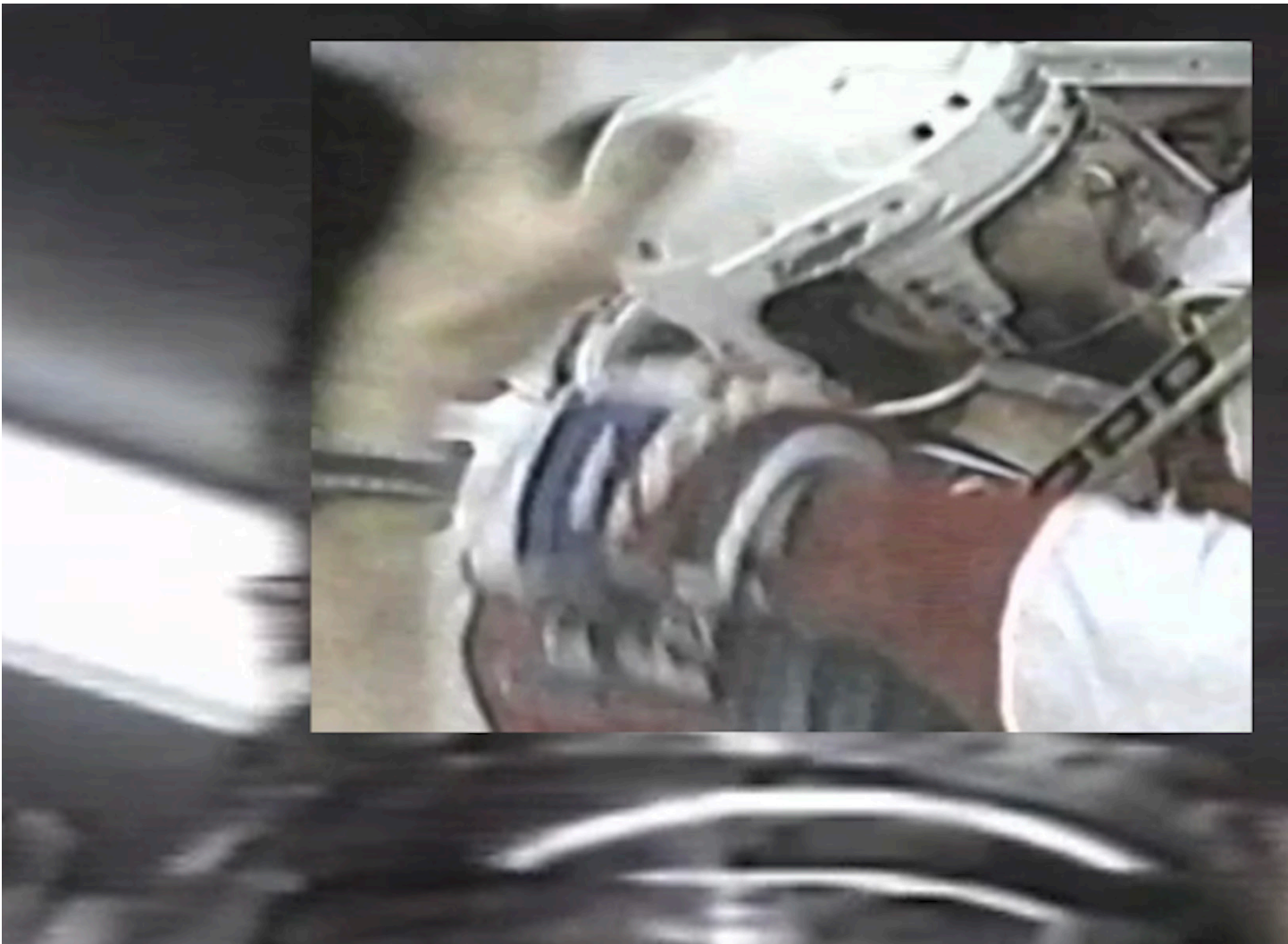
NOAH FODOR

Fodor's work explores the contradictions of masculinity through his experience playing ice hockey as a closeted athlete for over a decade. In hockey, a particularly violent and hyper-masculine sport, the possibility of queerness is denied and even feared, perpetuating a toxic environment that forces queer players to closet themselves. The performative acts of masculinity that happen within violent sports such as punching, hitting, and slamming reinforce idealized versions of what it means to be a man. Sports also set the conditions in which men can touch and become vulnerable with one another, leading to softer and homoerotic interactions, but when this emotional or physical closeness falls outside of this space it is questioned and attacked. The resulting photographs and single-channel video further complicate both his experiences and our expectations of masculinity and the role of sports in shaping a masculine identity. Ultimately revealing a homoeroticism, hidden in plain sight, which has caused his fears and desires to rear their heads.

Noah Fodor (b. 1999) is a queer lens-based artist currently residing in Chicago, IL. His work focuses on themes such as notions of history, membership, power, masculinity, and queerness. His practice ranges from the use of analog and digital photography to the archive, collage, and text work; often using them as a strategy to subvert his subject matter. Fodor will earn his M.F.A. in photography from Columbia College Chicago in the spring of 2024.



No Greater Theater I, 2023, single-channel video, 42" monitor



No Greater Theater II, 2023, single-channel video, 42" monitor



No Greater Theater III, 2023, single-channel video, 42" monitor



Untitled (Self Portrait in Helmet), 2023, archival Inkjet print, 24" x 30"



Untitled (Jockstrap), 2022, archival Inkjet print, 12" x 15"



Untitled (Nowhere to Run), archival Inkjet print, 32" x 40"

INTERVIEW WITH NOAH FODOR

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

Rachel Manlubatan: How does centering your compositions around one part of the body speak to the idea of vulnerability and intimacy between men? What other elements do you tend to incorporate into your shots to make the space feel less hyper-masculine and instead represent male physical closeness genuinely?

Noah Fodor: By centering my compositions around parts of the body, the camera itself becomes active in the space, acting as another individual, as if the viewer is looking through the eyes of this anonymous person. This way of close looking recreates the staring and admiring of men's bodies that is so common inside these hyper-masculine spaces. The locker room provides a space for men to become vulnerable and intimate with one another in ways that is seen primarily as jokes and "guys being guys". These spaces offer men a chance to act out their desires without having to confront the reality of what this behavior and the continuous homoerotic banter does to isolate queer individuals.

RM: What do you gravitate towards regarding color, subject matter, and editing styles when trying to harmonize your fears and desires?

NF: When it comes to color, subject matter, and editing I tend to gravitate towards what creates something ambiguous or unexpected, especially in a space like the locker room. Introducing anything other than a clinical form of lighting immediately does so and turns this space upside down and I use the color to help intensify both my fears and desires in the images. When speaking to my desires I tend to use the light and color to caress the body, but when it comes to my fears and anxieties the color introduced into the picture almost engulfs and traps the body.

RM: How has confronting your experiences

through photography changed the messages you try to push out through your work?

NF: It has changed quite a bit over the course of making this work the past two years. The project started off as a way to visualize the anxieties I felt so palpably in these spaces and the ways in which it forced me into a complex relationship with my sexual identity. Over time though, especially as I started to re-enter the locker room; a place I hadn't been in since high school, I was pushed (by myself) to confront the person that I had become in these spaces. To make this work I had to face the fact that many of my experiences in this hyper-masculine world forced me to act in ways I am directly combatting against with this work. There were times that I was the aggressor, the victim, the onlooker, etc. The work still holds true to being a visualizing of my fears and desires and how they interacted amongst my queerness, but it has grown to also encompass a message speaking to personal growth and recognition of who I was/had to be in these spaces.

RM: Can you compare and contrast how you use photography and how you use multi-channel video projection to symbolize queerness in an athletic environment? How did you first get into both mediums and what do you think audiences gain from seeing your work as still and moving pictures?

NF: The images and video together complement each other through my work. I use them to provide this inside/outside access to these spaces. While the pictures themselves have been born out of a sort of playing out my fantasies and giving a visual representation to how my time in the sport affected me psychologically. The video works to upend our expectations of masculinity in men's ice hockey and is used to combat this idea that queerness does not belong in sports, all while proving visual evidence that this homoeroticism is

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

inherently built into the sports, hidden in plain sight, and often goes unchallenged in this context. In these ways, both the still images and video symbolize a queerness through combatting the contradictions that fill these spaces and revealing an eroticism amongst men that is supposedly the antithesis of men's sports, but I think it could be what drives it. When it comes to audiences viewing the moving and still images in conjunction with one another, they gain access to the complexities of the queer experience in men's sports. Seeing a multitude of visual material, the has extreme highs and lows in terms of the tone, gives weight to this state of limbo I was trapped in where on one hand queerness is barred and policed intensely and on the other, homoeroticism thrives in unexpected ways.

RM: Have you always pursued art in your life, even while playing hockey, or did you undergo a switch from sports to photography? How have transformations such as this in your life affected the visual aesthetics you are known for, and what other artistic choices do you hope to experiment with in the future?

NF: I have not always pursued art in my life; however, I began to work with photography my junior year of high school in 2016 while I was still playing hockey for my high school's team. It was an interesting negotiation between being an athlete and starting to make art because I was entering a world, I really knew nothing about at the time. Hockey was pretty much my life almost 24/7, so there wasn't much time for me to engage in anything else outside of it for most of my childhood. This transition from athlete to artist and embracing my queerness has led to an extreme shift in the visual aesthetics of my work in the past, most notably pulling me out of a space where I was working strictly with black and white to now incorporating a lot of color. In the future, I plan to work more with collage as I have a

deep desire to continue to make sense of the images I'm using in them, subverting their original contexts, and using them against themselves in a way. I also would like to invest more time into making video work and bookmaking.



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

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