

# REBECCA GRACE HILL

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2020 ART & ART HISTORY  
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



Portrait of Rebecca Grace Hill

**DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES**

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# 2020 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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The *2020 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the works of MFA candidates in Columbia's Interdisciplinary Arts and Media and Interdisciplinary Book and Paper Arts programs. The exhibition, which includes artists' books, prints, drawings, textiles, sculptures, photography, sound, projections, and installation works, represents the culmination of three plus years' worth of development of a cohesive body of work for each artist. This exhibition, taking place at the Glass Curtain Gallery has been postponed to a later date due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This edition of the DEPS Artist Profile Series intends to give you an in-depth look at the work to come as well as a deep glimpse into the artists process.

**Participating Artists:** Julia Arredondo, Mary Gring, Rebecca Grace Hill, Selena Ingram, Maria VanDyken Li, Skye Murie, and Andrew Shoemaker

The *2020 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Art and Art History department and Paul Catanese, Director of Graduate Studies for Art & Art History and Professor at Columbia College Chicago.

# COLLAPSING DISTANCE: A CORRESPONDENCE

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Rebecca Grace Hill's work focuses on reframing personal narratives, especially ones of grief, pain, or loss. In her art studio she makes small portable collages and larger assemblage installations. *Collapsing Distance: A Correspondence* is an autobiographical 30-year narrative that explores meaningful places, significant life events, and the connections and synchronicities among them. The 30-foot installation consists of mailboxes arrayed linearly, as if they were for houses on the same street. Through this personal narrative, the work examines the impact of increased mobility and globalization, and proposes material objects as a tool for resilience.

Rebecca Grace Hill is an American interdisciplinary artist, sculptor, jeweler, poet, and gift-giver. Both Hill and her work can be found around Chicago, California, and throughout New Zealand. Her published writings include poetry, book reviews, and scholarly work. She loves Chicago for its imagination, inventiveness, and resilience. She lives with her partner and two cats near one of the highest natural elevations in the area, Ridge Avenue, close to where she was born.

For more information on Rebecca Grace Hill:  
[industrialgracerestoration.wordpress.com](http://industrialgracerestoration.wordpress.com)



*Divination*, 2018 reclaimed wood from a hospital, pharmacy bag paper, vintage oncology textbook pages, handmade paper, hand carved block print, brain scan, quartz pendulum

Photography by Jonathan Castillo





*Leylines*, 2018, wood from a house destroyed in an earthquake, vintage architectural book pages, technical geological printouts, vintage telegraph manual pages, commemorative telegraph stamp, vintage and modern stamps, onionskin paper, ink

Photography by Jonathan Castillo

Her Majesty Queen Victoria, by the Great Seal of the United Kingdom, on defined the boundaries of the Diocese of as the First Bishop Henry John Chitty of the said See of Christchurch . . . and for ever hereafter called by the name, church'; and did ordain that 'the Diocese of Christchurch shall be a City

Thus Christchurch was the first constituted a City.



*To Become a City*, 2019, reprints of official documents, photograph, vintage New Zealand Stamp  
Photography by Jonathan Castillo. Image courtesy of the Artist's Family



finer when the air is not pure, but has much dust in it.

**WHY WE SEE FARTHER IF WE ARE HIGHER UP**

The scientific explanation of this would be that "range of vision is determined by the altitude of the observer." In

and sky, but merely the boundary between them as they appear to our eyes.

This is a question often asked. As we stand by the seashore, the sky and the sea seem to meet at a line which

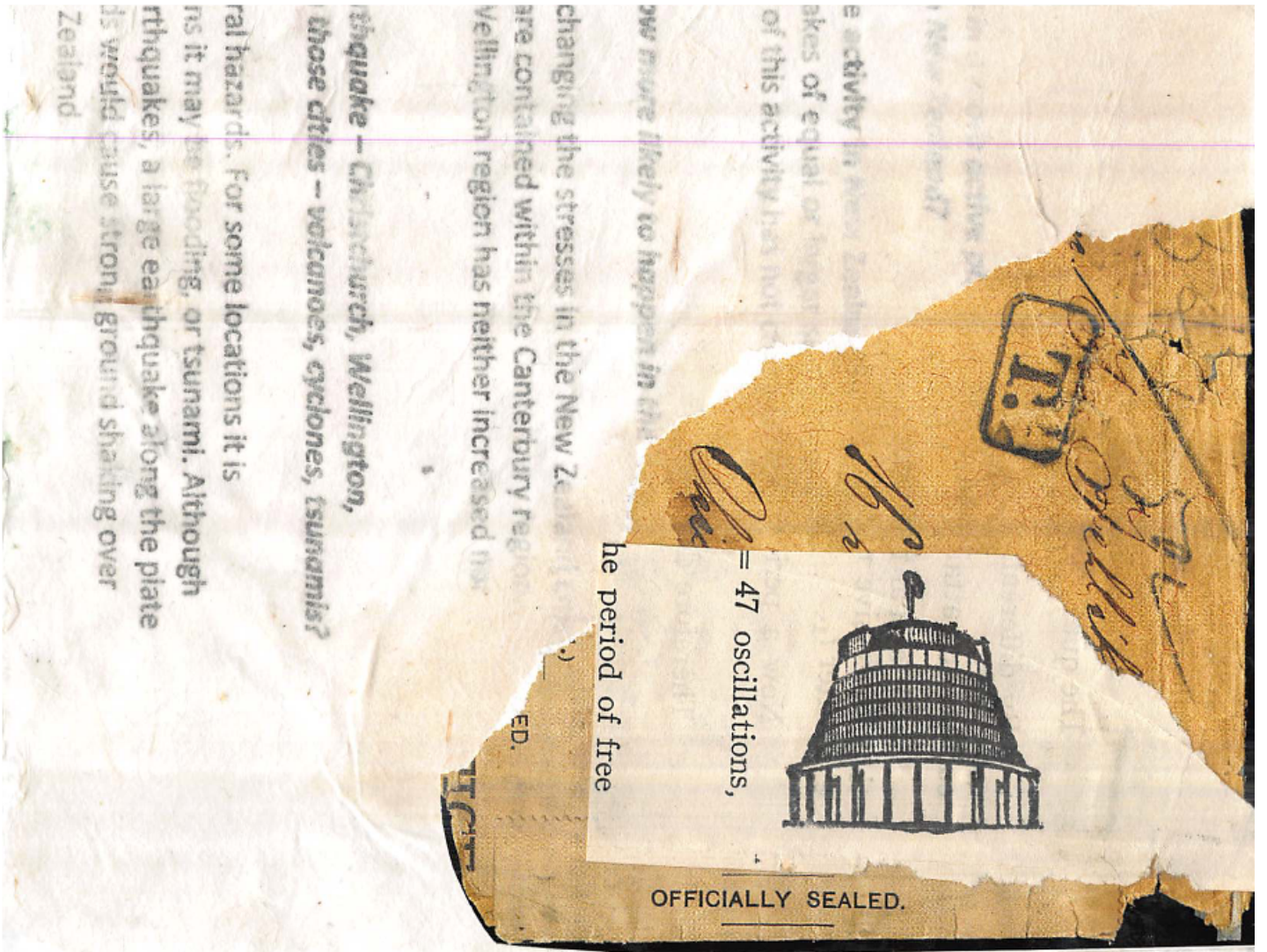


*Where later Canterbury Pilgrims worshipped before leaving ENGLAND*

1. O beau-ti-ful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain, For pur-ple mountain  
2. O beau-ti-ful for pil-grim feet Whose sternimpassion'd stress A thorough fare for  
3. O beau-ti-ful for he-ros prov'd In lib - er - at - ing' strife, Who more than self their  
4. O beau-ti-ful for pa-triot dream That sees beyond the years Thine al - a - bas-ter

*Freedom's Ramparts*, 2019, vintage hymnal pages, church bulletin reprint, vintage children's textbook, mountains

Photography by Jonathan Castillo. Image courtesy of the Artist's Family



*Parliament is Built on a Fault Line (Official Oscillations)*, 2018, technical printouts, handmade paper, vintage textbook pages, reproductions of postal and customs markings, rubber stamped image

Photography by Jonathan Castillo





*Patriotism, like a View from a Long Way Away 2001-2021, 2020, vintage USPS-certified Mailbox, vintage handmade greeting card, blue construction paper, cocktail flags, child's handwriting*  
Photography by Jonathan Castillo





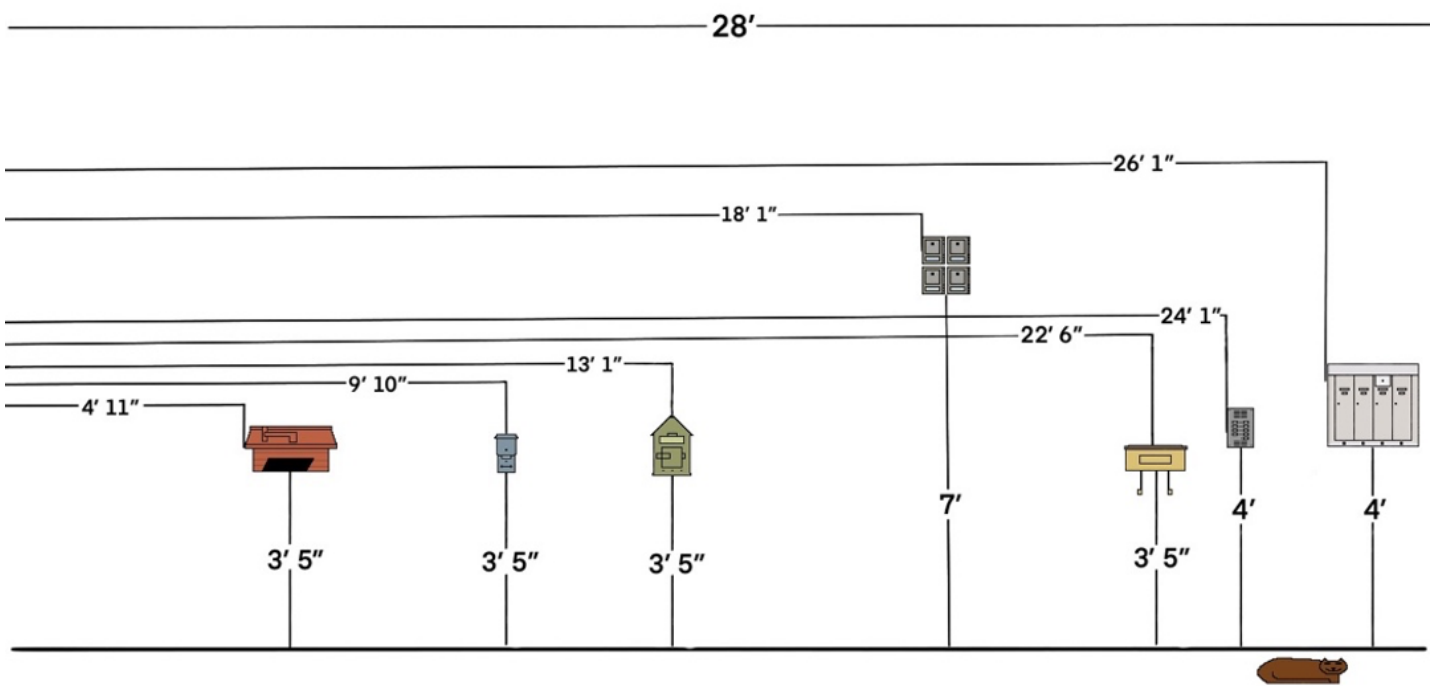
*Collapsing Distance Thesis Installation Example 1, 2019*

Photography by Jonathan Castillo



*Collapsing Distance Thesis Installation Example 2, 2019*

Photography by Jonathan Castillo



*Installation mockup of Collapsing Distance: A Correspondence, 2020*

Illustrated by Ali Schiffner

# INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA GRACE HILL

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

**Kaylee Fowler:** You describe yourself as a “gift-giver” as part of your biography. How is gift-giving an important part of your practice, and your involvement in the arts community?

**Rebecca Grace Hill:** I love presents! A lot of time the desire for material objects is looked down upon as greedy or bad. Yet, at the same time, objects are freely given to strengthen and develop relationships. I love beautiful things, and also objects can do work for us, like emotional labor so giving gifts is a way to support those around me.

**KF:** How do you go about finding meaningful objects for a project?

**RGH:** This is a super interesting question that I think about ALL THE TIME! On the one hand, I want to dodge the question by saying that I just pick stuff that's interesting to me! At the same time I really do think intuition can be spelled out, or learnt, and I would love to be able to give coherent advice on the topic. So, I've also read tons of books on how people relate to objects around them, and I've even conducted original research as a sociologist. These provide some general ideas or guidelines. The types of criteria I think about are manifold (1) Does the object have some sort of personal significance? Maybe that can be used as a starting point (2) How is said object understood in the culture at large? This gives an idea of how others might understand it (3) What symbolism does it have, or could it have? How can we extend the meaning that is already there? (4) And what story does it tell? In what ways does that story relate to whatever story I am trying to tell.

**KF:** Do you specifically plan a project and then find objects that work for it, or do your projects evolve in response to found objects?

**RGH:** Absolutely both! I believe making things is a conversation with the materials and I try to listen to what they have to say. At this point I have a massive collection of materials, so I try to start there. When I start a project I even find it helpful to just select a subset of materials that I resonate with to use as a starting point. That way “new material” can be introduced if it is needed to solve a problem. For example, perhaps a piece needs a little bit of something blue. Then I go rummage around for that. At the same time, though, I love shopping, exploring and thrifting. All of those are great ways to get material to add to the collection so it's an ongoing spiral.

**KF:** The objects in your *Collapsing Distance: A Correspondence* project are autobiographical for the past 30 years; are all the objects included in this installation collected from your personal life over 30 years, or where some of them acquired specifically for this project?

**RGH:** For this project I wanted to capture the essence, or feeling associated with specific moments. I don't have access to the actual materials from my life that would tell this story clearly. I think that one of art's potentials is to make these types of objects. What parts of our stories do we want to tell, that somehow are not represented in the world around us? Art is a form of reified imagination, and through it we have the opportunity to reenvision our narratives and adjust, alter, and fill in any missing pieces to tell a narrative that is more true to who we are.

**KF:** Several of your works were created in response to different crises over the past several years. What is the draw for you to make works that explore such personal topics of grief and loss? Coming out of this current pandemic, are there objects or subject matter that you think you will work with from this time?

**RGH:** This is a really great question! I think art is a way to begin a discussion that might otherwise be hard to put into words. For me, these gripping moments were always on my mind but hard to talk about until substantially after the fact. I expect the same will be true for this pandemic – much of its wisdom will be revealed slowly, over time. Much like the themes in my other work, I think work from this time will focus on ideas such as recovering from crisis, and a refocusing on growth, and resilience Perhaps even the idea of home, since we are spending such a long season stuck in them!

# DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES



*Our (Mountains ever be) Freedom's Ramparts, 2019, vintage hymnal pages, church bulletin reprint, vintage children's textbook, mountains*

**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 Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Kaylee Fowler. Design, animation and illustration by Graphic Design major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gianella Goan.

For more information, please contact Mark Porter, [mporter@colum.edu](mailto:mporter@colum.edu) / 312.369.6643  
<https://students/colum.edu/deps>

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