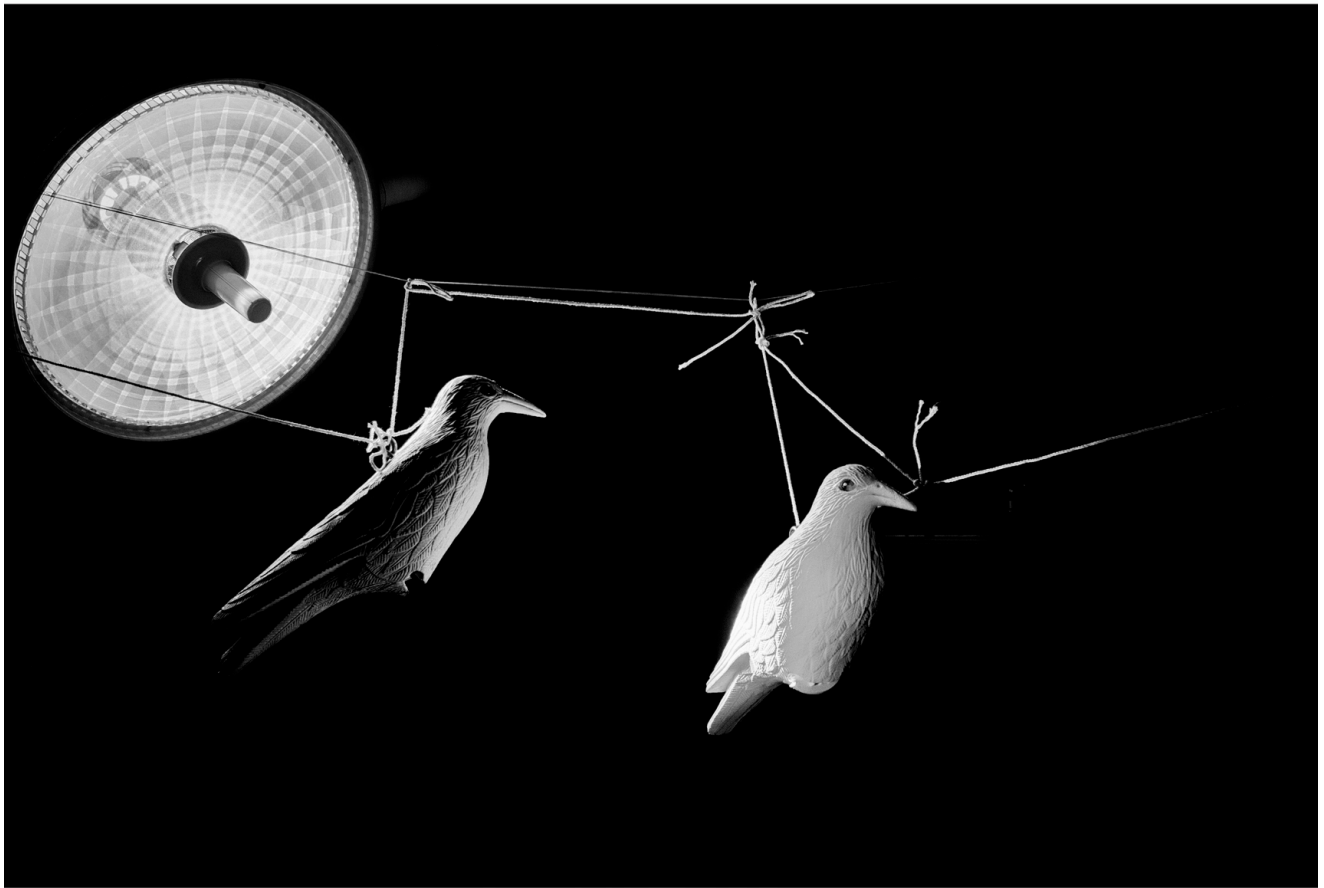


JES FARNUM

2022 MFA PHOTOGRAPHY
THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 6-20, 2022

2022 MFA PHOTOGRAPHY THESIS EXHIBITION

The *2022 MFA Photography Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Photography Department. This exhibition presents photographs, installation, and video works that are representative of the culmination of research and practice these emerging artists have maintained throughout their time in the program.

Participating photographers:

Jes Farnum

Sylvie Harris

Katharine Norton

Emilie Plunkett

Ziru Tang

Fengzhao Xu

Senjie Zhu

The *2022 Photography MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), and the Photography Department.

JES FARNUM

This Work

On its deepest level the work presented here illustrates some of my own internal processes, my attempts to, using a language of process and symbols, to make sense of, to quantify, to refocus the often anxious and unpleasant world I'm currently living in. On a shallower more surface level these are simply experiments, one leading to another, serendipity, joy of discovery, fascination, love of process: magic, alchemy, history.

My Work, Broader

For me physical objects seem to have a particularly strong attachment. Objects from my past, and often even similar stand-in objects, can potentially trigger a flood of forgotten memories. Certain objects feel almost charged with this ability, like an enchantment or a magical item that permits me to, at my convenience, revisit my past and those who inhabited it. My own working process, how I approach entails externalizing the internal – projecting my thoughts and the issues I desire to resolve – onto an idea, situation, or set of materials that I can then materially analyze and tinker with, hopefully resulting in some sort of satisfactory conclusion. This sort of 'therapy by making' has long been the preferred coping method for my family, who are representative of a much broader cultural phenomenon. My photographs therefore represent a mechanism that attempts to make sense of complex personal issues such as loss and disappointment in ways that are both deeply personal and that reflect upon the broader history of making/tinkering in American culture at large and in a particular strain of American art, both of which emphasize making as a kind of therapy.

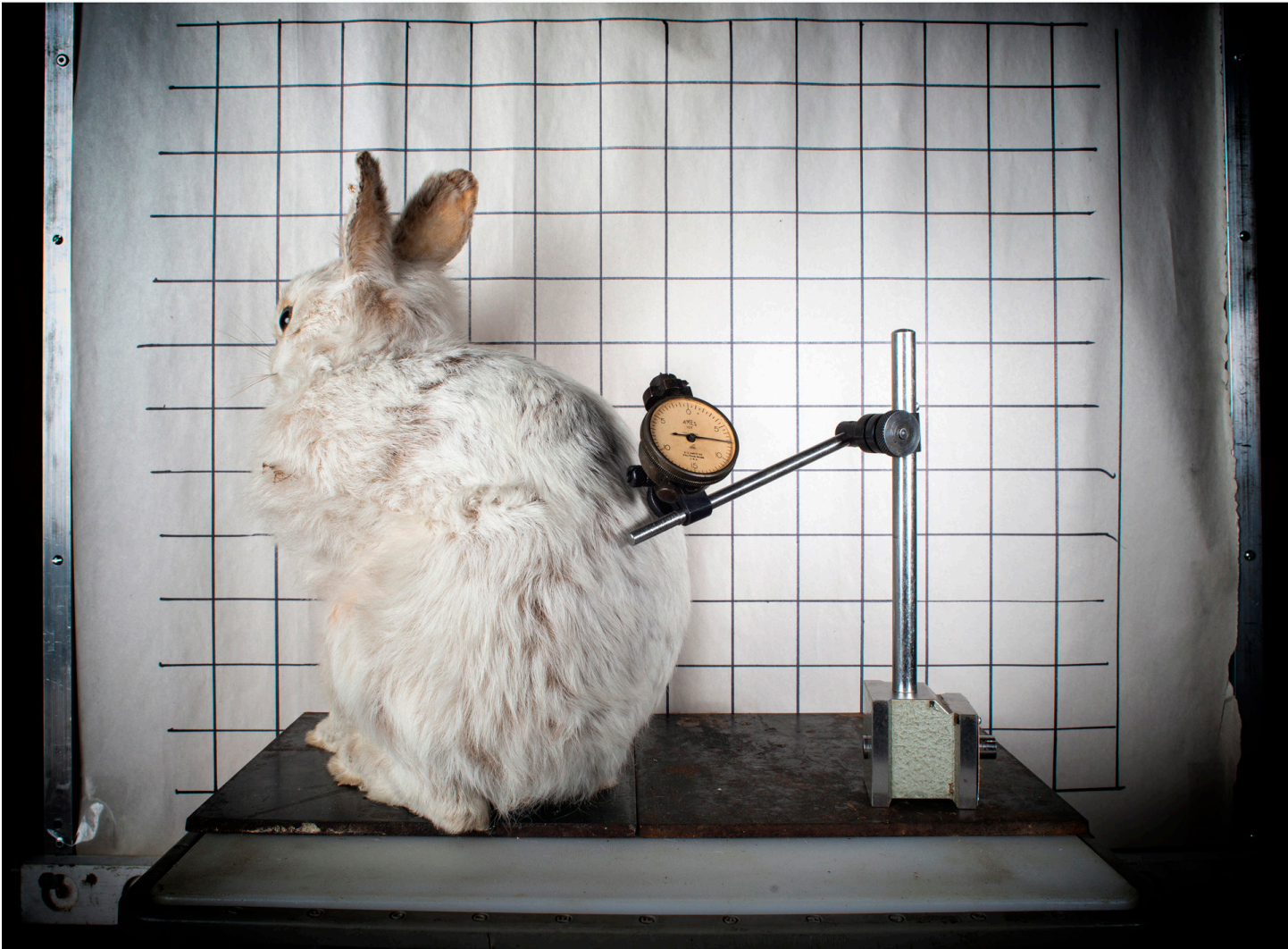
Jes Farnum, a Chicago-based photographer, who grew up on a small horse farm between Detroit and Flint but has lived in Chicago since 1993. Jes's work has, over time, evolved from traditional landscape photography, and through a more research, environmental, and historical-based approach to landscape, into the more experimental work shown here. A photo enthusiast from age twelve, Jes only recently chose to pursue photography formally. This was after having previously studied Archaeology/Anthropology at Northeastern Illinois University and Architecture History/Historic Preservation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Jes comes from a long line of makers and tech enthusiasts.

website: jesfarnum.com

instagram: [@jesfarnum](https://www.instagram.com/jesfarnum)



Argument 1-2, 2021, plastic crow decoys, string, veterinary exam lamp



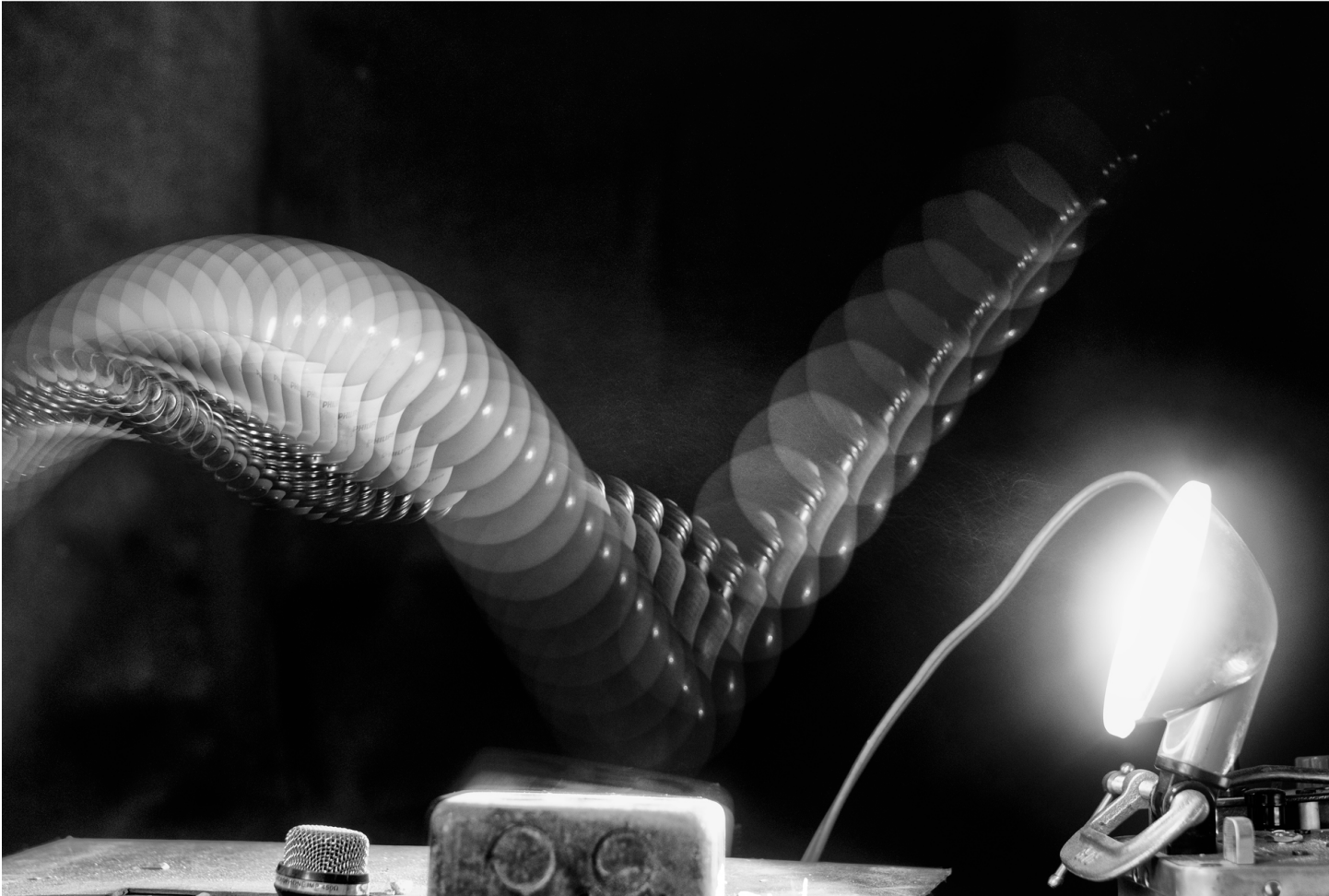
Boop 1-3, 2022, taxidermy snowshoe hare, measuring equipment, gridded panel



Boop 1-3, 2022, taxidermy snowshoe hare, measuring equipment, gridded panel



Bulb 1-3, 2020, strobotac, electrical box, plastic led bulb



Bulb 1-3, 2020, strobotac, electrical box, plastic led bulb



Bulb 1-3, 2020, strobotac, electrical box, plastic led bulb



Measuring Absence 1-2, 2020, taxidermy snowshoe hare, audio frequency experiment designed to measure the absence of a subject using a reflected 11 khz tone



Rabbit Portrait, 2020, taxidermy snowshoe hare, vintage timer, vintage wallpaper, linoleum

INTERVIEW WITH JES FARNUM

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

Kaylee Fowler: You've stated that photography is a more recent pursuit of yours, having studied Archeology and Anthropology previously. How does this background affect how you approach photography, and do you think it affects the subject matter or style of your work in ways others may not realize?

Jes Farnum: It's a long-term pursuit (I'm 52, and have been taking pictures since 1981), but the idea of pursuing an MFA in photography is recent. The archaeology and anthropology helped flesh out a lifelong interest in material culture and its related symbology, myth, and magic. My work has always had, even before I formally recognized it, a lot to do with objects and their deeper personal meanings, narrative lives, personal connections, etc. I actually came to Columbia with the idea of expanding on my SAIC thesis work relating to former Chicago foundry sites. The plan was to photograph these sites and the neighborhoods around them, and I was hoping for help in making and presenting these images as effectively as possible. Covid, with its limitations on travel, and a chance encounter with Harold Edgerton's book, *Electronic Flash Strobe* sent me off in a different direction. I guess the style mostly just evolved over time; Jay Wolke, and crit conversations about a lot of IIT, MIT and Bauhaus photography certainly helped.

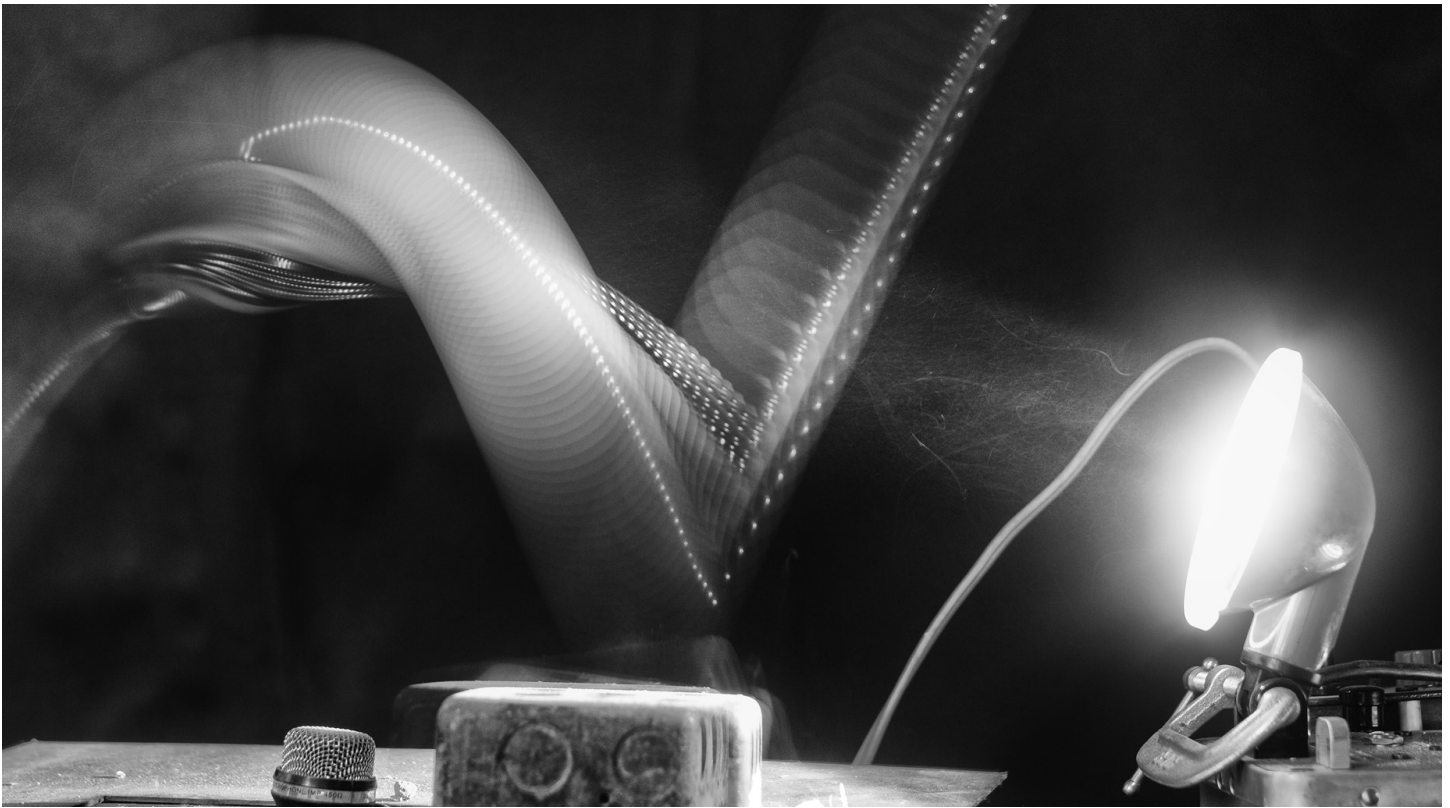
KF: What is the symbolism, if any, of the rabbit in your photos?

JF: The rabbit, like the crow decoys that preceded them; I needed a stand-in(s). I started with the crows, and Jay Wolke suggested a life-sized horse (as I mentioned in the biography, my childhood kind of revolved around horses). Unfortunately life-sized horses are expensive, and even more expensive to ship—and I live in an apartment. So I spent my flight home

from my parents' house at Christmas hunting through eBay for something more practical, the rabbit felt like a good fit, and it has such an expressive even endearing face. White rabbits, like white rats, make me think of experimental subjects. Seemed like a perfect fit for what I do. Also a snowshoe hare is great contrast against a dark background. So mostly as an experimental subject, wherever that might lead me to use a broader more generic subject. I should also probably add that while I did consider using human subjects, I'm just not a people photographer. I had considered using student subjects for the audio-related shots, but it just didn't come together.

KF: What do you hope viewers will take away from your work? Is there a particular experience or emotion you are hoping to inspire in viewers of these photos specifically?

JF: Curiosity, a little wonder maybe. They're admittedly a bit odd. It feels important to me to create something that feels original. The meanings are often very personal, but hopefully they can appeal beyond that. Grad school: shouldn't you be trying to push the boundaries a little bit? I hope I did with these.



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 Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistants Kaylee Fowler and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

Contact information: Mark Porter, mporter@colum.edu / 312.369.6643

Follow us on [Instagram!](#)

Like us on [Facebook!](#)