

SAMANTHA TRACE FOSTER

2022 ART & ART HISTORY
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 6-20, 2022

2022 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

The *2022 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art and Art History Department. The exhibition, which includes artists' books, prints, drawings, sculptures, photography, sound, projections, and installation works, represents the culmination of two years of development on a cohesive body of work for each artist.

Participating artists:

Kelsey Bogdan

John Bolin

Caitlyn Doran

Samantha Trace Foster

Anna Lipscomb

Alexander Jose Luis Ramirez

Chris Tasiar

Megan VanKanegan

The *2022 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.

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Nurturing the Pixel is an immersive installation composed of performance, prints, and pen plotter drawings that materializes the loneliness perpetuated by society's dependence on online communication. Social isolation can increase when connections are made entirely through the internet. Online interactions, especially social media, often fail those seeking intimate human trust and connection. Covid further intensified the situation to where it has become a crisis during a global phenomenon.

In the performances during the exhibition, Foster becomes S.A.M. – a human powered drawing robot. Using a state-of-the-art control arm equipped with MI (mechanical intelligence), audience members operate S.A.M. in order to draw portraits of people who are important in their lives, but that they primarily interact with online. The interaction between participants and S.A.M. results in an absurd moment of human connection, as well as a drawing. These drawings, imperfect evidence of those brief moments of human engagement, are then documented by a computer powered drawing robot and hand printing, exemplifying the push and pull dynamics of human relationships with digital technology.

Samantha Trace Foster is a Chicago based interdisciplinary artist with a foundation in printmaking. She uses her training to uncover and visualize the nuanced layers of society's contemporary relationship with the internet and its pervasive, for-profit culture. Foster received a BBA in Management from Loyola University New Orleans, completed advanced printmaking courses while an employee at Tulane University, and is an MFA in Fine Arts candidate at Columbia College Chicago. She is the recipient of the 2021 Aiko Nakane fellowship and the 2022 Albert P. Weisman award.

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



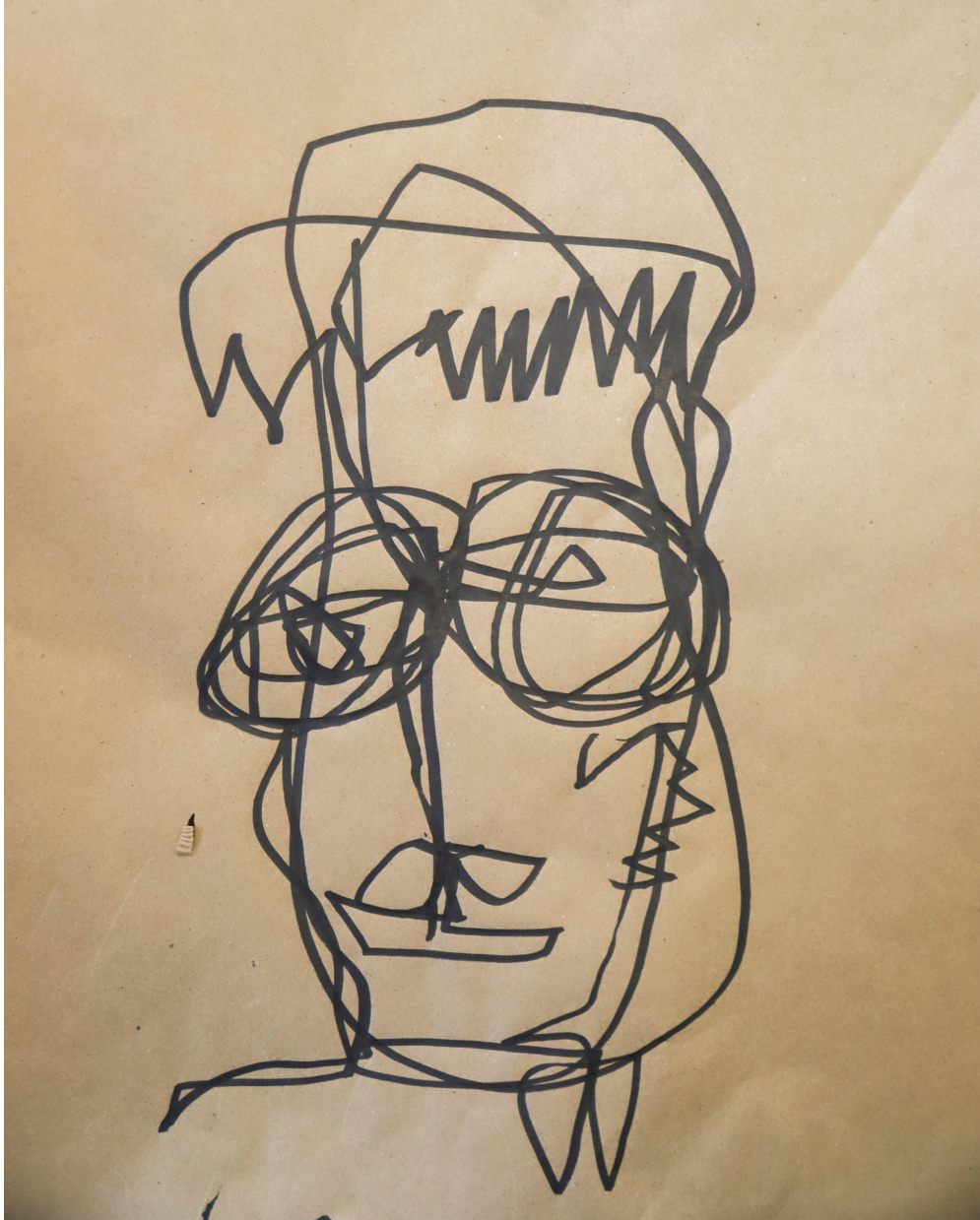
S.A.M., 2021, wearable, chrome metal and cotton jumpsuit



Axi 16 , detail, 2022, axidraw with watercolor pens and sumi ink on gampi, 38" x 96"



Print I, 2021, dry point on fabriano paper, 8"x10"



Drawing I, 2022, marker on butcher paper, 31"x24"

INTERVIEW WITH SAMANTHA TRACE FOSTER

Conducted by Sierra Delamarter

Sierra Delamarter: How does your foundation in printmaking influence your motives for this performance piece?

Samantha Foster: Printmaking has taught me to think in layers. This allows me to take a large concept or image and break it down into smaller, attainable sections. These layers are their own pieces of critical information. When registered in the correct order and placement, they create beautiful prints and well-crafted theories. In my thesis, *Nurturing the Pixel*, performance gets to the root of the human spirit while tackling the more abstract concepts about our societal condition of living a digital life amid a global pandemic. Printmaking is methodical but people are not. By performing as a machine, I am creating multiple drawings with the aid of participants. The idea of a communal print shop and pulling several prints with a team is a direct influence into this piece. The work cannot be accomplished without the people involved beyond myself.

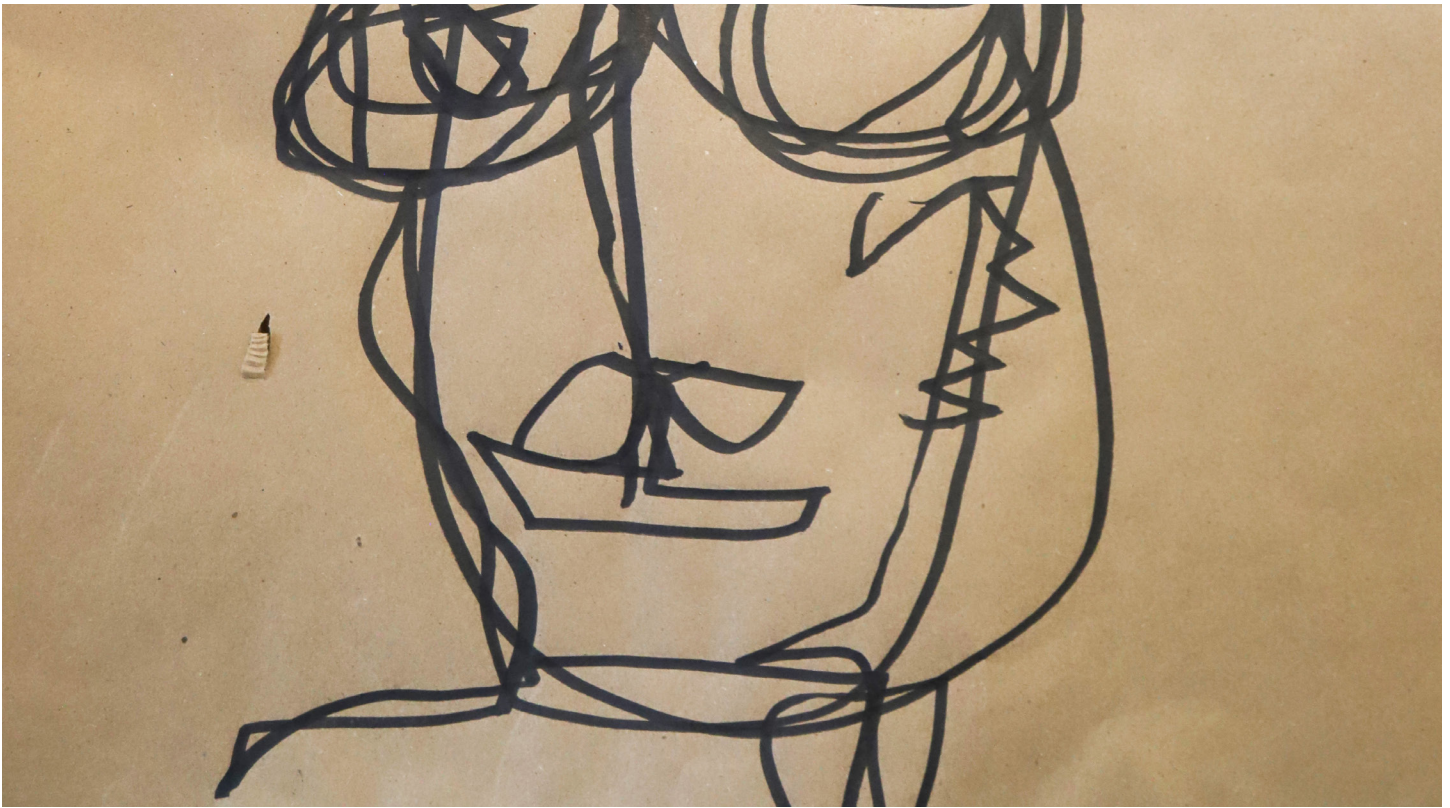
SD: What made you first become interested in printmaking?

SF: My dad is an architect, so I grew up watching how artistic tendencies could be applied into a pragmatic business that helped others. While working at Tulane University, I was able to take classes as a staff member and knew I would focus on studio art. Printmaking for me is the perfect blend of creativity, disciplined techniques, accessibility to business endeavors/the world at large, and community. It is the printmaking community that made me feel immediately at home; print nerds are some of the most welcoming, intelligent, driven, and thoughtful people I have ever met. I did not start printing until I was 28 years old and was suddenly in class with undergraduates and (the only) printmaking professor, Teresa Cole. I am completely

indebted to Teresa for allowing me to take her classes for over two years and changing my life by influencing my decision to attend graduate school.

SD: You explain that S.A.M. is a human-powered robot used in your performance piece. Could you go more in-depth about how this machine works?

SF: S.A.M. is the embodiment of a robotic drawing device. When I wear an armature and cover my head with a helmet, I become the machine. These pieces are constructed in metal to replicate both the feel and weight of robotic machines. This interaction provokes physical difficulty with the material choice and myself as S.A.M. The participant sits at the opposing end of the six-foot table, which subtly references the Covid social distancing mandate, picks up their end of the armature piece that is affixed to my drawing hand, and attempts to create a portrait based on the prompt: Draw someone who is important in your life, but that you primarily interact with virtually. This interaction creates confusion, frustration, exhaustion, and absurdist humor that collides into one very human moment. The drawings created from this performance are used as the raw material between machine and hand printing as a form of documentation for these ephemeral performances.



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

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