



DETRITUS AND DESIRE

2021 Fine Arts BFA Exhibition



cover, top to bottom, details

Darby Jack, *Axis Mundi*, 2021

Amanda Adela, *Intaglio* on fabric, 2021

Miranda Randel, *Installation Process*, 2021

iph, *no title (why is to be human to be [i'm tired of being here])*, 2020

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Columbia College Chicago

Being Presente

“The way we do this is the way we do everything,” performance scholar Diana Taylor states in *Presente! The Politics of Presence*.¹ In this proclamation Taylor holds us accountable for our movements, our ways of making, and our ways of being in the world. She asks us to be mindful of how we engage with our peers, how we prepare a meal, or even read a book. Are we rushed? Distracted? Patient? This statement articulates that what we do reflects back onto how we do everything; our past and present actions influence our future actions. For Taylor, being *presente* requires holding the past in our present to mindfully imagine a new future. During times of change, such as at graduation, it is tempting to place a punctuation mark at the end of an era; it’s done, we can move on. However, in agreement with Taylor’s observation, how we do this, is how we do everything. Her claim underscores that nothing stays politely behind. Moments of transition offer an opportunity to sit and reflect, take note of our development, find gaps, celebrate, and highlight the training and lessons that were impactful, and will remain influential.

This thesis show, *Detritus and Desire*, is a culmination of what these artists have brought with them, what they have learned, and hints at where they are going. The 2021 fine arts BFA class at Columbia College Chicago demonstrates their readiness to create with intention, to think with, and beyond, established histories of artistic expression, and to cultivate a relationship with the environment and others around them.

Art is muscular, meaning that it is expressive, relational, and vulnerable. Art moves us, it pulls us, shifting our perspectives. Before it can move us, however, artists go through a challenging learning process, cultivating methods of bridging that gap between maker and viewer. The training begins with artists learning to trust their curiosity, then continues with the dedication of immeasurable amounts of time to creating with intention. This is the beginning: trust, curiosity, dedication, and intention. At whatever moment artists are in their career, these are always in the artist’s toolbox. It is through the intentional challenge of that curiosity that enables a rethinking how conceptions of being, moving, and feeling can be explored, raising questions such as “How has time, gender, humor, or art itself, been presented in the world? and “How can I visualize and respond to these experiences?” These questions are followed by a string of other queries: “What, or who, am I in conversation with?” or “What relationships are being prioritized?” Creating requires artists to be in a constant state of evaluation; breaking, building, mending, breaking, building, mending. Artists must be committed to evaluating not only their personal past, but art’s history. To shape their present, and imagine a new future, the past has to be acknowledged and responded to.

The way we do this is the way we do everything.

¹ Diana Taylor, *Presente! The Politics of Presence*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 30.

This last year was punctuated with distance and risk. I have been, and remain, keenly aware of my body in relation to others, sensitive of the necessary distance I must maintain in order for us to stay safe. Elements of risk and distance have been further underscored by the fractures of communities processing trauma, the echoes of chants, and the nods of gratitude for crossing the street when someone is passing you. These actions give shape to the art of living apart, but together.

The body and its use in art is a much written about, much sermonized subject. Art history has placed crucial importance on the visual body since the Byzantine era, when author Giorgio Vasari looked to the past and characterized those bodies as lacking in dimension, failing to signify a sense of naturalism. In the twentieth century the body is used less as mere representation, and more as tool: body as canvas, mediator, platform, or brush. Artists began using their own bodies to navigate the social and cultural complexities of gender, race, censorship, and identity politics, in conversation with critical twentieth-century developments in the fields of psychoanalysis, philosophy, anthropology, medicine, and science. In *The Artist's Body* (2000), scholar Amelia Jones maps out the historical artistic use of the body, not only as a tool, but as a sign issuing various meanings and experiences. She does this by showcasing how the body is critical to our understanding and expression of our social, political, and cultural conditions, stating “the body is the site through which public and private powers are articulated.”²

This past year our bodies have been bound in our own personal, restrictive, and sometimes cramped spaces. In this current moment of bodily restriction, of apart-but-togetherness, I am struck by the embodiment of this cohort’s artworks. After reflecting on their artwork, we begin to notice our own bodies, their bodies, or artificial, disjointed, fragmented bodies populating the space. While accessing and referencing the rich relationship art history has with the body, this cohort leaned into our current moment of bodily restriction by creating new meanings and building necessary and crucial bridges from the past into a new imagined future.

iph uses their body in a fashion that complicates access to the past by interrupting viewers’ vision of the canvas, thereby critiquing the long history of the canvas’s relationship to and with artwork. Their body is the vehicle of artistic expression and transformation, asking us to consider the systems of regulation we abide by. Amanda Adela provides a space to contemplate the sensorial lack brought on by COVID-19 in her drawings of undulating lines woven between, around, and amongst a gaping mouth, speaking to us beyond the veil, on the other side of this unknowing space in which we

² Tracey Warr and Amelia. Jones, *The Artist's Body*, (London: Phaidon, 2000), 22–23.

continue to reside. Her attentive mindfulness creates a space to reflect, opening up access to multiple interpretations. Darby Jack's use of puppets, an echoing of a body, allows us to grapple with the fragility of time, the grasp of the establishment. The elements of humor point to a mountainous pressure to hit every punchline. In Miranda Randel's artworks we see the appearance of her body and artificial bodies, as well as materials that reference bodily qualities. Her cut-and-pasting of fragmented bodies collaged together highlights the body's potential to express a plurality of being apart, but together.

Artists, after breaking, building, and mending, have the potential to bridge the gap between what we have and what we need. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we all had to be apart, but we also needed to be together. In our actions, gestures, and reactions, we all had to think about a collective need. This cohort of artists have illustrated the capability of art to create a space that responds to those needs in a myriad of ways. These artists demonstrate exemplary perseverance, discovery, and criticality, both conceptually and in practice. Although it may be tempting for us as viewers, and for the artists, to place a punctuation mark at the end of our engagement with the artwork here, we should keep Taylor's claim nearby, while we reflect with intention and consider the potential of art, the necessity of artists, and our need to be *presente*.

The way we do this is the way we do everything.

Sylvia Faichney is a Ph.D. student in the Department of History of Art & Architecture at The University of California, Santa Barbara. She received her MA in History of Design and Material Culture at the University of Brighton and her BA in Art History at Columbia College Chicago. She has published with *Blind Field Journal* (2017), *Construction Literary Magazine* (2018), and *Interiors: Design/Architecture/Culture* (2019). Research support provided by Zhang Qiuzhang.

Darby Jack

“More than anything, I like it when people wanna giggle a little bit at something, or, just stop and look at something for a second, instead of just walking by it, quickly.”

Compiling works with an eerie yet whimsical take, Darby Jack sets out to disrupt a space through a multitude of media. Drawing influence from Fluxus, as well as more contemporary artists like Paul McCarthy and David Hammons, Darby Jack incorporates elements of their pieces, but also utilizes his own humorous wit in the work. Reveling in a subtle absurdity, and creating environments to question our own daily lives, the viewer may feel confronted, or confused, while looking at the work, both of which are the design of the piece.

Darby Jack has recently been creating works reanalyzing puppetry as an art form. Tapping into his childhood fascination with *The Muppet Show*, and aided by his recent acquisition of an overhead projector, he has been creating his own puppet performances, while also looking

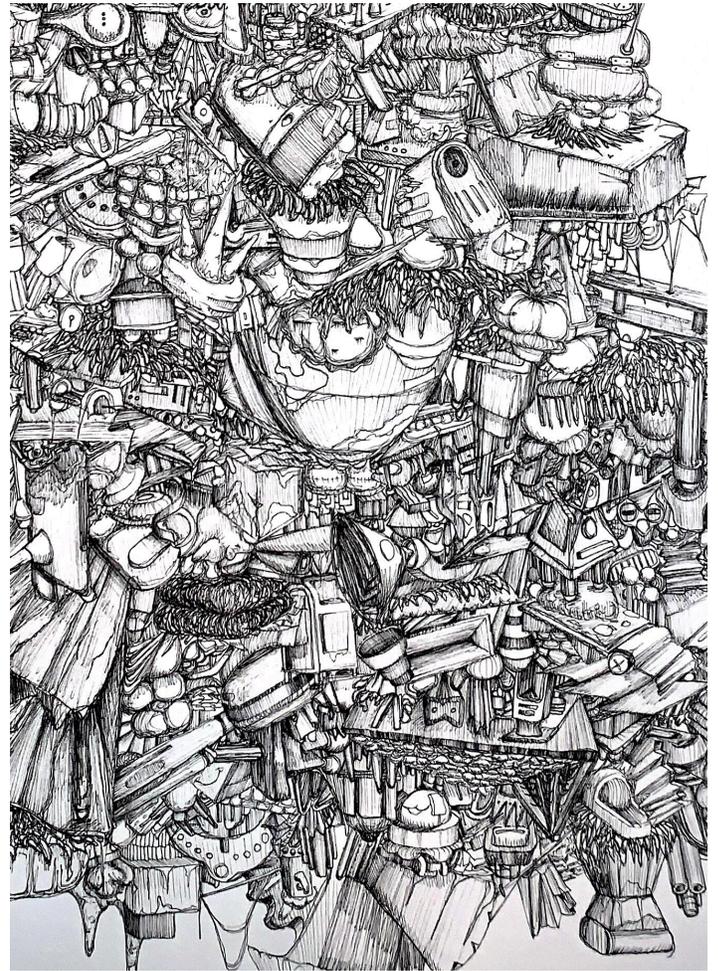
at puppetry from the past in order to recontextualize elements to use for his own work. With a recent piece, *What's Behind Those Ping Pong Balls*, displayed in C33 Gallery, Darby Jack focuses on the puppet's eyes, putting them front and center in the frame, forcing us to peer into them, while they stare back at us. Curating puppets as varied as having eyes painted on ping pong balls balanced over a fist, to human-like moving eyes inside a puppet with a human-like skin texture, we start to see them as more than just inanimate objects, but something that feels a lot darker, almost as if staring into a void. This feels intentional, but the juxtaposition of the song playing in the background, “Aqua Marina” sung by Troy Tempest (adding a sonically gorgeous element to the piece), makes us question



Stills from *What's Behind Those Ping Pong Balls*, 2021

the motive of the piece: is this supposed to be beautiful, or is this supposed to be disturbing? Or is it both? The answer, of course, is not revealed, but that is the intention with Darby Jack's work: to include the viewer's own interpretation of the piece, as a separate and valid observation, blurring lines between intention and outcome, making it about the experience one has with the piece, rather than a specified meaning.

Working in both analog and digital forms, Darby Jack creates works based on an internal composition, and a feeling he wants to convey with a piece, and goes off of that, creating everything from finely detailed drawings of trash piles to projected installations of looped videos of music performances. Thinking of the work as



Large Pile 1, detail, 2021

something humorous rather than serious, and also strongly considering art history and the canon, Darby Jack's body of work goes against "classical" fine art values. He favors an audience disinterested in the machismo and snobbiness of those who came before, who want to relate to something more human. Influenced by hardcore music and ideas surrounding the punk movement; Darby Jack distills that feeling into his own work, that couples an anti-establishment aesthetic with humorous elements, to create something outside of both. The work feels like a new gray area of exploration, where a quiet angst and whimsicality exist together, for a viewer to make of it what they will.

- iph



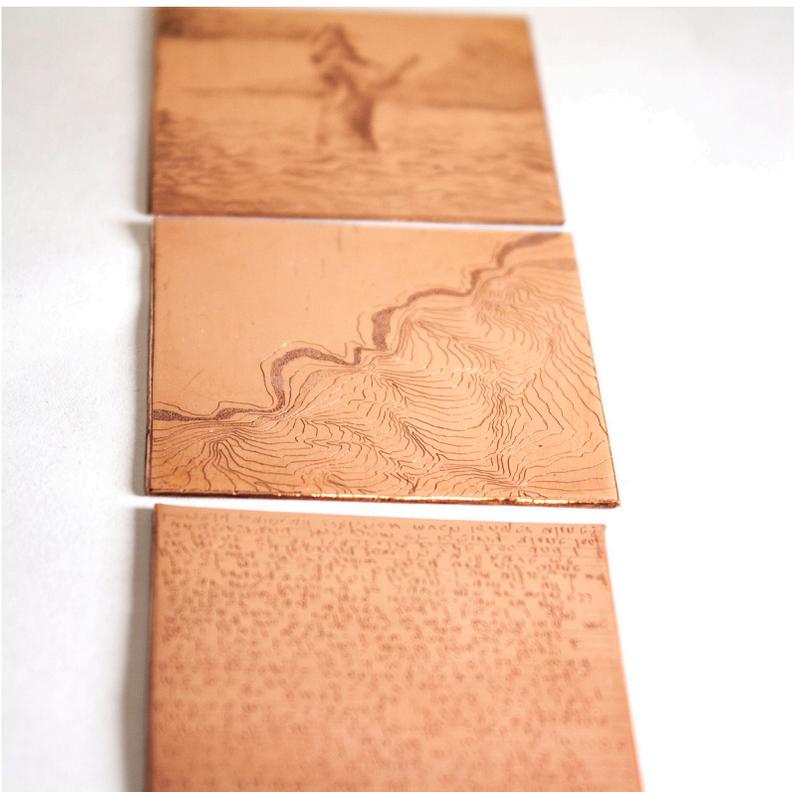
Pile, 2021

Amanda Adela

“[Art] helps me personally in my own struggles with all these different things but I think it’s also something I like doing ... to open a dialogue about things ... and bring up things that people neglect to talk about and try to brush under the rug.”

Amanda is a multi-disciplinary artist who creatively merges her interests in painting, sculpture, and print. Rather than let the pandemic hinder her creative process, she has used this time to explore the world of printmaking and etching. The hours of planning and printing have become meditative, a way to cope with the situation at large. She uses line repetition as both a relaxation method and the principal aesthetic. Amanda further explores the use of line with ink, black and white pen, and gouache paints, even going so far as to sew her prints onto paper thereby creating threaded, geometric patterns. In her latest project, she is creating a book of prints which viewers will be able to fold and manipulate. This decision for an interactive experience stems from her displeasure in the impersonal feel of a museum exhibition. She understands the inherent desire to touch the artwork and will invite people to do so.

Borrowing from minimalist and abstract artists of the past, her prints feature a simple color palette and are designed to be whimsical, playful, and childlike. Classical motifs such as the hands from Michelangelo’s *The Creation of Adam* appear as imagery in select prints. Amanda doesn’t rely on a structured theme and shies away from thematic labels, claiming her work always has multiple meanings. To suggest just one influence would be a disservice to her art. Many of her previous paintings and sculpture explore a combination of pain, chronic illness, feminism, and communication. Through her work, Amanda hopes to open a dialogue about the struggles with disorders such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), often characterized by



Copper Plates, 2020–21



Book Detail, 2020

impulsivity, hyperactivity, difficulty focusing, and forgetfulness, and endometriosis, a condition where tissue grows outside of a woman's reproductive organs, resulting in chronic pain. Her sculpture of a waist covered in barbed wire represents her daily pain with endometriosis, and her experience with ADHD is the exact reason why her work draws on so many influences. Her art directly mirrors the way her mind works, which is further illustrated by her curiosity in a wide array of art media.

While Amanda has always been interested in mouths, they appear constantly throughout her work to represent communication. She believes they can express different emotions and headspaces. In her newest prints, one can see the repetitive use of an open mouth. This could be a tie to the need to scream about her experiences, both in frustration and to be heard. In this, Amanda's work becomes feminist as she advocates for the experiences of women

to be taken seriously and openly discussed. This is a direct connection to her struggle with proper diagnoses, as endometriosis is often trivialized and dismissed as period cramps, and research on ADHD is male dominated with women showcasing withdrawn and 'daydreamy' behavior compared to the stereotypical hyperactivity of their male peers. Because of this, 6.9% of girls were diagnosed in 2016–2018 with ADHD compared to 14.6% of boys (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Amanda was not diagnosed with ADHD or endometriosis until her senior year of high school, and her work showcases the frustration from the female perspective in being misjudged and misheard for so long.

- Angeline Leonard



Cloudy, 2020

iph

“I analyze the art historical canon, recontextualize its concepts, and queer it to fit my agenda.”



Still from *a normal amount*, 2020

As a performance artist, iph creates a spatio-temporal experience where one has the chance to encounter art that does not feel like it is made, but rather an experience that just exists. They are drawn to the intangible and non-commodifiable elements of performance, and their body of work explores the importance of creating an environment for someone to tap into an idea as iph disrupts the conventions by which we mark the passage of time. As an artist, they prefer long-running performances to give the viewer the sense of sitting through something for a long time. Time, in fact, is an essential part of their art. Like Bruce Nauman and how his pieces make one question whether something is art or not, iph uses their own body to challenge established structures and conventions of art while producing new methodologies for creating, experience, and meaning.

iph's artistic practice consists of thoughts and ideas forming their own language,

and the performances replicate the artist's personal experiences in a heightened form. iph choreographs performances that attempt to deconstruct the notions of a binary world and create a neutral existence that is purely on its own, without any labels. In their words, they aim to “create a space where one can experience an emptiness, a silence, a place to reflect or touch something that has been ignored.” Much like the artist Yoko Ono, they reject the idea that an artwork must be a material object, but instead, involve the audience in the completion of the work by redirecting the attention to ideas instead of appearances.

In *a normal amount* (2020), iph uses their own body and space to challenge established structures of identity, painting's history, surveillance, labor, and perception. The performance, a 29-minute video that features two frames side by side, starts off with a long introduction of iph's body making its way



Still from *i really don't know how much longer i can keep doing this*, 2021

through strobe lights. The disorienting, yet meditative lights obscure a physical truth and make the viewer reconstruct an image in their head. iph's interest in the panopticon and digital surveillance comes into play as the viewer is put in a position watching the artist move their body throughout the space back and forth between the videos. The performance shows the viewer the intangibility and failure that so often is art, where a disconnection exists between the art and the audience, and how trying to tie everything together for everyone at once is a task that cannot be completed, yet it is worth trying and failing at the same time. With *a normal amount*, iph attempts to capture this; putting everything together, considering everything all at once, simultaneously embracing and rejecting perfection, and making this a bookmark in thought.

For iph, Columbia was a place for exploration, where they got to take classes in studio art and art history to shape each course into something they wanted to create with. Their interest in contemporary art got them to choose performance art as their practice. In the state of the pandemic, iph's

practice shifted towards performing for a virtual audience, and they became interested in recording pieces and performing for a camera rather than an audience. This also made iph realize the accessibility issues that exist in the art world and how art is generally geared towards a specific type of person. For their future projects, iph will be making

performances that are inclusive and capable of being experienced in different forms by everyone without any elements being subtracted from it. Rather than only using their body to make a performance, they will incorporate the viewer in the space, projection, sound, materials, and other elements to operate as performative.

Pursuing their own path, far from preconceived notions of creating art, iph's work goes beyond them, the technique, and the material. Their work emerges from a shape visualized in their mind, and becomes art that encapsulates different interpretations. It is an experience that is open for different conclusions to be made, open just like the process of its making where multiple things happen, where one can feel like entering a space that just exists.

- Öykü Kolat



Still from *i really don't know how much longer i can keep doing this*, 2021

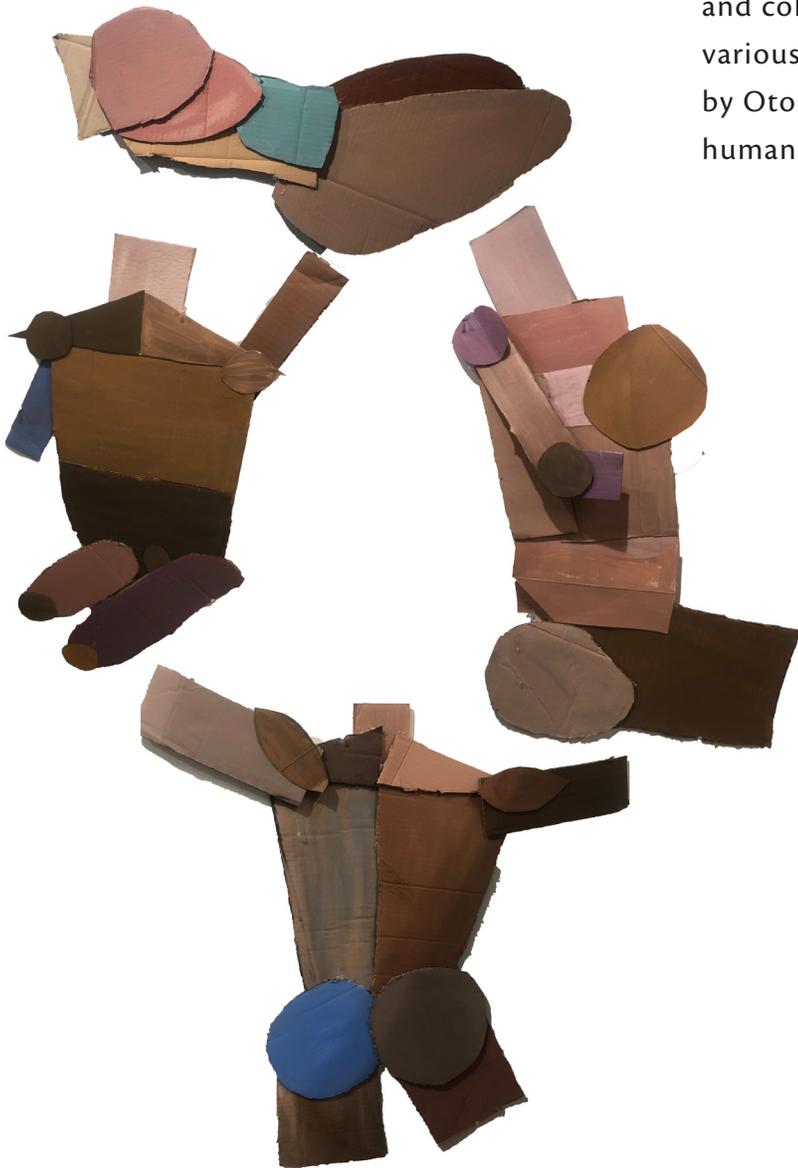
Miranda Randel

“You start questioning, being like—
Who am I? What am I? Who am I
in this world?”

As a bisexual woman, Miranda creates her work with a female and LGBTQIA+ audience in mind. Miranda’s artistic practice reflects her individual experiences and identity. With a background in special effects make-up, Miranda explores a multitude of mediums throughout her body of work including painting, drawing, sculpture, collage, and performance. Focusing on repurposed material, Miranda uses cardboard, glue, oil paint, and acrylic paint in her recent series, *Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4*. She emphasizes shape and color through her angular close-ups of various body parts. Reminiscent of *L’Air du Temps* by Otobong Nkanga, Miranda deconstructs the human figure.

Before coming to Columbia, Miranda worked mainly through painting and drawing. As she furthered her practice, she began to build on these skills with the addition of color theory and printmaking. She continued exploring other mediums eventually including sculpture. Now, Miranda adjusts her medium of choice depending on the topic she is considering. No matter the project, Miranda always starts with a sketch, whether it be digital or by hand.

Throughout the years, the focus of Miranda’s practice has evolved. Her earlier work considered topics revolving around mental health. Once Miranda started college, she felt free to explore her sexuality, which has become an important aspect of her work. Although Miranda still creates work with mental health awareness in mind, her main



Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4, cardboard, glue, oil paint, acrylic, 2020

focus is to reflect what is currently going on in her life at the time. Miranda's internal struggles, combined with her interpretation of the world around her, manifest throughout her work.

Drawing inspiration from the feminist artists of the 1970s, Miranda creates work revolving around sexuality and femininity. Specifically, Miranda looks at the works of Judy Chicago. She says, "I love a lot of the work that she did in *Womanhouse*. I love it because it just talks so much about different female experiences between giving birth, having children, and being sexualized by men."

Like Chicago, Miranda takes a critical look at the traditional roles of women throughout her performance *The Dirty Work*. In this video piece, the artist pins freshly washed clothing to an outdoor washing line. Simple yet effective, the performance continues as Miranda pins blood-stained underwear to the line. By making direct



Video still from *The Dirty Work*, performance, May 4, 2020

eye contact with the camera, Miranda engages with the viewer throughout a performance that normalizes menstruation.

Miranda has received a multitude of reactions from her work depending on the individual's personal experience. "Some people are totally comfortable with the human body, and nudity, and sexuality, and some people totally aren't," she mentions. This range of feelings oftentimes provokes a discussion whether the viewer is a fan of her work or not. Miranda hopes that even if someone can't personally relate to her work, that they can still take something away from their experience.

- Sam Collins



SKIN #1, eyelets, cording, acrylic, and fabric paint on denim, 2020

CONTRIBUTORS

Sam Collins is graduating with a BA in Art History and a minor in Visual Arts Management. She plans to pursue a graduate degree in the future related to art history or gender studies. After graduation, she hopes to continue working in the arts whether that be in museums, galleries, or alongside artists.

Öykü Kolat is graduating with a BA in Art History and a minor in Visual Arts Management. She is a photographer whose work revolves around exploring intimate forms in finite space. Kolat works as a curatorial assistant for the Museum of Contemporary Photography and an exhibition developer for the Hokin Gallery. After graduation, she plans to pursue a Master's degree and a profession that focuses on the history, theory, and criticism of photography, as well as color theory.

Jenna Kurecki is graduating with a BFA in Illustration and a minor in Art History. She views art and theory as concurrent practices, always inspiring one another. Whether pursuing graduate school or working as an artist, she intends to follow a creative career path. You can view her artwork at www.jennakurecki.com.

iph is graduating with a BFA in Fine Arts and a minor in Art History. They plan on pursuing a life in the art world and attending graduate school in the future. Their practice is centered around performance, and they hope to explore new ways of creating after graduation.

Angeline Leonard is graduating with a BA in Arts and Materials Conservation and a BA in Art History. Conservation is a way for Leonard to meld her skills as an artist, interest in history and chemistry, and desire to work intimately with artifacts of cultural heritage. She currently interns at Parma Conservation and will continue to pursue a profession in painting conservation after graduation. In the next couple of years, she hopes to attend graduate school for objects or wood conservation and art history.

Zhang Qiuzhang is graduating with a BA in Visual Art Management and a minor in Art History. After graduation, she plans to apply for a graduate program focusing in the field of contemporary art theory and museum study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have had the pleasure of working with the 2021 BFA in Fine Arts candidates and the BA in Art History candidates in their final thesis year. Appreciation goes to all the staff, faculty, and administration from the Art and Art History Department, without whose support this exhibition would not have been possible. We would particularly like to recognize the staff of the Fabrication and Printmaking Facilities, including Nate Carder, Chris Flynn, Chris Kerr, Amy Leners, Kumiko Murakami, Geof Prairie, H Schenck, Meghann Sottile, Madeline Vaccaro, and Andy Young for their support, along with Meimei Yu of the Media Center, and Steve Knight and Jesse Vazquez of the Digital Print Center, for assistance and technical support. We also thank Gina Ordaz and Jay Meyers, administrative assistants for the Art and Art History and Design departments, respectively. Thanks also to Chair Duncan MacKenzie, and Associate Chair Joan Giroux of the Art and Art History Department, and Rosita Sands, Dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts.

The Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS) staff, Director of Exhibitions Meg Duguid and Exhibitions Manager Mark Porter, provided invaluable support as the students prepared for their final exhibition. Special thanks go to the Art History students in Written Thesis, including Sam Collins, Öykü Kolat, iph, and Angeline Leonard for writing the catalog entries, Jenna Kurecki for creating the catalog layout design, and Sylvia Faichney for writing the introduction, with research support provided by Zhang Qiuzhang, and to Professor Joan Giroux for her thorough copy editing of the catalog. Lastly, and most importantly, we applaud the graduating Fine Art seniors themselves. We thank them for making this year so memorable. We look forward to welcoming them into the creative community as our peers.

Adam Brooks, Professor, Senior Fine Arts BFA Exhibition

Amy M. Mooney, Associate Professor, Art History Written Thesis

The exhibition and catalog have been sponsored by the Art and Art History
Department and the School of Fine and Performing Arts.

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Darby Jack
Amanda Adela
Miranda Randel
iph

