



Soft Allergy

Claire Ashley

Judith Brotman

Cameron Clayborn



Soft Allergy

Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, Cameron Clayborn

Curated by Meg Duguid

Soft Allergy is born out of the collaboration of individual practices. In a series of call-and-response installations, where edges are present yet hard to determine, the artists in this show pushed and pulled, upending and uplifting each other's practices. Meeting every three weeks over Zoom since 2020, the artists developed the exhibition virtually and by trading material and works in the mail along with toiling in their studios.

The exhibition not only consists of singular objects from the artists' individual practices that are placed in relationship to one another, but each artist has worked on, embellished, painted, sewed into, and/or incorporated spoken work, audio, or video inside of another's object. These actions spur a number of comfortable and uncomfortable relationships that are optimistically dark, bringing out issues of gender, race, and material. The works in the show exude the formal, material, and conceptual struggles of their co-creation.

During the run of *Soft Allergy*, a satellite exhibition, *Tender Irritant* was viewable from the windows of SAIC Galleries. Produced in the same manner as *Soft Allergy*, the work in *Tender Irritant* acts as a phantom appendage functioning as both companion exhibition and vigorous reaction simultaneously.

Soft Allergy

November 11, 2021 – February 18, 2022
Glass Curtain Gallery
1104 S Wabash Ave, Chicago, IL 60605
colum.edu/allergy

Tender Irritant

December 20, 2021 – January 12, 2022
SAIC Galleries
33 E Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602
saic.edu/exhibitions

Columbia
COLLEGE CHICAGO



**SCHOOL OF
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As Dangerous

In November of 2021, I traveled to Chicago to see the *Soft Allergy* exhibit at Columbia College's Glass Curtain Gallery. There was a time I'd think of that first sentence as one of the most boring I ever wrote. But my own view of travel during the Coronavirus pandemic makes that sentence mean I'm either a hero or a fool. Of course, the fact of the virus changes our relationship to most of everything we once took for granted, and it colors our view of any art we see. I'm not sure I'll ever view any contemporary art in a public place again without wondering if I'm a hero or a fool or without understanding that art as a comment on the pandemic.

Soft Allergy is titled in a way that lets us know it could exist even if there was never a pandemic. And the phrase's relationship to pillows and other kinds of bedding (or maybe even to an ailment we can feel but ultimately survive) reminds me of what we already know about any of the work of the collaborators who developed this show. What Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, and Cameron Clayborn seem to know they have in common is life, the fact that it continues, and more to the point, that the body fights for it, even when other pervading elements put the body in danger.

In truth, the exhibit begins outside with three figures staged as window dressing might be staged. From left to right, these images move from that which is pastel and butterfly-like (Clayborn's *gurl do not contain yourself!*) to what might be a black-and-white drawing of a human cocoon (Clayborn's cocoon) to . . . to what . . . one of the large tarpish bags that I think of as the major oddity of the exhibit itself (Claire Ashley's *Lumpy Morsel*). Upon entering, we encounter Judith Brotman's voice reciting *The Tales*, a 20-minute anaphoric poem, which begins: "The tale of the gaudy child and the disreputable shaman. / The tale of the prurient therapist and the moist tea bag. / The tale of the rabid woman and the lost Jew." The poem is a Whitmanian litany of accrual, and it prepares us for an exhibit of all that must be going on in the body. Much of *Soft Allergy*—with its scat and cushioncontainerbags and night fever—appears as a life-sized installation of what must be going on in our bodies though we are never aware of it.

The two back walls of the show (*Less than You Know/More Than You Imagine* and *1001 Nights* by Brotman) are collaged tributes to memory itself through items that join personal autobiography (through its items) to all of literary history (through its words). But beyond that, in a room all its own, as if a surprise closing act, is Clayborn's *Static in the Gelatinous*, a film in which he makes use of his own nude body to highlight fear as yet another possibility for our lives, a possibility as dangerous as any virus or allergy.

Throughout the exhibit, it is most clear that these three artists are each strong enough to bring very different talents to this project. But the progression of the show is what makes it clear that they have enough respect for one another's work to imitate and riff in ways that produce a singular and new kind of beauty that leaves me glad I saw it whether I call myself brave or risky. I want to be clear, though, that when I say beauty, I mean it the way we understand that which is terrifying can be beautiful. *Soft Allergy* is not pretty. I actually found it harrowing. But it is also aware that fear itself is a feeling among feelings, that we get to experience them all.

Jericho Brown
Atlanta



CURTAIN | GALLELLI



The tale of the left-handed priest and the conniving tourist.

The tale of the bloated musician and the respectful senator.

The tale of the well-formed nose and the uninitiated spider.

The tale of the bi-racial traveler and the flat-footed chiropractor.

The tale of the mutant thief and the resistant beautician.

The tale of the unhinged librarian and the perfumed sentinel.

The tale of the asexual judge and the mystical plumber.

The tale of the stitched alien and the perspiring castle.

The tale of the silver eyed man and the reconstructed breast.



Top: Cameron Clayborn, *a strand*, 2021
Bottom: Judith Brotman, *Hell no fuck yeah*, 2021



Right: Claire Ashley with appendages and embellishments by Judith Brotman and Cameron Clayborn, *Night Fever (Hang Ups)*, 2019-2021



Installation view



Installation view
Foreground: Cameron Clayborn with appendages and embellishments by Claire Ashley and Judith Brotman, *two strands*, 2021



Top: Installation view
Bottom: Cameron Clayborn, *gurl, do not contain yourself!*, 2021



Cameron Clayborn with appendages and embellishments by Claire Ashley and Judith Brotman, *Untitled*, 2021



Cameron Clayborn with appendages and embellishments by Claire Ashley and Judith Brotman, *Untitled*, 2021



Judith Brotman with appendages and embellishments by Cameron Clayborn, *Object of Contemplation*, 2021



Installation view



Installation view



Top: Judith Brotman, *Even an Eternity May Not Last Forever*, 2021 (left); Claire Ashley, *Scat (Series of Four)*, 2020 (right)
Bottom: Cameron Clayborn mbellishments by Judith Brotman, *Untitled*, 2021



Installation view



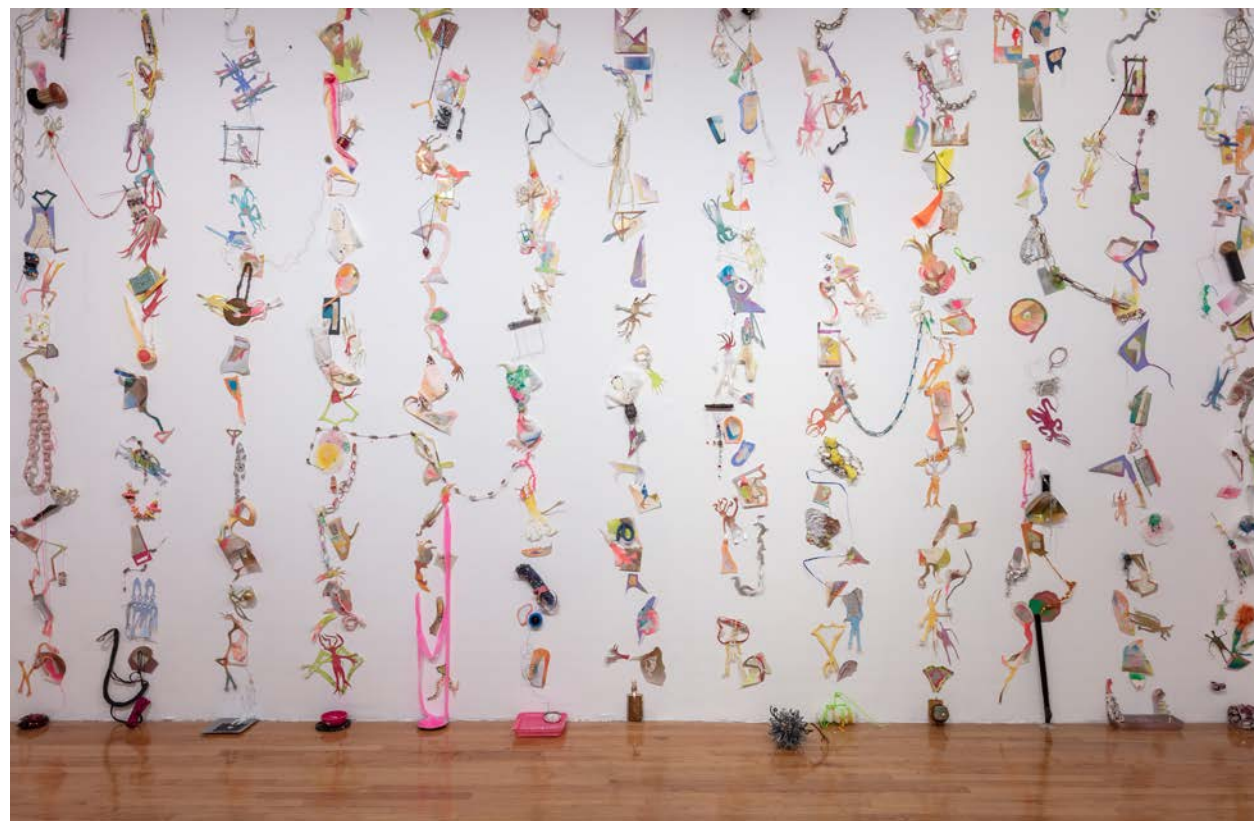
Claire Ashley with appendages and embellishments by Judith Brotman and Cameron Clayborn, *Tight Squeeze (In a Pinch)*, 2021 (left)
Cameron Clayborn *cushioncontainerbag (purple leg)* and *cushioncontainerbag (thigh)*, 2017-2021 (right)



Top: Judith Brotman, *Even an Eternity May Not Last Forever* 2021
Bottom: Judith Brotman, *1001 Nights (more or less)*, 2019-2021 (detail)



Installation view



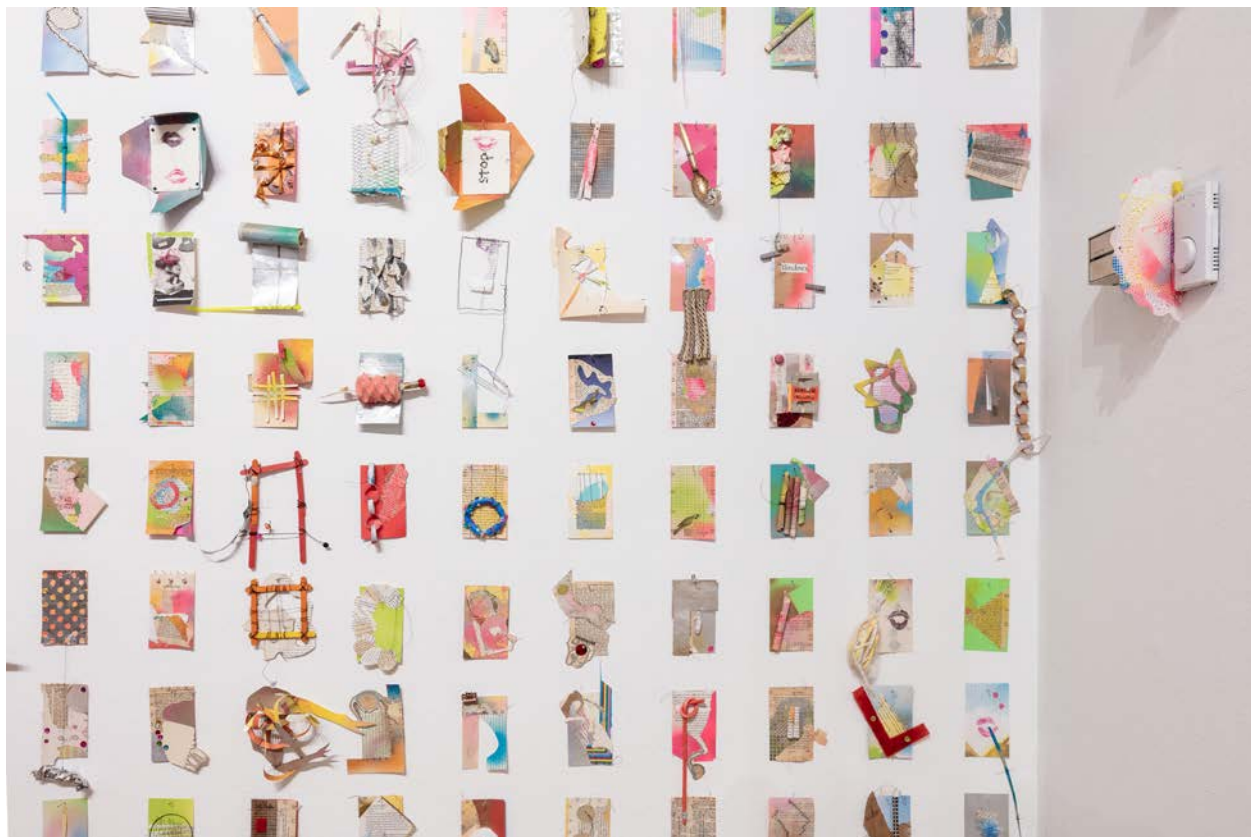
Top: Installation view
Bottom and Right: Judith Brotman with some embellishments donated by Claire Ashley and Cameron Clayborn, *Less Than You Know/More Than You Imagine*, 2020-2021



Installation view



Installation view



Top: Installation view
Bottom and Right: Judith Brotman, *1001 Nights (more or less)*, 2019-2021



Judith Brotman, 1001 Nights (more or less), 2019-2021



Cameron Clayborn, *Static In the Gelatinous (Ode to FEAR.)*, 2020-2021 (left)
Claire Ashley with video by Cameron Clayborn and audio by Judith Brotman, *Night Fever (Body Language)*, 2019-2021 (right)



Claire Ashley with video by Cameroh Clayborn and audio by Judith Brotman- *Night Fever (Body Language)*, 2019-2021. (detail)

The tale of the ever so slightly demented anus that looked lovely in shades of gray-green and the sandwich that was stolen by a perspicacious macaque.

The tale of the clearly heaven sent anus and the mysterious tissue papered grasshopper.

The tale of the wistful anus with hopes and dreams about to be realized and the exquisitely attired queen bee.

The tale of the anus seeking retribution and the child-like petunia masquerading as an ugly fruit.

The tale of the overly cautious anus with repressed interests of becoming a pilot and the island that quacked like a pregnant duck.

The tale of the anus which studied to be a priest and a rabbi but decided instead to sail the open seas and the cell phone that refused to accept calls from Wyoming that contained the number seven.

The tale of the anus that hoped to wed a moderately conservative politician and the basement filled with half empty cans of grapefruit fizzy water.

The tale of the anus with expertise in The Lost City of Atlantis and the sacred but overly contextualized list of prime numbers.

Judith Brotman, *The Tales 2: (more things in heaven and earth and bodily locations)*, 2021 (audio transcription)

Tender Irritant

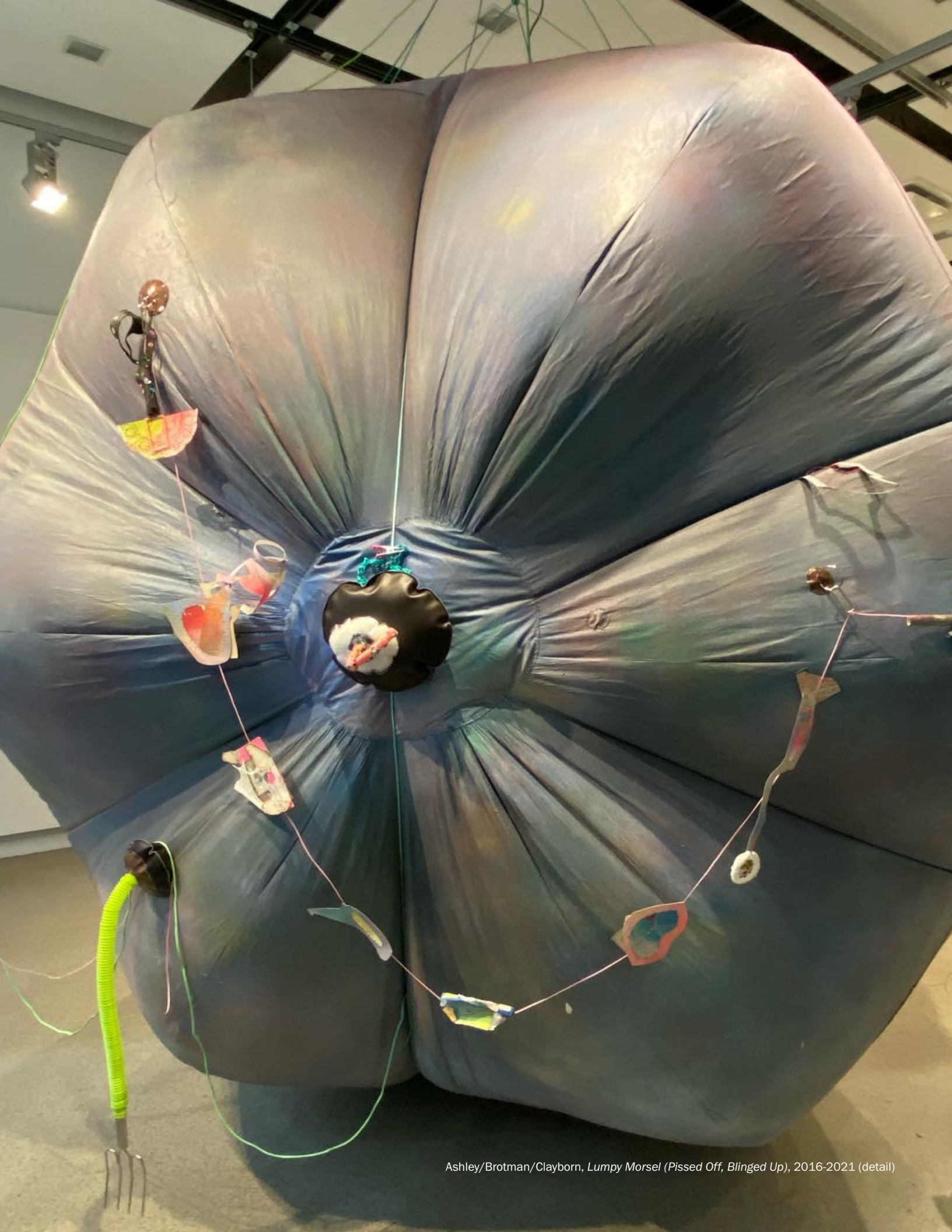
Exhibition Images

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Tender Irritant

Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, and Cameron Clayborn
December 20, 2021 - January 12, 2022
Tender Irritant is the reaction to *Soft Allergy*.

This presentation is born out of the collaboration of individual practices. In a series of call and response interactions, where edges are present yet hard to determine, the artists in this exhibition have pushed and pulled, upending and uplifting each other's practices. Meeting every three weeks over Zoom since 2020, the artists developed the show virtually and by trading material and works in the mail along with tolling in their states. This work is created from material made for the related exhibition, *Soft Allergy*, on view now at Columbia College's Glass Curtain Gallery, where each artist has worked on, embellished, painted, sewed into, and incorporated work inside of another's object. These actions spur a number of comfortable and uncomfortable relationships that are optimistic and dark bringing out issues of gender, race, and material. Produced in the same manner as *Soft Allergy*, the work in *Tender Irritant* acts as a phantom appendage functioning as both companion and vigorous reaction.



Ashley/Brotman/Clayborn, *Lumpy Morsel (Pissed Off, Blinged Up)*, 2016-2021 (detail)



Installation view



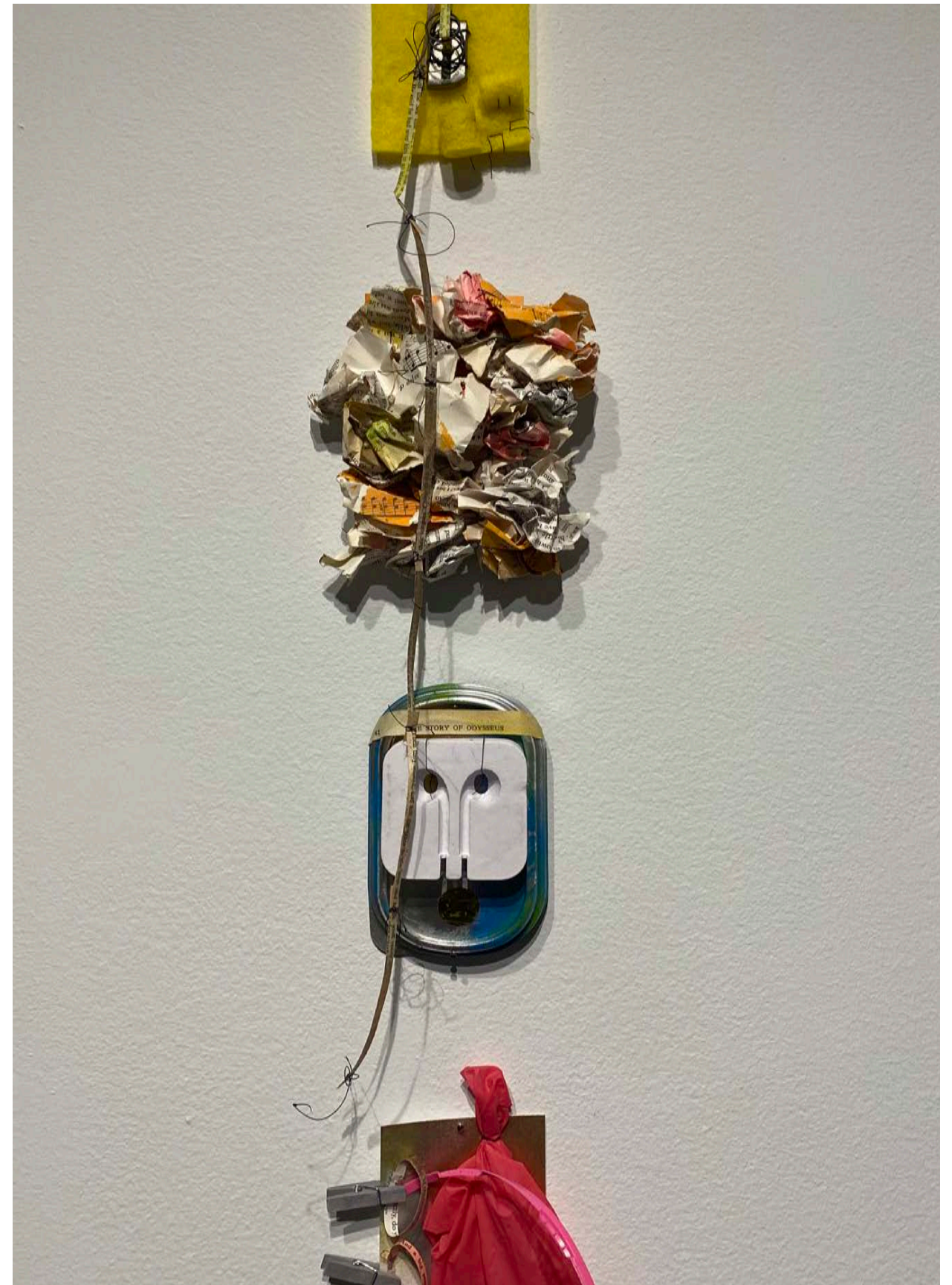
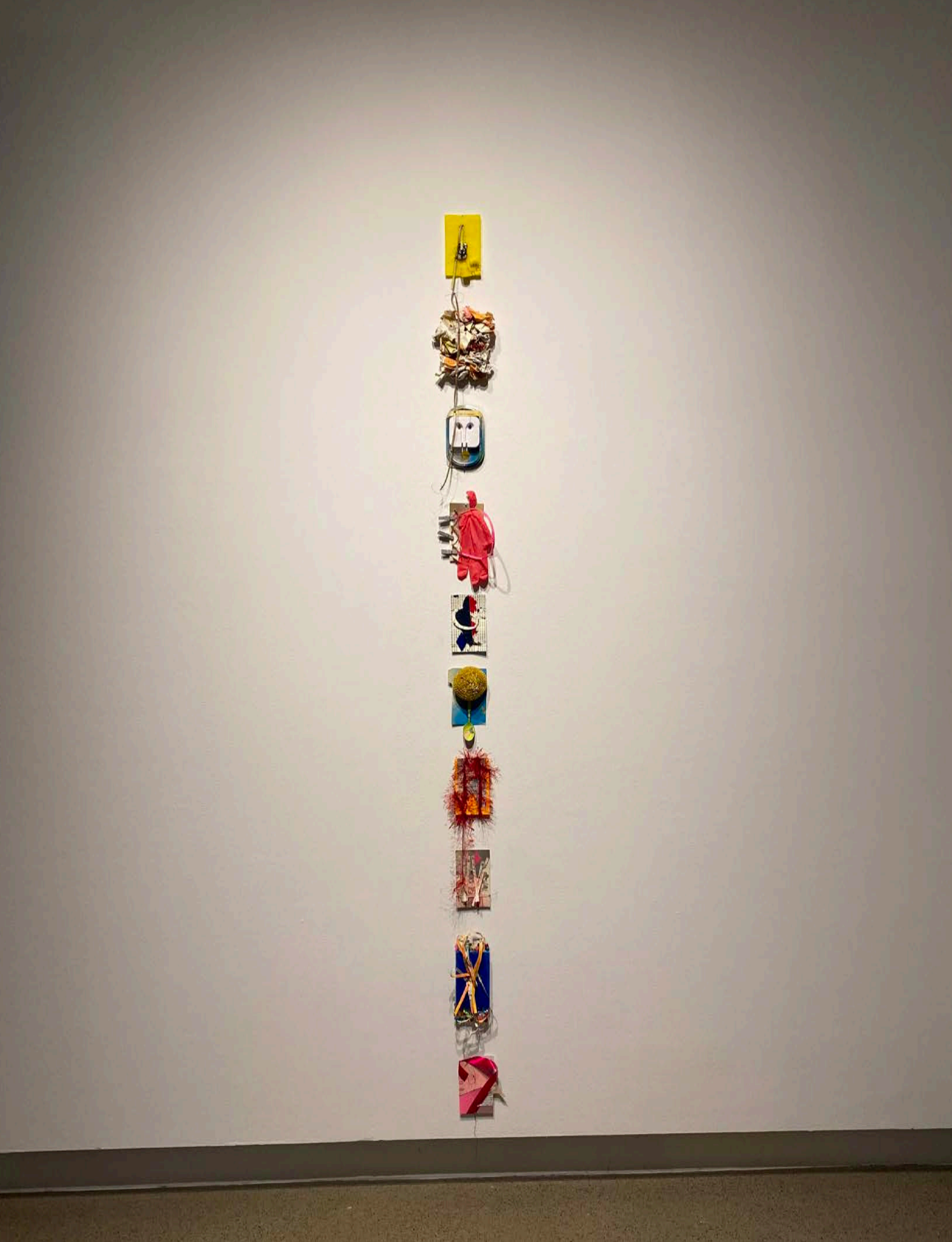
Installation view



Ashley/Brotman/Clayborn, *Pale JellyRoll (What's the Fucking Safe Word)*, 2016-2021



Left and Right: Ashley/Brotman/Clayborn, *Pale JellyRoll (What's the Fucking Safe Word)*, 2016-2021



Left and Right: Judith Brotman, *1001 Nights (more or less)*, 2019-2021



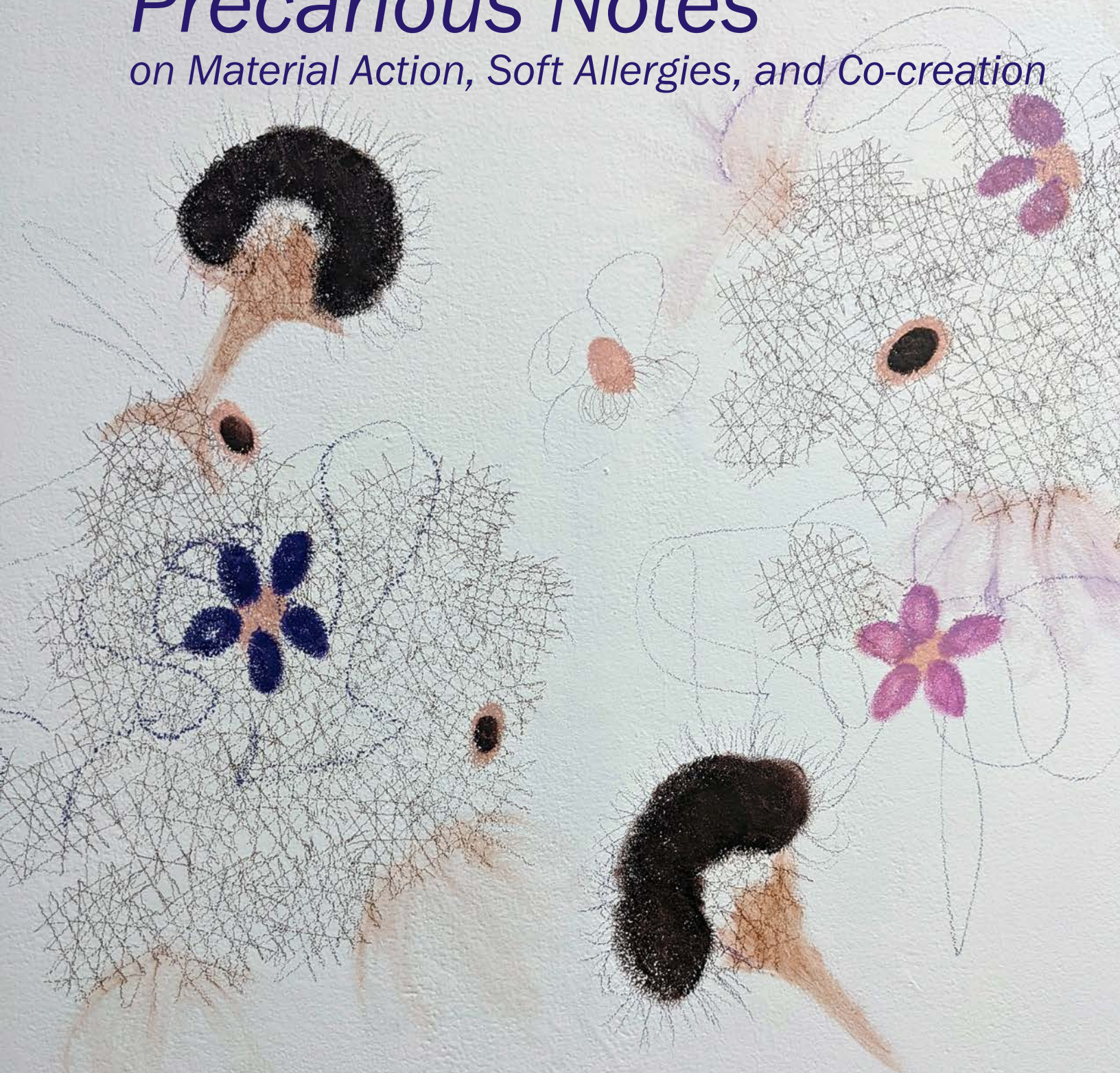
Judith Brotman, *1001 Nights (more or less)*, 2019-2021



Cameron Clayborn, *Static In the Gelatinous (Ode to FEAR.)*, 2020-2021

Precarious Notes

on Material Action, Soft Allergies, and Co-creation



Cameron Clayborn, *gurl, do not contain yourself!*, 2021 (detail)

A soft allergy can be overcome when tolerance is created through small repeated exposure to the irritant. In this process a body receives just a bit of the foreign substance over a long period of time so it can accept the irritant as a functioning part of its ecosystem. This kind of bodily acceptance of what once seemed unlikely to wholly welcome in, is the foundation that *Soft Allergy* is built on.

In bringing together the work of Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, and Cameron Clayborn, this exhibition relies on each artist's deeply curious material process while collapsing their significant differences in scale and approach. A kind of alchemy is formed by artists who are material-based. Acts including constructing, deconstructing, ripping, pulverizing, forming, mending, mixing, embedding, and adorning situate the work in close relationship to the artists' hand, their reach, their size, and their very understanding of their own corporeal limits. The working and reworking of material and form doesn't just create a hum of formal aesthetic, but the material functions as the conduit in which emotion, politics, and poetry burst into the world.

Soft Allergy merges Ashley, Brotman, and Clayborn's alchemic process, resulting in an exhibition shaped from a significant pool of trust that the artists maintained and grew. Each artist gave up a portion of their identity while fervently staking an individual claim in a sustained and repeated practice. There were no preconceived outcomes until the day the doors to the show opened. There were no final ideas how objects were going to function or fit together or even take form, but instead a structure was engineered, and overwhelming trust was maintained that the confluence of these three artists' processes would result in something that was greater than the sum of its parts. This does not mean, however, that the exhibition is devoid of content, only functioning in material. Instead, it is imbued with the ease and unease of co-creation revealing and obscuring issues of gender, race, body, material, and matter.

Each exchange of material, thought, and context created a round-robin where all artists were present in each other's studios despite being separated by actual physical distance. As with any artwork, the labor put into it reflects the very body making it. In exchanging works, the object carries a long shadow of the previous maker regardless of how many actions are performed on it by another. As work was pushed to the limits of its material end by one artist, it was passed on to be examined and reworked and its material potentials expanded by new hands pushing and pulling the object to another new. This is an endless end, repeated, ended, and started again, leaving a constant potential energy in the installations in the gallery.* Because of this, the objects themselves resist clear definitions. It is impossible to tell where one artist's work ends. Each artist took in a little bit of the others' practice and emotions only to make it part of their own, reembodying the other's spirit and creating an opening for a viewer to enter in.

The resulting exhibition is spectacularly grounded in the primal. Yet the spectacle subscribes to the "nothing is what it seems" ethos of the show because the spectacle is not where it first purports to be. The spectacle is not in the large sweeping gestures of the work or the wild colors brushing up between textured surface, but it is in the interstitial spaces between the artists' practice and resulting objects. The spectacle is a quiet scream and whimsical fuck-you attitude cloaked in a loving softness with a true welcoming comradeship. A space of spectacular spaciousness was created in the smallest of cracks, allowing the viewer to sit in their own body bemused, comfortably uncomfortable.

Meg Duguid
Chicago

*The constant of potential energy was so great, the work of *Soft Allergy* could not be contained in one show. *Tender Irritant* is the consequence of *Soft Allergy*. Utilizing the pieces and parts left from the initial installation, Ashley, Brotman, and Clayborn created a satellite project. This show, more muted in tone, was the fond aftermath of a passing allergic reaction.

Soft Allergy

Exhibition Checklist

Cameron Clayborn

gurl, do not contain yourself!, 2021
dimensions variable

Cameron Clayborn

cacoon (wall drawing) #1, 2021
dimensions variable

Claire Ashley

Lumpy Morsel (Bed Sores and Band-aids), 2016-2021
approx. 6' x 4' x 4'

Judith Brotman

The Tales 1: (yes, they could happen to you), 2021
19:40

Cameron Clayborn

a strand, 2021
108" x 110"

Judith Brotman

Hell no fuck yeah, 2021
12" x 9"

Claire Ashley

Night Fever (Hang Ups), 2019-2021
approx. 12' x 10' x 10'

Cameron Clayborn

Untitled, 2021
70.5" x 18.5" x 32"

Cameron Clayborn

two strands, 2021
168" x 172"

Claire Ashley

Scat (Series of Four), 2020
Approx. 18"- 24" diameter x 8" each

Cameron Clayborn

Untitled, 2021
17" x 9.5" x 18.25"

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (yellow leg), 2019-2021
10.5" x 4.5" x 33"

Cameron Clayborn

Untitled, 2021
14" x 8" x 10.5"

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (thigh), 2017-2021
10" x 4.5" x 13.5"

Judith Brotman

Object of Contemplation, 2021
dimensions variable

Claire Ashley

Hot Rock (Gouged, Itchin' and Scratchin'), 2016-2021
approx. 5' x 5' x 5'

Judith Brotman

Even an Eternity May Not Last Forever, 2021
dimensions variable

Cameron Clayborn

Untitled, 2021
56" x 15.5" x 13"

Judith Brotman

Less Than You Know/More Than You Imagine, 2020-2021
dimensions variable

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (dad's leg), 2017-2021
11.5" x 5.5" x 28"

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (purple leg), 2019-2021
10.5" x 4.5" x 33"

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (thigh), 2017-2021
10" x 4.5" x 13.5"

Cameron Clayborn

cushioncontainerbag (thigh), 2017-2021
10" x 4.5" x 13.5"

Claire Ashley

Tight Squeeze (In a Pinch), 2021
approx. 16' x 3' x 3'

Claire Ashley

Floatie Queen Surrenders, 2016-2021
Approx. 6' x 5' x 5'

Claire Ashley

Cuckoo, 2021
Approx. 8' x 4' x 1'

Judith Brotman

1001 Nights (more or less), 2019-2021
dimensions variable

Claire Ashley

Night Fever (Body Language), 2019-2021
approx. 7' x 10' x 8'

Judith Brotman

The Tales 2 : (more things in heaven and earth and bodily locations), 2021
12:06

Cameron Clayborn

Static In the Gelatinous (Ode to FEAR.), 2020-2021
5:30

Claire Ashley Materials List

Materials/objects/works given to me by Judith Brotman

Materials/objects/works given to me by Cameron Clayborn

Spray paint, acrylic paint, sequins, glitter, pleather, expandable foam, sand, earth, clear vinyl, paracord, popcorn paint, pleather, carabiner clip, webbing strap, mesh, denim insulation, sequined bath towel, sequined tissue, 3D printed object, chain, zipties, earth, feathers, chain, PVC coated canvas tarpaulin, fan

Judith Brotman Materials List

Authors of texts include (among others): Aeschylus, Claire Ashley, James Baldwin, Jeremy Biles, William Blake, Charlotte Bronte, Judith Brotman, Marcia London Brotman, Jericho Brown, Albert Camus, Julia Child, Kate Chopin, Agatha Christie, Cameron Clayborn, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Meg Duguid, Anne Frank, Sigmund Freud, Carlos Fuentes, Atul Gawande, Nancy Wisti Grayson, The Brothers Grimm, Lorraine Hansberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Hellstrom, Cathy Park Hong, Adolph Hitler, Homer, bell hooks, Edward P. Jones, Caroline Keene, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Jhumpa Lahiri, C.S. Lewis, Arthur Miller, Haruki Murakami, Vladamir Nabakov, Pablo Neruda, Mary Shelley, Jose Saragmago, David Sedaris, William Shakespeare, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Rebecca Solnit, John Steinbeck, Bram Stoker, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Michael Thomas, Ocean Vuong, H.G. Wells, Edith Wharton, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson, Malcolm X, and words from the Zohar/book of Jewish Mysticism or Kabbalah

Materials/objects/works given to me by Claire Ashley

Materials/objects/works given to me by Cameron Clayborn

Texts read by me throughout the past 5 ½ decades (with impact that has been positive, negative, or ambivalent) ... see list above

Index cards, paper, yarn, fabric, spray paint, upholstery thread, sewing thread, beads, sequins, glass pearls, my mother's costume jewelry, my hair that I cut during Covid, silverware, kitchen utensils, bamboo skewers, steak knife, straws, Kleenex, craft sticks, napkins, organza fabric bag, toilet paper, leaves, vacuum cleaner parts, slinky, doilies, gloves purchased at thrift stores, latex gloves taken from my doctors' offices, cloth and paper table covers taken from my doctors' offices, egg cartons, plastic, wire, swimsuit straps, goggle strap, sponges, shelf bracket, tin foil, dryer lint, hair rollers, ribbon, hair clips, combs, foil from candy purchased in Vienna, towel taken from my health club, various objects purchased at a hardware store or American Science and Surplus whose actual function remains unknown to me, lipstick, Sharpie, Land 'o Lakes butter container, plastic baggies given to me by my otolaryngologist, baby wipes, makeup remover pads, musical scores, Q-tips, erasers, Collaborative Kleenex drawn on by Jeremy Biles and embellished by me, Rik-rak gifted to me by Nancy G., images from book gifted to me by Michael T., clothes pins, broken dishes given to me by women who run estate sales, bank pins, nails, paper plates

Cameron Clayborn Materials List

Materials/objects/works given to me by Judith Brotman

Materials/objects/works given to me by Claire Ashley

PVC coated canvas tarpaulin, q-tips, sequins, velcro, polyfill, oil pastel, watercolor, vinyl, colored pencil, denim insulation, hair beads, metal wire, cotton pad, sequins, string, metal wire, plastic straw, note, tissue, muslin, straps, zippers, sand, carabiner, video



Ashley/Brotman/Clayborn, *Pale JellyRoll (What's the Fucking Safe Word)*, 2016-2021 (detail)

Tender Irritant

Exhibition Checklist

Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, Cameron Clayborn
Lumpy Morsel (Pissed Off, Blinged Up), 2016-2021

Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, Cameron Clayborn
Pale JellyRoll (What's the Fucking Safe Word), 2016-2021

Judith Brotman
1001 Nights (more or less), 2019-2021

Cameron Clayborn
Static In the Gelatinous (Ode to FEAR.), 2020-2021

Judith Brotman
The Tales 1: (yes, they could happen to you), 2021

Exhibition Materials list

Materials/objects/works given by Claire Ashley

Materials/objects/works given by Judith Brotman

Materials/objects/works given by Cameron Clayborn

Spray paint, acrylic paint, PVC coated canvas tarpaulin, vinyl, denim insulation, hair beads, metal wire, key rings, fork, belts, plastic embroidery floss, hair rollers, index cards, paper, yarn, fabric, upholstery thread, sewing thread, beads, sequins, glass pearls, my mother's costume jewelry, my hair that I cut during Covid, silverware, kitchen utensils, bamboo skewers, straws, Kleenex, craft sticks, napkins, organza fabric bag, toilet paper, leaves, vacuum cleaner parts, slinky, doilies, gloves purchased at thrift stores, latex gloves taken from my doctors' offices, cloth and paper table covers taken from my doctors' offices, egg cartons, plastic, wire, swimsuit straps, goggle strap, sponges, shelf bracket, tin foil, dryer lint, hair rollers, ribbon, hair clips, combs, foil from candy purchased in Vienna, towel taken from my health club, various objects purchased at a hardware store or American Science and Surplus whose actual function remains unknown to me, lipstick, Sharpie, Land 'o Lakes butter container, plastic baggies given to me by my otolaryngologist, baby wipes, makeup remover pads, musical scores, Q-tips, erasers, Collaborative Kleenex drawn on by Jeremy Biles and embellished by me, Rikrak gifted to me by Nancy G., images from book gifted to me by Michael T., clothes pins, broken dishes given to me by women who run estate sales, bank pins, nails, paper plates. Authors of texts include (among others): Aeschylus, Claire Ashley, James Baldwin, Jeremy Biles, William Blake, Charlotte Brontë, Judith Brotman, Marcia London Brotman, Jericho Brown, Albert Camus, Julia Child, Kate Chopin, Agatha Christie, Cameron Clayborn, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Meg Duguid, Anne Frank, Sigmund Freud, Carlos Fuentes, Atul Gawande, Nancy Wisti Grayson, The Brothers Grimm, Lorraine Hansberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Hellstrom, Cathy Park Hong, Adolph Hitler, Homer, bell hooks, Edward P. Jones, Caroline Keene, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Jhumpa Lahiri, C.S. Lewis, Arthur Miller, Haruki Murakami, Vladimir Nabakov, Pablo Neruda, Mary Shelley, Jose Saramago, David Sedaris, William Shakespeare, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Rebecca Solnit, John Steinbeck, Bram Stoker, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Michael Thomas, Ocean Vuong, H.G. Wells, Edith Wharton, Colson Whitehead, Jeanette Winterson, Malcolm X, and words from the Zohar/book of Jewish Mysticism or Kabbalah.

Biographies



Cameron Clayborn, *two strands*, 2021 (detail)

Claire Ashley received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her BFA from Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, Scotland. Originally from Edinburgh, Ashley is now based in Chicago. Currently, she teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Department of Contemporary Practices and in the Department of Painting and Drawing. Ashley's work investigates inflatables as painting, sculpture, installation, and performance costume. Her works have been exhibited nationally and internationally in galleries, museums, site-specific installations, performances, and collaborations at venues including Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, England; Art Basel in Kassel, Germany; Rockelmann & Partner in Berlin, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR; Illinois State University Galleries in Normal, IL; DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA; ICEBOX Crane Arts in Philadelphia; and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Additionally, her work has been exhibited in Scotland at The House for an Art Lover in Glasgow, gallerA1 in Edinburgh, and the Highland Institute for Contemporary Art in Inverness.

Jericho Brown is the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Brown's first book, *Please* (2008), won the American Book Award. His second book, *The New Testament* (2014), won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and was named one of the best of the year by Library Journal, Coldfront, and the Academy of American Poets. He is also the author of the collection *The Tradition* (2019), which was a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award and the winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. His poems have appeared in BuzzFeed, The Nation, The New York Times, The New Yorker, The New Republic, Time, and The Pushcart Prize Anthology, and several volumes of The Best American Poetry anthologies. He is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Creative Writing and the Director of the Creative Writing Program at Emory University in Atlanta.

Judith Brotman is a multidisciplinary artist and educator from Chicago. Her work frequently occupies a space between abstraction and figuration, deterioration and regeneration, elegance and awkwardness, generosity and obligation. She has exhibited at venues including Indiana University Northwest; Franconia Sculpture Park in Shafer, MN; Hampshire College in Amherst, MA; The Society of Arts & Crafts in Boston; Asphodel Gallery in Brooklyn; and the DeVos Art Museum in Marquette, MI; as well as Smart Museum of Art, RUSCHWOMAN, Weinberg/Newton Gallery, Threewalls, Slow Gallery, Chicago Cultural Center, Tiger Strikes Asteroid Chicago, Chicago Artists Coalition, Hyde Park Art Center, and Gallery 400 all in Chicago. Brotman's work is in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Illinois State Museum, and the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection as well as in many private collections. Brotman received her BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Department of Fiber and Material Studies where she currently teaches.

Cameron Clayborn was born in 1992 and was raised in Memphis, TN. He lives and works in New Haven, CT. Clayborn's practice addresses the relationship that vulnerability has to power. His work is materially rooted, and combines elements of Postminimalism, craft, performance, and spirituality. He has exhibited nationally and internationally with solo exhibitions and venues including Art Basel Statements with Simone Subal Gallery in Basel, Switzerland, where Clayborn was awarded the Baloise Art Prize, Simone Subal Gallery in New York, and Boyfriends in Chicago. He has shown in group exhibitions at venues including Bradley Ertaskiran in Montréal; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Stuttgart, Germany; Casemore Kirkeby in San Francisco; FIAC with Simone Subal Gallery in Paris; Mildred's Lane in Beach Lake, PA; Magenta Plains in New York; and Heaven Gallery in Chicago among others. Clayborn will be mounting a solo exhibition in 2022 at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin.

Meg Duguid is an artist and an arts administrator. She is currently the executive director of exhibitions for Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibition, Performing and Student Spaces. Most recently she curated *Where the Future Came From*, an exhibition and resulting book exploring the history of feminist artist-run spaces in Chicago from 1880-2018. Duguid, along with her partner Michael Thomas, is currently working to develop TheVisualist.org into a comprehensive and searchable cultural archive of artist-run projects and actions in Chicago. Duguid received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from Bard College.



Judith Brotman, *Less Than You Know/More Than You Imagine*, 2021 (detail)

Curator Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Claire Ashley, Judith Brotman, and Cameron Clayborn who opened up their practices to create this wonderful exhibition; Jericho Brown for penning such a moving essay; and Mark Porter, Senior Exhibitions Coordinator, who along with our fantastic student staff Sierra Delamarter, Killian Fowler, and Adele Hink and preparators JJ McLuckie and Cassandra Meek oversaw the *Soft Allergy*'s production and installation; Trevor Martin and the staff of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago Galleries for their work producing *Tender Irritant*; and Jonahathan Michael Castillo and Angela Golota for taking the exhibition photos for *Soft Allergy* and *Tender Irritant*, respectively.

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