

ANDREW SHOEMAKER

2020 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



Internet: The Aesthetics of Laziness (and/or Competition), aka, sometimes a nicer sculpture is to be able to hang out with your friends and have fun, aka, if we can't form bonds with people at least there have been 12,800 bonds formed by glue, aka, untitled various noise altering items, 2020

DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

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2020 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

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.

INTERNET: THE AESTHETICS OF LAZINESS

For the Thesis Exhibition, MFA candidate Andrew Shoemaker presents *Internet: The Aesthetics of Laziness (and/or Competition)*, aka, *sometimes a nicer sculpture is to be able to hang out with your friends and have fun, aka, if we can't form bonds with people at least there have been 12,800 bonds formed by glue, aka, untitled various noise altering items*. This work is an experimental acoustic treatment installation that focuses on friendship, and was created by making art in the presence of friends while sharing food and music. Like the Internet, sound is a vehicle for communication, and in both instances, it is very difficult to make clear connections with one another when the noise in our environments is too much to compete with.

The Internet is an amazing distraction from being bored and it enables Shoemaker's laziness like nothing else. His social interactions are mediated by the algorithms which are set by social media apps. The content he is shown is based on its "relevance." This kind of search engine optimization encourages a competitive and noisy environment online.

Internet: The Aesthetics of Laziness consists of acoustic treatment panels made out of pool noodles. The viewer is free to feel inclined to photograph themselves and their friends in the installation and share the images online. Describing his process, Shoemaker states:

I am a musician and interdisciplinary artist working with sound and digital media. My artistic practice is distraction turned material. My process is performative and is informed by improvisation and effort.

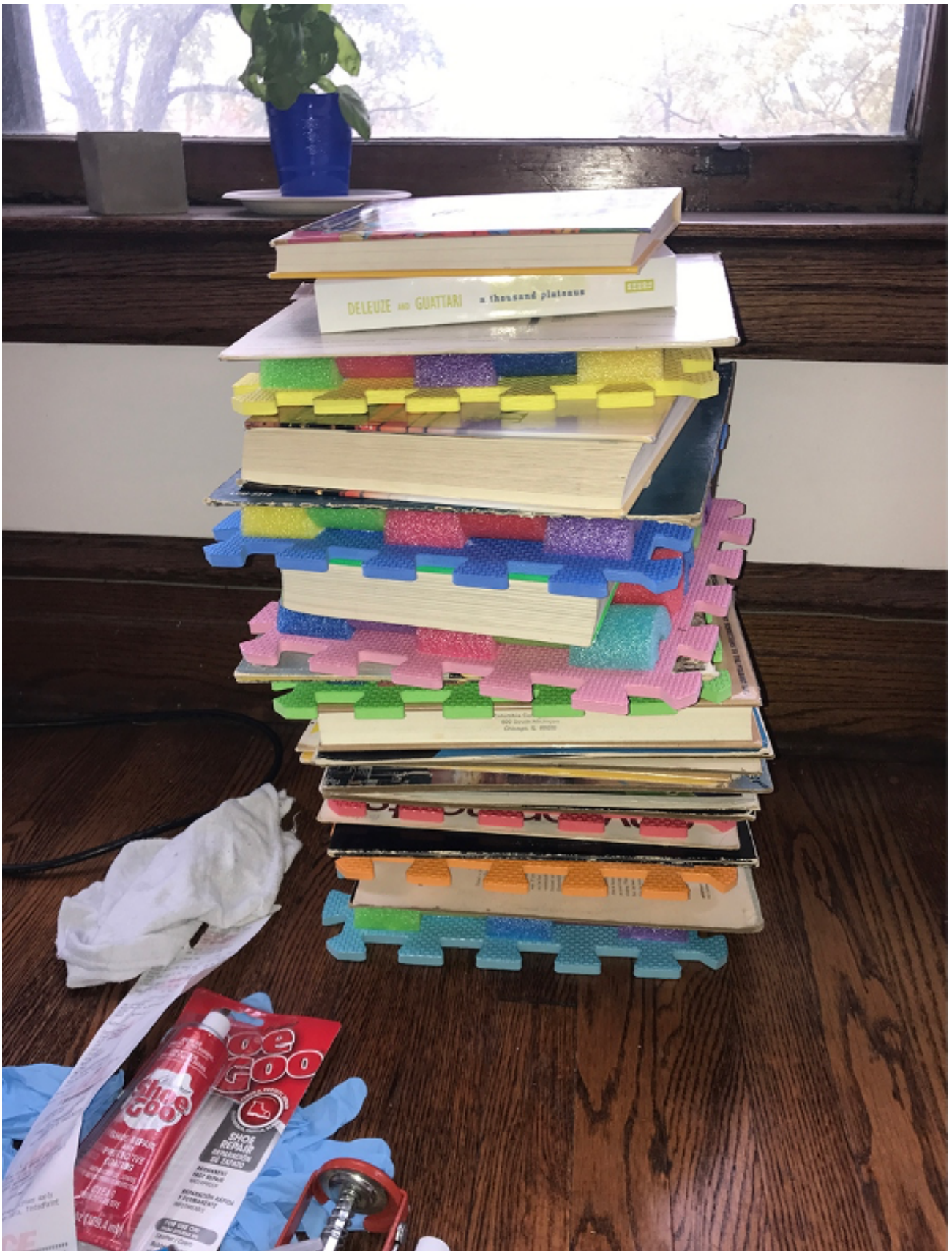
Andrew Shoemaker is an interdisciplinary artist from Gardner, Massachusetts. He works in digital media and sound, enjoys long walks on the beach in google maps, and playing the electric guitar.

For more information on Andrew Shoemaker:
Andrewshoemaker.cool



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Artist Note: I broke a blade on the bandsaw when chopping up the pool noodles



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Artist Note: Dense materials are used as weight to help the materials after they have been glued together.



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Artist Note: This is a version of the work I made in Minecraft.



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Artist Note: Image of me walking over to the band saw to chop up pool noodles.



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Artist Note: In the bottom left hand corner of this image there are two stacks of acoustic treatment panels drying. Books, records, and other heavy materials are used as weights to help the glue bond during this part of the process.



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Artist Note: This is a picture of my two friends @sentientmoss and @juul_osco posing in front of an earlier manifestation of this artwork. One of my main areas of focus has been how we encounter art online. I see art primarily through Instagram, so I wanted to make art that I thought would invite people to take photos of it and share their experiences online.



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Artist notes: Each individual acoustic treatment tile is fixed to the wall using thumbtacks and the support that they give to one another by being connected.



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Artist Note: This is a close up of the pool noodle chunks that get glued to the foam interlocking tiles.

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW SHOEMAKER

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

Kaylee Fowler: Can you speak more on your artistic practice statement, “distraction turned material?” what is the relationship to you between the concept of being distracted and the materials of distraction?

Andrew Shoemaker: In my practice I use my iPhone and personal computer. The tools that I use to make art are the same things that distract me throughout the day. I often have to turn WIFI off and disable 4G on my phone for extended periods of time. I appreciate these moments where I am able to focus on making artwork without being interrupted by distracting emails, messages, updates, and other pesky notifications.

I engage in making as an effort to distract myself from things like boredom and anxiety. I have spent 4 hours duplicating empty folders on my computer arriving at 262,144 empty untitled .zip files totaling to 1.1gb of empty space. I should have been doing laundry or homework.

KF: You define your artistic practice as distraction turned material; do you think this challenges the idea that art is something meant to spend time with, versus distraction, which is spending time with something deemed less valuable?

AS: I often make artworks while I am distracting myself from something else. It’s a form of pacing around in a room or fiddling my thumbs. For example, instead of addressing any boredom and anxiety that I may experience, I engage in scribbling with pen for hours on end until the ink has been completely drained. I am able to let my mind wander in these times. Other times, I try to let myself be bored or anxious and stare at my ceiling fan and breathe.

I think that in my statement I am making a self-deprecating joke, aiming to potentially discredit my own art. Yeah, they are just a distractions, but sometimes, we need distractions and they do have the potential to be valuable. Right now, I appreciate seeing things online that aren’t about COVID-19. I went to a COVID-19 relief benefit music festival where I saw the band American Football in Minecraft. I really appreciated that for an extended period of time, I was distracted and dancing in Minecraft to the music of musicians and DJs from around the world.

Sometimes, I kill 30 minutes on my phone just to create a 10-second clip using Snapchat. In a post-Vine attention economy, 10 seconds can feel pretty long and I find myself unable to sit through 4 seconds on some posts.

KF: Can you talk a bit about your choices in material? Why the use of pool noodles in this project?

AS: I wanted to make wall art that has the potential to remove sound from a room. I thought of constructing sound proofing panels using custom printed fabric, but I was having a hard time coming up with imagery that I would want to print. An artwork by Cory Arcangel made me think about pool noodles. *Clarity* (2015), is a red pool noodle wearing headphones listening to *Spectrum ft. Matthew Koma* by Zedd. I just thought it was hilarious, so pool noodles were on my mind.

I imagined that chopped up pool noodles would look like sound diffusion panels. It also helps that they are open celled foam. For the glue, I use As Seen on TV’s Flex Glue to bond the pool noodle chunks to foam puzzle mats. Flex Glue is advertised as being able to repair a boat that has been cut in half. This is silly and ridiculous to me, but also this means that the glue is waterproof. The noodles are glued on puzzle mats used for kids rooms. They were a solution of how to make this work modular. The puzzle pieces allow for the panels to be arranged in many ways, like Legos or building blocks in Minecraft.

KF: How long does it usually take to make a pool noodle panel? How did you end up figuring out the design for them?

AS: After a few days of cutting down pool noodles, each panel takes about 5-10 minutes to make. Sometimes they can be made pretty quickly, but the pattern and the conversation that is going on during the making of the art kind of slows that down, which is welcomed in this process.

For the pattern I just pick 5 random colors. They are arranged in a row. The next row mimics the row above it, but the pattern starts from the third color. So,

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. then,
3. 4. 5. 1. 2. then,
5. 1. 2. 3. 4.
2. 3. 4. 5. 1.
4. 5. 1. 2. 3.

I thought of trying to make pixel art with them, but a 5 x 5 grid doesn’t allow for much, so I stuck with the sequence that I created. When I was making these with friends, I gave them the option to do what they wanted, but everyone chose to adopt the pattern I set.

KF: This project was meant to focus on spending more time making art in the presence of friends, something that seems especially important now with physical distancing being implemented. How are you implementing this idea of art and friendship now, with restricted access to a physical community?

AS: I stopped making for a while. I definitely felt stumped. I hadn't touched this project for 3 weeks until today. I made one panel today while on FaceTime.

Mostly I've returned to making music, and working on a video game, which is about solitude, that I started last year. I'm also making these drawings where I draw until I drain pens of their ink entirely. I have been reaching out to old friends, using discord and zoom, and going to online chat rooms and meeting people in Minecraft and Second Life. I think I will have to settle on making art in digital settings, via Twitch or Instagram, but it does not feel like the same project to me...

KF: As an artist who works with digital media, and with the current state of quarantine making art only accessible through the digital, do you think this will end up affecting how people view your practice, and digital media art overall?

AS: I think people will see its potential a little more. But I also worry about saturation. I encounter most of the art I see through Instagram, but every 5th post is an ad and sometimes I see content that I don't want to be seeing. I find myself searching for independent artist made websites and communities so that I can see more art without the interruptions of cat videos and memes, but I don't think there is really a point in trying to fight that. I kind of enjoy the chaos of an unfiltered online feed.

I constructed a white cube Art gallery in Minecraft last year and kind of abandoned it because I felt like the interest was lacking and that I'd never get anyone else on board to curate shows, but yesterday, I saw the band American Football headline a huge music festival in Minecraft. It was epic and I'm using this term in a non-facetious way. The line was long, the servers kept crashing, the chat was constantly spammed with cheering. Merch was available, I met celebrities.

I've also wanted to post music performances on Twitch, and abandoned that endeavor, but now, every creative that I now is now streaming, so I feel pretty equipped to do this in an effective and interesting way that is genuine to my practice.

All of this seems a little more viable right now.

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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.

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