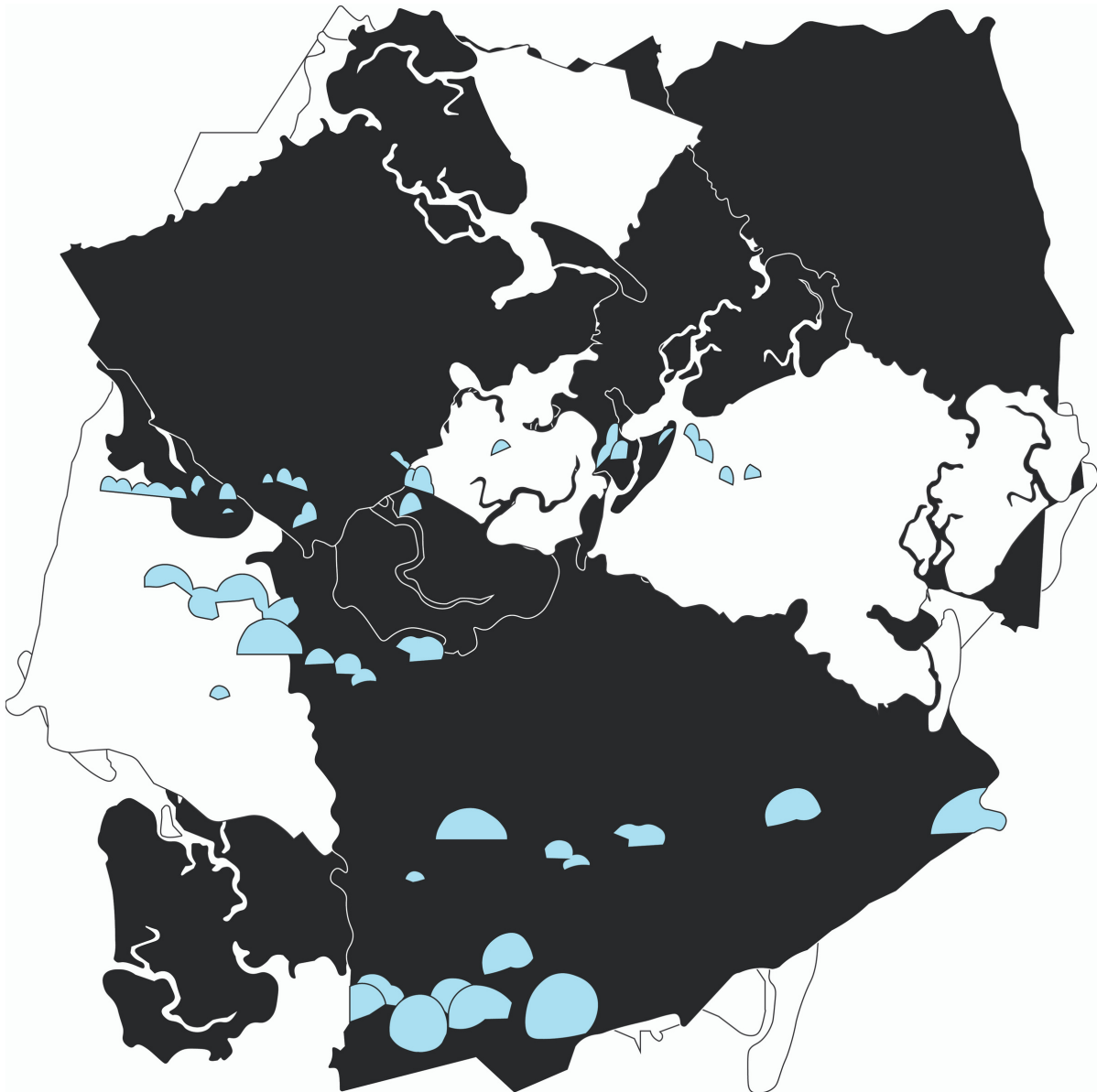


SABRINA PASTARD

2021 ART & ART HISTORY
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 5 - 21 2021

2021 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

DEPS is pleased to present the *2021 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition*. This exhibition showcases a body of work from each artist formed and refined during their time in the MFA program, and features a range of media from painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and beyond. Taking place at Glass Curtain Gallery during Columbia's Manifest festival, this edition of the DEPS Artist Profile series is a way to connect audiences with the artists of the exhibition and give you an in-depth look into the processes and ideas that have informed this body of work.

Jack Bradley

Josué Esaú

Chelsea Noelle Fetherlin

Jake Himovitz

Ava Makenali

Sabrina Pastard

SHAPE OF BLUE AND WRAITH

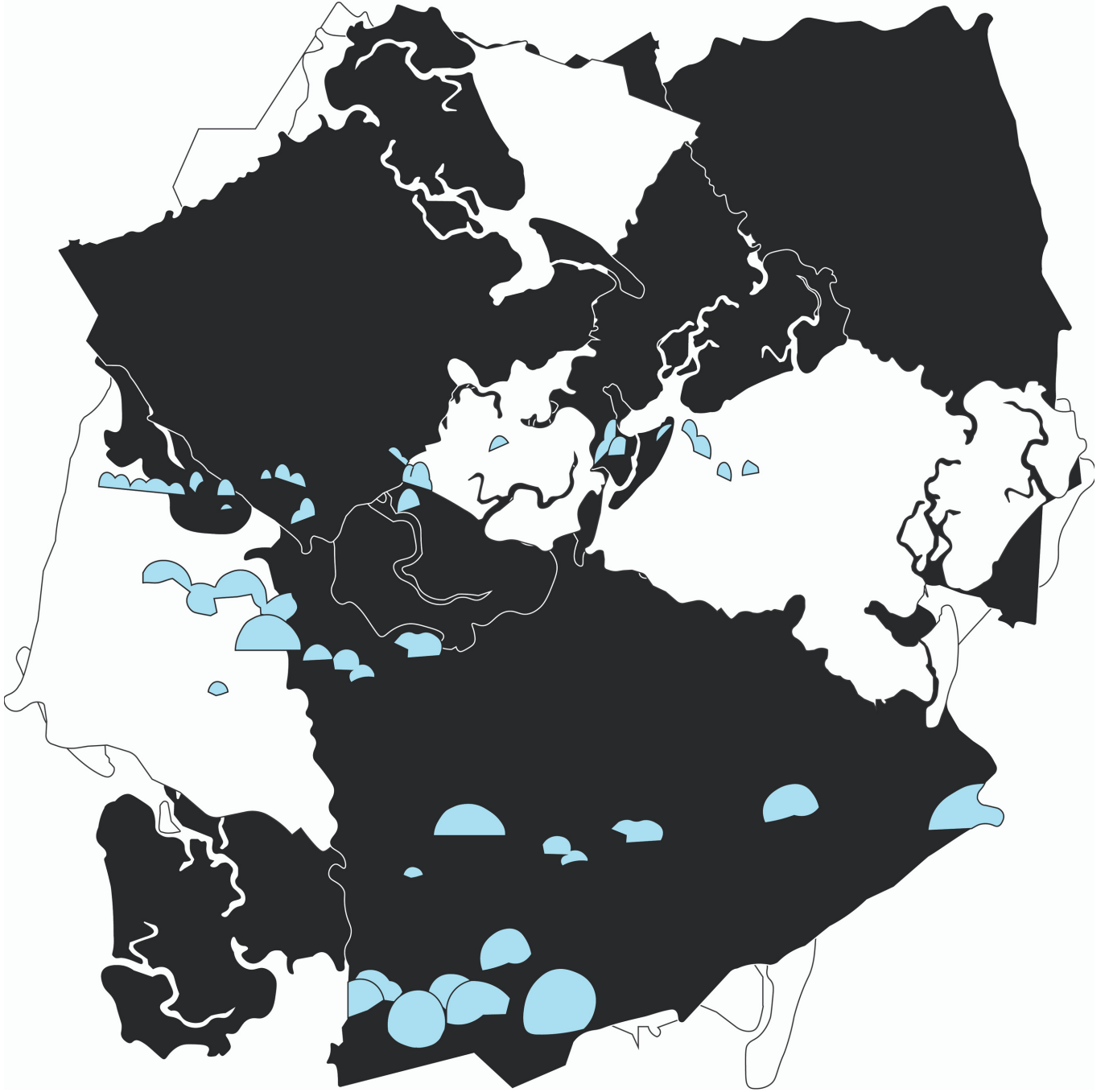
Whiteness is not something that wishes to be seen, recognized, or held accountable outside of its expression of power. Its power moves in spaces assuming itself to be the foundation of the space itself no matter the violence of its reality. We see that during protests, when cops move in greater numbers against those who call for accountability of unarmed killings as opposed to the response to the insurrectionists of January 6th. Whiteness needs to know itself in both the mundane and the systemic ways -to wrestle with the death and damage it has done.

--Sabrina Pastard

Sabrina Pastard's thesis focuses on whiteness from her immediate experience of it in *A Shape of Blue*, and from the knowledge that she is not the one who wants or needs to truly wrestle with it in *Wraith*. *Wraith* takes a moment to reify the thing that is whiteness in sculptural form, in the mundane space of white people's homes. Utilizing the symbolism of the picket fence and the hangman's knot, Pastard works to create a way to visualize the act of wrestling with whiteness. *A Shape of Blue* consists of digital illustrations focused on the examination and watching of whiteness moving through space. The blue shapes are abstracted riot helmets worn by Chicago Police that are suspended in motion among a ground of black and white. These two works are in conversation and what the viewer takes away from that conversation is dependent on the listening they do.

Sabrina Pastard is a visual artist who work with the poetics of the meta of the everyday. Through a variety of mediums, including sculpture, print, and photography, she creates works that pose questions to the status of our assumed lives and societal taboos, often balancing her visuals on the borderline of familiar and unreadable, safety and crisis. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, she currently resides in Chicago and is finishing her MFA at Columbia College Chicago.

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



Shape of Blue: Glynn County, 2020
Digital illustration



Shape of Blue (detail), 2020
Mylar, clear acrylic, vinyl



Wraith (installed), 2020
Fence picket and knotted rope

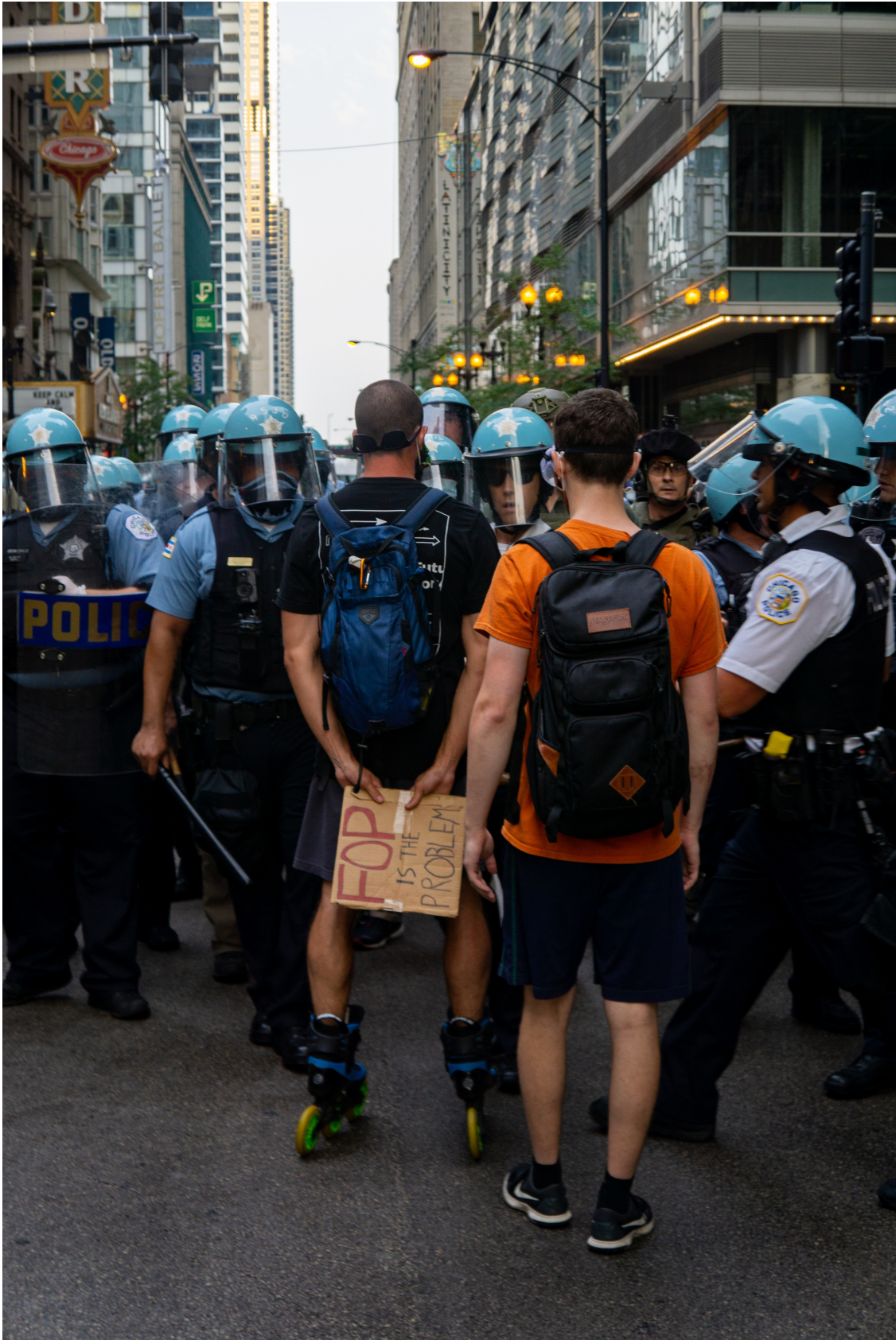


Photo Example, 2020
Digital photograph



A Shape of Blue (process collage), 2020
Construction paper

INTERVIEW WITH SABRINA PASTARD

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

Kaylee Fowler: You stated in your thesis that a fascination with philosophy and love of poetry influenced a lot of your thinking; what are some philosophy or poetry subjects that you are consuming at this point in time that are influencing your work?

Sabrina Pastard: I've been rereading books for the most part lately; *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, *The Book of Tao*, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* by Wassily Kandinsky. I mostly read them to help me get into the mindset of thinking about what's beyond, what's the meta level of thinking that may help me to understand what I'm trying to make. I think that as I've gotten older, I still enjoy dense philosophy, but my definition of philosophy has expanded beyond its common definition. I would love to tell you what that definition is but it is still escaping me.

Rather than written poetry, lately music has had the biggest influence on my making. Over the summer I started a ritual of sorts where I would sit out on my stoop observing the neighborhood, drink some matcha tea from my favorite cup, and listen to one album all the way through. My rule is that I can't use my phone during this time so I'm often just watching and scanning my surroundings, but sometimes I'll read. I started with listening to a different album each for the first few days; *Damn* by Kendrick Lamar, *What's Going On* by Marvin Gaye, channel Orange by Frank Ocean. Then I listened to the album *'Nuff Said* by Nina Simone. I found that no matter how many times I listen to the album I want to listen to it again and I think it's an apt album for the work that I'm making. The album has many of her protest songs from the 60s and was recorded 3 days after the death of Martin Luther King. Much of the time I find myself listening very intently to the lyrics and letting them just fill my mind; many of the

things that she sings about in those songs are all too relevant to our contemporary time. So now it's the stoop, my neighborhood, my cup, my tea, Nina, and me. Often, I do this before I get down to really making or writing for these projects so I can only expect that it seeps into the work that I'm doing, but I don't know if I'll be able to directly point it out. It's a bit of poetry and a bit of philosophy at the same time.

KF: Your sculpture for Wraith is currently installed in a home, with documentation of this sculpture being the only part of it installed in the gallery. How do you anticipate the movement of this piece through different spaces in the future? Will it stay in one house or circulate from place to place as the meaning may change over time?

SP: This image of the sculpture is placed in the entryway of one of the participants and is one of a few places that they have decided to place the sculptures in their home. Before sending the sculpture we had a discussion on where in the house they wanted the sculpture and the question came up about if they could put in multiple places in the house, while I originally wasn't thinking of that I realized that it was important to give that freedom to the participants. This work is something I want them to live with and the notion of someone picking up whiteness and putting it on the dining room table struck a chord for me. Our interactions with art are different inside and outside our homes. The same can be said about the art being in the different rooms within a house. When I consider how these will move from place to place, I imagine that they will someday physically show up in a gallery space, but for now they'll continue to be placed in homes and private spaces with their documentation being the object that is shown. The degree of separations between the real sculptures and the gallery is

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

important right now. The sculptures are questions and conversations that are being had in private spaces. Often the gallery environment isn't the space where these conversations are happening. People come and go some more than others, but no one really lives with or in a gallery. If there is an exhibition about racialized topics and subjects, we are seeing the representations or results of the conversations that the creators are having or works that the creators hope will spark conversation among viewers. Even then, when the viewer interacts with that work the conversation and real wrestling with the subject matter still doesn't happen in the gallery, it happens in the home. The question has been posed and considered. I want these sculptures to be more active than that.

KF: In some of your *A Shape of Blue* works you superimpose the blue shapes that represent police helmets over shapes representing county lines; are these compositions based out any relationship or statistic between those counties and police, or are these compositions created based out of their visual aspects?

SP: These works are being made more in line with my visual intuition at the forefront and being supported by historical and symbolic elements. This is opposed to the sculptures, which are created/supported primarily by the historical and symbolic relevance of the materials. In my process of making, especially with abstract work, the arranging of things becomes a method of investigating my own understanding of the concept along with personal reflection. I start to realize what history is internalized in myself and how my hands are partaking or recreating it.

I always start by placing the white pieces first and then the black ones, as I layer the black and white shapes over each other. I am determining "oh this piece needs to be this size and go here" or "I don't like this the shape this is making." These are

aesthetic choices- it's what looks right or balanced by my eye.

As I add more black pieces I start to cover some of the white pieces up completely and then I have to move it because it is no longer visually present. It feels like a chase, and it's in this rearranging that I start to really ask the deeper questions. When I realized I always place the white shapes first I started to think about white flight and gentrification and how our spaces are built. Where we live. How we are connected to distant communities and how can the community around us seem distant. I don't know why I decided to always start each one with the white shapes, that too is a question that I am asking myself about how I create. In the process of making *Wraith* I had a similar question pertaining to why the pickets had had to be white. Why is white, or whiteness, where things often/are "supposed" to begin in art? in material? I'm still in the process of finishing all the compositions and honestly some of these questions have only just come up. They are important questions because they make me stop and think and ask me do I want this part of history to be a part of my practice, a part of my intuition?

KF: If a viewer comes across some of your work without any knowledge of its background or the symbolism you use, how do you think they might see a piece differently? Do you think it would differ depending on the viewer?

SP: I wouldn't be surprised if it is simply dismissed by some. I know that I have gone to museums and galleries and seen sculptures constructed in simple forms that probably had heavy symbolisms connected to them that are interesting, but I've still just walked just by. These sculptures I think have recognizable symbolism, such as the hangman's knot that can be identified by most people from westernized countries. The knot was used before and after slavery, so while someone from France maybe able to understand the broader context of

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

hangings connected to the sculptures, they will lose some of the conceptual and emotional weight that an American viewer, especially a Black American viewer, who knows the history of slavery may experience. Somethings will catch and some won't- I think that's the beauty of human perception.

The compositions on the other hand are not as readable on an initial first look. If you're from Chicago you may recognize the color of blue in relation to the shapes much easier than someone from New York or Canada. If you are keen on topography or maps you may recognize the black and white shapes as counties or geographical spaces. But the focus for me is about creating a visual that has the viewer questioning the depth of space between the shapes, where might next blue helmet might come out from. If they are going or coming? Some people many find certain ones more compelling than others but, in the end, the work will only speak to those who care to listen. These are abstract pieces first and foremost and not everyone responds to abstraction the same.

KF: How do you feel after completing a piece? Does seeing a piece in the stage of completion feel different or separate from the feelings during the process of making?

SP: I know that I've completed a piece when I feel confronted by it. The things we look at look at us too. When I feel that I've met the gaze of something that I'm working on, that's when I know that I am working in the right direction. Which is a strange way to put it but it is what I believe. After that initial look of recognition- of confrontation, it's suddenly asking a question of me, it's suddenly making me. While I may be the one who makes the work, art has its own agenda and usually it's one that I did not plan for. Sometimes this means the form changes sometimes the conceptualization around it changes but eventually the work will always become its own maker. If I'm not discovering something in my own work in relation to how the materials interact or about how I make things then I'm probably not making art.

KF: What is something you are looking forward to, for this year or for your work or just personally?

SP: For my work I'm looking forward to going a little slower in my making. Sadly grad school isn't really a place where you can just sit with the work for 4-6 months. The sitting with, for me, is an important part of the process and I'm excited to be able to sit with work more often. I make intermittently and a lot of the times the work that I do is based on ideas I had a year or more prior to the actual making of it. Personally, I'm still figuring out what forward is.

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 Assistant Kaylee Fowler. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at colum.edu

MFA Thesis Exhibition

May 5 – 21, 2021

Glass Curtain Gallery–Columbia College Chicago

1104 S Wabash Ave, 1st Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Capacity of gallery is 10 visitors, and masks are required.

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