



You Should Have Seen It:

A four-part zine about lost or destroyed artwork





volume one:
it was their fault

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my fault, their fault, meant to be, never was

It's a peculiar experience to have something that took weeks, months, or years to create, get lost or destroyed. It almost feels like a bad joke for a work to break or be destroyed in a short moment of uncertainty, misunderstanding, or carelessness.

Whether the destruction is at the creator's hands, or the hands of another, this can evoke an intense feeling of loss for the artist. Or even spark feelings similar to grief that the creator has to navigate. This sentiment is not just for physical objects, but also pertains to conceptual, experimental and performative works. It's a similar sense of loss in the instances where documentation of a performance is lost or destroyed because no one pressed record, the battery dies, or the sim card becomes full in the middle of a piece. How does the artist grapple with that loss of not being able to share or study the work through documentation?

And beyond works that are lost or destroyed, what about work that's stolen? How is that loss reckoned with? With a piece that is destroyed, there's finality and perhaps an understanding of the cause. But with theft, one's imagination is left to wonder. To wonder and hope that the work lives on somewhere, and not left uncared for, to degrade or deteriorate.

Going through the collection of submissions falling under the title **"my fault, their fault, meant to be, never was"**, I empathize with the artists. Reading through the countless submissions of works getting lost or damaged during travel, or disappearing altogether is bizarre. And having to accept the damage or loss without any explanation is even more peculiar. And even more disheartening, not once did I read that a gallerist, curator, handler, shipping company, etc... offer an apology. And I barely recollect reading financial compensation being offered.

One artist concludes their account about their lost work titled The Reception Desk by stating, "I've never forgotten it and never forgiven them." In holding onto these experiences, I hope they found solace or a cathartic release writing about works that were lost, destroyed or stolen. Even if it was **"my fault, their fault, meant to be, never was,"** I hope the artists were able to say "fuck off" to those responsible, and give a proper goodbye to all the works that were lost, destroyed or stolen.

In 1999 I started going regularly to an old pedestrian rail overpass in Kraków, at the end of Katowicka street. It's long gone now. At the time I used to climb on it, lean against the railing, take out books from my backpack, and draw onto their pages.

These were mostly 18th and 19th century treatises with the occasional novel or dictionary, some bound in calf leather. Robert Wolak, an art collector friend kept bringing me new batches. They had no antiquary value, as they were missing illustrations, ripped out decades ago by some greedy hands to be framed and sold.

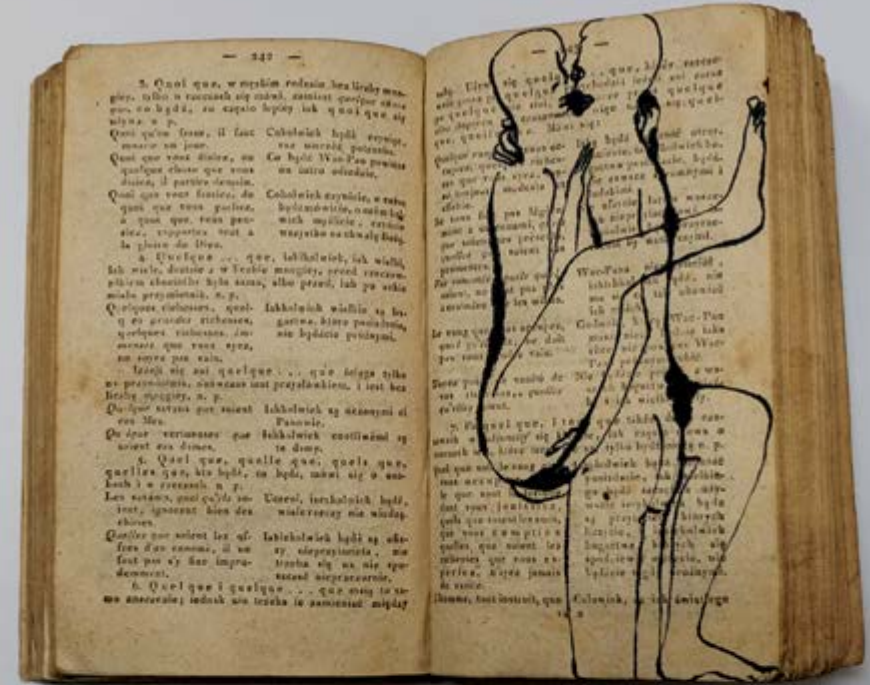
I dipped my brush in black ink and drew erotic scenes, faces, people. The images sometimes used the free space between the lines or the occasional empty page. At times lines meandered to steer clear of the text. More often they would just ignore it and treat it as a background, rendered insignificant by the passage of time. This made me happy: I had rediscovered drawing, eroticism and had a new game to play. The overpass was just far enough from anything to feel like a studio, sheltered from purpose, criticism, and other toxins.

Later, the Romanian branch of the Soros foundation gave me a grant to produce a book. It would be printed by the Romanian publisher Tim Nădășan and feature my text and drawings. I prepared a text inspired by Ad Reinhardt's life chronology but written in my own gibberish mix of several languages. As for the drawings, since at the time I lived in Poland, to have them scanned in Romania I had to send them to Tim's printing press in Cluj. Sending files over the network was unheard of so they had to be scanned on site. Plus, I wanted Tim Nădășan to see them all, even if he was only going to scan five or six, as he was a close friend and mentor to me.

Tim chose five images from the thousand or so, did the design and the printing. One year later a friend of ours took a package containing the books by train back to Poland. He had no idea of their content. Halfway through this long ride, somewhere in Slovakia, he switched train cars but forgot the books on the luggage rack. When he returned to collect it, the package was gone, and the ticket conductor was standing there, grinning: he had gone through the books and was probably amused by the naked bodies drawn on them. But he wouldn't give them back.

When we met at the railway station, my friend asked me what books were in the bag. See, he had lost them, but I should not worry, as he offered to buy all of them back. All I had to do is give him the titles. I was speechless. I had lost hundreds of my images, a couple of irreplaceable years of work. It felt like losing a child. I know drawings. These were my best. It took me ten years to bring myself to draw again.

... and one book that was not lost, drawing: 1999, photo: 2023 by Bogdan Achimescu



Elena Bajo

You Have the Right to Remain Silent

Double Destruction: Elena Bajo "You Have the Right to Remain Silent"

"You Have the Right to Remain Silent" was first exhibited as part of a solo exhibition entitled The Absence of Work at Platform3, in Munich Germany, 2012, curated by Marlene Riegler. The artwork was then supposed to be transported to ArcoMadrid, Spain where it was selected to be exhibited as part of their special Sculpture Presentation. However the budget for ground transportation was inadequate. The *X took it upon themselves, without conferring with me, to cut up the artwork into smaller pieces so it could fit into a smaller van. The sculpture was reconstructed in Madrid by glueing it back together and exhibited. It was here that I first was confronted by the tragedy that had taken place. My heart was broken and I sobbed uncontrollably. After four days of presentation in its scarified form, the artwork was destroyed again and left in a dumpster. Few months later I was invited by an art gallery in Berlin to participate in an exhibition entitled Material Conceptualism. The curator was interested in showing the sculpture, but given the fact that the work was non existent, it was decided to be re-made and exhibited. After the two month's exhibition "You Have the Right to Remain Silent" was completely destroyed and thrown away, again.

For more info:

https://www.academia.edu/7799968/Elena_Bajo_The_Absence_of_Work_

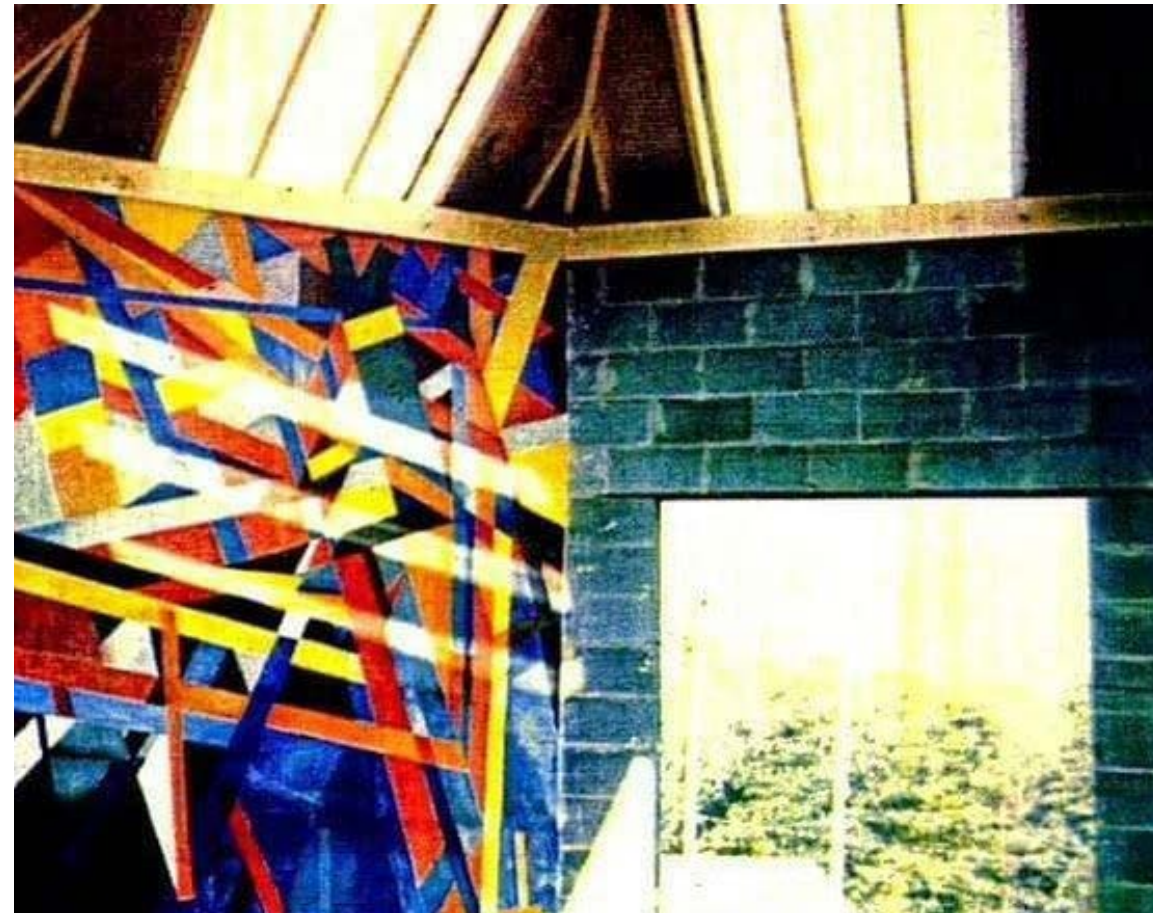
You have the right to Remain Silent, 2012, Acrylic on discarded wood and plastic. 9 feet x10 feet x 7 feet. The Absence of Work Curated by Marlene Riegler, PLATFORM3, Múnich, Germany, 2012. Photo by Ulrich Gebert. Courtesy of PLATFORM3, Múnich.



Michael Brathwaite

fresco

one of the first 2 frescos to be created in the new space



Michele Brody

Arbor Lace

I was invited back in 2003 or 2004 to exhibit as part of a group Environmental show in Prospect Park in and around the Litchfield Villa I believe. All I remember is that there was a wrought iron gate around the building in which I thought my public artwork titled Arbor Lace would be safe over night. I was told there would be a security guard hired to watch over the work, but not until the next night. Due to scheduling, I had to install the copper structure and fabric for the piece the day before. Early the next morning I got a desperate call from the curator telling me that all the copper from my installation had been stolen, even with the gate locked. When I finally got there I saw that all that was left of this artwork was the fabric. Most likely the copper was sold off as scrap. It was a shock to experience this early on in my career. Especially after it had been installed for several months out of doors in Rockland County back in 2002. Later on I had to purchase Art Insurance for a public art project with the MTA, and wished I had it then to help cover the loss of this work. Thankfully I was invited in 2005 to recreate a similar Arbor for an exhibition at the Abington Art Center near Philadelphia. For that show called Passages, I titled the work Arbor Lace II in honor of my first lost Arbor.

ARBOR LACE

April, 2002

Rockland Center for the Arts, West Nyack, NY.

9' x 4.5' x 18'

A covered walkway with double walls of lace sewn with pockets sprouting rye grass seeds. Supported by a copper pipe structure through which water, supplied by a garden hose dripped to nourish the grass while it grew through the lace.



Someone is looking at this book of covers. But I don't know who. It never made it back to me. On the way back from France, in a box filled with art work, someone stole it.

At least, this is the story I have made up about what happened. All I know is that the gallerist who put up a show of my work, mailed the box of art via USPS back to me after the show, and it never arrived.

Ironically, the page of the book I chose to share states: "Do not take". Those are the words that were inscribed on the inside of the book cover that I used as part of this book. I found it, and all the other covers in a dumpster in NYC. It had already been separated from the written words in the book. Just a spine without a body. And in the same way, All I have left of this book is the images I took of it prior to sending it off to France.

Maybe it is the book exacting revenge for having been initially violated by someone, maybe it is simply that the USPS wrecked the box and it got thrown out, or maybe someone opened the box and liked what they found. That is the version I hope is true.



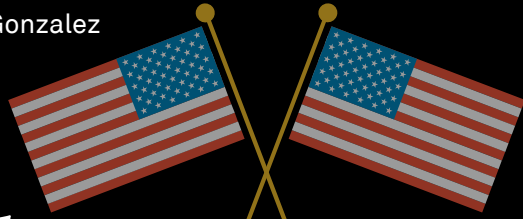
Page from Book of Covers. 1993. The entire book is made of covers nested one into the other and bound at the spine.

In 2015, a curator from a U.S. museum asked me to contribute some works to an exhibition they were curating at a gallery in Berlin. I was told by the gallery that I had to pay to ship my own work to the Berlin, which I grudgingly did. At the end of the exhibition, the gallery suddenly closed down and the gallery director disappeared. None of the artists in the exhibition ever got their work back and the gallery director has not resurfaced. Once a year I try to reach out to the other artists to see if any of them might have some new information, but no one ever does. My paintings are gone.

HELLO ABA 2
oil and alkyd on canvas (2 sections)
52 x 40 inches
2014



Rosalinda Gonzalez



Skowhegan's Got Talent

2009

Pilot Episode

About the viewers and cast

- 95% of the live audience liked the episode
- 97% were surprised by hidden talent
- 22% of the acts were performed by Skowhegan staff
- 89% approved of the hosts cross-dressing during the performance
- 65% were shocked by divas destroying the set in the final talent
- 45% liked the 'nice' judge
- 75% of the judges got drunk off Old Crow
- 79% preferred it to the pop culture version
- 33% of the artists and viewers went on to show at the Whitney
- 45% of the artists and viewers went on to show regularly at art fairs
- 33% found the talent predictable
- 89% of the cast arrived in the back of a red pick up truck
- 91% found the judges and hosts very sexy
- 88% of the viewers and performers where artists

About the episode

Undiscovered talent of all ages -- conceptual artists, emerging divas, painters, musicians, Skowhegan staff and more -- appear before 'local celebrity' judges who decide which contestants have top hidden talent. With the guidance of the show's sexy crossdressing hosts, the audience learns how talented these amazing fine artists are as they strive to make it in the art world. A select few still clips, shown here, were saved before the director's assistant dropped the hard drive.

HOT Judges

Brandon Cox

Theodoros Zafeiropoulos

Niels Vis



Classic Drama



Diane Grams

Shattered Surface after shipping --
Skowhegan fresco of Girl Rolling Backwards
in Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii

“Shattered Surface” of a 28-inch round fresco shipped back home from 2021 Skowhegan Alumni Summer. The scratch coat and arriccio were intact but the intonaco and its painted surface shattered. The image is of “The Girl Rolling Backwards at Pompeii’s Villa of Mysteries.” I made a crate with the help of fresco buddies Mariel and Oscar, but the crate was not handled with care, It was dropped on the corner and banged in the center as evidenced on the exterior. Good news. I purchased insurance and documented the packing and the delivery and was reimbursed the value of the insurance.

Photo of Shattered Surface -- a 28-inch round fresco shipped from 2021 Skowhegan Alumni Summer. The scratch coat and arriccio were intact but the intonaco and painted surface destroyed.



The piece was especially treasured because in my early career, it really bridged the development of abstract concepts from a representational mode. I had given it to my daughter, she loved it. But when she had to move from her New York Apartment to Massachusetts, it was taken then. She cried and cried. Later learned that the moving company she used was not reliable and had incurred many mishaps with others. Either careless or just stolen outright. Often wondered what became of it. At least I have my drawings from a Moving Car which is featured in my website as well as other works from Roads Travelled. www.anguilianiartist.com. Now on Cape Cod, the scene is different..the environs are all about Nature, the printmaking process, drawing and painting.



An oil painting measuring 18"x18". Inspired by the drawings I did from a moving car, I proceeded with the next series which was called "RoadWorks". (paintings and prints that came out of my many travels between Cape Cod And Florida.

This image records one of the many murals I have created over a forty-five year period. The destroyed works number well over three dozen of my nearly 100 completed outdoor and indoor murals.

Each has a story of its own, but this mural was probably the most visible and universally appreciated of my works. There was a protest march in Miami Beach by a large number of community members when it was determined by the owner that he felt a need to remove the mural as he planned to tear down that wing of the building. Prior to the demolition, his daughter held a press conference saying the artist was going to immediately be engaged to create a new work, but once it passed the government review, I received a call saying they would no longer need my services.



"Im-Migrant" was a series of seven sculptural works scheduled for a solo exhibition at the Sangkring Art Space Gallery in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The works were shipped to Indonesia, and I thought all was fine, but when the Gallery didn't receive the pieces I found out that they were being held for particular tariff purposes. Although the works were shipped two weeks prior to the exhibition date, we decided to reschedule the exhibition while we dealt with this situation. It took almost two months of difficult and arduous discussions and negotiations with the customs office, but we finally arrived at a suitable tax payment (extremely expensive). Once the payment was made I was informed that there was now a storage fee for the work, as it had been stored in a facility for almost nearly two months. I was not in a position to pay for the storage fee and the money I received for the exhibition had long been exhausted. Until today I do not know what finally happened with the work; it may have been thrown in the trash, or it may be with someone who decided to take them home, I do hope it is the latter.



It should've been stood up widthwise not lengthwise, but the gallerist had lots of confidence in earthquake putty. I didn't say anything because it was my first real solo show in LA. "Like Lawns" opened December 3rd of 2016. My Latchkey centerpiece didn't make it to the first day. Apparently a lot of Big Trucks drive by the area and it fell off it's pedestal its first night in the space.



Latchkey
2016
Layered acrylic
20 1/4" x 8 3/4" 1"

One morning i looked out the window and discovered the door to my car was open. Shocked, i ran down stairs and looked to see what was the matter. I had had seven bronze swimmers in a box from the foundry, which i was taking to my studio to patina and then make into a mobile. All gone, along with everything else, driving glasses, jacket, bag of dirty laundry etc. I called the police. They came and i filled out forms and finally received some money and had the foundry make the swimmers over again, made the mobile and sent it to the gallery, where it was hung and sold. Meanwhile, who knows what has happened to the original swimmers?



Seven bronze swimmers - Stolen!

Linda Molenaar

Broken tooth wheel

The Meal 1998 is an installation of human-, scheid-, pig, cow- and horse lower-jaw teeth from dentists and slaughterhouses. The artificial gum is from over-dated polyester resin I was able to use at a tooth technical laboratory. The cow wheel broke 2 teeth on it's way back from an exhibition in 2017. The art insurance travel company payed the renovation I had to perform. Luckily the tooth technical laboratory was back then still up and running.



Partners is an oil painting, 6' x 6' on linen, done in my loft on A Street in Boston. It was lost after a move. The painting was special to me, a combination of my experience living in Rome and coming back to the States, heartbroken. Finding images and narratives that were meaningful to me to tell a story of the strength required to create and sustain relationships. Fish out of water.



Maine Central was a site specific sculpture project completed in 1988 in the field of Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine comprised of railroad ties, motor oil, hay, dirt, and measured approximately: 100 yds long x 50 yds wide x 40' high tree line enclosure. Artists Ursula Von Rydingsvarrd Barry Le Va and Guy Goodwin were instrumental in supporting me throughout the struggles and creation of the project. Maine Central was a seminal project in the development of my own way of seeing and unique sculptural language and the whole process enabled me to go to a place that I had previously not gone in my work and life.



Maine Central, 1988, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, railroad ties, motor oil, hay, dirt, approx 100 yds x 50 yds x 40' tree line enclosure

This is a piece I made for the show "Things are not what they seem to appear" in 2018. At the time I was studying the work of Theodor De Bry (1528-1598) and the piece portrayed one landscape etching of his book America. The idea of the piece was to work with copper patinas, I was looking for that special green. I read about patinas and found that the ammonia in piss is ideal, I decided to follow this technique. The works looked perfect for some months until they started to fall apart. I decided to leave them in my studio's patio to see the results.



This original painting along with several others and my entire portfolio of 4 x 5 transparencies including the beautiful leather case was stolen from Interview Magazine in the 1980's. The Art Department at Interview had asked me to drop off a portfolio for review which I did, as requested, with their receptionist. When I went to pick it up no one could not find it. This was upsetting to say the least. I had a receipt but it seemed to have no meaning for them. What I could gather is that after the review of my work someone from the art department carelessly left it out on a random table in the reception area near the elevators and walked away. The receptionist remembered several messengers coming in and picking up other packages, and that's the last she saw of the portfolio. I spent years trying to get Interview to at least reimburse me for the nice leather portfolio never mind the expensive transparencies and artwork to no avail. Even worse was the dismissive and incredibly discourteous way they treated me and the loss. What was the problem? Just another artist among the many whose portfolios they thumbed and tossed. I've never forgotten it and never forgiven them.



Painted photograph, 11" x 14"

Paul Santoleri

philly on a half tank

This painting on an oil tank was done in 1999, I Always thought it would last until it rusted away but with the changing climate, world and understanding of renewable energies, the oil tank from 1905 was torched and recycled with all the other tanks at the now defunct refinery and tank farm in Philadelphia, i hope it will one day be replaced by a solar farm.



photograph copyright Lu Szumskyj

In 2005, I created a public artwork project entitled "We'll Manage" for The City of Tempe's Public Art Project "Artist Adorned Transit Shelters". The project consisted of six Plexiglas panels decorated with images of the physical and cultural aspects of the city. Meant to evoke stained glass windows, the images were created using small pieces of cut colored Vinyl. While the project was intended to be on display for eight months, after the first week, someone stole one of the central panels and the entire project was de-installed a few days later.



"We'll Manage", 2005, Claudia Sbrissa, "Artist Adorned Transit Shelters", Public Art Project, City of Tempe, Tempe, AZ

In the summer of 1968 I painted a fresco in the fresco barn with Mike Henderson. It was a summer and an era of political violence -- RFK was assassinated in June, Martin Luther King in April, the Vietnam war was raging. Our teachers told Mike and me, a Black artist and a young woman artist, there was no way we could complete the fresco in a day. We did. But political art had little relevance at Skowhegan (although Ben Shahn was there that summer) and received scant attention. A few years later, the fresco barn bunt down. The fresco was neither noted, mourned or missed. Mike went on to a distinguished career as a professor at UC Davis and as an artist, political activist, and musician in San Francisco. He is currently having a retrospective at the UC Davis Museum of Art. I went on to co-found SPARC (the Social and Public Art Resource Center) in LA with Judy Baca, become an activist as a Guerrilla Girl, and create a series of Tomboy paintings shown at the Leslie Lohman Museum of Art. This was our first piece of political art. The content of the mural is remarkably prescient. This is the only image I have of the mural.



Summer 1968 Skowhegan Fresco, 6' x 15'
Christina Schlesinger and Mike Henderson
Fresco Barn, Skowhegan, Maine

Peter Schnore

Poverty victimized great painting
titled Painting Love

Was awarded The First Benjamin Altman for Landscape, 1990, National Academy of Design. But poverty MADE ME cut it down to fit size requirements in hopes of prize money later. Cut down it is not the same great painting.



From a 30 years old invitation.

This incident was ground zero, I think 1999, when my artists' loft building at 247 Water St in DUMBO when it was SLUMBO was condemned and the entire building of hundreds of artists had 48 hours to relocate!!! Not kidding. Most of us had been there well over 10 years. So, hysterical rush to the freight elevator to scam, and this fabulous painting was lost in the shuffle, likely from a neighbor who felt I stole the elevator from them for a run... just a guess... have not seen it since that day tho...



Elvis Thumb Print, 1984, acrylic, wood chips, fishtank gravel on patched cotton duck canvas, roughly 32" x 43" x 1 1/2"

Holidays was lost in shipping. My gallery said they sent it back to me but I never received it. The question of what happened was never resolved, I let it drop because it is a small painting that had traveled from New York to Boston in a casual exchange, no paperwork. I made the painting at the height of the pandemic, casting a humorous eye on my in-laws lack of holiday cheer in their upscale condo in Seattle. We were missing our annual visit that year. The featured miniature artwork is by Mark Toby and Kenneth Callahan.



This artwork was broken by accident by a former classmate during an end-of-the-year final crit deinstall. There is no way to avoid accidents from happening. This is why it's crucial always to document a finished artwork. Now, this broken piece of art lives in my storage unit. Maybe one day ill figure out a way to fix it- or not. It's still one of my favorite pieces I've made.



Los Trabajadores, 2018, digital photo print on cinder block, 8 3/4 "x 2 1/4 "x 7 1/2 "



One day a police officer came into the garden and hand cuffed me and took me to one of the three blue squad cars at the end of the alley. After the other officers gathered to talk, the squad car drove away.

I asked the officer where we were going, he said "to the hospital". I asked him "what will happen to me" he replied, "the staff will find a room for you."

At the hospital I was met with a red chair with straps and wheels.

I was taken to holding room #3. The walls were padded and a blue mattress on the floor had a yellow stain from being bleached many times. A camera monitored my behavior and a nurse took my blood and asked a lot of questions.

John Viles
Skowhegan Maine Scholarship

1979

In the middle of the night, placed back in the chair, I was sent upstairs to 6 West for mentally ill patients. The room was in a hallway that was designated for risky and involuntary residents. Every 15 minutes an orderly would check the room.

I sat on the window ledge after covering the white noise with my blanket. The staff were in a Plexiglas box except for the nurses and daily counselors.

The psychiatrist visited three times a week as we lined up to meet with him.

I was immediately diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Between the years 2016-2019 I was unable to return to the studio and lost 3 years of art-making.

Manageable Mania

Someone thought my work was garbage and threw it in the trash.



In 2020, my painting, *Us Despite Them*, was included as part of my department's faculty exhibition at the art college where I teach. While the show was up, Covid swept the country. We all went on lockdown, the exhibition ended early, and no one could pick up work. The gallery staff wrapped and stored our art, with paintings leaning against each other in the racks. My painting surfaces are quite delicate and unfortunately, the wrapping stuck to the paint. When the wrapping was removed, the paint came off too. I have since repainted the destroyed areas, but the painting is not the same.







volume two:
it was my fault

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My Biggest Enemy Is Me, Pop a 911 (ooh)¹ — My Fault

I opened up Instagram. Britney Spears was dancing with knives so authorities performed a wellness check. Spears assured the public these were prop knives and “No one needs to worry or call the police.”² At a rave in San Francisco the video of Spears dancing with knives plays to a remix of Hit Me Baby One More Time montaged with the text “Sharp Objects”. Though some have interpreted this song as sadomasochistic, Swedish writers Max Martin and Rami Yacoub had simply mistranslated hit as slang for call (Oops!). As the lyrics continue, the singer pleads in all of her pop glory “give me a sign”³. Spears’ prior conservatorship and history of mental health struggles are well documented. It is easy to go down a research spiral on reddit, wasting weeks when you have an incoming essay to write (My Fault). If we agree upon dancing as a form of art, and Spears’ video dancing with knives as artistic expression, then should she be blamed for posting this video (is it her fault) or should the overly concerned public be blamed (is it their fault)? In suicide prevention as well as some harm reduction practices, one detail that has garnered much debate is conducting active intervention with assistance from police. Though this is protocol, relationship to police is relative from one individual to the next dependent on race, class, and geographic location. It can also send a mixed message that in seeking help, the result is a form of involuntary arrest. Authorities were sent to Spears, but were told everything was fine, and left.

While self-policing refers to community, company, or small group policing without use of outside authorities, the term is often misconstrued to refer to the policing of oneself in the form of internal monologuing—setting rules, regulations, and self-discipline to encourage better behavior. People with an active internal monologue are likely to view others as having this same internal chatter, when in reality there is a spectrum—some individuals have very little internal monologue while 30-50% have an active internal monologue.⁴ I hypothesize (without any substantial evidence) that individuals who blame themselves for things, whether just or not, have at least some internal monologue. There is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Just as blaming oneself can be an effective tool for a change in behavior as well as critical self-reflection, it also can be one’s downfall in excess—leading to feelings of uselessness, lack of hope, or defeat. As a default mechanism I am far more likely to blame myself—perhaps the same could be said of the artists included in this section My Fault, as in most cases blame can be shifted to outside sources, even if it was one’s own fault.

¹ Lady Gaga. 911. Interscope, 2020.

² Spears, Britney (2023, September 29). “I know I spooked everyone with the last post, but these are fake knives that my team rented from Hand Prop shop in LA. These are not real knives. No one needs to worry or call the police. I’m trying to imitate one of my favorite performers Shakira ... a performance I was inspired by !!! Cheers to us bad girls who aren’t afraid to push boundaries and take risks 🐼🐼🐼!”

³ Spears, Britney. ... Baby One More Time. Jive, 1999.

⁴ Killian, Kyle D. “How Inner Monologues Work, and Who Has Them.” Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, 25 Apr. 2023, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intersections/202304/inner-monologues-what-are-they-and-whos-having-them#:~:text=Key%20points,in%20information%20and%20memory%20processing.

The Works—Through the Lens of Brightsiding

My Fault, But It’s Called Process —

The kiln shattered Lauren Cohen’s ceramic, yet do we blame the kiln or the artist? Regardless, Cohen glazed it anyway. It still became art.

Improper Storage —

Mice ate Heather Cox’s frosting covered wheelchair, but if the mice had no access, this would be a far less interesting story. Mary-Louise Geering’s beeswax bra melted due to lack of AC, but now we have the work cast in bronze. Perhaps that first iteration was meant to be ephemeral anyway. Lily Prince’s painting was moldy, but Lily used this as an impetus to remake the work.

Artists Don’t Follow Rules, Right? —

Robert Franca made a work with a tire rim that assisted his entry into an advanced painting class. Robert was instructed via signage to clean out work, but didn’t follow the rules. However, the work had already served its true purpose.

Ooops, I Did It Again —

Sarah Hotchkiss left painted wood components for a sculpture in a box of diapers on a car. (Who hasn’t done that before with coffee at a gas station?) The person who found the diaper box might have needed something bizarre to occur to break the monotony of their day. Valentina Jager lost her laptop and had no backup—but maybe we are too concerned with preservation. Prerna’s clay went plop—there is not enough slapstick in the overly serious field of art.

Purposefully At Fault —

An anonymous submitter collaged the hand drawn piano harp schematics into a work—but who were using those schematics anyway?

Does It Bring Me Joy? Yes! Do I Have Space? No! —

Bettina Sellmann made life sized children (artists are apt to compare their artwork to children). These took three months to complete, or a third of a pregnancy. But to declutter, baby’s gotta go into the dumpster. Rosa Valado made a work that was just too large and took up too much room in the studio, but now Rosa has more room to make (plus had the sense to take a great picture of the work before its end!)

"Graffiti", a sculptural installation, being exhibited here at Sideshow Gallery (Williamsburg, Brooklyn) in 2003 as part of a two person exhibition with Jonas Mekas (film stills on the wall). My piece takes inspiration from all the graffiti surrounding my studio building at that time, and creates a three dimensional form -in two parts- that occupies the interior of the gallery. Lightweight steel structure, pressured into the ground made it possible to scroll through the space in the spirit of writing. The transparency of the aluminum fabric created the illusion of projection and movement with Mekas' film stills. I think we were all very pleased with this work and after the show I tried to save it in my studio but it occupied so much space (12' h x 20' w) that I had to cut it up and discard it. I did save the footprint so it could be recreate it - but never be exactly the same - the engineering had to be designed on the spot and there are no blueprints for that.



Graffiti; 12' x 6' x 20'; 2003; steel and aluminum fabric; Sideshow Gallery, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

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Bettina Sellmann

Sleep Swim

Thrown into the dumpster with two more meticulously sewn figures about 15 years ago.

They were life size (children). Each took me at least three months to complete.

Must have misunderstood the "clear your clutter" thing. Regretted it soon after and never got over it.



Bettina Sellmann, "Sleep Swim", 2 figures: styrofoam, foam, fabric, life size (of ca. 4 year old children), 1999

In 1993 I painted a self-portrait as the Queen of Diamonds and did an accompanying painting, making it a diptych, of myself also as the Jack of Hearts. I never painted anything like this before or since so it was a one-off rather than part of a series like how I usually work.

In moving from Jersey City, NJ to New York City and then to the Hudson Valley over two decades, the painting was forgotten about. I discovered it a bunch of years later in a group of paintings that had mold on the back of the canvases. Humidity in the Hudson Valley is an issue and I hadn't been careful when storing some paintings from the 1990's in an uninhabited cottage.

I faced the choice of costly mold remediation, D.I.Y. mold cleanup or just dumping the work. I tried wiping off the mold but it was pretty deep into the weave of the canvases and in the wood stretchers so I photographed the works and then tossed them. Some in this group were from my first painting class at RISD, some were from a series of small, square, abstract paintings I did to practice layering and glazing--learning to manipulate acrylics after giving up oils. It was painful to toss these paintings, hard to let go.



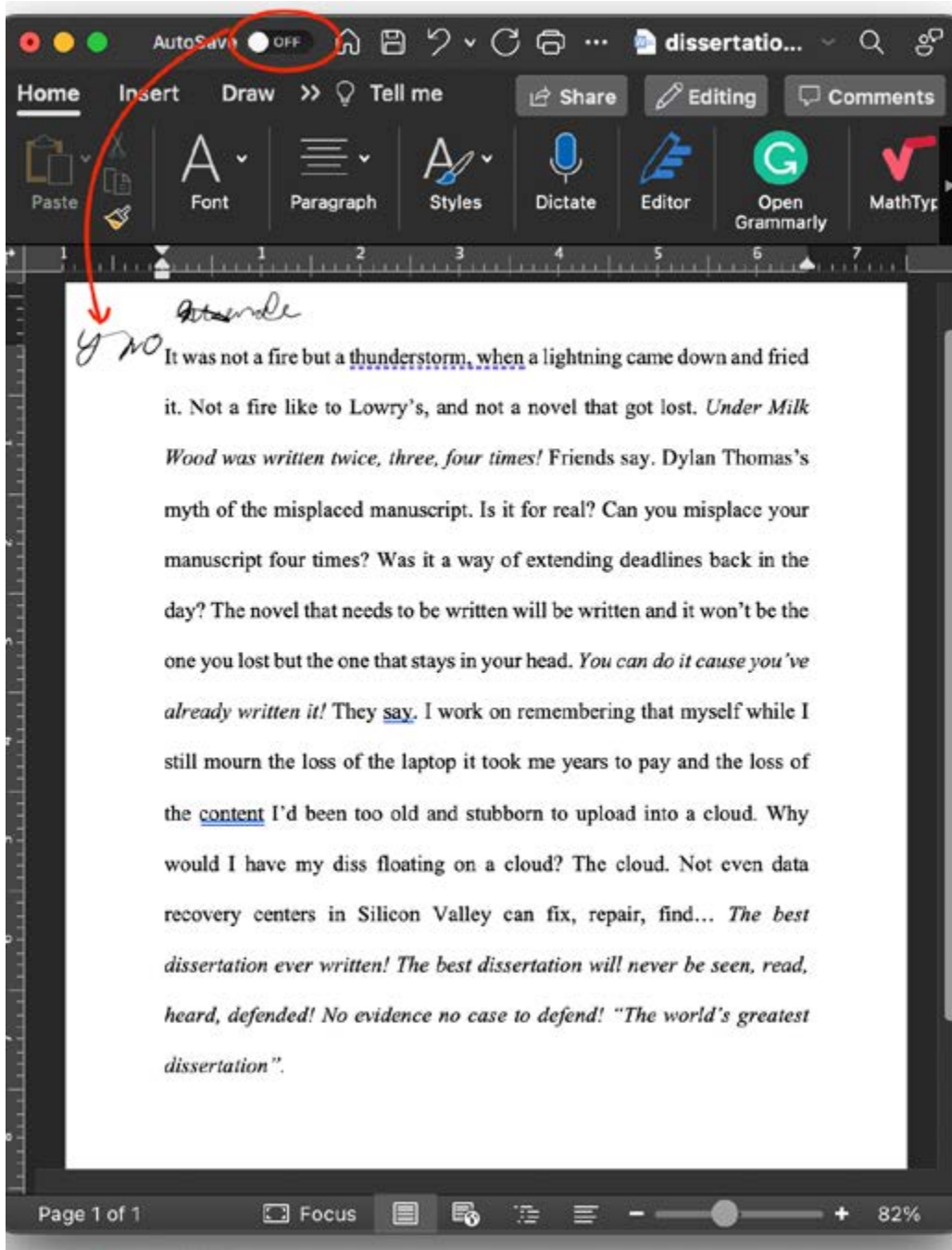
Prerna

Plop



Valentina Jager

the fifth greatest



Anonymous

Piano Oh No



In early 2014, I packed a pickup truck with all the sculptures I was bringing to a three-person show across town. Things were rattling, so I pulled over at a gas station to make everything more secure. In the process, I must have put the box of painstakingly painted, double-sided wooden pieces that were meant to hang from the show's largest sculpture on top of a neighboring car. Crucial detail: they were in a repurposed diaper box. I drove back, frantic, less than an hour later, but they were never seen again. I feel bad for whoever thought they had scored a free box of diapers and got some useless art instead.



'Drying Rack,' 2014; Acrylic and acryla gouache on wood and lauan, brass-plated chains and S-hooks, dimensions lost to time.

Mary Louise Geering

Royal Jelly

I made this sculpture in 1993 – one year after Skowhegan. I was very fortunate to have it be included in a group show in Boston and even have the show reviewed favorably in the Boston Globe. Unfortunately, I did not pick it up soon enough after the exhibition and it was left in a box in the gallery storage space with no AC. It melted and became stuck together and was completely irreparable. Luckily, I still have the pattern pieces and can reconstruct it. I'd like to have it cast in bronze next time! The following is the text accompanying the work, (done on a typewriter, no less.)

Royal Jelly, 1993

My mother's bra reconstructed by bees. These bees have been very busy trying to show you how it is. The body is removed leaving the bra-skin. Royal jelly is what bees feed to developing queens. Enter with light through my nipples. The light drips from my nipples. The wax becomes flesh - a second skin below the surface. Make an offering. Light the milk. Remember to breathe. We wear the same size.

Mary Louise Geering



ROYAL JELLY, beeswax, 9.5" x 11.5" x 11", 1993.

Heather Cox

Wheelchair and Frosting

Eaten by mice.



Wheelchair and Frosting, 1995, 30" x 28" x 36"

Lauren Cohen

Snake plant leaf. It broke in the kiln
but I glazed it anyway.

Snake Plant Leaf.





volume three:
it wasn't meant to be

Essay by Abbey Williams ^{A '04}	2
Megan Walch ^{A '96}	4
James Southard ^{A '12}	6
Rebecca Shippee ^{A '18}	8
Finn Schult ^{A '17}	10
Christopher Saucedo ^{A '88}	12
Vabianna Santos ^{A '13}	14
Ken Rush ^{A '68}	16
Lorna Ritz ^{A '67}	18
Marilyn Propp ^{A '69}	20
Josué Morales Urbina ^{A '07}	22
Lorena Mal ^{A '16}	24
Elanit Kayne Linder ^{A '06}	26
Mindi Katzman ^{A '84}	28
Jane Hammond ^{F '92, '05}	30
Sam Finkelstein ^{A '22}	32
Peter Dudek ^{A '78}	34
Eugenie Diserio ^{A '75}	36
Ivonne Dippmann ^{A '11}	38
Bill Cravis ^{A '04}	40
Bill Cravis ^{A '04}	42
Danilo Correale ^{A '13}	44
Carlos Casuso ^{A '22}	46
Katherine Bradford ^{A '09}	48
Doug Bosch ^{A '91}	50
Teresa Booth Brown ^{A '88}	52
Timothy Bellavia ^{A '97}	54
Colleen Asper ^{A '06}	56

The screen is framed within the flush surface of a pedestal, the video is framed by a soft black edge and then framed again by the book and framed again by the artist's hands. A black rectangle gives way to the suds of a car wash. What is contained? Nature books laid flat and shot from above act as landscapes in relief that can be felt, a finger traces the edge of a cliff in a desert or appears to etch the crevasses in the snow on a mountain. Seeing is believing. The hands are the figure to the ground, performing as in playing each page like an instrument. The hands are actors, performing an improvisational dance guided by the image and keeping time with ambient music of the room. Brown noise is punctuated by the fading drums at the end of a song.

"Body the body, the body, the body
The body, the body, the body, the head
I'm part of the body, I'm part of the problem
I'm a part of my body."

Doom-scrolling, web pages pile up searching for news about a mother orca grieving the loss of her newborn calf. New search, new window, new tab, new me, new day, not. From a distance rows of windows in an apartment building, in one window someone's playing with a baby, it's oddly silent, as if in a cave, room tone. The spray of fins splashing in the crashing waves is rendered digital noise by a magnifying glass cursor, zooming in, zooming out, zooming in and out. New search, flipping through book pages, what's she looking for? Frantically until it's as if the pages turn to tar, sticking together, redacting themselves, slowing her down. Feelings are not facts. "Sometimes you gotta close a door to open a window."

The hand imitates the campy glamoring of Dracula, performing horror. The performance of horror. Great horror performances, Shelley Duval, Mia Farrow, Linda Blair, mother and child. "You and me together now."

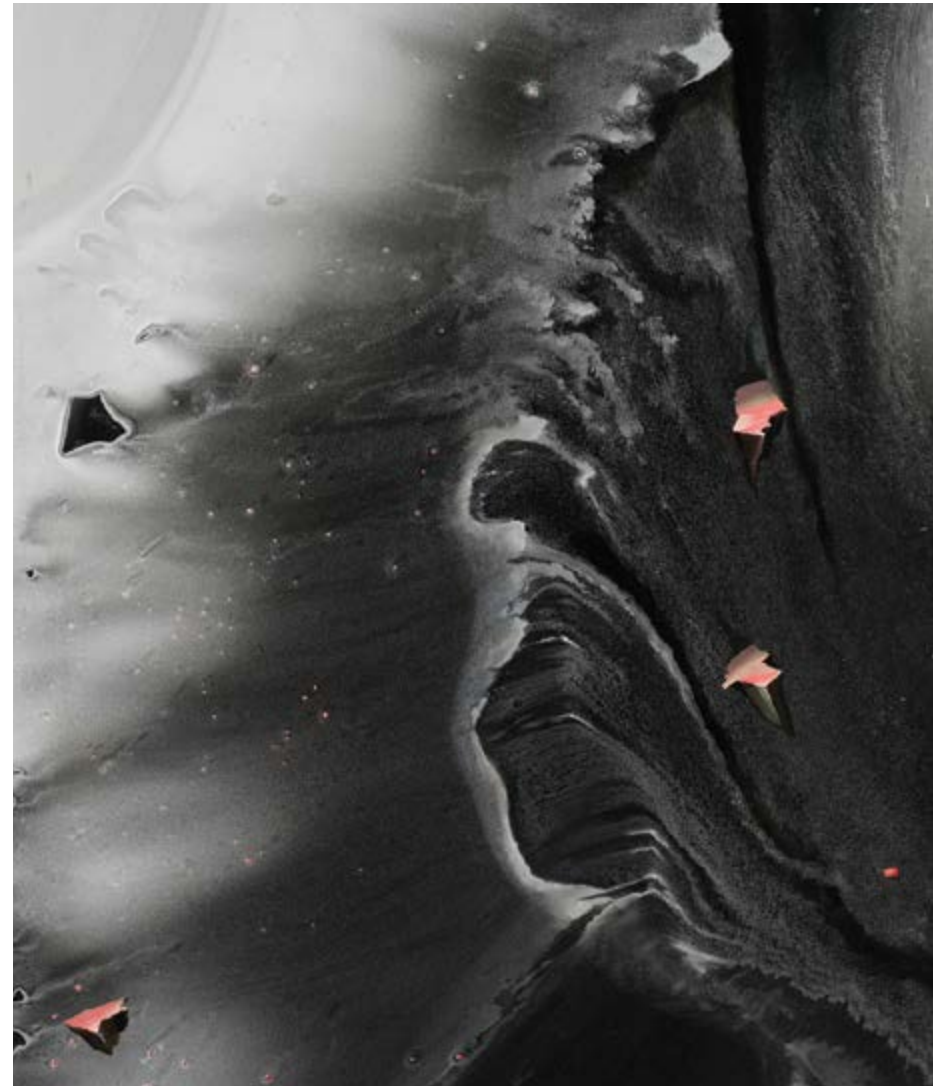
A gorilla admires a human baby behind its glass enclosure.
A parrot keeps a pacing vigil by its dying owner.
Orcas are attacking ships.
Save our souls.



On May 10th 2018 an extreme weather event occurred in southern Tasmania; record rain and flash floods inundated Hobart. Cars floated through the streets and a wall of water and mud swept through the facility where five years of my artwork was stored. The paintings were the product of a studio lead PhD whose subject was pictorial turbulence as a model for our times. The images were apocalyptic, eschatological and tempestuous.

Now they were coated in greasy clay, feces, and mud, which solidified further over twelve months in the limbo of an insurance assessment.

Lashings of soap, a high-pressure hose, two bottles of Windex and 16 months later, a selection of these 'Storm Works' were salvaged and transformed - re-spawned from the muck of the broken river banks and playfully reincarnated in a metamorphosis of misfortune.



salvaged section of painting Black Swan, 2018
oil and enamel on composite panel
30 x 27 inches

Glitch noun

Synonyms of *glitch* >

- 1 a : a usually minor malfunction
a glitch in a spacecraft's fuel cell
also : BUG entry 1 sense 2
- b : a minor problem that causes a temporary setback : SNAG
- 2 : a false or spurious electronic signal
glitchy 'gli-chē adjective

Webster's Dictionary



LH And so, did you get it right in the City?

Eybers Yes. I bought it, there was a Franklin Clark Company. I can remember the name, and he had his garage and display room, sales room, on Fourth, Fifth and Jennings Streets. The building is now the Modern Machine, but that was quite a modern building at that time. That was built in 1924, because I worked on it in 1924, and then I bought a car from them in 1925. (Interruption in tape)

I think it was sometime in the 1920s, late 1920s, I think, or it might have been the early 1930s, Eppley he owned the Martin Hotel, hired Grant Wood. You've heard of Grant Wood from Cedar Rapids, the artist. Hired Grant Wood to paint the ballroom in the Martin Hotel. And we, they hired us to first canvas it, you know, and prepare it and paint, put the underground on it all over. We got the color from Wood, and then when he came down here, he wanted somebody to help him, and I was the youngest, so I got the chance to help him. And you know we had it all painted in a background color, and then he made a glaze. You know what a glaze is - a transparent color, and, oh, kind of a light buff color, and all I had to do was smear it in, just smear this glaze on, not too much, and he painted that whole room. It was like a big corn field, all the way around, just a corn...without putting on a brush full of paint. He used his thumb with a rag most of the time and a dry brush, and you know, he would just give a few swipes on this glaze that I had coated in, and then there was a rabbit sitting there, or he give a few streaks up and down, and take a dry brush, and he had a cornstalk. He was fantastic, really. I think that, in all the years that I've been painting, I think that was the most interesting experience that I had as a painter. And at that time He wasn't as famous as he later became. But he was a fantastic painter really.

EYBERS Glazing is old, it's not something new, but I think it was new to him for that type of work. Glazing is a transparent paint and we had put on a coat of paint underneath it. What he put on was transparent. So, if he just wanted to make it darker, so he'd give it a couple more coats. He seemed to enjoy that, but something new for him, I guess, in that kind of work. But, glazing, even in trade school, we were glazing, so it wasn't something new.

SS What did he use in the process?

EYBERS Well, you mean material? He made his own and I never did know exactly. I was hoping that I could mix him some of that paint, but I didn't.

SS Okay, and how did he apply it?

EYBERS With a paint brush.

SS Perhaps even just wiping away with a rag?

EYBERS No, he applied the glaze with brushes and then used rags. I remember the first time I saw him actually doing something on the wall, he had a rag around his thumb and with a few swipes and there he had a rabbit sitting there. In fact, when I told my father how he did that with just a few swipes with his thumb and he had a rabbit, why he said, "You're going to be sick tomorrow. I want to see how he does that."

JFFS/NATION 8-23-14 The Daily Nonpareil

ART DONATION - Phyllis Rodenburg, left, has donated a second segment of Grant Wood's mural taken from the Corn Room at the Chieftain Hotel in Council Bluffs when the hotel was converted to an apartment facility in 1970. The segment, which measures 10 inches by 41 inches, will be displayed in the Pottawattamie County Courthouse lobby with other mural segments that have been donated to the Bluffs Arts Council. Accepting the gift on behalf of the Bluffs Arts Council were Executive Director Laurel Book and Dick Miller. Rodenburg and her husband, the late Lyle Rodenburg, purchased the segments in 1967 when they were sold after being given to the Bluffs Arts Council by members of the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County.

Is it an Easter bunny? *April 27th 2011* *NO!*

While the definitive answer accompanied him to the grave in 1942, the legend persists that Iowa painter Grant Wood liked to include a well-hidden rabbit in some of his paintings.

Dick Miller, the Bluffs Arts Council member who's been working to collect and preserve the Corn Room, noted that Wood painted in a Chieftain Hotel meeting and dining room in the 1930s, was recently showing segments of the mural that are now on display in the Pottawattamie County Courthouse lobby to a group of Lewis Central Middle-grade students in Karen Huber's art class.

Two of the students, Zach Brown and Zach Ellis, pointed out what they thought was a rabbit near the edge of one of the segments.

Did they really see an eye and an ear in the segment? They think so.

We'll print and distribute over 117,000 copies of your ad every week!

You were like
"BRING HALLOWEEN IN WITH ME"

So
I'm sitting there
So drunk
giving you a
Jack o'lantern tramp stamp
with a permanent marker
And haunting the fuck out of your sheets
Where we lost your phone
a week & a half later

&
You ask me what my ~spirit animal~ is
&
I tell you that's a stupid fucking question
I ask you what keeps you up at night
(admittedly worse question)

So we decide we're both panthers
&
Now we are
at least to each other

&
I know the way you can't fall asleep at night
Without something on the tv
or my phone screen
Jennifer's Body was *always* a great movie
Everyone was just too boring to get it
Except for us I think

Please don't go through my porn hub history when I fall asleep
It's not that bad
I'd just rather
do it together

I got that tattoo machine
Like you asked me to

&
I hope you still think about that jack o'lantern
That's probably (hopefully?) covered up by now



Christopher Saucedo

Flood Eroded Plaster Hand of Child

Disaster may arrive without warning but sometimes you see it coming; it doesn't really matter much because eventually all floodwaters return to the sea and if you're reading this you've survived.

When those waves hit, you've got to roll with them. If you can, pivot to minimize the impact and actively look and listen for ways to escape the imposition. To minimize delay, quickly reassess priorities and take action. Don't wait for the perfect moment to restart: that never happens.

All that actually matters is escaping the interruption the storm precipitated, that disheartening delay in getting back to where you once were, when you knew that the next step in solving your aesthetic equation was at hand. It's a race to get back to that confident place, which of course can never really be found. Maybe you weren't as close to an answer as you choose to remember and since so many of the variables are new there is so much to reconsider.

Over the years, I've had my share of uninvited hurricanes rage through my studio; one way or another we all have.

Flood salvaged plaster cast, after Hurricane Katrina Levee Failure in New Orleans, 2005

photo credit: the artist



The same week I destroyed this painting, I reclaimed this story.

Other than sharing a week, they have nothing to do with each other.

PISS STORY WITH STARS
(1999, 2016, 2017, 2021)

The story I wanted to write was about the time I pissed myself in the drugstore next to the Wet 'N Wild nail polish display after some hyper-sensory panic that turned the fluorescent lights a searing white and kept me from finding the back of the store, lost in the brightly-colored onslaught of loud packaging and multiples. Couldn't put the words to it in a way that would dissolve the shame. My mom was there though she didn't see what happened. I was 16 or maybe a bit younger.

The story I wanted to write was how the moment got healed. First, I tried to make a fiction where the girl pisses herself outside a gas station at night in that isolated arena of light in the black, laughing with friends. This way the event revises into rebellion. Self-determination. But I lost the details and I lost the sense of a young and sensitive body crackling with input. The swinging gate of trauma slamming down on more furtive and burgeoning sensation: could be this was a day when my brain was first rewiring into the "bad neighborhood." A habituated map of abuse, the over-coding of youth with collapse.

I remember the image in a film where the woman is raped in the early spring and left as stark white flesh cooling among the freshly growing thicket at the edge of the woods. That paradox. I was not raped- but it enters my dreams sometimes. The empathic similarity is that child abuse takes things away from you before you even know you have them. Extinguishes a self not yet known.

So I wrote:

A teenage girl shaking and pissing herself, angry under white gas station lights, the salt water cooling the flesh. Repeatedly, she imagined her own death and the soft forever her skin would take on and then raccoons coming through to scavenge and scratch it open. So as you're washing her hair she comes up again, rebuilding her body from light, a pale grey sky towering over you. Most of the stars reside in her hair. And since stars are dead light, the soft appeal of her voice is a tone that matches a steady stream of warm piss down her leg.

But the story I really wanted to write was of the stations of the body guarded by vigilant deities. You can do this in meditation to guard sensory gates in attempt to train yourself to release the body at the time of death. But I wondered also about the infinite adulations this could take on. A blessing in the crook of the arm, a tiny cosmic caress at the back of the knee. A vibrant shin bone, genderless but not pathless- the whole apparatus of celebration rising to articulate the limbs and walk it forward.

I think the best way to heal this young expanse is to return to her a certain purity of self-concept- indelible and non-specific at the core. The *towering pale grey sky* zaps to a clear blue like the changing of the channel. They say you can never walk too far away to realize that the undamaged thing is still sitting right where it began- at the impersonal center of the self. So maybe her torso flashes blue for a moment but it's not death's light.

And if we gather to wash her, to peel off her clothes softly and draw warmth over her body, passing our palms like eyes over the lines of a page- frictionless, and turning past into continuity—we do it because there never was any separation in the first place. The body of a young woman contains the whole stellar-social conjunction, all that we thought to become before the intentional and unintentional fuck-ups, and the visitation of harm.

The story I wanted to write is the moment she is healed by knowing through the hands of others that she never left.



Ken Rush

Lost then found

In 1968, I went rummaging around the barn at Skowhegan. I found a broken window and used it to make a series of sequential landscapes in the panes. Sometime over the next few years, I lost track of the painting. I often wondered what I had done with it. This winter, I received an email from the son of my first wife's brother in law. He stated that his parents had passed away and he had this painting that he knew I had done. He asked me if I wanted it, and it now hangs in our home 50+ years after I had lost track of it!



Skowhegan Window, oil on barn window, 1968

Lorna Ritz

Lew and I have watched and listened to each other's painting/music since 1972, attending each other's exhibitions and concerts over decades. The idea to compose improvisationally from each other's work Lew jumped on board first. Music moves in a linear way and painting, even though takes months to make whole, is seen in one single moment. Lew's music incites visual responses from which I continue to paint. Good thing I have a perfect visual memory!!!!

Lew and Lorna Program Discussion ideas:

Intro—conversation about Lew and Lorna's relationship. How did you meet and how aware have you been of each other's work? I was the first person Lew met in the Main House at MacDowell Colony when he arrived. I had been picked up by Lester, who drove too fast on those back dirt roads, because I had a call in the Main house. When I finished my call, there was Lew with a big smile, so I welcomed him. Right then and there we talked and talked; I lit a fire, thinking my painting was patiently waiting for my return. I do not even know if Lew will remember all this, but Taro does. One night Lew invited me and Taro for a midnight concert. We walked ~@ mile on a snowy path through the woods to Lew's cabin. He was so excited about his new piece that he built a fire in the fireplace larger than the cabin. When he sat at the piano to perform it, the piano keys were too hot for his fingers which jumped off the keys.

Frame—Stravinsky quote: "As for myself, I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves, I have the feeling that everything is permissible to me. If everything is permissible to me, the best and the worst; if nothing offers me any resistance, then any effort is inconceivable, and I cannot use anything as a basis, and consequently every undertaking becomes futile.

Will I then have to lose myself in this abyss of freedom? To what shall I cling in order to escape the dizziness that seizes me before the virtuality of this infinitude? What delivers me from the anguish into which an unrestricted freedom plunges me is the fact that I am always able to turn immediately to the concrete things that are here in question.

My freedom thus consists in my moving about within the narrow frame that I have assigned myself for each one of my undertakings." Does this ring true for each of you? Is the

literal frame of a canvas an important starting place?

Standing in front of a blank canvas, I may as well be in the maze of the Casbah, or lost in the dunes. I begin from nothing, staying flat instead of flying on through. I spend a lot of time just standing there, feeling my body in relationship to the canvas. When my arms reach out to apply paint, they come from my core strength. I have to believe in the reaching for something outside of myself. When I scrape away the oil paint, I reapply it and scrape again, many times over. I search for structure right away, through spatial relationships of color. What is the light from the sky on the mountains today? It changes every day, but solutions lead to more solutions; I can never quite get there, which is why I keep going after them.

Form—how are the works organized? Is the painting specifically representative, was it painted from an actual subject? En plein air? How did the trio take form and how were the elements organized? As close as I get to an actual subject is that I paint the seasons as they occur. The color harmonies reflect . e.g., icy cold, intense heat, as in "August Landscape." All colors are mixed with each other for a specific temperature range of color, except cobalt blue, which is always sky, a breathing open space between all the other colors. The space flattens if the color vibrations are off; they must meet each other democratically. I don't want them to scream at each other or be complacent. I want them to sing, to create movement between them. Sometimes the sky recedes, but at other times that same blue moves forward.

Gesture—musical and visual figures and how they convey gesture

How I place shapes together becomes the structure in the paintings: (where' they exist in space in relationship to each other). The picture plane in the paintings changes constantly through the volume that color creates, (in a constant state of relational movement). What one thinks is coming forward will then shoot back when in relationship to something else coming forward. That is called the plasticity of the movement.

Time—the differences of how a work is taken in—unfolding time as with music, versus the immediacy of a picture—but doesn't looking at a picture give time for pause and investigation, an unfolding as well?

(Depending on Lew and Lorna's thoughts, we might play some of the sections of the piece where material is presented at different tempo markings).

Any visual idea that shows up while I am listening to Lew's piece takes me 2 months to paint. The painting may look as though it happened in one moment, which is what it should do. If you don't feel the emotion and source of life in the painting, look at it longer, and wait. Root your feet in the earth and breathe. Go up close to the painting and then stand back, first to see the application of the paint and then to see how

the painting's unlike parts need each other to exist. Both Lew's pieces and my paintings are complex and take time to hear and to see relationships which stir the heart and soul.

General question—What do you hope the audience receives, perceives, reacts to and experiences?

I hope that once the audience leaves that they still see the painting, hear the music, and want more of both. I hope the audience is curious about what creative process it took to make a work whole.

The Smith College Department of Music presents



A Concert Conversation:
Composer Lew Spratlan & Painter Lorna Ritz
How a painting inspired a chamber work for violin, viola and piano
which will be performed at the event.



Thursday, February 9 - 7 pm
Earle Recital Hall
Free and open to the public. Masks welcome.



For disability access information or requests, call 413-585-2407.
To request a sign language interpreter, call or text 413-585-2071 or email ods@smith.edu at least 10 days before the event.



Marilyn Propp, Wall Mural, Kansas City, Missouri 1976. DETAIL, in process.

I had just moved to Kansas City, and received an invitation to apply for a downtown wall mural, to be installed on the side of the Globe Storage and Warehouse building. I did drawings on site, and submitted a 5' long, to scale, acrylic painting on paper.

I painted an arched figurative form, like a diver moving through the clouds, to direct the viewer's eye up to the beautiful Missouri sky. I added splashing water, the shape of my eraser, and lizard-like shapes moving down diagonally into the center, with outlined cloud-like shapes surrounding it. The colors created the spatial effects. My design was chosen and installed.

Later I learned, to my surprise, that the curving leaping shape is the exact shape of the Missouri River as it winds around Kansas City.

Another surprise: I was photographing the mural during a thunder storm, and a lightning bolt moved across the sky and seemed to touch the mural exactly at the white jagged line on the middle left.

Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, it was one of eight murals chosen throughout the U.S. It was installed on a 55' x 115' wall in downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

The mural lasted until approximately 1990.

Josué Morales Urbina

Bet Lehem

A man dies and leaves a friend with a memory
A mother dies and leaves a child with a memory
Time never dies but leaves excessive memories
And when I die I will leave my love as a memory for you

Josué Morales Urbina
Bet Lehem, 2022
Toasted sliced white bread
Dimensions Variable



Uprising, after Ximeno y Planes (2017-2018) is a large scale fresco painting based on the reconstruction of a mural that was lost in Mexico City after an earthquake in 1845.

In 2017, after 2 years of research to locate the original sketches and materials, I had the opportunity to build a 1:2 scale installation of this painting just beneath the original apse where it used to exist, and with the collaboration of 2 painters, we reproduced the image in the course of 4 months length, the duration of the solo exhibition it was part of, performing it's appearance slowly and opening it's process to the public to witness its recreation and, after completing the image, it's destruction.

The original painting was a work by the Spanish painter and sculptor Ximeno y Planes "Sublevación de los Indios del pueblo del Cardonal" and depicts the rebellion and killing of an indigenous community in Ixmiquilpan on the early years of the conquest, an event justified by the church and further painted on the main dome of Santa Teresa la Antigua Convent, the first women convent after the Spanish colonial invasion, that during the XX century became a state building used for the government's newspaper, then military base and infirmary during the Revolution. Later in the 1970s the building turned into an archaeological site when official excavations started to unearth a main pyramid, Tempo Mayor, buried in what was the pre-hispanic center of Tenochtitlan, now the center of Mexico city's downtown where the site is located. After the archaeological study concluded, the building was abandoned and in the 90s a group of artists rescued the space for it to become the first contemporary and experimental art museum in the city.

On view between 2017 and 2018, the progressive re-appearance of the mural led the work to unfold as a question and as an encounter between the reenactment, the repetition, the soon-to-disappear image, and the public, as a collective exercise of memory, crossing through colonial and political conflicts, but most of all, as a collective experience with the phantasmagoric survivals of the monumental gestures of nature that can shatter all foundations.*

After the completion of the new mural, 4 invited friends and myself performed the destruction of the painting, becoming the earthquake ourselves, but, after more than 3 hours hitting with hammers and filming its disintegration, some sections of the painting resisted. There were parts of the image that wanted to stay. Not a monument or lost in oblivion, I decided to take care of the fragments that remained.

To keep a fragment safe of an image** after its destruction again

Uprising after Ximeno y Planes (fragments) are fragile pieces of plaster and pigments that become dust in the most subtle gesture between fingers, and still, they continue to be part of something bigger (as everything is) that is not disappearing but spreading, extending the image to places.

*3 months before the opening of the show, on the 19th of September 2017, we experienced one of the worst earthquakes in the recorded history of Mexico City.

**image as imagination, as phantom, as potential.



Dear Daughter,

Your laughter amidst the sleep insanity of new parenting means more than a million works of art that I intentionally created. I thought your being would be my creation. I was never a creator only a vessel moved out of the way by your growing body and hunger. Never a creator. With me it was always something from something. A drawing from paper and pencil. A baby from flesh and seed. A story from words ... as I communicate or try to communicate my loss and practice of non-attachment.

I began my practice of healing and non-attachment as a young person. In my childhood home beloved items were crowding my life. So I took out a notebook and wrote them all down. I held their memory and allowed the physicality to go. I did this again in 2002 for a project titled All I Want for Christmas is Nothing. I ended up with nothing ... and then ended up with nothing after Hurricane Katrina. I had physical pain over the loss of documentation of art and the art itself.

Here nothing was lost. Nothing destroyed. No pain. The art itself, yes was destroyed, but the gain from the destruction was enormous. Paper is funny. Ripping paper is hilarious. Your laughter is hilarious, the first word I taught you, thinking it was funnier than funny, breaking it down into syllables and clapping hil-air-eee-us. And you said it. Early. "Hilarious" from the mouth of babes was ... well, hilarious.

So here the destruction, like most, produced something more fantastic and deeper and meaningful. And your dolly can "jump jump jump for you, dance dance dance with you, play play play with you, cause she has an art heart."

<https://vimeo.com/82878473>

Hilariously yours,

Mommy



In 1978 my house burned to the ground. Of the few things not totally incinerated was this ceramic piece. The silver lining and unintended consequence of the fire disaster was the patina the TORSO acquired. "Out of the Ashes..."



Ceramic torso with patina courtesy of a house fire, 9 x 8", 1978

Jane Hammond

Great Chicago Fire

This is one of fourteen large paintings I made for my first show in Chicago. It was 1989. The show was to be at the Zola/Lieberman Gallery in the new River North gallery district. Roberta Lieberman had come to the studio before I had my first NY show at Exit Art and I remember distinctly her saying to me I want to give you a show and this offer is good whether your show at Exit Art goes well or not. My show at Exit Art went very well, but her unconditional offer was still impressive and important to me.

All fourteen paintings were picked up on a Thursday late in the day. I remember thinking it was amusing that the trucker's name was Van. Chicago/New York is a twelve hour drive-- if you never stop. Van arrived sometime on Friday and my paintings were delivered to the gallery Friday late afternoon.

Saturday night I went to a party and there was talk of a big fire in Chicago early that morning. Several galleries had burned to the ground. The mind is a funny thing, it never once occurred to me to explore this. My first instinct was to build a wall, play deaf, deny.

Sunday on CBS News I saw the fire. It was an entire city block. The building that housed the gallery was a Louis Sullivan building so it was a piece of Chicago architectural history. Zolla/Lieberman was not named in the news piece, but somehow when I saw the fire on TV it became real to me and I knew.

Everything was gone and it all happened so fast. I felt numb, hollow, rudderless and vaguely cheated. Eventually I cried, but it took a while because the whole thing was so surreal.

That year turned out to be pivotal for me because I finally got some grants, three in fact in the same year. And, as it turns out, Roberta Lieberman explained to me that the artist is completely paid. So I had a kind of heartbreaking sold out show.

I had been teaching at MICA for ten years, commuting to Baltimore every week and spending several nights there. I loved teaching but I was itching to be in the studio every day and ditch the long commute. In the end the fire was my ticket to total studio life and I never looked back. Luckily.

Untitled (264,142,144,231)
Dimensions 76" x 60"
Oil on Linen
1988



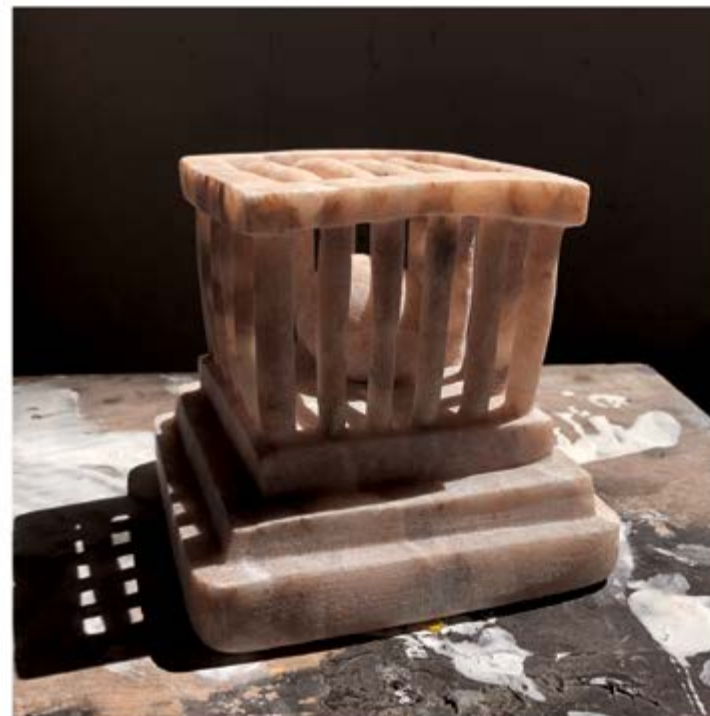
I brought this caged egg to Skowhegan this summer to finish polishing the alabaster. I was thinking about the way we are birthed into this universe & then subjected to live within its container.

Sometime in August I put the work perched up in the eave of an outdoor pavilion and double checked that it was secure with the wiggle-test.

I came by the next morning to find the form shattered -- the bars of the cage in fragments and the egg resting atop the base of the cage.

What jostled the sculpture from its cozy corner is still unknown, but the only possible culprits could be the wind, a squirrel, or a ghost. The pavilion and the structure of the cage both allow for a breeze to pass through with ease, and structure was sturdy enough that it would remain stable even if a squirrel ran across the top bars.

Given the supernatural cast of characters that hang around Skowhegan's campus, I can only assume that a begrudged spirit unhappy with the work or one inspired to free the egg from its stone prison subjected the sculpture to its fate. Or perhaps a feline spirit attempting to animate the object knocked it off the ledge with curious indifference ...



My experience at Skowhegan was key in figuring out how to build Untitled/Arena. I made the model in 1977. I went to Skowhegan in 1978 where I figured out how to make an outdoor sculpture. Untitled/Arena was built in 1979 for an exhibition on Wards Island. Wards Island is in the East River and part of NYC. The Organization of Independent Artists sponsored the show. There were several exhibits like this back then, but this one was perhaps the biggest, it had about 90 artists in it. When I scouted the island for possible locations I saw a Tom Doyle sculpture that was already in place. The wind had blown it over because, though it was quite large and heavy, it had wooden deck-like panels that caught the wind. I made a mental note to make sure what I built could deal with the wind.

I found a spot that had large maple trees arranged in a circle. It looked like those trees had been there for a hundred years and the space it encircled was a perfect fit for my bleacher-like sculpture. I installed my piece and took this photo from a perch up in one of the trees.

The show opened in the summer of '79 and stayed up for two years, which was good because in the second year the show was reviewed and my piece was mentioned. However, I knew the show was ending that year and I dreaded taking the piece down.

Nature took care of that for me.

Hurricane winds blew up the river and toppled over the tree I took the photo from. It crashed down onto my sculpture, totally demolishing it. It was a sight to see.

You should have seen it.



Back in the early '80s in New York City, graffiti was everywhere - on subways, buildings and billboards. It inspired me to make my own series of graffiti art using spray paint and paint markers on colored mylar.

Almost none of these paintings exist today - most were given away.

I was also in the music scene then, with my two bands, Model Citizens and The Dance.

Fast forward to now...the music catalogs of The Dance (LP's Soul Force, In Lust & Do Dada) and Model Citizens (Model Citizens NYC 1978-1979) have been reissued in vinyl, CD and on all streaming platforms by the Modern Harmonic/Sundazed Music label.

Veteran music critic, Roy Trakin, also a friend and fan, was recruited to write the liner notes for The Dance reissues. When we reconnected after 40 years, he told me he still had a painting I gave him and sent this photo of Pluto in Scorpio.

He had recently moved and it was left rolled up in the trunk of his car. While all the folds in the painting are unfortunate, what is fortunate is that Pluto in Scorpio survived in any form!



Spray paint and paint markers on canvas backed mylar.

Pluto in Scorpio, 1982 by Eugenie Diserio

When I was a student at Bezalel in Tel Aviv, I had a very small studio space. A difficult task when you are dealing with large-scale paintings. Therefore, I moved “partially” into an open space next to my studio that was available to all students. Another student who was not in my year had a similar idea and also moved into the same room. He was a very difficult character and basically kicked me out. There was no room for dialogue or discussion because he was crazy! So I got into the first phase of destruction, cutting my large format canvases into 3 cm x 300 cm slices in order to weave them into patterns in my small studio space. I didn’t just slice them. I also folded them into half of the width and sew them together afterwards. I don’t remember how many hundreds of pieces I sewed together, but after that I was an expert at it. They actually turned out to be beautiful objects.

I presented one of them, in a shape of a black bird, as a floor piece in my final exhibition at the end of the year. I prepared the floor precisely and positioned the object in a well-composed arrangement with my other objects. I had no idea what would happen at the opening event! The second phase of destruction began. I was well dressed, ready for easy conversation and pleasure, and ended up shouting at people who didn’t see my artwork lying on the floor. It was not just one person, no, there were too many of them! People just kept walking over it and with each more step life was slowly drained from it. I asked friends for help to stand in front of the work, one in each corner, so people wouldn’t keep walking over it. I was devastated and furious. Funnily enough, I didn’t stay for my final critique, but flew the following day to the US, because I was accepted as a participant in Skowhegan – and being able to enter the US for a residency stay is a story in itself. Since I wasn’t in Tel Aviv to take down my exhibition either, my dear colleagues took care of that and packed everything for me. One can imagine that this beautiful black bird was sent to nirvana after being constantly trampled on during my absence. Now, almost 12 years later, I design carpets and tapestries. I place great emphasis on quality and the feeling you get when you walk on the rugs. This time you are invited to do so and I guarantee that the wool is of high quality and heavenly for your feet.



Untitled (robots). ©2007

Wood-fired porcelain, each approximately 8”H x 6”W x 4”D.

Aside from the lively, if monotonous, ongoing debate over Art vs. Craft that tends to dominate the argument against inclusion of ceramics as a medium to be taken seriously – within the larger canon of a Fine Art tradition that embraces painting, drawing and sculpture – there is a very simple explanation for the relative exclusion of ceramics from contemporary exhibitions. Ceramics are often heavy to ship, or fragile, or both, and the logistics of safely packing and shipping the work (by artists), then receiving and handling the work (by curators and gallerists), is a process fraught with dread and financial liability. Ceramic works, even now, tend to find their audience in exhibitions that consist only of other ceramic works.

So it was that I enthusiastically packed and shipped two ceramic objects for an invitational exhibition in Pittsburgh, PA. This occurred at the end of my first year out of graduate school. I had landed a one-year teaching position in the Ceramics program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The ceramic robots were mementos from that year, intrinsically valuable as they marked my personal and professional progress. They were made of porcelain (I created plaster molds from found plastic toys, then slip-casted the forms). They were wood fired, a lengthy process by which atmospheric wood ash creates glaze effects on unglazed ceramics, together in a kiln full of student work. I hurriedly bundled the pair of robots in whatever scraps of bubble-wrap I had on hand, boxed them, and shipped them off. I was notified/consoled shortly thereafter. Although the box had arrived at its destination on time it contained nothing but small shards of porcelain. Beyond repair. The exhibition’s curator generously offered to pay for them; I humbly declined. Lesson learned? Try video! Or cardboard! Anything, really, other than ceramics!



Untitled WMD ©2004-05. Pulp made from one year of The New York Times, chain link, I-beam clamp and hardware, 114" x 44" x 44"

One of several rituals that occupied me during my time as an MFA candidate in Pittsburgh, PA involved collecting the outdated New York Times daily print editions from the university library. I schlepped the newspapers back to my private studio, where I passed them through a kitchen blender, methodically pureeing them with water, then straining the resulting mush. I formed the newspaper pulp into a small sphere initially, adding more and more until it became a rather hefty orb. Ultimately, I amassed one year's worth of the NYT and called the sculpture *Untitled WMD*. I vaguely recall pushing the object up a grassy hill with the help of three or four good-natured colleagues, rolling it into the freight elevator and installing it precariously from the ceiling joists of the gallery's third floor. Man, you really should have seen it!

I attended a 3-year MFA program over a period that spanned the end of George W. Bush's first term and the beginning of his improbable second term. The U.S. war in Afghanistan was well under way (and would not officially end anytime soon). I was inspired to build *Untitled WMD* by Noam Chomsky's ideas regarding the "propaganda model" of corporate-sponsored news media, in particular the New York Times, "*the place where people will go to find out what happened...*" "*...Therefore it's extremely important if history is going to be shaped in an appropriate way, that certain things appear, certain things not appear, certain questions be asked, other questions be ignored, and that issues be framed in a particular fashion.*" (Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media, ©1992)

The group exhibition concluded, and I removed *Untitled WMD* from the gallery. I returned the 500-pound goliath to my studio (considerably easier going downhill, by the way). As much as I valued the sculpture there was no question of lugging it, after graduation, from one temporary teaching position to the next. My studio happened to exit near a loading dock. At the time, workers were clearing the parking lot adjacent to the loading dock with powerful bulldozers and excavating tools, to make way for a new Computer Science building. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation had donated twenty million dollars toward the project, to be christened the Gates Center (at a cost of about \$100 million, ultimately). Always an opportunist, I shoved my sculpture off the dock and into the disarray of rubble and mud, where it looked to be quite at home. I envision a distant future, after the dust from the imminent climate and/or nuclear apocalypse has settled. I imagine some new life form digging curiously through the ruins left behind by our species and finding – beneath the hi-tech wreckage of the Gates Center – my very low-tech oddity.



Alain Badiou describes events as “rare and unpredictable occurrences that challenge the existing structures of knowledge and power, and create new possibilities for change and transformation”. One may argue that the empirical often predictable and reproducible nature of happenings and performances in art generally place them outside the category of event as described above. Working, in my own way, against this notion, attempting to push the boundaries of the event in art, back in 2013, I began to consider atmospheric events, foam, smoke and wind, as my artistic materials. In August 2013, my first and only attempt at manifesting these considerations and conflicts was activated on a rainy afternoon, in a field on Skowhegan’s upper campus, where a large dense white cloud, ignited by a large quantity of expired fire extinguishers, began to float between the trees and then through the field until it dissipated forever. This event was short lived. I myself had no view of the cloud. There were witnesses. But because the two cameras meant to document the moment both failed to record anything, no documentation of the event exists aside from a few hazy photographs captured with a disposable film camera. The event has never been recreated. All notes and research on the subject were forever lost under the Skowhegan rain.



The only proof that such performance ever happen, outside of few people memories

Carlos Casuso

UPS hates painting

UPS shipping from Skoweghan to Italy damaged my unfinished work in multiple parts but with persistence i was able to restore and finish it.



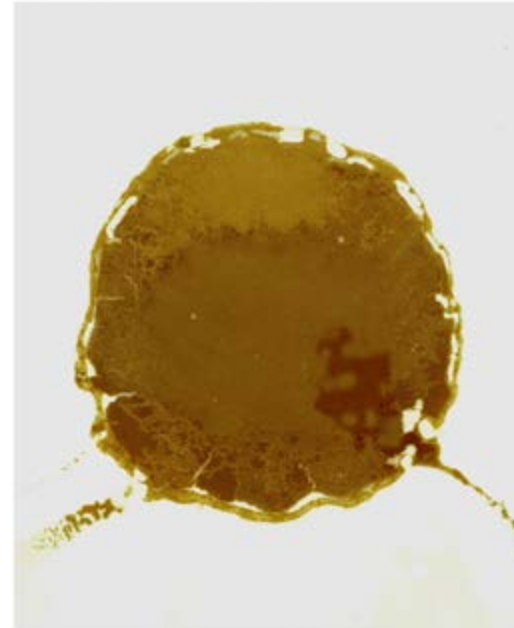
UPS shipping <3

This painting wasn't coming along so well. Impulsively I added a red boot on each head. It me laugh but it was more like an embarrassed laugh. I kept going filling in the two figures with color. When I came across this early image I nearly cried over a lost weirdness never to be retrieved or perhaps duplicated. (But no, this Zine comes to my rescue.)



Acrylic painting 60" x 48" 2019 that I ruined by painting over it.
photo @katherine Bradford

Cross Section, completed in 1998, was essentially a very oversized microscope slide. It measured 24" x 36." The substance sandwiched between the two sheets of glass was a slurry made of pitch pine pollen and linseed oil. This particular work was part of an ever-expanding body of pollen-based artworks made during the years 1996 - 2008. Most of the pollen artworks produced during this time would be exhibited at multiple venues throughout the New England area. *Cross Section*, however, was exhibited only once, at the DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, in 2000. In 2001, during a relocation move from Exeter, NH to Providence, RI, it was dropped by the movers. After my initial shock I became rather fond of the outcome. I grew to think of it as my quirky version of Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)." It hung on a wall in my home for about two years after the accident but eventually the slurry oozed out of the cracked glass and became a mess. Now the artwork resides somewhere deep in the Johnston, RI landfill.



Before

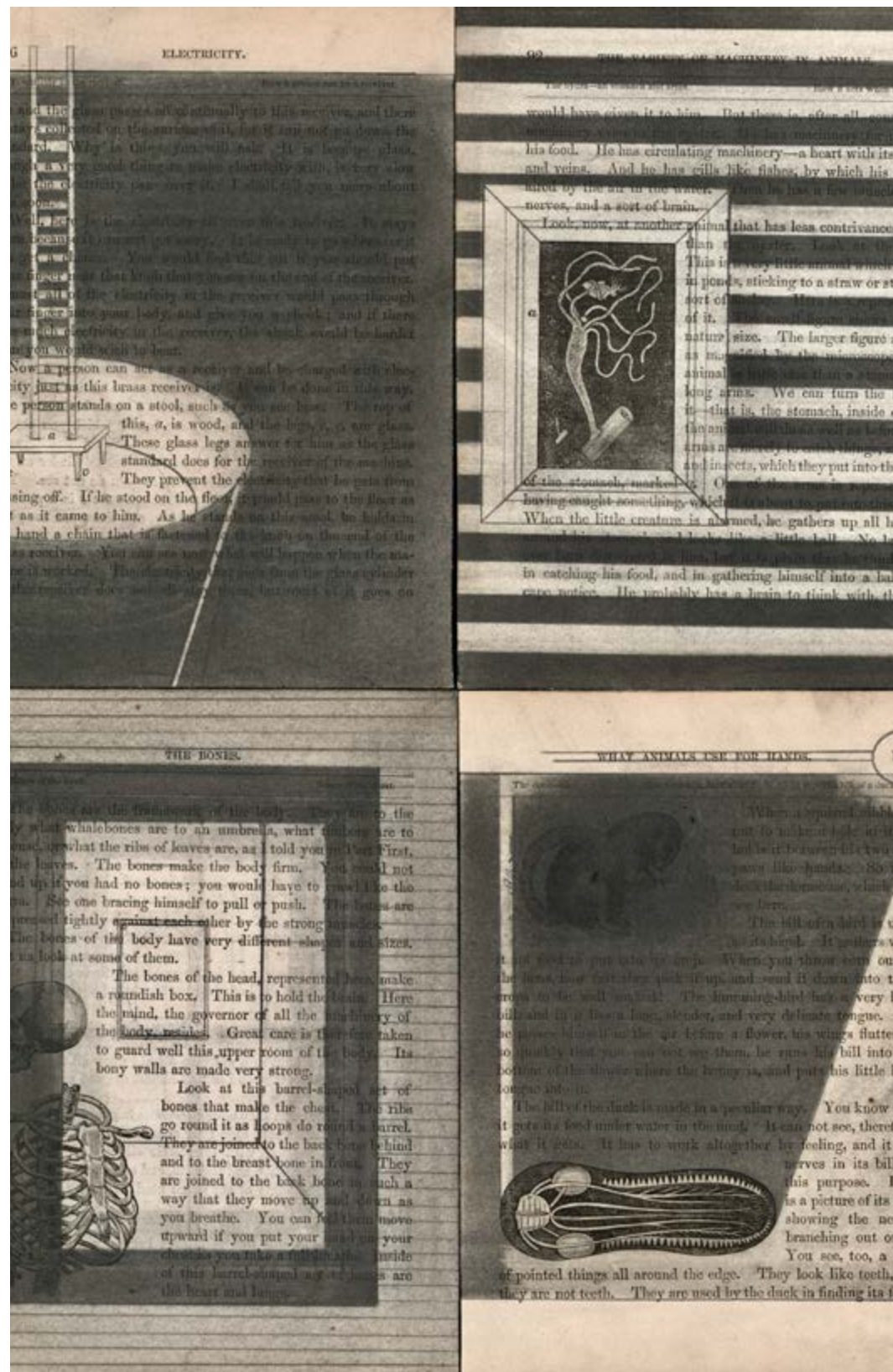


After

In 2014 I was at a residency at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming, and purchased a book at a local antique store, *The Child's Book of Nature, Plants-Animals-Air-Water-Heat*, by W. Hooker M.D. published in 1887. I often collect books when I travel, and the tattered, leather-bound volume then became the foundation for a series of drawings on the brittle yellow pages. While I was working on the book pages, I felt a strong sense of what can only be described as strange.

When I returned home from the residency and was unpacking my new work, I placed what remained of this new to me volume on my bookshelf with other books I use for my collage and drawing work. There on the shelf was an identical volume, inscribed inside with my name and the date and location purchase, Teresa Booth, Bennington, VT, 1981. In 1981 I was 17 years old and a freshman in college. My now 52 year-old self remembered why the book was so familiar. As a young artist I had purchased the book and tried to make artwork out of the pages. I ended up creating a frustrating mess which I lost track and likely threw away years ago.

Teresa Booth Brown, four drawings:
 (left to right and top to bottom)
 Glass Legs, Into the Mouth, The Bones, They are not Teeth, all drawings 2014, graphite
 on book page, 6.5 x 4.75 inches each.

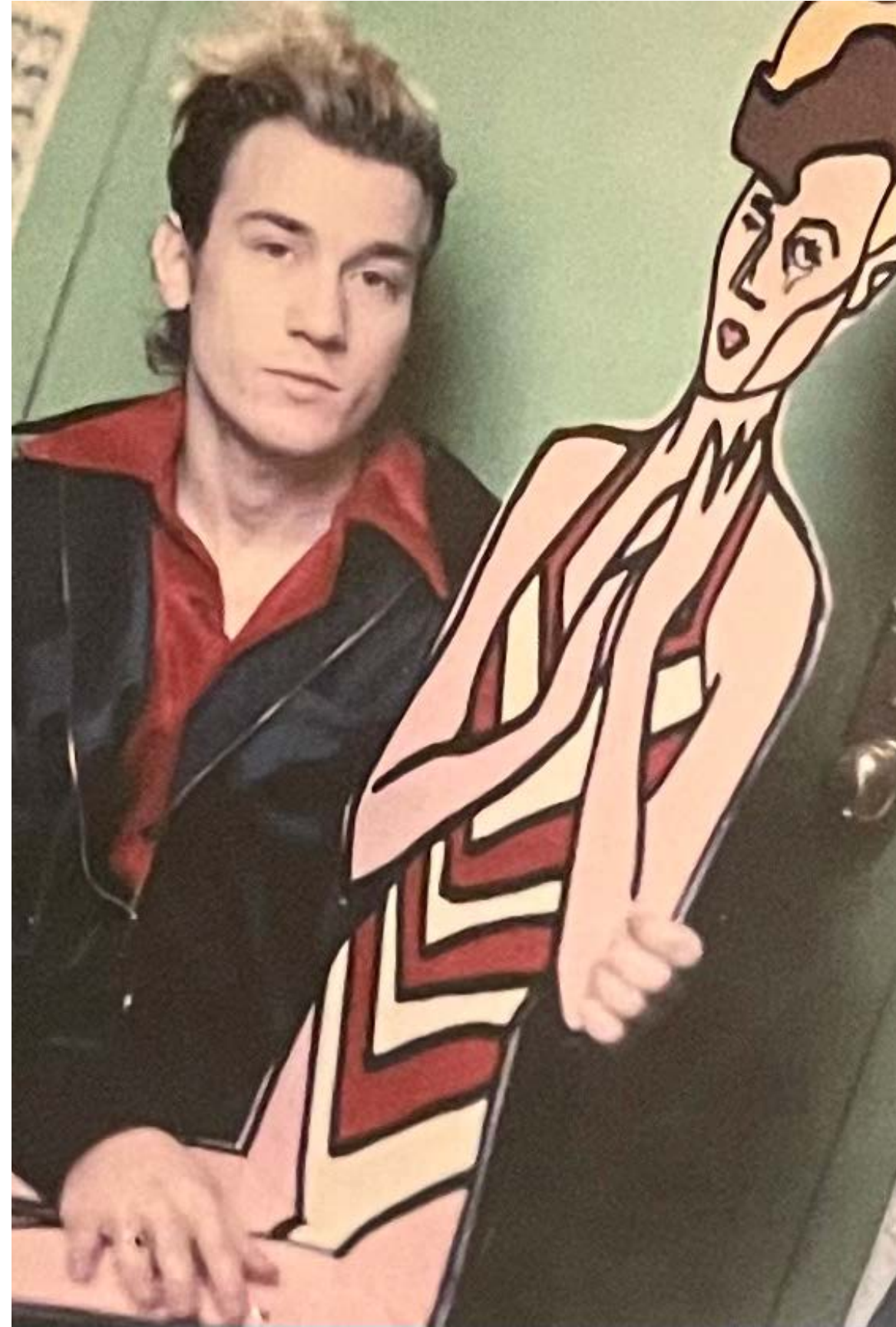


Timothy Bellavia

Runaway Paper Doll Wedding

In 1997, I was afforded the opportunity to exhibit my work in an LGBTQ + show about marriage equity at White Columns in New York City. Soon after, I heard the news that I was accepted to the artist residency in Skowhegan School of Art. I merged my paper doll (pre-bit emoji) avatar into a short film that featured both residents and the Skowhegan class of 1997. After this portrait was taken I tossed my alter ego and much to my surprise the paper doll ended up selling pizza on East 23rd and Lexington Avenue for nearly 5 years.

Timothy with the tossed Timmy Paper Doll



I only ever heard my neighbors in the next building over when I was in the bathroom. More precisely, I only heard one neighbor, but it was clear he was addressing someone. The nature of their exchanges led me to imagine a kitchen or living room on the other side of the wall, a shared space, rather than a mirroring bathroom. The volume of the lone audible neighbor addressing his inaudible interlocutor led me to imagine he was a jerk.

The substance of my neighbors' exchanges has largely been lost to time, but I do recall the man once shouting, "My ears are not too big! They are not, they are not, they are not!"

The painting accompanying this text is of the mirror in my then bathroom. I made it meditating on the mirror as a lost object in self-portraiture—the rectangle that disappears when the painter paints their face. If the rectangle is the ground zero of painting, I wanted to find a rectangle that was empty as a subject and full as an illusion.

This painting was shown in Cochin, India. During the run of the exhibition, I moved. When the gallery returned the work, they did so without confirming my address and the painting shipped to my old apartment. Strangely, it was my neighbor who signed for the package rather than anyone who lived in my former building. I was never able to track him down or find the painting.

During the pandemic, I started making paintings of my ears in part because they were the only orifice unmasked in public space. If painting is a portal, I reached through the mirror, through crumbling brick and mortar, across continents, and through my neighbors very large ear to my own.





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it never was

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Never Was

In Memoriam. An Elegy for Artwork Friends who vanished
In Order of Appearance

I had a friend who was always hungry. She only ate herbs and performed this reggae song:
“Parsley, Basil, and Ginger.
These are herbs,
They are what I eat.”
The song was shared 5 million times last October.
(p.4)

Number One Friend, the oldest, and my grandmother’s favorite, built a cabinet without shelves.
It hung on the wall, and when dates came home, they thought she owned things. If they stayed over, they found out the next morning that she didn’t even have one cup. She loved having loud sex. One of her dates burst into flames, but the cabinet was fine.
After that, she was voted hottest newcomer on Grindr.
(p.6)

That friend’s baby sister completely refused to read unless the letters had devil horns.
(p.8)

Twenty of my friends made halloween costumes of their town. Their neighbors looked forward to them every year. Last Halloween it rained, and all the costumes were ruined. My friends just laughed and said:“It’s just paper, we’ll make new ones!”
(p.10)

One of those friends went home and built rooms from a castle inside his apartment until there wasn’t enough room for him anymore. We went and got him out with tweezers
(p.12)

After that, he only did yoga in the most verdant, fertile woods, until he could hover several inches above the ground. On the night of a big forest fire, a monastery took him, and he is the abbot, and famous to a certain type of California baby boomer.
(p.14)

One of my friends, the one who moved to Germany, painted a self portrait as a UFO onto the Berlin wall. It went analog viral; Berliners named it “UFO Gesicht”. They ended up carrying that section of the wall into the nearby S-Bahn Station, where teens carefully graffiti around my friend’s UFO face.
(p.16)

Many of my friends are exuberantly generous and adaptable. They teach me the art of transformative thought, but only one actually has it down to a scientific theory, which he memorialized, in the manner of early twentieth century quantum physicists, in an equation that is both timelessly elegant and conceptually impenetrable.
(p.18)

I have a friend who is slipping away into a state beyond words. I grieve her disappearance and train myself to perceive her new forms of communicating. Shhhhhhhh. Have to focus. Can’t talk.
(p.20)

One friend made herself giant wooden Greek pillars and put them up in Macri Park in Williamsburg. When she climbed on top of one of them, it toppled over and shattered into venus shaped ceramic shards. My friend was so happy when she saw them.
(p.22)

I had one friend who gave me a notebook that was completely blank except for one map to a rare books library in South Africa and a date when I should meet her there. I lost the notebook and when I found it again, I had missed our date.
(p.24)

Another friend made a drawing that bleeds every year on 9/11, and more and more people come to pray over it and say: “Never Forget.”
(p.26)

I had one friend who gave me so much tea a few months after he arrived here, I felt like I was being watered. All that tea came with so many stories, and that is how I grew into the strong, queer tree I am today.
(p.28)

My friend comes over and lowers my thermostat to teach me sustainability. I hate cold air as much as I hate cold water, but it is the most important lesson a friend ever taught me. I am grateful.
(p.30)

A friend who was an extremely old soul collected mountains.
(p.38)

All of my friends are forever. If you can’t do that, I’ll sand you down to “person I knew once”.
(p.36)

Another friend took some job outside the city and we lost sight of him. Later, we heard he was hired to ride a hurricane.
(p.42)

I refer to Garden Lace as one of the best site-specific installations I ever made that no one saw. It was my first piece produced out of graduate school, and was located way up in the Chicago suburbs. Garden Lace marked the start of many temporary installations that only survived for the time period of the exhibition. Where the power of these works only survive in photographs (slides mainly) or in the memories of those who had the chance to experience them.



GARDEN LACE
 October, 1994
 David Adler Cultural Center, Libertyville, IL
 10' x 16' x 14'

Three walls of windows covered with lace curtains hung from CPVC pipes overlooking an herb garden. 7 curtains sewn together with pockets in which 7 different culinary herbs were planted, and watered by a drip irrigation system. The water dripped down the curtains to rain gutters that recycled the water back to a stainless steel reservoir. Two existing corner cabinets were stuffed with dried culinary herbs. The scent of culinary herbs was prevalent with sound of running water.



Cabinet 1.

Yes, number one, the first, the beginning of them all. There were 58 more over the next 15 years, and that's not counting the built-in cabinets and architectural insertions that came directly out of this first cabinet. It meant a lot to me.

Charles Saatchi's first wife, Doris Lockhart, bought it out of an exhibition of work selected from London MFA programs. It was only my second exhibition in a public gallery. She had it brought to her house, but did not hang it, moving it instead into storage.

Thirteen years later there was a fire in the Momart warehouse in East London. It destroyed over 100 works, including Cabinet 1.



Cabinet 1, 1991.
36 x 84 x 5 inches
wood and paint

Noelle Choy

Where's the work? Not here.

A grad school critique tee that continued to fail after many screens, inks, locations, texts, experienced printmakers, Walmart tees, dollars, days. If your shirt bled, know that it still brings me turmoil. Not pictured: Nostalgia.



Image credit: Jordan Wong

Kerry Downey

paper did and will do what was does

Last month I came to face the truly incomprehensible and ignorant destruction of my work (a total of 20 large works made over the course of roughly five years). Crouched in front of this pile of wreckage, I could feel the boiling of my blood, this heat accumulating in my face and neck. I thought to myself this is a re-enactment but this time it will be different! POW! A flash of light, like a punch in the gut. I'm cracking up. POW! A flashback and forward- past-present-future selves happening at once. The cartoon sound of being smacked, powerful eventness; the tiniest blip, a glitch, my superhero chest tattoo, my trans power, grand opening of a sublime wormhole. Loss and humiliation are entangled in other inevitables - like how I will rework all this material and in so doing, it will rework me. It will do what paper does, make life pliable, necessarily vulnerable, resilient, impressionable. I have to sort through the large-and-in-charge feelings of grief and rage - which are tied up with feelings about my leaving a 10 year long studio community and the ongoing existential and economic work of being an artist. Old and lifelong fears of invisibility and annihilation bubble up and over. Lol, it's just paper! So amazing, so incredibly powerful that it's just paper.



Jonathan Ehrenberg

The Outskirts

For a video inspired by Kafka's novel *The Castle*, I built life-size sets from plaster and cardboard. I was living in a house at the time and turned each room into a scene from the novel, so that I was eating lunch beneath a hillside town or sleeping inside a schoolroom where the character K slept, and clearing my sleeping stuff in the morning to make room for child actors (feeling as invaded as I imagined K did when pupils arrived in the morning). The video took nearly a year to make, so I spent a long time living in these sets. I tried to keep them intact after the shoot, but it was a losing battle: some had to be cut into fragments, others suffered water damage. Large cardboard pieces began to lose their shape over time. Now that they've fallen apart, that whole part of my life feels unreal.



I have made several quilts with this underlying hexagonal geometry. My work is often seasonally inspired. This one, made in summer, was lush with plant-themed batiks, which feel organic because of the flowing dyes used in the process of making them. It had a variety of sizes of stars and radiating configurations, which represented flowers. It had stem-like lines rising asymmetrically through the symmetrical geometry. There were splashes of light, umbels of tiny hexagons, flower colors, sky colors, light colors, petal colors, shaded glade colors. It's so strange to look at the image now, not having seen it in many years.

I gave it to friends as a wedding present. The man in the marrying couple was my yoga teacher, The woman he married was also a yoga teacher who I knew less well than I knew him. I invited them to my house, to pick out a quilt as a wedding present. I was really happy for them and for the optimism of their marriage.

A year or so later, they broke up in a dramatic way that divided the sangha of yoga students. The male teacher had been charismatic and very popular; his classes were celebratory and emotional. His wife alleged some kind of misconduct. He and his wife each had their adherents, the ones who believed only them. The community that had formed around his classes disintegrated.

As his business was falling apart, he suffered a house fire. The house was demolished by the fire and collapsed completely. He did have a woodstove, and was not home when the fire broke out. Since no one was there, and he lived in a fairly remote location, the fire was very advanced when noticed by neighbors, and it was impossible to save the house. So the quilt was consumed.

Later, I did help him sort through the rubble and mud and charred remains for whatever could be salvaged. What he was really looking for was his wife's engagement ring, which we didn't find. We found dumbbells, marbles, and I found the dead cat, but it didn't even occur to me to look for any remains of the quilt.

Destroyed marriage, destroyed house, destroyed quilt. He did rebuild the house and now holds yoga classes there.



In 2010 I was in my mid-twenties and experiencing a bout of seasonal sadness during a harsh Berlin winter. I felt adrift professionally, so I was thrilled when I was commissioned to make and paint a giant wall for a famous techno musician. The set piece would be an 8-foot tall replica of a section of the Berlin Wall, on which I would paint a psychedelic scene filled with alligators, dildos and UFOs. The wall was conceived as part of a baroque one-woman-play which would premiere at Berlin's coolest theatre. The musician would burst through the wall and begin singing one of her signature hits, so the wall had to be serrated, and needed to be read as both a whole and two separate parts. I threw myself into the project, working furiously in my bedroom where the wall hovered over me at night as I slept. It felt trance-like to work on the piece, which began to take on a subterranean Boschian feel. I was proud of it. When I was halfway through, the play's director called me and said, "I'm really sorry, but _____ decided to take this in another direction. She wants more of a graffiti vibe." The next day some assistants came and picked up *my* wall. The director continued to be apologetic, saying that "You'll still be on the program!" I remember googling the wall and imagining the process of spray painting a smiling face over my delicately drawn scenes. The brutal gesture hurt my stomach. I never saw the theatre piece and didn't even pick up a program. The only memento I have from that project is one poorly-lit photograph I took while sitting on my bed.

Epilogue: I wound up at a party at the musician's apartment five years later, and thought about telling her how devastated I was by the decision to paint over my work. And how much, at that time the wall meant to me. But instead I just gave a slight nod, deciding to leave that troublesome set piece in the past.



I was just out of grad school when a then-prominent guest curator for a then-thriving Chelsea gallery invited me to show some new work in a group show opening a month before I left for Skowhegan. When the show closed, he asked to have one of the pieces on personal consignment to install in his apartment over that summer. The show closed just days before I was headed for Maine, the piece was delivered, and then I got a strange voicemail from the curator: "...your piece did not function. It took me and my son hours to remove it. Please come pick it up in my lobby at your earliest convenience, I won't be purchasing it or keeping it any longer – it will be with the doorman." It had been two days.

I couldn't figure it out - Remove it? The included cleats should have made installation/de-installation a breeze. Didn't function? The piece was a painting that hangs on a wall- or, a "model of a painting" as I was calling those works then. A skeleton of the drawing for the piece was cut out from adhesive vinyl, the painting was created on top and coated with a polymer – "kind of like a giant sticker" as I offered to the curator in a studio visit. The last step was to permanently adhere it to the "canvas", a custom-built molded Plexiglas panel.

But it turned out he took my off-the-cuff description literally when he took the piece home, despite the month of my piece hanging peacefully on the gallery wall. I arrived at his Trump- branded condo building uptown in a rented van to transport the 48"x 48" work back to my studio. I came into the marble lobby with dollies, asked the doorman about the painting & he gestured to a dim corner next to a drooping potted palm: "There" was all he said. In the corner was a sad, mangled, crumpled mass and what remained of the Plexiglas panel scattered around it. It looked like construction debris, seemingly just poured onto the floor of the lobby. I couldn't understand what I was seeing - the total wreckage of a new artwork I had just exhibited and then lent to this man less than a week ago. "What the actual fuck?" I'm sure I said.

After clearing the lobby of the corpse of the destroyed artwork, my incredulous emails and calls revealed the practically slapstick series of events that had unfolded. He took the piece home, had understood the work as a literal sticker and thought the carefully constructed panel was just a disposable carrier for the painting which he imagined was in fact meant to be peeled off and stuck to his wall to be displayed – cool idea actually! But not where I had arrived yet. Apparently he and his son had clawed and tugged at the vinyl for hours, eventually managing to peel the entire piece mostly intact off the fragile panel which cracked and shattered along the way. He then tried to stick it to his wall (making sure to mention to me that it had damaged the surface) and it had detached within an hour and slumped to the floor. In frustration he bagged it like a body and had it dumped along with the panel remnants in his lobby for me to collect. Weeks of letters to him and the gallery asking for compensation for the mangled work went unanswered and just like that, I was officially hazed into the art world.

Thing is - his unintentional intervention ended up being pretty interesting to me after I got over the entitlement, ignorant destruction and surly dismissal - maybe even a necessary critique of the presentation, inadvertently creating a kind of chaotic wall sculpture from the maybe too sleek mock painting. But I'm being generous here - I was enraged at the time. The ensuing Skowhegan summer restored my sense of humor and over time the story has become a reliable knee-slapper for me - but also a cautionary tale: I always carefully watch my descriptive words with curators. And coincidence or novel collaboration, recently revisiting what remains of the work pulled me out of a studio rut, pushing me toward dispensing of a support completely in my newest work: maybe disaster + time = evolution?



"Metalace Corp."
Ink, acrylic, polymer, adhesive vinyl on molded acrylic panel
48" x 48"
2003/2023

In the spring of 2021, I discovered that my most beloved painting, *Untitled Self Portrait (To live freely in this Body)*, had become lost in the ether. How a four by five foot painting could be subjected to such a fate is a reality I am still trying to make sense of.

In 2018, a former professor invited me to participate in a group exhibition at a gallery in Chelsea. I had just graduated from New York University with a degree in Studio Art and was in Maine for the summer enjoying the once-in-a-lifetime experience offered by Skowhegan. After the residency, I would fly to Berlin to start my new life abroad. Aware of my upcoming departure, I asked my professor to hold onto my painting in his studio storage after the show closed. I told him I would pick it up the next time I was in New York. But I was naive.

Fast forward two and a half years, I was invited to participate in a group show at Stevenson Gallery in Johannesburg, and they wanted to show the aforementioned painting. Conveniently, I had just arrived in New York on a trip when the request came in, and it seemed like the perfect time to retrieve the work. I texted my professor, but when I received his response, that the painting had been lost, I was hit by a wave of shock. It is a long, painful, and deeply twisted story that I am forever grateful to have only been on the periphery of; he had gotten into a dispute with his mentally unstable ex-wife, she changed the locks to their home and his studio, and he could no longer get access. The landlord had dealt with their chaos for years and decided to turn his nose to the conflict, including my professor's pleas to be let back in. Subsequently, he lost everything (except his infant daughter who he gained sole custody of due to the mother's unfit mental state), his life's work, and also the works of many other artists, including me. Completely broken by the situation, he escaped back to his hometown with his daughter, leaving behind a burgeoning art career in the heart of the world, to live with his parents and pick up the pieces of his life.

This all happened in the fall of 2018, two years before I had asked for the painting back. My shock doubled. I reached out to the landlord to try to locate the painting's whereabouts. He said he "checked" the property but found nothing and started blocking my calls. Against my professor's wishes, I desperately emailed his ex-wife to see if she could tell me anything about the painting. She proceeded to send me a series of disturbing and increasingly threatening emails at strange times in the night. Frightened, I began to look into the process of filing a lawsuit and inquired with Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts based in New York. But eventually I lost my nerve due to my abroad status, inexperience with the law, and preemptive guilt at the thought of suing a man who had already lost everything. It was at this moment that the devastation began to sink in. I realized that it was very unlikely that I would ever see that painting again. I didn't expect to grieve over it the way I did, for months I could barely talk about it without getting choked up. Even today, as I write this years later, I still get misty eyed when I think about how much that piece meant to me, and the way it was abandoned—the way I allowed it to be abandoned.

I made the work when I was 21. It was the first time I felt that I had successfully rendered the isolating experience of living with body dysmorphia through the shimmering medium of oil. It was the first time I



Untitled Self Portrait No. 1 (to live freely in this Body)
Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju
oil on canvas
122 cm in x 152 cm, 2017.

truly felt that I had created a painting that possessed a deeply emotional and alchemical power that others could also sense but not name. In the process of its making, I was opened. And now it is lost forever, but these memories give me comfort. I realize now that the things which are most cherished are often the things that are irretrievable. And in this gap between the things we want but know we can never have, we are forever changed. Sometimes I wonder where the painting might've ended up; if its hanging in someone's kitchen or buried in a landfill in Queens. I think about the way it might have bent the room's interior, or its subtle reverberations among the filth, the worms.

I made four of these columns right after grad school, around 2002. They were as tall as I could make them in my loft, maybe 12 feet, and had these really heavy, badly designed wood interiors that made them miserable to move around. The outside was cut cardboard painted with enamel.

My plan was to put them under the BQE where it crosses Metropolitan Avenue. There's a fenced in non space there, with a gate. Sometimes people would be there, sitting or sleeping, but mostly it was empty, loud and dusty. I walked by it everyday to get to the train.

While I was making them, someone put a huge lock on the gate. I waited to see if someone else would cut it, but I didn't have the guts to cut it myself. Did someone own this space? Was it the city's? What happened there that made someone pay attention?

I decided to put them in the park another couple blocks down Met, which I think I knew was ruining the project. The ground was uneven and the wind was much stronger in the open and they barely stood before falling.

I took some photos, maybe with slide film, and planned to come back later to take more. It had taken a group of my friends to carry the columns over and I thought I'd be able to look at everything more closely once they had all left. When I got back, the columns were already gone.

It's taking me a long time to figure out what my work is about. I've always thought of this project as a colossal failure and never showed images of it to anyone or talked about it. I hoped that the friends who helped me lug them to the park all forgot about it. I didn't think I had any photos of it until I came across this misfiled slide.

I've been working with a leaf shape that is similar to the leaves in the columns' capitals in my recent work. I'm cutting the form out and using it as a stencil in prints, paintings and on clay sculptures. I think about these columns almost everyday. Cutting the shapes, arranging them. Where I was then, where I am now.



Vivienne Asya Koorland

BLUE CONTENTS: Moscow on the Hill

Destroyed by fire, Sunday, April 18, 2021,
Jagger Library Reading Room,
University of Cape Town, South Africa.

My painting BLUE CONTENTS - god I loved that canvas - left my Mercer Street studio in New York in 1998, the year I completed it, never to return.

I painted it in oil on linen made in Belgium and Poland and stretched it over stitched burlap made in India via Africa to Brooklyn, so I felt assured I had as many of my home bases covered as possible.

BLUE CONTENTS was part of my *LIST* series, and it referenced a contents page such as those found in books; specifically, a modest 1980s paper booklet, idiosyncratically translated from the Japanese and ironically prescient, as it turned out—death by fire—from the Museum of the Atom Bomb in Hiroshima, where I've never been. In place of prefacing chapters, it lists the titles of some of my own paintings, with each name painted in the distinctive script that characterized those works.

With its 3.5 inch stretcher depth, BLUE CONTENTS was also heavy with paint, glue and cloth, including salvaged fragments from some of my other paintings, often long-saved, for the precise purpose of making this canvas that evoked those that had gone before.

When it left my studio, it travelled to Cape Town for exhibition at the gorgeous UCT Irma Stern Museum, where it was bought by a German collector with a passion for South African art.

BLUE CONTENTS was later loaned to my beloved alma mater, the University of Cape Town (UCT), where it hung for years in the office of the President at the then new Oppenheimer Library complex, and where I never saw it, before it was eventually moved for installation in the legendary Reading Room at Jagger Library, the principal library at the heart of this stunning main campus.

There, in that splendid reading room, where I'd sat before, enveloped by landmarked buildings arranged around the contested statue of Cecil John Rhodes, now of

Rhodes Must Fall and protest movement fame, framed by the magic mountain and underneath the glittering South African sky, lived my painting. I was so honored.

There it lived with the renowned African Studies archive, so rich in audiovisual materials, the utterly irreplaceable African Special Collections, the unique manuscripts, the rare books, the documents and maps from the most important collections in Southern Africa, perhaps anywhere, until the morning of April 18, 2021.

On that day, a fire tore through the libraries housing the irretrievable collections, sparing almost none and leaving it its wake Chernobyl-like destruction and irreversible, near-hopeless desolation.

I had been so privileged to share that home through my painting, and I mourned the burning. But if it had to go, BLUE CONTENTS went to heaven with the angels.

It will always be with those irrecoverable eternally-mourned lost treasures.

Moscow on the Hill was an affectionate name for the UCT main campus during the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, between Sharpeville and the fall of the apartheid regime. After the fire, I renamed my absent painting *BLUE CONTENTS: Moscow on the Hill*, to reflect this and to register its life at the University.

BLUE CONTENTS 1998 (Moscow on the Hill)

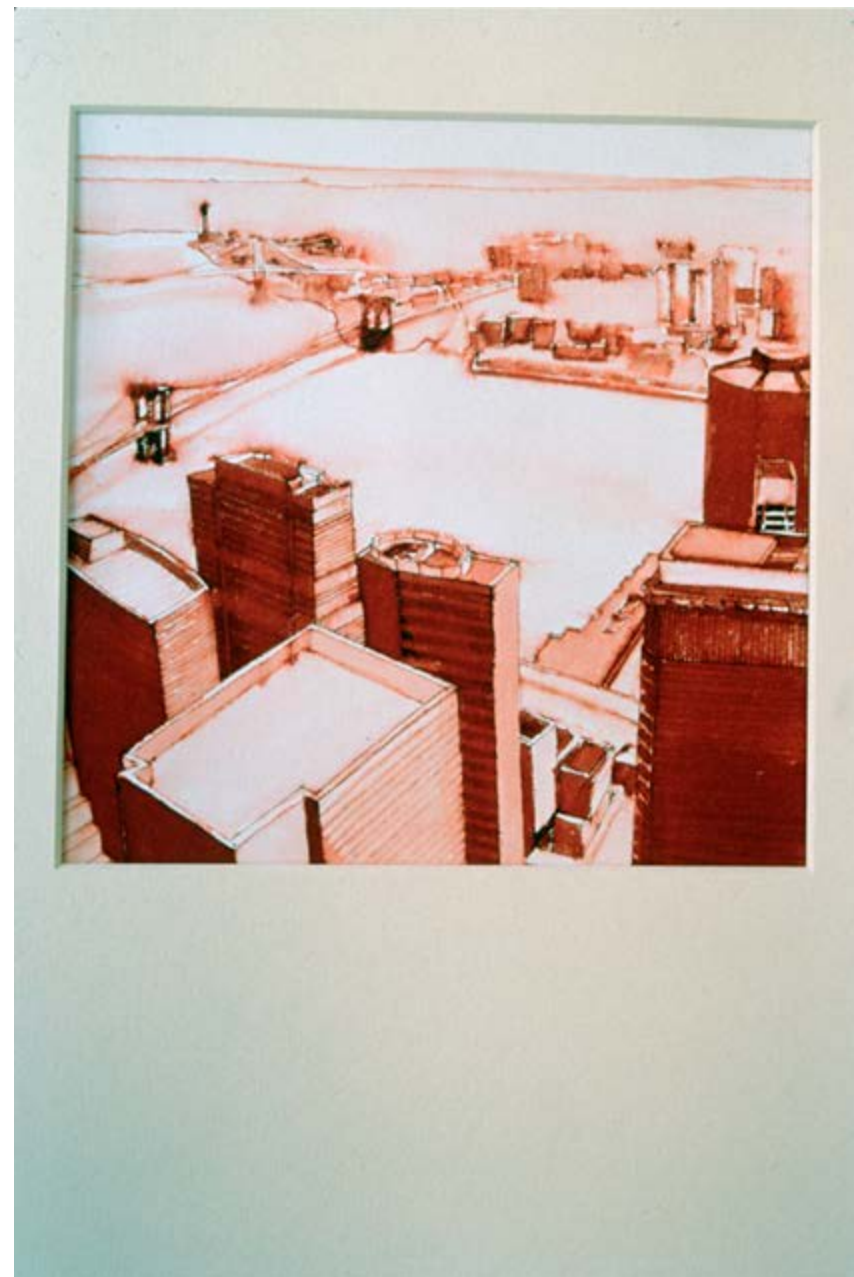
Oil on linen, 50 x. 44 inches

Oppenheimer Library Collection, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Destroyed by fire, Sunday, April 18, 2021



This pen and ink drawing was selected in 2001 by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council for a group show at the Federal Reserve Bank on Maiden Lane. All the work for the show was collected at the LMCC offices in the World Trade Center. It was still there on the morning of 9/11 when the planes hit.



"View from Above", sepia ink on Arches, 7" x 7", 2000

In 2007, I was asked to make a large-scale painting (8 x 5' or thereabouts), for a 1 painting solo exhibition at Mario Diacono Gallery in Boston. At the time I worked in a spare bedroom in our 3rd floor walkup on Washington Ave in Brooklyn. For practical reasons, I made the painting a diptych on birch plywood panel so I could get the painting through the doors and down a rickety, windy staircase. I was working on this painting during the winter, and it was almost done- just in time for the deadline, when the boiler in our apartment broke and the heat went out. The change in temperature caused the wood grain on one of the diptych panels to split all over its surface, while the other side remained in perfect condition. I must have used different sheets of plywood for each panel... After much stress and despair- and consulting with a conservator who I happened to be working with one day art handling, I realized that there was no fix to the split wood grain issue. The only way forward was to postpone the show and to remake half of the painting. Writing that email to postpone the show and explain the reason was a low point. Having to remake half of the painting was not as much fun as the first time around to say the least- but making the decision to move on from wood panels and find a different material to paint on was worth it! In retrospect, this painting was a milestone in my practice, and it conjures up a special time and place in my life.



In 2013 I was part of an exhibition at The ArQuives (formerly the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives) in which a group of artists were invited to research and respond to their collection. This exhibition meant a lot to me. I was grieving the death of my friend Javier, one of the first people I met when I migrated to Canada, who embraced me like my auntie.

Javier was a big-framed, sarcastic, and caring “mother” who would help you navigate the system, share cruising tips, host fabulous dinners, and meet you where you were in life. He arrived in Canada in the 70s as part of a wave of political refugees during the Pinochet dictatorship. He was an unapologetic fag and community organizer and, through his work, carved out spaces for other Latinx refugees in Toronto, serving on several not-for-profit boards and as a founding member of the queer Latino group Hola.

There were light and dark shades to Xavier’s character. His non-status situation was exposed when he hid his non-status lover on his balcony to protect him from immigration officers, leading to his deportation. Ironically, he didn’t resolve his migration status even though he worked for an immigration lawyer. Now, he faced one of the gay immigrant’s nightmares: returning as an older adult without any support to a place that had excluded him based on his identity. Sadly, a few years later, he passed away.

There was radio silence on the day the news broke about his death. No news media picked up the story – not even the LGBTQ outlets. Even The 519 - the hub of Toronto’s oldest gay neighborhood - which Xavier frequented as his second home, didn’t acknowledge losing an influential Latinx Queer elder. In their eyes he did not look like one. Their social media post that day was a survey: “We need your feedback on the future of our community.”

According to ancestral indigenous traditions in what is now known as Mexico, you die three deaths. First, when you realize you’re mortal and you will die. Second, when you are dead and buried. And third, the last time someone says your name. Such institutional disregard towards a well-known community member made me doubt if Xavier existed. Was I dreaming? Do I exist? Javier didn’t vanish in Pinochet’s Chile, but in Toronto – the last place my friends and I saw him in person. His death brought to the forefront the fears of deportation and tragic endings familiar to queers, especially immigrants.

As an immigrant artist, working on an exhibition at The ArQuives created an opportunity to respond to feeling unseen and disposable, compounded by my precarious working conditions in the fast-food industry. I envisioned a one-channel sound installation and open-ended sonic archive made in collaboration with other immigrant queers. For the installation, a naked speaker would face down from the top of the building’s narrow staircase to create an echo chamber. The speaker cords intentionally hung and traveled from the speaker, into and around the main exhibition space.

I began my piece doing preliminary work by adhering found string to the walls of the current exhibition, which we were invited to respond to as part of the work-in-progress nature of the curatorial intervention. In parallel, I conducted interviews for the archive. And, after two weeks, I returned to the space for a public engagement. Having done the interviews, I was excited to see the space with fresh eyes, casually introduce the work, and initiate a conversation with the public. However, when I got to the exhibition space, I found that most of the string



had been removed and was sitting on the floor tangled in a ball. I was crushed. The curator smiled from afar. My stomach cramped. The event was about to start, and the room was almost full. The other artists were schmoozing, and there was no one around I could talk to about the issue.

During the event, I kept trying to understand what had happened and how I might have been responsible for the fuck-up. So many questions rushed through my head. Had I failed to communicate my intentions? (A fear commonly shared among ESL folks). Raising the issue would affect the other artists' work and those who had opened up to share their stories but I couldn't let it go. I was overwhelmed and felt trapped. When I turned around, the institution's curator was telling the audience that her strategy for preparing the exhibition involved rounding some of the archival photos' corners to make them look like amateur 4 x 6" color prints that were popular in the 1970s. What? I was stunned. Some people rolled their eyes, but others were more than surprised about the audacity of permanently altering archival material for a shallow trick to give it a vintage aesthetic.

The curator later told me that my work was dismantled because communication didn't trickle down to the volunteers, and in her words, it was an honest mistake because the work "didn't look like art". My piece embraced ephemerality as a strategy to mirror the precarious and provisional structures of support, housing, and employment that queer immigrants live within. It took so little to replicate the reality that I intended to represent. Sometimes an artwork doesn't have to be completed to do its work.

Taylor Spence

Radio Tower

I made Radio Tower in the fall and winter of 1999-2000, for the Worldviews Studio Program, which the World Trade Center's management company had started in order to bring the energy of art and artists into its unused corporate spaces. The wonderful Moukthar Kocache curated the piece.

At the time, I was reading a short poem/story by Turgenev called [The Conversation](#), about two mountains that talked to each other over deep time. I imagined that the Twin Towers were like these two mountains.

I made a 23-foot-long fresco that strung together into one line all the mountains on the same latitude as the World Trade Center around the globe. In order to make a true buon fresco, I sealed the sheetrock wall to ensure proper curing, something I had been experimenting with over several years of trying to make frescoes in modern architecture. I adhered metal plastering mesh to the wall, and made the fresco on that armature with various ochers. I liked the idea of bringing the earth up 1000 feet into the air, and would have liked to use ochres from all the locations of the mountains, but that was beyond my ability at the time.

I attached an antenna to the metal armature of the fresco, wired it to the WTC's long metal windows, and then connected it to a shortwave radio located on a small table in the space. The whole building was metal, and so I theorized that it would act as a radio transmitter, bringing far-flung broadcasts into the space. The plan needed more thought and expertise than I possessed. Radio transmissions did fill the space – mostly taxi communications from the streets below.

After the piece premiered in early 2000, I got busy. A new set of artists took over the space. There were some discussions about the management company acquiring it as a decoration for their offices. But I never went back up there to see my piece. Then, on September 11, 2001, I watched from Brooklyn, where I lived, as the great metallic towers buckled and collapsed into a giant cloud of dust and fire and death. Radio Tower became part of the twisted metal and cement in the pit. The pigments, lime, and sand of my fresco were part of the billowing streams of smoke rising into the sky over the next few months.



Taylor Spence, *Radio Tower*, fresco, pigment, wire mesh, antenna, shortwave radio, World Trade Center 1, 1999-9-11-2001.

Losing

This is a now distressed oil portrait I did of a former friend who sat for me years ago. I pushed it out of sight until...

During Covid I began sanding down old paintings. I often found that I liked the original, pre-historic, pre-cognitive marks better than what'd been lost. My palm sander ripped up her body though. And then the thumb tacks. Don't ask me why because I'm not sure.

We're not friends anymore. I lost her. It was all very painful. Friendships are complicated. Last time I saw her was in '22 when she moved to the Bay Area from Central Coast and cat-sat for me at the end of my father's life. I lost him, too. Then seven months later, my cat died. I guess I lost her, too.

I don't think anything was destroyed though.

Failed Friendships

Failed friendship as focus for flash fiction. Phonetics. Fantasizing what could have been done differently to forestall their foreclosures. Fun friendships fizzling out. Is friendship that fickle? What the fuck. When we were fourteen or four or before or after we said friends are forever. I still have the fragments, tiny notes from first grade. *I love you forever*. I feel the fool. Why did we write forever when it wasn't? These were fleeting affairs. Forever isn't a number. Friends forever is a fallacy, a fraud, a fake and needless to say a fiction. I'm afraid I stand with forever.

Oil on canvas, 16" x 20"



Edited by Kandis Williams and Angie Jennings.

DAD:

This is mental masturbation. Is it necessary to build a bridge between reality and our perceptions?

STRAUSS:

From: The Savage Mind

There would be plenty to say about this supposed totalizing continuity of the self which seems to me to be an illusion sustained by the demands of social life-and consequently a reflection of the external on the internal-rather than the object of an apodictic experience.

But there is no need to resolve this philosophical problem in order to perceive that the proposed conception of history corresponds to no kind of reality.

As historical knowledge is claimed to be privileged, I feel entitled (as I would not otherwise feel) to make the point that there is a twofold antinomy in the very notion of a historical fact.

For, ex hypothesi, a historical fact is what really took place, but where did anything take place?

Each episode in a revolution or war resolves itself into a multitude of individual psychic movements.

Each of these movements is the translation of unconscious development, and these resolve themselves into cerebral, hormonal or nervous phenomena, which themselves have reference to the physical or chemical order.

Consequently, historical facts are no more given than any other.

It is the historian or the agent of history, who constitutes them by abstraction and as though under the threat of infinite regress.

There is no history without dates. To be convinced of this is sufficient to consider how a pupil succeeds in learning history: he reduces it to an emaciated body, the skeleton of which is formed by dates.

The rapid cry of the crested jay is said to resemble the crackling of burning woods and so presages the successful firing of a family's swiddens. The alarm cry of a Trogon is likened to the death rattle of an animal being slain and augurs good hunting. The laugh of a Trogon is a good omen for trading exhibitions because of its brilliant red breast it is also associated with the renown attending successful war and distant voyages.



CLOSER by Nine Inch Nails

You let me violate you
 You let me desecrate you
 You let me penetrate you
 You let me complicate you
 Help me
 I broke apart my insides
 Help me
 I've got no soul to sell
 Help me
 The only thing that works for me
 Help me get away from myself
 I want to fuck you like an animal
 I want to feel you from the inside
 I want to fuck you like an animal
 My whole existence is flawed
 You get me closer to god

You can have my isolation
 You can have the hate that it brings
 You can have my absence of faith
 You can have my everything
 Help me
 Tear down my reason
 Help me
 It's your sex I can smell
 Help me
 You make me perfect
 Help me become somebody else
 I want...
 Through every forest above the trees
 Within my stomach scraped off my knees
 I drink the honey inside your hive
 You are the reason I stay alive

I was thinking about how cross culturally humans have learned to admire the behaviors of animals.

In many cases we idolize and worship them. Animals are the living conscious aspect of nature. We exist symbiotically with all nature and in death, we reintegrate with it's sacredness.

I remembered "The Savage Mind" by Claude Levi Strauss when I began making drawings about "Closer" because both writings talked about how we reflect on animals., I'd say that the book attempts to prove that all minds exists apart from "the savage mind" is an illusion of history. Using theories of dialectics to cut up and analyze myths and cultures, he attempts to show through this book that all identity is made of dialectical dualisms that are largely the result of our immediate environment. Stauss' work focuses on Native American tribes that lived in an immediate and close relationships to nature. There are thousands of words for different plants and natural phenomenon in certain languages. In some cases, natural phenomenon took their place within rituals of divination.

The Hidatsa tribe believed that the rapid cry of the Crested Jay is said to resemble the crackling of burning woods and so presages the successful firing of a families swiddens, or fertilizers for the next harvest. I decided to draw a bird breathing fire onto a crop of corn to represent this interaction with god/wilderness. After I laid in the pencil drawing, I happened to check my facebook feed. A local DJ I follow from Tijuana had posted a painting of a bird blowing fire onto corn. It was the exact orientation that I had just drawn the bird and it was the first thing that popped up on my screen. I know that this was some sort of sign. I added a comment in the thread below. I told the DJ about the quote from Strauss and how I had just made a painting of a bird blowing fire on corn. I asked if she knew the artist's name and where I could find the painting online. I spent about twenty minutes dazed and Googling, finding only a few memes on Spanish speaking sex/dating sites before I finally broke down and asked the thread to explain the bird image in English. She said it was an albur which she described as a Mexican double entendre. If you look at the painting and describe it in Spanish you might say "El pajaro quema maiz." which means "The bird burns corn". If you were listening, you might hear "El pajaro que mamais" which translates to "the bird that you suck" which in turn might be taken as "The dick that you suck". I felt as if I had passed behind some magic the curtain and found that there was this bird and now I had to decide whether I was being told to suck it or not. Maybe it was a sign saying that I just needed to pray and bring pleasure to a masculine manifestation of God. Or maybe it meant that I could just piss in my underwear, stuff it in my mouth and finger my prostate until I came all over myself? Maybe this bird was the key to bringing myself to the next level of personal consciousness.

The song Closer, and the albums "The Downward Spiral", "Pretty Hate Machine" and "The Fragile" got me through a particularly bad patch of my life. It's strange looking back at this song and realizing

the deeper themes. It seems to be about the God complexes developed by ordinary people. It shows the desire to penetrate and be penetrated. In this painting, I admit that isolation is part of the chemistry that makes alchemy that produces desire. I imagine the walls that people build to protect themselves from the other when we feel that we have grown apart, after the merging of love is gone.

This song also reminds me of the link between sex and death. It shows how people constantly strive to leave their bodies. There is this desire to not have a body and to become a part of the ebb and flow of love. This painting is about the idea of abundance in relation to this. I'm attempting to show that there is no way to exhaust the endless resource of love even if there are ways to exhaust our bodies and minds.

When we are sheltered from desire our entire lives we suffer from a kind of arrested development. Our first experiences of the erotic are inexperienced. They can be traumatic and shameful if not approached correctly. As we get older we learn to defend ourselves from harm and figure out our expectations in love. I show the baby's eyes being kept open by the bee of wilderness. Then we can see the baby aged and as the older figure of herself, she is the executioner who has left the arms of the fool and found the guidance of a judge who has all of the knowledge about how to balance joy and terror.

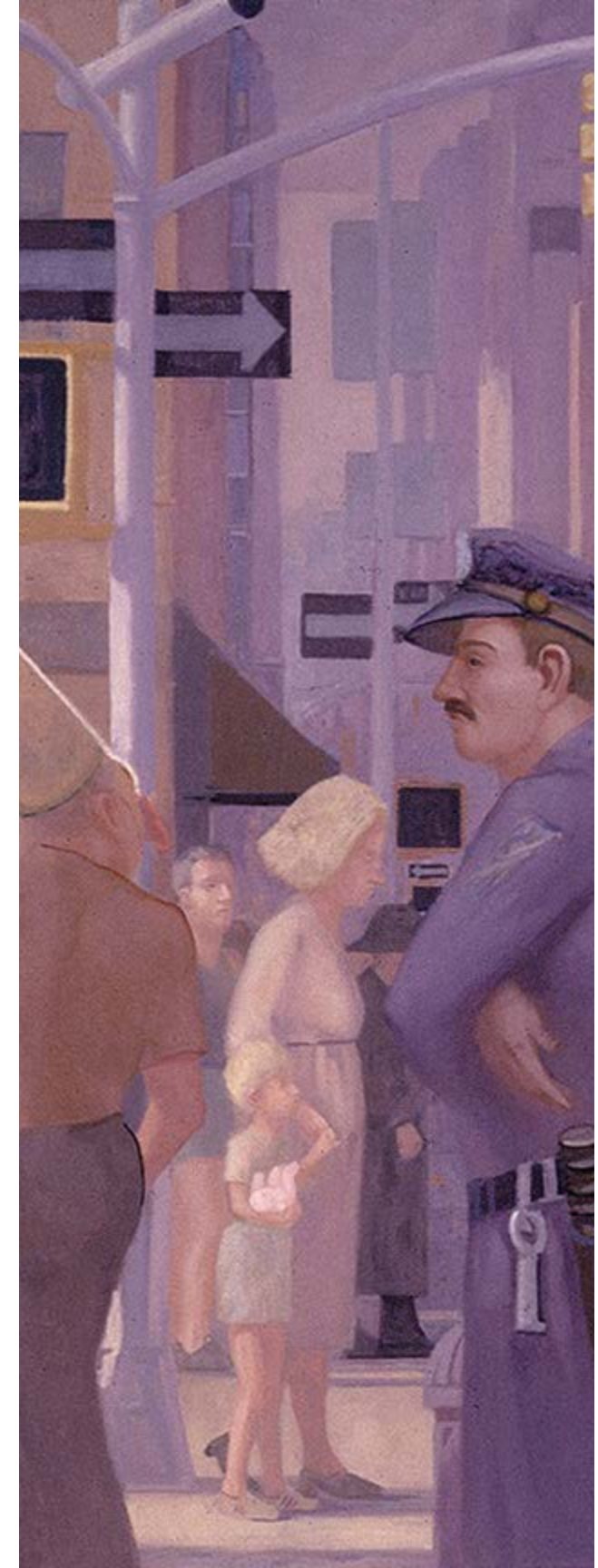
I think of the sperm as already alive and already criminal. Their sole purpose is to penetrate or die. The birds of perception devour and terrify them.

A young girl at the family dinner table licks the blood from her plate until the center is eroded away and becomes a halo. Later in life when she herself is pregnant and waiting to start her family she holds this halo in her hand and meditates on the circle of life rather than putting it on and becoming angelic and pure. Her child self sits in the top left corner of the painting, and her Judaic older self sits in the foreground of the bottom right.

I have this obsession with being pure as the dead. The angel of death in heaven shaves the feathered earth to reveal the piss, honey and light of the unnameable. Bees and birds float down to the human level to collect souls and pollen. They shave and penetrate humans and try to convince them of their godliness. Sometimes they try to kill them out of mercy.

Note: I destroyed this painting because it revealed too much about my personal life. Although it took me two to three months to paint I burned it in a fire pit because I felt it was emblematic of a crisis in my life. I crisis of selfishness and disrespect to someone I cared very deeply about. It had been two years since I had painted anything due to financial instability and depression. So destroying it was even more painful for me. I felt it was a cursed image.

This painting which was lost or destroyed in one of my many studio moves was part of a series of paintings from the mid-1990s: "Punchinello and the Law." Each painting placed my ubiquitous character Punchinello, an I not I, near a policeman. My policemen usually were strongly masculine with mustache and scowls. Frequently Punch was alarmed by them. In this painting, Punchinello glances over his shoulder with some kind of recognition found in the mother and child and in the young man on the crosswalk. The Policeman looks on. The series "Punchinello and the Law" never found much of an audience and hence, as I moved from studio to studio, it has been whittled down. I still like the theme. Patrick Webb, 2023



Punchinello and the Law: Recognition, o/c, 1997 72 X 30

THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF LANDSCAPE IN A PORTRAIT MODE

This is a sad story about both the loss of art, and the artist forced to face the banality of his own arrogance.

In 2008 I moved to the Catskill Mountains after spending most of my adult life in New York City. Before leaving the city, the imagery in my work was largely architectural, but after I moved, the imagery became about nature. What can I say? Weak minds are easily influenced by their environment.

In the summer of 2009, I created a site-specific sculpture for the Kingston Biennial which consisted of 3 iconic natural images; a tree, a rock and a cloud. It was called Landscape in a Portrait Mode.

The imagery for the tree-like shape was made by piling a series of saplings into a tee-pee form and then photographing them on the spot where the sculpture would eventually stand. The photographs were then printed onto vinyl with an adhesive back and then laminated onto plywood structures.

Two years later I entered the same piece into an outdoor exhibition organized by the Helen Day Art Center in Stowe VT called "Exposed". It was accepted and they asked that I make it site-specific for that exhibition also.

After a few months, I packed up several saplings, my camera, and a few tools and headed northeast for a one-way 5 ½ hour trek to Stowe. When I arrived, I was given the choice of a series of different sites, one of which was a few hundred acre plain in the middle of town that had a series of walking trails and a creek meandering through it. It had mountains in the background and seemed perfect in every way.

It would be something of an omission if I didn't mention that the plain was a flood plain.

Site photos were taken. The old photos were removed from the structure and new photos were laminated to it and after a few months the whole thing was installed at the site. It stood about 12 feet high, was staked to the ground with multiple 4 foot long thick metal stakes on an angle so it could withstand high winds. It weighed about 1,200 pounds. This was the beginning of the summer of 2011.

By this time, the depiction of the natural world in my work tended to have a theme of the arbitrary violence of nature versus the less than innocent violence of humanity. I felt it was a clever juxtaposition, and a relatively easy one to make since, in reality, I felt somewhat immune to the forces of nature in my seemingly protected modern life.

Then, later that summer, I was producing a piece for the Governors Island Art Fair. I had two interns working on a site-specific piece incorporating 3 separate large structures. It took weeks to produce and like the piece at the Exposed show in Vermont, multiple trips to Governors Island off Manhattan.

And then out of nowhere, days before we were to finish the fabrication,



In 2009



In 2011

Hurricane Irene struck. My upstate New York area of the Catskill Mountains was one of two in the northeast where the hurricane struck the hardest. We experienced 12" of rain an hour for multiple hours. In one morning, streams changed direction, massive boulders were moved, and entire towns were virtually wiped out and underwater.

While our house on the side of a mountain was not significantly affected, the electricity was out for days and many of the roads were closed. What was worse was that my piece for Governors Island was incomplete and due in a matter of days.

The two interns and I packed up the unfinished piece, numerous tools, and unlaminated prints into the trailer and headed south. It was an arduous trek to try and find roads that weren't flooded out. A guessing game if ever there was one since there was very little communication available. Where I live in the mountains, there is only one radio station, and we can't always get that one. There is no cell service, and with no electricity, at the time after the hurricane, we had no internet.

Finally, we reached Manhattan in the early morning hours and finished the fabrication right up and into the opening a few days later.

In the meantime, I was getting messages from the organizers of the show in Vermont. But without cell service when I was upstate, and too busy with the finishing of the other piece post-Irene downstate, I didn't get a chance to listen to any of them. When the day finally came to listen, they urgently asked me to call.

I mentioned earlier that there were two places in the east where Hurricane Irene hit the hardest: The Catskills was one. The other was northern Vermont. When I finally spoke to the organizers, they told me that the piece in the Exposed exhibition, along with several others, was completely lost in the flood caused by Irene. The only part that was found way, way downstream was the small cap on top. They asked me if I wanted to make the 5 ½ hour trek again, one-way mind you, to Stowe to pick it up. I politely declined.

I found it ironic that even though I was using the theme of the arbitrary violence of mother nature in my work, I foolishly thought it wouldn't really affect me. And in fact, compared to some of my neighbors whose homes and businesses were destroyed, I got off very easy with just a lesson in the stupidity of my arrogance.

The following year I had a 20' high, 2000 lb. piece, that had actually survived an exhibition during Irene in 2011. But in 2012 during Super Storm Sandy in another location, even though it was anchored to the ground with 4 giant slabs of 3" thick pieces of granite, it was flattened. But that is a story for another day.



You Should Have Seen It is a 4-part compendium of recollections about lost or destroyed artwork solicited from the Skowhegan community. The volumes consist of: *it was their fault, it was my fault, it wasn't meant to be, and it never was. You Should Have Seen It* was curated by Rebecca Shippee^{A'18}, and created by The Skowhegan Alumni Alliance with help from Paige Laino and Chris Perry. Cover images by Darrell Petit^{A'88}, Marilyn Propp^{A'69}, Heather Cox^{A'97}, and Taylor Spence^{A'98}.

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