

VOLUME 37 / ISSUE 1 / NOV. 2018

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arts + literature + culture



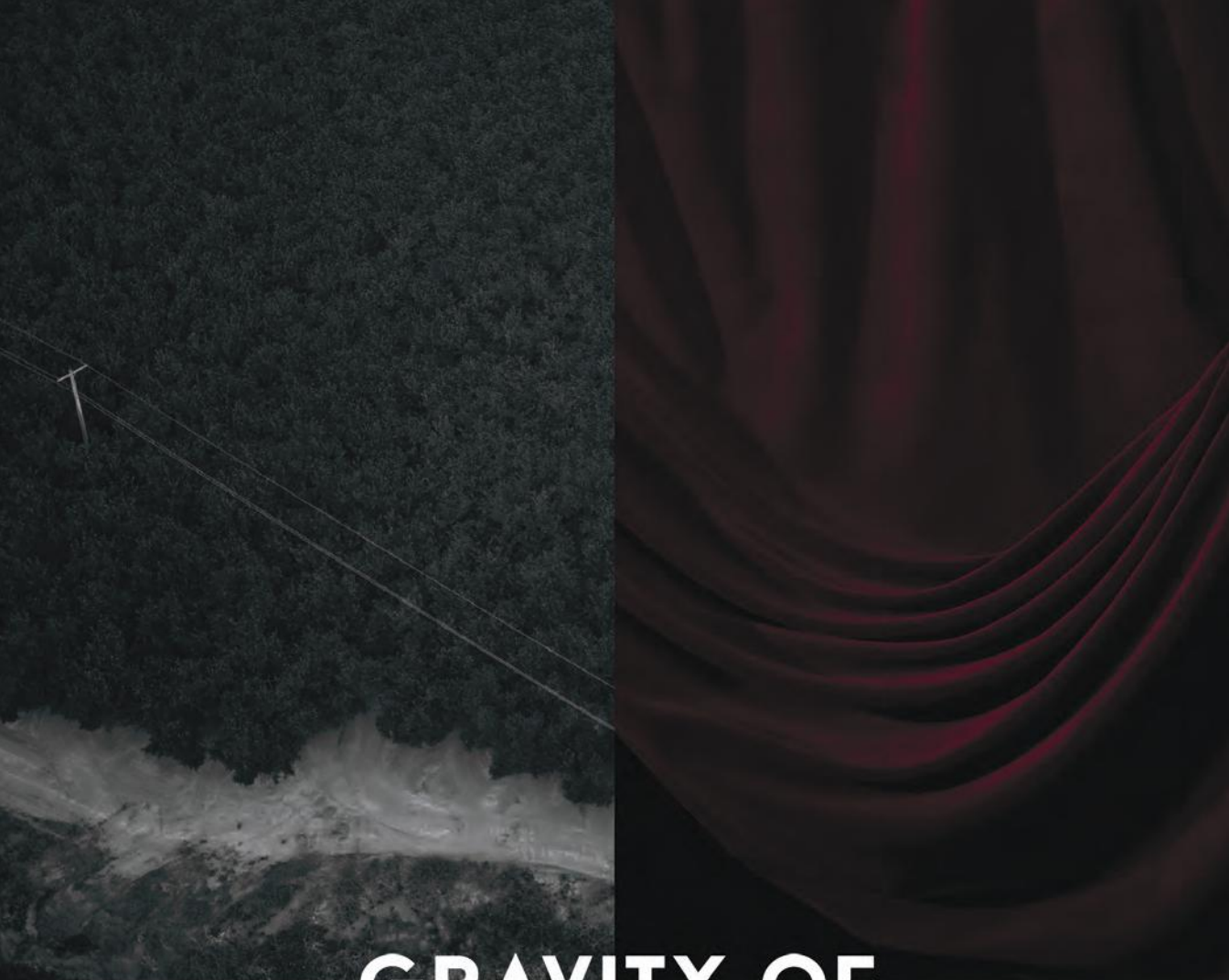
jeromie dorrance

+

gaia orr

+

jenna maurice



GRAVITY OF PERCEPTION

JANUARY 11 — MARCH 23, 2019

TYA ANTHONY • MARCELLA ERNEST • KRIS GRAVES • ZORA MURFF
XAVIERA SIMMONS • LORENZO TRIBURGO • KRISTA WORTENDYKE

Left Image: Lorenzo Triburgo, *Policing Gender, Untitled Aerial 02* Right Image: Lorenzo Triburgo, *Policing Gender, For Missy*

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COVER ART

Jeromie Dorrance
Untitled, Digital Still, 2013–17



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1
Editor's Note

2
SUBMISSION: **Taylor Burgess**

10
**Frame Within a Frame:
The Art of In-Game
Photography**
–Isaac Banks

18
MSU DENVER ALUMNUS
Jeromie Dorrance
–Estevan Ruiz

36
SUBMISSION: **Monique Archuleta**

44
SUBMISSION: **Mikaela Nunnally**

50
MSU DENVER INSTRUCTOR
Jenna Maurice
–Estevan Ruiz

74
SUBMISSION: **Alex Zezza**

86
MSU DENVER STUDENT
Gaia Orr
–Estevan Ruiz

104
SUBMISSION: **Ali Watkins**

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HI
by Estevan Ruiz
2018

ISSUE ONE

The mission for Volume 37 of Metrosphere is to provide a break for students of the Auraria Campus, bombarded by distressful daily news. We believe that we should be showcasing the artists of MSU Denver who impact Denver's art scene and inspire their communities. This time around we're not so interested in timely matters, reviews or rehashing past trends. We are interested in shared experiences from our art community.

Our goal with all our issues for this volume is to share insightful stories that move and inspire our readers. We want to showcase artists who are ambitious and work hard at their craft. We want to be considerate of our submissions and focus on how art and culture within this magazine should be presented. Art is not trivial. It is what shapes our culture, guides innovation and challenges our social constructs. Volume 37 of Metrosphere's legacy will uphold and advocate that notion.

If you're new to Metrosphere, welcome. We hope that you, the reader/viewer, will find the content of this magazine interesting. We're introducing yet another new design, format and editorial philosophy to the long history of an ever-changing publication. Metrosphere is rooted in showcasing

submitted literary and visual artworks from MSU Denver students, and we aim to feature stories on students, instructors and alumni. This first issue introduces an interview series in which we speak with budding creative students, inspiring instructors and successful alumni. We let them share their work, insights and experiences with you. We hope you will enjoy them.

The bulk of this first issue was put together by a team of two, Creative Director Joseph Hatfield and me. It was a lot of hard work, but I am grateful for the two new additions to our team, Kelsey Casados and Madison Lauterbach. If it wasn't for them coming along, we definitely would not have met our deadline. We have a solid core group now. We are proud, and relieved, to deliver to you our first issue of Metrosphere for the school year.

I encourage you to engage with us, whether you submit your own artwork, pitch a story or want to comment on our efforts. Send your inquiries and comments to our inbox at submission.metrosphere@gmail.com, or to me personally at erui28@msudenver.edu. Thank you for picking us up. We appreciate the support.

See you next issue,



Editor-in-Chief
Estevan Ruiz

SUBMISSION

ADMIRATIONS

PHOTOS BY **TAYLOR BURGESS**

right
Cloudy Peak
2018

overleaf
Fog Lake
2018









Whether I am spending time in my profession as a designer or pursuing my hobby of photography, my work consistently revolves around the natural world. My ultimate goal is the conservation of our world's natural resources. In depicting landscapes and wildlife through photography, my hope is to evoke an awe-inspiring admiration for these natural ecosystems and furthermore, a sense of value and promotion for sustainability. For me, the use of black and white in photography communicates a sense of primitivism and calming that I experience when out in these spaces.

There is an overwhelming hierarchy that I seek out and deeply appreciate, one that makes me feel small and gives perspective to my life, one that everyone should experience and above all, respect.



FRAME WITHIN A FRAME

THE ART OF IN-GAME PHOTOGRAPHY

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY **ISAAC BANKS**

Are video games art? Yes, there is really no need to argue this point anymore. There is a video game art gallery in Chicago, a pasted exhibit in the Smithsonian American Art Museum which is part of the “Denver Art Museum Stampede: Animals in Art” exhibit. But unlike traditional art, video games allow players to interact and create their own art with a photo mode. This meta-art within the art, frame within a frame, mode gives gamers a toolset to create and share their moments using games.

Taking a picture inside of a virtual world is a weird concept. Why would anyone want to take a picture of a video game character or environment? But the interactivity of games allow this fourth wall break into a new form of art within art. The only thing similar is walking into an art gallery, arranging the art pieces and then taking a picture.

Over the last couple of years, photo modes have been added to games, such as “Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice.” This game, in particular, has a moody setting perfect for taking photos. This mode, at its base, allows the player to pause the game, move the camera around and take an in-game picture. The manipulation of the in-game camera allows the players to capture images at different angles. On top of camera control, the mode has options for exposers, filters, the field of view and aperture. Extras include controlling the characters’ facial expressions, removing them completely from the scene and the time of day. This control allows players to capture stills from a new perspective.

This mode would be meaningless without moments worth capturing. Games have become more realistic with jaw-dropping visuals in “Horizon



Untitled
Hell Blade: Senua's Sacrifice
2018



Zero Dawn,” “Infamous Second Son” and more. Instead of talking about a cool moment or how beautiful a game is, players can now take a picture and share it. But photo modes go beyond just taking a picture. Portraits of characters perfectly framed in black and white, a freeze frame right before the killing blow or a landscape portrait of in-game environments are where the possibilities really shine.

This trend has taken off this current console generation, PS4 and Xbox One, because of the ability for gamers to quickly share their favorite moments. The internet has brought together gamers from all over the world to not only play together but to share experiences with each other. Sony saw this trend before launching the PS4 back in 2013 and removed the start button on the new PS4 controllers, replacing it with a share button. This change allowed gamers to quickly take a screenshot or video clip while playing and share it with their friends. Sony updated the PS4 so gamers can now stream to YouTube and make posts on Twitter and

Facebook. This new ability, along with things like Twitch, helped thrust video games into a new social spotlight.

As for the developers, Sony’s first party studios have fully taken advantage of photo modes, adding them to all PS4 first party exclusive games. “God of War,” “Horizon Zero Dawn,” “Uncharted 4” and the new “Spider-Man” have all shipped with photo modes, or the developers have gone back and added post-launch. Developers have also started to engage with their communities that have used photo modes to capture stills of their games. Sometimes it is a simple retweet and other times they host photo competitions and give away prizes. For the developers, these tools are great because it keeps their game in the spotlight for longer and shows off the beauty of their games.

This weird frame within a frame art form is becoming the future of video game experiences. The ability to make your own art and share it with others is taking the art form of video games to a new level.



Untitled
Hell Blade: Senua's Sacrifice
2018













JEROMIE DORRANCE

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS BY **ESTEVAN RUIZ**

DATELINE is a contemporary art gallery in the River North neighborhood of Denver, owned and operated by MSU Denver alumnus and visual artist Jeromie Dorrance. The gallery hosts monthly exhibitions featuring emerging local and national artists. As an artist, Jeromie's main focus is in corrupting and compressing the layered data of video files, a technique known as datamoshing, to create glitched-out visuals and media. I met up with Jeromie on Sept. 11 at DATELINE, where we talked about what it's like to own a gallery, what art students should be considering and his overall enthusiasm for moving images.



Estevan Ruiz: You're a visual artist all around, but your focus is on digital media. What is your fascination with it?

Jeromie Dorrance: Moving images are a lot more interesting to me than just pictures. Like, static artwork. I grew up around a lot of pop culture and television and watching movies, it was like the golden age of video stores. My mom would let me pick out a movie whenever we went to the grocery store. Before Redbox they used to have actual video stores. Do you remember all of this? You're not that young. *(Laughs)*.

You're only a year older than me. *(Laughs)*.

They used to have video stores in the grocery stores, and for 99 cents you could check out really old tapes. I would pick the weirdest stuff my mom would let me get. One time I checked out "Critters" as a kid. That was kind of terrifying to watch. I saw stuff like "Labyrinth" and "The Dark Crystal,"

Jim Henson kind of stuff that wasn't "Sesame Street" or the "Muppets". It scared the crap out of me, but when I was younger I had an interest in animation, preferably stop-motion stuff. So when I got into high school, there weren't any programs like that.

I kind of got out of video stuff, but I was still into film and different, weird things. I discovered Adult Swim on Cartoon Network and I wasn't particular on what was going on. They didn't really advertise who was who, but they would have really weird video-art programs. I do remember seeing a Dan Deacon music video on Adult Swim. This was like 15 years ago, so I can't name people off the top of my head, but it was really weird and definitely something I wanted to be apart of.

When did you really get into art?

I kind of fell out of art in high school, and after I graduated I went to Metro State [MSU Denver] to get a degree in geology with the intention of becoming a paleontologist, which is really weird. I hated the science courses and I hated the labs and remembering formulas. I realized math wasn't my thing. I dropped out of school for a year and just skateboarded and hung out downtown.

But I think it was the best thing I ever did, because it was over that summer that I discovered places like Rhinocropolis. I think back then there was a place called Monkey Mania, Blast-O-Mat, and other DIY venues. There were really cool people putting on art shows and concerts.

That was one of the first times I met Mario [Zoots]. Him and his girlfriend at the time were painting this backdrop,

and I was like, “Oh man, these are really cool artists, I want to get to know them.” So we started talking and I told him I went to school at Metro, and he said he was going to school at Metro and he was working at the Emmanuel Gallery at the time. I went to visit him there and that was the first time I had actually been inside a gallery. So then I was kind of hooked on art. I went back to school that same semester that I met him and signed up for as much art shit that I could. And that was it, I became an art student. It was an interesting time for me, but I think I made a really good career move.

Were you proactive as an art student, trying to put your work out there?

Actually, Mario and I got picked up by Lipgloss to do visuals, and that’s when I really started getting into video art. A lot of my time was spent doing visuals in nightclubs, and then a few bands signed us on to do visuals too. In March 2012, we went out to South by Southwest and did visuals for a bunch of different Denver bands. That was the first time I had ever been to SXSW and it was a real big eye-opener for me then. It was a really cool kind of festival back then. I haven’t been back since, but it was really fun meeting people from Austin and meeting all these different artists and hanging out with all these musicians.

Ever since then I have been doing visuals, so I learned a lot of stuff through that. But most of the people I met in Denver I met through Metro State. It was definitely a really strong community of artists back then. People like Mario, Milton Melvin Croissant III, and Colin Ward, who was going to school then for art and music. On the weekends everyone would convene at

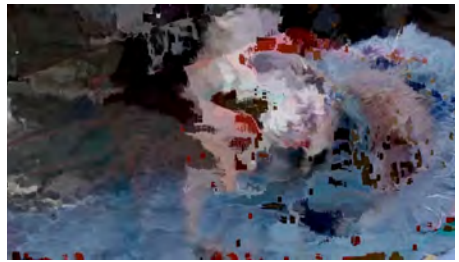
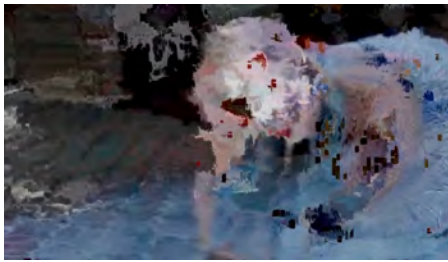
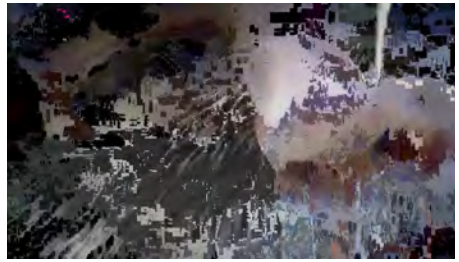
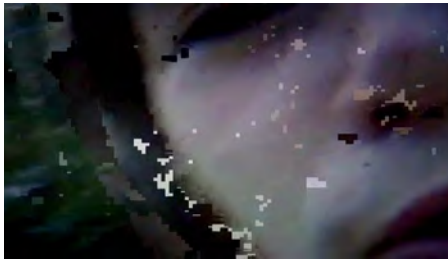
Rhinoceropolis for a show and party and see what everyone else was working on. It was really cool.

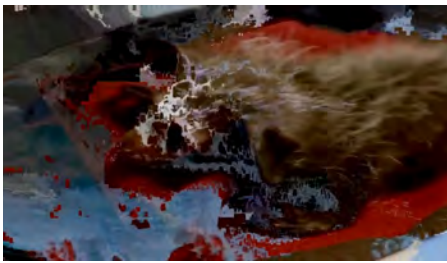
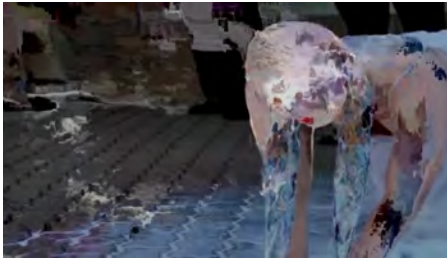
You use datamoshing as a technique to create your visual art. How did you get interested in that?

Yeah, it’s an early technique that I saw. It was in a Chairlift video and we knew Aaron [Pfenning] from Chairlift. He’s left the band since then, but he was the one who actually made that video. I remember seeing him at a bar somewhere and talking about it, and he was like, “Oh yeah you can just go online and find it,” and I was like, “OK.” It took ages to figure out because you have to download all these weird programs, and then you have to figure out how everything stacks. People saw it as a passing trend, but I saw it as a way to actually control the image, much like painting. So I pushed it in that sense, and I think I really advanced it. I haven’t seen any other datamosh videos that look like mine.

The way that I figured it out was that you can actually control it, it’s like oil paint or clay. The last video I made took almost a year to make, but every single clip moves into the next clip. That was the result of hours of watching thousands of different films and videos and finding something like, “Oh my god that guy just moved his arm the exact same way as this other guy in this other [movie].” When you get into Hollywood films they can be pretty similar, they really copy moves from each other a lot. You can see that in the new Star Wars films, they straight up ripped the old Star Wars off scene for scene. It’s really crazy.

I turned the last video I made into a show. It was a juried show in London and





LESS (A Still Sequence)
from USURPER "LESS" Music Video
2017

they said it was of exceptional quality (*Laughs*). So somebody out there still likes datamoshing, which is cool.

What is the “Less” video? Is it the video you made for USURPER?

Yeah it’s a music video, but I’m not sure if he’s even making music under USURPER anymore. That guy likes to go through projects really quick. But once I figured out how to control this medium, I started making longer videos. My next goal is to make a feature-length film that makes sense coherently while it’s moving. It’ll all be found footage or appropriated footage, but it will make sense coherently the way it moves together. It’s a mixture of editing tricks and knowing how things are going to smash into each other. Really cool stuff.

You talk about having control. Is that something you also seek with the other mediums you practice?

No, actually. My drawing style is kind of chaotic and uncontrolled, kind of like my handwriting is very messy. I don’t have very good penmanship, and I don’t have very good draftsmanship (*Laughs*). But I still draw and paint every once in a while. I really like super drippy ink, and the way you can’t control it. In a way, it’s like the exact opposite of what I’m trying to do with this video medium, which people are saying is like, super chaotic and unpredictable. Once you figure out the rules, the physics behind what’s happening, then you can do anything with it really. It’s wild. My other disciplines have definitely fallen to the wayside.

In two days you’re traveling back to England and are having some work exhibited there. Is that right?

Yeah! It’s this group show and the whole theme behind it is supposed to be







this homage to Alejandro Jodorowsky. Things like chaos and anarchy, and weird stuff like unpredictability, cinema, film and art. I submitted that last piece and as far as I know it got in, which is cool.

I'm curious about your studies at MSU Denver. From your perspective, what do you feel you've gotten out of your education?

It was a nice time to be a digital artist because you could actually major in it back then. The technology was changing super rapidly. When I started school, I didn't even have an iPhone. They didn't exist. By the time I finished school they were up to the iPhone 5 or something, that's how fast they were moving. I had a flip phone when I went to college and an iPhone by the time I graduated (*Laughs*). Pretty crazy. It was a really exciting time.

It's sad that they got rid of the digital art major program because I think that's really important, especially today. Especially going to London, to places like the Tate Modern and different galleries out there. Just because digital media and new media isn't very popular in galleries here, doesn't mean it isn't in other countries, especially in England. They seem to be embracing that experimentation and the moving image, anything that's not cinema I guess.

That's interesting thinking about your time at MSU Denver, especially in the beginning when we didn't have the technology that we have now. Do you feel as though the glitching and the datamoshing were somewhat of a reaction toward emerging tech when it comes to visuals? Like finding ways to exploit it?

Yeah, I think so. It was like using these archaic old technologies to make something new. It was always kind of a hurdle because the newer the computer, the more it would crash, so a lot of people were discouraged from it. There was a section where we had to show a different technique and teach it to the class. I think mine was the least popular. I made this piece with this rhinoceros crashing through Angela Lansbury in a bathtub. I don't know what it meant, but it looked really cool (*Laughs*).

The video art class was weird. It was more of a video art survey class. A lot of people had these different ideas in their head as to what video art was. I remember in the syllabus it said, "No music videos allowed!" I was like, "Oh, that's boring." But it was interesting, video now is so stale and clear, like what's the point in trying to make video out of something new? I've been doing a lot of these little video pieces where I just zoomed in on my telephoto lens in my iPhone and it looks like you're filming on a Hi8 camera. Like an old digital MiniDV camera or something. It looks so grainy and freaking awesome.

Yeah, I want to make a video piece about that, just film people and the ducks at the park zoomed in all weird while I'm in London. I was like, "Whoa, you can get this look with your freaking 4K iPhone, and all you're doing is chopping the resolution down by a fourth." It's interesting how the computer re-processes and analyzes it. I don't know if that's the look they were going for, but it's definitely a very nostalgic look for me.

In hindsight from your undergrad experience, is higher education

worthwhile for kids interested in art today?

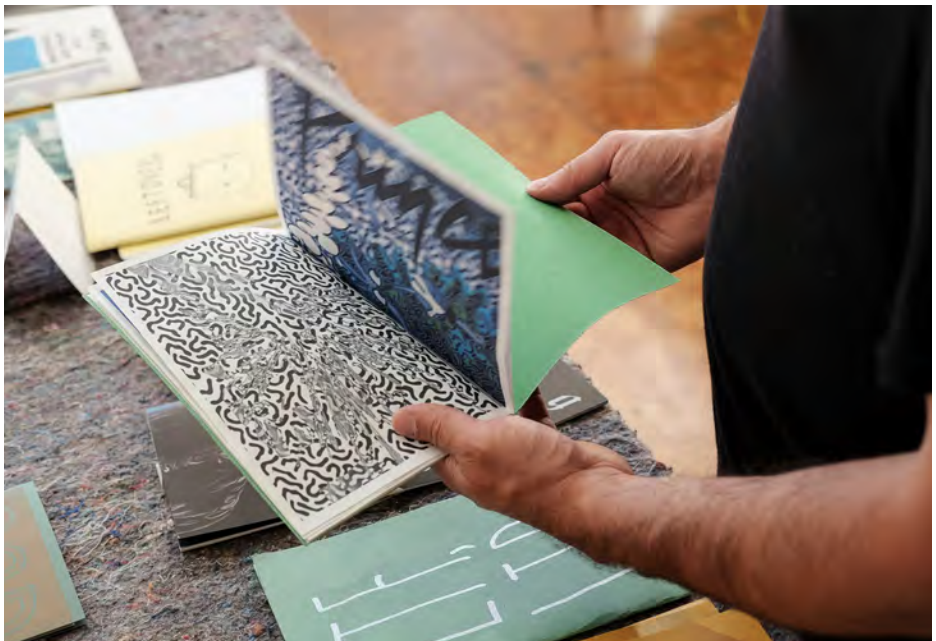
I think it's definitely good for the networking, especially if you're really into something but you're clueless. The foundation programs are really good. It seemed like my second and third year I had figured everything out, so it was a little bit boring. But during my last year of school I learned a lot. I met a lot of people, like pretty much all the people I still talk to today. It's really cool in that aspect. Plus you're getting an art degree and you can go on to get your master's. You can't do that if you don't go to school, obviously (*Laughs*).

Do you have any advice for art students who may be struggling to stay motivated?

Don't stop! Unsuccessful artists are the type that are like, "I don't care what people think, I'm going to make my own art and someday people will recognize my work." They have to think about what's happening in popular culture and

keep up with what's happening in the art world. You have to be really aware and soak up everything around you, and you can't be afraid to experiment. You have to get out there. You can't just lock yourself in your room and be like, "I'm going to create all this masterful work." I've seen artists do that and it doesn't really go anywhere.

Some of the most successful artists are the ones who are really knowledgeable about art history and popular culture. Art history doesn't just stop at Andy Warhol. In school, they teach art history up to a certain point, and then it just ends. Art history is what happened yesterday and you have to build on that. And you can't be discouraged because people don't like what you keep making, but you'll never find an audience if you don't ever cater to other people's tastes. I'm not saying they should just copy, but they should absorb absolutely everything.



Should students be getting more involved with their local art scene and building their network?

Definitely! That's the most important part of art school. People who think they're just going to go to art school and learn how to paint are wrong. You could be the best painter in the world, but if nobody ever sees your paintings, it doesn't matter. You can't just sit around waiting to be discovered, there's like, 8 billion people on the planet. The artists on Instagram that have the most followers either appreciate art, or are artists themselves.

Do you think you can find success through Instagram?

Yes, but you still have to network. You can't just post something on Instagram and come back to it a month later and be like, "Oh, nobody liked it." You have to put in the work, nothing is free. I know plenty of people who graduated with an art degree and they're not doing anything in the arts. They're delivering pizzas, working in bars, wasting their lives.

So, survival of the fittest?

Not even that! It's as simple as talking to people, but not being a weirdo (*Laughs*). You have to be happy about life, and be ambitious. I struggled with that for a long time. I was like, "I'm just going to draw my little cartoons, and if people don't like it, then they suck!" I obviously didn't go anywhere with that, so I tried something new. I had a guy who came in here the other day and he was looking through Jack's [Estensoro] work and he was like, "This guy is just throwing stuff up there to see what sticks." And I'm like, "You know what, that's a pretty good strategy!"

If you're not making the work, then you're never giving yourself the opportunity for that work to be shown anywhere, to be presented to the world. There are artists that have come through the gallery and they're like, "Oh, I need to make work for the show!" I'm like, "You're an artist, shouldn't you have a body of work just sitting around somewhere ready for a show?"

Artists like Jack have a garage full of art. Artists like Bruce Price, he's got a basement full of art, stacks and stacks of art just ready to go for a show. You need a show of geometric shapes? I got that! You need a show of naked dudes? I got that! You need a show of flat color? I got that! Everybody's idea of what an artist should be is just so out there. Art is culture, and if you don't have that culture you're not going to survive in the world. Like primitive cultures, they used to cast out the people that didn't give anything to the tribe (*Laughs*). That's why art is so important. This day and age, especially now with technology, everybody is super lazy and they think stuff is just going to land in their lap. Those are the people who aren't going to get anywhere in life. You have to work really hard.

What's your relationship with MSU Denver now? I understand that you often help exhibit student and thesis work, and hold workshops too.

Yeah, I'm as accommodating as I can be to those people whenever students or faculty reach out to me from Metro, University of Colorado Denver, and University of Denver. I haven't done anything with Community College of Denver yet. It's always fun to have students in there and see what they're doing. They get a hands-on gallery

experience. It's a lot more fun than me just going to a thesis show and being like, "Oh OK, so this is what they make?" I haven't been to a thesis show in a long time because I'm usually traveling whenever they have those shows, but I'm going to start going to them more. In the past, I've guest taught different classes. Other than that, I'm always really excited to have them in the gallery. I'm hanging out with other alumni, and I'm keeping that community pretty tight-knit.

I read that the idea of DATELINE came about during your time in Berlin, post-breakup, and it just happened to work with your friend Adam Milner's situation. Did you ever think that you'd own and operate your own gallery?

No! In fact, our senior year they brought in all these art gallery owners, and one student asked, "What's the best advice you can give us?" And Phil Bender [owner of Pirate: Contemporary Art

gallery and MSU Denver alumnus] said, "Don't open an art gallery!" (*Laughs*). I didn't want to open an art gallery, but then I realized while I was in Berlin that certain types of art galleries are a pain in the butt to maintain and keep going. You have to be more loose with your programing and open to more inclusive and different kind of concepts. I mean, there's a fine-line of what I won't show here.

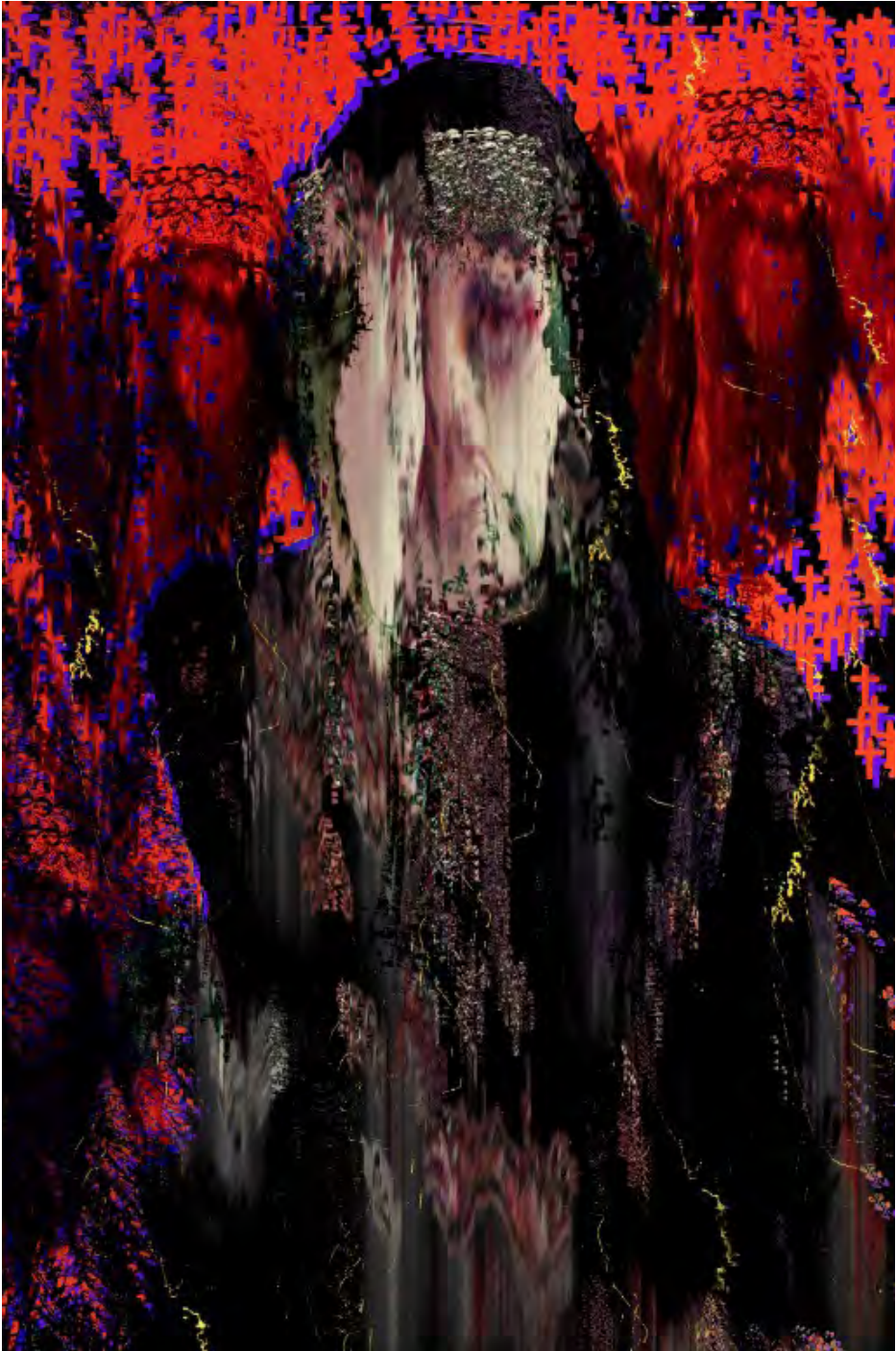
This show ["This Is It"] is pushing that envelope, but it's a product of what's happening in the neighborhood. If I were to have a video art show here during last week [the CrushWalls event], it would have been weird. So you have to know your community, while also being inclusive of everybody else. Some people are like, "I hate this neighborhood, it's a drinking neighborhood!"

I have my good months and my bad months, but even the bad months aren't that bad. Every once in a while you have to get out of your comfort zone and do a show like "This Is It" but other than that, it's fun.

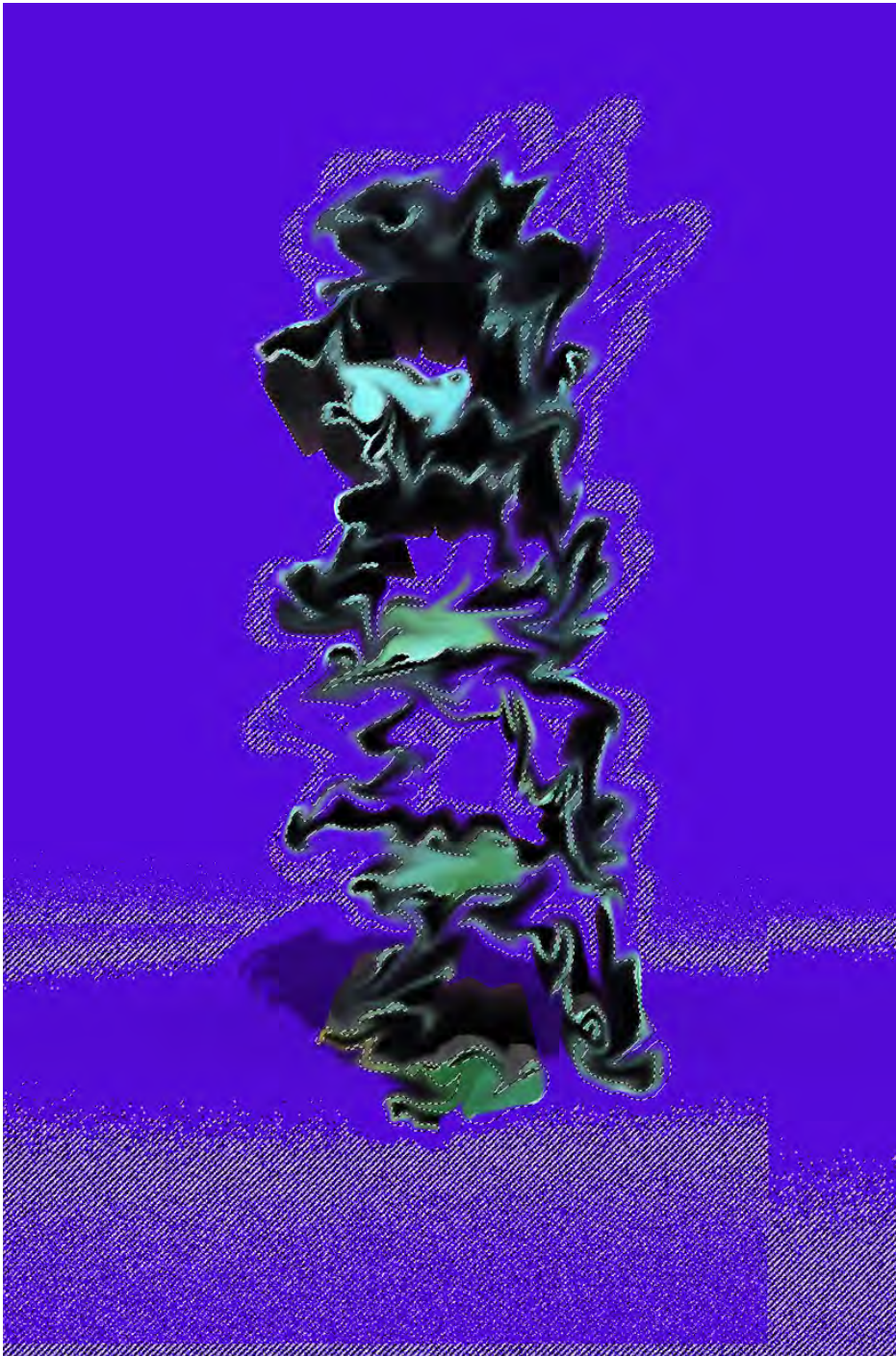
What are some of the exciting parts of owning and operating an art gallery, and what are some of the not-so-exciting parts?

When an artist doesn't show up with work for their show, that's not exciting. Having to paint and patch walls gets really old. Once, during a really hot summer I had to patch and paint these walls that this artist had just totally destroyed. It was so hot, so I took my shirt off, then I took my pants off. I was literally down to my socks and underwear, just painting this wall. Then I heard some giggling and when I looked back, there was some





Untitled
Digital Still
2013–17



Untitled
Digital Still
2013-17

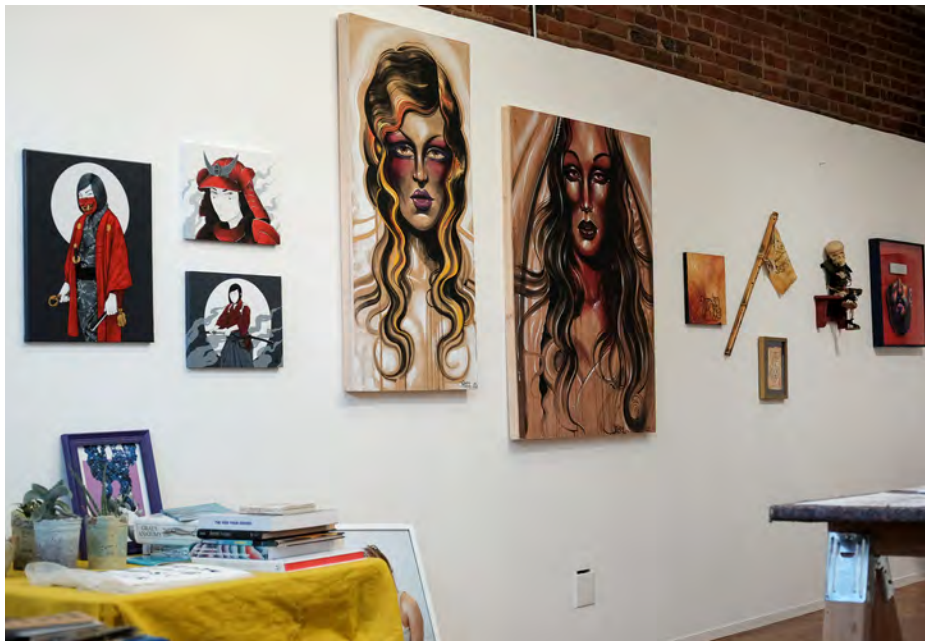
girl standing in the window watching me paint (*Laughs*). I realized, it's kind of like a performance piece. Every month you can come in here and watch me painting the walls and getting really angry, hot and sweaty, hating life. But when you have a good show, nothing else really matters. When you have a blockbuster show or people are buying art, it's a great feeling. It means that you did something right. They don't always have to be financially successful, but you know when a show's good and when a show's bad.

On DATELINE's about me it says, "DATELINE is a contemporary art gallery specializing in emerging and experimental contemporary art." Do you think that gives you an edge, that you seek out more innovative and conceptual ideas?

Well yeah, either really cool art that normally is not just a canvas on the wall, and then I also ride that border with just pure local art and

emerging artists. If there's an artist on Instagram and they're not local, and I'm considering if I should show them or not, I look at how many followers they have. If they have more than 3000 followers, I won't even consider showing them here. That's based off of my relationship with artists in the past.

It seems weird that I'm using Instagram as that litmus test, but it's totally true. People with more followers seem to have this weird ego. But every once in a while I'll find this amazing artist with only three or four followers and I'll be like, "Yo, come show at DATELINE!" The end result of that is a very diverse roster for the year. I just added a whole calendar of all the artist I've ever shown for the last four years. It was something I always wanted to do for my four year anniversary present to myself. It's a vast list. It's insane. Like, why do I feel so tired? Oh wait, I've shown, like, 1500 artists here in four years (*Laughs*).



left
 "This Is It"
 Art Exhibit
 from left
 to right:
 Casey Kawaguchi,
 Jher 451,
 The Art
 of Victory,
 Detour
 DATELINE Gallery
 2018

Do you think keeping DATELINE relevant is a means of getting the community involved? For instance, your pop-up shows and zines that you collect and sell, and the efforts you make to feature emerging artists, is that another way of keeping an art gallery relevant nowadays?

I think it's imperative to help the art community, and to give young and emerging artists a voice in a world where they don't necessarily feel welcomed. There's very few galleries around here anymore, besides the ones that are furniture and design galleries—like pretty shit you'd hang on your wall. Plus, it also keeps my mind fresh. Running an art gallery is like opening up a new business every month.

Every show is a new opportunity. You get a chance to try out new things, it's just fun and fresh. There are times where I'm like, "Oh my god I need to just close, this is crazy, what am I doing, I'm so stressed out!" But then there are times where you're like, "OK this makes sense, I get what's happening here." So that's important too.

What can we expect from DATELINE in the near future?

After we come back from England we're going to primarily focus on local art for 2019. We'll probably only have one or two shows featuring national artists this year. We need a major focus on local art and the community. They need to know there's still somewhere that cares about them in this neighborhood. Yeah, 2019 will be a pretty good year.

Why should people care about DATELINE?

Interesting question. It seems to be one of the last few spaces like this. Sometimes it feels like a commercial

art gallery, and sometimes it feels like a project space. But at the end of the day, it's really DIY. I feel like I'm giving a voice to people here in Denver that are starting to feel constrained or pushed out of the community, especially in this neighborhood. But things ebb and flow, and hopefully we'll get a nice big stock market crash, and the artists will have their day again. People who were diligent and got their shit done during that time, it's paying off for them. People who didn't party all the time and buckled down, figured shit out, made art, hung out with other artists, did cool shit, they're the ones reaping the benefits. I think it's a good thing.

I've had a few mental and internal struggles with myself, but I think it's safe to say that DATELINE is not really going anywhere. We're taking a little bit of a hiatus, but then we'll pick it back up in the spring, which is nice. You get to experiment and see what art does well, and what art doesn't. It's not like opening up a clothing store and then nobody buys your clothing and you're stuck with everything. It's really interesting in that context. Next month, there will be a completely different show in here, then November, December and January we'll be closed, and pick it back up in February. A fresh start, like the seasons. It's like that song "To everything, turn turn, there is a season, turn turn." I probably totally just botched that.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



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SUBMISSION

THE SECRET GARDEN OF PLEASURES

CYANOTYPE PRINTS BY **MONIQUE ARCHULETA**

Dear Stereotypical Social Norm,

Open your eyes because in the 21st Century we are still battling for sexual equality. We are looking for acceptance. To be loved and to love for as long as history can remember. Yet if you are not of the "norm," you are condemned for having a positive and healthy sexuality. Yet it is constantly thrown at us in social media, television, music, and every day billboard ads. As a society, we love sex. Everyone wants to do it. But only if it fits into the neat and pristine puzzle that society wants us to fit into. Don't bother loving who you love, lose weight to be liked, don't free the nipples, not in public, no straight person wants to see that, so just fit in. Go with the crowd. Don't be different. Follow the rules and never ask questions. Well here we are alive, kicking, and fighting back. We the garden of many fighting flowers. We will not be pushed and unheard.









No, we are not going to fit in, and we don't want to. We will stand out and proudly hold our sexuality up high. Dildo, butt-plug, anal beads, condoms, nipple clamps, collars, and handcuffs included. For we are the LGBTQIAPK, the healthy plus size people, the healthy skinny people, the healthy average people, the small boobed, the big boobed, the no boobs, we are the people who are naturally beautiful yet mocked because we do not look like supermodels. We want to live in a world that sees sexuality for anyone that is not of the "norm" as normal. We are not derogatory words, we are he, she, they, them, their, and us. So here we are raw and uncut, photographed on watercolor paper, colored by cyanotype. Showing that sex is natural. Showing that we are beautiful. It is as natural as flowers. It is as beautiful as a rose. Because SEX IS NATURAL, and we are beautiful.

Sincerely,
The Secret Garden of Pleasures.

SUBMISSION

TATS

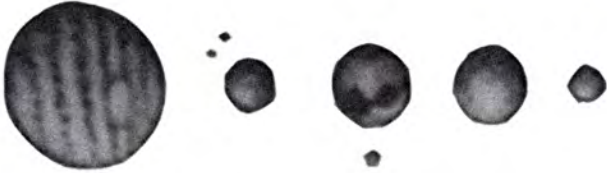
ART BY **MIKAELA NUNNALLY**

Tats is comprised of appropriated images curated from a growing archive of tattoo imagery via Pinterest. These digital collages play with the relationship between the art of tattoos and their placement on the body. The series investigates the ways that people alter their bodies and apply a cultural aesthetic to their physical selves.













JENNA MAURICE

INTERVIEW BY **ESTEVAN RUIZ**
PORTRAIT BY **JOSEPH HATFIELD**

Building relationships is a complicated and vulnerable process. MSU Denver instructor and visual artist Jenna Maurice has been investigating this condition throughout her artistic career, documenting such experiences through performance whether they concern relationships among people, nature or chemicals. Jenna is methodical and considerate in her approach and carries these qualities over into the classroom, where she encourages students to experiment for themselves and embrace failure. I sat with Jenna in the photo lab of Auraria Campus' art building on Sept. 28. We talked about nonverbal communication, feelings of insecurity, the benefits of criticism and her future works.



Estevan Ruiz: You studied photography as an undergrad at Watkins College of Art and now teach photography courses here at MSU Denver. What draws you to this medium?

Jenna Maurice: I actually didn't start out in photography. I started out in filmmaking. I went to film school for about two years of my undergrad and then I decided to change my major, as lots of undergrads do. What I really loved about filmmaking is telling a story through an image, but I didn't want to write scripts—dialogue wasn't something I was interested in. Telling a story through a still image or a series of images was really how my communication was working. My graduate degree is actually in interdisciplinary media arts practices, which kind of encompasses video performance and photography. So it's really more about storytelling and communicating through images.

Growing up, were you always interested in film and photography?

No, I wasn't. I was homeschooled, so I didn't have art classes until I went into high school. But we never had photography or film, or anything. My first intro to photography was through my friends in high school who had cameras from their grandparents. I'll never forget the first day I looked through an old hunk-of-metal manual film camera and was like, "Oh my god!" It was love at first sight. That sounds really cheesy (*Laughs*), but I still have that very first image that I ever took, and it's pretty special. Being able to curate the world through a rectangle, has always been pretty interesting to me.

What was your first camera?

My first camera was a Canon AE-1. I still

have it and shoot with it today.

Was it something handed down to you from your grandparents or a family member?

It wasn't. I learned later that there was a little bit of family history about photography, and I did some work about it. One of my series that I worked on called "Rewriting The Archives" is actually a series inspired by a bunch of old slides that my uncle gave me from a road trip. I kind of love the story about the camera though. I needed one because I had decided I was going to go to film school, so I went to a pawn shop and bought a camera. The guy who sold it to me told me that this camera belonged to a mountain police officer, and he had bought the camera because he wanted to be able to take lovely pictures on his horse. But it was a completely manual camera, and it's really difficult to get all the settings right. There's nothing automatic about it, and that's kind of impossible to do on a horse (*Laughs*). So he sold it to me for like 30 bucks. It came with three lenses that were pretty expensive lenses. I feel like he passed it down to me unknowingly.

From your perspective, what is it that you look for in a photograph?

I never go out to shoot a photo, but I always have something in mind. There are two types of photographers: there's the seeker, and there's the shaper. The seeker is someone who's going out in the world trying to find something, and the shaper has a specific idea, and they make it happen. Sometimes there are people who shift between the two.

I have always been more of a shaper. I think that's why I moved from film to



Sara: Through Her Own Eyes
So Successfully Disguised to Ourselves
C-Print
2006



Deanna: Through the Eyes of Her Sisters
So Successfully Disguised to Ourselves
C-Print
2006



Mom
Silent Communication
C-Print
2007



Dad
Silent Communication
C-Print
2007

photography, I had a story I wanted to tell. The story or experiment always starts in my mind, and then I go out and document it. I include myself in a lot of my work, and I'm documenting these performances that I've already planned. Sometimes I even storyboard or make drawings of what the frames need to look like, and because I'm in most of my work I usually need an assistant. I have an assistant that I've been working with for almost the whole time that I've been shooting since graduate school. He's been consistent, and I also help him with his work, so we kind of rely on each other.

You have an IMDb page with many credits, from assistant director to actor, working on short films. How did those opportunities come about?

You know, those opportunities come about from making friends in school, and then they do cool things and they want to work with you because they've been working with you in school. That's why I always try to tell all my students, "These are the people that you're going to work with when you get out of here." The people that are serious about doing art are the ones you want to form relationships with to make shit happen. The only way you can really do that is to form close relationships with people who work well together. All those relationships came from my undergrad.

What was your experience like as an art student at Watkins?

I went to Watkins which is a small private art school. There were no psychology majors or math majors, so even the general education courses that we took came back to this idea of problem-solving through visual art in some way or another. It was a really

small, tight-knit community, and that was great for me because I was coming from a homeschooled background where there wasn't a humongous group of students all the time. I also felt like I was getting a lot of personal attention from my instructors. I had a freedom in that small space to be able to make things happen on my own. I was always doing outside projects with other students that weren't even a part of school, it was a really positive experience for me.

Is this where some of your projects on your website came from, from your undergrad? Specifically the ones you have of your family?

Yeah, the family portraits on the website are all from the last year of my undergrad. During my undergrad program we had a big BFA thesis show and a series called "So Successfully Disguised To Ourselves," which is my BFA thesis series.

I like that series "So Successfully Disguised To Ourselves," and also "Silent Communication."

That happened right after undergrad. You know when you get to that "I have to do things without assignments," mentality and you have to make yourself do shit because you need to be an artist now (*Laughs*).

I'm curious to know a little more about "Rewriting the Archives." I'm aware that you projected these slides from your uncle's collection and composited yourself into them, right?

So I would call them live composites because they're all in that one frame, and nothing is being cut out in Photoshop. I would project those slides in a big studio room with a really long space. I had a slide projector that



Untitled #2
Rewriting the Archives
Archival Pigment Print
2012



Untitled #4
Rewriting the Archives
Archival Pigment Print
2012



Untitled #7
Rewriting the Archives
Archival Pigment Print
2012



Untitled #8
Rewriting the Archives
Archival Pigment Print
2012



Finding Equanimity within the Landscape by Walking Through an Obstacle
Concerning the Landscape: A Study in Relationships
Still from single channel video
2013

had a 1000 watt bulb, so it was a large projection that was bright enough. A lot of these took eight or more hours to do, just to get the perspective and lighting right. The background images are actually those from my uncle, who I didn't know very well at the time. About 15 years ago he gave me this bag of slides and was like, "You're into photography!" and I was like, "Why are you giving me trash?" (*Laughs*) But I kept them, and when I was in grad school I started looking at them and I was like, "Oh my god, these are really good."

He was a businessman, not an artist whatsoever, but he took these amazing photographs that were so well considered and contained such amazing compositions and perspective. He's got these photos from the balcony of a hotel looking down at the pool where you see all these people laying out, and this amazing one of this lady driving by in a car. I started looking at them and was like, "Wow Uncle Len, I didn't even know your life was interesting." I thought that maybe I could try to get to know him and his experience a little bit better if I could somehow do performances where I inserted myself into these memories, kind of rewriting these archives that he had given me.

Actually, in grad school, I got a grant to go out and make some new work with him and these slides. I took video of me interviewing him about the slides and their history, and at the end of that whole process he decided he didn't need or have any interest in making any new memories. He wanted to keep them exactly as they were, so that was a really interesting bonding moment that we were able to have. And just

like all my other work, it's about building relationships with something, whether it be a person, or a landscape, or the past.

Your work "Concerning the Landscape: A Study in Relationships" is really interesting too. What was that process like and what were you trying to achieve?

That whole series is asking questions like, "How do we form a relationship with the landscape? Does the landscape even care if we form a relationship? Does it care about relationships? Does it care about communicating?" One of the first pieces that I thought of for this project was a piece where there's a big field and there's one large bush in the middle of the field. Instead of walking around the bush, which is probably all of our natural instinct to do, I walked through the bush, which was difficult (*Laughs*). Even with that little bit of questioning I'm wondering, "Does the bush care if anybody notices it or interacts with it?" Because a person definitely would.

I was trying different experiments to see how I can relate to different aspects of the landscape. Like, how do I understand the force that is Niagara Falls? I have to try to do the only thing I know how to do that makes me experience that force, and that's fill my entire stomach up [with water from Niagara Falls] and vomit it over the falls (*Laughs*). It sounds insane, and it took a lot of practice and a lot of visits to the nurse to get some tips on how to do that, so there's a lot of research that goes into it as well. In that series I also buried my head at the lowest point in North America, therefore getting lower than it, kind of having a joke with the landscape or an argument of

some sort. So hopefully there's some seriousness as well as some humor. Some of them are just trying to elicit a human response from the viewer.

That happens a lot with the one where I'm trying to relate to the Toadstool rock. I'm trying to hold a rock balancing it on my head, it's like a 30 pound rock, I do it for a couple of seconds, but hopefully when the viewer is watching it they're getting a little bit of, "Oh I know that feeling." That little feeling of humanity.

The piece I like a lot is "Difficulties in Relating to Ocean Waves." It is pretty funny.

Yeah totally! I was also like an idiot rolling up and down. Yeah, being a wave is hard. I'm also not built like a wave so that's a disadvantage, but yeah there's definitely humor. I also feel like there's humor in failures in our lives. Failure is a huge part of my practice, accepting and learning from failure and also reveling in failure. Failure is such a negative thing and I really want to turn that around. That's how I learn and experience things. If I never experienced failure, I'd be a really boring person (*Laughs*).

You came to Colorado to pursue your Master's of Fine Arts in interdisciplinary media arts practices at CU Boulder, where you created your first installation piece commenting on feeling inadequate with your work. I'm curious to know more about that and how you overcame, if you have, those feelings?

No, I never overcame those feelings. They're always here (*Laughs*). I think it's daily, maybe more a weekly, process, where as an artist I feel like I'm always in self-doubt or always feel like I'm

not doing enough or being inquisitive or exploring enough. There's always this little bit of vulnerability too of like, "I can't show anyone my work because it's not good." Every artist, if they're not going through that I don't know how they did it, but I think most people are. It's also kind of nice to have those feelings because I feel like I can relate to students really well because they probably have those feelings about their projects that they do for classes at this point. It's still a constant struggle, but maybe I'm a little more comfortable than I was with that installation "Forbidden Doorknob." Maybe I moved a step up the stairway, probably 20 more steps (*Laughs*).

Do you think through experience and consistently creating work that you've been able to establish more confidence within yourself?

Yeah and that's where embracing failure really comes in because if you look at failure as not a negative, it's easier to either accept rejection or just be OK with people not liking your stuff and not getting a bunch of validation about it. My partner and I, we've taught classes together before, and we are really interested in this idea of rejection therapy.

There's this entrepreneur who lived in Texas, his name is Jia Jiang and he did "100 Days of Rejection Therapy," which was really an important part of our graduate school experience because we started taking those things to heart. He would just come up with things and he'd go and ask strangers to get them to say no to him, so he could practice being said no to—practice being rejected and it being OK. So once we started really thinking about rejection as something



Difficulties in Relating to Ocean Waves
Concerning the Landscape: A Study in Relationships
Still from single channel video
2014



Interacting with the Lowest Point in North America
Concerning the Landscape: A Study in Relationships
Still from single channel video
2014



Difficulties in Relating to the Toadstool Rock
Concerning the Landscape: A Study in Relationships
Still from single channel video
2014

that could be positive or could be learned, and really controlling this crazy rollercoaster of emotions, which is human, I think that really helped to get up another step.

Would you consider yourself a perfectionist?

I mean, just the fact I'm going to say no probably means *yes (Laughs)*. Yes but then nothing is perfect, so no. I can never get it there so I guess not, but I try. I'll probably never make any work that has a really lo-fi quality to it. I'm really interested in really clean looking work. That's the way I find that I can challenge myself, is working outside of something that I'm comfortable with. I like to know where my perfectionism goes. It's also good to be aware of that so I can kind of turn it on it's head and try something new. That's how you break new ground.

You keep challenging yourself. I always wonder how I can make my world just a little bit bigger. I feel like going against my perfectionist self or surprising myself with a process, kind of makes my world a little bit bigger.

Do you think the feelings of insecurity are an affirmation of your passion for the work that you're doing?

It could be for sure. I mean yeah there's definitely a conversation you could have where it's like, well if you were flippant about it, you probably don't care about it. So the fact that I feel like a shitty artist sometimes, probably, definitely, is attributed to the fact that I care about being a good one, and doing all that I can to be a problem-solver in the world through community and imagery. The negative feelings I feel, they're always the thing that pushed me forward. Not that

negativity is pushing me forward, it's challenging me to start looking at the world and materials in a new way.

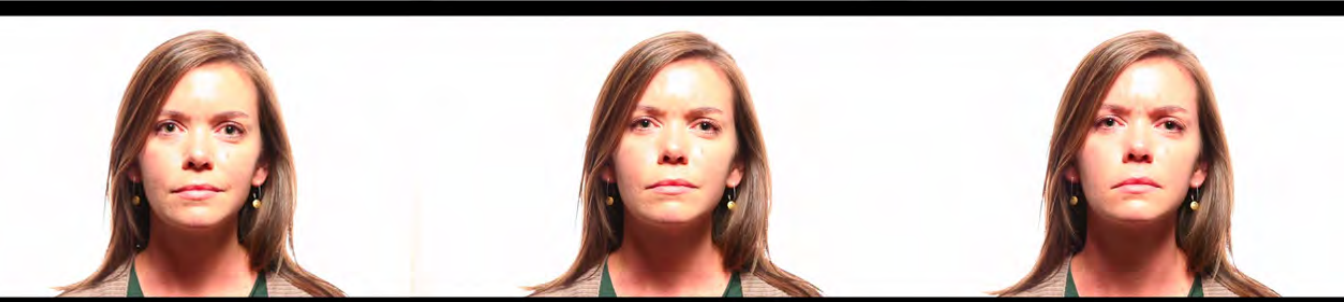
You'll see from my past work that I work in all kinds of things, sometimes I wouldn't even call myself a photographer. I would call myself a visual artist because I work in video, I work in performance, I work in photography. Right now I've got two things I'm working on. One is a short film that's a little bit of an abstract narrative, and then the other is a series of actual prints that are camera-less photos. They're real different from each other, but they're all dealing with the same exact thing, which is relationships (*Laughs*).

I thinks it's great that you're very open about these feelings and, through your work, visually expressing them. Even regarding your family portraits, it's interesting how they project themselves or how they think you think of them as the viewer, tapping into the emotional side of things.

I've always been grateful that my family is willing to have their vulnerable side be printed of them for people to see. It's on the internet and not all of the images are positive. They're really about the human experience, which is super complicated.

Some of your portrait and performance series through film like "Reactions to a Memory of an Experience," and even your photo series "Tension Portraits," are very visceral.

I'm really interested in this idea of communicating without the language that we use. I do a lot of traveling, where I go to places they don't speak English and try to have experiences on a human level. Where maybe we don't



Reactions to a Memory of an Experience
Image sequences from a single channel video
2015

even say anything but maybe we cook a meal together and figure out what each other are doing in the kitchen without even talking. I feel like all those works you just mentioned, “Reactions to a Memory of an Experience,” they’re all about trying to read the humanity in another person by looking at their subtle gestures. It happens to us everyday, I love that shit!

Many art students share that same sentiment of not feeling adequate and seem to be afraid to experiment and push boundaries. How do you encourage art students to take risks?

Well one main thing that I understand as an artist, is that there is no artist that is the same, or there shouldn’t be. Even in a class situation where you might be focusing on intro or intermediate photography, everybody’s point of view and what they’re communicating is going to be completely different. So I really try to encourage my students not to look at each other to find that bar for themselves. Definitely be challenged by each other, but know when you need to go your own way and explore your own stuff, because you are the only one that has the point of view that you have. The world is really boring when we all start making the same work, so I try to really encourage students to find what it is personally that they get excited about.

I talk to my students a lot about this idea of personal aesthetic and what does that word mean. Sometimes when I try to understand words I look at the opposite word, and an opposite word of aesthetic could be anesthetic. An anesthetic is something that deadens or numbs or makes you feel nothing, so the opposite of that would be

something that actually makes you feel alive in your body. When I start talking about that with students, most of the time it really clicks in to what they’re passionate about, what they love, and then that’s the starting point to say, “OK how can we explore this through imagery and what medium is actually needed?” Even in photography, is it a more experimental medium that talks about that idea, is it a more traditional one, is it a digital medium? So really trying to find that thing that makes them feel alive and go from there.

And also what you mentioned earlier, be open to failure if it doesn’t work out.

Yup! Constructive criticism in a healthy community atmosphere is the best thing that happens to you in school and it’s the one thing that you miss the most when you’re out of school.

So, receiving feedback through criticism and establishing a network, that’s what you should be getting out of art school?

Totally! One of the ways that you can keep that community sense going is to have informal critiques when you’re done with school. I have a group of friends that get together and share work every month, and it’s kind of what keeps us all accountable and going. It’s also what inspires—I kind of hate the word inspires—it gives us new ideas and lets us see new things, around the couch, sharing stuff informally. That feedback is what’s really important and it doesn’t have to stop at school.

I like what you said about students being challenged by each other, but not being influenced by each other’s work. Is that something you carry as a professional as well, as far as

not trying to be influenced by other people's work, but rather coming up with ideas organically?

I think it's really important to know the conversation that you're stepping into because everything that all of us do is part of a conversation that's already ongoing. The world has been around for a long time, the mediums that I'm working in have been around for a while. I do feel it's really important to know what that conversation is and be mindful about how I'm contributing to it and what is the unique thing I might be contributing. To know that and to know what the unique thing is, I do need to know the rest of the stuff that's in that conversation, so I look at work all the time.

You have an Instagram account, @hashtag_dead, where you post images of roadkill and decaying animal corpses. What initiated this project of yours?

(Laughs) So I didn't want my personal life to be on Instagram, but I wanted to have an account because I wanted to understand how it worked and to be able to look for stuff on it too—just see what the deal was. I think it's really important for any instructor to know what's happening, especially in the realm that they are teaching in. Instagram is a humongous part of our image consumption.

I definitely wanted my Instagram to be a personal project. Sometimes with personal projects I set rules for myself, so my rule for my Instagram was every time I saw a dead thing on the ground while walking, I would post it. Now it's gotten to the point where it has become a zine called "Hashtag_Dead" and I invite people to share their dead posts with me. Now I repost dead

photos and tag people. So it's kind of become like a community 'dead' effort of memorializing these poor animals.

Instagram is unique because it is a purely visual platform. There are tons of photographers, myself included, who use it as a project space. How do you think Instagram impacts the medium of photography?

It's impacting it in an interesting way. First of all, it's just easy to stumble upon things now on Instagram and I love that there's the whole gamut of things. There are people doing normal, everyday things. There are all kinds of professional photographers on there. There are companies on there, and there are also people putting weird stuff on there. I follow this one person where all she does is put her face in bread every time, it's called @breadfaceblog *(Laughs)*. You can find everything.

One of my favorite Instagram accounts is called @carpet_sample, and it's just this man who posts little pictures of the carpet that he's around that day and then people comment. My favorite thing about it is that he replies to every single comment and he says things like, "I'm glad you like carpet," or "Thanks for liking my carpet" *(Laughs)*. It's opening the door to being able to talk about images in a new way. I'm able to talk with my classes about the idea of cliché or dismissible imagery a lot better now because they dismiss imagery everyday of their lives on purpose. They know what that's like and we can have conversations about, "If you don't want to be dismissible, what are the things about dismissible imagery that you know? Why did you dismiss an image?"



Small Organs (Grape)
Lumen Print
2018

I feel like those conversations are way easier to have now than in the 90s, when the internet wasn't really huge yet. Just the way we consume images and the amount of images we see through Instagram everyday, it has transformed the way we think. We think critically about images now even if we don't know we do. We're able to have critical conversations because of the way we view them.

Do you think the ease and accessibility of Instagram challenges or augments this notion of nonverbal communication?

Okay, so I think there's a couple different things about that. One, this idea of nonverbal communication, or what's underneath an Instagram account, we can definitely have bigger conversations about. Students, and people in general, know that a large percentage of Instagram is all about the perfectly curated life. So it doesn't show all of these moments that are bad, or that might not be perfect. It's all about posting things that will make people think that you live this amazing life, and it will make you maybe feel better about it but you also know that you're curating your life through imagery. That's a super interesting nonverbal thing that's happening within people's Instagram accounts that we can then have conversations about in the classroom. It also brings up this idea of what a machine can do for your images. There are so many filters that perfect things or make things look as though you shot them with this old equipment. I think that's a good segway into how do we do this for real?

You mentioned this a little, but what are you working on currently?

I'm still working on some videos with performances in the landscape. I go to Death Valley every year in December and see what kind of relationships I can make with the land there (*Laughs*). I'm doing a series right now that's focused on emerging and disappearing in the landscape as a human. Some of the videos that I'm working on right now are on that. There are some photos too. I have a project I've been working on, that's been on the back burner for about six years. It's a short film that is an abstract coming-of-age story that's based on some emails that I received in high school from a person that was very close to me. I'm also working on this series of lumen prints, which is an analog process. It's where you have actual darkroom photo paper, bring it out to the sun, and expose organic material on it.

So I'm working with things that come from the earth, as well as the body, that are organic materials that would create an image. Things like plants, vegetables, fruits and things like that, but also things like dew and rain. How is the rain from Denver different? How does it burn itself onto the paper and how is it different from the rain that's in France? What about sweat from people's bodies, what about hair? So kind of going a little bit further with this process with the actual relationship of the biological and chemical properties of matter and the photographic paper, and how do those things get along.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



jennamaurice.com

IG: [@hashtag_dead](https://www.instagram.com/hashtag_dead)

SUBMISSION

A stylized, hand-drawn graffiti-style word 'OUTSKIRTS' in black ink. The letters are thick and interconnected, with a rough, expressive quality. The 'O' is a simple circle, while the 'S' and 'K' have multiple overlapping strokes. The 'I' is a single vertical stroke, and the 'R' has a curved bottom. The 'T' is a simple vertical stroke with a horizontal top bar. The 'S' is a simple curve, and the 'K' is a simple vertical stroke with a diagonal crossbar. The 'I' is a simple vertical stroke, and the 'R' has a curved bottom. The 'T' is a simple vertical stroke with a horizontal top bar. The 'S' is a simple curve, and the 'K' is a simple vertical stroke with a diagonal crossbar.

PHOTOS BY **ALEX ZEZZA**

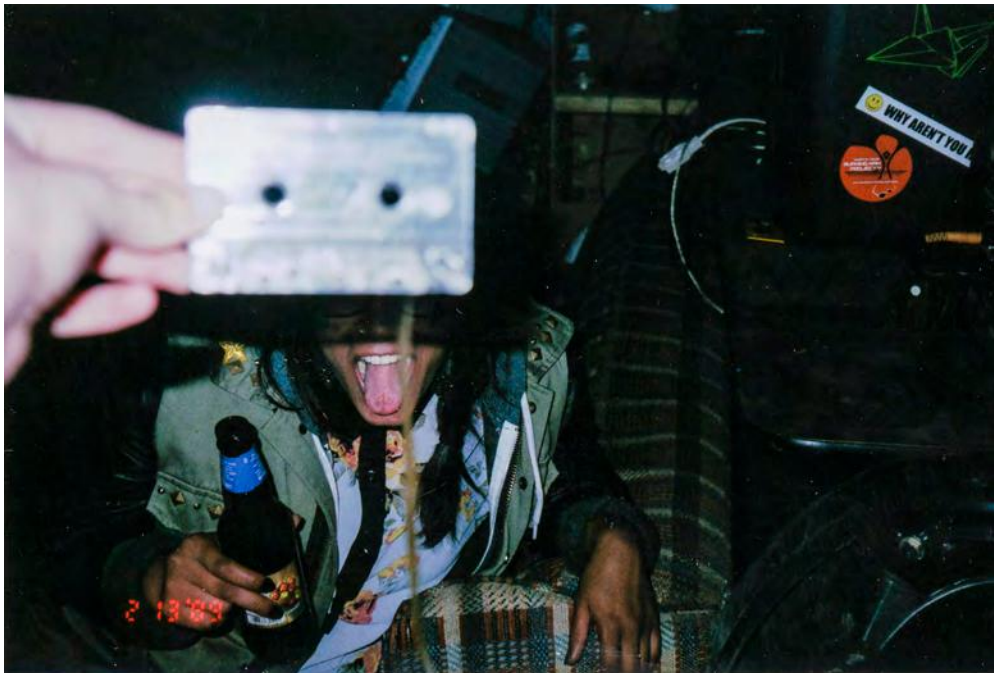








This is a collection of photos sharing my point of view of an underground counterculture, which flourished in Denver's RiNo neighborhood. The space known as Rhinoceropropolis, which has since shut down due to safety concerns after the 2016 Ghost Ship warehouse fire in Oakland, provided a space for local artists and musicians to experiment and share their work. This series of snapshots were captured on 35mm film during 2012 and 2013.

















GAIA ORR

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS BY **ESTEVAN RUIZ**

Determination and humility are the first words that come to mind when I think about MSU Denver student and artist Gaia Orr. Motivated by a DIY ideology and grounded in her altruistic outlook, Gaia is ambitious yet sincere. Growing up with art as an everyday experience thanks to her creative parents, things have come full circle for her. Bouncing around from different schools and occupations ultimately led her to MSU Denver, where she has since discovered her purpose and artistic vision. I had the privilege of speaking with Gaia on Sept. 30 at her home in Capitol Hill, where we talked about nostalgia, how to meet artists, skateboarding and her love for zines.

Estevan Ruiz: Your academic journey has been an interesting one. You went to CEC Early College for an extracurricular program, where you received education in culinary arts, then went to Community College of Aurora, then Community College of Denver, where you received your associate's degree. Now you're here at MSU Denver pursuing a bachelor's in art. How has your diverse education affected your outlook?

Gaia Orr: I think it was really necessary because I didn't really have a whole lot of direction when I first started college. I was always told that after high school you go to college, so I always knew I needed to do it. The first class I took was a digital photography class, and then I started taking business classes. I've been going to school for seven years now and I think the business and marketing stuff is practical and interesting. Through my education I was also able to discover the things I dislike. Like in culinary school, I found out I did

not like working in a kitchen, so that was super valuable.

Considering you didn't have a clear direction when you started school, would it be fair to say that you've been on a journey trying to discover yourself and your identity as an artist?

Yeah, definitely. I think art school is really challenging because it forces you to define yourself. I see school as a way of buying time. You can better yourself and figure out what you actually like spending your time doing. I would say I found myself through school. I don't think I'll know exactly who I am by graduation, but it's definitely helped that I've been able to take my time.

And especially learning from your previous experiences and knowing what you didn't like.

Well, I learned a lot by working for a photographer, but those experiences also helped me realize that I wanted to make art. It's been a process of self



right
Prints by
Jazzmyn Barbosa,
Crispysz
Painting by
Jack Estenssoro

discovery. I've always been the type of person that needs to make a mistake, to go down the wrong path and be like, "Oh yeah, that didn't feel right."

Now that you're at MSU Denver pursuing art, how has your experience been so far with art classes?

It's been pretty challenging. Some days it's really difficult to identify yourself as an artist. But I think it's helped me realize that I'm making art for a purpose, and not just to stay busy. I mean that's a huge part of it: staying busy, making things, and enjoying the way it feels when you finish a project. At Metro I've had teachers like Jenna [Maurice] and Natascha [Seideneck], who have helped me figure out what I want to do and encouraged me to stay with photography.

Your interest in the arts stems from your upbringing, both of your parents being artists themselves. What was that like growing up with so much exposure to art?

It was just a normal, everyday thing. My dad was on the computer a lot. He was working with sound, visuals, and programming, and sometimes he'd be writing poetry for his blog. My mom would be painting, always working on a different project. It was an everyday thing, an activity to keep yourself busy.

Is this a trait that you carry on now, trying to stay proactive and productive as an art student?

Yes and no. School has inspired me to focus on what I want my art to say. A few years ago I was just making stuff, and that's when I started doing collages because it's one of the quicker ways to see an end result. I think that's something that's carried over into my art. Part of me just wants to see

things completed, and say yes or no to an idea. But I've gotten more focused and I try not to make something I know I'm going to hate. Which would be interesting to do, honestly (*Laughs*). But I try not to because I value my time. Hopefully when I'm out of school, I'll have more time to just goof off again.

You're also influenced by pop culture from the late '90s and early '00s, referencing things like Beanie Babies, the Rugrats show, movies and pop music. How does that culminate and influence your work?

That's a big question for me because that's what I'm trying to sort out right now. I think part of it is just making more light-hearted, spontaneous things. I've always been drawn to that. I've also been dealing with nostalgia in art. I wonder, does part of this have to do with how I feel about those particular things and them being around everyday in my life? So I've been trying to explore it a little bit deeper in my art. I have some bad tastes, but I don't know, you can make it work for you (*Laughs*).

It makes sense that you would be inspired by the things that excite you or make you feel happy.

It's not always happy. Sometimes I look through old magazines from before I was born and it gives me that same feeling. But it's just like, that shared nostalgic quality of certain things. It's just being comfortable and enjoying what you're doing.

What led you to your interest in photography?

I would say looking at magazines, and looking on the internet too. But magazines were probably the first thing. Seeing artistic pictures of

famous people you admire and movie stills really drew me to photography in the first place.

You worked as a photo assistant at Andrae Michaels Portrait Studio, what do you feel you gained from that experience?

When I took that job, I was pretty inexperienced in photography. So it taught me a lot of the basics like three-point lighting, how to properly store all your files, and the whole customer service aspect to it. That was the first time I had to sell anything, which was really hard. I took away a lot from that experience. It pushed me to be more independent with my photography.

Doing photography for yourself?

If someone puts boring rules out in front of me, I'm just like, "OK, I don't want to do that." After a year of working there, I just wanted to push the [camera's] ISO and experiment.

You dabble in fashion photography and have expressed that you're exploring more experimental routes, but I also know you're trying to incorporate more of your culinary background into your photography. Can you tell me more about that?

I started looking at old cookbooks, specifically one that my dad got when he graduated. I think he's wanted it back in the past, but I've always held onto it because I love it so much. All of the recipes are pretty much inedible, they're awful, but the pictures are cool and otherworldly. In contemporary times you take a picture of food and want it to look delicious, and those pictures do not look like that at all. They're taking these super saturated and unappealing photos of raw hot dogs and stuff like that. I think I've just been trying to take little things that I like about the culinary world and put it into my photography.



right
Prints by
Garrett Moore



Untitled
Collage
2017



Untitled
Collage
2017

So, it's not necessary to depict the dish as something to consume, but rather something to appreciate aesthetically?

Yup! So some of the food photography doesn't even have edible scenes. Like I'll do a jello mold with glitter in it, and it's definitely not about eating it at all (*Laughs*).

I'm sure there's a fine line where someone could see your culinary photography as a fine dining experience, but then you're really making it into this surrealistic object, incorporating inedible items or things you definitely don't want to consume.

No (*Laughs*).

You've recently created some skateboard graphics for Emage skate shop, using re-scanned images of your culinary photos. How did that opportunity come about?

The opportunity itself came about through Brendan [Reimers], who owns the shop. We're good friends with him. I think the shop reached into a particular subculture in Denver and it's been flourishing and inspiring the youth. Brendan was open to helping us out. He really likes original art. Garrett [Moore] already does so much art for them, so hopefully they can do more artist boards like that. Those were just rescanned food photos, kind of like a surreal food scene.

You're really involved in the skateboarding community and you've even mentioned the documentary "Beautiful Losers" as an inspiration too. You've also been exhibited at Emage for their 2014 show "Friends of Friends."

I would say that's a good mile marker for the start of our relationship with



Emage. It was probably a little less than 10 kids who all got together and showed whatever art they had available at the time. And that's pretty true to the skateboarding community in general. Like, "Hey, I have a friend who does that, and I have five friends who do that, let's all get together and make something happen!"

Yeah, there's a lot of DIY influence, doing a lot of things on your own with friends.

Yeah! During the time that I was meeting all of these skateboarders, I was also meeting people in the DIY punk community. I feel like I pulled influences from both of those communities unintentionally while making art. I started making a lot of zines. That definitely came from the punk kids.

You've also been exhibited in "The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula" and Alexander Ablola's show for his

“Soft & Shallow” zine release. How did those connections come about?

Through mutual friends, Instagram, and just being present in Denver. Some days I’m more social than others, but it never hurts to just say hello to people when you’re out. That’s how I was able to do those art shows with those kids. We had a similar ideology, similar style, a right time, right place sort of thing.

The work you exhibited in “The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula” was a portrait series, where the idea came from a portrait you found in your grandmother’s archive, right?

My grandma had a bunch of different interests in her lifetime, one of which was hair-modeling. I think she was helping out a friend, and I found this picture of the back of her head in various poses and it really caught my eye. I had been staring at it for a couple of years and after she had passed away this last year, it really inspired me to make something with it. So I decided to recreate that picture of her. I tried to recreate the setting, lighting, and the overall quality the best that I could, with my grandma, my mom and me. That’s pretty much our entire family, so it was a really important piece for us.

I feel like that’s the only time my family really related to my art, because it was about them, it was pictures of them. I think that’s the only time I’ve really made emotional art so far. I think it was successful, but I don’t know if I could ever force myself to do something like that again. It just kind of happened that way. But I did like the process of that project, and I’d like to continue with appropriating and recreating images from the past. I don’t know if they’ll be as hard hitting to me as that one. That one made me emotional.

I know Mario Zoots has been an inspiration for you as well, reaching out and interviewing him for a project. And he kept you in mind to be exhibited in his curated show, “The Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula.” It sounds like you’re being very proactive as an art student, getting out there and networking, and reaching out to some of the big-name Denver artists.

All it takes is one common thread. I know that Mario knows one of my teachers or one of my friends, and it makes it feel less scary to say, “Hey I’m a student at Metro, what are you up to, would you be interested in talking to me?” I think it’s easier than people think. I’ve heard students say, “I just need to get out there and put myself out there.” All it takes is one interaction, but you can’t look at every interaction expecting this is going to get you somewhere. But putting yourself out there isn’t going to hurt you, even just showing up to a gallery show and introducing yourself to the artist. You never know, you might be the only person who introduced themselves to the artist that night.

I think for some art students that’s always an issue, feeling insecure and maybe intimidated to make the effort to go out to shows and meet other artists.

Just bring a friend with you. Denver is small. If you don’t know somebody there, your friend is bound to know somebody there. It’s pretty casual.

You make your own zines as well, featuring your photography and collage work. What do you find so interesting about the format?

I think it’s a way to get immediate, tangible results. You can always post to your blog, but having something

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Hand Portraits
35mm Film Scans
2018

tangible that you can trade with somebody and hold onto years down the road beats all internet art. It can be costly, but if you really want to you can do it for free. I can't say that about painting on canvas, or having someone else print your photos.

Do you think the accessibility of images makes photography interesting too? The fact that you can capture a framed photo and share it with others through platforms like Instagram, but you can also print it out and distribute it as well?

Definitely. I think it's a great way to share photos. Everyone can take a photo. Doing it with purpose and in a community where you feel people are interested in the same things that you are is what makes it really fun.

As an emerging artist continuing your studies at MSU Denver, as well as doing your own thing outside of school, do you ever experience feelings of self-

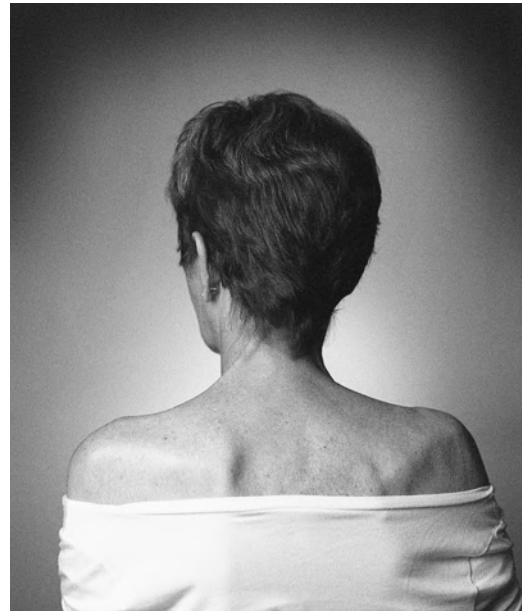
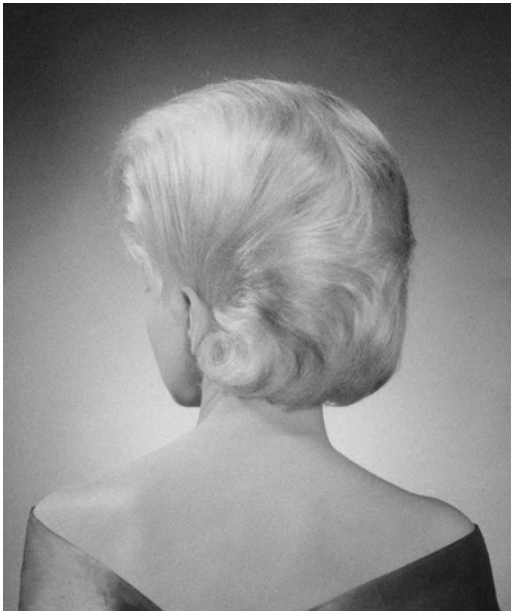
doubt or struggle with coming up with new ideas?

All the time! All the time. In every scenario, I have feelings of self-doubt. But setting deadlines for yourself really helps. If you know you have to finish something on a certain day and you get 75 percent of the way there, you might as well just finish it. Just do it. Of course I think about rejection and I think about all the other setbacks in life. But it's just art (*Laughs*). Not every piece has to be perfect. Even before art shows I'm like, "Oh my gosh, no one's going to like what I have!" or, "This isn't what I expected, what I planned for!" No one knows that but you, so just go for it. You're going to look back on it and be pretty proud of yourself. It's definitely better to look back and be like, "Oh, I could've done that better," than, "Ugh, why didn't I participate in that?"

You've been the subject of a few paintings for Molly Bounds [MSU Denver



left
 "Girl Crush" and
 "Cherry Bomb" by
 Jessica Gutierrez
 "Danny Mansion"
 by Grant Corrigan



The Back of Our Minds
Found image of my great grandmother and original images of my matriarchal lineage
2018



alumna], and she's someone you consider to be a mentor too. What has your experience been like with Molly?

It's interesting because I can't remember the first time that I met Molly. She was just always going to the same things I was going to at the time. I think we just had a bunch of mutual friends. She was always very supportive and really believed in the community. I think she's a huge fixture in the DIY scene that I know in Denver, so I've always looked up to her. As far as being in her paintings, she would just post on Instagram, "Hey, I need a model for this painting," and I would go hang out with her. I kept doing it because she's a talented painter, and they looked really cool.

It's really cool to hear that you're taking an initiative and just reaching out to people you admire.

Yeah, she's really nice. It's cool because when I first started getting to know Molly and seeing her art around, she

was just beginning. She's come so far now. It's been really cool to see her murals around, or see whatever project she's currently working on.

You're also very interested in the empowerment of women, whether it's in the arts or business related. How important is it for you to be an autonomous-creative woman?

Very important! When I went to art school I chose not to get a BFA, [Bachelor of Fine Arts] because I can see myself doing something more business-oriented at some point. I think women in the workplace has been common for a long time, but now I feel like it's starting to equal out. I like working for female bosses right now and I hope one day I can be a female boss. I think it's a little bit easier to work by myself right now, but hopefully one day I can be a leader of a team.

That also seems to coincide with your academic journey, trying to figure



right
 Untitled Zine
 by Molly Bounds
 Other Zines by
 Gaia Orr,
 Jessica Gutierrez,
 Garrett Moore
 and Whitney Wells

yourself out not only as an artist, but as a woman as well. Would that be fair to say?

Yeah, definitely! It all goes hand in hand. I think really hard about what I'm saying because you never want to send the wrong message. A positive message is so much better than anything questionable that would put anybody down. I think about it a lot.

Do you have interests in establishing a communal space for creative women to come together and share their work, or being an advocate for creative women in general?

I think I have an interest in establishing a communal space for creative people in general. If a woman were to come up to me and say, "I need a space for art," I would take that very seriously in the moment. It would be really cool to have a communal workshop space, where a bunch of people could leave their projects and come back to them and be inspired by each other. That's something I've always been really interested in. It's definitely possible in Denver, and we've been on the brink of it a few times. I'm still waiting for the Bauhaus of Denver or something like that (*Laughs*).

I think it's interesting that you're not trying to pursue a BFA in art, but rather a BA because you want to gain more from the business side of things. Are you pursuing that aspect as well because you're trying to find a way to better support yourself as an artist or is this part of a vision to establish something of your own?

It's a little bit of both. It's hard for me to see much longevity in being a gallery artist. I think it's really important to work for something bigger. It motivates me to finish and work my hardest, as

if I'm on a team and other people are relying on me like there's a deadline in place. I would still say that I prefer working by myself, but I don't think I'm pushing myself when I work alone and isolate myself.

You sound very goal oriented: not only giving yourself deadlines and committing to finishing a work, but also being held accountable when someone is relying on you. Or if you're in a situation where you are your own boss and you're putting something together.

If it was just me in a gallery doing everything, I would have nobody to answer to. But when you know who your boss is, you know who your teammates are, and you know who your audience is, it makes everything feel more real.

It seems like you care a lot about relationships and that you're open to helping others be successful as well.

I think art school can be really competitive, but I don't necessarily think that people can't work together. I do a lot of group projects in my business school, but it just occurred to me that I never do group projects in my art classes. That would be a really interesting thing to try out, because artists say all the time that they're doing this for their community or for certain voices to be heard. But at the same time, everyone seems to be pursuing individual goals. So I'm really interested in seeing more mutual support, people willing to share ideas, and share credit with each other.

You know, I've always been curious about that as well. I wonder if it is the nature of our capitalistic society, being more selfish with our pursuits and interests. I think it is an interesting

shift. Especially now, it seems like a lot of artists and companies are moving toward a communal approach to promote either a product or a cause. It doesn't seem like such a radical idea, but it's funny how it's being implemented more so now.

Well, I'm not anti-capitalist. I do want to support and make a name for myself, but there are more important things to think about than making a profit.

Where do you see yourself in the next five to 10 years?

I think I see myself being part of a team. I've always wanted to be my own boss, but I know I'm not ready yet. So in those next five to 10 years I'll probably just still be learning everything that I can. I've taken my time at school, and now I think I'm going to take my time at work. Then hopefully keep making art,

maybe still in Denver.

What can we expect from you next?

I have a lot of different, ongoing projects right now. I'm just exploring a bunch of new mediums and practicing more alternative types of photography. So hopefully I'll finish one of those projects, and hopefully the cookbook project will come along. I don't have any shows in the works or anything like that.

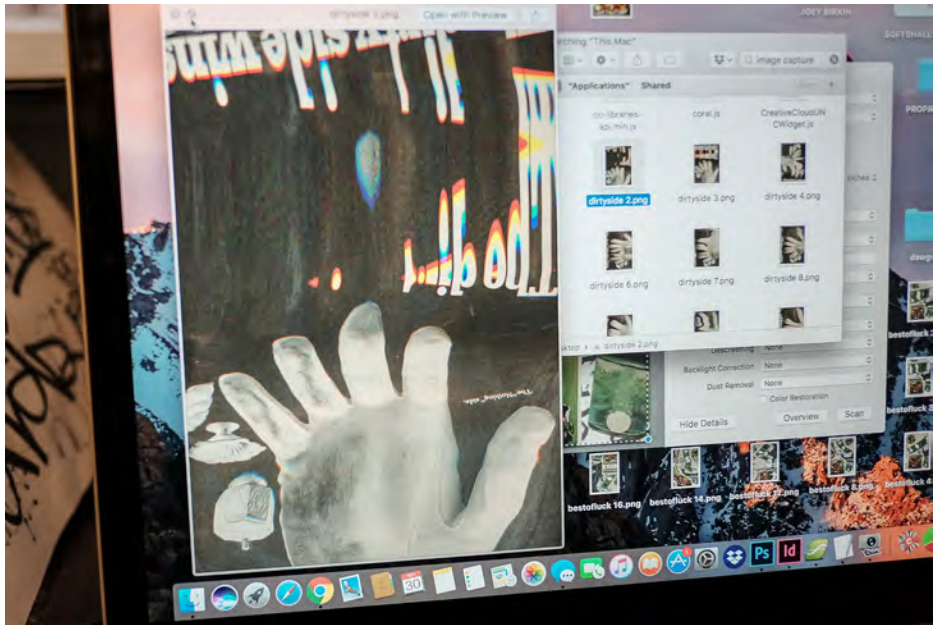
What's the cookbook project about?

Probably taking a bunch of those weird cookbook pictures and making a zine out of it. Now that I said it, I have to do it (*Laughs*). And graduating, that's next.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.



IG: @gaia0rr



right
Works in Progress
by Gaia Orr





SUBMISSION

RENAISSANCE REENVISIONED

PHOTOS BY ALI WATKINS

Sarah emulating
"Lady with an Ermine" by Leonardo Da Vinci
2018

Growing up as an adopted Asian-American in a town and a family where no one shared my olive skin, or almond eyes or oily slick hair, my definition of beauty was confused with saturation. It was flooded with images of tall noses and sunshine locks. It saw pale skin in my classes, in my friends and family, the magazines I read and the TV shows I watched. It seemed that this was beautiful. This was normal.

In my adolescence, I discovered that I attached love songs to not just boys but girls. The thing about liking both is you can hide your truth and pass for straight. So I stayed quiet for years. In the books I read, the protagonist always fell for the knight. It seemed that this was love. This was normal.

right

Mimi and Ananas emulating
"The Lovers" by René Magritte
2018

overleaf

Maddie emulating
"Ophelia" by John Everett Millais
2018







Today, I define my own normal. A lifetime of seeing my reflection poorly portrayed in media forced me to create my own spaces. When we see famous paintings we see beauty. For this photo series I wanted to make my friends who are people of color and/or LGBTQ to feel beautiful. I had them emulate paintings, mostly from the Renaissance period. Audiences will see familiar images with new faces, challenging what should be considered beauty.

right

Theresa and her son emulating
"Madonna and Child" by Duccio di Buoninsegna
2018

overleaf

Malcolm emulating
"Boy with a Basket of Fruit" by Caravaggio
2018





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