

22

FUNCTION

e n d u r a n c e

Harrison Clark, *Seeing Red*, Digital, 2021

@hacer_kun



reinvent
rediscover
reconnect
relearn
rehabilitate
restrict
reveal
recollect
represent
reflect

re:

“

What's one word that comes to mind when you think about this past year? What has this time meant to you? What has it taught you? How has it affected you?"

We asked students to respond to these questions when submitting their work to the 22nd Issue of *Function* Magazine. Our vision for the publication, and its theme, was for it to reflect what we as students, artists, and human beings are going through in this pandemic time.

With consideration given to the responses that felt most reflective of our vision, we developed the “**re**” theme. This collection of words – reinvent, rediscover, reconnect, relearn, rehabilitate, restrict, reveal, recollect, represent and reflect – guided the curation and design of our book.

In addition to the accomplished work of Image Arts students, this book contains interviews with select, key individuals, from our school and the wider creative community.

The *Function* team is proud and excited to present this year's publication and the talented artists showcased within it. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did creating it.

g r a t e f u l

Andrew Donnelly, Machine, 52 Chromogenic Prints, 2021

www.andrewdnly.com



FUNCTION MAGAZINE

www.functionima.com

@functionmagazine

Function Magazine

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g r o w t h

Angel Avramidis, *01 Blurred Portrait*, 2021

@angel.photographyy

F E A T U R E

seeing myself

Seeing Myself focuses on the challenges of suffering from body dysmorphia. This collection of self-portraits metaphorically depicts what it is like to see your body differently from how it really exists because of the constant attention to and obsession with flaws in your appearance. Someone with body dysmorphia may constantly see themselves through critical eyes, finding issues with their face or body that aren't always noticeable to others.

The photographs in this collection all distort my appearance in one way or another. I have taken a more abstract approach to the subject while also aiming to highlight the concept of not knowing exactly what you look like due to a lifetime of looking too hard in the mirror.

I think that this series is especially relatable during recent times when we have all been confined to our homes, often with only ourselves to interact with.



ABOVE | Angel Avramidis, *02 Fragmented*, 2021

RIGHT | Angel Avramidis, *03 Water & Glass*, 2021







LEFT | Angel Avramidis, *04 Nose & Lips*, 2021

ABOVE | Angel Avramidis, *05 Distorted*, 2021

u n l e a r n i n g

Kelsey Myler (she/her), *Staircase Flowers*, Inkjet Print, 2020

@kelsmyler

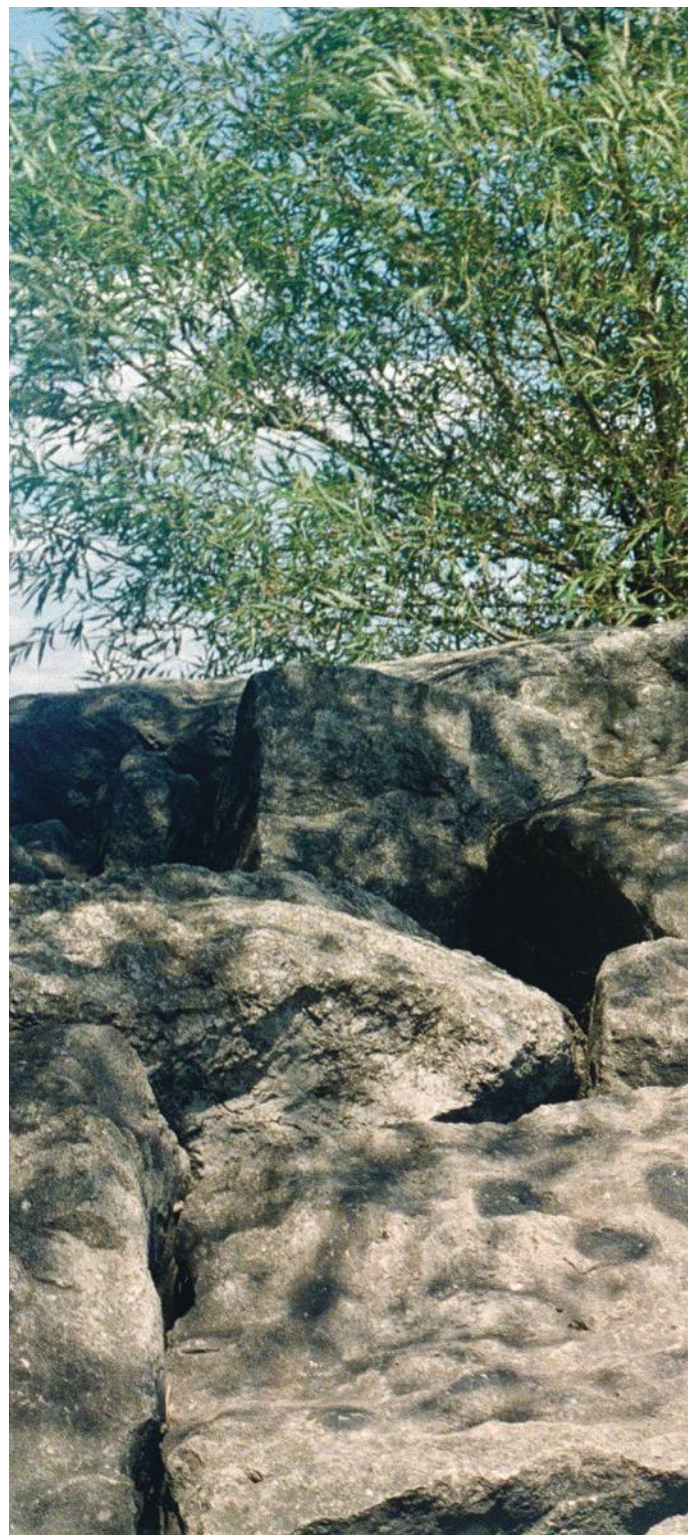


r e f l e c t i o n

Lucy Mahoney (she/her), *Mirror*, 35mm Film

@000.lucy

www.lucymahoney.squarespace.com







p e r s e v e r e

LEFT | Andrew Moreno, 12.19.2020

RIGHT | Andrew Moreno, 12.22.2020

@drudesu



e x p e r i m e n t a t i o n

Angie Guo, *Plastic*

www.angieguo.myportfolio.com





I N T E R V I E W

all bodies are good bodies

Teri Hofford is a photographer, author, speaker, coach, educator, activist, and self-love enthusiast.

A self-described “hyphen person,” Teri talked to **Kerry Manders** about the value of openness, the benefits of interdisciplinarity, and necessity of purpose-driven work.

All images by Teri Hofford



What do diversity” and “inclusivity” mean to you?

What a timely question: I was just working with a branding strategic consultant today and part of my homework is to do a “diversity and inclusion” statement for next week! For me, an open mind and an open heart are absolute necessities. We need compassion and the flexibility to change – our minds and our behaviours – upon learning new information. We also need *self*-compassion, trying not to get bogged down in shame or embarrassment about the things you thought were true but aren’t or aren’t anymore. We have to be willing to change our beliefs, and that’s not always easy. We can acknowledge beliefs and still move towards doing better.

Being open to different perspectives is necessary for growth in any capacity, whether you are one person or a small organization or an entire city. Another necessary thing is deep listening. Even though I like to talk, it’s important that I know when it’s time for me not to talk. I value curiosity above judgement because judgement solves nothing; curiosity gives us space to grow and to change in light of new stories.

How has your understanding of inclusivity shifted over time?

I’ve always been an empath. It started when I was growing up in a small-town community where our school had twelve kids and I was the biggest of those twelve. I was picked on from the time I was in grade six. Very quickly I knew what it meant to be different. I always had an openness – that’s a key word for me – to understanding

why people behave the way they do. It doesn’t mean I have to accept it, but I can understand it.

When I first started my boudoir photography business it was with the sole purpose of showing bodies like mine. But that still meant *white* bodies. Within a year, I realized all sorts of different bodies desperately needed representing. I think that happens when you put your 20s behind you – you start to look beyond yourself to say there are things outside of me that also need attention. It wasn’t just about saving people “like me” anymore.

When it comes to my creative work – even looking at my Instagram – I’m always wondering if it’s all too cohesive, too similar. Is there anybody – any bodies – that I’m *not* featuring but could be? I’ve been able to foster a pretty good community around the idea that all bodies are good bodies. Still, I’m always looking to improve representation, because I come to the table with my own biases and blind spots. I need to be critical of my own practice and be open to feedback. My initial instinct when I receive criticism is to get defensive. But I’ve learned that when I feel defensive is exactly when I should be listening, because that’s my ego talking. I defend myself as a “good person,” but then I remind myself, “hey, they *didn’t* say I was a bad person.” So maybe I can adjust my business practices a little.

To really diversify is not to tokenize. It’s to pay models of all shapes and sizes – to invest in those bodies. Tokenization is a big problem in the photography industry in general and it avoids the real work of changing the industry. Change takes year-round work, not a special “different bodies” issue once a year.

You wear many hats: entrepreneur, educator, coach, photographer, writer. What are the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinarity?

Chase Jarvis of CreativeLive calls us interdisciplinary types “hyphen people.” It’s something I really struggled with until recently, to understand that I could do more than one thing. From the time we start school we’re asked, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” Meaning: what’s the *one* job you want to do for the rest of your life? The more I understand myself and my strengths – I’m a visionary, always moving, always executing – the more I understand that I can’t ever stay in just one realm because that’s not who I am. It boils down to *purpose*. Why would I limit myself to only one way of realizing that purpose? For me, that means waking up every day and trying to make somebody else’s life better than it was before they heard from me, saw me, or learned from me. My intent in every realm is to empower. I share certain parts of myself and encourage others to do the same. We can share our stories and let people know that they aren’t alone. I showed my body to say, “look: fat people exist and we’re not just faceless bodies on the news contributing to the ‘obesity epidemic’ or whatever they call it now. No, I’m here being awesome and cool.”

Doing multiple things allows me to switch gears when necessary. When I find myself burning out from photography and from running a photography business, I can write more. Or I can offer a course. This year I started teaching writing workshops for photographers. My empowerment work goes beyond boudoir photography. I’m actually writing more than I’m taking photos right now: *thanks, Covid lockdown!*



Teri Hofford | Self-portrait

What have you learned in the process of your self-portraiture? How has your practice in front of your own camera helped you in your work behind it?

There’s a big difference between doing self-portraits and having another photographer take portraits of you. Self-portraits are a kind of chickenshit way to get your photos out there, to be honest. When you photograph yourself, you’re in control of literally everything. I want to see what you look like when you give up that control.

One of the things I’ve learned from self-portraiture is to *slow down*. I have to look for the light differently, embody a different kind of patience, consider my body from all different angles. It gives me a lot more compassion towards bodies in general, and more understanding of what it’s like to hold a pose indefinitely. Sometimes I feel badly about what I make my clients go through!

With self-portraits, there is a certain safety, because I'm in control of the camera and I'm in control of who sees the photos. I can delete, delete, delete as I see fit. When I sit for another photographer, they're in control, and I have to listen and be present *with* and *for* someone else. I have to manage my expectations appropriately and that is both personally rewarding and very helpful to my business as a photographer. When I go to someone's else's studio, I'm constantly assessing what I like, what don't I like, what about this experience I want to bring to or avoid in my own practice. It's good for me to be in the client's shoes. I remember the first time I paid \$5000 for a photoshoot. Even I hesitated at the price, and I know what photography's worth! I was trying to come up with any excuse not to do it, in a way. Eventually I just had to bite the bullet and press "purchase" on that portrait session.

The best way to understand your business is to frequent other businesses in the same field. Find people who you think are better and smarter than you and learn from what they are doing.

How do you go about creating a safe space in your studio?

It's very important for me to set expectations before clients even step foot in into my studio: here's what I will take care of for you but here's what you're responsible for. I try to do in-person consultations before a session because I want clients to know exactly what they're getting into before they pay me any money. I need them to trust me, and it's my job to minimize anxieties.

When a client is in studio, I want them to have an amazing experience and my transference of energy really helps, I think. And I show as many bodies as I possibly can.

People hiring me know that I've photographed people who look "like" them. Once they are in studio, I take full control. telling them exactly what to do. I give them access to a wardrobe that is fully inclusive. My furniture is accommodating. This is something that I want to say to any photographer reading this: have furniture that can accommodate larger bodies! As someone who is fatter, I can tell you that if go into a studio and see I see spindly little legs on the sofa, I won't feel confident posing.

What sorts of language should we avoid when speaking about marginalized bodies?

I don't know if there's anything to avoid, aside from intentionally harmful things, unless an individual says, "do not say that." I run a relatively inclusive Facebook group and we're very open to hearing what people have to say and learning new information. What once was okay to say might not be anymore, and we need to talk about it. Language is always changing. If someone tells me that I said something that offends them, it's my job to believe them and to rethink my language. The word "fat" is fine when talking about my body. There is such a stigma around "fat," such negative connotations, and the assumption that "fat" is something we must fix. I'd love to strip it of its negative connotations and to let it be one descriptor among others. I'd also like to get on an airplane and not get side eye from people who don't want me to sit beside them. I'd like to go to a doctor and not have "lose weight" be the first solution offered to any problem under the sun. I'd like to post a picture of myself in my underwear eating pizza and not have people come at me in the comments. I'd like to go into a clothing store and find sizes that fit me. I'd like smaller people to stop saying "I feel fat" as an umbrella phrase for feeling like shit – whether they are bloated or uncomfortable



or even having a bad hair day. What do you mean when you say, “I feel fat”? It usually has *nothing* to do with actually *being fat*. “I feel fat” is toxic. It’s an assumption that “fat” is necessarily uncomfortable and unattractive. I can tell you that I exist in a fat body and I’m not uncomfortable or unattractive most of the time.

Can you tell us about others whose work has inspired you?

Dr. Lindo Bacon has been amazing. They wrote a powerful book called *Health at Every Size* basically debunking all the bullshit studies and junk science of diet culture. They helped me undo certain beliefs that were pretty firmly ingrained by undoing my emotional attachment to them. And *all* beliefs carry emotional attachments. Dr. Bacon helped me believe that I could change anything – from the way I feel about money to the way I behave in relationships.

In terms of photography, I want to shout out my friend Boon Ong. He’s in Calgary and he does amazing portraits of people that are very meaningful and emotionally impactful. I made him do a workshop with me because I wanted to learn from him. He’s the complete opposite of me in terms of shooting style, but our mission is the same: to empower people and help them be seen. He said something once that I’ve never stopped thinking about. Photographers in the boudoir industry spend so much time trying to fit their clients into the “boudoir box.” Boon said that we need to start building the box around our clients, making sessions specific to them, to unlearn the ways we’ve been taught. That shifted something fundamental for me in my practice.

What advice can you give to Image Arts students as they’re set to graduate and launch their careers?

Be open and be flexible – that’s the best advice I can give. Also, set realistic expectations for yourself and

what you want to accomplish. Because being an entrepreneur is not the same as being a photographer. Literally 98% of running a photography business is not photography itself. And it can be lonely. You have to manage your expectations and constantly reevaluate *why* you’re doing what you’re doing. You need confidence in your own mission, your own purpose, so that you don’t get distracted by what everyone else is doing.

What is one thing you wish you knew before you started out?

Probably someone told me this and I just didn’t want to hear it, but I’m going to pass this on: you have to figure out the cost of doing business and to budget for it. Not sexy, I know! It sounds like the most basic advice ever, but people skip this crucial step all the time. They decide to focus on the “passion” parts and to just “see what happens.” That’s not a good plan. In fact, it’s not a plan at all! You need to plan for the running of your business. Passion might be infinite, but money is finite. What are you going to spend it on? Are you charging appropriately for your services, your time, your expertise?

What does fear or doubt look like in your creative practice? How do you handle them?

My brain can disassociate from itself a little bit. This is where being forward thinking is beneficial. I’ll get an idea, and my body gets to work implementing it, and part of my brain is thinking “maybe this is a ridiculous idea.” But here’s the thing: *my body is still doing the work*. There’s a part of my body that trusts that I know what I’m doing, and it understands that my brain is going to take a hot minute to catch up. But it *will* catch up!

The other way I deal with doubt and fear is to look beyond myself at the bigger picture. If my purpose is greater than me, then my fear doesn’t matter. The fear of not doing *anything* is worse than the fear of trying *something*. ♦

e s c a p i s m

Jessica Bemis, *Baggage*

@jessicabemisphotos



a m b i g u i t y

Jessica Berger, *Care*, 2020, Digital
@jessicabergerphotography



u n e a s e

Christina Oyawale (they/them)

A Domestic Performance, 2021, Photographic Print

www.christinaoyawale.com







b r e a t h e

Connor Borisenko, *Untitled March 2020 #5*
www.connor-borisenko-photo.squarespace.com

c o m m u n i c a t i o n

Madison Bowman, *Couch Potato*, 2020, Digital
www.bowmanphotography.ca



r o u g h

Olivia Graham, *Quiver*

www.oliviahaslettgraha.wixsite.com/photography

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







c h u r n

Liam DeBoer, *Recognition Amnesia*, 2020

@chairwil

f r a g m e n t e d

Kendall Stephenson (she/her), *Jam Drawer*, Medium Format, 2021
www.kendallstephenson.com







thesis seminar

Bronwyn Demers

Bi,
Sh,
Uprety.

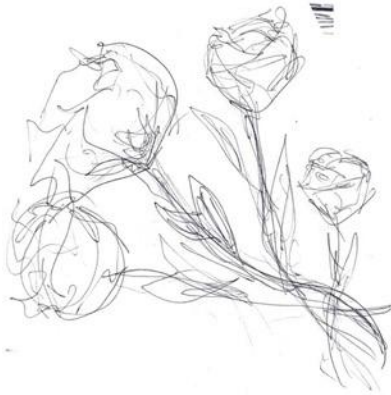
Andrea Chartrand
Feb, 19th

Teagan Lopes

Gabrielle Tyrie

**EXPERIMENTS
IN**

**IMAGE
MAKING**



To consider:

- room for interpretation
- space to move within the image, rearrange

- colour?

- important to remove myself from my group's style

- almost dutch flower painting.

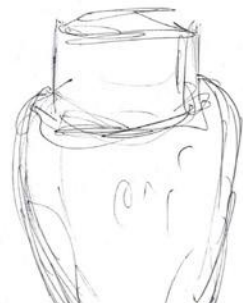
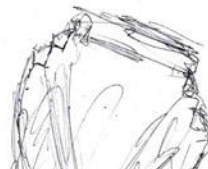
- simple structure

or white? pop of colour or neutral?

- set the base for images to come?

- will this line in its original structure?

- where does it go from here?



being the first one to start
our process feels stressful. What
is the basis I set? How much
of it will actually tie over it
goes through our group. A 35mm
negative to start and then what's
will it be larger or smaller? How does
everyone's work tie together, will it tie



Vases, Bronwyn

thoughts of fiery sunsets running through the sky so free,
grounded by the world it so wants to leave,
yet sets into it when time comes,
the repetition of nature surprises me yet again,
and again,

only an observer can criticize a sunset,
how beautiful one seemed compared to the next,
but to the sun,
all of them are just as beautiful as the last,
or the next,
because for the sun,
it's never set nor will it ever set,
the perspective of the watchers mean very little,

it is the idea of life that lets the sun prosper,
the hope of a new beginning or the next ending,
whatever can happen will happen,
for the sun is just shining a light,
in a dark, dark universe.



Proccess, Bish

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Data, Teagan

Log, Day 1

Received one email from Teagan. Enclosed was one JPEG image along with a short message wishing me luck.

Initial considerations were as follows:

First, I was to re-render Teagan's image as cyanotype. I panicked — how I could honour the colours in my strictly blue and white interpretation?

Second, how would I rip this image from a digital space to an actual one? Teagan's image (how she realized it) exists only digitally. I am left with no roadmap from the artist on how to make her work into an analogue object. I have to make Teagan's image into a film negative, then cyanotype print from that. Curious if I can do such a thing while remaining genuine.

Conclusions for next steps:

I will not be able to honour Teagan's image. I must remind myself that art is not so precious. I should work with the sentiment of creating my own image rather than interpreting the previous one.

The Plan:

Cyanotypes printed under the light of the sun are inherently unique. I intend to lean into this process; furthermore, I will expose the sensitized paper still wet. Wet cyanotype is totally unpredictable and will produce a unique print.

Log, Day 2

The Making Of:

Conditions are mainly overcast. Exposure will most likely be between 1-2 hours long.

Watercolour paper is coated with chemicals and left to dry. Re-dampened with vinegar and ready to be exposed.

Following a series of unfortunate events, the tray, unexposed cyanotype, negative and glass contact frame were all dropped. This led to the glass mostly shattering. The artist, me, would like to point out the presence of ice, which was instrumental in the process of tripping, falling and shattering. Out of stubbornness, or perhaps simply laziness, I leave the cyanotype to expose. I am curious how the impact of broken glass and the new variable of snow will have on my final image.

Reflections Upon Completion:

In a somewhat comic fashion, I ended up making a much more unique photograph than originally intended. I do not recommend falling; however, that performance is one that can not be replicated. It makes me think of the relationship between my print and my negative. Contrary to the traditional photographic process, there is barely any. I look at my negative and see Teagan's image. I look at my image and see the possibility of what it will become with Andrea. I hold my print and my hand feels the composition morph and shift in my mind. The still picture feels not so static. My picture has a past and an eventual future. I feel grateful to be its caretaker and to pass it along, as well as to leave my permanent mark on it. As much as it is mine, it is not mine.



Historical, Gabrielle



How do I honour the specific dark cyan-blue that is unique to cyanotype, and what does it mean to be the last member to re-process this image? These two questions act as a foundation and access point for me to begin my intervention. My process, as always, begins with a complete mock-up of the composition in Photoshop. I use this digital space to map out exactly how the finished physical piece will read. I utilize the layer tool as a device that instructs my process for the physical fabrication of my work. Each layer indicated in Photoshop is also a new step of instruction when building. In this case, my composition begins with colour. What type of conversation should take place between Gabrielle's cyanotype and what I'm about to make? My initial instinct is to contrast the cyanotype with an orange background, but this feels too obvious. Should the colour scheme be analogous? Monochromatic?... But then will the image be too camouflaged? **I select the paint bucket tool — a luminous cadmium orange hue — and fill the first layer.** I visualize the blue of the cyanotype vibrating in contrast to the orange background. This feels right to me. **I add a new layer.**

What does it mean to be the last member to re-process this image? Now that I've established colour relationships, how do I close this collaborative study? The desire to manipulate space in my work also inherently blurs time, burying the ability to fully trace the timeline of action and process. With this in mind, it feels logical for me to return the image to Bronwyn's original composition. Before duplicating, I fill the new layer with a deep cyan blue. I question how I can engage the entire space of my image, and aim to activate a type of unity between

all layers. I've decided that the two blue layers will be iterations of the original composition. One layer will play with negative space; and the other, positive. First, I observe the structural elements within Bronwyn's image. What does the room look like? How do the floorboards, the floating shelves, the unique pin-holed walls exist? I translate these elements onto my first cyan layer. **With the eraser tool, I begin subtracting the cyan layer from the orange below. I mimic how the pinholes converge at the center of the canvas; how the floorboards shift in space; the gentle perspective of the shelves; and, finally, I block out the large grouping of podiums in the middle.** My eyes start to wobble a little. The radiant orange background manipulates my vision as it attempts to advance in space, despite its background location. As my eyes move through the piece, there are moments of uncertainty where I am unsure what is in the foreground and what is in the background; what has been added and what has been subtracted. This is the activation between layers that I was looking for. **I click on the second cyan layer. With the paintbrush tool, I illustrate Bronwyn's composition as a line drawing. I spend some time now adding and removing elements to and from the composition.** I do this until I feel that the appropriate amount of detail is included, and that the right type of conversation has begun.

I grab a piece of cardstock: luminous orange, luminous red, and lemon-yellow gouache. I paint two separate backdrops but am only satisfied with one: a loose linear gradient. I take four nickel-plated t-pins, and adhere the painting to a piece of polystyrene. I begin making extra long t-pins with hot glue.

Gabrielle has given me the final cyanotype and four test prints. I use her final piece as the top layer, and her clearest test print as the second. **I transfer my two photoshop drawings onto the cyanotypes and use them as cut guides. After cutting is complete, I glue the various cuts onto their according pins and begin assembling the piece as a whole. I go through many attempts of assembling, lighting, shooting, and re-assembling before I am satisfied with how the cut-outs are aligned and I shoot the final image. I bring the file into photoshop. With the healing brush tool, I mask out spots where t-pins peek out from behind. The image is complete.**



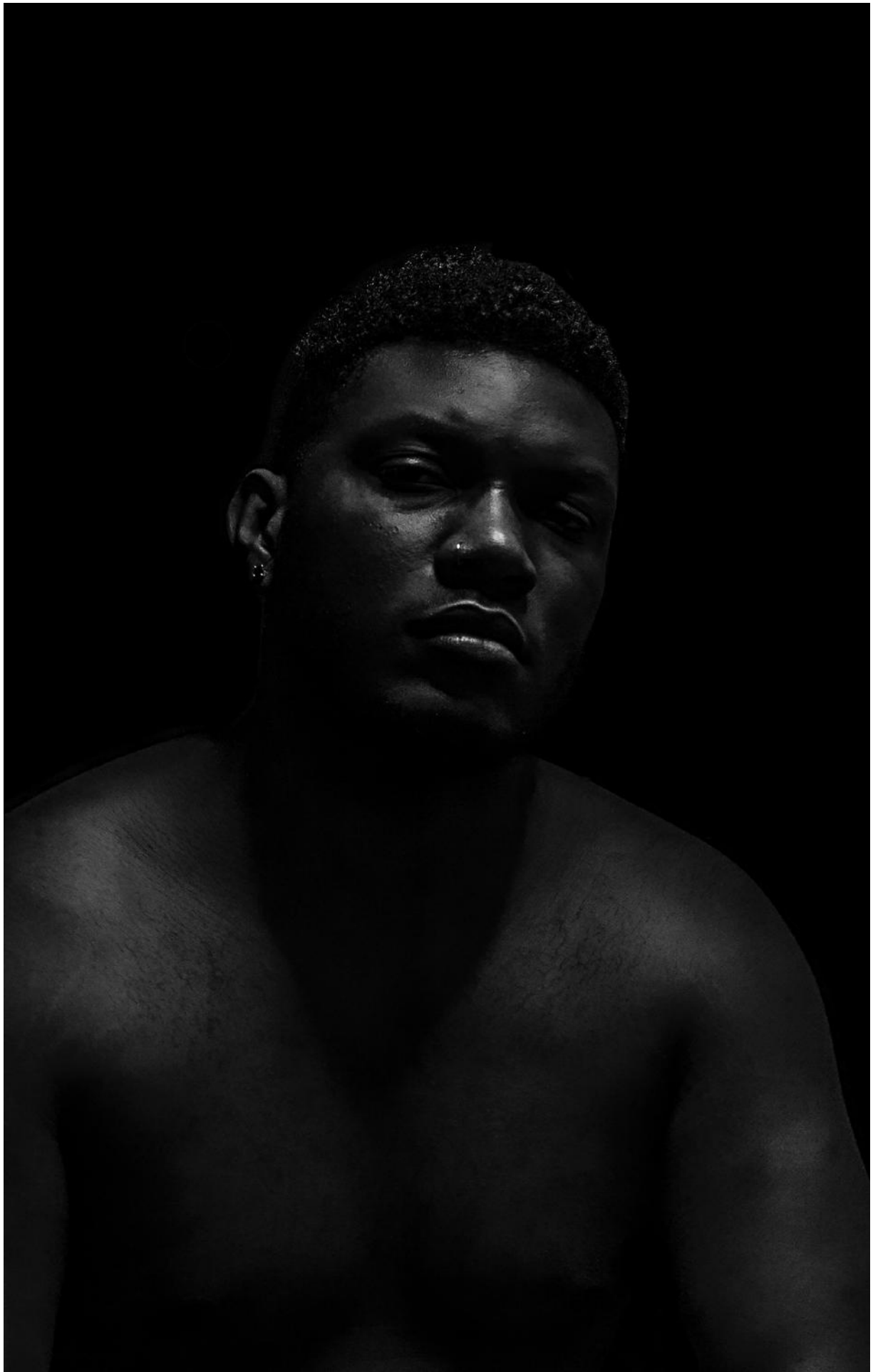
Mechanical, Andrea

s h i f t i n g

Shamier Ricketts-Samuel, *Shrouded*

@shamier.samuel

www.shamiersamuel.com







t i m e

Ben Harley, *1 I Love You Hamilton*, 2021

@lost.mile

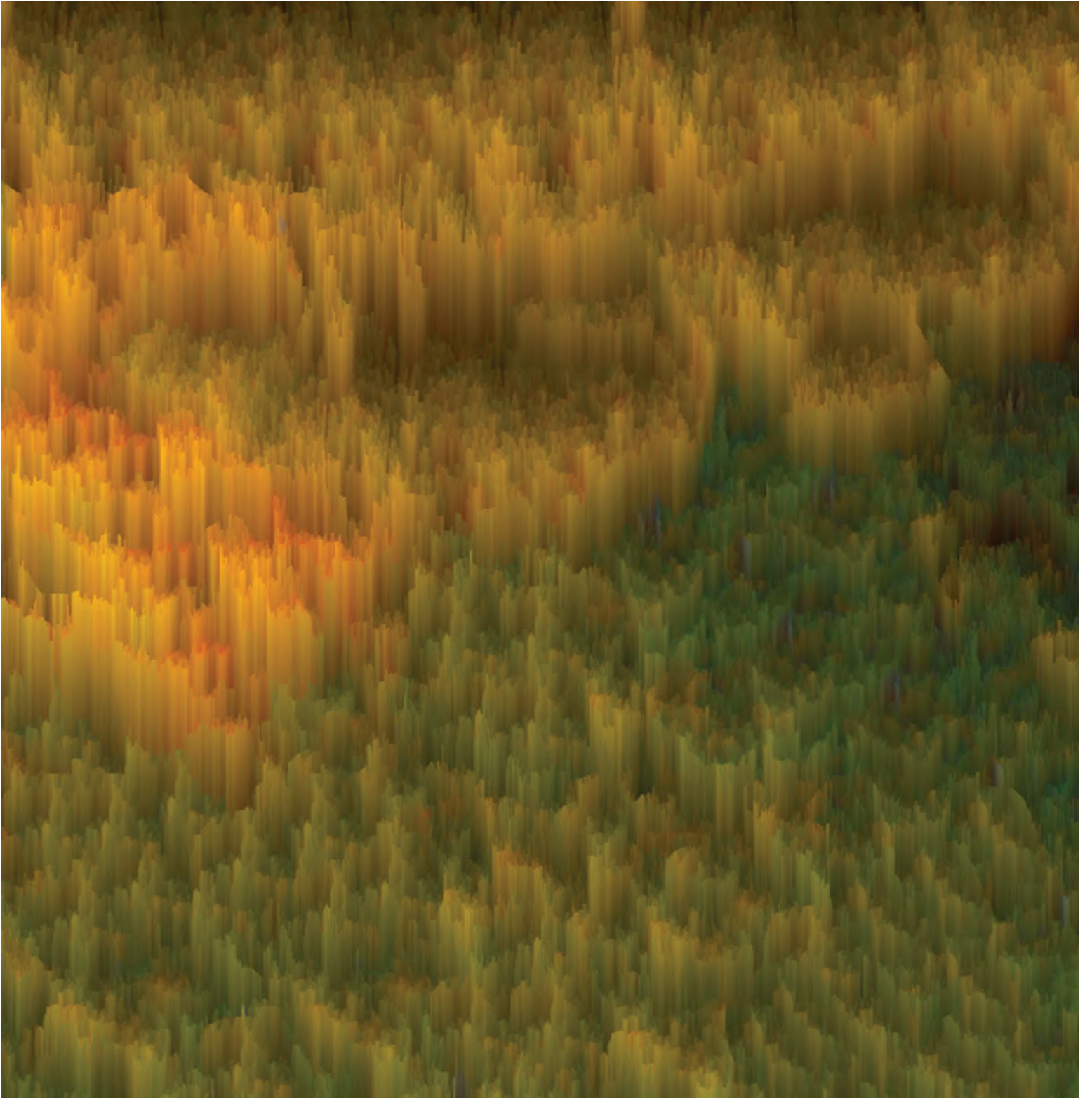




e n d u r a n c e

Harrison Clark, *Artificial Nature*, Digital, 2020

@hacer_kun





c h u r n

Liam DeBoer, *Physical Posture Induction*, 2020

@chairwil



r e d i s c o v e r y | Jennifer Qu, *Sweater*, 2020, Diptych, @jenn.qu



Dear,

Within the two worlds I live amongst,

I have grown tired and restless trying to navigate my relationship
between my Chinese heritage and the country that I have
been raised to flourish in, Canada.



谁知道在加拿大能够买到古筝

ABOVE | Jennifer Qu, *Guzheng*, 2020, Scanned Print

RIGHT | Jennifer Qu, *Jun Zi Lan Flower*, 2020, Scanned Print



希望
你
过
好
！
妈妈

This project is a collection of images coupled with envelopes addressed to my family members all around China.

A well overdue homage to my cultural heritage that I have spent years learning to embrace proudly. Mapping out the remnants of my own culture through objects and traditions here in Canada that my family has carried ten thousand kilometers around the world. The rips, tears, and crumbled creases in the scanned photographs represent the years that I have spent trying to erase my own culture - the self damage and insecurities I have tried to suppress by defacing my own culture, folding over my history tucked away in my pockets. Although these images may be scratched and bruised, it does not take away from the essence that is being photographed. Comparably, no matter how much I tried to avoid my Chinese heritage, I could not because it is the essence of who I am.



Jennifer Qu, *Teaset*, 2020





Jennifer Qu, *Dumplings*, 2020



b u r d e n s o m e

Philipp Bernhardt, *Hammock*, Digital, 2020

@pb.11



e s c a p i s m

Jessica Bemis, *Locked In*

@jessicabemisphotos







r o l l e r c o a s t e r

Ammar Bowaihl, *ENDSARS4*

@ammarbowaihl

c o n f i n e m e n t

Victor Rusu, *Apple With Nails*

@victorrusu







b r e a t h e

Connor Borisenko, *Untitled March 2020 #4*
www.connor-borisenko-photo.squarespace.com



Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Val and Martika*, 2013, C- print, 20 x 30 inch



I N T E R V I E W

the work that photographs do

Michèle Pearson Clarke is a Trinidad-born, Toronto-based artist who works in photography, film, video, and installation. She is currently the inaugural artist-in-residence at the University of Toronto's Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies (2020-2021) and the Photo Laureate for the City of Toronto (2019-2022). She talked to **Kerry Manders** about the work of photographic advocacy, the importance of visual literacy, and the depth of process and practice.

Tell us about your work as the City of Toronto's Photo Laureate. How did this opportunity come about? What does the role entail?

For me, it came out of the blue; it's not a position I applied for. The city convened a committee, and I was their recommended selection. But the invitation came with the freedom to make the role my own: I could figure out what I wanted to accomplish with this three-year, part-time appointment.

I have a broad relationship to photography in my practice, and I make more moving image work than I do still photography. Since my relationship to photography is one of making but also one of writing, thinking, and teaching, I wanted to bring this full and varied relationship to photography to my role as Photo Laureate. I was less interested in making photographs and asking Torontonians to look at them than I was in inviting Torontonians to think about and reflect on the work that photographs *do* in our world. As someone who has the privilege of working full time as an artist, it was very appealing to me to devote some of my time to photographic advocacy.

I love this idea that the Photo Laureate is an advocate and an ambassador. I see your Photo Laureate Instagram account, for example, as an educational platform.

Unfortunately, what I've been able to do during my tenure has been really hampered by COVID-19. But the Instagram account has become an important facet of my Laureate role. I don't have a budget, so I can achieve more by supporting and participating in existing programming — panel discussions and exhibition talks, for example, and amplifying artists and issues on the Instagram feed. My advocacy entails shining a light on what other people are doing.

I'm also going to repeat something I did last year on my Laureate anniversary: I'll offer a day of online "office hours" where people can talk to me about anything, even



Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Glitter Face*, 2020, digital video still transferred from 16mm, HD video, colour, 2 minutes

I'm always trying to create access and connection so I'm happy to give as much of my time as I can to those informal conversations.

Can you tell us about your monthly photography column for the *Toronto Star*?

That has been a real highlight for me, being able to touch on a wide range of topics and reach a huge number of people. Also, I've developed my own knowledge and practice because, with every topic that I cover, there's research. When I wrote about climate change and photography for last year's January column, I ended up reading for at least a week before writing anything. I did a deep dive into thinking about the emotional impact of climate change, and how that is conveyed photographically.

One of the things I'm so grateful for is my visual literacy. The column is a small attempt to invite a more general audience into that conversation — to introduce visual literacy and inspire people to consider photographs differently. As photographers, we often take for granted our ability to read and think about images. Everyone has an intimate relationship to photographs, seeing and taking images all day long with cameras in our purses and pockets. My job is to help us think about images in new ways.

What are you currently working on?

The pandemic has really shifted my practice. One of the most immediate responses to this pandemic was a turn to

mutual aid, and I've responded to that as well. At the best of times, being an artist is a very "look at me" job. And like most artists, yes, I have a healthy ego. But when you're living through a period of such suffering and grief and loss in all forms, it's a bit more difficult to say "Well, I made a thing. Will you look at it please?" So, I've found it harder to be self-focused. Thankfully, both my residency at the University of Toronto and my Photo Laureate work allow me to focus on community.

When I was invited to take up the U of T residency, I proposed curating an exhibition rather than mounting a solo show. "We Buy Gold" will open on May 7, 2021 and showcases mostly emerging LGBTQ photographers from across Canada. It's deepening my practice because I'm learning what it means to be a curator.

It's postponed until next year, but eventually I'll also be working on a project called *Toronto Park Portraits*. This will involve free family portraits by professional photographers at parks across the city. It is a return, in a way, to the research I did in my MFA and thinking about the history of portraiture. When it comes to representations of more marginalized folks, you're not going to comb the archives and find as many studio portraits of them. Portraits of queer or Indigenous people or folks with disabilities are few and far between, in part because of the prohibitive cost of studio portraiture. But we all recognize that a well-lit, well-composed portrait is very compelling! It stands out. It elevates how you see yourself and it elevates how other people see you.

And as the photographers and assistants are working to make the portraits, I'll be talking to people about what it feels like to live in Toronto in the summer of 2022. There will be a project website and an Instagram account where, provided we get permissions, we'll share photos and excerpts from our conversations. Again, I'm trying to create different kinds of access and points of engagement for Torontonians to connect through photography.

How has your background in psychology shaped or inspired your creative practice?

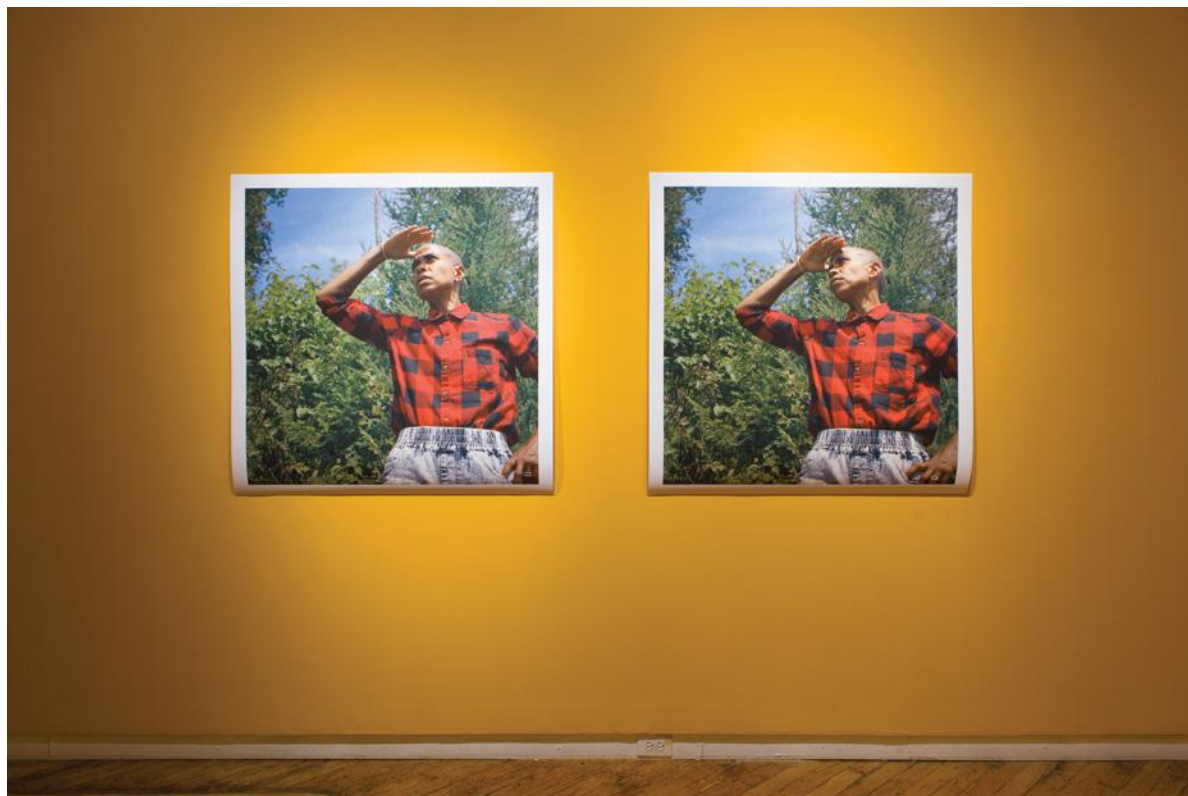
The skills and knowledge and capacity to hold space for human complexity that I learned as a counsellor are especially useful in my artistic practice. Going back to school to do my MFA was very much driven by my grief experience, which I wanted to concentrate on. I had turned to numerous sources for help, understanding, and comfort, including art. I didn't often find what I needed, and that's the motivation for the work I do.

There's no question that the capacities and capabilities that I developed in my first career directly shape and influence the art I make. I've moved from holding space for people in a professional therapeutic role to holding that space in a contemporary artistic role. Those actions are quite similar, even as the boundaries, ethics, outcomes, and expectations are distinct. But both careers foreground social practice and community. That's a growing area of contemporary art that focuses on community in relation to the work, most often in areas that involve vulnerability, healing, and repair.

What have you learned about queerness and curation in your current artist residency?

Reading and thinking about queer approaches to curation over the last months, for me, I've come to see it as less about an academic definition of queerness and more about a queer practice. Yes, all the artists I'm working with identify as queer in some way. But as we make this exhibition together, we're asking how we can grapple with the power dynamics of the gallery space, how we can work within that space differently. This is crucial for me as a first-time curator. I'm trying to foreground those things that make me feel supported as an artist. I know what it feels like to have me and my work truly seen by other curators.

I'm trying to question everything, including how the work will be displayed and explained in the gallery. One concrete



Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Woods 1*, 2018 and *Woods 2*, 2018, Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography. Photo by Darren Rigo, 2018.

example: I decided that a single, “expert” curatorial essay didn’t feel right to me, so I asked the artists who they’d like to have write about their work. Instead of one curatorial text, now we’ll have nine short texts by nine different writers.

And our exhibition will have *two* opening receptions, COVID permitting (who says we can’t?!). We will have a weekday evening reception and a weekend afternoon reception. A Saturday reception has a different kind of energy and is accessible to different people, including those who want to bring their children. Small gestures matter. It’s about accessibility and inviting in the largest possible audience.

What would be helpful for students to know as they apply to get into their first exhibitions?

The number one thing is to think about your photographic project as a three-dimensional thing. Most people work digitally, and we only ever relate to images on a screen. You’ll make a series and you’ll be asked how you want to present it for an audience. You want to have a good answer! Because the work needs to exist outside of your computer.

It’s okay if you don’t have a show yet, but you need to be working *toward* that show. Choose a gallery space that

you’re familiar with and start visualizing how you’d exhibit your work there. What photographs would go where? What would be their size and scale? Framed or unframed? What are you trying to communicate with these choices? The sooner you start thinking about these questions when you’re working on a project, the better. The “where” and the “how” of its eventual presentation should be related to the conceptualization and execution of your work in progress.

The other thing students should be doing when galleries open again is to *visit them*. Any of them. All of them. I’m always shocked by how few shows my students attend. You need to go and to study and to ask yourself questions about the exhibitions you see. Do I like this? Does it work for me? What is it communicating? What is it asking of me?

The *why* is crucial, isn’t it? Too often, we stop at “I like this” or “I hate it.”

Yes. Do I think this is well shot? Why is it installed in this way? How many images are on the wall? Why not less, or more? How are the images spaced out? They need to pay attention to what they like and don’t like, to track their gut reactions. With some reflection, they might be able to validate their first impressions—or change their minds.

Studying other work will help them make decisions when it's their turn. I'd also recommend signing up for various photography newsletters and reading about photography daily .

Can you tell us about an artist or work that played a pivotal role in your artistic development?

I'm going to name the whole of the *Inside Out LGBT Film Festival*. I wouldn't be an artist if it wasn't for that festival. When I first came out, and I was looking to meet people and make community. I became a volunteer, first ripping movie tickets and later sitting on the screening/programming committee. I eventually became a board member and enjoyed a 15-year relationship with this organization. It was my film school and my first artist network.

Long before I became an artist, *Inside Out* gave me permission to believe it was possible and the relationships to make it happen. Watching films there was an amazing education. It was the first time I saw short rather than feature-length films. It was the first time I saw experimental films. I had grown up watching traditional movies: discovering what *else* was possible in that



Michèle Pearson Clarke, *Deanna*, May 26, 2018, 2018, archival ink jet print, 40 x 40 inch

medium was mind-blowing. And I met so many people in Toronto's arts community. When I first, and hesitantly, voiced my desire to make my own film, I had community support, people who not only wanted me to succeed but were willing to help me do it. I made my first film in 2003 and my first video in 2006. The queer artists who ran *Inside Out* and who made work that was shown there – they were my inspiration.

That's such a great answer: not one artist or one work but an entire festival as your biggest inspiration. Okay, final question: if you could give this year's graduating Image Arts class some advice, what would it be?

One: Understand that there's not a single career path for you. Reject the narrow narratives about what a successful artistic career looks like. *You* must forge your own path, the one that works for you and your passions and talents. Also, refuse the implicit hierarchies. Being a wedding photographer isn't "less than" being a gallery artist.

Two: Whatever direction you choose, recognize that you are a business you have to manage. Learn a bit about marketing and advertising and accounting and the like. How will you pay for and run your studio, your website? I'm shocked by the number of artists who believe they don't need a website! A website is a strong business tool that you should leverage. You need to show people what to pay attention to. You need to have your contact information readily available for those who want to be in touch.

Three: Don't say "yes" to every opportunity. It's hard to say no, but you have to know your limitations and understand what's a good fit for you and your work – and what isn't. There's a lot of pressure to say yes, especially when you're starting out. You'll regret some of your yes-es, and that's a necessary learning curve as you develop self-awareness. And sometimes you *should* say yes to challenging asks that push you out of your comfort zone. But there's a difference between stretching yourself in positive ways and doing things that simply aren't a fit for you. Learning when to say "no" will be crucial for your practice. And for your overall well-being, too. ♦



s a f e

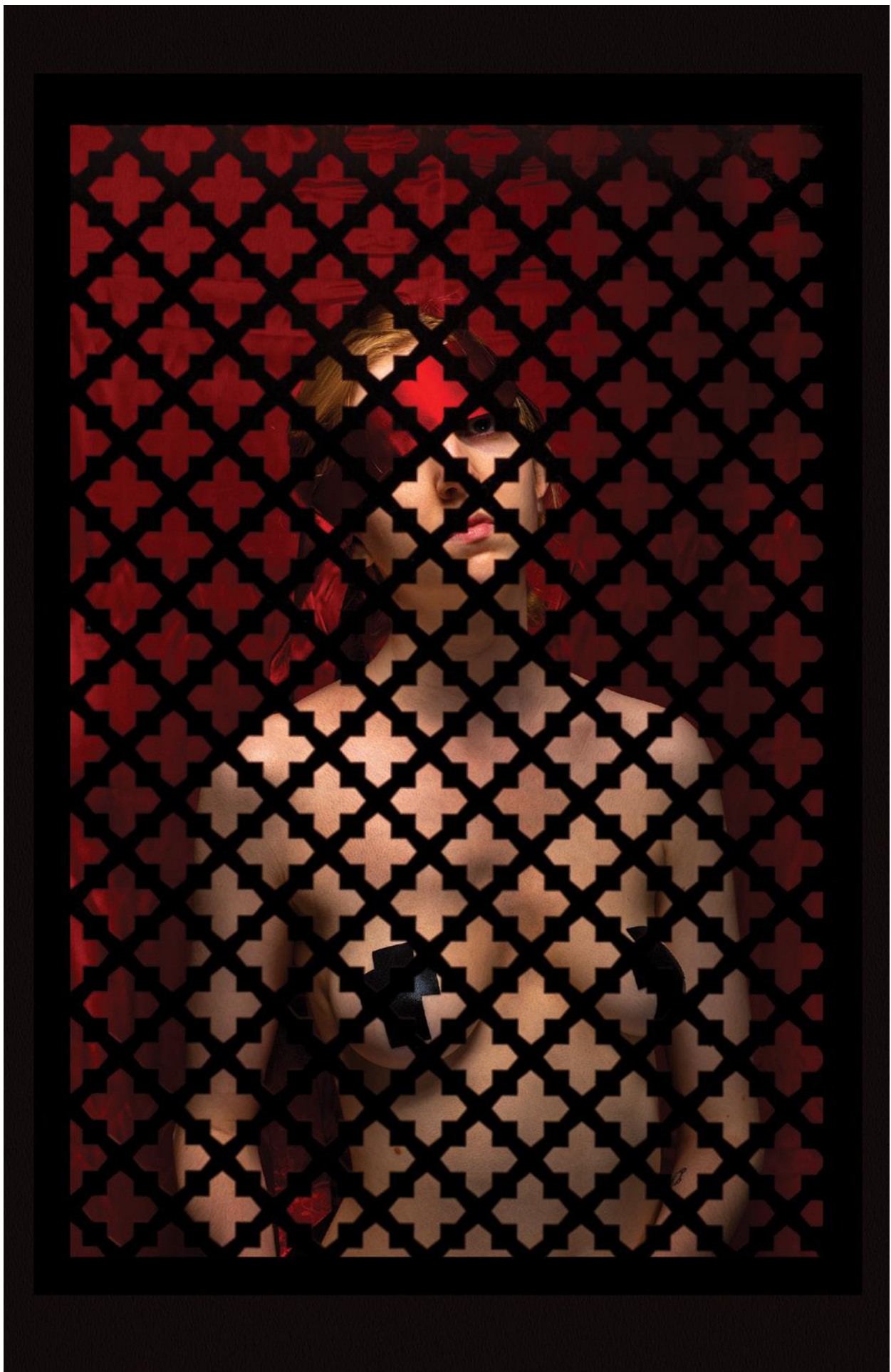
LEFT | Arjot Sandhawalia, *Lunchtime Prep 1*

RIGHT | Arjot Sandhawalia, *Lunchtime Prep 2*

@arjotsphotos

e n d u r a n c e

Lin Duperron, *Confess*, 2020, Inkjet Archival Print
15.5 x 23.5 inches, from the series *Indoctrination*
www.linduperron.com





e x h a u s t i n g

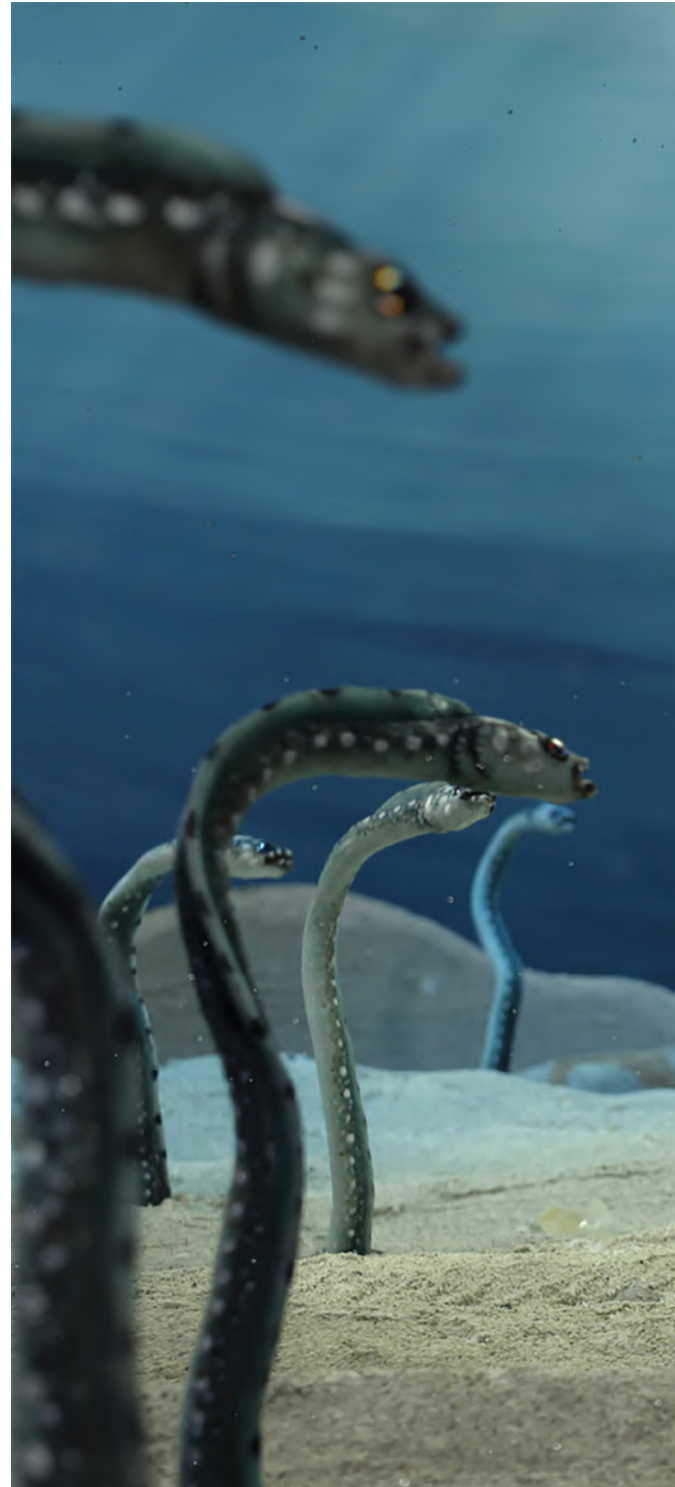
Teagan Lopes (she/her), *Altered Forest*, AI Render, 2020

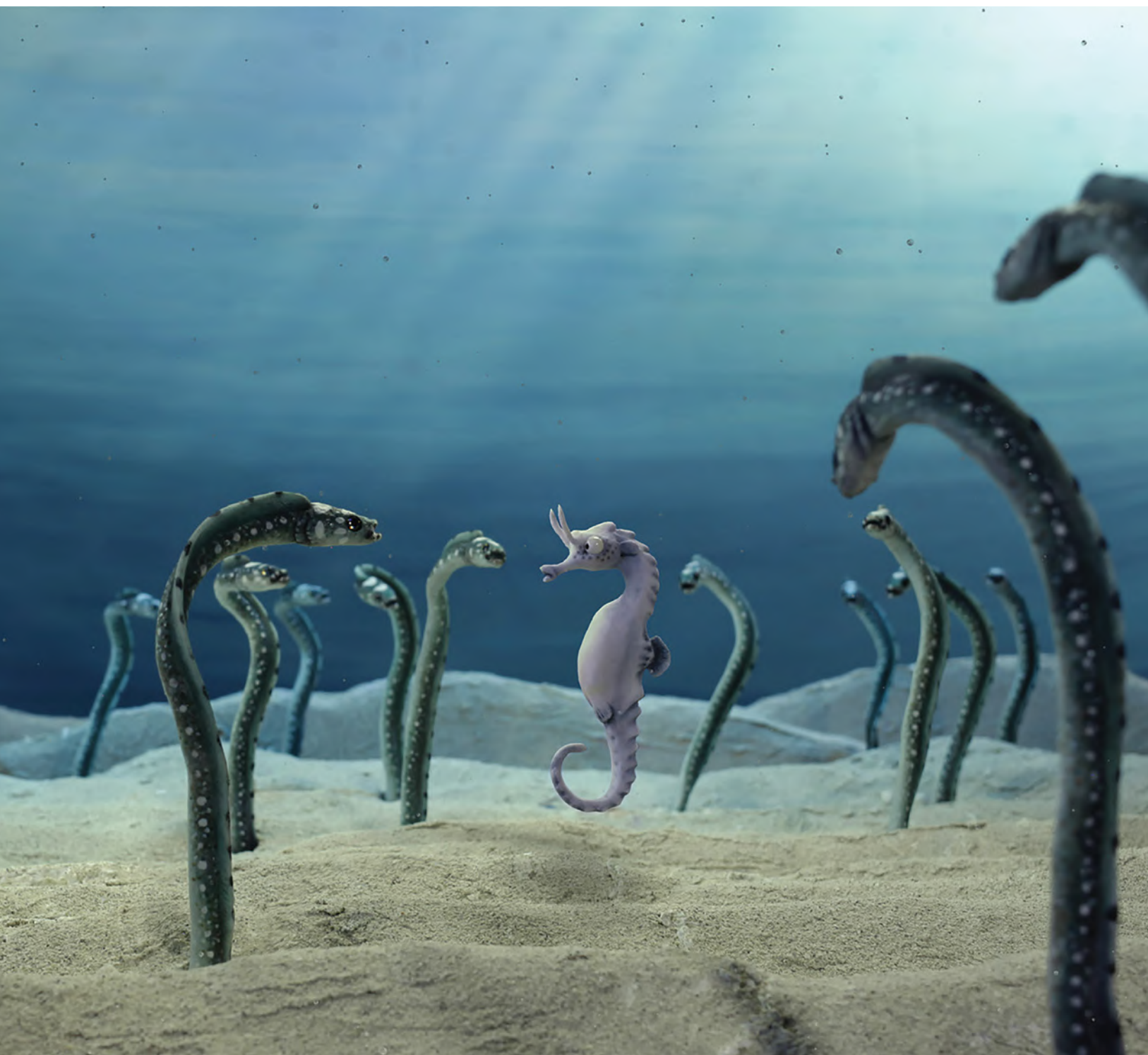
www.teaganlopes.com

a d a p t a t i o n

Kirsten Brass, *The Lost Seahorse Still Image*

Kirsten Brass: Writer/Producer, Benjamin Fieschi-Rose: Writer/Director,
@thelostseahorsefilm





l o s t

Patricia Daszkowski, *Les Deux Femmes*

@patricia.dasz



c h a l l e n g i n g

Jessica Rondeau, *Untitled 01*, Inkjet Print

@jessrondeau



c h a l l e n g i n g

Jessica Rondeau, *Untitled 02*, Inkjet Print

@jessrondeau



j o u r n e y

Ethan Lackner

Light at the End of the Tunnel







F E A T U R E

the barren farmer

“...Then maybe then, it’s happened in practice

but never in theory. I will remember that I am

only so small and too mighty to fall to small things.

If every mountain crumbled at first sight of snow,

I would live on the plains as a barren farmer and

cry to the moon for the rocks and oceans I knew.”

r e h a b i l i t a t i o n

Meagan Dickie (she/her), *Mount Erskine*

@meagandickie / meagandickie.com



Meagan Dickie, excerpt from *The Barren Farmer*





Meagan Dickie, *Near Baker Ridge*

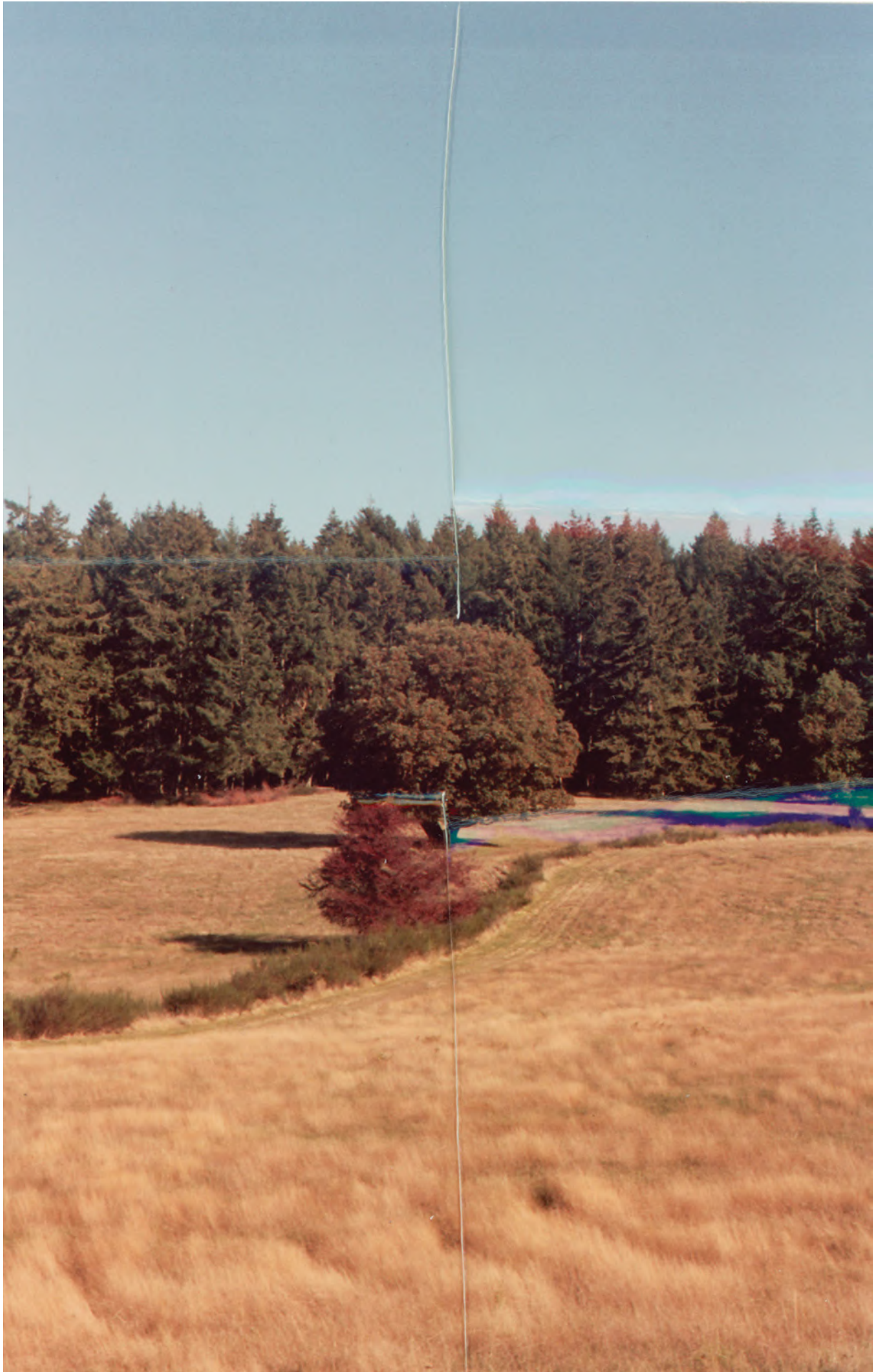
The Barren Farmer is a direct response to perception and abstract documentation surrounding the natural environment of the west coast. The flesh of the project relies on the interaction between the physical ecosystem of Vancouver Island and the manipulation of imagery. By deconstructing and reconstructing the photos, I uncover what parts of the environment directly connected with me.

The images are manipulated by scratching the photographic print, folding the print, crumpling it into a ball, spilling water on the prints, boiling the undeveloped film in tea, painting on the print, and collecting pieces of the environment to compliment the images. Warping the landscape is my dialogue to articulate how my quality of life shifted and was altered while photographing the landscape.

The project title comes from an excerpt from one of my journal entries written while photographing the project. Living on Vancouver Island, I often wonder how I would be different without nature I can easily access. Being in a new place has reminded me how much I have grown in the past year and who I would be without the privilege of photographing the west coast. I felt that I would be empty with my soul reaping more than it can sow and become a Barren Farmer with no gratitude for the things I have found to matter, like using nature as a way of therapy.



ABOVE & RIGHT | Meagan Dickie, excerpts from *The Barren Farmer*



v o r t e x

Anne-Marie Cloutier, (she/her), *horse tail*, Chromogenic Print, 2020

@a_mcloutier

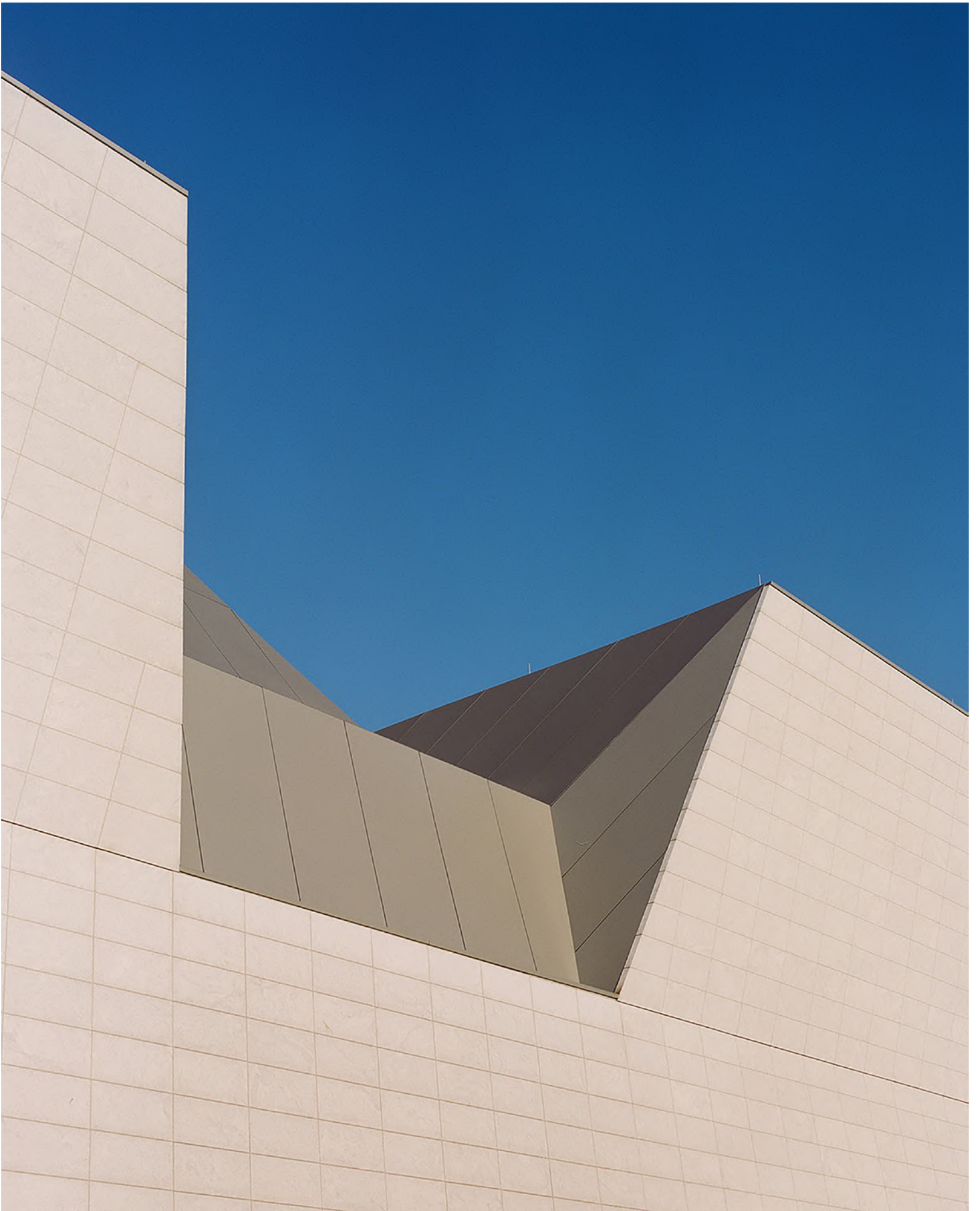


a p p r e c i a t e

Ella Murphy, *Aga Angles 01*

@lactoseintolerant

www.ellamurphy.com



l i m i n a l

Josiah Botting, *Marianas Trench*, 2021

@jbotting_

josiahbottingphotography.com



m o t i v a t i o n

Noah Nicholson, *AJ*

www.nonicholson.myportfolio.com







p a i n

Freida Wang, *hope you are well*, 2021

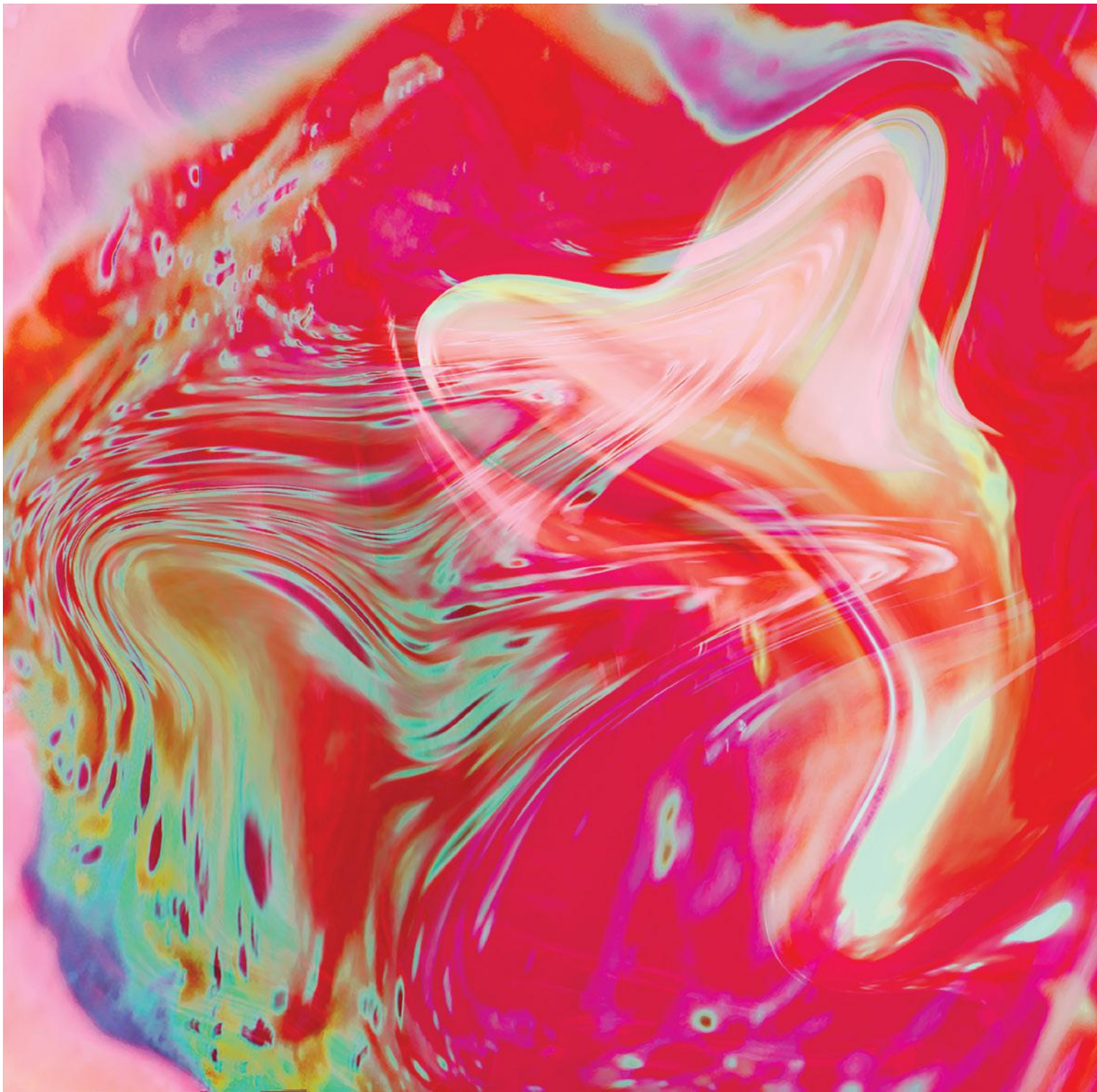
@everyone_ / freidawang.com

g r o w t h

Alec Boyle, *mikaela*

@alex_singular_



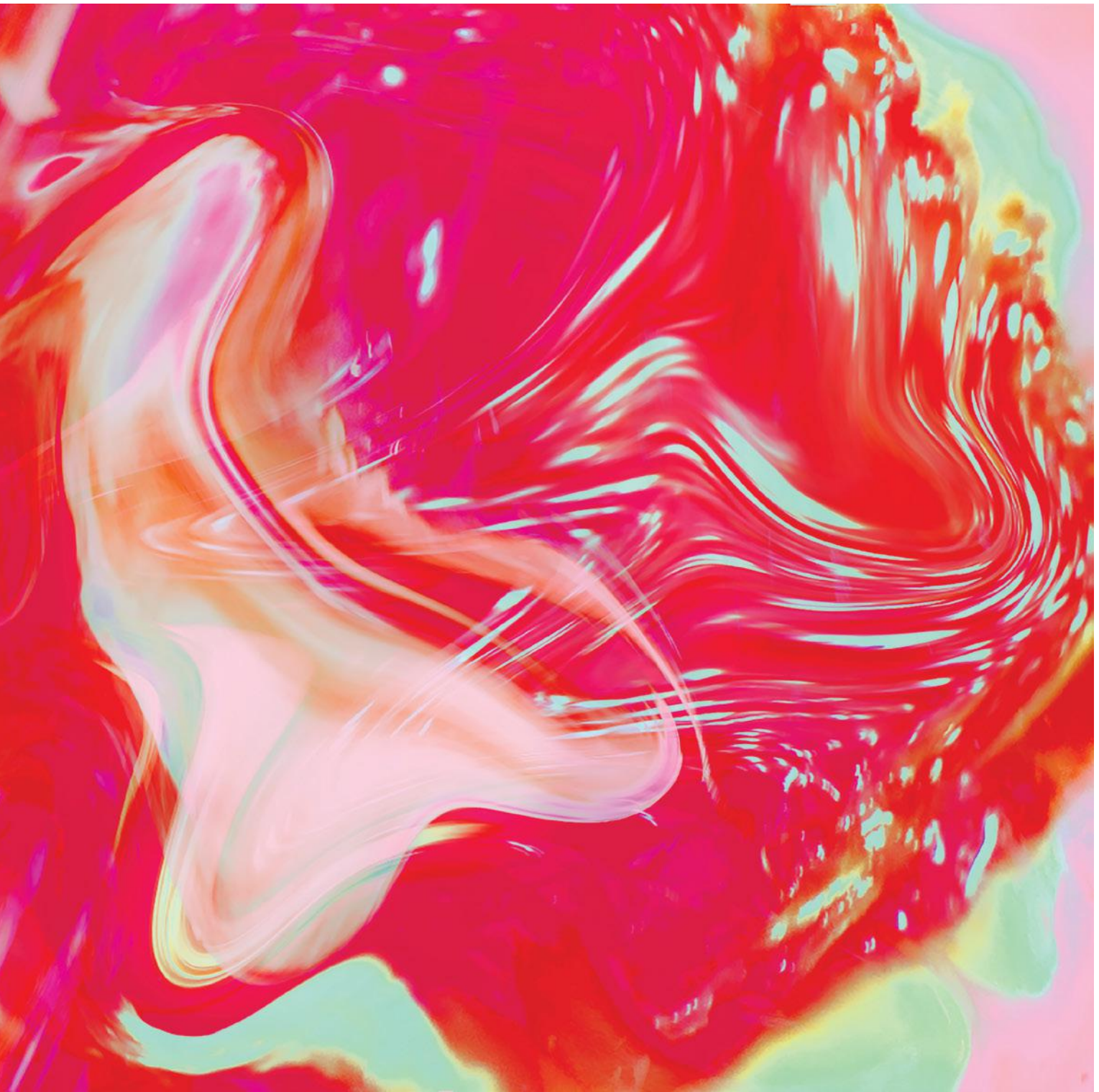


p a t i e n c e

Peyton Mott (she/they)

Chromophobia, Digital Art/Photography, 2021

@peyton_mott





Iain Cameron, *first success* 8

I N T E R V I E W

in conversation with Iain Cameron

I sat down over Zoom with **Professor Iain Cameron** of Ryerson University's School of Image Arts. Most students who are enrolled at IMA have at least one class with him; he is known for his knowledge of everything art history and his distinct Scottish accent. In this interview, we discussed everything from the purpose of art history, his own inspirations, what makes a great artist, how education has changed, his own work and how he's adapted during these unusual times. Brew yourself a coffee and get comfortable.

INTERVIEWER

Yarden Haddi



Iain Cameron, *Lockdown*

Yarden: How are you doing?

Iain: Not too bad I've been OK, surviving. I was an only child so I enjoy my own company. Not doing too bad during the lockdown.

Y: Usually when I do an interview I do some research online on my subject; however when I searched your name, the only thing that came up was a bunch of thriller novels. Your lack of online presence, does it add anything to your work?

Iain: It's not really deliberate, it's more just a product of timing and the way I work. I'm not the sort of person that feels compelled to cultivate an image. I find that a lot of the internet is centred around that and I think that's one of my flaws — I don't promote myself well enough. Part of that is just my upbringing and the place I was raised. Even now when I speak to my friends in Scotland and they ask "*How have you been doing?*" and I'll say "*Oh great; this happened and that happened.*" they'll say "*Stop showing off.*" I just come from that background of being more reserved. Proving yourself through actions rather than building a career for yourself and measuring that online.

Y: Some of my most enjoyable classes I've had during my degree have been your art history classes. One of my big takeaways was the idea of *contrapposto* and I still think about that when doing studio portraiture.

Iain: I think that's an important thing for photographers to wrestle with when working with a model. You have to try and animate them in some way — through gesture and through posture — and if you don't know what to do, have them in a *contrapposto* stance and work at it from there. It's important to suggest animation. That's one of the things that spark a belief that the subject is alive somehow and it's something I try to hammer home; it comes early in the course, too, so maybe it's more memorable. I touch on that [*contrapposto*] in the first or second week so everyone's alert at that time — maybe that's why it sticks a little bit more.

Y: Well I thought I paid attention but I'm not gonna get into all that.

Iain: [Laughs] Let's not go there.

Y: What inspires you to make art?

Iain: For me, a lot of it is the process rather than the end result. I really enjoy engaging with looking at the world. In terms of taking pictures and just getting out there and trying to wrestle, it's a very abstract belief; but I think the way I aesthetically compose [an image] communicates something about my values of the world and how I see it and I'm fascinated by that. I can go out there and look at a subject and arrange it in such a way that it will speak to someone else and we will have this non-verbal dialogue over time. That's what fascinates me about making images. I do enjoy the process much better than the end results. Taking pictures and making them in the darkroom, I'm very much into the process of it. I lack a lot of follow-through; once I kind of made the image, I start to lose interest and move onto the next one, which I would say is another flaw of mine. Things not to do in photography.

Y: You did a project yourself called *Ambiguous City Space*. What were you trying to convey here?

Iain: I did that for my Master's thesis and funny enough, I found some of the outtakes from that the other day. I wanted to do a project on Polaroid. This was a timeframe when Polaroid was about to die. I've always been interested in urbanism and if you asked me about my focus, that is what I would say. I was reading a lot of things about Paris in the 19th century and how the city was created as a spectacle to show off the wealth of the glory of the [French] Empire. As an opposite to that, I started to think about the unglamorous parts of the city. Every city has these areas — I call them ambiguous spaces — that are not clear in their meaning. They don't have a didactic meaning like a parliament building does and is much more obscure than the parts between physical spaces. I

went on an investigation for that and I gave myself the restriction of Polaroid because I knew it would be difficult to make a good exposure. Most cities have an eclectic accumulation of different styles and so *Ambiguous City Space* was really looking at the ambiguity in the modern urban environment; these overlaps and spaces that don't quite make sense. When I first came to Canada, I was working for an architect — a lot of my friends are architects, I find them to be intelligent people. Of all the artists out there I find the architects to be the smartest and to be the most broadly interested in art theory, so a lot of that comes from conversations with them. Things like usage of public space, that was my motivation for it.

Y: What do you believe are the key tenets of an artist?

Iain: To be quite frank I don't know if they [artists] owe anyone anything but from my perspective, [if you are] a working professional artist making a living out of this, you become a spokesman for the people in a sense. You are being afforded the liberties to reflect on the world in a leisurely way more than most people do. Most people have to work at a job from nine to five, but you somehow found your way into a position that your job is that of an artist. If you look at it that way, you're looking on behalf of those people, so you have to try and show them something in a relevant way — something that will enrich their life, even if it's in a very, very small way. Even when they look at the work and they feel excited by the colour or they feel intrigued by some aspect of the work, that you're giving people something from the images you are making. It doesn't always have to be something profound, it could just be the pleasure of seeing the pop of red that makes them feel excited at that particular moment. You make the work with others in mind because without someone interacting with your work then it's nothing, you may as well not be doing it.



Iain Cameron, *Ambiguous City Space*

When you're making your work you have to take some responsibility that you are trying to make something productive; creating a work that someone's going to look at and connect with in some way, shape or form. Is it being intellectual, formal — be it purely aesthetically? You are creating something you feel is unique, that's your viewpoint of the world and you're trying to say to people *"This is how I see things, do you share my view?"* *"How do you see the world?"* Provoke them to take up a camera and take pictures; that's probably the greatest compliment you can get as a photographer, I think. To show your work and have someone come up to you at your opening and say *"I think this is really interesting and I want to do this myself"*; that's much more complimentary than someone saying *"Your work is wonderful, I want to pay you \$1000 for one of your prints."* Inspiring someone to do the same is really rewarding — that's intellectually satisfying, emotionally satisfying and it tops any financial reward or pat-on-the-back could ever do.



Y: How should new photographers respond to the changes in technology?

Iain: They will have to adapt, but there will always be a use for photography. I think you're probably sitting there right now wondering *"Where am I going? What have I learned?"* You've probably learned a lot more than you think you have and this will become clear to you as you move out of Ryerson; you'll understand what exactly you've just learned. Part of that will be how you talk about the photograph — that's something the many millions [of people] on Instagram don't have. They can't explain to you what they did, why it works, its success. They just know that it's happening; because you understand these things, it gives you a distinct advantage. Because we are living in a world that is becoming more and more image-saturated.

Y: It was difficult finding your projects online but I was able to find one you did on the September 11 Attacks. Could you speak on it?

Iain: That's probably the most conceptual work I've ever done. It was done on the first anniversary of 9/11. For me, it was a critique of the media and the way they responded to 9/11. I wrote a paper on that as well; basically, the thrust of the article was video captured that day better than photography and where photography really came into it was people making posters on the inkjet printers of their loved ones. And that was by far the most photography produced on that day, but [I] also analyzed photographs produced on that day. One of the things that came up to me was on the day after the attacks, something like 80% of U.S. newspapers carried a photograph of the second plane hitting the tower in this big orange explosion. No one wanted to show a picture of someone falling from the building.

For me, they had dehumanized the whole attack and they aestheticized it into this explosion. My thinking was *"If you don't show the actual death and destruction, you make it easier for people to respond in a similar way,"* and you never see the human cost of that. I did a show where two of the walls were a repetition of a plane hitting the tower and one of the jumpers — very abstract in how the image was done. I basically took them from the media and stylized them very heavily in photoshop. One wall had this whole repetition of the plane hitting and the jumper, then a large poster of the plane coming in, a large image of a destroyed building and an image of Bin Laden and the anthrax letter to show the story is not over.

Y: Showing that letter garnered some controversy.

Iain: One of the things that I did with that show was that I didn't put up my name. I didn't leave a comments book, I really wanted people to deal with it. Students were writing little notes and sticking them onto the prints, which I found fascinating. I denied any possibility to com-

ment on it yet they were trying to find ways. I think it was a first-year student that read that [anthrax letter] as an attack on Israel, which it was never intended to be. The dean at that time, a Jewish gentleman, stood up for me quite solidly saying *"This is free speech being misinterpreted."* That show would never fly today. I would probably be out of a job today; that complaint would have been taken a lot more seriously today than it was back then. I was fortunate that the Dean clued into the context of the show and understood that this was a misinterpretation of the show, but I'm not quite sure that would happen so easily today. It would have been a lot more controversial, held up to a lot more scrutiny and my motivations would have been questioned.

Y: How has COVID-19 changed you and your life? And what will come of all this?

Iain: I think this will make us colder to each other. Social distancing has taken its toll. We will get a whole generation of young people who have been taught *"don't get too close to people."* It will ultimately have an impact unless we swing back to normal really quickly. Personally, it has reinforced where my life is going. I've become older now and a little more conservative about life and more of a homebody. Teaching is obviously different. I put the same amount of effort into lectures, but it's not quite the same as having a face to see when you're in class and you see a student falling asleep — you know when to wrap it up. Or you can see when a student needs a little bit of encouragement to speak like, *"Yarden, what do you think about this?"* so I still feel the same intensity in class. I feel if I had a couple more years working like this I could be quite more effective. I am starting to learn things that were working better online. I think one of the problems is that we are too tied to the old model and rather than understand that we are in a different environment, we try to take the old model fit in the new environment. Once we let go of the old model, there will be new classes that we can fit in. ♦

z o n e d

Maria Sofia Guevara (*she/her*), *CornontheCob*,

Photographic Print, 2021

www.sofscreativ.space



s h i t

Deion Squires-Rouse, *Manipulate: Me*

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s h i t

Deion Squires-Rouse, *Mom*

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a d a p t a t i o n

Tyler Da Silva (he/him), *FAG!*, 2020, Digital
[@tylerdasilvaphotography](#)







e n t r o p y

Caeden Wigston, *Goodsides*

@caedenwigston



e n t r o p y

ABOVE | Caeden Wigston, *Catherines Landscape*

RIGHT | Caeden Wigston, *I Beg You To Have Patience*

@caedenwigston





i n d i v i d u a t i o n | Eka Jeladze, *Untitled 04*, @ekajeladze





d e p r e s s i o n

Ramzi Khalil, *A Slow Death*

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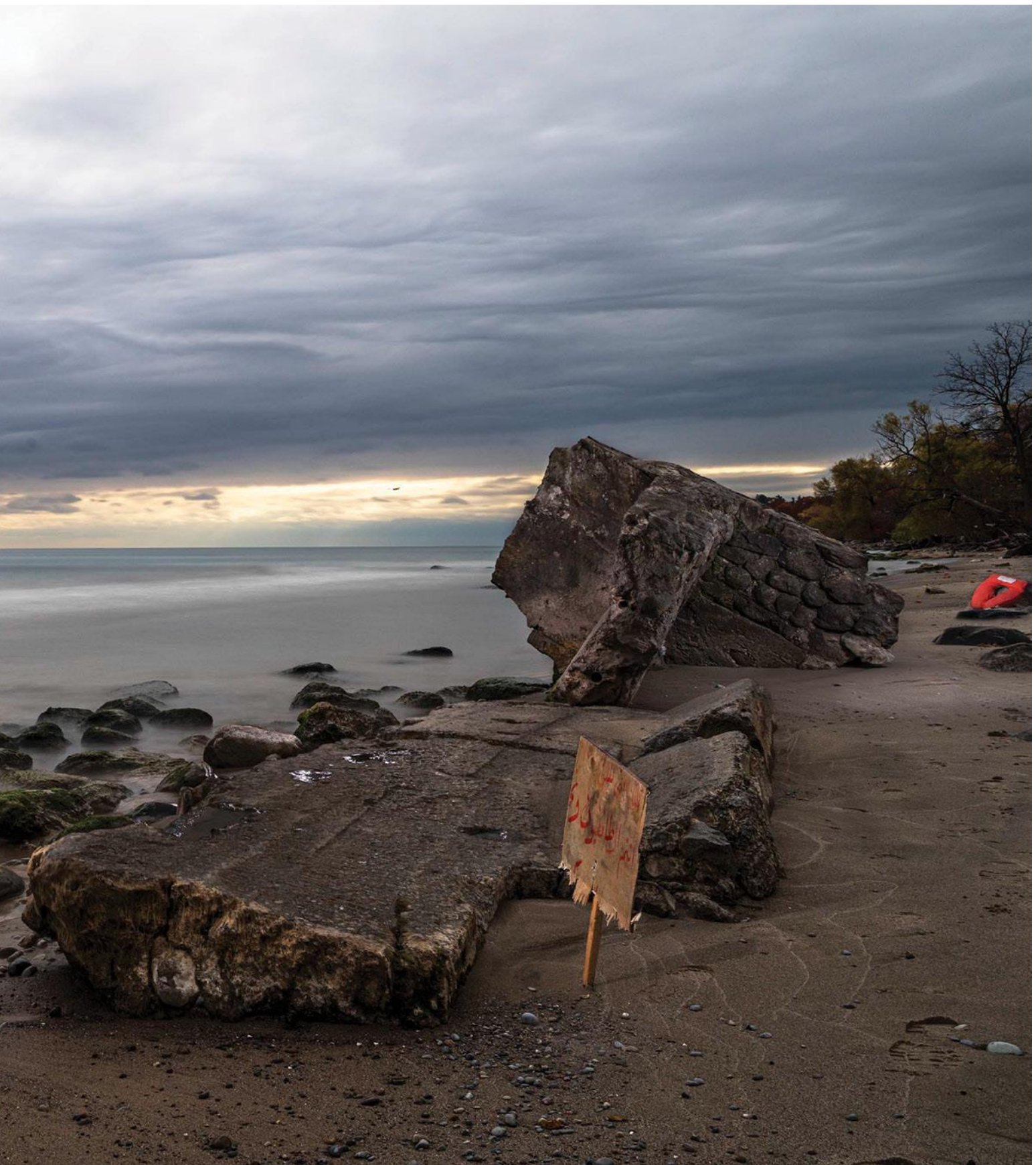
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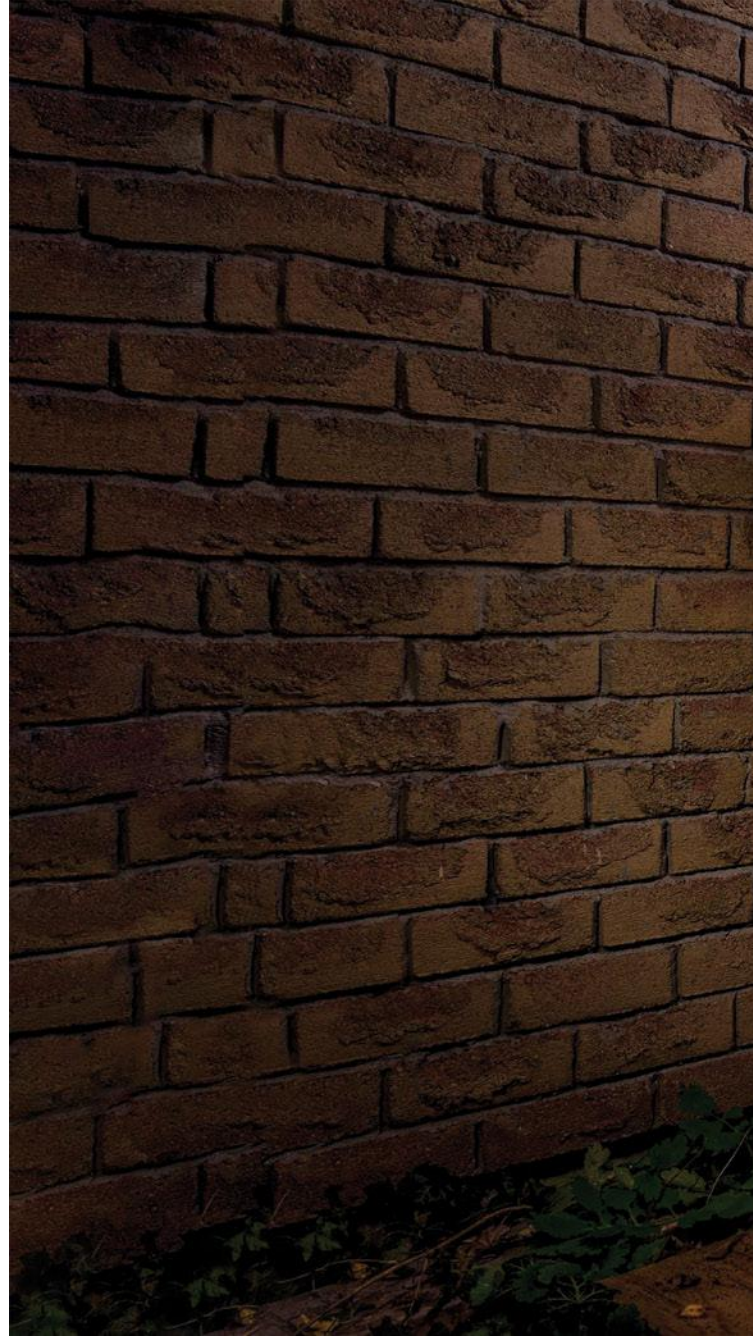
buried identity

My photographs reflect on the unrelenting tension between the physical absence of the Lebanese people, who have been displaced from their homeland during the civil war due to political powers. The series presents the psychological presence of millions of Lebanese who continue to struggle. Appearing like ghosts in a field of dreams, the unidentified figures presented evoke the presence of absence of a homeland that has been cleansed of most of its sons and daughters. The photographs will metaphorically reunite the displaced immigrant inhabitants with the native homeland they lost. While a massive tragedy of forced displacement and economic migration is increasingly reverberating across the globe, the images invite viewers to witness forgotten immigrants who have languished in the shadows around the world for the past forty years. Stripped of their identity and driven from their land by the cruelty of political greed and power, four generations of the Lebanese people endure as unfamiliar guests in foreign host-lands. The series continues the tradition, an unwavering insistence to raise children on the cultural narratives of Lebanon and to nurture them on the vision of returning to and rebuilding their ancestral villages and towns.



Ramzi Khalil, *Exodus*





Ramzi Khalil, *Surrender to the Regime*





Ramzi Khalil, *No Witness Remains*



p a i n

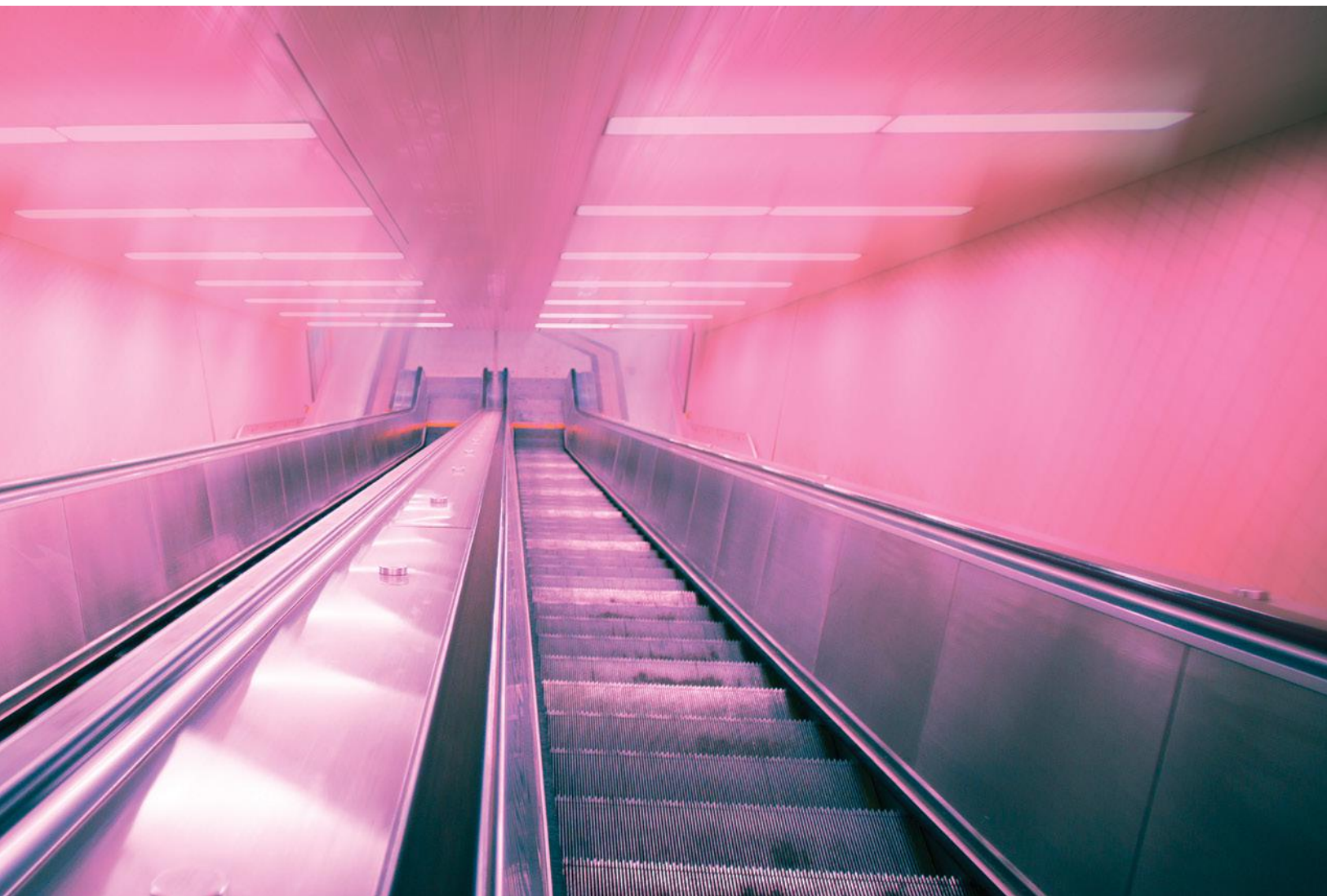
Freida Wang, *No, You.*, 2020

@everyone_

freidawang.com







p a t i e n c e

Peyton Mott (she/they), *Stygiophobia*, 2021, Digital Art/Photography

@peyton_mott

g r o w t h

Andy Nguyen, *rush hour in saigon*

@nghtanh





d i s s o c i a t e

Milyn Pham (she/her), *Comfort*, 2021, Digital
@vizionmillz



g r o w t h

Andy Nguyen, *tina* & *ivan*
@nghtanh





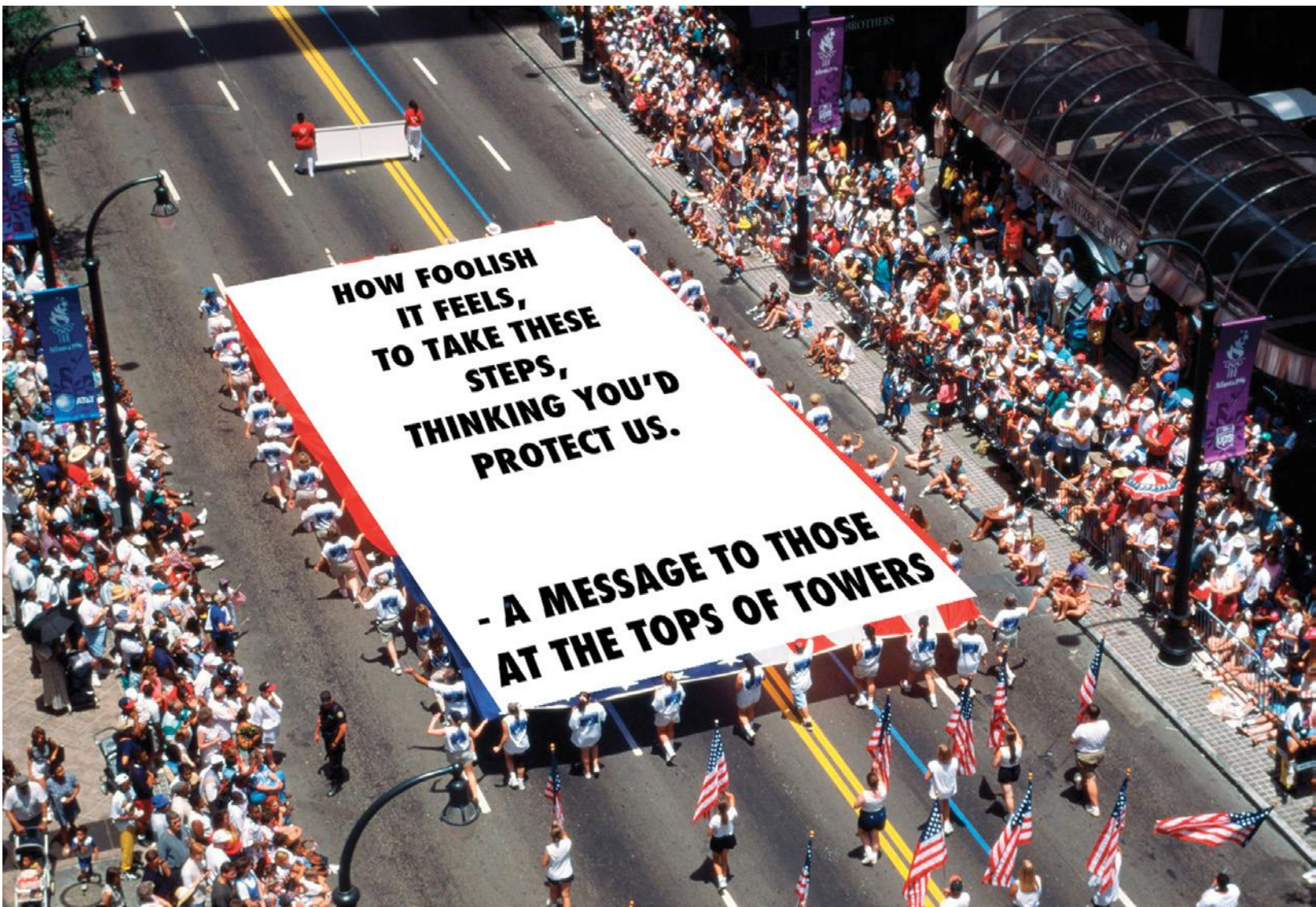
f o c u s

Selina Chea, 04 Same Shit, Different Day
@chea.captures

p a t i e n c e

Aley Luzuriaga (she/her), *How to Escape 4*, 2019, Digital
@aley.luz





I N T E R V I E W

inhabitable, inheritable worlds

Joshua Vettivelu is a Tkaronto-based artist working within

sculpture, installation, performance, video, and drawing.

In addition to their studio practice, Vettivelu currently sits on

the Board of Directors of CARFAC National and is the Manager

of Ryerson Artspace. Here, they talk to **Kerry Manders**

about happy accidents, interrogating the institution,

and collaborative world building.

LEFT | Joshua Vettivelu, *Mock up for a Pride Float*

Your studio practice includes a combination of sculpture, installation, performance, video, and drawing. How do these different areas of your practice overlap or influence the other?

It's really funny because I've always thought of myself as "everything but photography," and now I'm running a photography gallery. I went to York University and earned my BFA. I wanted to be a photo-realistic painter. I was 17 when I started university and really caught up in what "good art" was to a broad spectrum of people. Like any large institution, York was administratively difficult, and I didn't always get the classes I wanted. I got "stuck" in some sculpture and video classes, and now I can say that was the best thing that could have happened to me.

My very first sculpture class was a mold-making class and the first thing I made was a cast of the inside of my mouth! And in this moment, I realized that something physical could come from something internal, from a place that you don't really understand and can't really see. That moment broke down a lot of what I thought I was supposed to aspire to. From that moment, sculpture started to reveal to me that I was interested in the material world, yes, but also that the lubricant between my interior psyche and physical world was called "language."

Sculpture allowed me to play with "real world" applications of what I was learning in, say, my Sexuality Studies class. I could translate language – theory – into something physical and material. What is the materiality of gender? Of race? The sculpture program was good for reminding me that words exist in a matrix of associations. Sculpture was a way to pick apart – and put back together! – my experiences. I could use it as a different vocabulary.

Administration is a language. Relationships are a language. Family is a language. Community building is a language. I'm not inventing this: we all participate in multiple languages. Presenting an image as a drawing versus a sculpture versus a video all mean different things. Communication is a difficult pursuit! How can I bring ideas and materials together to convey something that begins as a pre-verbal

utterance to eventually form words in sentences? How can I ensure my references and referents become somehow communal? These questions come up in my studio practice, but they apply to everything from administration to budgets. It all overlaps.

What are some ways you think about photographic work in the context of installation?

I ask students all the time: why is this a *photo* and not something else? Why *must* this be a photo? Why is this printed on photo paper and not something else? Why isn't this printed on metal or etched on something? I want them to remember not to take their choices for granted, not to do something a certain way because that's the way it's always been done. I want them to make conscious – and conscientious – choices for specific reasons that are integral to their work.

I understand that students are concerned with doing things "correctly" and having the "correct" answers. But I want them constantly and continually to question themselves. What does "correct" even mean? To or for whom? Maybe if they aren't so concerned about having or finding "correct," pre-existing answers, they can come up with new ones. And maybe if they worry less about "right" answers, they'll also craft new questions, and new questions beget new questions. Just as you have to ask yourself questions about the art, you have to ask yourself similar questions about its installation. Why choose the language of a gallery exhibition when there are billboards right outside! There's the internet! There are magazines! I want them to understand that a gallery show is not their only option.

At the same time, I get it: there's an incentivization to landing the gallery show. It looks good on your artist CV. But why do we buy into the hierarchies of institutions – institutions that are rooted in colonial power structures? Those are power structures we need to try to recognize, discuss, and dismantle. When I'm teaching, I always ask my students where they want to show their work. Everyone says the AGO! And I say, "Okay, let's assume



Joshua Vettivelu, *This Light (Greater than the Sum of the Sun)* | Photo credit: Christina De Melo

this can happen for you. When you show at the AGO, you're going to be exhausted, you're going to end up in debt, because it's an extractive place. It *cannot* be your end goal. The AGO might be *one* path, *one* mode of validation and professionalization. But don't concentrate all of your hopes and dreams there, because it's not going to make you feel good."

These institutions are inherently extractive. Institutions have their own desires, and those desires are rooted in capitalism and revenue. And we get caught up in these systems whether we like it or not. Without even realizing it, we start adjusting our practices to fit with the institution's commercial desires. What I know from being on the board of CARFAC is that we have to fight for even *minimum* payments from places like the National Gallery of Canada. Tiny, unknown galleries are paying their artists better rates than the National Gallery! And that makes me sad for the world of visual arts. I encourage young artists to look to other venues and alternate ways to present their work. We need to be aware of what we're choosing, and the implications of our choices.

What are your thoughts about art in everyday life?

What are some ways we can bring sculpture and installation into our personal spaces?

Okay, weird answer for you: languages of resistance can only develop socially, but before that can happen, they need to happen internally. I've learned that my practice is a constant reorientation with the objects around me. As you can see [via our Zoom call], I have little gatherings of objects in my apartment...

I'm intrigued by the Blundstones on top of your door frame.

Those are my "art school" Blundstones! I'm really utilitarian about shoes. We were really poor growing up, so I only ever had one pair of shoes at a time. I still only have one pair of shoes at a time. So those Blundstones represent years of my life – literally all the walking I did for a given period. And maybe this is just me being sentimental, but the ordinariness of sentimentality is the point here. Let's think about this lily [points to wall]: my Mom grew



Joshua Vettivelu, *Fort Da* (Learning my Mother's Nickname)

it and I cast it in resin in 2007. I thought: how long will this keep? How long can I keep this? And that's an art project right there. It's not for anyone but me. Maybe part of the point is not everything has to be "Art." So that's my answer for what sculpture can do. Because that's what it's done for me: never letting an object simply "be."

Like language, objects always signify in many directions.

One thing I'm noticing is that the younger generation is more politically astute than their predecessors, even though they're often being taught by instructors regurgitating the same neoliberal agenda they inherited. It's exciting to meet them because they're already doing important work. One of the things I want to help teach them is that they can conduct themselves and their careers in a politically savvy manner, but "Politics" need not always be front and centre in their artwork. The politics must be everywhere else, if that makes sense. Perhaps the best way to support Muslim women *isn't* by taking a photo of one in a hijab with tears rolling down her face. I want students to think about their own work in relation to all those images that *already* exist. What will *your* intervention look like? You don't

want it to be extractive. How are you going to make honest, non-exploitative work? There's a difference between "putting" politics into your work and making work that is political — living a politicized life.

**What are some key elements that you look for when selecting an exhibition space?
How does the criteria differ based on each work?**

In the past five years of my career, I've been getting larger, more visible opportunities, which always means more research. I have this relational artwork that amplifies heartbeats called *Pulse*. Every heart beats differently and it's very musical. Two strangers sit across from each other and we turn up the bass. Eventually, you can't tell the heartbeats apart. It's rather anxiety-producing, in a way — this dissolution of the boundary between self and other. I thought this could be an interesting political tool!

I was invited to present a project at the AGO for a First Thursdays event called *Land Rights Now*. Thinking about the history of images of Canada, I chose *Pulse* to amplify the heartbeats of five Indigenous performers in front of a Group of

Seven painting. The Group of Seven created a visual narrative around Canada that was intentionally devoid of the people who had connections to this land, facilitating the ideology that Canada was an untouched resource, prime for exploitation. It was important to me to amplify the real-time heartbeats of my Indigenous colleagues, in that gallery, in front of that painting.

And I want to be clear here: I learned about this critique of the Group of Seven from the conversations being had by Indigenous and Black scholars around me like Deanna Bowen, Lisa Myers, and Wanda Nanibush.

Are your installation pieces inspired by concepts and ideas or are they developed in response to a physical space?

It's a bit of both, depending. Lately, the work I'm making is predicated on invitations – on me being invited to create work for certain spaces. These invitations emerge from pre-existing relationships, on people being familiar with my work, knowing what I'm interested in, and believing I might be a fit. Either way, it's all about the right fit. Earlier in my career, I'd search out spaces and contexts where I thought my work would be a good fit. In those cases, the work, the ideas, came first, and I had to figure out where to present them. Of course, sometimes I made mistakes! Seeing your work in a space that is not a good fit is a useful, if painful, learning opportunity.

What are some of the roadblocks you've faced when trying to realize an idea or vision?

When I was younger, I'd get ideas for pieces that I didn't have the skills to pull off (yet!) or the maturity to follow through to completion – a case of biting off more than I could chew. Again, these were learning opportunities! I have a solo exhibition coming up in November 2021, and I've been working on and through the ideas since 2014. Sometimes, ideas take time to realize, and that's okay. I needed the right venue for this work, and that took time. Conceptually, I had to exhibit this work in a place that used to be a site of material production in the industrial age but is now used for cultural production. That was key. So, I'll be exhibiting at the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington in Bowmanville, Ontario, which used to be a functioning mill.

Who inspires you in your practice?

I'll name a few people here. Deanna Bowen's research practices helped me to understand the linguistic reference point in relation to the ambiguous art object. Tobaran Waxman is the Artistic Director of The Intergenerational LGBT Artist Residency, which I was a part of and where I met Syrus Marcus Ware. I was on the young end of the intergenerational spectrum, and it was the first time I heard the term "intergenerational" used with intention. It really made me think that, as queer people, we must create our own avenues of knowledge inheritance. Otherwise, cycles of oppression continue, and we find ourselves constantly reinventing the same wheel. I was only 23 when I participated in the Residency, and it was a huge learning experience. I understood for the first time that the worlds I build need to be inheritable.

What piece of advice would you give to Image Arts students as they launch their careers and enter the industry in today's climate?

Regardless of how you think you're living your life, know that the way that you live your life is world building. If we accept things the way they are, if we leave objects alone, we're affirming the world as it is. Do you want to change the world? If the answer to that question is yes, you must challenge the world as it is and help to build a new one. I'm talking about your work, your art, sure: but I'm also talking more generally about how you live your life. Who are your relationships with? Who are you collaborating with? That's where world building happens. Because of course no one can do it alone. We actually have a lot more agency than we think we do. After all, institutions are, at their core, relationships between sets of people. And those relationships can change, and so the institutions can change. You need to find the right people and keep working, keep pushing. But I also think it's equally important to know when to call it quits, to stop pouring energy into an institution that has no will to reform and put your energy and intentions elsewhere. Refusal is just as much a part of world-building as saying yes to new opportunities. ♦

p e r s e v e r a n c e

Matthew Morreale, *Noah*
@mattmorreale



a c c e p t a n c e

John Delante, *Untitled (Self-Portrait) No. 9, by the lake, Ajax*, 2020

@jmdelante





h o p e

Katya Ilna, *Enjoy the Silence*
@katya__ilina / www.katyailina.com

about

FUNCTION is a visual art and culture publication that is curated, designed, and produced by a team of 4th-year students at the School of Image Arts.

Our magazine's primary focus is the work of current students, faculty, and industry professionals working with and around lens-based media.

Over the years, print publication has been the standard platform for engaging in the ongoing discourse surrounding contemporary art. In 2019, *Function* launched its website, which allows us to continue this conversation in new and expanded ways. The site features interviews with industry professionals, exhibition highlights, and student profiles. As we strengthen our presence online, our devotion to print publication has remained.

Our goal as the creators of *Function* is to coherently represent the Image Arts community and create a space that is inclusive, collaborative, and accessible.



Jordana Petruccelli

Publication Designer & Communications

I'm a portrait & lifestyle photographer, and practicing artist from Toronto, Canada. I'm currently studying photography at the School of Image Arts. Since starting my photography business at age 16, my favourite part about the commercial work I do has always been meeting and working with new people. My personal projects are often abstract and conceptual series that explore themes, such as the self.

r e c o n n e c t

From the series *I know who I am not.*, Thesis, 2021
[@jordana.photographyyz](https://www.instagram.com/jordana.photographyyz) / www.jordanastudios.com



Kashif Ahmed Bin Arif

Creative Director & Marketing

I am a documentary and portrait photographer based in the Greater Toronto Area. I am currently studying Photography Studies at Ryerson University in the School of Image Arts. My love for photography comes from my mother – she loves taking pictures and taught me how to use a real camera. From there, I developed my passion and now I love capturing portraits – when people are in their most beautiful candid form, showing their true emotions, captured in the moment.

r e p r e s e n t

From the series *Lost Identity*, Thesis, 2021
[@kapture_studios](https://www.instagram.com/kapture_studios) / www.kapturestudios.com



Yarden Haddi

Financial Director

I'm a Toronto-based photographer covering topics such as shifting landscapes, architectural design, implementation of surveillance in our daily lives, and the use of urban space in the city, utilizing a mix of digital and analogue mediums.

r e c o l l e c t

A Portrait of Bathurst Street, Thesis, 2021
www.yarden.ca



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p a t i e n c e | Peyton Mott (she/they), *Stained*, 2021

Polaroid, Souped I-Type Film

@peyton_mott

