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ART

2017

MFA

**2017
UO ART MFA
THESIS
EXHIBITION**

**5/5/2017-5/28/2017
OPENING 5/12 6-9^{PM}**

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8371 N INTERSTATE AVE. PORTLAND, OR 97217

GALLERY HOURS: THURSDAY-SUNDAY, 12-5PM

ANDREW DOUGLAS CAMPBELL

CHELSEA COUCH

ESTHER WENG

JOE MOORE

LEE ASAHINA

MANDY HAMPTON

MARY MARGARET MORGAN

MERIL WALLACE

RON LINN

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of French literary critic and theorists Roland Barthes' influential 1967 essay, *The Death of the Author*. In countless MFA critiques and seminars, artists have grappled with Barthes' essay and its implications related to de-skilling, negation of authorial voice, and birth of the reader/viewer. Each of the nine artists included in the University of Oregon's 2017 MFA Thesis Exhibition undoubtedly addresses the viewer, challenging audiences to explore new ways of thinking about and moving in the world through infiltration, translation, and humor. Yet in all of the artworks presented, the viewer "is born" not at the expense and death of the author, but through a shared insistence on the importance of the relationship between artist and viewer, artistic presence, and/or the laying bare of the production apparatus.

CHELSEA COUCH

Chelsea Couch's work finds itself occupying a space somewhere between sculpture and performance. Rather than a simple means of display, screens and video clips are transformed into sculptural objects; the frame and the representation it encloses collide. Many of Couch's pieces include depictions of her own body, creating an intimacy between her work and the viewer. At the same time, through cropping and framing, the artist becomes anonymous. Couch's body opens itself up to receive projections of the viewer's own self image.

Couch's digital pieces are accompanied by more traditional sculptures made from materials such as clay and metal. Like video, clay can present the index of a body without its physical presence.

Metal, in turn, alludes to and replicates architecture and its ability to contain. Couch examines multiple levels of containment, considering how we are contained by our flesh, and how we have been conditioned to occupy space and how architecture dictates our

movements. In some cases, Couch both exaggerates and breaks free from these confinements. In *On Tongue*, the endless licking of a wall mimics the madness induced by the monotony of a daily routine, while transgressing the normative boundaries between architecture and body.



Chelsea Couch. *In the Pines*, 2017. Copper-Covered Steel, Fluorescent Light. Dimensions Variable.

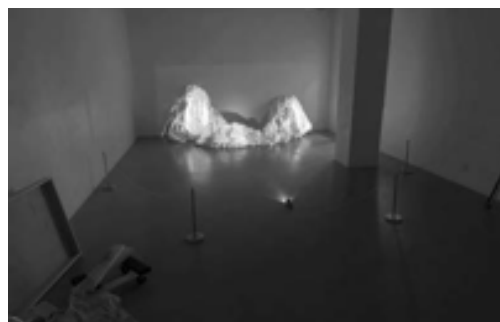
ANDREW CAMPBELL

Andrew Campbell sets out to investigate interpersonal relationships and the narratives they foster. Campbell's choice of working in fabric and embroidery is very important as its marginalized past, being defined as craft, allows it to break with expectations. Thread also becomes the perfect representation for human life. There are often moments,

people, culture, that connect us together, creating a strong social structure just as threads are woven together to produce a durable textile. Using fabric also inserts references to the human body into Campbell's work. The material looks like it could have come from clothing like an old suit jacket, tattered from years of wear and tear.

There is a call and response element to Campbell's work. As the viewer looks at the finished piece, it is clear that Campbell explored his way to the end product, that each stitch is a solution. He asks the viewer to react to his work,

relating distressed and frayed fabric to the trauma we all experience. Regardless of who we are, Campbell's work alludes to emotions and associations we all have, thus solidifying another connecting thread in our social narrative.



Esther Weng. *Untitled (Diorama)*, 2016. Single-Channel Video Projection Installation with Tarp, Flashlight, Wood, Rope, Paint. Dimensions Variable.

ESTHER WENG

Philosophers and scientists strive to eliminate indeterminate terms from their arguments, as those terms are unquantifiable and untestable. Rather than stray from uncertainties, Esther Weng's work aims to highlight them through the collapse of the viewer's expectation of time and space. Weng works with a variety of mediums from film to sculpture, often using multiple mediums at once to obscure the viewer's understanding of the exhibition space. She has projected exterior scenes to fill interior spaces and has used natural light, changing with the position of the sun, to bring her pieces to life. This mode encourages her audience to contemplate their relationship to the piece and the performative interaction Weng is facilitating.

Early avant-garde films are one of Weng's primary sources of inspiration, but whereas film often offers its viewers an illusion of time passing, she uses physical materials such as film and clay to produce palpable documentations of the past. Once she has transformed the passage of time into a type of artifact or relic, it is subject to manipulation. Through the physical manipulation of material, Weng prompts her viewers to consider their own perceptions and how those perceptions can so easily shift and morph, leaving them with nothing but uncertainty.

Early avant-garde films are one of Weng's primary sources of inspiration, but whereas film often offers its viewers an illusion of time passing, she uses physical materials such as film and clay to produce palpable documentations of the past. Once she has transformed the passage of time into a type of artifact or relic, it is subject to manipulation. Through the physical manipulation of material, Weng prompts her viewers to consider their own perceptions and how those perceptions can so easily shift and morph, leaving them with nothing but uncertainty.

MANDY HAMPTON

The best way to describe Mandy Hampton's work is as uncanny; her sawdust sculptures are simultaneously familiar and mysterious. Their materiality grounds them in reality, but their cavernous

existence projects them into an imaginary space, creating an identity that breeds discomfort and wonder. Through these tensions, Hampton explores the relationship between science/technology and the natural world as her sculptures straddle the threshold, allowing for new spaces to unfold.

Hampton primarily uses sawdust clay to create her ambiguous forms. Just as everything in our world is simply a collection of tiny particles, so too are Hampton's sculptures. When looking at these forms, there are clear references to a desert landscape and the human figure. The sawdust alludes to the texture and dryness of sandstone, but it is also draped over the skeleton of the sculpture like flesh, shielding the internal structure from the harsh element of the outside world. Intentionally, Hampton has condensed most elements of life into one frozen moment. Many of her sculptures are hollow with a window into their interior. Perhaps these openings are portals to some new unknown realm or simply an invitation to explore. Through the compression of time and space into one form,



Mandy Hampton. *Sawdust Portrait*, 2016. Sawdust, wood, mixed media. 26 x 48 x 60 inches (WDH)

Hampton transforms her audience into pioneers, setting out into the unknown.

MERIL WALLACE

In a world where so much of our time is fixated on screens, Meril Wallace asks his viewers to step outside. His art practice is motivated by love of place, specifically nature, and how place can teach us to love. It seems like the juxtaposition of industrialized society (the viewer) and nature (Wallace's work) is extremely important when thinking about how place can give lessons in love. The love that comes through Wallace's work is not romantic, but rather a love that can be translated as appreciation and admiration. Through appreciation, understanding and awareness can be cultivated.

As we move through life, we are typically so focused on our to-do list and what we need to do to get to where we are going that the world around us becomes blurred. Going out into nature is a way to slow this pace. It is this slowness and appreciation that Wallace shares with his viewers. Much of the materials Wallace uses are sourced directly from the places he loves: the branches off a tree or the sounds of a bird chirping. Inspired by his love of place, Wallace recreates a space for his viewers to learn to slow down, to appreciate, and to love.

RON LINN

Some of the major themes seen in Ron Linn's work are memory, myth, nature and the sublime. When we see something awe inspiring we yearn to return to that feeling, that moment, but that experience can never be relived. Once you see something, you can never again see it for the first time. Rather than attempting to replicate memories and experiences Linn uses drawings to translate those experiences into tangible objects. These translations are not devoid of meaning, but rather become an artifact of experience, an artifact that can be many things at once.

This flexible existence is evident in work like *now/here sign*. While this atmospheric motif was sourced from Linn's personal experience looking up a smoke stack, it can also bring to mind images of the moon, an image we can all recall. For Linn, this image is his translation of a specific memory of a time and place, but has left it open for interpretation. The object itself does not hold specific meaning, but rather it is a catalyst for the viewer to fill the gallery space with his or her own personal narrative. Linn's work allows the viewer to have an active role exploring the relationships between experience, memory, and objects.



Meril Wallace. *Hear over there*, 2016. Tree stump, directional speaker, audio recording.

JOE MOORE

Everyday is full of opportunities for everything to be made into anything. The anxiety inducing freedom of the everyday, the mundane seems ridiculous. What is even more

ridiculous is regardless of the endless number of outcomes' most of us live in fear of failure, but what is failure when anything is possible? Joe Moore's work embraces the ridiculous, the mundane, and failure, solidifying these concepts into a humorous object or compilation of objects.

While much of his work seems disingenuous and cheeky, it is also light hearted. There are two phases to Moore's work. The first is his performance or interaction that is either recorded or fossilized in the form of an object and the second is the piece's interaction with the viewer. Moore paired video recordings of intentional failures with opportunistically sourced objects to manipulate and possibly exploit the viewer/object relationship. The confidence of exploitation is muted by a sense of self-sabotage, which moves Moore's work away from pompous self indulgence, towards relatable humor. Always looking to crack a joke, Moore's body of work teaches his viewers how ridiculous it is to take yourself too seriously.

MARY MORGAN

What happens when life expires? What comes next? These are questions that are pregnant with anxiety. But rather than finding these sort of questions morbid, Mary Morgan embraces them, finding humor in the efforts taken to thoughts and realities of mortality. Through her art practice Morgan is constantly juxtaposing preservation with perishability in order to create a microcosm that promotes new ways of thinking about issues of expiration and idealism.

Morgan often uses objects sourced from thrift stores and materials with an impending half-life, meaning that during the course of the exhibition they will begin to decay. In both cases the objects "life" is important, whether it be a past life or a life that is in a state of detrition. The spaces she creates are in a constant state of flux, mirroring life itself where temporality reminds us of our own bodies. This produces a sense of empathy between the viewer and the installation. Morgan does not attempt to make her objects into something that they are not, however she shifts their context, which shifts their perception. While she is very honest about their mundane nature, she gives these disparate objects new life. This new context promotes new lines of thought for

Pushing against Barthes assertion that creator and creation are unrelated, for these nine artists the relationships they have with their works and their viewers must be considered. Their making process is just as important as the viewer's experience.



Joe Moore. *Truck*.

her viewers that are just waiting to be explored.

LEE ASAHINA

Lee Asahina produces large-scale paintings that exist perfectly poised between abstraction and representation. She often chooses shapes that can be interpreted as many things: a flower that might also be a hand. This gives Asahina's paintings an open quality that allows viewers to insert a piece of themselves into the composition. While Asahina makes references to pop culture, fashion, and music, she also gives attention to the formal qualities of her paintings. She emphasizes the flatness of her work as if to tell her viewer "yes this is a painting, and yes I am a painter." While she embraces some formal qualities of painting, she also pushes back by using color that clash in order to add some humor to her work.

Asahina draws much of her inspiration from New York's club culture of the 1970s. Each canvas is like a never-ending dance party with a composition that promotes movement by mimicking the repetition and improvisation of jazz music. All of the formal elements of Asahina's paintings work together to produce a specific vibe. Asahina's viewers are not only engulfed by the scale of her paintings, but also by the vibe and the energy that radiates from them, just as passers by are drawn in by the music pulsing through the streets of downtown on a Saturday night.



Lee Asahina. *Big vibes*, 2016. Oil on canvas. 70 x 70 inches.

SLOANE KOCHMAN

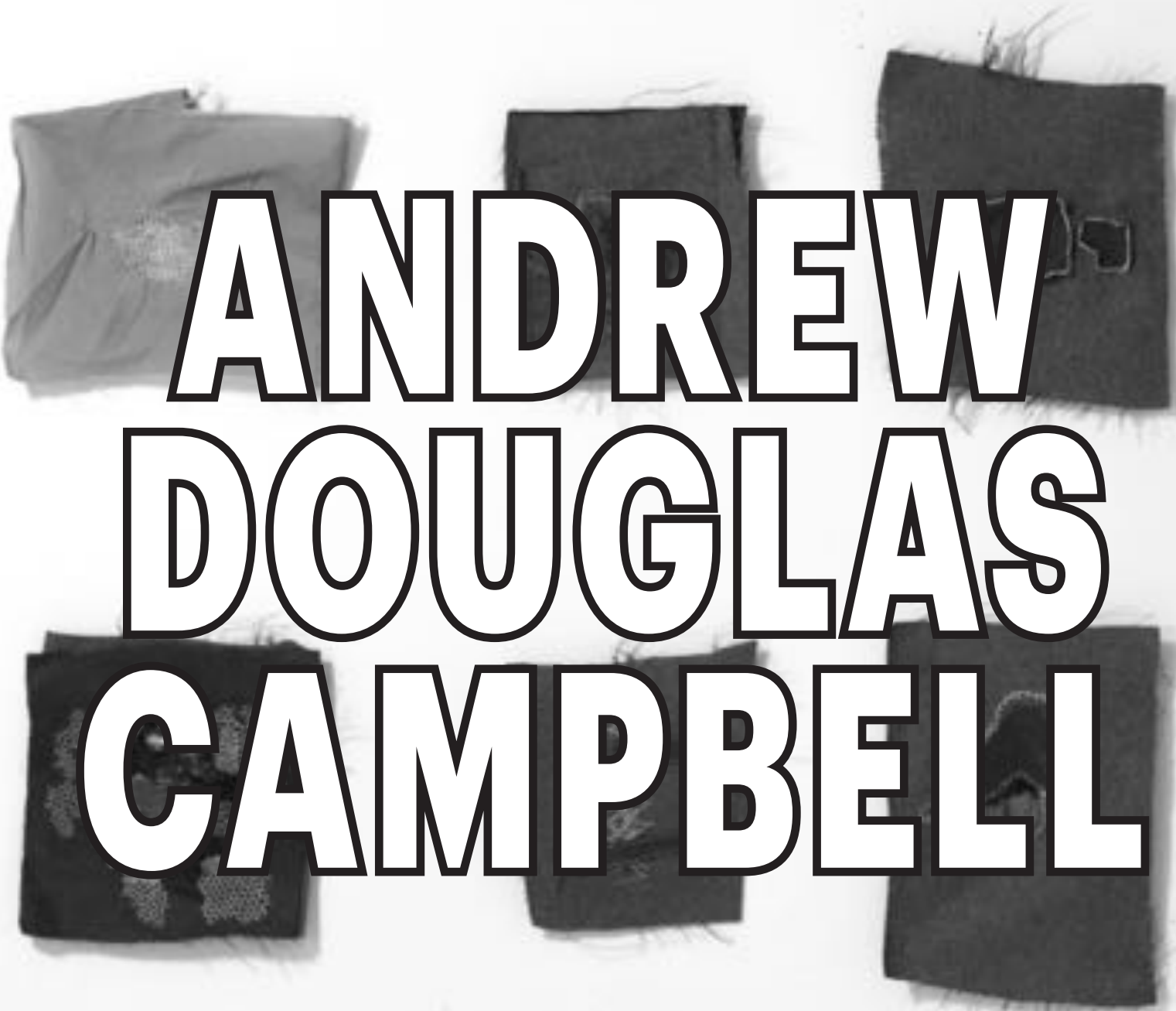
MA Candidate, Department of the History of Art and Architecture



Ron Linn. *apostrophe i*, 2017. documentation of presence. dimensions variable.



Mary Morgan. *Giant Grower's Festival*, 2016, digital video still



ANDREW DOUGLAS CAMPBELL

**Chicago,
Illinois**

"...someone's always telling [us] how to behave..."

-God is My Co-Pilot

We hear stories, internalize them, and then re-enact them; this creates a subsequent narrative that someone else can witness; an oral history as it's played out on bodies in the day to day. The skin, the surface, the superficial signs of a person is an important location where identity communicated and behavior determines the limits of identity. Expectations of behavior are often defined by how others perceive us, perceive who we are and where we stand. Nina Simone expounds on the impact of 'good' behavior in *Mississippi Goddam*,

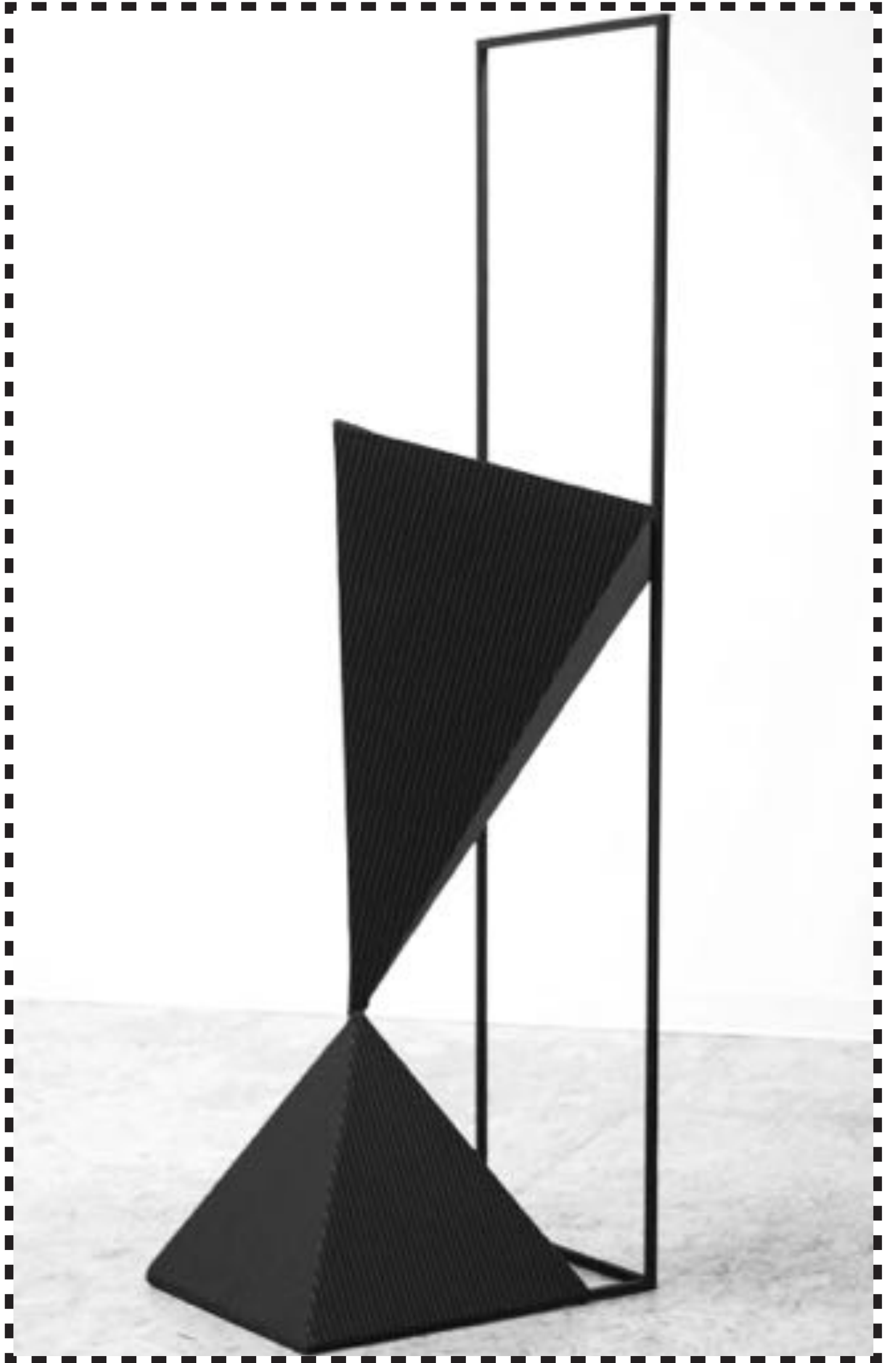
They keep on saying "Go slow!"
But that's just the trouble "go slow"
Washing the windows "go slow"
Picking the cotton "go slow"
You're just plain rotten "go slow"
You're too damn lazy "go slow"
The thinking's crazy "go slow"
....
You keep on saying "Go slow!" "too slow!"
But that's just the trouble "too slow"
Desegregation "too slow"

Mass participation "too slow"
Reunification "too slow"
Do things gradually "too slow"
But bring more tragedy "too slow"
Why don't you see it
Why don't you feel it
I don't know
I don't know

To be clear: I have a body that slips between the mainstream and the margin depending on circumstance; I question the value and consequences of behavior. The mainstream goes about telling the margin how to affect the evolution of cultural narratives/attitudes: stay in line, go slow, wait your turn. Here, misbehavior is an opportunity to pry open the limitations of a marginalized body; in Simone's lyrics misbehavior becomes a cultural leap forward. Progress is what happens when the skin, the surface, the superficial signs of an identity start to misbehave; a subsequent narrative ready for witnesses. This is not a perfect model, not all misbehavior is progressive; although, we never know what forms, identities are possible until structures/materials/bodies/individuals behave outside their expectation, defy their stations, step out of line, get uppity.

**BFA
School of the
Art Institute
of Chicago**

andrewdouglascampbell.com



ANDREW

DOUGLAS

CAMPBELL



CHELSEA COUCH

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Begrudgingly accepting the confines of her body is an ongoing task—the mind is drawn often to the body's borders, its limitations, and its fragility. In Chelsea Couch's work, the artist's body becomes an instrument that probes its own edges. The bruise or movement of the hand or memory of touch exists separately and equally to the body as an object represented. Although the impetus of making is intensely personal, her body in an image is not an extension of self—the artist's body is simply the most available to her: it is the body she knows best and with which she has a lived experience of embodiment. Her interest lies in the slippage between self and representation, in the ways in which representation can create as well as shift interpretations of self. Exploring means of visually conveying a

quality of touch, her work considers how it feels to live as a person with a body, the frustrations as well as bliss, ecstatic awkwardness. As a digital image is manipulated it degrades and this mark is left as an imprint such as a body bruises when it is handled in ways it cannot withstand—this condition of the matrix echoes in both digital and actual timespace, a boundless whine. What could be infinite instead decays as a body trapped in a screen.

BFA
Painting & Drawing
The University
of Tennessee at
Chattanooga

chelseacouch.com





ESTHER WENG

Hsinchu, Taiwan

Do you remember your earliest memory of describing something you saw? Or the time before you learned to identify colours by different names? And how would you describe the moment when the sunlight hits your face while emerging from the theatre after a matinée show? My work explores the indeterminacy of perception in relation to the desire for comprehensibility. The pre-occupation with comprehension generates both representation and misrepresentation, offering varying degrees of recognition in the shifting of images and meanings. Employing video projection installations along with sculpture and two-dimensional work, I attempt to probe the form and flirt with supposed boundaries of the visible as well as the legible. A moment of empathy occurs when the viewer realizes her own implication in the piece as the video projector ceases to be a vehicle for the subject but becomes the subject itself. I am interested in how the projector could act as either a conduit or as an antagonist in

these moments of awareness. Equally as intriguing to me is the alignment of thresholds of entities that causes a collision, a collapse of interiority and exteriority. Where space is prone to indeterminacy so is time. After all, even our own grasp of time is not only endogenously generated but also modulated by external cues, and is subject to the desynchronization of signification. In order to evade perennial idleness and dysfunction, we may need to readjust our comfort level with potential meanings and even unresolvedness. Perhaps the more we think we understand something and the faster we can access it, the more we negate its many layers. My slow way of working in series inevitably becomes a way for me to process and interpret the ever-shifting terms of any given moment.

**BFA
Painting &
Filmmaking
San Francisco
Art Institute**

estherweng.com





Minneapolis, Minnesota

Someone tipping over <-----> Sublime,
Humor and Irrelevancy as Political Motive,
Two Bowls With A Pig In It, The Importance of
Absent Explanation, Transcendent Banality,
PASSION, Making a dumb thing Stupid, There
Is Hopefulness To A Chair Trying To Go
Off-road, Escapism, Movies, Commodity,
The Everyday, Inside Jokes, Pratfalls, Lies,
Intentional Failure, The Existential Dilemmas
Produced by Observed Experience...

People are riding 4-wheelers dressed as
stuffed animals on inline skates through malls
all across America, at the same time a
befuddled man attempts to retrieve his hat

from a blackberry briar patch while
wearing a wool sweater. In an almost
hallucinatory trance I ask myself,
"What the fuck are you doing that
for? Wait, why am I watching you
do this?"

BFA
University of
Minnesota,
2010

josephrobertmoore.com





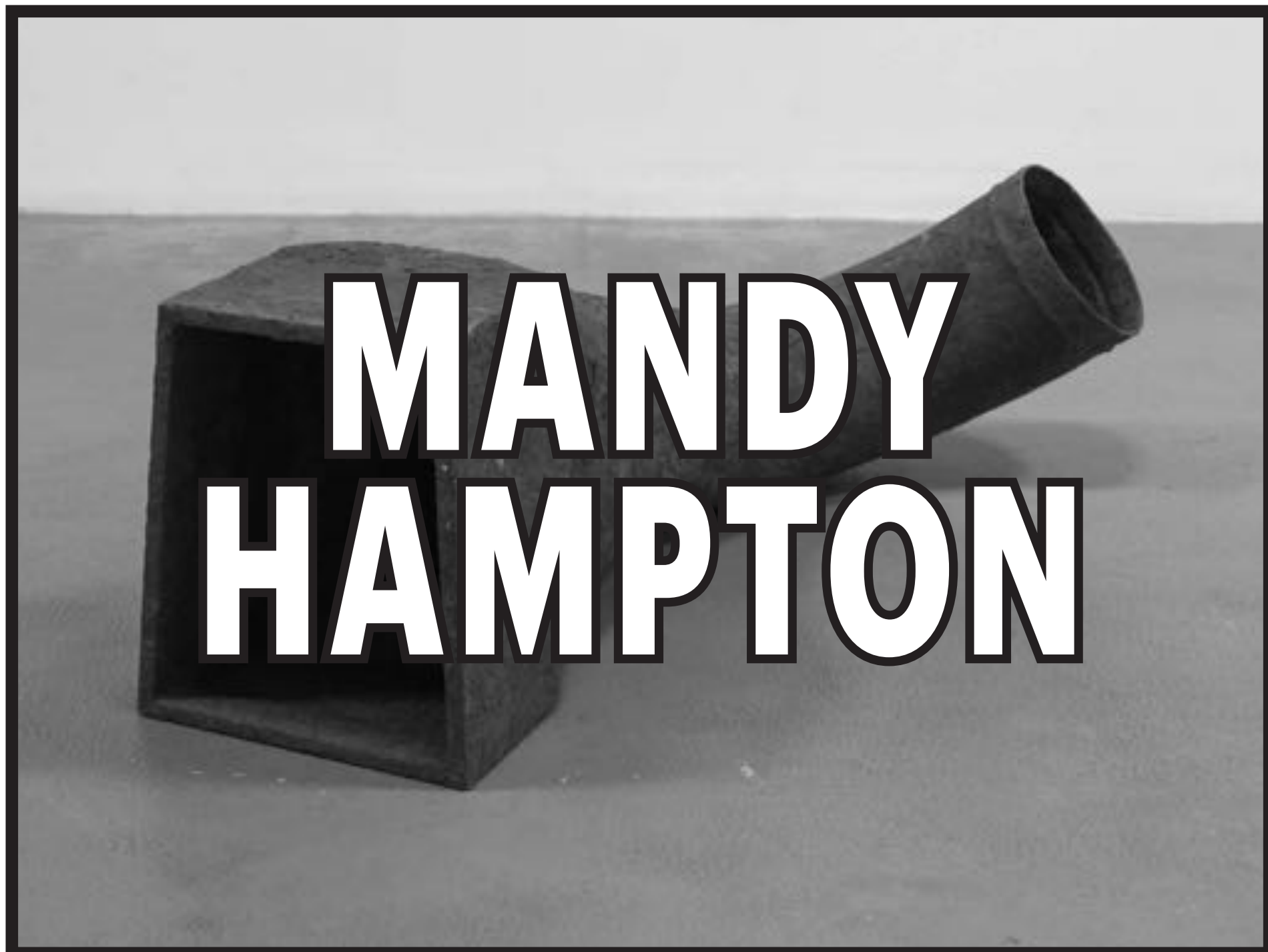
**Salt Lake City,
Utah**

Lee Asahina makes paintings composed of flowers, hands, and scribbles along with various other shapes and marks that mine the personal, the cultural, and the historical. Her work is made in the spirit of Arthur Russell's disco outings and Buster Keaton's absent-minded gags; it is repetitive yet improvisatory in its composition and colors. Engaging with the haphazard and the formal, Asahina references both vernacular and Modernist painting tropes. Her paintings, often eclectic and joyful, ask the viewer to engage in an indexical reading of the labor and liveliness that is embodied in them.

**BFA
Visual Art
Westminster
College**

leeasahina.com





**Bitburg,
Germany**

Mandy Hampton makes sculptures composed of a sawdust "clay" of her own invention, which she spreads across armatures made of geometric frames, wire, and found objects. As the sawdust-clay dries, the forms contract, bend, and fold, bowing to gravity and compressing space. The process transforms these rigid frames into biomorphic entities, with cracked surfaces and openings that reveal internal spaces. These recurring portals most frequently take the form of a narrow slit or a distinct trapezoid. Primarily abstract and expressive, the sculptures suggest cavernous spaces, bodies, and mythical creatures, remaining grounded in the familiar while hinting at the absurd. The distinct sense of internal/

external space allows these sculptures to exist as if worlds in themselves, and the viewer is forever stuck on the outside looking in.

**BFA
Sculpture
University of
North Texas**

mandyhampton.studio





MARY MARGARET MORGAN

**Birmingham,
Alabama**

Pumping iron, celebrating the harvest bounty, reading one's natal chart. I find humor and pathos in the cultural peculiarities that act out a desire for longevity. Taking cues from these moments, the work percolates into a crescendo of pathetic bulges, spitting leaks, and seeping rot. Shapes, colors, and materials mimic each other-- A stained blanket nests stale bread while across the way, olive oil rests with urine in a glass ampoule. Stacked vases barely contain the putrid smell of compost, an action mimicked by a two-year old squash. Both take on the shape of your bicep.

**BFA
University of
Alabama at
Birmingham**

marymorgan.us





MERIL WALLACE

Grand Junction, Colorado

Here is where I first learned to love. To love the place that I am from. To love the harshness of the landscape and hot afternoon winds that rush between canyon walls. Where did this love come from? From time. Time spent lying in the shade of a hardened juniper tree. Time spent listening to the crackling noise of cicadas on the bank of a river. Time spent tracing topographical maps with my fingers hoping to follow the same paths with my feet. Something will always be found in places I venture to, though what is found is not always sought. Regardless of their discovery, things that are found, will always come home with me: objects, images, memories, and the need

to return. My practice is in my actions of going to, sitting in, listening to, looking at, walking in, returning to, seeking, trying to understand, and finding myself in place.

**BFA,
Painting,
Colorado
Mesa
University**

merilwallace.com





Portland, Oregon

I am of the practice of trying, often failing.

At its core, ritual is an act of futility, but in its reenactment it opens a new space of meaning, succeeding at something else instead. Drawing is a ritual, walking another. As with walking, the locus of drawing is found in desire for or lack of: of wanting to take the next step, to see where the line will lead; of attempting to call back lost experience; of seeing a place for the first time, knowing that you can never reclaim that moment. Through acts of meditative intervention, I explore the spaces (and non-spaces) we create for ourselves, the stories we tell and inhabit, the desire to transcend the boundaries of our bodies and our reason.

I wonder how one might speak to place, rather than simply about it. What language might we even use to bridge such a divide? The question is perhaps unanswerable, but this urge to connect and its ultimate failure lies at the crux of my practice.

My work is a performative act that yields objects of labor, artifacts that are meant to convey a meaning incapable of being shared. We often place our faith in objects to clasp meaning and memory, to hold them somehow fixed within tangible bounds, and yet where we usually end up is at the beginning again: a desire for connection and an internal landscape that is in many ways more real than the actual thing.

**BFA
Brigham Young
University**

ronlinnportfolio.com

