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EDITORS’ NOTE

Oberlin College Art Department’s Senior Studio and Thesis program is an intensive, year-long course of study. Students are selected for admission into the program through a competitive portfolio review process, and their efforts culminate in a thesis exhibition during the spring semester.

We are proud to present Oberlin’s fifth annual Senior Studio and Thesis Catalogue. Launched in 2008 by Art History majors Ali Cardia and Julia Feldman, this catalogue highlights the accomplishments of participants in the Senior Studio and Thesis program, as well as the graduating Art History students whose essays are featured. This catalogue captures a small but vital cross-section of activity in Oberlin’s art department.

This book is the product of a collaboration between the editors of the Senior Studio Catalogue, the Art Students Committee, and Wilder Voice Books. Senior Studio Catalogue: A.F. Capel, Hanna Exel, Molly Stein, Editors. Wilder Voice Books: John West, Editor-in-Chief; Emily Seagrave Kennedy, Managing Editor; Fontaine Capel, Senior Associate Art Editor; Sage Aronson, Senior Associate Editor; Kara Kraik, Associate Editor. You can learn more about Wilder Voice Books at http://wildervoice.org. It was printed through by Bodnar Printing in Lorain, OH and Oberlin College Printing Services in Oberlin, OH, thanks to Wendy.

A.F. Capel
Hanna Exel
Molly Stein
May 2012
With intentional care and precision, Briffa integrates his ongoing passions of photography and architecture in his Senior Studio thesis exhibition, aptly titled Through Earth. Relying on found images of natural land formations and bodies of water, Briffa reassembles these individual elements in order to construct his own unexpected, foreign landscapes that ask the viewer to reevaluate the contemporary significance of the photographic image. By erasing humanity—in either representations of the human figure or indications of human development and impact—almost entirely from these “untouched” environments, Briffa maps idealized spaces outside of social and cultural connotations, ultimately highlighting the basic relationships between structure, line, scale, texture and color value, and the thoughtful process that unified these elements into one realm.

In his piece Found Landscapes, a series of twenty framed collages, Briffa nostalgically reflects on the visions and practices of America’s earliest monumental photographers, namely Ansel Adams and Alfred Stieglitz. Just as the first American photographers captured previously undocumented scenes of natural and urban landscapes, Briffa’s found-image collages reveal complex worlds that the modern eye has never experienced before. Displayed as if these works were hanging in a gallery in the early twentieth century, the stylized framing and thick matting of the collages encourage viewers to explore and intimately engage with each individual composite environment. Conversely, the close placement of the framed landscapes near one another (displayed in two groups of ten) provide each individual environment with a comparable context—the individual collage’s relation to the collective body of twenty collages—that constantly reconsider the photographic truth behind each landscape and the method of its construction, or if it was constructed at all.

Briffa again defies our assumptions about photography and the natural world in his piece Between Granite. Vertical strips, extracted from no more than five or six photographs, appear side by side to form an immense, seemingly endless mountain range that extends horizontally to cover the entire length of Fisher’s south wall. Conceived in black and white, Between Granite inherently simplifies space and form: regardless of how many more small slivers are added, there will always be one mountain range. As disparate edges meet, so do disparate spaces, unifying many locations to create a new environment, an unprecedented connection.

Once more, the definable natural elements of Briffa’s found images are reconfigured in color and size into hundreds of miniscule squares, containing a range of varying hues between black and white. Instead of aligning two disparate edges, New Crust addressed all four, discovering fluidity and motion between spaces through chromatic similarities. Placed on the floor in an incomplete square, the wooden boxes force interaction from the viewer, who either has to bend down and examine each box’s minute details more closely, or physically enter the grid to experience all the boxes at once.

Briffa’s fascination with constructing/constructed space manifests most evidently in his final work, Time Appears. Now through an architectural lens, Briffa frames an experience of an image (of nature) across space and time. As the viewer moves along the mouth of the structure, the “sun” (a hidden light source) gradually sets on a projected scene of water, sky and clouds, which is also transforming slightly over time. Briffa continues to ask the viewer to question the context and presentation of an image, this time mirroring the viewer’s motion with the motion of the image itself.

Briffa’s body of work in Through Earth blends the reality between identifiable natural elements and unimaginable living spaces. Testing humanity’s acceptance of the photographic image as truth, Briffa deconstructs and reconfigures forms so they speak a new, believable truth.

Briggin Scharf
Despierta, realized by Fontaine Capel in collaboration with David Ohana, explored the bodily consequences of artistic processes and materials. By inviting the viewer to destroy her production, Fontaine complicated the boundaries between referential action and reality, between ritual and truth.

Capel’s performance began in a pristine environment of black and white. Two long white shelves flanked the central space of the room; over four hundred *cafeteras*, or stove-top percolators, cast in plaster covered the left shelf, and plaster rubble, remnants of the casting process, littered the opposite shelf. Against the back wall between these ordered material collections sat a black bathtub underneath the warm glow of bare light bulbs, hung low from the ceiling on varying lengths of wire.

*Despierta*, awake and vigilant, Capel took to her task. With quiet but intense purpose, dressed in a floor-length black gown, the artist gathered the broken plaster from the shelf into a metal bucket with her hands, and carried and deposited the weight around the tub, forming piles of debris. The masses grew as Capel repeated the act of moving plaster and constructed a miniature landscape of peaks and valleys, the plaster bits suggesting geological patterns over which the porcelain tub stood. Each organic impulse in the artist’s embodied repetition echoed the rows of repeated but minutely differentiated cast *cafeteras*. The viewer witnessed the exhaustion of the artist’s body as she completed this lengthy task and how the plaster dust marked her dress and skin. As a gesture to her painstaking production of the *cafeteras*, Fontaine symbolically gave her body to the process and material of production.

With the shelf cleared, Fontaine further involved her body in making. She dragged two fifty-pound bags of raw dry plaster from the empty shelf to the tub, tore them open, and emptied their contents into the tub, half-full with water. Kneeling beside the tub, Capel stirred the mixture in a kind of meditative ritual—her mental distance from this bodied activity contrasted her previous sequence of movements. She next stood up, climbed into the tub, and submerged her entire body in the plaster. When she surfaced, the white gunk covered her skin, dress, and face in broad swashes. At once the process of making and the materials took a toll on the artist’s body—her plaster bath, and the plaster skin covering that resulted constituted a reference to the artist’s laborious hours in the studio manipulating materials.

Yet the conclusion of her performance collapsed that referential distance. “Break it.” Capel handed a plaster percolator to the nearest viewer, and thus invited the audience to take part. What had been a ritual representation of production became an actual destruction of Capel’s work. The results of the artist’s plaster cast process to which the first half of her performance referred was destroyed by the mass of spectators, who hurled every plaster object against the back wall behind the bathtub, breaking the lightbulbs in the process.

The *cafeteras* themselves refer to a ritual of Capel’s childhood—her grandfather would make her a sweet *cafe con leche* every morning in tenth grade, and the percolator remains a potent symbol of that ritual, connected to Fontaine’s maternal Cuban heritage. *Despierta* existed in fixed geographical and temporal coordinates—the performance lasted two hours in Fisher Galler—yet evoked moments in the artist’s history and locales of identity. Capel’s performance was the culmination of physical, intellectual, and creative exertion—it was the artist’s own transformation that formed the subject of her work, the materials and consequences of which she offered to the audience.

Claire Jenson
Maira Clancy’s senior studio show and junior TIMARA recital, Cognizant Creatures, is a reflection on the hyper-awareness that she feels in relation to her surroundings, an awareness that she describes as often the cause of “deep insecurity and separation.” Clancy tells us her stories through combining visual and sonic realms into a three-part film, each part of which is distinct from the other, yet connects under the underlying theme of isolation.

The first film, Seize, is a stop-motion animation and sound composition about “anxiety and its effect on the human body.” The work uses over four thousand different MRI scans of human brains, which Clancy individually cut up and photographed into a compilation. They appear to the audience much like a seizure as each scan flashes on the screen in accompaniment with the abrasive sounds of mechanical screeching—the clanging of a wrench striking a metal ladder, the slow rumble of a thunderstorm, and the heavy breathing and droning voice overlay of the artist herself. A great deal of distortion was applied to the recording through Pro Tools, adding texture. Furthermore, Clancy’s placement of speakers in various corners of Fairchild Chapel envelop the viewer in the experience, creating a completely immersive work of visuals and sound.

The second work, Praha, is a collage of sounds and video or a “sonic quilt of collected sounds coupled with video” taken in Prague. The “sonic quilt” refers to Clancy’s manual hand-stitching of hundreds of different recordings that function as a cohesive soundscape, as it would be otherwise impossible to capture the auditory phenomena of an entire city walk with just one recording. In Praha, we are taken through a journey from the underground train system, up onto the city streets, and then finally ending at the base of a sculpture of the crucified Jesus. Here, Clancy’s sound setup was key as it mimicked the sound projection one would hear in actual life while walking in public.

Concluding the evening was the claymation film The Lovely Adventures of A Lone, Lost Alien. As in Seize, Clancy composed the music for this film from her own voice, breathing, and various other recordings, then distorted into overlapping textures. In this film, which was perhaps the most literal manifestation of the show’s title, we watch as the alien protagonist navigates through a world beyond our own, meeting fellow creatures along the way. Upon crash landing on a strange new planet he explores various environments and encounters various creatures, most of whom he does not get along with, as he does not understand their ways, and they do not understand his. He meets a potentially compatible mate with whom he has sex. Afterward, the two notice a peeping Tom in the shadows. The peeping Tom runs away upon discovery, setting off an extended chase scene, which finally ends with the alien protagonist chasing the peeping Tom into his own abode. Within the walls of the alien’s home, the protagonist enters into a trap when he sees a shiny, glowing crystal stone that he cannot help himself from touching. Once he is close enough to the mesmerizing crystal, the antagonist cranks a lever and lowers a cage onto the unsuspecting alien. Caught within the cage, the alien looks over his shoulder to see another cage behind him, only to realize that the alien occupant within that cage is dead, leaving him with little hope for the future.

In all three works, Clancy successfully explores possibilities that exist when visual and sonic realms collide and subsequently connect. She presented a strong delivery of her stories by enveloping the viewer and activating multiple senses. The video in combination with the sound, being projected from various locations and staggering intervals, truly positioned us in “real-time” and resonated with the viewers. Despite perhaps not always following exactly what was going on in the video, the central theme of isolation was strongly felt. Clancy says, “Meaning is not central to the narratives I create; rather, the medium is the message.”

Kara Brooks
Upon entering for/giving, the viewer is engulfed by tangled skeins of yarn that suspend and cocoon eggshell-thin papier-mâché spheres, wrapping tightly in some places and unraveling in others. From one such length of yarn dangles a lantern made of wood and canvas, cradling a single tea light and rotating gently. Its walls are densely packed with markings singed into and through the fabric. Coming closer, one can see that the markings are words excerpted from The Prophet, a collection of poetic essays by the Lebanese-American writer, philosopher and artist Kahlil Gibran. The muted colors, expressive detailing, and quiet loquaciousness of the lantern send a message that resonates throughout the rest of for/giving; DeWitt and Klein's work rewards the viewer who leans in close to listen.

DeWitt and Klein's collaboration grew out of conversations about their work as volunteer advocates with the Lorain County Rape Crisis Center. for/giving found its genesis in these shared experiences and feelings, and it took shape as an exploration of the potential for art-making to serve as a healing process. "The imaginative work of making drawings, prints, sculptures, books, and poems is inextricable from the imaginative work of envisioning healthy communities free of violence and oppression," they write.

Making concrete their engagement with these issues, Klein and DeWitt produced limited editions of two silkscreen prints which they sold to benefit three organizations whose work they admire: the Lorain County Rape Crisis Center, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and the Oberlin Community Bail Fund. Always engaged with language, they incorporated into their prints the words of two Oberlin-based poets. DeWitt's print shows an energetic cluster of shapes hatched in a way that evokes muscle fibers, and bears a verse by Caitlin O'Neill: "She is not wounded / but she is not innocent either / she has seen all that the world has to offer / but she still sings." Klein's print weaves vertebras and ribbons with a stanza by Galen Beebe: "My body carries / the past forward / like an egg on a spoon." Beebe's words are an elegant gesture to one of the main themes of this show. In for/giving, DeWitt and Klein strive to explore what it means that our bodies bear traces of—and are unavoidably implicated in—complex, often traumatic collective and personal histories.

To speak more of Klein and DeWitt's engagement with embodiment, one must consider the processes by which they make their work. In their seriality and their meticulously, delicately worked surfaces, the pieces included in for/giving bear potent traces of the artists' hands. For DeWitt, the activity of wrapping, as seen in her works on paper, fabric and papier-mâché alike, is a meditative practice that allows her to experience her embodiment in new ways. In her artist statement, DeWitt writes:

"I wrap and I wrap and I wrap … The process of stitching, wrapping and making multiples of the papier-mâché orbs creates a kind of trance … the activity becomes fraught with anxieties yet imbued with the power of some unknown transformation. In the act of wrapping, I give myself a chance to be in my body, to meditate, but I also find the opportunity to transcend my body."

For Klein, too, the physical experience of creating the work is central to its meaning. For the multimedia work Regina, a testimony; or, I will tell you the whole story, just be patient with me, the artist meticulously copied text from the post-war diary of her late grandmother, a survivor of the Holocaust. In re-tracing Regina's words, Klein both exhumes and attempts to salve a rupture in the fabric of her family's history. The tracing paper pages that hold the text are illuminated from below by a projected image of their original author. In the footage Regina's mouth moves, but the video has no sound; no matter how much the viewer tries, they can never discern what exactly she is saying. "In ...because in times like these/to have you listen at all, it's necessary/to talk about trees," Klein grapples with another history of violence. The work comprises a set of weathered window panes through which the viewer can see ghostly images traced from photographic documents of lynchings, murders that were often carried out based on false accusations that the victims had...
raped white women. In an artist statement, Klein describes both her compulsion to make this piece and her experience of the process, which are intertwined:

Through tracing these artifacts, conjuring up clouds of bodies and the spaces they once inhabited, I am implicating my own body in a conversation about the messy, dynamic histories and presences that these objects carry. As I rub my fingers, covered with the graphite remnants that dust my studio, over and into projections of these photographs that I light onto my wall, I feel these questions - how could I? how could I not? - echoing through me.

Klein’s own activities work to invoke ghosts that some would rather forget. She calls up bodies that were brutalized centuries or decades ago, in addition to those that suffer today. Considered together, Regina, a testimony… and …because in times like these… highlight the historical contingency of how certain bodies are made vulnerable.

The works that Hannah Klein and Rebecca DeWitt present in for/giving speak in a language rooted in the body, one that acknowledges the ways in which difficult narratives can be inscribed in and carried on by our very own flesh and bone. But if the body is a home for pain, it can also be a site of healing. In for/giving, painful pasts rupture into the present in a way that cannot be ignored. In fact, by folding narratives of trauma into practices aimed at healing and (re)generation, DeWitt and Klein argue that the histories nestled within our bodies must not be ignored.

Hanna Exel
n Devra Freelander’s Senior Studio Show, plaster cast rocks and crystals, a rainbow of jewels, dirt, moss, black sand, mirrors, an armchair, and a deer head confront the viewer as microscopic, organic kingdoms. Organic and inorganic materials work together to alter the rules of perception that govern the way we see: shiny beads become growing moss; camouflaged mirrors open windows into etherworlds; moss entangled with crystal casts act as the vine-like arms of a creature engulfing an armchair; and crystal casts sprout out of a mounted deer head like oozing wounds. Freelander’s works ultimately attempt to confound the line between the “familiar/plausible” and “dreamlike/implausible” that she identifies in her artist statement.

In a telling example, *Untitled*, a deer head and three plaster cast rocks are mounted onto black fiberboard on the wall, surrounded by a painted seafoam green amorphous shape. Freelander attached moss and encaustic casts of crystals to a deer head mounted on a fractal-like shape of black fibreboard. Below, three plaster casters of rocks sit on individual, wall-mounted podiums. For Freelander, these plaster casters allow her to personally define the usually arbitrary rules and patterns of the geological world for her alternate one. On two of these fabricated rocks, synthetic fur covers a side like festering moss, whereas on the third, tiny black beads creep up the edges and around the corners like growing fungi. Through these processes, Freelander makes aware the permeable boundaries separating the living and nonliving.

In a piece titled *Mill Hollow*, Freelander’s alternate world literally mirrors our lived one. Substrate, a black sand-like material, covers an area of the floor in a similar amorphous shape as the one found in *Untitled*. Small, circular clearings open in two spots where arctic boulder and green peridot are situated on mirrors with plaster-covered rocks. Mirrors are familiar objects; we interact with them daily. Yet here, they emerge from the substrate as more than reflective surfaces, but as windows and portals into an unknown, yet visible universe. Viewing it from above, it really feels as if you are peering Through Earth. For Freelander, mirrors create a space that is present and identifiable, one that inarguably exists, but is physically inhabitable. *Mill Hollow* attempts to exist in this realm—it is discernible and familiar, yet bizarre and unreachable.

In *Slow Life*, a found armchair is planted in a corner being physically grabbed by vines that seem to emerge like a rapidly spreading infection from the walls, while on the floor it is surrounded by a seeping pile of soil and moss. The beautiful and intricate paisley-like pattern of the armchair naturally extends from these engulfing vines, as if the vines and the armchair were literally molding together as a product of decay and time. The armchair’s seat has been struck through by a massive, plaster boulder, as if the form began to grow and crystalize inside the armchair. Whereas *Mill Hollow*’s title seems to reference a place, perhaps its alternate world, *Slow Life* is appropriately descriptive. It really seems as if this armchair had been abandoned and the earth around it began to grow to its shape, like vines to a building, and swallow it Through Earth.

In Through Earth, Freelander addresses the possibility of unfamiliar, alien worlds by constructing her own alternate world full of distinctly familiar yet palpably altered objects. While her creations exist in an isolated aesthetic environment, they attempt to open up and explore the potential permutations of geological, parallel universes inhibited by bizarre, beautiful forms. Her work reminds us—a generation that laughs at peoples’ UFO sightings and beliefs in crop-circles—that our perceptions may be more true than our defined reality, and that our surrounded world is perhaps teeming with unidentified life and extraterrestrial activity.

Molly Stein
Faith Hays' Senior Studio exhibition, titled *What You See, What You Get*, encompasses a series of works that addresses portraiture as an artistic genre. While portraits often involve an artist's visual interpretation of a model, in addition to this, Hays' exhibition actively incorporates the perspective of the painted subject.

The walls of Hays' exhibition space are filled with a series of large oil canvases that depict the artist's friends and family members. In one painting, Hays focuses on the bottom half of a seated figure angled towards the left side of the canvas. In the area of the figure's legs, thick sections of paint merge with lighter washes to create an extremely textured surface, one that turns to drips of flowing color in the painting's lower right section. By rendering only the lower half of the model's body, an unexpected turn next to surrounding canvases, Hays emphasizes the role of interpreting and selecting that artists must play when making portraits.

Many formal techniques used in this portrait are common to other paintings in the show: rich flesh tones, energetic brush strokes, and an impressive textural complexity. This diversity in Hays' application of paint is accompanied by a striking array of compositional and framing techniques. While in several paintings, the models face directly towards the viewer, in others, they are shown facing in different directions away from the viewer. These figures often fill much of the space of the painting and are cut off unexpectedly at the canvas' edge.

Hays chose how to represent these figures pictorially, but the models were also given the space to react to their visual renderings. In wall labels hanging immediately left of the gallery's entrance, the models offer emotional reactions to Hays' depictions of them, while also addressing questions of likeness and painting technique. Hays, too, partakes in this responding process in three portraits hanging to the right of the entrance. In these works, Hays is painted by fellow artists, and, mirroring the process of other works in the show, reacts to these portraits in accompanying in-wall labels. By taking on the role of both artist and subject, Hays explores both sides of the artist-model relationship.

In a final examination of the portrait mode, Hays' show includes a series of intricately made marionettes. Constructed of a variety of materials including wood, canvas, crochet, wire, cloth, and yarn, these marionettes are visually compelling when simply hanging on the gallery wall, their heads framed by a backdrop of textured paper. They take on a new dimension, however, when taken off their hooks and animated by the hands of their maker. Once manipulated, Hays' marionettes move in dynamic patterns that recall the energetic and lively lines of the nearby paintings.

This process of manipulation functions in a similar way to Hays' artistic choices. Just as a marionette's movements are controlled by its manipulator, Hays portrait paintings offer manipulations and interpretations the models' physical appearances. The models' written responses emphasize this, and in so doing, incorporate the viewer in the process. By confronting viewers with the juxtaposition of paintings and model reactions, Hays invites gallery-goers to question their own active perception of these works and the figures represented in them. Foregrounding the interactions between artist, model, and viewer, Hays' exhibition openly addresses the interplay of perceiving and being perceived.

Sara Green
Through Alison Karasyk's confrontation of her own relationships, of traumas and victories large and small she created an environment at once tense and serene, laying bare the cacophonous spectrum of emotion wrought from the minutia of human interactions. She sought to question accepted conventions of emotional life, throwing into sharp relief the rehearsed banalities inherent in human relationships and presenting them anew. As she suggests in her opening poem/statement, "Let's only practice hello."

In Fisher Gallery Karasyk created a quasi-domestic setting, with soft pinkish light and partitions positioned diagonally, perpendicular to each other near the entrance to the gallery, evoking a spatial intimacy that served to position the works in a sort of private context. The viewer entered the gallery and encountered Karasyk's poem/statement projected on the first diagonal partition. This narrow vestibule opened onto a view of the show's centerpiece, Karasyk's untitled work comprised of a luminous white bed swathed in a duvet of cracked eggshells. From a distance this work appears appealingly tactile, but a closer examination reveals a threatening array of jagged edges. The bed, to many a space of intimacy and shelter, is rendered threatening. Yet eggshells are fragile. The work proposes a contradiction in terms, with the initial tempting tactility subverted by the serrated eggshells, despite their actual frailty. Karasyk sought to express the plurality of experience related to the bed through sensory deception and subversion of typical materiality. "It's about the multiplicity, the range of experience that exists within the space of the bed," she stated in an April 2012 interview. "How for some people it's a safe space and for others it's a space of violation, and that speaks to both men and women, who have likely experienced both."

Beyond the bed a cloud of latex-covered roses hovered in a space between threatening protrusion and inviting tactility. As a canopy hanging over the fraught bed these roses present a beautiful decay, once vibrant creatures preserved in their process of slow death. These two works present a parable of life and death, rebirth and decomposition. "How long do [these objects] remain happy for until you have dried up roses and the person is gone, that day is gone. Are they romantic anymore or are they a reminder of something that's possibly dead?" Karasyk asks. Her works are deeply anthropomorphic, reflecting and reevaluating the prevailing images evoked by such objects as roses and beds, and the relations that occur surrounding these emotionally laden symbols. The hand-crafted appearance of her work, with the embroidered window screens, cracked eggshells and antique lace silkscreened on mirrors are in dialogue with notions of the domestic, and imbue the work with an indelible fingerprint of the artist.

Yet the magic of Karasyk's work lies in the simultaneous specificity and universality of her objects. The latex covered roses and cracked eggshells evoke a palpable sense of nostalgia, serving as a means for Karasyk to examine her own experiences while leaving enough space for the viewer to project their particular associations onto the objects as well. "I didn't want to frame anyone's experience, because each piece is about so much" she says, "I'm still learning what they're about." The lace-covered mirrors of Filterate and the two embroidered window screens functioned as portals, offering a glimpse of the foreign terrain for that is another human's emotions. As this interior space unfolded before me I found myself nostalgic for a place I've never been, for experiences that are not my own.

Stephanie Tallering
i love going hard in the paint. making DEMENTED CRAP has always been a pass time for me since i was probly one year old. ask my mom. experiments, surprises, you name it i love it. one time i had an idea with gregory to make a coin with david byrne on one side and david lynch on the other side. that just about sums it up. i have influenced by so many people along my way walt disney, steven p jobs, anansey the spider, wee herman, my friends, and even animals, the list goes on. i struggle because i can’t answer the question of “why do i make art” but it seems to keep my heart pumping my blood through my veins so i better keep doing it, curiosity inhabits my cells, i wander if neandertals mated with humans. i wonder if there is life out there. i need to make a living doing art; this is my strongest passion. i can’t get caught in a dead end job. i want my stuff to be different, to be unique. example: imagine the idea of a grayish horse using a hammer to bring food from his satin plate to his tiny mouth, while he listens to DMX or deubeussy and has electrodes to his brain. another example: i just invented a character nicknamed time jones, that’s just two of my ideas. hope you like them and me. in infenety and beyond. Michael Doyle Olson
The time at which you entered the gallery to view The Collection did very much to impact your experience of the installation. Arriving promptly at 8 pm allowed you access to only half of the gallery space. Artists Chase Stone and Gregory Wikstrom had constructed a blank white wall dividing the room, concealing one side of the exhibition space entirely from view. Entering the accessible half of the room, the viewer was first confronted with a vast array of meticulously placed objects arranged on large white tables. These objects included lenses, and various dissected mechanical devices, such as sewing machines and tape recorders. Closer examination of the solid white wall stretching the width of the room revealed the presence of two security cameras, mounted high on the wall.

Just beyond the tables was a tall but comparatively narrower barrier, constructed of television screens of varying sizes. The images on the screen, it became instantly clear, were live feeds from cameras placed all over the gallery. A few of the television monitors showed action happening on the accessible side of the wall. Yet the vast majority showed footage of events taking place on the other side of the gallery. Behind this television screen barrier was a short row of chairs facing a VCR, multiple television screens, and an assortment of VHS tapes. Viewers crowded into this area, changing the tapes, laughing and conversing. Yet trained too on this area was a camera mounted at the top of the television tower.

As the minutes passed, inching towards 8:30 pm, viewers began to focus their attention on the screens with feeds from beyond the wall. Stone could be seen moving through the space feverishly at some moments, calmly at others. A viewer dressed entirely in black on the audience's side of the gallery moved towards the wall and began to violently strike its surface, over time breaking the wood, creating a functional passage between the two sides of the gallery. Entering into this previously blocked off section was an experience quite apart from the initially accessible half. Dimly lit, the space was divided into very distinct environments formed by wooden structures, collections of pieces of paper, images, notes, receipts, and television screens. Gradually, it becomes clear that this debris is not only connected, but deliberately, painstakingly collected and compiled. Exploring each area, the viewer was confronted with ever more cameras—the same cameras that had allowed insight into Stone's movements when the space was inaccessible.

Wikstrom spoke about the pair's study of surveillance as a process, spanning the weeks and months leading up to their show. They would leave one another notes, he and Stone described, and would follow one another closely over the course of days and weeks. I myself was subject to an early experiment last fall, wherein Stone recorded a long portion of our conversation as we sprawled out in his studio. In exploring the concept of surveillance, The Collection brilliantly facilitated a thoughtful, probing critique of what it means to watch another person. Additionally, this show launched a very effective, intriguing commentary on the Senior Studio exhibition-going experience. So much of attending a Senior Studio art show is about seeing not only the art, but your friends who are also in attendance. Your attention is oftentimes neatly divided between the pieces and your sleekly dressed, wine slopping peers. Wikstrom and Stone's show is achingly aware of this divide, and entirely yields to it, creating mechanisms by which you may survey and examine others at the show.

Kristina Anderson
THESE ARE JUST MY MEMORIES
ZOË STRASSMAN

Memories are complicated, their clarity tinged by rosy tones or obscured by dark smudges. In this space of recollection, the worst is exaggerated and the best forgotten, and our mind frames our past without regard to objective truth—if there even is such a thing. But yet, in spite of the impossibility of it, our preservative instinct remains strong, compelling us to record our daily thoughts in journals, save ticket stubs in scrapbooks, and write songs to remember.

We have a fascination with pictures, and it is with this fascination that Zoë Strassman's senior studio show, These are Just my Memories, resonates. In photography we find the ability to capture a moment just as it was, or to compose a moment just as we wanted it to be. Photography straddles the line between reality and fantasy, the cold objective and the romantic subjective. In photographs we recall the best, the worst and everything in between; they hold the potential to evoke emotions of almost any kind.

Transforming Fisher Gallery into a quasi-domestic space, Strassman's photography opened up onto windows of nostalgia, a feeling heightened by the dark mahogany-stained frames, which had a matte, honest look, absent of the more performative gilded frames of neo-classical art or the sterile, passive white frames preferred by the minimalist aesthetic.

In a particularly precious moment, Strassman converted the corner diagonally to the right of the entrance into an intimate, domestic space, where a large, comfy armchair sat surrounded by an array of smaller-format photographs. Here, one felt as though he or she had entered into a grandparent's living room, where family portraits lined the walls of a cozy space.

The content of a photograph, especially a family portrait, can be quite intimate, telling a specific story about personal moments. But photographs somehow retain a kind of universal appeal, telling a story about human relationships and providing a generalized lens into the past that overcomes the personal. "Our culture relies on [photography] for proof of existence and experience. In some ways, we entrust photographs to remember, knowing that we won't always be able to ourselves. We trust the times and moments we choose to document will be worth remembering later."

Strassman began with an interest in our generation's unique conception of photography that comes from having grown up knowing photography both as an analog and a digital process. Using family photographs to investigate how people remember, she documented how college students store and display their own memories through a unique, quite poetic, approach. Rather than taking pictures of family and friends, she photographed the photographs of her family and friends as the person to whom they belonged displayed them. While she composed each shot, the composition within the margins are those imagined by these other people. Strassman's distancing approach was successful, although, she admitted, "one of the challenges of curating a solo-show of all photographs was to make sure that the space seemed dynamic, despite the similarity and symmetry."

In spite of her concerns, with this distance Strassman achieved images with a kind of universal value—paragons of memory—in which she is simultaneously curating and creating the work, making a new object out of an old object without altering its context, and creating a dynamic atmosphere in spite of the lack of medium diversity. Strassman layers time, documenting someone else's document and presenting it herself in the present. A personal take on the art of appropriation, others' narratives become her narratives and, in viewing them, they become our own.
Star Wars, one of the few photographs taken outside of a domestic setting, is a visually compelling shot taken in a dorm room with walls plastered from floor to ceiling with photographs. Here, the importance of the individual picture was subordinated to a kind of memory mosaic constructed by the resident of the room. To the college audience, the scene was a familiar, resonating with our desire to make the alien, sterile space of the college dorm into something more than that: a home filled with the faces of parents, high-school friends, childhood homes, personal triumphs, lovers and pets.

Some photographs showed men and women from a different era—parents getting married in the ’70s, decked out in long white flowing gowns and brown suede pants with paisley embroidery; photos taken in a photo booth with big ’80s hair and youthful smiles.

Although some photographs were more successful than others, overall Strassman crafted an intensely sensitive, personal show, treating viewers to a nostalgic stroll down the proverbial memory lane. Strassman’s technical skills and mastery of the medium were made clear especially through her sensitive approach to focus, softening it in places and sharpening it in others to heighten the emotive effect of her images, thoughtfully emphasizing particular images within the composition.

Rather than pretend at an objective truth, Strassman did just the opposite, freely admitting to the subjectivity of her content. “These images are as narrative as they are documentary,” her statement concludes. “They depict how people choose to remember.”

Georgia Horn
F rom Adam and Eve to Sisyphus, tales of human struggle have long immortalized the mythology of man’s battle with his own humanity. Regardless of time or place, man has been relentlessly haunted by his awareness of his own mortality, whether manifested in sadness, anger, or frustration. The poet Goethe once commented about humanity’s fate, “Why did you grant us such intuition, / Such power to know each other’s heart, / To see, among life’s scattered throng, / The true relationship where we are?”

Alexander Voight addresses this awareness of human despair through a stunning amalgamation of photography, painting, drawing, and stencil work. His show, titled *Albatross*, draws inspiration from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and deals with the animal’s metaphorical significance as an unrelenting psychological encumbrance. In this case, the figurative chokehold stems from the demons that originate from within the human psyche. Voight’s twelve prints work through a compendium of colorful mediums to create a totalizing series that wavers between psychedelic and surreal. Often Voight situates himself as the subject within, posing in contortions with body twisted, mouth gaping, and fingers extended, evoking images of fantastical otherworldly spirits. Yet even with the wildly expressive and gestural marks of paint against hazy ethereal kaleidoscopic backdrops, Voight expertly achieves balance in the tension between raw human frustration and cathartic emotional release.

Through a desire to come to terms with inevitable human suffering, Voight uses himself to create a character with which the viewer can emotionally relate. Through skillful photo manipulation and hand-painted overlay, his body no longer becomes his own. In *The Sickly King*, his form teeters precariously between the grotesque of bent limbs and the beauty of achieving physical liberation. Chest thrust forward and skin smeared with paint, Voight’s body exudes a primal nature that stands in tension with the spiritually transcendent aureole behind and the razor-like halo emanating from his face. Similarly, in *New Mantle*, the human form is drastically abstracted. Legs are reduced to paint drips while black scraths obscure the faces. White paint caked onto the skin outlines the ripples of knotted muscle and the elegant lines of outstretched arms. Through both works, we are left with a dark yet ecstatic performative gesture that seeks to express a euphoric mental break. Only from the abstraction are we, the viewers, able to escape the burdens of our own world and step into the artist’s spectral dreamland.

This series succeeds in emphasizing innate tension within human nature and the honesty of the human struggle to find solace from within. The works incite powerful visceral reactions through the push and pull of the duality of the liberation we aspire towards and the primality from which we evolved. While these characters may seem alien, it is their foreign exoticism that invites us to question our own troubles and challenges us to let go. *Albatross* functions as a spiritual altar to the tribulations of being mortal and the efforts to break free from the vicious cycle of human suffering. In the end, while the albatross and its curse remain, Voight sheds light on the darkness.

Tiffany Fung
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