



2017
**Master of Fine Arts
Thesis Exhibition**
The University of Arizona School of Art

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Colin Blakely, Director, School of Art

Sometimes, things just fall into place. Walking through the galleries of this year's MFA Thesis Exhibition, it is easy to be left with this thought. Every project demonstrates a level of ambition that could have fallen flat had a whole host of circumstances not played out in the artists' favor. Seeing the extent to which each project individually reached its full potential but also the way the exhibition as a whole coheres, it just seems as though everything fell into place.

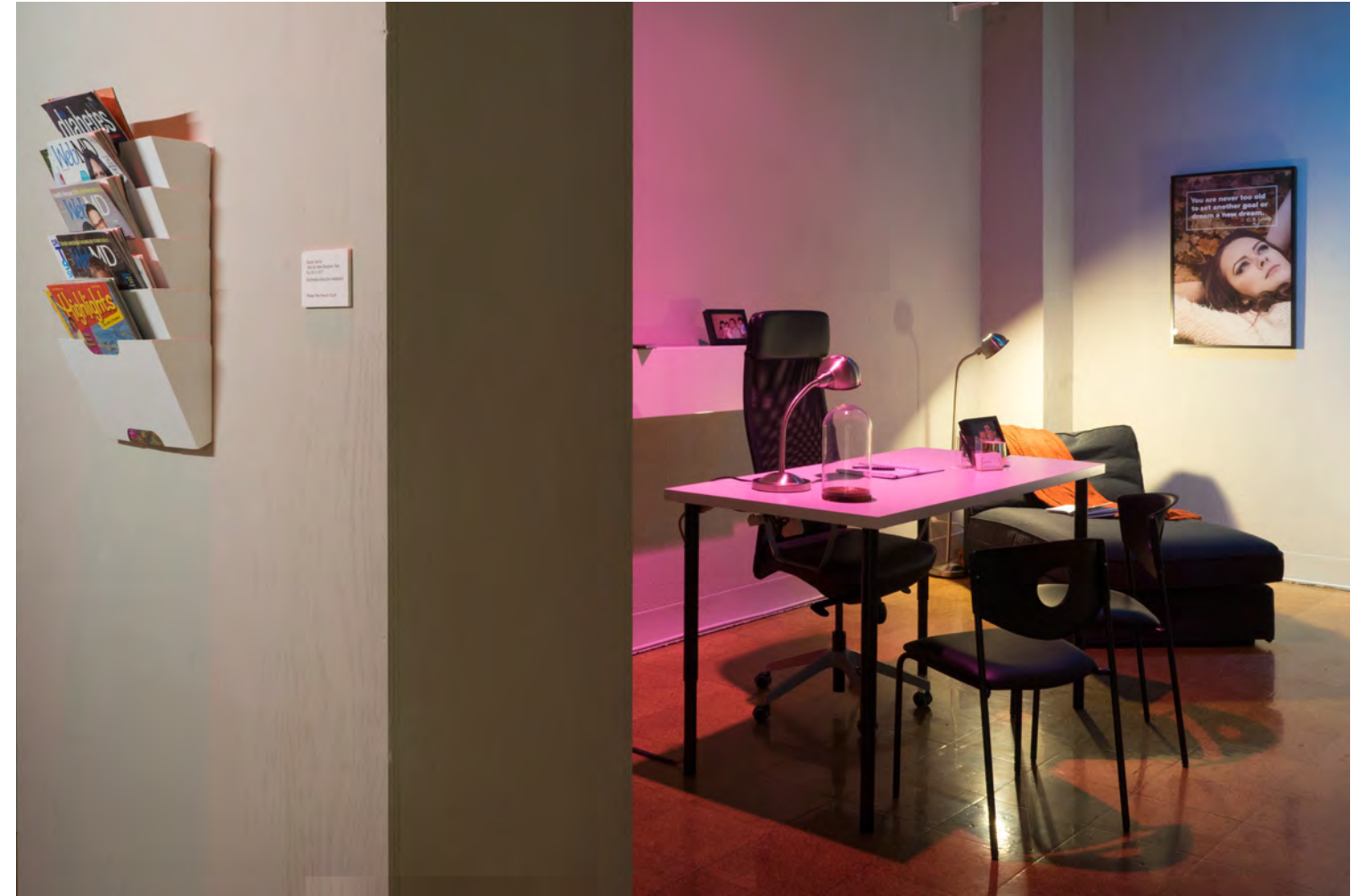
However, we all know that things don't just fall into place. Ambition must be matched by perseverance and grit, and it takes great skill to make the most demanding tasks look effortless. To that end, I want to congratulate our MFA class of 2017. They have risen to the challenge of pushing their practice as well as their chosen media into new territories, all while making the effort required to do so look easy.

*The MFA exhibition is hosted in the Joseph Gross Gallery and the University of Arizona Museum of Art.

GLADYS GARCIA

I Bite My Nails Because I Saw You Do It

On December 27, 1999, I fell asleep exhausted after an exciting day at the aquarium with my family. I didn't know that would be the last time I ever saw my father, who died in his sleep later that night. *I Bite My Nails Because I Saw You Do It* is an installation that reflects the decades-long internal struggle with my own mental health, stemming from that traumatic childhood event. It reveals the dichotomy of attempting to fulfill the roles of both the “doctor” and “patient” in my attempt at healing after losing my father. This piece presents raw and unfiltered internal and external dialogue along with items and mementos that recreate my mindspace as I struggle to understand what I had, whom I loved, and why I lost it.



I Bite My Nails Because I Saw You Do It

Multimedia interactive installation detail

2017



I Bite My Nails Because I Saw You Do It

Multimedia interactive installation detail

2017



I Bite My Nails Because I Saw You Do It

Multimedia interactive installation detail

2017

HELLEN GAUDENCE

Magharibi (Westward)

This collective body of work titled *Magharibi* – Swahili for the navigation point west of the sun, signals both a geographical location and a sense of routing towards a particular direction. I'm referencing an aspirational journey out of Africa toward the western world, divulging the black body's experiences of movement across borders and the aftermath of situating oneself in a non-native space. The work speaks to present day construction of the African Diaspora and the influence of place and historical memory upon one's identity.

In *Magharibi*, Black and white portraits of African migrants residing in Tucson are juxtaposed with color landscape images from Tanzania, featuring a repetitive motif of stand-alone native plants engulfed in red earth toned dust. These allude to the materiality of geography commonly seen in Africa while simultaneously flattening the continent by presenting it as a homogenous location. Paired alongside the decontextualized migrant portraits brings forth a consideration of absence of place, likewise lending visibility to this community while suggesting an additional narrative inhabitants of the American West.



Magharibi (Westward)

Installation view

2017



Goba

Digital archival print

15" x 15"

2017



Ibitola

Digital archival print

15" x 19"

2017

JANELLE KRAUSE

Silent like snowfall

It's quiet here, like the silence from snowfall, like walking into a basement where all of the lights are turned off.

Weaving with monofilament is where it began. This unyielding silvery substance that captures the light in a passing glance transfixes me. The more I stare, the more I obsess over this quality, and the more my mind wanders.

Little flashes of captured luminescence become flashes of memory – an imagined piece of life. My attention shifts inward as these memories come to life in recreated moments of light, color, and sound. Staring further, I alter the memories to make stories of my own.

Now, I've imagined so much I'm not certain where the memories end and where the stories I tell myself begin – my imagined space is not the reality. This brings me out from my warm, imagined space and I see now where I truly reside. It's a place where the memory used to be. All that is left is the disintegrating scaffolding of a memory's origin; tattered ruins in both memory and mind.



Silent like snowfall

Monofilament, cotton and linen fiber, plexi tube

20' x 20' x 9'

2017



Silent like snowfall

Installation detail

2017



Silent like snowfall

Monofilament, cotton and linen fiber, plexi tube

20' x 20' x 9'

2017

LEAH LEWMAN

From the Inside, Out

The relationship between landscape and architectural structure is a complex one. Humans created buildings to ultimately provide one basic function: shelter. The desert of the American southwest presents a unique situation in this regard. The architecture here not only protects us from the harsh climate, in many cases it also opens us up to the landscape by way of large, pane-less windows that bring the landscape in, while keeping the heat out. My work explores the tension created from this visual divide between man and nature.

I use a combination of installation and 2D works to mimic, but also stretch and manipulate the relationship between a viewer and their surroundings. The focus is on the architectural structure of the window, situating the viewer apart from a natural “beyond.” By using layers of paint, collaged layers of paper, and forced visual perspective in the case of installations, I create a visual divide between the spectator and their subject. The painted landscape, a beautified and idyllic image of what we think nature is, lies just beyond our reach – visible but also obstructed and inaccessible. The intimate architectural space now creates a complex barrier from a much wider outside universe. Oriented within this space, the viewer is asked to evaluate their own relationship to the land and sky surrounding them beyond the walls. Through this work, I question whether we can truly consider ourselves a part of nature anymore.



From the Inside, Out

Oil on Yupo installation

Variable dimensions

2017



Cropping: the Ideal View, A1-D4

Collaged prints on archival museum board

6" x 6" each

2017



From the Inside, Out

Back of installation

Variable dimensions

2017

JONATHAN MARQUIS

A Geology of the Senses

My practice accumulates and dissipates around my attention to the lives of glaciers, changing landscapes and notions of self. The multi-media works in *A Geology of the Senses* put into motion several embodied ways of relating to moving bodies of ice, and considers the senses as pathways of extraction and absorption.

Proposing the human organism as geologic, and the senses a form of extraction – the question remains, if the sensorial subject is an instance of the land, then where is the individual? Where and when does vision, and the rest of the senses, slip into the geologic? A glacier listens, mountains walk and waters attend the sun.

Relationships to place, geologic time and climate change operate sometimes indiscernibly on our perceptions in fluid exchange. Vision eavesdrops the creep of ice. The aural envisages beams of light. An unknowable and uncontrollable longing explored with processes of melting and chemistry. Material-loaded ice melts onto the canvas. Chemicals meet the solar to develop the painting's outcome. Light and ice exchange positions. A glacier is a way of seeing. Time's blue distance – a faded reservoir.



A Geology of the Senses

Installation view

2017



Like a glacier: An unpredictable portent not on your map

Ice embedded with acrylic, pigment, carbon, calcium carbonate, cyanotype on canvas, lumber, spray paint, various materials

82" x 82" x variable dimensions

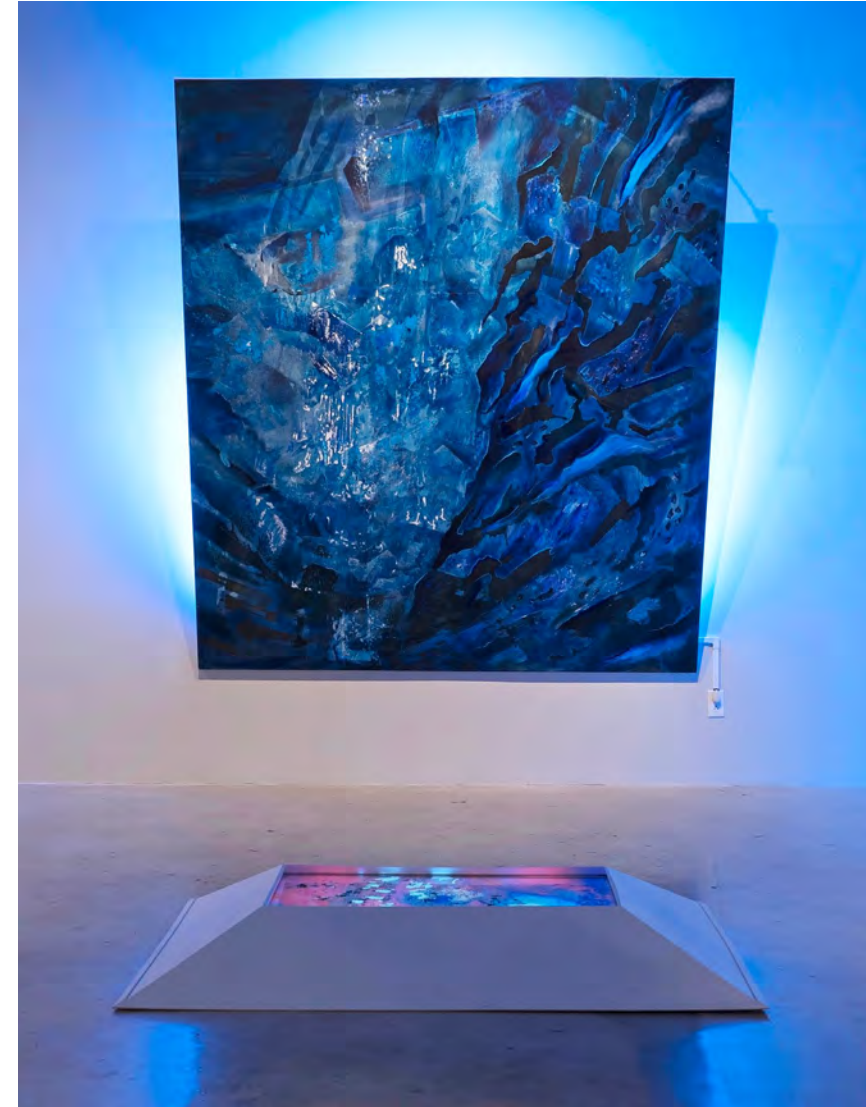
2017

Time spray and glacial silt

Acrylic, cyanotype on cotton canvas, LED light

38" x 38"

2017



Pressed: Slipping toward the geologic

Acrylic, cyanotype, carbon, pigment, calcium carbonate on cotton canvas, pine, LED tubes, fixtures, extension cords, chain, carabiners

96" x 84"

2017

Ablation Site Eight: Breaking apart is a chance to see, listen for the ice creep

Single channel video, LCD screen, plywood, spray paint

44" x 59" x 7"

2017

ALISSA M NEAL***Point of Know Return, Kansas, 1977***

On New Year's Day 2016 I woke up with a headache so splitting it took all the energy I could muster to open one eye. Slowly kneading my feet together, as if paralyzed from the ankles up, I struggled to differentiate between what being soaking wet and frostbite must feel like, knowing my hands under the pillow had to be one of the two. Overnight snow had accumulated on the windows, still perfectly preserved in individual flakes, making it impossible to tell what time of day it was in the world outside. The room was quiet and the debilitating smell of lemon-lime soda and dirty socks was a distraction from the slight suffocating feel the collared shirt and ninety-nine cent Mardi Gras beads tangled around my neck caused. Knowing the evidence of the evening before would be uncovered with a few simple swipes I had no intention of finding my phone.

Once up on all fours I opened the back window and crawled out of my fifteen-year-old camper pickup truck and gracelessly slung my barefoot onto the cold parking lot pavement below. The hum of the billboard sized, Route 66 Casino, neon brought a slight smirk to my unpleasant tasting mouth. I took pleasure in my unusual life more than once throughout that seven-hour drive back home.

I get to keep this story, and 157 more like it, and because of that the world can have its dirt back.

***Point of Know Return, Kansas, 1977***

Installation detail

2016-17



Point of Know Return, Kansas, 1977

Installation detail

2016-17



Point of Know Return, Kansas, 1977

Installation

2016-17

ERINN NORDEMAN

The Endless Chain

At an early age, I had complete confidence in myself. I embraced the beauty of seductive powers seen in women in media and was unashamed of being turned on by sex scenes in soap operas. I was entirely unaware that society might disapprove. All such signs of being uninhibited have dissipated in my adult self. Religious and societal traditions slowly taught me that shame was preferential to liberty, and modesty to personal exploration.

These photographs and quilts display a journey for me breaking free and finding myself again. The quilts shield and censor the vulnerable photographs behind them. They utilize the double wedding ring pattern- a traditional motif for wedding quilts to be given to brides. The quilts are a reminder of the traditional role of sex, through consummation, and the limitations of self within this context. The artifact of these acts are on display for the audience to contemplate their own experiences.

The variety of materials I chose counter traditional quilting fabrics. From cosplay vinyl to royal blue velvet, the fabrics were chosen for their tactile quality as well as their connections to my personal memories. I am exploring the memory that fabric can hold in relation to our coming of age. Together the photographs, the quilt motif, and the textiles illustrate the dichotomy many people feel regarding their sexual exploration: guilt and pleasure.



The Endless Chain

Installation view

2017



Kimberly

Quilt and photograph

2017



Pamela

Quilt and photograph

2017

OLIVER PADILLA

Product of the American Dream

My art practice explores ethnic, social and economic systems that determine ones deeply established position within the desire of upward mobility in the United States of America. Even though there is no apparent caste system in the USA, much of our lives are filled with predeterminations. My project, *Product of the American Dream*, is a multi-media and performance installation referencing a fast food drive-thru restaurant as a critique of the lack of economic opportunities for many young Americans as they enter into the workforce. Fast-food jobs are considered entry level employment on the American economic ladder, but for many condemned to the underclass by institutionalized structures of poverty, this is a type of job they will only know. As a first-generation American myself, privileged by the unlikely opportunity of graduate study, I decided my thesis approach would step into a typical position for under-privileged Americans wanting a piece of the dream. I gained employment at McDonalds. I used this job as research to create a performance reenacted on a physical replica of a fast food drive-thru. The project plays off of the cyclic nature of our pre-determined economic positions, reinforced by the repetitive and mundane actions that is indicative of fast food jobs.



Rite of Passage

Installation of *Product of the American Dream*

2017



Rite of Passage

Installation of *Product of the American Dream*

2017



Rite of Passage

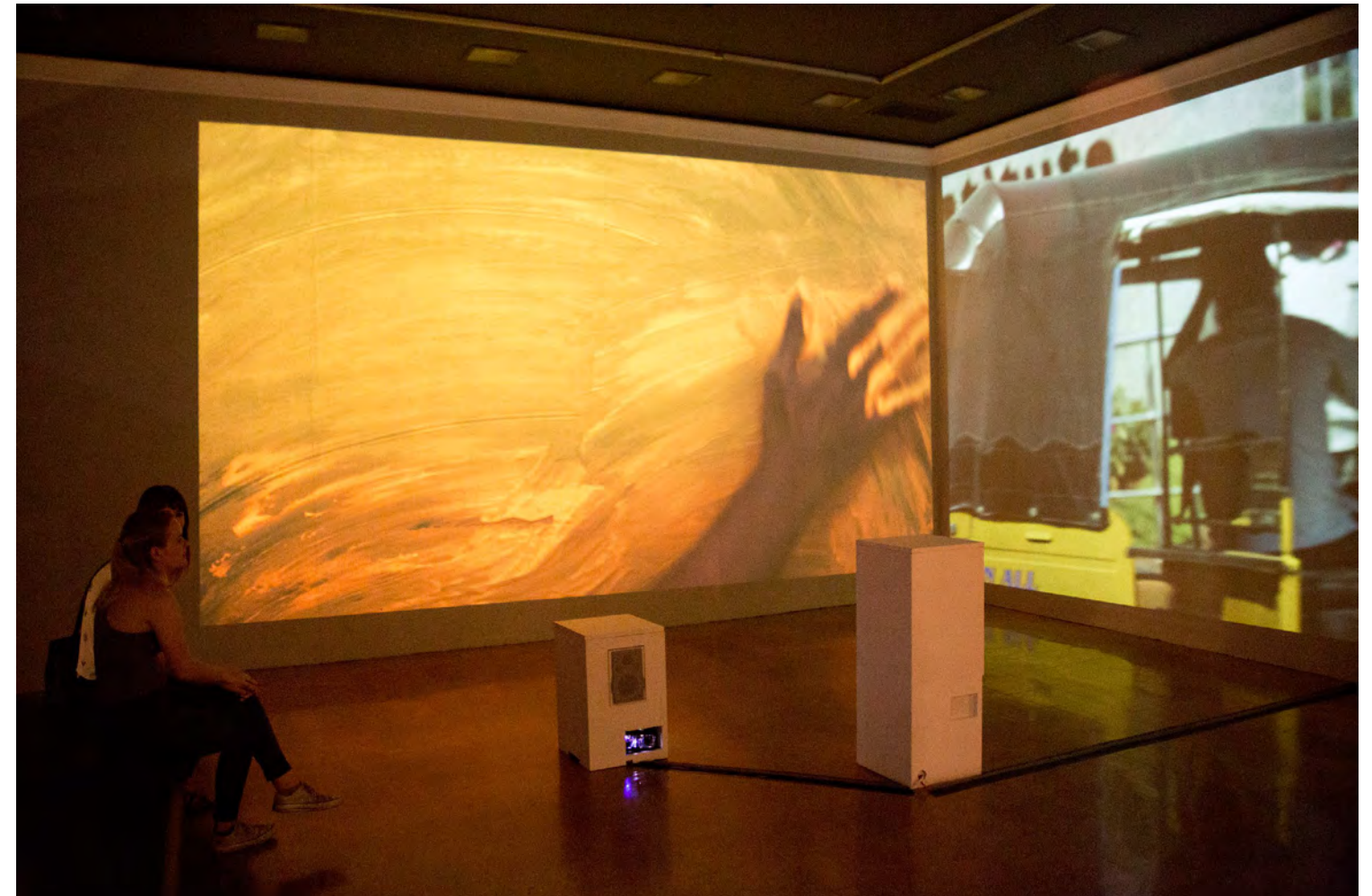
Installation detail of *Product of the American Dream*

2017

JAPHETH PAUL

Indian Unrest

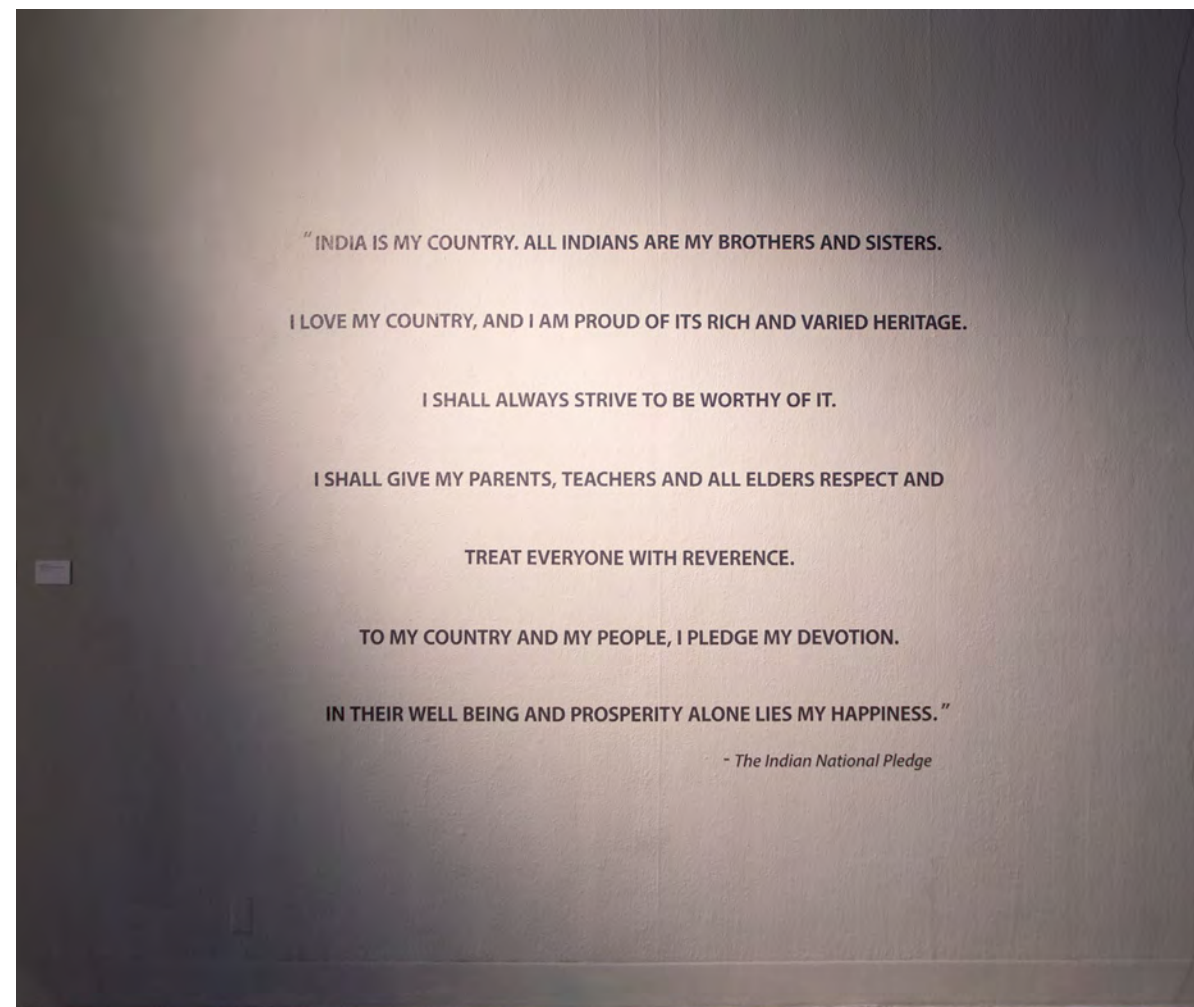
A double standard has permeated all of Indian society throughout its history. Persecution is part of everyday life though routinely ignored. This abuse of power has led to identity-based politics, which harms members of non-dominant groups. My work is an expression of my personal experiences within the social and cultural landscape of India. I externalize this embodied experience through text, video, and ambient sound creating an environment of the pressures of the expectations of others. The videos follow the cycles of my thought and open up an examination of culture and society. To enter the space is to enter a mindscape and see Indian society through the eyes of its own alienated citizenry.



Indian Unrest

Installation

2017



Indian Unrest

Installation detail

2017



Indian Unrest

Installation

2017

ELLIOTT ROBBINS

Black Aesthetic

Black Aesthetic features an audio/video work, as well as a series of graphite drawings. Through the use of appropriated and self-generated text, as well as a single drawn figure, the viewer is presented with a disjointed narrative. The narrative in question is an exploration of the intersection of societal readings of a black body, as well as a subjective experience, and the dichotomies to be found between. By collaging together bits of text, and the inclusion of a black figure, *Black Aesthetic* examines experience, with no concrete conclusions to be drawn or clear distinctions that can delineate the personal and the political. This body of work is as much a personal narrative, as it is an interrogation of the performative nature of blackness and masculinity.



Black Aesthetic

Installation view

2017



La Petite Mort

Graphite on paper

52" x 40"

2017



Black Aesthetic

Installation view

2017

SHAH NOOR SHAFQAT

Intimate Gravity

Dealing with my daughter's eczema was frustrating as a mother. As an artist, however, I was intrigued by the textures of human skin in health and disease along with the associative emotions that arose.

The skin textures of eczema I saw daily on my daughter's skin became an inspiration to create unconventional textile surfaces. The unpredictability of the occurrence and severity of the symptoms of the eczema are echoed by the uncertain way that the silk paint moves through the fabric. The hand embroidery—especially the knots—is related to the sensitivity and patience required of me to deal with the disease and treat my daughter's inflamed skin. My feelings of stress, frustration, struggle, containment and restriction are expressed through the textures of silk painting, embroidery, and colors, forms and surfaces that allude to inflammation, roughness, itchiness, discomfort, and the stress of skin.

Intimate Gravity is a group of circular mixed media works based on the histology of eczema and the patterns and textures it creates on the skin. The surfaces, based on microscopic images also suggest fungi growth, visually beautiful yet appalling in terms of the biological damage engendered. Some of the pieces have abstract forms derived from images of gut, liver and kidney that point to the possibility of leaky gut and bad gut bacteria, which are known to cause eczema. Abstract representations of liver and kidney forms in other pieces refer to the evidence that overtaxing of these organs by toxins can also lead to eczema. The black background represents my sleepless nights investigating my daughter's skin condition through a microscope while she slept. This series, born in a period of suffering and intensive motherly care-giving has grown into a highly personal expression of beauty and intimacy as my child has become healthy with time, medicine, and maternal care.



Intimate Gravity

Silk paints, silk dyes, wax, acrylic, hand embroidery, colored pencils, fabric paint on silk fabric, latex paint on wall

2017



Intimate Gravity
 Installation detail
 2017



Intimate Gravity
 Installation detail
 2017



2016 MARCIA GRAND CENTENNIAL SCULPTURE PRIZE

Isan Brant, current second-year pursuing her MFA

Congratulations to this year's recipient, Isan Brant (Studio Art MFA student), for her project entitled, *Tracing Ancient Oceans: Objects of the Anthropocene*, a proposed installation of 12 large multi-media sculptures that draw from local geological and ecological history in exploring human/nature interactions. Brant is exploring Biosphere 2 as a potential site for placement of this public work.

Building on the excellence of our graduate program, the Marcia Grand Centennial Sculpture Prize Competition is intended to provide MFA-seeking Graduate students with up to \$8,000 to support the completion of work in the sculptural/3D arts.



***Tracing Ancient Oceans:
Objects of the Anthropocene***

Works in progress

2017



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