excerpt

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Amanda Gerhart, Deanna Marino, Emma Lesnevich, Jake McKenna John Halligan, Kenzie Walsh, Lauren Gaston, Olivia Carlucci, Rachel Silver, Rong Sun, Sebastian Velasquez, Sierra Bacon, Sierra Watkins, William Segura, Xander Opiyo



The 2020 University of Delaware Bachelor of Fine Arts Senior Exhibition



Foreword

I Will Always Know You as The Class of 2020

On April 20, 2020, thirty-nine days after campus shut down, our Department Chair, Professor Greg Shelnutt sent out an email titled "Thinking, Reason, and Meditation: A Few Thoughts Before the End of the Academic Year" to the undergrads, grads, faculty, and staff.

In it he referenced the doldrums as described by the Lethargians to Milo, the protagonist in Jules Feiffer's **The Phantom Tollbooth**. "The Doldrums, my young friend, are where nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes." And as local Ordinance 175389-J further informs Milo, "It shall be unlawful, illegal, and unethical to think, think of thinking, surmise, presume, reason, meditate, or speculate while in the Doldrums. Anyone breaking this law shall be severely punished!"

Greg continued by sharing his own state of mind, "with all the medical, economic, and political uncertainty we are facing, it certainly seems difficult to think, meditate, and reason at the moment. I know that at various odd moments during the day, I find it difficult to concentrate; I can't remember what I was supposed to be doing, and the energy is just not there. This is not easy, not easy at all."

His literary reference captured the stasis we all found ourselves in while quarantining at home. The semester started as any other, with joy and energy, and the excitement to create something new right alongside the aversion to the daunting work that the next fifteen weeks would bring. It was a familiar feeling. Hard work, late nights, camaraderie, ambivalence, procrastination, and deadlines. Being simultaneously ready to move onto the next adventure and not ready to leave the support of the college community.

Then coronavirus—as verb, as noun, as disruption, as chaos. The virus sent us all packing only to land in a digital netherworld, a flimsy facsimile for our in-person, handson education. A technologically driven digital platform replaced what was an embodied experience just a few days before. We resorted to communicating across faulty internet connections via video teleconferencing. [That long ago dream of wishing phone calls could be video calls, was here with a vengeance]. We wrote and edited artist statements via shared drives and documents. But nothing would come close to building and sharing in the studios and labs together. Gone were the painting studios with the thick paint splattered easels. Gone the sculpture studios with the loud din of table saws and sparking welding tools amid the smell of sawdust. Gone the darkrooms and photo chemistry with the red safety lights and black and white negatives hanging by clothespins. The print studios with the UV exposure unit, the colored inks, acid baths and large presses. The bags of wet clay, the ceramic glazes, the potters wheels spinning and kilns a-firing. Gone were the video installations, immersive light filled spaces and interactive studios with circuits and wires.

Enter the doldrums. Time became elastic. Home became the studio. Deadlines were hard to keep track of. Sleep schedules shifted. Every class felt the same — the interface, the screen flattens the experience. The only thing keeping us on track were the Zoom invitations to meet at 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 3:30 pm, 6:00 pm and on.

The work the students made at home, if they had the space, changed them. They discovered new ways to make work with hand chisels, used tea bags and tennis balls to make prints on paper, the sun to fade fabric, paint in their parent's garage, and, of course, the computer to illustrate and edit. The fifteen students receiving their BFA degrees this Spring have earned it in every way. They have emerged resilient and persevered during the strangest of times.

As Greg stated so well in the closing of his April 20th email, "...my wish for you in these most trying and uncertain times, is to envision those ideas, images, and forms that seem 'just out of sight or a little beyond your reach,' and to learn 'for no reason at all,' so that you might have the courage to try. There is another side. We'll see you there."

It has been inspiring to share these difficult times with you and observe our collective shift into unchartered ways to teach and to learn. You already have proven you can do it. Go out into the world brimming with the confidence that you gained while creatively tackling making at home. Be kind to yourself, your friends and family. Build your world. And tell us all about your accomplishments. We're still here for you.

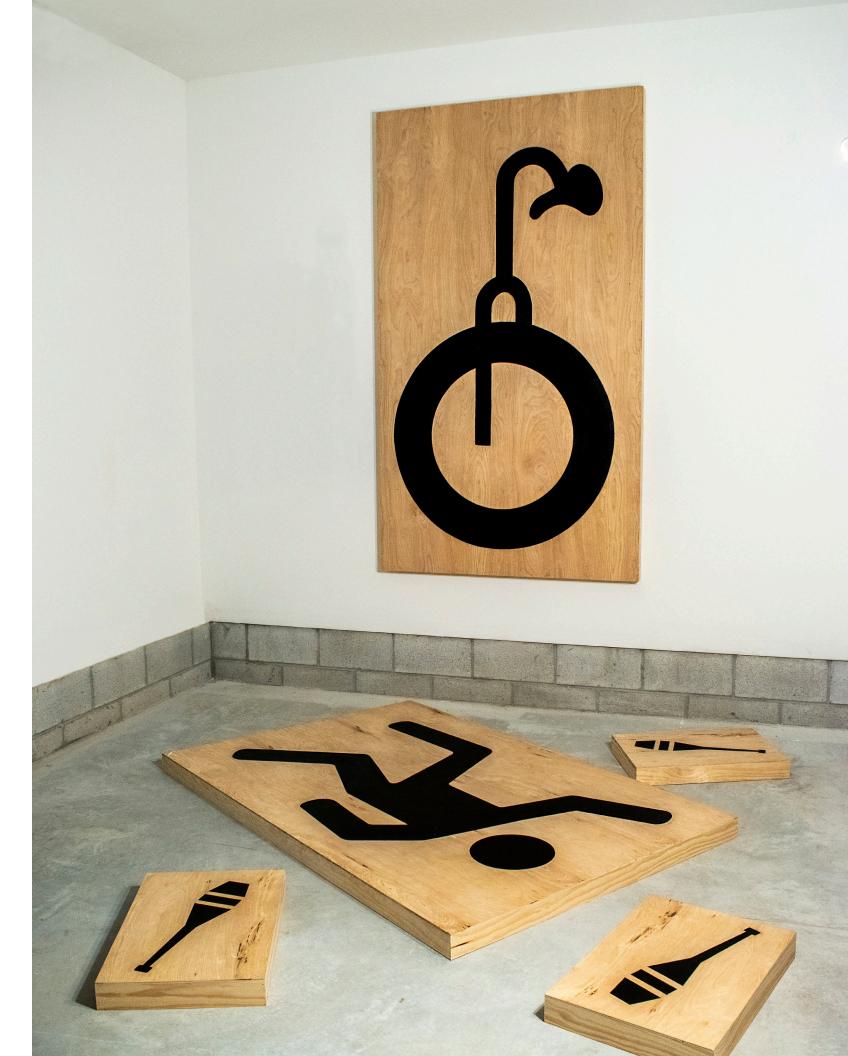
Amy Hicks Associate Professor of Lens Media / Associate Chair Department of Art & Design University of Delaware, May 2020

John Sebastián Velásquez

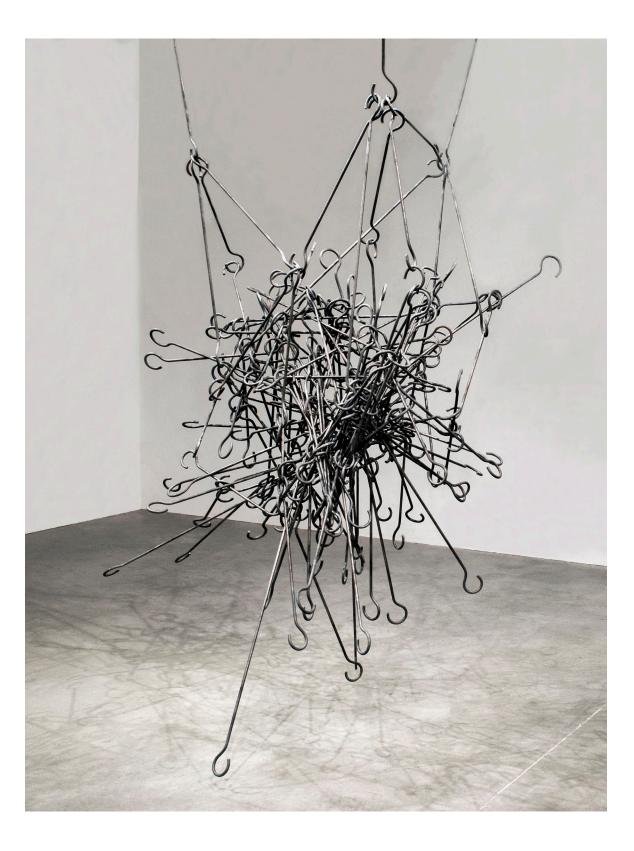
John Sebastián Velásquez creates sculpture from found objects and industrial materials such as steel, wood, and concrete in order to explore the complexity of human relationships. Through intensive process-based work, he bends, cuts, and crushes strong, rigid materials to describe soft, malleable emotions. His personal experiences are the catalyst for the creation of his sculptures and his thoughtfulness is what allows the meaning to permeate such dense materials.

Sebastian chooses steel for its resilience as the actual and metaphorical backbone of his work. The tactile connections made between one material and another must be cleaned, cared for, and maintained just as the relationships that are made throughout life. He focuses on details when creating lines and forms in threedimensional space, confronting each project as if he is carefully carving intricate linework into a linoleum block.

Working with his hands, he makes forms that require him to twist 1,000 screws a day and spends weeks laboriously welding repetitive shapes. His attraction to physical labor stems from the countless summers spent working for his family's construction business. The physical struggle that is integral to Sebastian's processes is consistent to that of the emotional struggle he experiences during the realization of his ideas. This process of ingesting life experiences and regurgitating them into conceptual steel forms has become a therapeutic endeavor, allowing him to physically work through bad experiences, move on to the next, and celebrate each new chapter of life.







Used and Abused, 2019, Steel, Concrete, MDF, Grease, Hair, 84" x 60" x 48"

Disconnected, 2020, Steel, 144" x 60" x 48"

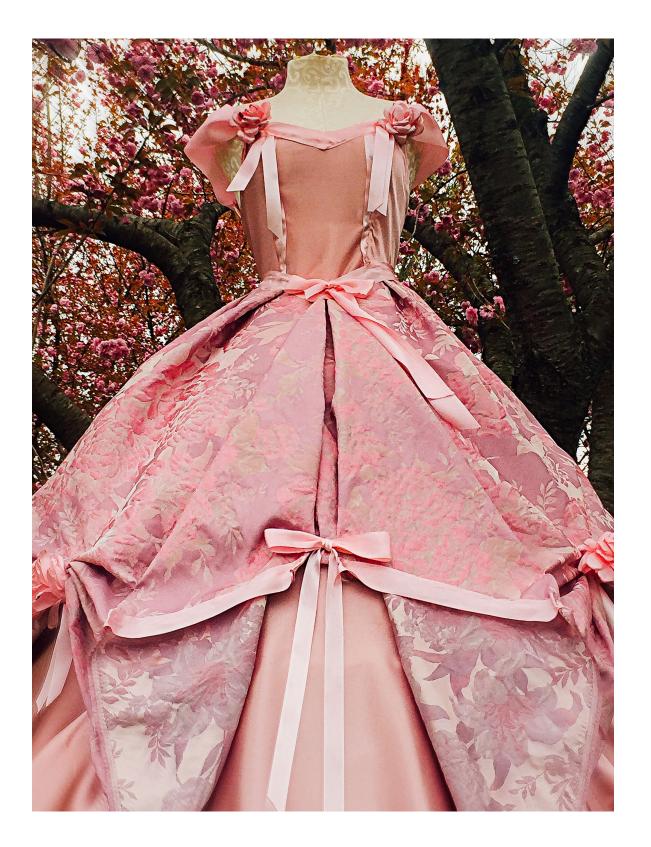
Deanna Marino

Deanna Marino creates large scale sculptures by incorporating found objects, wood, metal, or glass with fabric. Marino is inspired by costume design and elaborate, historical and fantasy-inspired formal wear that would be found in a period drama or a renaissance faire. She researches film and theater, searching for visual references that seem based in past reality, but with a hint of grandeur that could only have been pulled from a non-existent world.

Working with her hands and on her feet, she gets her whole body into the act of making. The larger the scale the better, the physical involvement is a calming, fulfilling activity that opens the act of creation and embraces her imagination.

Believing that our childhood fantasies represent our "truest selves," Deanna populates imaginative worlds, far more beautiful and fantastic than our own, with vivid gowns of flowing fabric. As a selftaught seamstress, Deanna finds an opening to access child-like-invention by boldly working in a way that is completely new to her. She states, "When we are children fully embracing these magical mental worlds, they exist without judgement or shame, unburdened by knowledge of what is or isn't real. These fantasies are completely raw and genuine reflections of our desires, fears, passions, and ambitions."







Heavenly Bodies p II, 2020, Fabric and size 6 form, 72" x 60" x 60"

Heavenly Bodies p III, 2020, Fabric and size 6 form, 72" x 60" x 60"

Emma Lesnevich

In their paintings Emma Lesnevich reframes and deconstructs the figure in order to understand the human condition. Through the lens of psychology, they use color, gesture and brushstroke to express connections between the mind and body. Emma observes human behavior, looking for evidence of how emotion imprints on the body in order to make unseen thoughts visible in paint.

Drawing from life and referencing photographs, Emma inspects the human body, reworking it onto the canvas using vivid, unnatural, and sometimes repellent colors. Rather than mixing paint on the palette, Emma mixes oils directly on the canvas to limit their conscious control over the paint. While they use their own body as source material because of access, the self-portraits are "more about being human in the most general sense, rather than exploring the self as subject."

Emma paints as a distraction to the unpleasant things in life. Therefore they use tones of green, blue, and red prominently as they see these colors representing frustration, dissatisfaction and unhappiness. By manifesting these emotions physically in the painted figure, Emma encourages understanding and empathy, hoping that viewers reconsider their preconceived perceptions of other bodies and otherness.









A Collection of Self Portraits, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 48"

Primary Feelings, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 24" x 24"

John Halligan

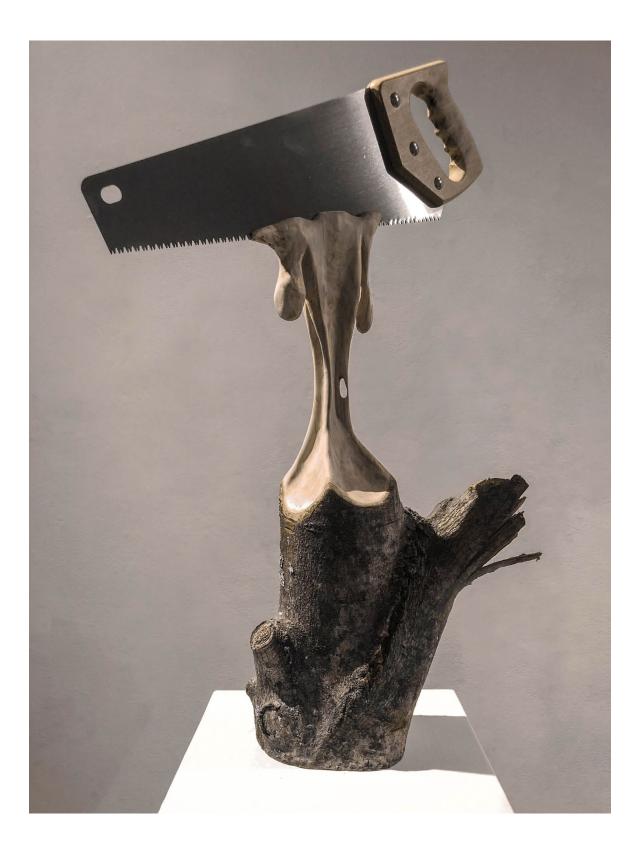
John Halligan finds poetry in every aspect of his sculptural work from his tools–chisel, pen, wood, aluminum, and paper–to the simple act of carving to the careful placement on a pedestal or on the floor. During his walks, John looks for fallen or cut trees from woods or people's yards. With the help of friends he retrieves as much of the tree as possible, carrying the limbs and stump with respect for what was once a living entity. He uses the act of sculpting with power tools and hand tools to understand and navigate issues of self worth, entrapment, and living in a world of toxic masculinity. His guarded feelings work their way through him and eventually into his sculpture and drawings.

Whether it is controlling the fluid gesture of molten aluminum or intimately carving wood, these laborious processes are essential to his work. Each one of the actions has a tempo. As John reveals and removes material he forms a relationship to his ideas and gestures.

He states, "What draws me to carving is its methodical rhythm. Not every piece wants to cooperate and every piece is unpredictable. But that is how life is inevitably going to be every time, so why would the process be any different? Working with objects that were once living organisms, each have their own unique characteristics. Wood and metal speak a distinctive language and from that a personality sprouts as I carve through the layers of growth. Our personalities begin to synchronize as we gain an understanding of one another to express our deepest feelings. Through this an everlasting bond is cultivated."









Who Cares if it Kills, 2020, Oak, Cherry, Aluminum, 108" x 48" x 29"

Entrapment, 2020, Maple, Steel, 30" x 16" x 4"

Jake McKenna

Jake McKenna creates digital works composed of writing, photography, illustration, and graphic design. He uses wit and absurdity as a tool to exaggerate stories, ideas, and socio-political commentary. Inspired by comedic writers and storytellers, Jake recognizes their ability to speak publicly in an unfiltered manner and be heard. Jake believes that comedy is organic; it can't be fabricated or faked because truth is at its core.

Jake uses comedy to point to the absurdities in life. Finding the strange and unordinary in the mundane, Jake writes from his experiences and observations of the world he lives in. His ideas flow unencumbered when he is given a problem to solve or forced to digest something unfamiliar, which results in an honest, often exaggerated and opinionated reaction. These are the moments in life that he searches for.

While his work is heavily reliant on writing, his illustrations showcase his desire for neatness and clean lines. To ensure the written word has impact and power, he removes fluff and flare and keeps the visuals minimal. Through humor and satire, Jake's work attempts to turn the awful into something benign. He believes that laughter is subversive and by provoking it, we can take a step toward catharsis together.

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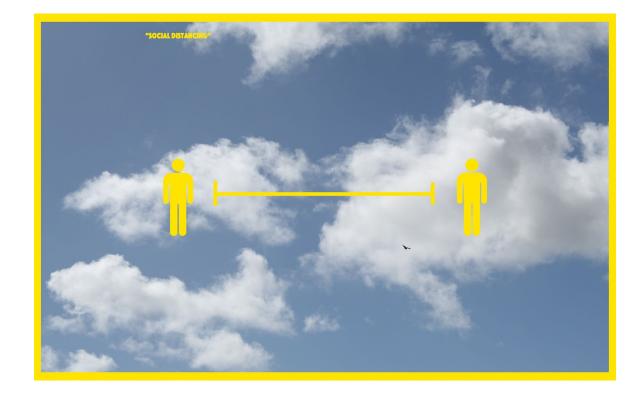
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Social Distancing, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 13" x 19"

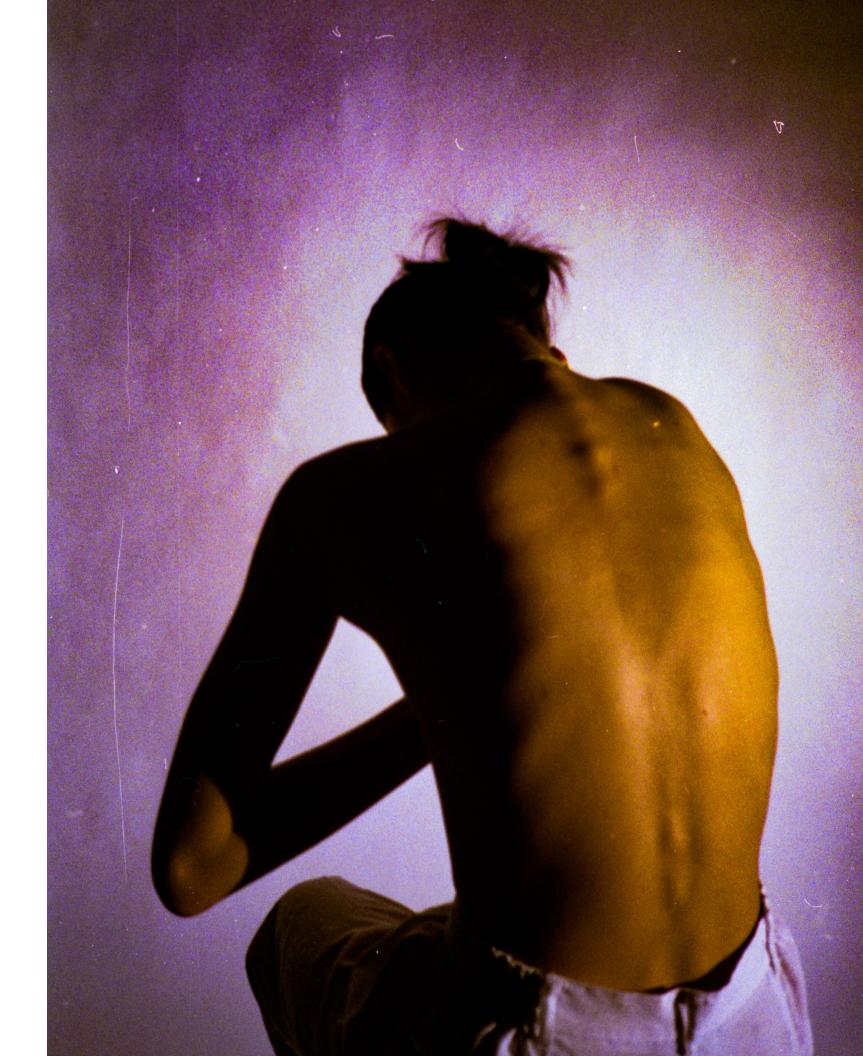
Munch-O-Mask, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 13" x 19"

Xander Opiyo

Xander Opiyo uses photography, videography, and mixed-media collage to understand the complexity of intrapersonal relationships. Employing methods of observational cinema, he works with his characters to construct scenes that feel authentic in order to probe the human psyche on screen.

Xander uses a combination of modern and outdated photo and video equipment to record real and staged moments between a diverse cast of non-actors. He then alters the footage in a cyclical process of physical and digital manipulation via scanners, printers, temporal shifts, filters, and traditional mark making tools. His experimental approach is inspired by his attraction to the aesthetics of the 1970s and 80s and his desire to embrace the tactile experience of living.

Using primarily muted hues and sparse lighting, Xander expresses his curiosity of emotional fragility, the pursuit of intimacy and the scarcity of time. Purposely composing scenes with partially obstructed faces, he creates room for viewers to relate to the subjects and simultaneously shares his sense of wonder at all things human.







A Fluid Mountain, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 16" x 20"

Dissonance, 2019, Digital Inkjet Print, 16"x 20"

Lauren Gaston

Lauren Gaston works with clay, ink, and paper to tell stories about experiences or emotions that are difficult to describe in words. Drawing inspiration from her observations of nature and the field of psychology, she creates to ponder the passing of time, life and rebirth, and human behavior.

Studying both psychology and art, she references scientific concepts by translating them visually through line and form in her prints and ceramics. She derives her ceramic shapes from the long history of functional pottery and then carves personal illustrations onto the surface of the wet clay. In order to layer textures and images, she also experiments with printing techniques on top of glazed ceramics.

Due to the durability of the medium, ceramics can be traced through ancient civilizations. Utilitarian objects such as cups, bowls, and vases which are used regularly as part of a daily routine, are also indicators of culture and religious beliefs. Understanding the history and context of an artifact is important to her. Lauren states, "I relish the process of using my hands to create something tangible. I enjoy seeing my creations in the hands of others, being used daily. After I finish creating something, it lives a new life with someone else, whether important or not, beloved or forgotten."









Trapped, 2018, Ceramic, 14" x 4" x 4"

Confined, 2020, Linocut, Various Paper, 18" x 24"

Rachel Silver

Interested in artforms that allow her to improvise, Rachel Silver uses photography, video, illustration and writing for their increased sense of immediacy and spontaneity. Rachel seeks to divulge the vulnerability, discomfort, pain and joy of being alive by responding to discoveries made while working with language and raw material.

Her process begins with the written word. She mines her collection of diary entries and chooses excerpts that have moments of clarity. Using the probing aspects of lens-based media, she turns the camera on herself and close friends to scrape away at uncovered truths. She then re-processes these images through alternative photography, transferring them onto fabric that she cuts and dyes by hand. During the cyanotype printing process, she alters her negatives by scribbling over them with the fattest marker available. The combination of her actions, writings, and imagery in her textile collages become a physical manifestation of human feeling. The scraps of fabric hold not just the remnants of chemicals, but a multitude of emotion and selfknowledge.

Rachel states, "I use photography and video in a similar way as my journal. I pick up my camera to access my inner emotional state, to achieve a meditative state that I am unable to achieve during other parts of my day. My work is rooted in my decision to continue existing. I'm committed to being whole, showing my raw self unapologetically and truthfully; expressing everything as it comes."

What do I want to experience before death?



I would like to laugh at death until he trembles before me.





Self Portrait Emulation, 2020, Tri Color Gum Arabic Print on Watercolor Paper, 11"x17"

It's Diaristic, 2019, Cyanotype Prints on Dyed Cotton, Each 10"x 7"

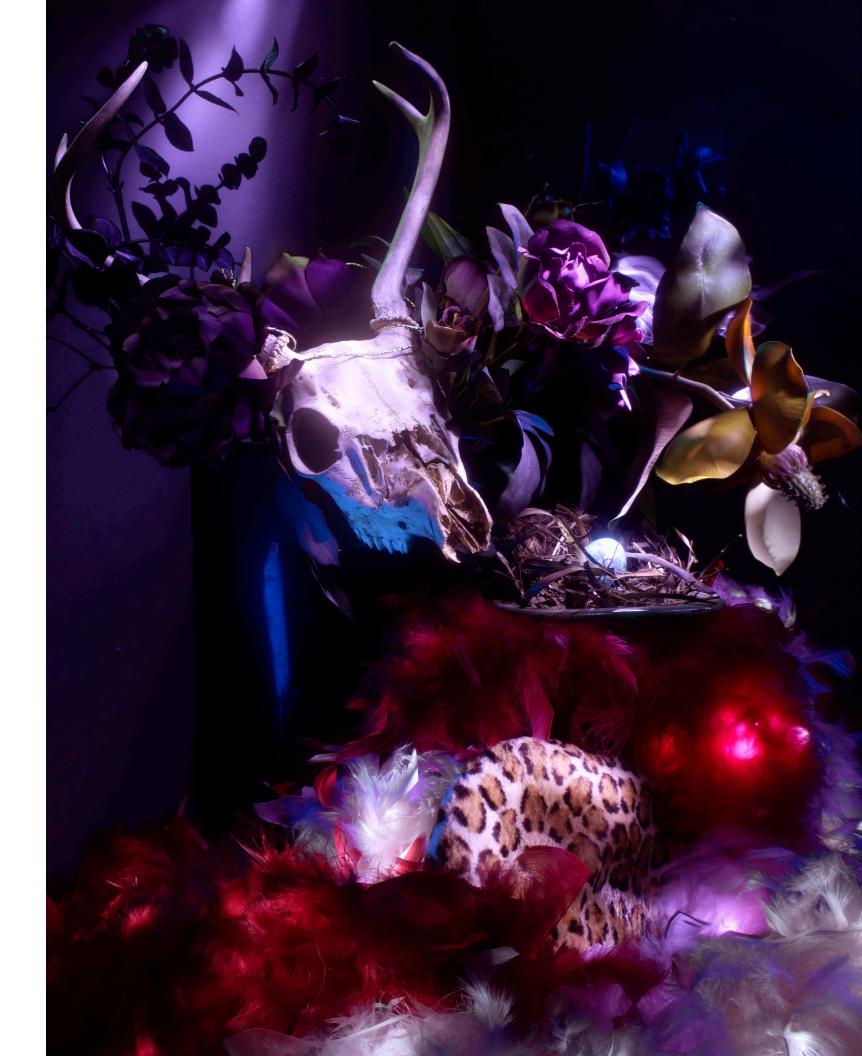
Sierra Bacon

Sierra Bacon uses video, illustration, spoken word, and collage to address uncomfortable social and political topics. An integral part of Sierra's work is the way she layers language, image, and audio to build bold, yet intimate, public statements that further strengthen the female voice.

Her vibrant multi channel video essays reclaim real life experiences sourced from personal memories and historical texts. Sierra combines deep colors and symbolic imagery such as pomegranates, peaches, bodies of water, and the female body with spoken word. She invites women to share their life experiences during recorded interviews. She reshapes these audio recordings into original poetry, sometimes reading them with her own voice, sometimes asking others to read for her.

Sierra's work confronts the unchanging societal standing of women residing in the western hemisphere, specifically sexism, perceptions of the feminine body, and rape culture. Other times her films serve as personal confessions, in which she reveals her thoughts and emotions. Sierra constructs complex layered forms that bear witness to those traumas and injustices, emphasizing the poetics of politics in filmmaking.

Sierra states, "I believe that by examining the deeply personal I make space for an empathetic understanding surrounding the social politics women face."







This Ring Reminds Me of Your Warmth, 2020, Cyanotype, Black Tea, Vinegar, 17" x 11"

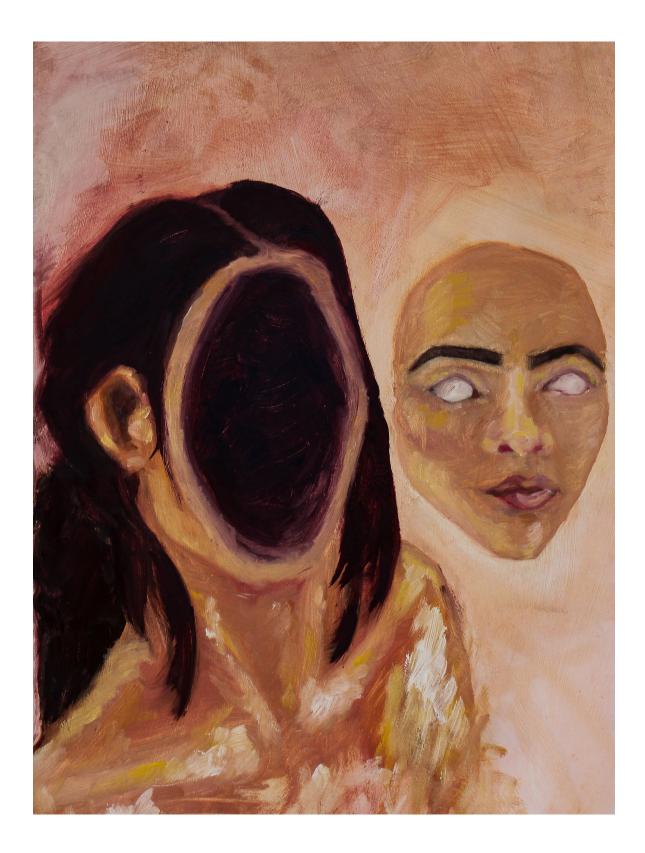
Amanda Gerhart

Amanda Gerhart is a painter, illustrator, and designer from Newark, Delaware. She paints events, people, and objects that do not physically exist. Painting directly onto the surface, Amanda focuses on cognitive conflicts, perseverance, and current social issues in her surreal paintings.

She fills her sketchbooks with imaginary experiences composing unnerving and illogical scenes from familiar forms. She distorts the human body by applying layers of oil paint until the canvas is heavy with pigment. Through the act of painting, she tries to access her unconscious, her true emotions, by being open to where the paint takes her. Amanda challenges herself to work through the uncertain elements of making a painting until she is able to make something that feels complete. She states, "I enjoy painting because it reminds me that there are going to be ugly moments, in painting and in life, and we have to work through them in order to create something good."







Face Mask and Gloves, 2020, Oil on Paper, 18" x 24"

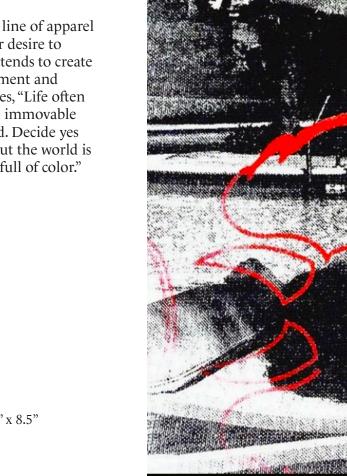
Self Portrait, 2020, Oil on Wood Panel, 18" x 24"

Olivia Carlucci

Olivia Carlucci is intrigued by lived experience, expressions of vulnerability and modes of human connection. Combining illustration, photography, fashion and screen printing, Liv's apparel and prints are inspired by the personalities, emotional quirks, and characteristics of the people close to her.

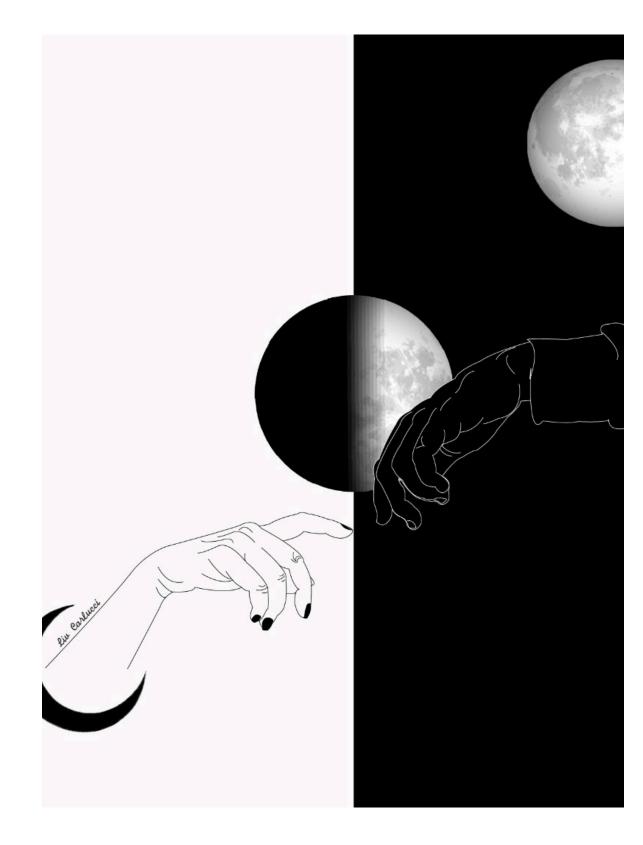
She collages photographs and sketches to create digital drawings and screen prints that celebrate imperfection in a society that idolizes perfection. Each piece is chaotic, unpredictable and decidedly non-conformist in order to reflect the rhythms of human emotion. Sketching out ideas is her way to release the emotions she cannot put into words. Using making as a way to achieve catharsis, Liv draws the unseen energies we cannot touch or describe but can psychically feel within our bodies.

Liv recently began creating *Phase One*, a line of apparel with original illustrations. Reflecting her desire to empower people through her art, she intends to create comfortable clothing that makes a statement and instills confidence in the wearer. Liv states, "Life often asks us to conform and fit in. Formulate immovable opinions. Choose between good and bad. Decide yes or no. And to be labeled by our peers. But the world is not black and white. It is uncertain and full of color."









Phase One, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 7"x 7"

Miss You, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 9" x 15"

Sierra Watkins

Sierra Watkins documents theatrical productions and special events with photography and video as a way to immortalize important moments in people's lives. Love is the theme that inspires and drives her work. Sierra uses the lens to seek pure emotion, the human in its truest form. Therefore, she uses methods of direct cinema to capture and represent precious instants as truthfully as possible, rarely altering the image in postproduction.

In addition to on-site events, as an aspiring commercial artist, she also works in the studio on product photography and portraiture. Paying close attention to the structure of the edit, her composition, rhythm, use of color, and overall aesthetic is heavily influenced by pop culture and hip hop music videos.

While she employs staged tactics such as lighting and gels to enhance her subject in her studio work, her desire to act as a witness keeps these interventions to a minimum. Sierra documents people's milestones to create an archive of real human joy and fulfillment so they can share their memories with future generations.







Euphoria, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 8" x 10"

Super Woman, 2019, Digital Inkjet Print, 8"x 10"

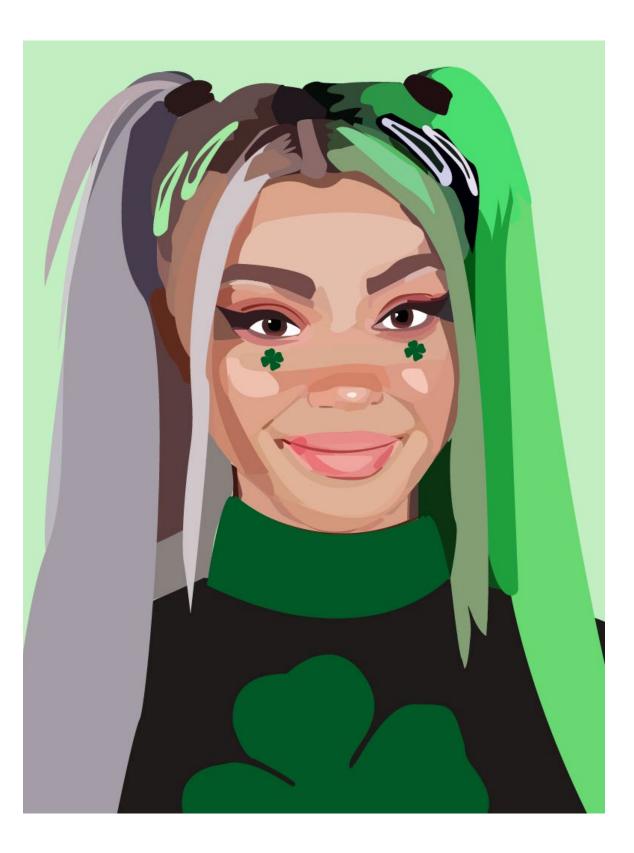
Kenzie Walsh

Kenzie Walsh uses digital illustration, watercolors, and photography to explore the complexities of human emotion from loneliness, anxiety and depression to happiness, confidence and feelings of lightness. By giving herself daily prompts and drawing exercises, she seeks to understand her actions on a deeper level.

Kenzie's work is playful. Using the sense of childhood adventure to draw adult themes, she provokes thoughts of what it means to live a full life and how one could live one in the future. In both her creative and commercial work, she questions whether the act of making something beautiful is at odds with making something meaningful. Embracing both beauty and significance, she chooses to create vector-based works with clean lines and popping colors.

Most recently, while continuing to use prompts as a form of journaling, her work has begun to express her feelings of hopelessness in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and shelter-in-place orders.





Lucky, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 9.87" x 6.85"

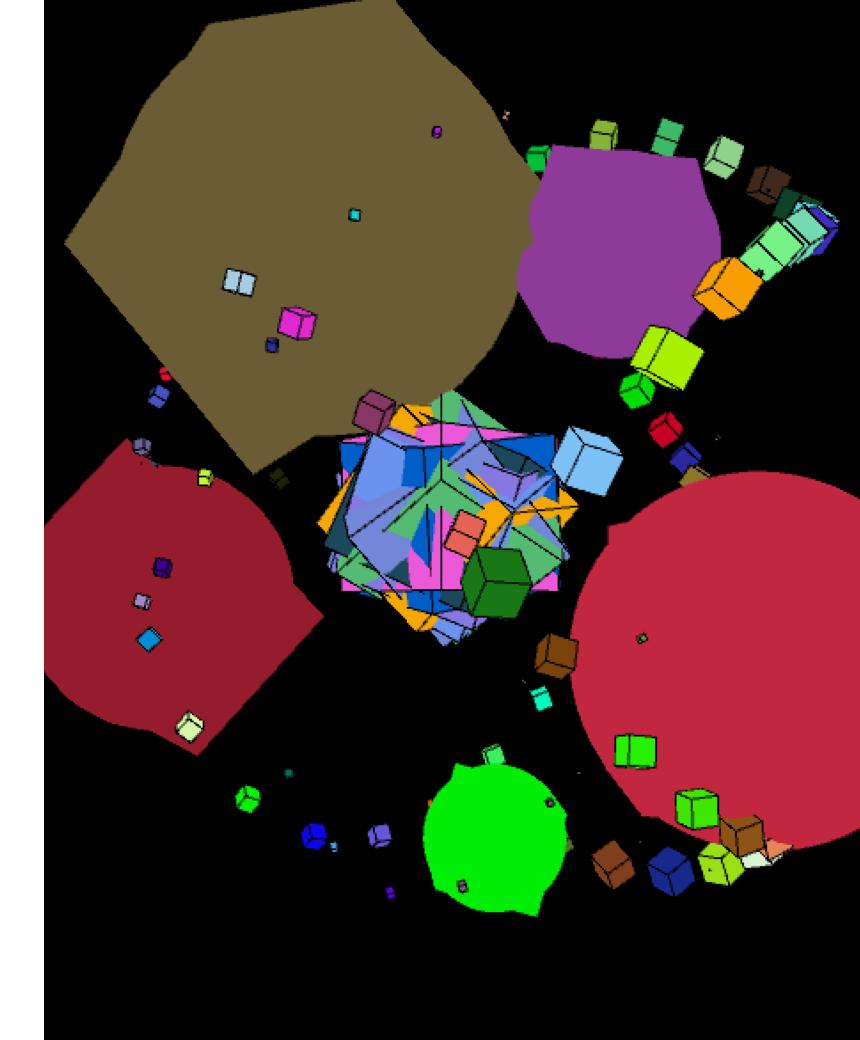
William Segura

William Segura's computer-saturated upbringing influences his creations. He uses a combination of digital illustration, 3D modeling, Arduino, HTML, JavaScript, and Processing to create hybrid works that seriously consider humor.

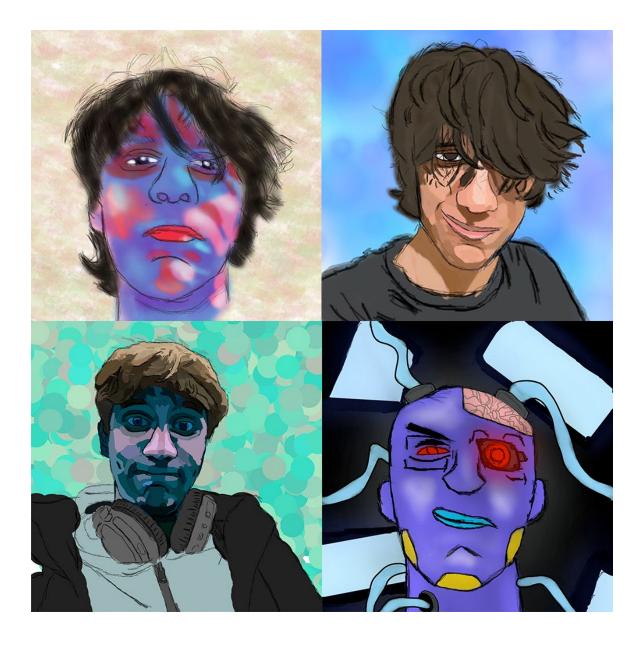
Incorporating an amalgamation of code to randomize interactive experiences, William attempts to blend order and chaos within his work.

By portraying personal quirks he invites viewers to acknowledge and accept them as part of the human experience. Whether it be the fears in uncovering his mask, showing the world the foul mouthed video game addict he has grown to become, his obsession with chewing his nails, or even the struggles of opening a jar of salsa, he reveals embarrassing anecdotes to provoke laughter and help others feel better about themselves.

William conveys self-effacing revelations through slapstick because he believes that comedy lightens the struggles of life. His process begins with writing about his life experiences, tapping his unconscious for suppressed memories. He translates his sketches through digital platforms preferring to tweak individual "flaws" with clean-edge technology, a process that allows him to make some sort of sense of the messiness of human life.







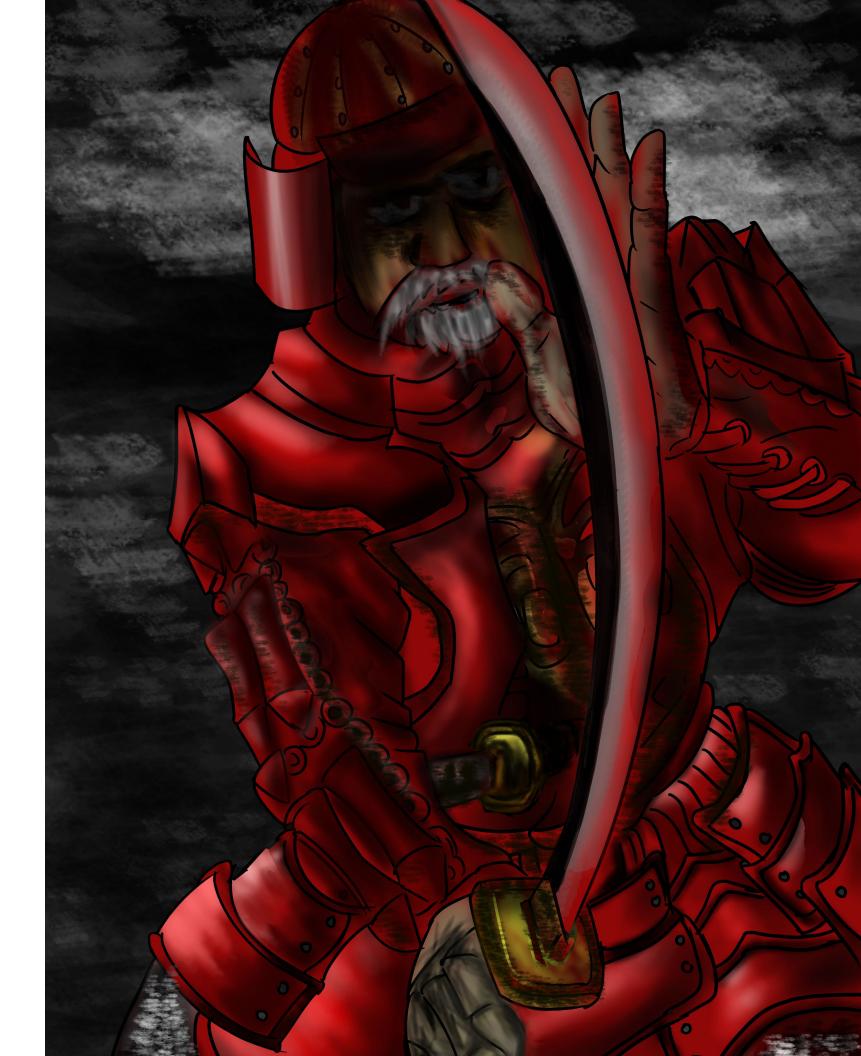
Me, Myself, and I, 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 13" x 19"

Rong Sun

Rong Sun creates paintings, drawings, animation and photography for novels, comics, animations and games. His interest in weapons from China, Japan, and Europe as both aesthetic forms and tools of war led him to study history, physics and culture.

Rong collects weapons and trains in martial arts and fencing, participating in competitions for over four years. Using this knowledge as source material, Rong combines his research of historical weapons with popular science fiction and his imagination to illustrate fictional warriors. He is curious about armed forces from different countries, cultures, and time periods and how these institutions shape the individual. By studying military forces throughout time he hopes to understand the evolution of war, competition, strategy, and varying norms that guide human action.

He is working on a series of illustrations using digital tools to blend light and shadow, color and shape to compose Samurais, Warriors, Generals, and Knights in moments of bravery and repose.







Europe Knight 2020, Digital Inkjet Print, 17" x 11"

The Lynn Herrick Sharp Award

In September 2009, Lynn Herrick Sharp established an award in support of our Fine Arts program. University of Delaware alumna and collector of contemporary art, Lynn Sharp is actively involved in enriching the arts in Delaware. She was President of the Board of Trustees at the Delaware Art Museum and in 2002 received the Governor's Award for the Arts. Sharp is also Member Emeritus, Board of Directors at The Delaware Contemporary.

The award recognizes a student in the final stages of pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Delaware. This award is intended to assist the recipient in producing and documenting their work for the Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition.



The Fine Arts Program combines the best of creative research and hands-on experimentation. Students have the opportunity to experience animation, ceramics, drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and video. With faculty guidance, students choose their own pathway of study that enables them to develop into an active creative force.

Students are empowered to impact culture in a meaningful way and positively change the world. The goal is to educate students in the craft, culture, and theory of contemporary fine arts to prepare them for successful careers in the arts while learning how to live with a creative awareness.



Sierra Bacon Lynn Herrick Sharp Award



John Halligan Honorable Mention

Bachelor of Fine Arts Senior Exhibition 2020

The artists wish to express their thanks to our friends and families and our undergraduate faculty.

Department of Art & Design Faculty

David Brinley Martha Carothers Jia Rey Chang Jon Cox William Deering Abby Donovan Colette Gaiter Amy Hicks René Marquez David Meyer Robyn Phillips-Pendleton Ashley Pigford Greg Shelnutt Priscilla Smith Aaron Terry Peter Williams Lance Winn

Department of Art & Design Staff

Amber Bonsall Cindy Delaney Peter Schwenk Nate Sherman

Designed by

Xander Opiyo, Emma Lesnevich, Rachel Silver, Olivia Carlucci

Copy Editors

Jake McKenna, Sierra Bacon





Department of Art & Design

104 Recitation Hall University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716

302-831-2244

www.art.udel.edu artdepartment@udel.edu