

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
SCHOOL OF ART

2012

Master of  
Fine Arts  
Thesis  
Exhibition

JONATHAN BLACK

JOVAN ERFAN

JOHN GIALANELLA

REBECCA HAMLIN

CAMDEN HARDY

STEPHEN JENSEN

AUSTIN MARTIN

BEN MCKEE

JONATHAN NELSON

ASHLEY SAMUELA RAASCH

CHRISTIAN RICE

SHAWN SMITH

RACHEL STIFF

ASHLEY WHITE

FRANK YUNKER

2012 University of Arizona School of Art

# Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition

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# Jonathan Black

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Within the discipline of graphic design there is no topic more important, more consequential and more crucial than environmental responsibility. Today, relatively few professional designers engage in “green” design, largely due to the complexity enveloping it. My thesis project, “The Graphic Designer’s Guide to Understanding and Implementing Environmentally Responsible Practices” aims to influence the design community by distilling information about green materials + processes and presenting it in an accessible, engaging format. The first poster in the series focuses solely on paper, the easiest entry point into green design. The accompanying selection of posters demonstrates how these principles can be put into practice, as they are printed on responsibly manufactured paper (with non-toxic, water based inks).

*“Designers actually have more potential to slow environmental degradation than economists, politicians, businesses and even environmentalists. The power of designers is catalytic.”*

– Alastair Fuad-Luke







# Jovan Erfan

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My work explores concepts of hybridity in cultural identity, particularly relating to the Iranian-American experience. Inspired by mythological narratives, present-day imperialism, voyeurism, and the female body as a metaphoric site of social and individual trauma much of my work is an attempt to negotiate instances of cultural misunderstanding or apparent incongruence.



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1979-1985, A Monument (or Nothingness)

2012

4' x 6" x 10'

7,500 carnelian beads, gold thread, wood





# John Gialanella

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Nostalgia is a feeling of being connected to an unknown past, a bond to a place or time or object. There is this personal longing to become attached and acquainted with an unfamiliar period, a time of handcrafted, mechanically moving parts with evidence of its human creation, void of the impersonal, ambiguously smooth texture of plastic. Here in the present, I can no longer repair an appliance as my grandfather would have, I can no longer repair my car like my father would have. Instead, I operate on a machine that has no visible moving parts, just circuits, laser-cut to perfection and run with sophisticated programming. I lack the tactile connection with my machine that the preceding generations had.

The accumulation of now useless objects, in combination with modern, digital technology, act as a way to bridge the ever-widening gap in generations. While the tools for craft may always separate the eras, the common human experiences keep us adjacent, these emotional and human realities are contained by no boundaries. By appropriating the found antique and re-introducing it through a common understanding, the original use for the item becomes subverted in favor of the narrative it aids to depict. The objects retain the characteristics unique to their time and place and use, thus providing a crucial link for the viewer—but coupled with other objects and images in a modern setting, the assemblages are presented with new context. Binding the past and the present materially through a universal experience.



What goes on four feet, on two feet and three,  
but the more feet it goes on the weaker it be?

2012

16"x20"

Mixed Media



11



Ages of Man

2012

3'x5'

Mixed Media

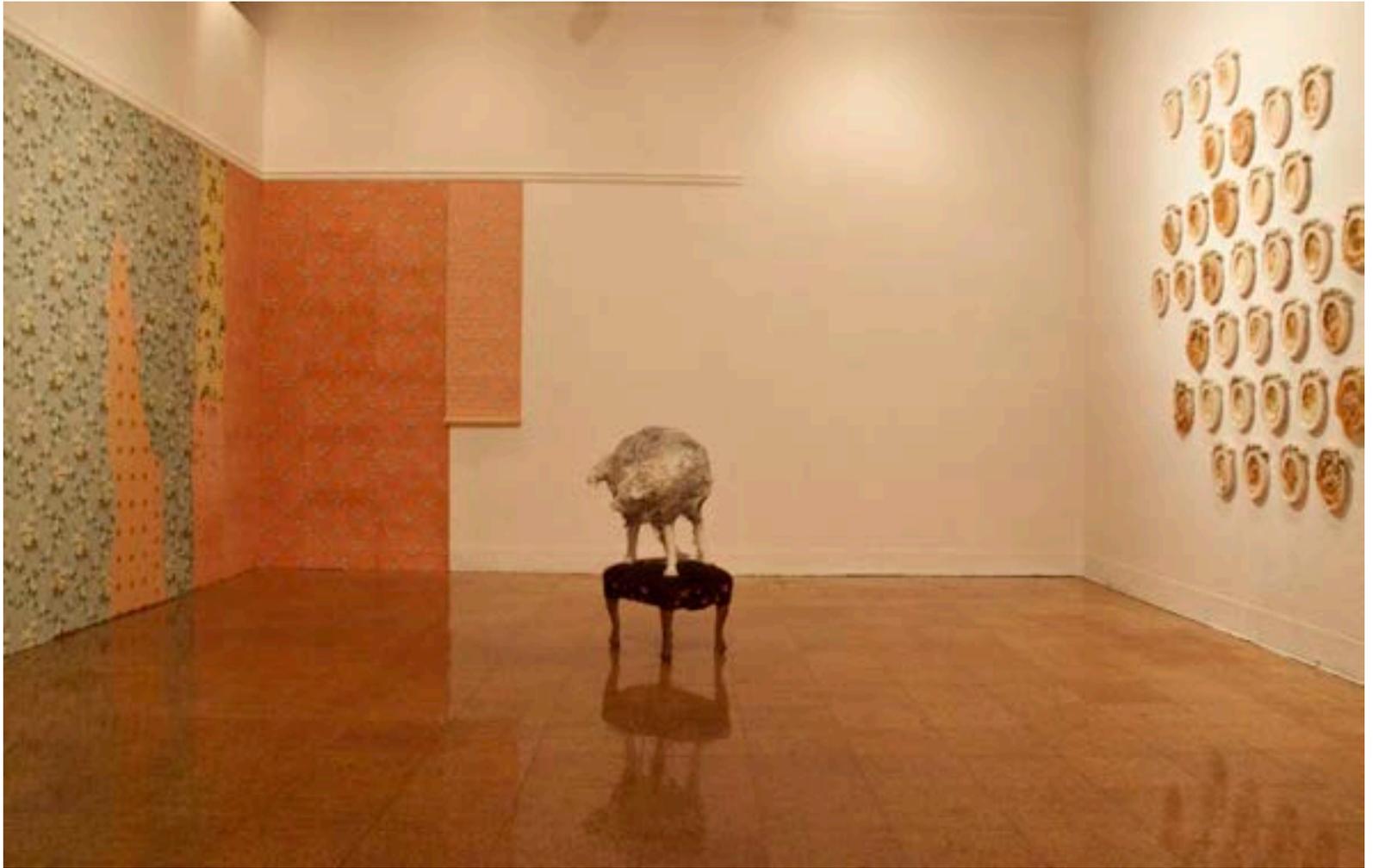
# Rebecca Hamlin

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Using traditional sculptural elements and unexpected materials, my work examines elements of social and personal identity through a lens of domestic associations in order to address what I call the domestic identity- how we define ourselves through how we live, where we come from, and the structures we erect and exist within to maintain a sense of place. "Structure" includes actual spaces such as buildings and homes, but also includes relationships, routines, goals, and traditions.

13 Introspection into my own compulsory habits has inspired me to investigate larger notions surrounding our historical role in controlling our immediate environment. What do we make of disruption within our own routines, expectations and traditions? How adhered are we to the notion of tradition and what do we make of a situation in which the tides are turned and the outcomes are not expected? How do we react personally or as a society to challenges to established structures, such as new and innovative ideas, progress, abnormalities and evolution?

I use a combination of materials and objects to express the dualities I want to convey when approaching any idea- the old and the new, comfort and anxiety, benefit and detriment, fantasy and reality. Thus, any object or material becomes helpful in setting up the arena of juxtaposition and when used metaphorically, helps to further emphasize my observations to the viewer. My use of the forms of domesticated animals, i.e. dogs, bees, sheep, as well as domestic objects and environments, calls into question the notions surrounding how/why we act to control our lives through this domestic identity. In this framework I address psychological issues within our interactions with our surroundings and how the potential for the resulting inner narrative can either help us to reconcile the familiar with the uncanny or upset the natural order altogether.





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Patterns in Futility (35 Frames detail)

2012

12" x 8" x 1" (each)

Mixed Media Installation, Ceramic, Polyrubber

# Camden Hardy

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## STONES ON A CARTESIAN PLANE

Cairns are a wonderfully ambiguous form of communication. They are not messages to be read; they are visual cues for an ongoing internal narrative, an encoded communique decipherable only to those who know the reasons behind its construction. Each one has a story to tell, but without knowledge of its origins, a cairn's beholder is limited to the most basic of interpretations. It becomes a broadcast: "someone was here".

To encounter a cairn in the landscape is to realize that another person had an experience of or within a geographic location that was deemed worthy of sharing with others. More significantly, as spectators we feel as though this pile of stones has been left specifically for us.

As social beings, we are compelled to share our experiences with others. To see that another person once existed where we stand is comforting. It tells us that we are not alone — that

others out there found, or produced meaning in the landscape. A bond of kindred spirit is formed between maker and viewer, spanning across time, anchored in space.

To assemble a cairn, on the other hand, is to develop an intensely personal relationship with time and space, through which the builder internalizes his/her surroundings while simultaneously externalizing the experience for others to encounter in the future. Repeating this act becomes analogous with reciting a mantra of self-affirmation: "I exist in this moment. I exist in this moment..."

These photographs speak to an inherent desire to connect with others, in some form or another, and the solace that results from such a simple, yet beautifully complex, gesture.







# Stephen Jensen

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The world is a diversion.

It is an infection to which all are vulnerable, concealing the essence of things that cannot be seen.

The world is temporary.

It will fade from our touch and unveil the Eternal.

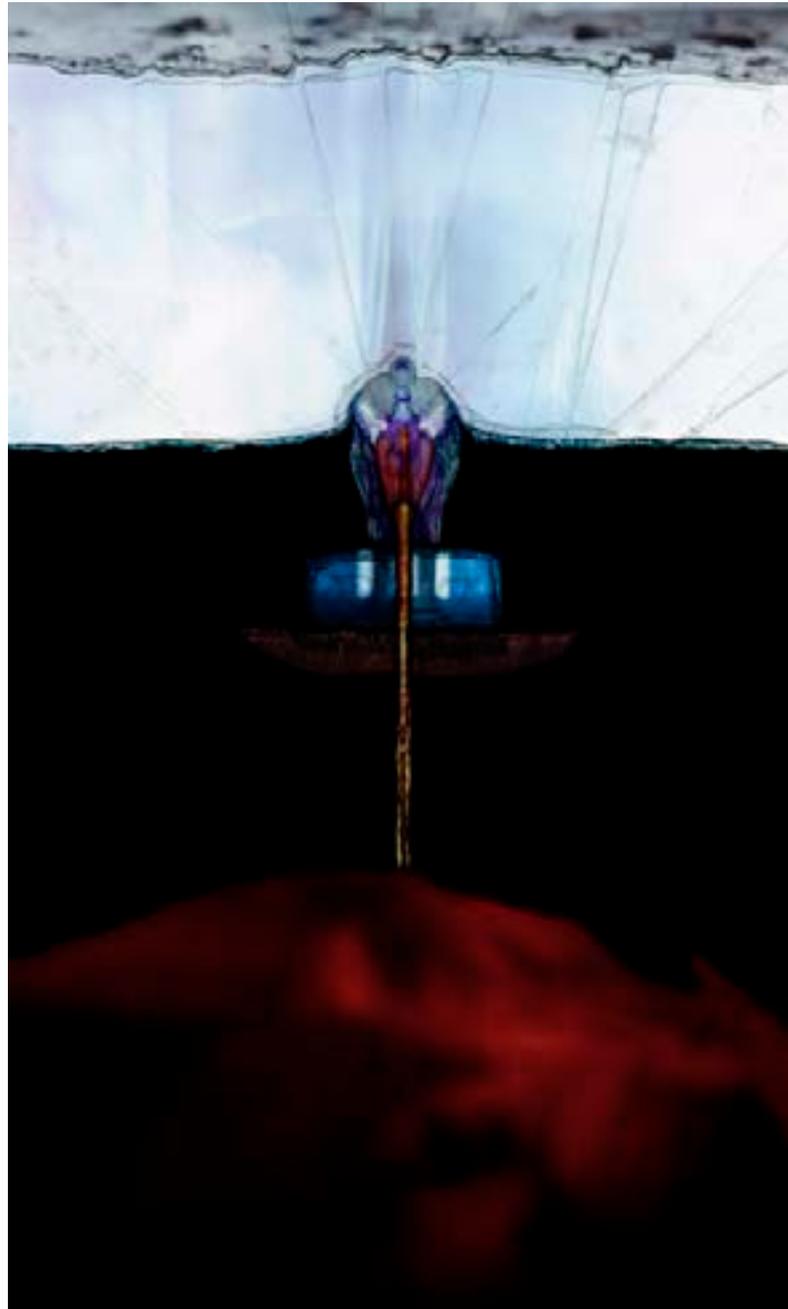


Emerging From the Carcass

2012

40" x 72"

Giclee Print

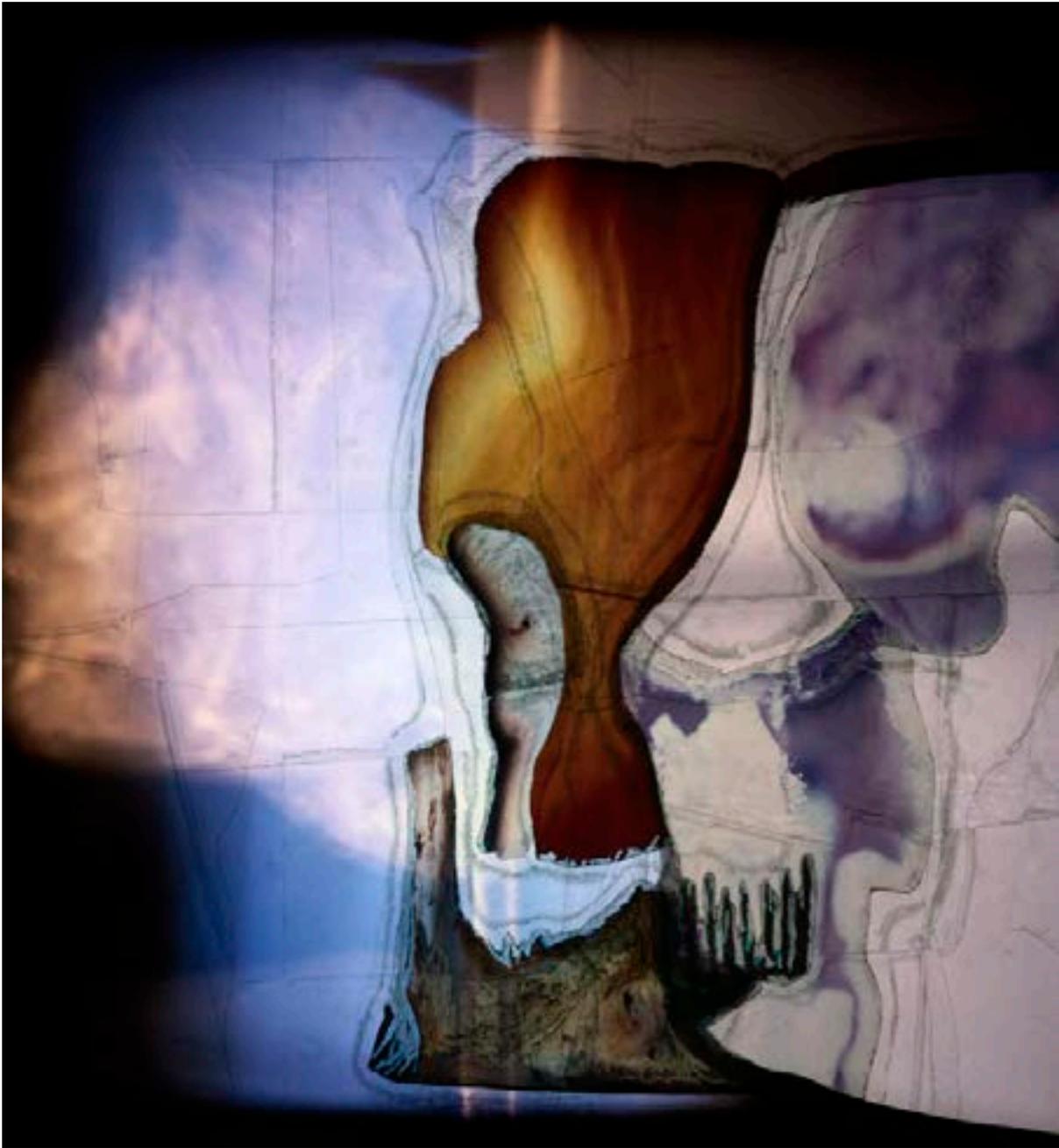


Bore Into Dirt

2012

40" x 66"

Giclee Print



The Ubiquity of Shadows

2012

40" x 43"

Giclee Print

# Ben McKee

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This installation is a meditation on my relationship with my older brother, Matt. Matt is developmentally disabled and suffers from a seizure disorder. Despite growing up together and the bonds of brotherhood, our relationship is one marked by both developmental and physical separation. Through a multi-mediated approach: conflating time and space, exposing armature and artifice, and showing a confluence of idyllic and lived memories, I am attempting to depict how memories are a construct and how, ultimately, they fail to mend the hole caused by distance, worry, and guilt.







Matt & Ben (My Big Brother & Me)

2011-2012

10' x 20' x 5'4"

mixed media installation

# Jonathan Nelson

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Inspired by identity and culture, my work originates from personal experiences. My art is a gateway into the political and racial status I was born into. The colonization I witness began with my Certificate of Indian Blood that states I am 4/4 Navajo. It continued with the withholding of information about the plight of Native peoples in secondary education, which excluded genocide, forced acculturation, and broken treaties. Today, I am confronted with Indian mascots, casinos (which I do not collect on), Navajo hipster panties, Johnny Depp as Tonto, and now, McCain trying to convince the Navajo & Hopi Nations to relinquish Water Rights forever. My work is an introduction to the complexity of my status as an indigenous person in America.

The body of work I have created challenges the notion of Indian art by bridging the gap between the comic book form and easel painting. It engages the general public into the story of Jonesy, a sheep living on the edge of the Navajo reservation trying to sell his wool. The humorous narrative brings to light the sustaining life of indigenous culture and its on-going struggle in an Eurocentric driven society. Utilizing sheep allows me to illustrate profound issues in Native America, often unconnected to society that communicates adaptation, deconstruction, and knowledge. Using symbolic gestures, I am asking the audience to reflect on our personal status and the judgments we make that either empower or oppress.



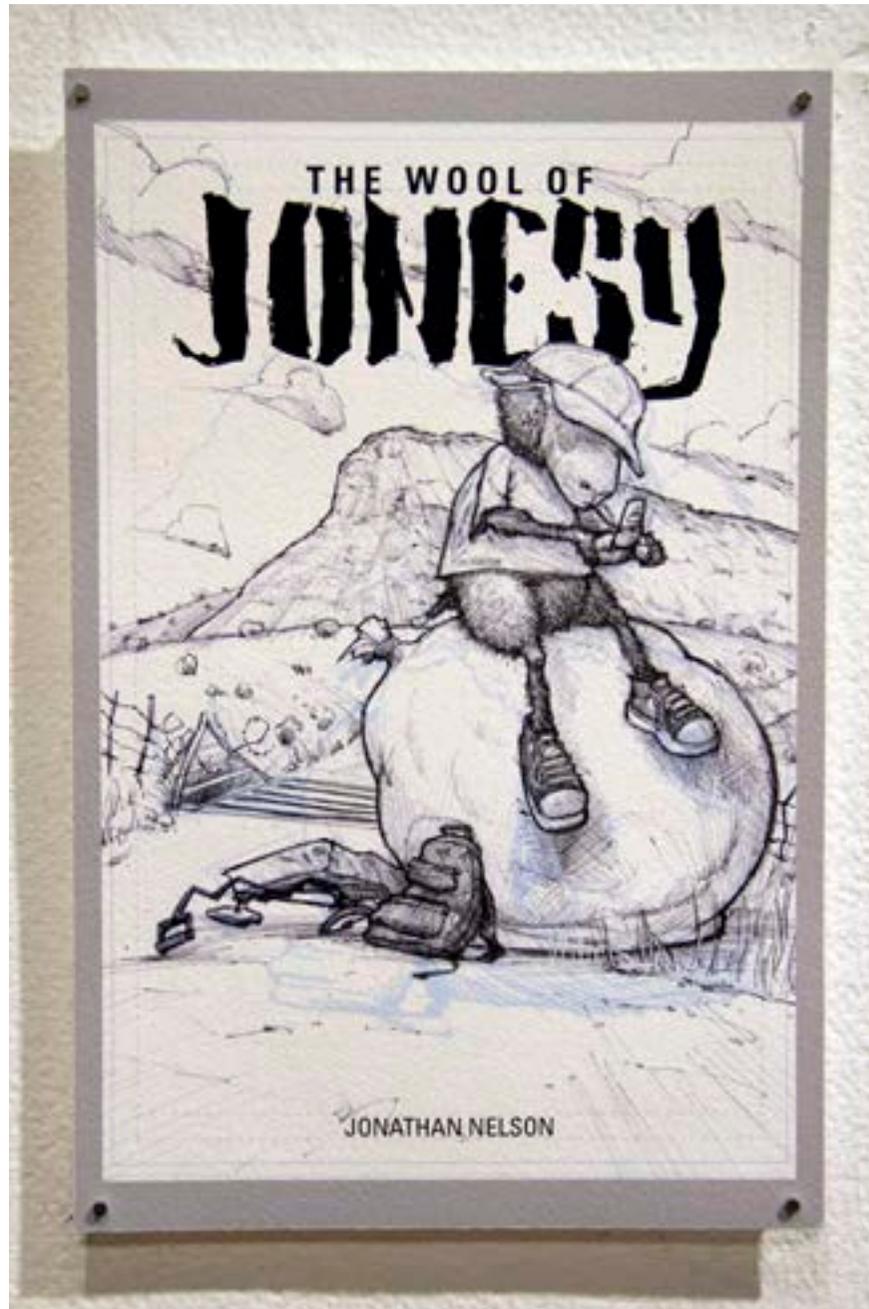
Opening Night

2012

72" x 48"

Acrylics on canvas





# Ashley Samuela Raasch

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*Melting Bodies* is an immersive installation that explores an internal sense of boundaries and of the self through the use of video, psychoacoustics, and sculpture. The work investigates the body and its experience of confronting water in its various forms in order to probe psychological states of mind. The environment searches for the void between chaos and order, encouraging private introspection.



[BACKGROUND] Untitled

2012

Duration: 21 min 15 sec (seamless loop)

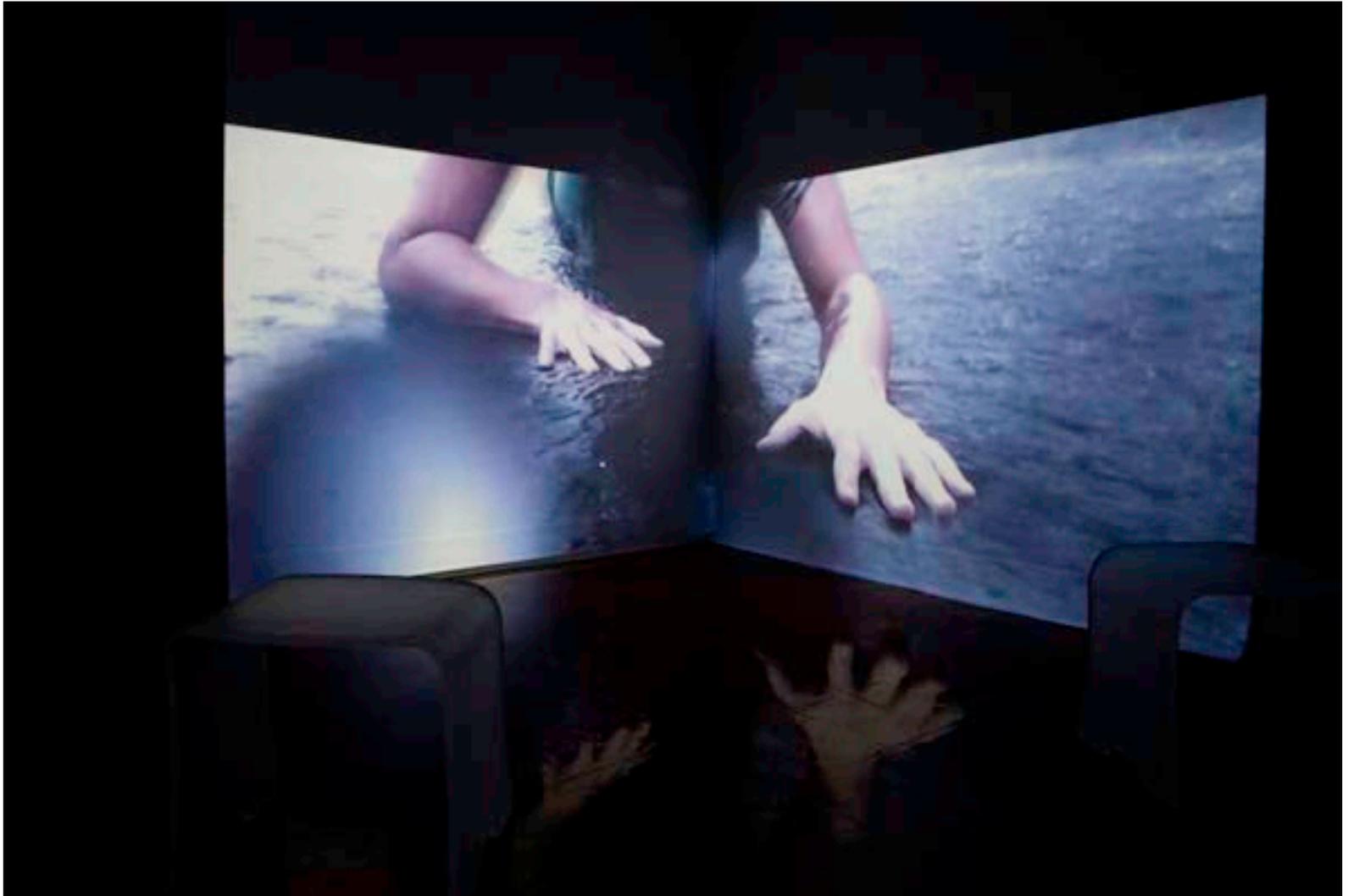
Single Channel Video

[FOREGROUND] Untitled (cube)

2012

18" x 18" x 18"

Acrylic



[BACKGROUND] Untitled

2012

Duration: 43 min 09 sec (seamless loop)

Dual Channel Video

[FOREGROUND] Untitled (seating)

2012

Acrylic



Untitled (cube)

2012

18" x 18" x 18"

Acrylic

# Christian Rice

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I consider myself a social observer and try to work from the perspective of a detached social scientist. Absorbing the current zeitgeist, I aim to produce work that provokes thought and reflection on the physical and mental states of our world. As a result, my focus is on current events and developments in technology, with an emphasis on social media. I am not at odds with our current culture but do find many aspects of it peculiar. These peculiar aspects are what I comment on.

The goal is to report on a subject and expose phenomena that may go unnoticed in an increasingly fast paced world. Consequently, my work usually serves as a warning or a call to attention.







# Shawn Smith

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This body of work concerns itself with the issues that are intentionally withheld from mainstream awareness; Topics that many consider to be conspiratorial or controversial. While the internet provides an avenue of endless distraction, it has also been indispensable in respect to amassing and disseminating information that challenges a mainstream paradigm. It is this paradigm which is troubling. I parallel this paradigm to the idea of the American Dream.

The idea of what it means to be American is largely a notion that is sold to us, or indoctrinated into our psyches at a young age. Of course there are exceptions to this notion. For instance, we have the ability to define our identities on a local or individual level, but I suggest; we base our definitions from cues that are prescribed to us through the conduits of our modern technological environment. In this environment, we are bombarded with cleverly subversive advertising and political terminology which, through repetition, becomes a part of our collective unconscious and ultimately, if left unchecked, a part of our decision making processes.

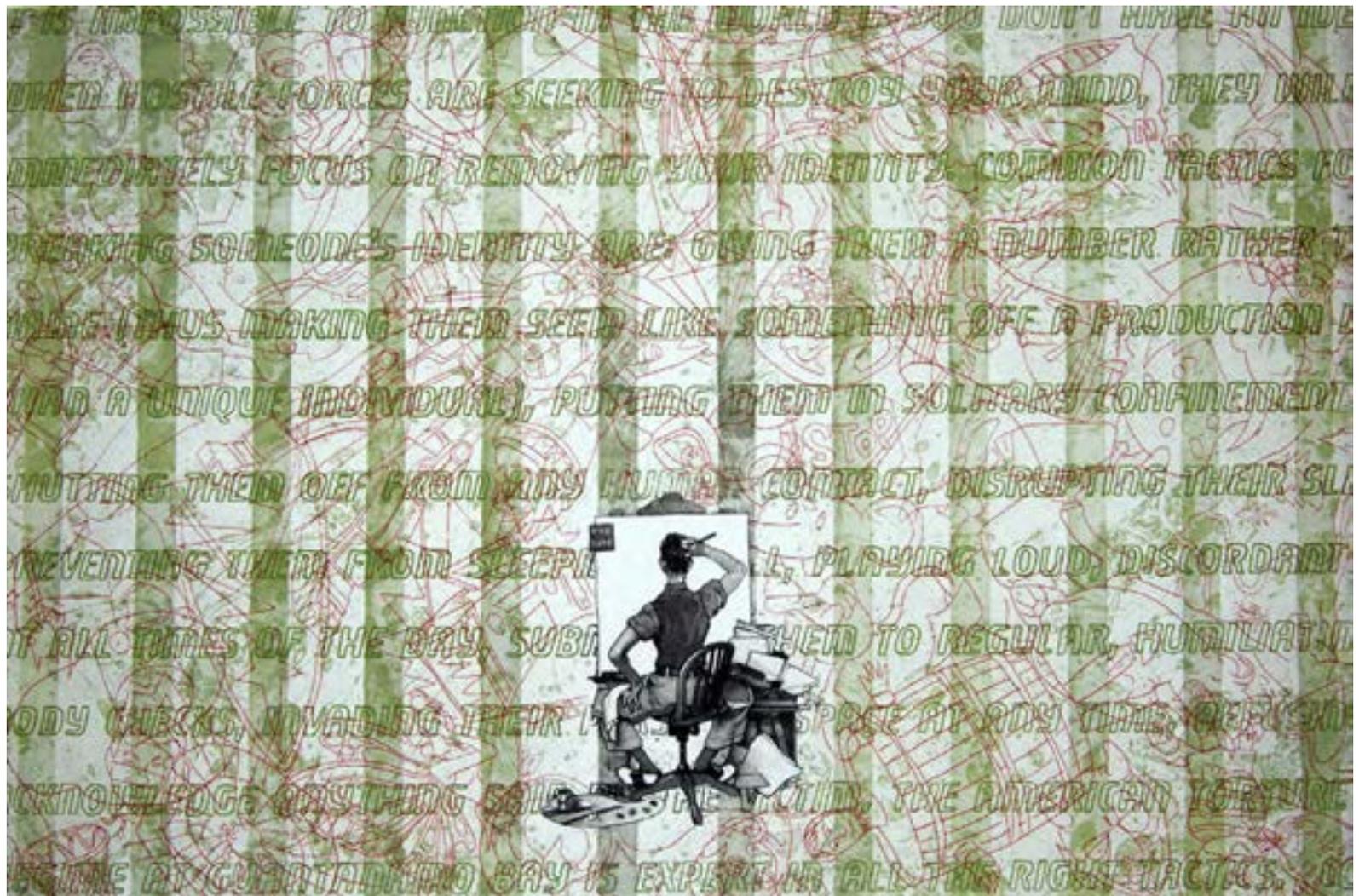
We often make decisions or build opinions based off the use of repeated imagery and buzzwords (Freedom, Hope, Liberty, Justice, Terrorism, Socialism, etc.) This, coupled with the advent of the television, internet, and smart phones - our world

view has become hijacked and, in many instances, predetermined by political and corporate interests. Buzzwords are perpetuated through media outlets and overused beyond recognition. Since we are a people who rely on entertainment to present us the news - we are consequently misinformed by those powerful interest groups who control the information we consume day to day.

My work is represented through the depiction of an idealized American mythology and serves as both a source of attraction and distraction. Images of an archetypal American lifestyle portend my work as a primary focus, furthering the notion of attraction while lending little substance in the way of critical analysis. Intertwined with this "ideal" imagery is an entangled field of nonsensical line drawings derived from the internet which represents, more literally, an environment of juvenile amusement and entertainment. Through the navigation of these initial line layers, the prints begin to embody the process of distraction and confusion I wish convey.

By sifting through these erroneous distractions, one is challenged to ignore the ostentations of the initial layers in order to get to the information beneath it. It is the information beneath these layers that serves as the goal of my work, as it represents the fruit of my investigations.







# Rachel Stiff

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Through process and action meaning is found.

Something catches my attention; usually something seen or felt from outside. The feeling, and primary thing it came from, is where the painting starts, and is often driven by a childhood fascination for things on the ground, from the brilliance of nearly fluorescent sweet peas to the beauty that exists in decay.

lying history with textures and colors that come through the surface at the end; the meaning altered through the process of the making.

In the end, the paintings are both the things remembered as well as the experience and history of being made.

Abstraction enables depiction of the most important properties and forms that are embossed in memory. The feeling, and primary thing it came from, is where the painting starts. Beginning with one idea and ending up with something entirely different is simply part of the process. This evolution is satisfying because the first thing painted is giving the canvas an under-





47

Sweet pea

2012

69" x 50.5"

Mixed media and imitation gold leaf



# Ashley White

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My thesis exhibition is an investigation of Appalachian culture; an attempt to visually manifest attitudes, beliefs, and social mores maintained within the central Appalachian subculture. I am interested in revealing the truth as I see it. The project attempts to challenge stereotypes and generalizations of the “idea of Appalachia” by providing an insider and alternative perspective. In the essay *The Politics of Poverty*, author John C. Campbell writes that Appalachia is “a land about which, perhaps, more things are known that are not true than any part of the country.” I am positioning artifacts from a marginalized culture into a prescribed field of power. This strategy serves to complicate class privilege, negate assumed social stations, and transform Appalachian culture, often stereotyped as isolated and ignorant, into a source of pride and dignity.





51

Throne

2012

Dimensions Variable

Found Object Installation



# Frank Yunker

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## **MYSTERY CULTS OF THE ELECTRIFIED MOLD OR: WHAT IS IT TO BE A HUMAN?**

What is it to be a human? This question is presented through the deconstruction and the partial deterritorialization of the human figure and human interaction. This inquiry seeks no answer; it simply puts forth all that is unknowable about the human condition. Much like the secret rituals formed in the mystery cults of ancient Greece, this work begins to form unknown rituals that emerge as creations of the sub-natural world – of the lower levels of the electrified mold behind your eyes. This forms a zone of experience or sensation that exists extra-lingually, removing logical or linear thought from the space. It becomes an instinctual zone that is not perceptible all at once, but only fully realized in the back of the mind, through a duration of discrete instances.



Mystery Cults of the Electrified Mold  
or: What is it to be Human?

2012

11.5' x 11.5' x 11.5'

Watercolor animations, spray paint, paper mache,  
aluminum foil, astroturf, rocks and cardboard



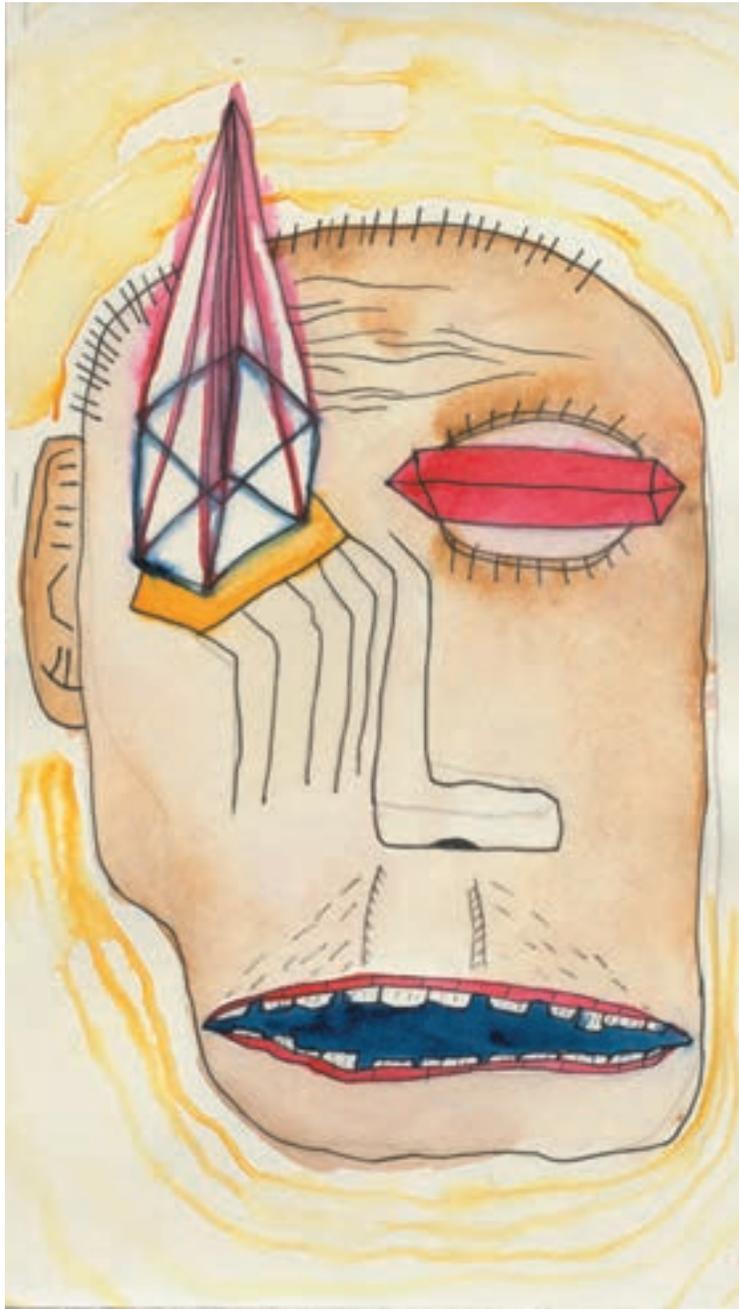
55

Mystery Cults of the Electrified Mold  
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Designed by Jonathan Black for Studio A

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