

Jerome Fellowship Exhibition



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Miranda Brandon

Regan Golden-McNerney

Jess Hirsch

Sieng Lee

Jason Ramey

Jerome

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Essays by Jane Blocker

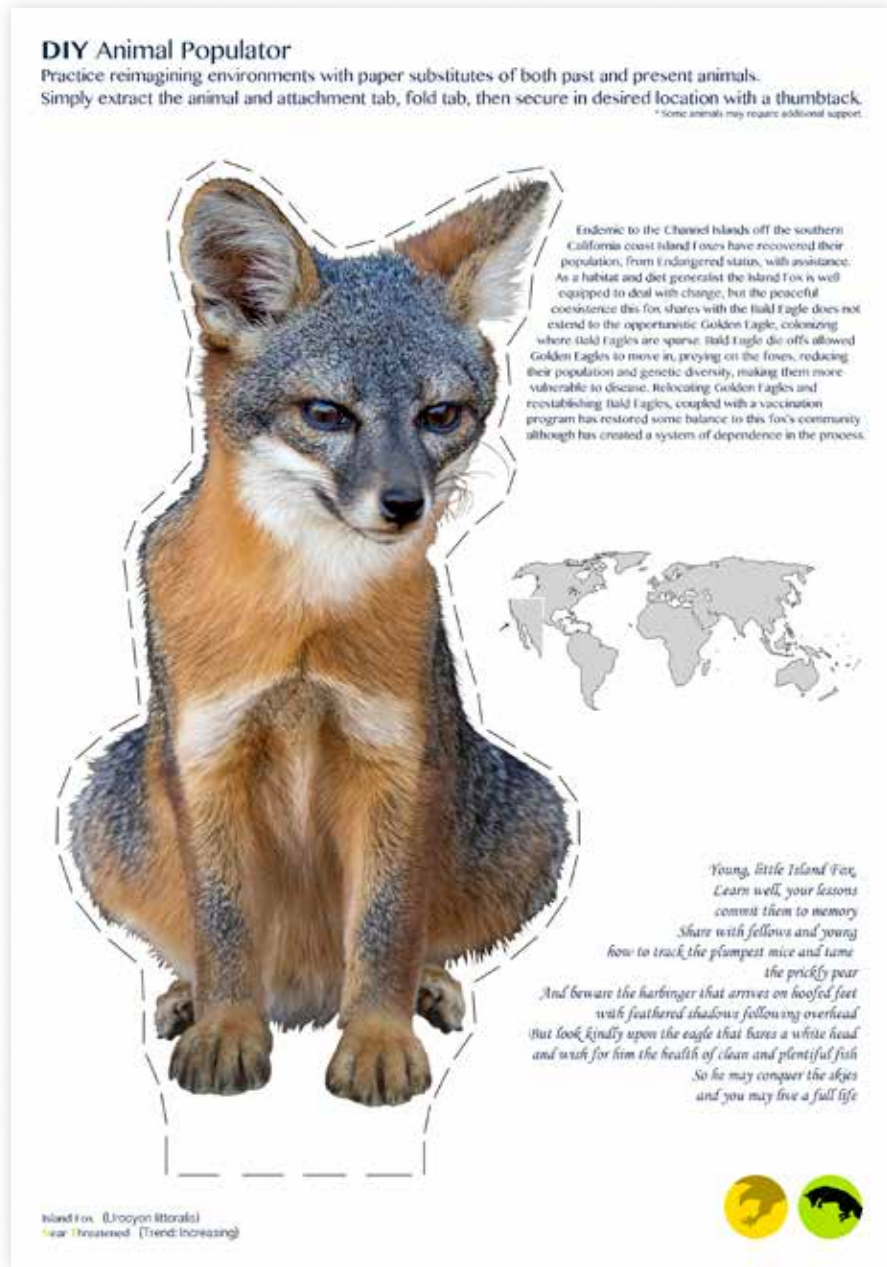
JEROME
FOUNDATION
Celebrating the
creative spirit of
emerging artists **50**
YEARS



Miranda Brandon



Impact (Blackburnian Warbler), 2015
archival inkjet print
44" x 44"



DIY Animal Populator (Island Fox), 2015
archival inkjet print
20" x 14"



Island Fox, 2015
archival inkjet print
34" x 24"



Miranda Brandon

Miranda Brandon

Convergence #3, 2015
archival inkjet print
11" x 17"

Belonging: Miranda Brandon

Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give.
Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

The animal's environment . . . is only a piece cut out of its surroundings, which we see stretching out on all sides around the animal—and these surroundings are nothing else but our own, human environment.

Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*

In the first quarter of the twentieth century two impish young girls—Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths—perpetrated a hoax when they claimed to have photographed fairies frolicking in the woods near their rural English home. The girls took pictures of each other posing next to the famous Cottingley Fairies, diminutive figures in flowing Grecian costumes with wings like those of large butterflies. The fairies seemed to flit and dance and light on the grass, hollow logs, or the branches of overgrown shrubs while the girls looked on admiringly. It was not until the early 1980s that the two (by then elderly ladies) finally revealed their ruse. Carefully positioned for the camera, the fairies were actually paper images, which the girls had cut from a series of printed illustrations by Claude A. Shepperson that were published in 1914.¹

While the photographs are perhaps most famous for their charming beauty and their having fooled Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who swore to their legitimacy, they also illustrate an important ecological problem having to do with the question of belonging. In a letter to a friend in South Africa, Griffiths included a photograph of herself with four of the fairies. On the back she wrote, "Elsie and I are very friendly with the beck fairies. It is funny I never used to see them in Africa. It must be too hot for them there."² Although she speaks of an elusive and fantastical creature (which could presumably appear anywhere it wanted to), she posits the scientific theory that fairies *belong* in a cooler, damper climate—that the Yorkshire beck is their natural habitat. Thus, those who believed in the Cottingley Fairies were taken in both by the authenticating truth function of the photograph and the seeming naturalness of the scenes it captured.

Miranda Brandon's work *DIY Animal Populator* (2015) stages a similar kind of hoax, but one that is more explicitly engaged with photographic, ecological, and artistic concerns. She offers viewers die-cut printed pictures of animals with accompanying didactic text, like that which appears in museums of natural history or field guides, meant to educate viewers on the range, habitat, conservation status, and history of the animals included in the project: island fox, Indiana bat, road runner, gopher tortoise, hummingbird, and prairie



dog. Participants are instructed to cut out and position these images (very much like Shepperson's illustrations) in natural environments and document them with a camera.

DIY Animal Populator grows out of a previous project, called *DIY Bird Populator* (2013), in which Brandon presented printed images of endangered or extinct birds, such as the huia of New Zealand, with instructions (similar to those that used to accompany books of paper dolls) for cutting out and using them: "Create your own population of your favorite bird wherever and whenever you like. Simply extract bird and attachment tab, fold tab, secure in place with a thumbtack in desired location, then photograph and share." A whimsical game, various forms of which have been played since nearly the beginning of photography's history (the Cottingley Fairies, spirit photographs, UFOs, the Loch Ness Monster), these projects imbricate photographic practices and traditions. The original found wildlife photographs, which Brandon uses to create her zoological paper dolls, then become props for staged pictures.

The paper cutouts might find themselves in a range of naturalistic settings (meadow, forest, riverbank, desert, beach), but they might also be tacked to an office bulletin board, taped to the back window of a car, propped against a chain-link fence, framed and hung on a gallery wall, or stood (like an adventurous garden gnome) in front of a famous tourist landmark. Each of these environments falls on a spectrum of greater or lesser genuineness. Even though the threatened island fox is native to the Channel Islands off the coast of California, for example, spotting one in a Minneapolis park seems more "natural," more plausible, than spying one standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The problem with bird and animal species, of course, is that they do not necessarily remain where they belong. Some roam and migrate (penguins, geese, bears, coyotes, humans), others invade (Asian carp, brown tree snakes, European starlings, humans), others overpopulate (rabbits, raccoons, deer, humans), and others dwindle or disappear entirely (ivory-billed woodpeckers, great auks). And all of those migrations, invasions, overpopulations, and disappearances, in turn, dramatically alter ecosystems the world over, thereby changing what we understand "nature" to be.

Indeed, Brandon's previous project, *Impact* (2015), vividly illustrates the problems inherent in the word *nature*, which refers all at once to an inborn tendency, the natural environment, and that which is credible, true, nonartificial. She creates large-format, high-resolution digital photographs of dead birds posed as though in the precise moment when they unwittingly crashed into windows or the glass curtain walls of modern skyscrapers, a ubiquitous architectural feature of the built human environment. While perfectly natural to us, the illusory properties of plate glass are lethal to migratory birds, which die in the tens of millions every year by being taken in by the hoax of reflections.

Oddly enough, this ornithological deception is built into the very history of art. Pliny the



Elder, in his *Natural History* (77–79 CE), locates art's origins in the practice of visual trickery. Two great painters, he explains, entered into a competition. Zeuxis painted a still life with a bowl of grapes so naturalistic that birds flew at the picture attempting to eat the luscious fruit. Parrhasius, when his turn came, displayed such a convincing picture of a curtain that his rival demanded that it be drawn open so as to reveal the painting presumably concealed behind it. Revealing his ruse, Parrhasius, having tricked a fellow painter rather than a mere animal, was proclaimed the winner.³ Just as reflected images or painted grapes can entrap a bird and Parrhasius's painted curtain deceived Zeuxis, so we are ensnared in the delicate beauty and naturalism of Brandon's images.

Like the Cottingley girls, Brandon also takes pictures of herself looking wistfully at creatures whose presence in a particular landscape and willingness to hold still for the camera are as unlikely as those of a fairy. In one such image, *Convergence #3* (2015), Brandon, dressed like a camper or junior naturalist in a gray cap and blue windbreaker, contemplates an orange Panamanian golden frog sitting on a fallen tree covered in green moss. From an anthropocentric perspective, the neon orange frog is the exotic subject of the photograph, which we read as a hoax since such frogs are native to Central America and not the woodlands of Minnesota. But if we look from the amphibian's vantage at the strange human animal in the photograph, it becomes clear that what such images reveal is the invasive spread of human beings in habitats in which we are aliens. How was the image of the frog obtained in the first place if not for migrating human explorers and colonizers? Although these projects beckon the viewer out of doors to experience the natural world, they also encourage her to ask, "Where is it OK for me to go? Where do I belong?"⁴ —JB

Notes

1. Frances Griffiths, quoted in Paul Smith, "The Cottingley Fairies: The End of a Legend," in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 396.
2. *Ibid.*, 376.
3. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 9: 309–11.
4. Miranda Brandon, interview with the author, Minneapolis, 18 May 2015.



Regan Golden- McNerney





previous pages (verso and recto):
Prairie Construct, nos. 1 and 8, 2015
archival inkjet prints
dimensions variable

above (clockwise):
Prairie Construct, nos. 32, 10, 16, 36, 2015
archival inkjet prints
dimensions variable



Prairie Construct, no. 23, 2015
archival inkjet print
dimensions variable

Freedom: Regan Golden-McNerney

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*

The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of *limitlessness*.

Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*

Limitlessness is a characteristic of both freedom and sublimity. To move through the world with ease and explore one's environment unimpeded, to play in one's own yard or neighborhood as though it were a grand forest or vast prairie, is to know a childlike joy. Regan Golden-McNerney remembers that joy—the profound happiness of the child's meanderings through derelict landscapes thick with overgrown weeds, groves of volunteer trees crowding an embankment along some train tracks, marginal gardens of dandelions, violets, and chokeberry bushes squeezed between a garage and an alley, the profusion of milkweed and creeping Charlie overtaking abandoned lots. But the magical spell cast by raking afternoon sunlight and floating downy cottonwood seeds is easily broken by the discovery of plastic bottle caps, chunks of concrete, oil barrels, a derelict rusty household appliance, the sound of a train rushing by, or the urgent voice of a mother calling her child to abandon what had seemed to be, just moments before, an Eden.

It is a perpetual oscillation between limitlessness and constraint, general and specific, sublime and ordinary, forest and leaf that Golden seeks to create for her viewer. She has combined a series of digital photographs called *Prairie Constructs* (2015) into a large-format folio made in the spirit of John James Audubon's oversized book of hand-colored etchings *The Birds of America*. Like Audubon, she scales up from the miniature to the gigantic. Composing ephemeral collages of artistic waste on a flatbed scanner



(cut fragments of nature photographs, sheets of tattered black tracing paper, scraps of drawings, and actual plants that once posed for her camera), she produces large, glossy prints that plasticize these varied textures and smooth the diminutive archaeology into a single homogenous layer.

These strange images produce a quivering visual disorientation, something like the ophthalmologist's test where a series of lenses dropped in front of the eye makes the world jump from blurriness to sharp focus and back again. In one oversized page, *Prairie Construct, no. 8*, a detailed photograph of a reddish compound leaf, prominent against the blurred details of the larger plant of which it is a part, has been cut into sharp bits like fragments of broken glass. The artist places that shattered photographic leaf, strewn against a black background, in visual conversation with an actual red maple leaf and a cluster of its rust-colored seeds shaped like delicate, folded butterfly wings. In the twenty-third image from this series, another cluster of maple seeds, verdant and new as spring, lies next to scraps of white paper bearing a series of thick brushstrokes in a palette of green and brown. With lush complexity, the resulting scanned pictures (leaves in a book made from photographs of photographs of leaves) imbricate art and life.

Her practice of collage—searching for and selecting the appropriate fragment, then cutting, arranging and mounting it on paper—mimics that of the gardener or naturalist. Her practice begins with an artist's notebook, which constitutes a botanical portfolio, sketchbook, and commonplace book all at once. Rather than a collection of texts, proverbs, or bits of knowledge, however, it contains the detritus of other art projects (the scraps cut away from photographs, pieces of drawings, random strokes of paint on paper) alongside snippets of nature (a mass of still-connected green maple seeds thrown down by the wind, the spiky leaves of a dandelion, or a dried bit of ragweed) culled from walks in the neighborhood. The book constitutes what Golden describes as a “temporary holding space for fragile, changing things.”¹

Such ephemerality is made more dramatic in Golden's large-scale temporary wall installation *Panicum Capillare* (2015), which comprises cut photos of plants and landscapes, painted marks on the wall and on paper, painted marks that have been scanned and printed, drawings on paper, cut white paper, and ragged trimmings, swept up off the floor, from what has been cut out and used in other collages, other momentary assemblages.

Ironically, unlike her previous series of cut photographs taken in her family's thirty-one-acre plot of forested land in rural western Massachusetts, this enormous work (nearly thirty feet in length) has emerged from a period in the artist's career when her exploration of the natural world has been limited to the small-scale marginal bits of wilderness around her neighborhood in St. Paul. The work's title, which refers to a common species



of prairie grass known as witchgrass or panicgrass, also suggests a more midwestern theme as it turns away from the forest to the oceanic prairie that once spread across the middle of the country. Rather than scan the distant horizon of the vast plain, however, the viewer is absorbed into and overwhelmed by the seeming limitlessness of the vertical wall-mounted landscape, which expands beyond the borders of her peripheral vision. In the presence of the gigantic, however, she is also lost in a peculiar sublime world made of miniature botanical and artistic detail.

These works, by virtue of combining real plants with the realism of photography and the artistry of painting, mobilize the detail (that which is small and close-up) to blur and refocus the panorama (that which is vast and distant, and which the camera and the canvas never satisfyingly capture). A conceptualist intervention in the long history of American landscape painting (Thomas Cole's rustic mountain overlooks, for example, or Frederic Church's glowing sunset vistas), in which the natural world is an object to be possessed and aestheticized, this work freely trespasses the dilapidated fence marking the traditional boundary between high art and the everyday.² It subverts, to borrow from Naomi Schor, “an internal hierarchic ordering of the work of art which clearly subordinates the periphery to the center, the accessory to the principal, the foreground to the background.”³ Meandering freely across these boundaries, like so many backyards, ripe for exploration, Golden's work focuses and blurs, gathers up and scatters the green bits that make up the world. —JB

Notes

1. Regan Golden-McNerney, email correspondence with the author, 27 May 2015.
2. “Rules are to be considered fences placed only where trespass is expected.” Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses*, quoted in Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 22.
3. *Ibid.*, 20.



Jess Hirsch



DEATH WISH AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made effective as of _____ by and between _____ (Participant) and _____ (Artist, Jess Hirsch).

Death Wish is a two part agreement to embrace the body's inevitable demise through gemstone and mineral essences. By agreeing to consume gold essence and diamond essence you are accepting death, as best you can, to be a reality in your future. The gold essence attunes your will power to your higher self's true calling. It does so by strengthening your solar plexus, connecting you with the energy of the sun. The solar plexus is the site of your will, by nurturing this place you call forth your inner wisdom to make action based on your individuality. Through appreciating the activity of life, you can welcome death.

Gold essence should be consumed sparingly due to its strength. Take it for no more than 2 weeks at a time, during moments when your will is weakened. Take only a few drops under the tongue starting with a single drop and increasing the drops based on your individual needs. Energy medicine is subtle and requires acute attention.

Once Jess Hirsch dies, a diamond essence will be made out of the carbon in her ashes compressed into a diamond with the assistance of Algordanza International. Natural diamond essence brings mental clarity, heightens inner vision, and cleanses all the chakras. This diamond, however, is made from the body, and potentially its energy will hold that of the artist's consciousness. The effects may be different than that of a natural diamond, produced by the earth.

Much like the gold essence, the diamond essence should be consumed sparingly. Again, begin with a single drop and increase the amount based on your individual needs. Occasionally the energy medicine does not reside well with the body. If either the diamond essence or gold essence creates discomfort, discontinue use and pour the contents into soil.

I _____ agree to consume gold essence as an acknowledgement of my death and that of Jess Hirsch. If Jess dies before myself I will then become the recipient of her diamond essence and will continue to acknowledge the ephemerality of life by consuming the diamond essence.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Artist

Date

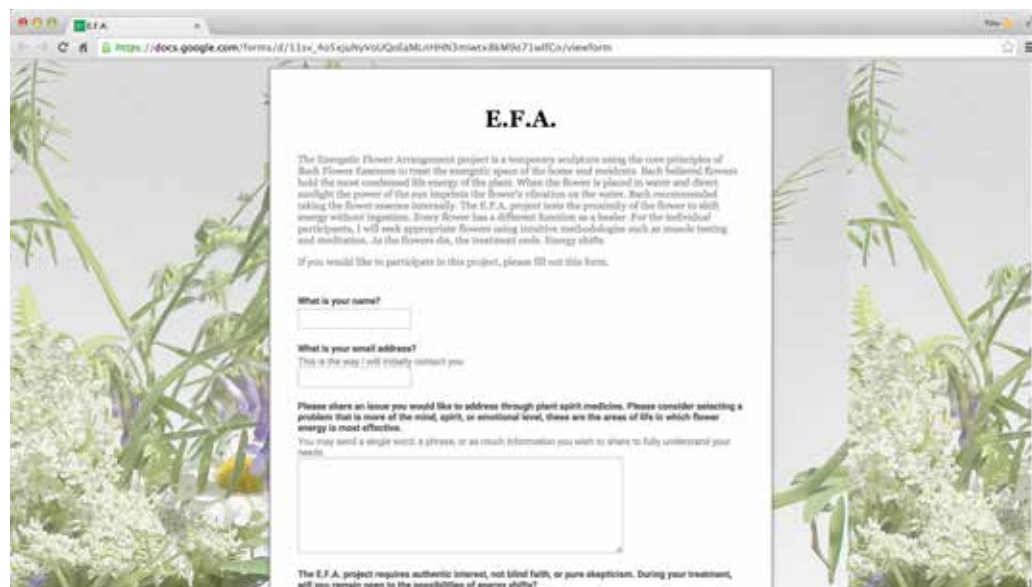
Death Wish Agreement, 2015
paper contract
11" x 8.5"



Death Wish: Diamond Essence & Gold Essence, date TBD and 2015
essence of gold, water, and brandy
3.75" x 1.5"
Photo: Rik Sferra



Death Wish: Death Ring, 2015
18 karat gold cast from artist's hair
.75" x .75" x .5"
Photo: Rik Sferra



Energetic Flower Arrangement, 2015
screenshot of online form to receive temporary flower sculpture

Belief: Jess Hirsch

Belief is where the mind rests.

Matthew Goulish

How could they turn men to stone, those eyes of the Gorgon so soft and liquid? Is it because this archaic creature living at the end of the known world is the supreme representation of the rule, of the wrath that shall befall those of us who cannot withstand the temptation to transgress? And this is truth. For what makes a rule a rule is that built into it is the desire to transgress it.

Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum*

Jess Hirsch thinks a lot about the future, or, to be more accurate, about the end of the future. She imagines the day when the Gorgon's glance will petrify her and she will become stiff and cold as stone. In her work *Death Wish* (2015), she initiates a plan for that inevitable day. She has executed a will, of which her young niece will be the executor. The will consigns her cremated remains to a company called Algordanza International, which will (through a complex process of intense heat and pressure) turn the carbon that once was Hirsch into a diamond. Along with the contract, she has submitted a deposit for this service, the balance of which will be paid upon her death. She has instructed her niece to derive the remaining funds necessary to pay off the diamond from the sale of a gold ring, which she designed and made. Emulating nineteenth-century mourning crafts in which strands of a loved one's hair were plaited in complex patterns and kept in lockets, brooches, or rings as a token of the dead, Hirsch made a fine braid from a lock of her own blonde hair and cast it in gold. The hair winds loosely around the finger three times and ends in a snake's head. Richly layered in its associations, the ring recalls Medusa's writhing elapine tresses, but also strings tied around the finger as an aid to memory, the threads of life measured and cut by the Three Fates, as well as fairy tales involving Rapunzel's golden hair or yellow straw spun into gold. Within this alchemical economy, gold, "soft and liquid" as the Gorgon's eyes, is pledged in trade for one of the hardest stones on earth. The blue sparkle of that future artificial diamond will indicate the presence of boron, the pale color of which indicates the remains of human bones.

More than merely keepsakes, Hirsch will use these materials to create elixirs of gold essence and diamond essence similar in preparation to herbalist Edward Bach's flower essences, made by collecting the dew that forms on plants, which he believed contains a powerful life force. Participants can sign a contract in which they pledge to consume these homeopathic remedies, which Hirsch calls "energy medicines," "as an acknowledgment



of [the participant's] death and that of Jess Hirsch." In traditional homeopathy, the key principle of which is "like cures like," tiny particles of a given substance, such as bee venom (*apis mellifica*), are diluted in water or alcohol so as to create remedies for ailments, such as bee sting, the causes of which are materially related to that substance. Through this project, however, the recipient is meant to contemplate not his restoration to life through cure but the strict rule of his death.

Set in motion by a series of contracts (the last will and testament, the written agreement for the purchase of the diamond, the pact with members of the art audience), this complex relational artwork contemplates the nature and limits of belief. The contract, after all, acts as guarantor of a legal obligation, a pledge made binding by signatures and witnesses. It is a discourse that simultaneously represents belief that the signatories will act as they have pledged and the fear that they will not. It is ultimately a hedge against doubt. *Death Wish* thus asks viewers to think critically about belief in medicine, in the law, and in art itself.

In *Energetic Flower Arrangement* (2015), Hirsch solicits requests through social media to design arrangements of wildflowers she collects and then combines in accordance with pharmacological research she has undertaken in Peru and at the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota. These bouquet still lifes, displayed in bottles of spring water, which absorb the plants' energy, are both *vanitas* and elixir, offered simultaneously as a reminder of death and of life. The medicine they offer for a wide range of maladies (physical illness, grief, disappointment, unhappiness, emotional trauma) is as ephemeral as a blossom but as potent as thought.

Jacques Derrida reminds us that the Greek word *pharmakon*, which means both remedy and poison, names a "language medicine" through which the absent is made present, where what is dead may be restored to life. Representation, after all, (like Medusa's gaze) turns the world of the living to stone (frozen images, sedimented words), where it both preserves and destroys that which it names or pictures. "The god of writing," Derrida explains, "who knows how to put an end to life, can also heal the sick. And even the dead. . . . The god of writing is thus also a god of medicine. Of 'medicine': both a science and an occult drug."¹ All language, he insists—and by implication we might say all art—is a form of this alchemical charm.²

"The thing I love about folk medicine," remarks artist Dario Robleto, "is that it's intimately tied to magic and belief—or to the placebo effect, which is the way contemporary science would explain it. You know how your grandmother gives you a spoon full of some concoction that has no real scientific base to it, but it has some real effect? I love the idea that art can somehow be the medicine on the spoon."³ Hirsch's project develops from previous works in which she has investigated the effects of the "medicine on the spoon"



through a range of alternative healing practices and beliefs, such as Reiki healing, touch therapy, homeopathy, and Bach flower remedies. In a work from 2013 called *Reikiwave*, she set up a small microwave oven and a display rack stocked with Orville Redenbacher-brand microwavable popcorn. Wall text invited visitors to "EAT FREE POPCORN SUPPLIED BY ARTIST. WHILE POPCORN IS COOKING, THE PARTICIPANT MAY TEXT THE ARTIST TO HAVE REIKI (JAPANESE ENERGY THERAPY) SENT TO THE POPCORN." Although Hirsch's work often contains such tongue-in-cheek references (Reiki waves and microwaves) and elements of pop(corn) art (such as the obvious associations between her *Death Wish* and the famous series of Charles Bronson vigilante movies), she undertakes her research into these forms of medicine with sincerity and humility and offers no conclusions about their real spiritual, let alone scientific, effects.

We might say, borrowing from artist Matthew Goulish, that Hirsch "plant[s] a question in a garden." Hers is perhaps the most profound question possible: What is the nature of life? It is a question that her work tends and nurtures but that she does not presume to answer. "Define [that question]," Goulish instructs, "without preventing it from flowering. Take it literally; take it allegorically; take it as a preface; take it as a mystery to decode. Ask the question five different ways before attempting to answer." How is belief a form of life giving? How is art a matter of faith? Can we, through art, or magic, or medicine, lock eyes with Medusa's gaze and transgress the rule of death? Hirsch "compose[s] responses that do not annihilate the question's delicate ecology; [that] avoid the answer that kills it."⁴ —JB

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," *Disseminations*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 94.
2. *Ibid.*, 70.
3. Dario Robleto, "Medicine on the Spoon," in *Alloy of Love*: Dario Robleto, ed. Elizabeth Dunbar (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 275.
4. WWMatthew Goulish, "Every House Has a Door," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 574–75.

Sieng Lee



Becoming American, 2013
found objects and joss paper
10' x 3'6"



Brand New Years, 2013
found objects and joss paper
8' x 3'



Season Two Episode Five: Bring the Pain, 2014
graphic installation and found objects
10½' x 10½'



Becoming American (detail), 2013
found objects and joss paper
10' x 3'6"

Something: Sieng Lee

For every bullet hole,
Let there be a sonnet to stitch the truth back together.
For every eye gone blind,
Let there be something to take its place.
Something.
Anything.

Bryan Thao Worra, "The Last War Poem "

Judd and Morris assert the values of wholeness, singleness, indivisibility of a work's being, as nearly as possible, "one thing", a single "Specific Object."

Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood"

In 1962, when American artist Tony Smith ordered the construction of his famous six-foot cubical sculpture *Die* from a New Jersey steel fabricator, the United States was at the start of its Secret War in Laos, where the CIA trained Hmong fighters to battle Communist forces who were waging a civil war. By 1970 the wars in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia had reached their apogee of violence and destruction, and antiwar protest in the United States was at its most intense. In September of that year, four months after National Guard soldiers shot and killed unarmed student protesters at Kent State University, the contemporary art magazine *Artforum* published answers by twelve prominent artists to a question it had circulated that summer: "A growing number of artists have begun to feel the need to respond to the deepening political crisis in America. . . . What is your position regarding the kinds of political action that should be taken by artists?"¹ The responses that the magazine received varied widely, from claims that art ought to be apolitical to assertions that artists have a moral obligation to dissent. In 1975, when the United States pulled out of Vietnam and ended its military involvement in Laos and Cambodia, it left behind tens of thousands of Hmong who found themselves on the wrong side of history for having aided the Americans, and who were forced to flee the country. An unknown number were killed. That at the same time as U.S. foreign policy caused the displacement of some fifty thousand Hmong, minimalism emerged and grew to prominence in the United States is something of a historical coincidence, and yet a convincing argument might be made that the ideology of American exceptionalism is common to both. After all, artists and critics alike presented minimalism as the next phase in modernism's long triumphal movement toward the purification of form. A uniquely American movement, its heroic industrial materials, plainspoken geometrical forms, unified compositions, and putative autonomy

asserted (not unlike the United States in Southeast Asia) an imperialist claim.² Despite this shared ideology, many of the responses to *Artforum's* query (and indeed the question itself) assumed that art and war are entirely unrelated endeavors. For the magazine and its presumed readers, politics is only that in which one *chooses* to participate, and that which one intends in one's art.

For Hmong American artist Sieng Lee, the supposed distance between the artist and the category of the political is a privilege afforded to white men like Smith, but not to those considered to be racial or ethnic Others.³ As much as he might want to participate in a purely formalist art, plainly geometrical and scrubbed of social and political reference, race politics (unbidden though it may be) always seems to enter the room when he does. When you are a refugee, he remarks, "Content is made for you by your identity."⁴

Thus, critic Michael Fried, famous for his excoriation of minimalist art on the grounds that it was not art but rather a form of theater conscripting the participation of the viewer, becomes an unlikely ally. Fried, rather than viewing minimalism (or literalist art, as he dubbed it) as a neutrally geometrical, abstract, and purely formal art (in a Kantian or Greenbergian sense), is dismayed by its objecthood—the way in which its becoming a mundane thing, a something, thereby shifts attention to the viewer's experience in time and space. For Fried, Smith's cube, by virtue of its literalness, is a Pandora's box that when opened, releases the thorny problems of the body, temporality, individual experience, and the difficult politics that attend them. He claims that minimalist sculpture, because of its bodily scale and its tendency to get in the viewer's way, is inherently concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters the work.⁵ It creates, he remarks, "a situation" (127).

Lee's quotation of Smith's rusty cube in his large (and, as of this writing, unnamed) sculptural installation constitutes a wry commentary on modernism's formalist pretensions and unrealized ambitions. In addition to Smith's work, it recalls Vladimir Tatlin's famous *Monument to the Third International* (1919–20), a ridiculously massive architectural structure, which was never built, the exterior armature of which Tatlin designed to be a steel spiral enclosing a glass cube building that would slowly rotate.⁶ In Lee's installation, the large box, the emblem of minimalist sculpture and constructivist industry, hangs from the ceiling rather than sitting inscrutably on the floor. Moreover, it seems to be spilling out or sucking up its contents in a large cone (reminiscent of Tatlin's spiral) made from thousands of sheets of gold and silver spirit money folded into a series of boat shapes and decorated with various objects (some of which are identifiably Hmong, and others of which are not).⁷

Unlike Smith's practice of simply imagining and ordering up from a steel fabricator a supposedly neutral geometric form, Lee folds each of these papers by hand in a labor-

intensive meditative practice.⁸ Despite the handicraft technique, once assembled into the monumental conical shape, the sculpture both quotes and mocks "the wholeness," much touted among minimalists, "that can be achieved by the repetition of individual units."⁹ This work, while in some respects trading on a simple gestalt, is anything but minimal. Given Lee's training in graphic design, we might read his cube not only as a midcentury sculpture but also as a gift box, a commercial package design, or an oversized origami carton. Or we might ignore the installation's three dimensionality entirely, follow the artist's lead, and *suspend* the sculptural, seeing the work as constituted by a series of flat sheets of paper printed in gold and silver and a set of two dimensional planes on which the graphic artist might arrange words or images.

This work develops out of previous projects, such as *Becoming American* (2013), in which spirit money, folded in three-dimensional shapes, forms a smaller-scale cone form, reminiscent of a Christmas tree, with a pair of trouser legs and men's shoes where we might expect to see a wooden trunk. In this work, Lee's identification with new conceptualism and the work of artists such as Robert Gober, with their slightly odd, surreal (and often humorous) juxtapositions, becomes clear. Here, the plain geometrical shape pretending to be *nothing*, pretending simply to be an object,¹⁰ is at the same time *something*—a culturally and religiously specific signifier. The body that Fried suspected was latent in minimalist sculpture and that he feared would "corrupt" and "contaminate" high art reveals itself in this fragment of a specifically male body dressed in Western clothing. In this work as well as in his Jerome installation, the something or nothing depends crucially on who is looking, who has access to the visual language of Euclidian geometry, the story of Pandora, minimalism, constructivism, spirit money, or Christmas trees. —JB

Notes

1. "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium," *Artforum* 9, no. 1 (September 1970).
2. See Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. Francis Francina and Jonathan Harris (New York: Phaidon; Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 264.
3. Sieng Lee, conversation with the author, 18 May 2015, Minneapolis.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 125–27.
6. The cube, in which lectures and symposia would be held, was to have been topped by a second pyramidal building for administrative offices, a cylindrical communications center, and a hemispherical radio tower.
7. Spirit money, also known as joss paper, is made of bamboo or rice paper to which a square or rectangle of gold or silver leaf is applied. People from various cultures throughout East and Southeast Asia fold and burn it as an offering to their ancestors.
8. Lee, conversation with the author.
9. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 119.
10. *Ibid.*

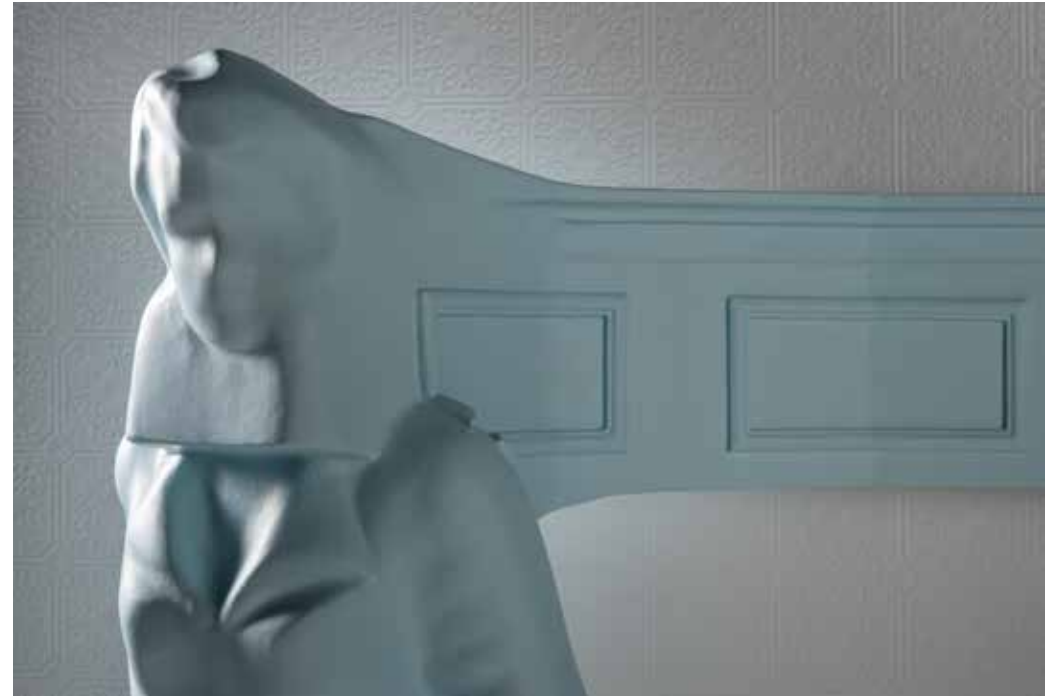
Jason Ramey



Queen Anne and Lath, 2011
found buffet, pine lath, assorted hardware
32" x 49" x 20"
Photo: Eric Baillies



Mantel, 2015
 EPS, fiberglass, urethane
 variable dimensions
 Photo: Rik Sferra



Mantel (detail), 2015
 EPS, fiberglass, urethane
 variable dimensions
 Photo: Rik Sferra



Jason Ramey

Built In, 2012
 found dresser and mirror, paint, gypsum
 74" x 120" x 66"
 Photo: Eric Baillies

Uncanny: Jason Ramey

This *unheimlich* [unhomely/uncanny] place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning.

Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"

By means of the light in that far-off house, the house sees, keeps vigil, vigilantly waits. . . . Through its light alone, the house becomes human.

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

We might think of poor Alice, drinking her potion and eating her cake so that she monstrously stretches up and shrinks back down, but the house itself is also enchanted. It too expands and contracts in surprising ways. Despite its coziness and intimacy, it is a place in which one "experience[s] what is large in what is small."¹ French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in his famous book *The Poetics of Space*, goes so far as to describe the house as a cosmos or universe.² No matter its actual size or opulence, the home into which one is born constitutes the known world and impresses on the child mind a sense of enormity, which is why when we return to such spaces as adults, we marvel at how small they seem. Every giant chair the child once struggled to occupy, every formidable stair he fought to climb, has been miniaturized. From cellar to attic, the house rises up vertically, toweringly in our imaginations and memories, but at the same time, Bachelard suggests, it "appeals to our consciousness of centrality" (17). Its corners, cupboards, niches, closets, and drawers may be measured with the small ruler of intimacy, privacy, and protection. For Bachelard, its tendency to grow and shrink makes the home especially suited to memory, fantasy, and daydreams

Sigmund Freud argued that the home is a trigger for the uncanny. The home or *heimlich* (homelike) is, in his view, a redoubling of the womb, the first space we inhabit as living beings. Freud identifies it with the maternal, with whatever is "familiar and old-established in the mind," and thus with longing and nostalgia.³ The uncanny, or *unheimlich*, despite the "un" by which it announces itself, is not the opposite of the home but is rather "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). The uncanny is often a double (the doll or mannequin in place of the human; the house in place of the womb), which first appears commonplace, perhaps tinged softly with memory, but which soon fills us with dread. It is utterly alien (235–36). "The *Heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence," Freud remarks, "until it finally coincides with its opposite *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*" (226).

Jason Ramey

Ambivalence abounds in Jason Ramey's sculptural installations, where miniature and gigantic, memory and fantasy, home and uncanny come together at right angles to form so many conceptual corners. The odd conjoining of disparate elements is a common tendency in Ramey's work, such as his *Queen Anne and Lath* (2011), in which a found Queen Anne-style chest, painted in a "joyful-sad" robin's egg blue,⁴ morphs into and forms a corner with a lath wall. For Bachelard, "every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house" (136). Something extraordinary happens in that place, that angle, where cabinet and wall meet, which we might name enchantment. Something is inaugurated in that touching, as if by a magic wand, which Bachelard explains by saying, "The corner is the chamber of being" (138). Reflecting on the house where he grew up, Ramey echoes the philosopher, remarking that, "these walls weren't just inane parts of my childhood home, they were my childhood."⁵

In *Mantel* (2015), he has used a 3-D printer to enlarge a found tiny plastic figurine meant for a model train village or architectural model. Like Alice, she has grown unexpectedly into a life-size doll. She is a blank or placeholder in monochrome robin's egg blue. Originally made of molded plastic, her fingers and eyes, the crease in the sleeve where her shoulder bends, the buttons on her bodice, and the shoes on her feet are all rendered crudely. She poses awkwardly in midstride, her right arm akimbo and her hand resting on her hip. She wears a 1950s-era dress with a Peter Pan collar, pleated skirt (frozen in mid-sway), and cloth belt, and the clutch purse in her left hand is stuck permanently to her side. This overgrown figurine is posed in a domestic setting in front of a white wall, the surface of which is embossed in a pattern of squares containing floral motifs, punctuated at the corners by medallions. She is attached at the head and neck to a mantelpiece, which bends away from the wall behind her like a hungry snake reaching out to swallow her up. The mantel, embellished with moldings and applied decoration, recalls a traditional middle-class home, yet it seems uncannily to be animated, as though attempting to detach itself from the otherwise familiar mise-en-scène it serves. Of course, the hearth is a well-worn metaphor for home, family, and indeed civilization itself, but it also has uncanny features: it is an odd, gaping aperture in the center of the home, a conduit from inside to outside through which only air and smoke pass. Bachelard considers the light emanating from the house, whether from candles, electric lamps, or fireplaces, to make it a corporeal being, warm as living flesh, animated and breathing. It is, as he says, strangely human. Like René Magritte's famous painting *Time Transfixed* (1938), in which a small train appears to charge from a fireplace into the viewer's space, *Mantel* offers an inexplicable, surreal episode, which Alice might be tempted to describe as "curiouser and curiouser."

A second new work, *Built In #2* (2015), engages more overtly with the corner and meditates

more self-reflexively on the sculptor's practice. Here, in a punning gesture, Ramey takes a miniature figurine of a construction worker or carpenter (perhaps a sculptor?) and scales it up to life-size. Like his female companion, this builder has been plucked from a model train enthusiast's tiny scene. The stereotypical laborer (long sleeves rolled up at the elbow, overalls clipped over the shoulders, a 1930s Depression-era cap) crouches down, his left knee bent outward and his right knee on the floor. He reaches down to work on the oak flooring, to which he is attached and from which he seems mysteriously to emerge. He faces blankly like the daydreamer into a corner where two half walls meet. "From the depths of his corner," Bachelard remarks, as though picturing this oddly giant figurine, this man who is an object, "the dreamer remembers all the objects identified with solitude, objects that are memories of solitude and which are betrayed by the mere fact of having been forgotten, abandoned in a corner" (142).

Although these works seem to juxtapose a number of opposites (animate/inanimate, miniature/gigantic, homely/uncanny, real/imagined, human/furniture), their queasy revelations also involve doublings, repetitions of the same. Take, for example, the wallpaper pattern. Pattern is, like the mold, the trace, the scribe, the stamp, a mechanism for copying, for repeating with greater or lesser degrees of complexity. It is in its again and again-ness, its mundane proliferation of shape and color, where that uncanny feeling begins to overtake the viewer. It is enhanced by the mise en abyme of these works' self-reflexivity, for they are sculptures that meditate on the practices of sculpture (casting, building, and pressing), works of art that daydream about objects becoming art. —JB

Notes

1. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Beacon Press, 1969), 150; subsequent page references are given parenthetically in the text.
2. "For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word"; *ibid.*, 4.
3. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVII, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 241; subsequent page references are given parenthetically in the text.
4. Carol Mavor, *Blue Mythologies: Reflections on a Colour* (London: Reaktion, 2013), 42.
5. http://jasonramey.com/artwork/2682351_Queen_Anne_and_Lath.html; accessed 17 June 2015.

Artist Biographies



Miranda Brandon is an animal enthusiast and advocate, as well as a bird rehabilitator. Her photographic work challenges how we perceive the world around us and strives to promote a greater understanding and appreciation for the interconnectivity between human and nonhuman animals. Originally from Oklahoma, Brandon moved to Minneapolis to obtain her BFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and later completed her MFA at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in 2014. Since then, Brandon has been a Showcase Artist at the Bell Museum of Natural History and participated in multiple group shows, both local and national, while also teaching in the greater Twin Cities area.



Regan Golden-McNerney depicts ecological change in the American landscape using altered photographs and drawing materials. After living in numerous cities across the United States, Golden happily returned to her hometown of St. Paul in 2012. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group shows both nationally and internationally, including Gallery 44: Centre for Contemporary Photography in Toronto, Gallery 400 in Chicago, CUE Art Foundation in New York City, and the Rochester Art Center in Rochester, Minnesota. She has received grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Core Program at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Stone Summer Theory Institute at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Golden is also an art critic. She received a BA from Grinnell College and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.



Jess Hirsch is a sculptor, woodworker, and novice herbalist living in Minneapolis. Her work explores the healing world through experiential sculpture. A 2013 graduate of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, with an MFA in sculpture, Hirsch recently received a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant and a Forecast Public Art Jerome Emerging Artist Project Grant. She has participated in Northern Spark and the Art Shanty Projects, exhibited at The Soap Factory and the Walker Art Center's mini-golf series, and attended residencies around the country. Hirsch cofounded Powderhorn Kitchen, an online gallery, shop, and experimental school, and runs The Bedfellows Club, a roving gallery hosted in the viewer's bedroom.



Sieng Lee is an installation artist and designer interested in creating work related to his refugee experience as a first-generation Hmong American. Lee's work reflects and questions the changes that are happening within his community as assimilation becomes inevitable. He is interested in the amount of cultural content generated by Hmong Americans in academia and in social spaces like the web, media, politics, and events. A national ADDY winner, he helped design the *We Are Hmong* exhibit at the Minnesota Historical Society. Lee holds a BS in graphic design from Herzing University in Madison, and an MFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.



Jason Ramey is an artist/designer living and working in Minneapolis. Originally from Monticello, Indiana, Ramey received a BFA from the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, and an MFA and MA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. After teaching for a year at UW–Madison, Ramey moved to Minneapolis to teach at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, where he is currently teaching in the fine arts department. Ramey's most recent work is centered on the body and its connection to the space in which it once inhabited.

Acknowledgments

A one-year Jerome fellowship passes quickly, too quickly perhaps. Six months into the fellowship year and already the demands of making new work for an exhibition and catalog come to the fore. Time, the time to create freely—which the fellowship is designed to cultivate—might already seem jeopardized. But ideally the pressure to make something new provides necessary momentum and stimulation. Things come together. Thoughts coalesce. Ideas take form and become parts of a whole. And what ultimately gets placed in the MCAD Gallery becomes the jumping-off point for what comes next. For the 2014 recipients of the Jerome Foundation Fellowships for Emerging Artists—Miranda Brandon, Regan Golden-McNerney, Jess Hirsch, Sieng Lee, and Jason Ramey—time has passed quickly, but the benefits of the fellowship year will continue to follow them far into the future.

The decisions of three independent arts professionals made the fellowship year possible for these five artists. Over a six-week period last fall, three jurors culled through 252 applications, narrowed the pool to 34 semifinalists, and traveled to the Twin Cities to do studio visits with the 12 finalists. The jurors were Candida Alvarez, artist and professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Shannon Fitzgerald, curator, writer, and executive director of the Rochester Art Center in Rochester, Minnesota; and David Norr, an independent curator and writer.

In early February the fellows met for the first time with Jane Blocker, whom they had selected to write their catalog essays. Blocker, professor of art history at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, then met with the artists individually before crafting essays that thoughtfully frame the fellows' responses to ideas about nature, their everyday surroundings, the intersections of life and art, their role(s) in the (art) world, and childhood memories of home. The title words "Belonging," "Freedom," "Belief," "Something," and "Uncanny" are poetic touchstones, markers of meaning that extend beyond the facile assessment of liking or not liking something. Blocker connects the fellows' work to history and literature, to art historical ruses as well as art movements, teasing out the questions the piece is trying (or not) to answer.

In addition to having the privilege of discussing their work with Blocker, the fellows selected Bill Arning, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, to visit the Twin Cities in October while their culminating exhibition is on view. These one-on-one studio visits are an opportunity to share what they have accomplished and to project further into the future. The third and final studio visit is with a local curator or artist of the fellow's own choosing and generally happens toward the end of the fellowship year.

Many staff people at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design contribute to a successful

fellowship experience. I wish to thank Jay Coogan, president, and Karen Wirth, vice president of academic affairs, who ensure that administering this program remains a priority for the college. Kate Mohn, grants and projects administrator, has quickly become a terrific asset, as her assistance writing proposals and final evaluations as well as keeping track of deadlines has proven invaluable. The team in DesignWorks has worked quickly and creatively to promote the work of the 2014 fellows in the form of exhibition announcements, gallery signage, and the exhibition catalog. Nathan Lewis, fellowship and gallery coordinator, with the help of Francesca Garcia, the MCAD Gallery graduate assistant, ensured that the fellowship cycle unfolded smoothly, and tended to the needs of the jurors and critics before, during, and after their visits to the Twin Cities. As usual, the skillful photographer Rik Sferra makes magic happen in the studio, where he photographs the fellows and their artwork; no head shot or still shot or installation shot is too difficult for him to master. The art magic extends to the exhibition space, where the efforts of Jeff Jones, Katie Maren Nelson, and the MCAD Gallery installation crew ensure that good art looks even better—thank you Christopher Alday, Isabela Cruz, Julian Howley, Allegra Lockstadt, and Aaron Olson-Reiners.

And finally, a heartfelt thank-you to the Jerome Foundation's board of directors and outgoing president Cindy Gehrig for their ongoing support of this fellowship program. After thirty-eight years at the helm of the Jerome Foundation, Gehrig has decided to make time for herself. Her significant dedication to emerging artists was aptly recognized this year when she received a 2015 Sally Award for commitment to the Minnesota arts community. The grace, humility, intelligence, and wisdom that Gehrig brought to what she describes as a "life calling" can only serve as an inspiration for us all.

Kerry Morgan

Program Director, Jerome Foundation Fellowships for Emerging Artists

Past Recipients

2013	Kjellgren Alkire Pao Houa Her GraceMarie Keaton Robin Schwartzman Nate Young	2007	Matthew Bakkom Monica Haller Colin Kopp Liz Miller Rosemary Williams	2001	Jay Heikes Markus Lunkenheimer Alec Soth Peter Haakon Thompson John Vogt	1995	Robert Fischer Anne George Stephanie Molstre-Kotz Todd Norsten Carl Scholz	1989	Lynn Hambrick Vince Leo Stuart Mead David Pelto Alyn Silberstein	1983	Jana Freiband Janet Loftquist David Madzo Jeff Millikan Steven Woodward
2012	Susannah Bielak Amanda Hankerson Michael Hoyt Melissa Loop Lauren Roche	2006	Ernest A. Bryant III Brian Lesteberg Cherith Lundin Monica Sheets Marcus Young	2000	Santiago Cucullu Alexa Horochowski John Largaespada Gene Pittman Cristi Rinklin	1994	Terence Accola Mary Jo Donahue Jonathan Mason Karen Platt Elliot Warren	1988	Phil Barber JonMarc Edwards Jil Evans Dave Rathman George Reboloso	1982	Jane Bassuk Frank Big Bear Jr. Laura Blaw Matt Brown Kevin Mangan
2011	Richard Barlow Gregory Euclide Lauren Herzak-Bauman Alison Hiltner Jehra Patrick	2005	Janet Lobberecht Megan Rye Angela Strassheim Dan Tesene Megan Vossler	1999	Amelia Biewald-Low Jason S. Brown James Holmberg Anne Sugnet Inna Valin	1993	Mary Esch Damian Garner Shannon Kennedy Linda Louise Rother James Whitney Tuthill	1987	Michelle Charles Leslie Hawk Paul Shambroom Viet Ngo Diana Watters	1981	Ricardo Bloch Bruce Charlesworth Alison Ruttan T.L. Solien Scott Stack
2010	Greg Carideo Teri Fullerton Julia Kouneski Brett Smith Jonathan B. Williams	2004	Michael Gaughan Kirk McCall Abinadi Meza Lisa Nankivil	1998	Amelie Collins Brad Geiken Rollin Marquette Don Myhre Thor Eric Paul	1992	Angela Dufresne Tim Jones Chris Larson Andrea McCormack Shawn Smith	1986	Gary DeCosse Christopher Dashke Jennifer Hecker Michael Mercil Randy Reeves		
2009	Steven Accola Caroline Kent Tynan Kerr Andrew Mazorol Tony Sunder	2003	Tamara Brantmeier Lucas DiGiulio Jesse Petersen Matthew Wacker Troy Williams	1997	Jean Humke Carolyn Swiszc Amy Toscani Cate Vermeland Sara Woster	1991	Hans Accola Sara Belleau Franciska Rosenthal Louw Colette Gaiter Annette Walby	1985	Betina Judy Kepes Peter Latner James May Lynn Wadsworth		
2008	Evan Baden Barbara Claussen Kirsten Peterson Benjamin Reed Lindsay Smith	2002	Joseph del Pesco Helena Keeffe Charles Matson Lume Justin Newhall Grace Park	1996	Therese Buchmiller Todd Deutsch Celeste Nelms Mara Pelecis Mike Rathbun	1990	Andy Baird Mark Barlow Keri Pickett Ann Wood Christopher Wunderlich	1984	Doug Argue Remo Campopiano Timothy Darr Audrey Glassman Robert Murphy		

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