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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Who made the grasshopper?
11.15 – 1.24.26

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *Who made the grasshopper?*, an exhibition of drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, collage, and lithography by 42 artists she has been honored and delighted to work with since opening the gallery in 2005. This is the gallery's final show.

The Summer Day
by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean—
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what it is you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

NORIKO AMBE

Noriko Ambe cuts into stacks of paper with a razor blade, one sheet at a time, to create sculptures that resemble three-dimensional topographical maps. To begin each sculpture, Ambe makes a series of small incisions in its bottommost sheet of paper—the one that will be closest to the wall, farthest from the surface of the finished piece. Because she cuts this sheet with a full stack of paper underneath it, her knife scores its path on the second sheet of paper in the stack. When she moves on to the second sheet, she slices a slightly larger hole around the scored lines. After repeating this process on dozens—even hundreds—of pieces of paper, she ends up with dizzyingly complex artworks.

Ambe's work is about the relationship between art and nature, human ingenuity, and the perception of our physical world. Balance, order, and purity—whether human constructs or naturally occurring phenomena, Ambe is always hunting for them.

COLBY BIRD

For the past ten years, Colby Bird has been focused on making kinetic sculptures not unlike elegant, precarious Rube Goldberg machines. Peering inside, one might find a dense tangle of electrical wires and switches, newspaper clippings, shelves, a music box, blow drier, hand mixer, or some such surprise. The sculptures' exteriors are adorned in an equally maximal fashion: with fruit, light bulbs, brass door knobs and knockers and chains, blocks of wood painted in primary colors, pieces of leather acting as straps or latches, sharpened pieces of metal lashed to scrappily whittled handles, fresh flowers in tiny vases made from emptied-out light bulbs. With a little prodding, the sculptures perform actions that range from playing a music box or local talk radio, ringing a bell, blowing out a candle, juicing a lemon, to dropping some (or all) of their components to the floor in an apparent display of self-destruction.

Over the years, Bird has devised various strategies to collapse the boundaries between the three phases in the life of an artwork—its production in the artist's studio, its initial public display in a gallery, and the rest of its existence in a museum or collector's home. His work often requires regular attention from gallery staff or its eventual owner: fruit decays and needs to be replaced, candles melt to a nub or extinguish prematurely, light bulbs burn out, flowers are thirsty and have short life spans, precariously stacked sculptures are designed to spontaneously collapse so they might be put back together. While these materials imply a kind of inevitability and helplessness, the kinetic sculptures are performative and entertaining—either way, much of Bird's work engages the viewer in its ongoing self-actualization. It's not something to just glance at and walk past; it needs to be cared for, attended to, loved—almost as if the work is perpetually still in the studio, in the artist's hands.

ANDY COOLQUITT

The objects in Andy Coolquitt's work come from everyday life. He explores the relationships between groups of objects as they travel from the street to the studio and the exhibition space. Colorful metal tubing from abandoned shopping carts and children's toys are assembled into simple geometric forms (and often incorporate light bulbs). Disposable plastic lighters—found in gutters and crack dens—might be displayed on a rod that leans against a wall. 40-ounce malt liquor bottles sit on the ground; extra-long constructions of plastic straws climb out of them and up to mouth-level. Sometimes a pair of pants lie crumpled on the floor as if somebody just stepped out of them. It can be difficult to tell whether Coolquitt's objects are "somebody-mades" (curiously modified things he finds as-is on the street), "finished works" (in which the hand of the artist is evident), or "in-betweens" (objects that may have the potential to be incorporated into a finished work). This ambiguity of origin collapses the distinction between art and life, highlighting Coolquitt's ultimate goal of honoring existing communities while building new ones.

LADDIE JOHN DILL

Laddie John Dill's Light Sentences—equal parts drawing, painting, and sculpture—are thin, straight, glass tubes that hang on the wall and glow with segments of colored light. The sections range between two inches and two feet long—each with its own color and intensity—and come to a combined length of about seven feet in a single work. As Ken Johnson wrote for the *New York Times*, "they glow beautifully like strings of illuminated glass beads."

Dill credits his stepfather—a mathematician, lens designer, and inventor always busy with projects (including the development of night vision)—with inspiring an early love for electric light. Laser beams shot through the hallways of Dill's home growing up; oscilloscopes and exposed electronics littered the mantle and the dining table. He delighted in the quality of light that came from his stepfather's toys.

So as an art student studying painting, Dill quickly gravitated away from oil and toward materials like neon and argon. He ended up in Rio Score's small sign shop in southern California, learning how to weld glass tubing, coat its insides with a fluorescent emulsion, suck

air out, pump gas in, and electrify these objects that Score called *signs* but Dill thought of as something else. Captivating. Magical.

Dill's work deals directly with light and color in a way that seems almost otherworldly, but his feet are planted squarely on the ground. When asked about a review of his work that postulated about his spiritual inclinations, he dismissed the notion with a single, sarcastic word: "Showbiz." He says he is solely interested in the relationships the Light Sentences create between light, color, glass, gas, and an electric charge. And yet there is something undeniably transportive about them. Intentionally or not, Dill's artworks arouse a sense of wonder similar to what he experienced in his childhood home—something like seeing a laser for the first time, but in the early 1950s, well before most of the world had even heard of such a thing.

BEN DURHAM

Ben Durham makes drawings of people he grew up with. He finds the source images for his works by looking for familiar faces and names in online databases of mugshots from the Kentucky Department of Corrections. Rather than rendering his subjects by classical means (crosshatching or the like) Durham *writes* each of his subjects' stories, layering text in varying weights and densities until it somehow resolves into a photorealistic likeness. He calls these drawings Text Portraits.

Although Durham grew up in Lexington like the men and women he draws, he has escaped the cycle of poverty and crime that many of his peers have not. His interest in art set him on a different path. Durham's drawings are reflections on the many factors that shape a life, and exercises in avoiding oversimplifying anyone's story. No matter what side of the fence we come from, we are more similar than we are different. Perhaps only chance sets us apart.

FRANCESCA GABBIANI

Francesca Gabbiani makes collages from layers of paper she precisely cuts with a razor blade. Greater LA has long been a jumping-off point for her work—her last show at the gallery looked at female surfers and bioluminescent waves as a way of considering our changing climate. She calls her series of cactus collages The Survivors, admiring the succulents' remarkable evolutionary adaptations that allow them to thrive in the notoriously harsh deserts where they often live, and suggesting they might hold some of the critical keys to our own approach to tomorrow.

KARLA GARCÍA

In her own words:

My artistic practice is grounded in clay, a medium through which I explore the intersection of the land and the symbolic realm of myth. I sculpt forms based on the desert flora of the Texas-Mexico borderlands, where I grew up, in various states of bloom and decay. Barrel cacti and clusters of wild grasses, the pinched and coiled primary characters of my recent work, are resilient creatures that can thrive in particularly harsh conditions—and have done so for millions of years.

I'm exploring what it means to be a Mexican woman, sister, daughter, and mother, especially in today's uncertain and volatile political climate. My work is a reflection of how I feel as I move through time and space, how I have changed over the course of my life, and how I aspire to bring my roots—my cultural, literary, and metaphysical heritages—into my every present moment. I don't always have the perfect words, but I know this is where the work comes from. Each of my sculptures is the result of a private conversation I'm having with the world, expanded into an imagined landscape shaped by folklore, intuition, memory, and the teachings of philosophy.

EWAN GIBBS

For more than 30 years, Ewan Gibbs has spent almost every day drawing all day long. He is in the studio by 6:30 in the morning, takes breakfast at 9, lunch at 1, a catnap or two or three to keep his mind fresh throughout the day (in his bed, in the room adjacent to his studio), and stops working to walk four miles at 5:30 in the evening. After dinner at 8 he often gets another hour in at his drafting table. All the while, he keeps several mantras close at hand to help keep him focused:

It takes as long as it takes

Just do the next bit

Listen to your body

Double down on delicacy

And try to modulate the fuck of out of it!

Gibbs's drawings are small, grayscale, misty but realistic, and precise. Most of his drawings are based on snapshots he takes of iconic landmarks (often buildings) he encounters when visiting a place far from home. He grids his source photographs and translates them onto paper, square by square, row by row, into handmade, incomprehensibly delicate facsimiles.

HAAS BROTHERS

The Haas Brothers' cartoon drawings—of cuddly, bug-eyed animals with conspicuously (often oversized) humanoid genitals—are the connective tissue between their sculptures and furniture. Whether a furry chair with horns and feet, a ceramic vessel that looks like an underwater coral with wiggly tentacles, or a brass stool with knock-kneed legs, each object the Haas Brothers make is a goofy character from a bizarre, technicolor, alien ecosystem. Theirs is a utopian world of sexual freedom, shamelessness, gender/class/racial equality, and *fun*.

The painting in this show is an evolution of their ceramic sculptures they call Accretions, which are determined by the principles of self-organization. Shoaling fish, murmurations, crystallization, the formation of sand dunes, and the growth of stalactites and stalagmites are all examples of self-organization in nature, a process by which chaos spontaneously approaches order in physical, chemical, or biological systems.

Paintings, in the Haas Brothers' studio, are a little bit like science experiments. Each begins when twin brothers Niki and Simon design a situation in which paint and canvas have an opportunity to interact and yield some unexpected result that could not have arisen from human input alone. For the one in this show, *Martin Drippenberger*, they mounted a speaker to its backside and played a trio of tones—174, 126, and 72 hertz—at high volume during its production. They used a squeeze bottle to drip lines of paint at regular intervals along the top edge of the canvas—and did so over and over again until each drip came to resemble cave bacon, a naturally occurring geological formation Niki and Simon first saw at Inner Space Cavern as kids. On its way down the canvas, as it was responding to the tri-tone vibrations, each dripped line wiggled with increasing urgency and sometimes converged with its neighbors. Simon had the idea for the painting after looking into cymatics, the study of sound waves made visible in a physical medium like water, sand, or on a metal plate.

SIMON HAAS

Simon Haas's drawings pay tribute to his queered forefathers and the persecution they endured, and are a deeply personal reflection on the internalized homophobia many gay men—including Haas himself—struggle to overcome in their own journeys toward self-acceptance.

Haas's photorealistic drawings on small Claybord panels are rendered with warm obsessiveness. In his glory hole drawings, he dotes on the wood grain of a wall (a nod to Fire Island, a gay enclave where architectural timber is ubiquitous) as much as an unknowable partner's pubic hair or chin stubble or the stitching on his underwear. His silvery graphite is both materially and illusionistically reflective—his images capture glints of light on a wet tongue or in a wrinkle of duct tape at the same time as their deepest shadows gleam as if lit by some internal source. He scratches and abrades highlights into his drawings with steel wool or a carbide-point scribe, a technical eccentricity that recalls a guy with a hard-on carving his phone number into a toilet stall.

Nautilus Walk is one of the first drawings he made after his series of glory holes, of new friends swimming in a vast ocean—a tender moment he wished, as it was happening, could extend forever.

KARL HAENDEL

In his own words:

This is a drawing I've been wanting to make for years. It's my version of a marriage portrait.

The marriage portrait is a category of image you will find throughout history, across time and place. There are examples from ancient Egypt, China and India, Renaissance Europe both north and south, and Modernism, with Munch and Kahlo. In the past, marriage portraits were reserved for kings and queens and their like; the image of the betrothed served to signify and spread the power and prestige of the union. But the practice continues today—if you had a wedding, I bet there was a photographer there.

I've long been interested in this genre—specifically, how I could add my own spin to this type of representation. Instead of focusing on faces, the normative mode of portraiture, I focus on the hands, letting touch be the guiding sensation of the union.

I began by taking many pictures of the hands of my married friends Lora Reynolds and Colin Doyle. I then brought those images into Photoshop, digitally repositioning fingers, joints and jewelry, and eventually merging their hands together into some impossible combinations. The two individual hands, once joined in this manner, become something new in their own right. A third thing—the unique union—greater than what the two individuals can each do alone, but also impossible without them.

JESSICA HALONEN

From an essay by Kelly Baum:

"PM" is a particularly evocative combination of letters. An acronym with a variety of meanings, including post meridiem, postmortem, and palliative medicine, "PM" is suggestive of endings, both temporal and physical. For her part, Halonen had something else in mind when she selected "PM" for the title [of this body of work], specifically "particulate matter," which is to say microscopic particles that are felt in the body but barely seen with the eyes, bits of solids and drips of liquids that are impactful but almost invisible.

Investigatory in spirit, Jessica Halonen's practice is resolutely research-driven…[For PM], this led Halonen to a library in her home state of Michigan, where she sought out a study published by R.C. Kedzie of the Michigan State Board of Health in 1874. Titled *Shadows from the Walls of Death; Arsenical Wall Papers*, it comprises a "book of specimens of poisonous papers," more specifically, a sampling of mass-produced wallpapers—the type found in lower- and middle-class homes—whose inks contain the deadly chemical arsenic. The book includes a selection of the wallpapers in question. It was also printed on what its title page identifies as "poisonous" sheets of paper. In so doing, the authors made the deliberate, if baffling decision to correlate their publication's content and material, anticipating by exactly ninety years Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase, "the medium is the message." Copies of *Shadows from the Walls of Death* were distributed to libraries around Michigan in the hopes of alerting the public to the dangers of the papers with which they had decorated their walls. In its introduction, the Secretary of the State Board of Health, Henry B. Baker, encourages libraries to give the book "a prominent place" on their shelves. The more attention the study received from readers, however, the more those readers were exposed to the very hazards about which they were being warned. The implications of creating a publication about toxic wallpaper that was itself toxic seems not to have occurred to either Kedzie nor Baker, and eventually almost all the copies would be destroyed. In 2022, [researching this body of work], Halonen reviewed one of three surviving versions at the University of Michigan.

Halonen does not end up dwelling on the more macabre aspects of *Shadows from the Walls of Death*. Instead, she focuses on the wallpapers themselves, forging an artistic and conceptual dialogue with her source material.

CARL HAMMOUD

When Carl Hammoud started painting his newest body of work, he did not yet know how many images he would make or what they would depict—a simple departure from his usual mode, but a significant one. For every previous body of work he has ever made, he spent much of his time collecting images, combining and organizing them, considering how they related to one another, choosing a color palette—all before sharpening a drawing pencil or opening a single tube of paint. With his newer work, Hammoud made a point to avoid thinking prescriptively. He opened himself to receiving new ideas while making paintings and drawings and he let himself chase them. He did not begin with a thesis. Rather, he stepped straight into the unknown of a bottomless stack of blank panels and trusted some connective thread would lead him to the next image he needed to make.

The new work asks big questions. What is real? What is important? How does one survive the "day in day out…[of] boredom, routine, and petty frustration" that David Foster Wallace described as comprising "whole, large parts of adult life that nobody talks about"? For Hammoud, it's his daughter. She is changing the fabric of his being. Teaching him to open his eyes and heart as wide as he can. To feel the feelings. Live in this moment. Let the wind take over. Bringing this new disposition with him into the studio has animated his already heady work with a novel emotional charge. Fatherhood, it turns out, gives new weight to staring out across the sea.

TERESA HUBBARD / ALEXANDER BIRCHLER

Much of Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler's practice—rooted in time-based media and photography—investigates the interplay between social life, history, and memory. Their work frequently engages questions of obsolescence and attends to the lacunae—those gaps, omissions, and discontinuities—that surface within archives and collections. Drawing on methods and lines of inquiry more commonly associated with anthropology, archaeology, and history, Hubbard / Birchler extend their artistic practice into these adjacent disciplinary terrains.

In *A Year* (2025), the artists turn their attention to VHS tapes. By stacking, grouping, and reconfiguring VHS tapes into humorous yet quietly provocative tableaux, the work reflects on material media, cultural residue, and the passage of time. The act of reading the movie titles transform the composition into an act of time-keeping, inviting viewers to consider how personal and cultural histories are inventoried, recorded, forgotten, and re-encountered.

TAMARA JOHNSON

Tamara Johnson's handmade sculptures are so meticulously crafted they might convince you they are what they purport to be, unless you look closely enough to notice their slight squishiness precludes mass production. Although Johnson's work is suffused with lightheartedness (and simultaneously unafraid of leaning into tragedy), her sculptures are all deeply personal signifiers. "The objects I make become condensed bouillon cubes of material meaning," the artist says, "holding vulnerability, sexuality, and humor in a delicate balance."

ELLSWORTH KELLY

Starting in the 1940s, Ellsworth Kelly made paintings, sculptures, and prints of precise, simplified shapes in vibrant color—alone or in concert with others—and contour drawings in pencil or lithographic crayon of plants, flowers, and fruit. Shape and color are the primary subjects of his art, but his work stands apart from that of other early geometric abstractionists—which was characterized by a preoccupation with math and conceptualism—in that it was always derived from visual experiences Kelly chanced upon in the world. He made sketches and photographs—of the gentle curve of a snowy hill, shadows falling on a staircase, reflections in water, or the negative space under a bridge—which he would later return to, study, and transform into artworks with unidentifiable origins.

One of Kelly's lifelong projects—his Spectrums—began as a student assignment to reproduce the Munsell color chart by hand. Munsell's system is an extensive color space organized by hue (e.g., red or blue), value (lightness/darkness), and chroma (intensity). Kelly never lost interest in trying to reduce Munsell's hundreds of data points into just a handful of colors that were perfectly coordinated in value and chroma. It was very difficult to do, Kelly said, because "each color has to be the right red, the right purple," and the transitions between each pair had to be seamless and balanced. Making a violet as brilliant as a yellow—and conversely, a yellow as weighty as a violet—was no easy task. He chose the colors for his Spectrums intuitively, in a celebration of light (which Isaac Newton proved was comprised of many colors) and seeing.

Considering the untraceability of the majority of Kelly's work and that all of it is inspired by his specific observations of everyday life, *unknowability* becomes an important conceptual anchor that remained constant for the entirety of his career. He spent his life distilling fleeting, mundane moments of visual intrigue into artworks that take the viewer beyond their normal experience of the world. As curator Richard Axsom put it, "...[Kelly's] paintings, sculptures, and prints are physical objects and a part of our sphere. His serene art, then...is a conduit between two realms: the phenomenal and the transcendental."

ROSY KEYSER

Many of Rosy Keyser's paintings deal with having one foot in the physical world and one foot in another—psychological, spiritual, cosmic.

Keyser calls her studio an "untamed piece of turf," a space where she tries to be present with her paintings, listen to them, respond, and let them show her places she could not have intentionally found. Her daily studio practice is an exercise in relinquishing full control and letting her work—and the world—wash over her.

Binaries are of less interest to Keyser than continuums. She references order/chaos, female/male, vertical/horizontal, life/death et cetera to get at the possibilities of what is *between* the two poles. She describes the experience of wrestling with her own work as similar to the phase transitions between liquids and gases: vaporization and condensation.

TONY MARSH

When Marsh threw his first ceramic vessel in a high-school art class in 1972, a little pot about the size of his fist, "I thought it was a miracle. Holding it in my hands, I didn't expect it to be so warm. It was almost like an infant. It changed me. I walked into the studio, saw that thing, and knew I never wanted to do anything else." And just as he foresaw, making ceramic vessels has provided Marsh with more than 50 years of endless new territory to explore. Every time he opens the kiln, he hopes to see something he has never seen before—and often he does.

Tony Marsh has dedicated his life to a material and a form he says never seems to exhaust itself—clay and the vessel. Each has been critical to humankind since ancient times: for survival, storytelling, beauty—for how we make sense of ourselves and the world around us. Marsh continues the tradition, following a well-worn path—and yet still breaking new ground.

ROY MCMAKIN

In his own words:

Sorry to make things difficult, but my drawings are in fact just that: drawings.

Part of the reason I make drawings is that they don't have to be anything.

And they don't have to be figured out until they are done.

Some are minimal, some are streaming, some are of objects. They are similar to one another.

Some of them have text, some have imagery, some can just be a drawing of a rectangle. They are pretty. And calm.

I made [one] for this show.

JASON MIDDLEBROOK

The common theme across all of Jason Middlebrook's work is an exploration of man's relationship with nature—symbiotic at times; often adversarial, misguided, or underappreciated; always nuanced and always evolving (for better or worse). Over the course of his career, he has developed a visual vocabulary in pursuit of these ideas—based on the tension between images of plant or animal life (organic forms) and geometric abstraction (a stand-in for mankind and the built world).

DONALD MOFFETT

The surfaces of Donald Moffett's paintings are luscious, seductive, and almost always monochromatic. But the enchanting textures he conjures—with dense/extruded/fatty/rich/uncut oil paint or glossy pigmented resin or glistening rabbit-skin glue—belie the personal and political depths that drive Moffett's ambitions. Campaigns for justice form the core of the work, charted by Moffett's close examinations of pleasure and heartbreak—whether in the news, on the street, in the bedroom, or in nature.

TOM MOLLOY

Tom Molloy, for as long as he can remember, has been a careful reader of history and the news. He is interested in geopolitics, and although he is an Irish artist living in France, he pays particularly close attention to the United States—both because it has been the de facto global leader in the push for democracy, denuclearization, and human rights since the end of World War II, and because the delta between the USA's purported ideals and real-life actions provide Molloy with some especially rich territory to explore in his artworks.

JONG OH

In a first encounter with an artwork by Jong Oh, from afar, the work registers as a delicate and precise line drawing—the black outline of a cube, for instance—improbably levitating, devoid of any substrate, in three-dimensional space. What appears to be a thin stroke of ink seems to have been removed from paper or canvas and made to float in mid-air. Closer inspection reveals the work is not a drawing at all—but a sculpture of thread or fine black jewelry chain and thin metal rods, held aloft by a few cleverly arranged lengths of practically invisible monofilament. For Oh, the boundary between a drawing and a sculpture is more a question of time—attention, awareness—than dimensionality.

The Line Sculptures center around a square dowel of unfinished walnut. The wood might form the shape of an L, with one section fixed to the wall vertically and another protruding perpendicularly. Sometimes he balances a found blue marble on top of the dowel, or he dangles a length of fine chain underneath to create a straight and plumb vertical line.

Ever since he was a boy, Oh has preferred listening to speaking. In a world where logorrheic personalities often rise to prominence, Oh went through a period of questioning his own gentle nature, his tendency to focus on others rather than himself, his predisposition toward sensitivity rather than assertiveness (as if such traits were liabilities). "Eventually, I came to accept this about myself," he says, transforming a source of self-doubt into a subtle and sophisticated visual language that invites viewers to pay closer attention to the world around them. When asked if he ever thinks of his sculptures as self-portraits, he says no, not consciously. "But if that's the case, at least I've been honest," he laughs—honest to his own fiber as well as the materials and spaces he works with. Wherever he goes, Oh carries with him his mother's encouragement to embody the present moment: "Whatever you have in your hands," she would say, "you are only ever borrowing for a short time. You arrive in this world with nothing—and so too, you depart with nothing."

MIKE OSBORNE

Whether or not a sinister narrative actually underpins the mundane scenes from Mike Osborne's body of work Federal Triangle, which he made in Washington DC during the first Trump administration, the pictures evoke a smoldering paranoia familiar to even the most casual consumers of news.

The institutions implied by the title of the show represent much of the policy and messaging that shapes our understanding of Americanism today. The "paranoid style" described in a 1964 article by Richard Hofstadter—which looks at conspiracy theories and movements of suspicious discontent throughout American history—continues to be relevant, now that division and distrust are two major hallmarks of the current political era.

CLAIRE OSWALT

Claire Oswalt's paintings on canvas begin as meanderings in watercolor on paper—swaths of earthy reds; pools or veins of rich, watery blues; arroyos of emerald green. She makes stacks of drawings before ripping them up and rearranging the pieces into small rectangular collages, centering them on sheets of foxed paper pulled from books of personal significance. Some of these collages become studies for larger paintings—near-perfect facsimiles made from pieces of canvas she stitches together. Oswalt came to this way of artmaking as she slowly learned to balance the opposing forces within herself.

Her work is a representation of confronting the unknowable, searching and discovery, reshuffling priorities and impulses, and finding balance—between science and softer paradigms, light and darkness, time alone and with loved ones, responsibility and flâneurism, chaos and control, concave curves pushing against convex ones, earth and air and water. Claire Oswalt's work is a portrait of her life and how she moves through the world: with open eyes, an open heart, curiosity, sensitivity, fearlessness, and the optimism that beauty can always be both found and made.

MEGHANN RIEPENHOFF

Meghann Riepenhoff makes her images with an antiquated photographic printing process—no camera, no lens—and thinks of her work as a collaboration with the ocean, landscape, and precipitation. Her dynamic cyanotypes take on varying shades of blue and give the impression of water in motion—droplets that run before amassing into sheets; waves that swell, crash, and spray fine mist; a snowdrift growing in an icy storm. Much of Riepenhoff's work is large enough to feel immersive, overwhelming—her biggest pieces can even recall the apocalyptic surf at Nazaré.

In a darkroom, she coats paper with a homemade solution of light-sensitive iron salts. Once dry, she packs it into light-tight boxes, carries it into the field, and unfurls it in sunlight. As water washes over her paper—whether from the sea, a lake, rainfall, or a snowstorm—each piece continuously changes in appearance as it simultaneously exposes, processes, and fixes. UV light initiates the exposure; water arrests it. Although she speaks of collaborating with the landscape, she acknowledges mostly needing to surrender to it.

She has been making her current body of work, State Shift, while displaced from her home because of a climate event. Her hand is more visible in this series than previous bodies of work; for the first time, she is adding materials to the cyanotypes as they develop on the beach—mica, mushroom inks, ginko chlorophyll, commercial pigments—as an analogy for the impact human activity is having on the planet.

MARIAH ROBERTSON

Mariah Robertson breaks all the rules of photography—starting with almost never using a camera to make her pictures. She pushes against the boundaries of the system: norms, taught in educational darkrooms, that many see as the most efficient path to a perfect print, but Robertson sees as opportunities—dogmatic constraints ripe for reimagining. Rather than obsessively managing light leaks and calculating perfect ratios of time and toxic chemicals, Robertson drips/pools/swirls/sprays chromogenic developing chemistry on light-sensitive paper to create riotous worlds of color that simultaneously point to fire, water, distant nebulae, microbiology, and the unknown. Her iconoclasm is rooted in feminism: she asserts her work's right to *be*, against the grain of the male-dominated photo world, just as women's rights activists have been doing for the last century in the larger world of patriarchy.

KAY ROSEN

"When it comes to reading my work," Kay Rosen once said, "Throw out all the rules you ever learned: spelling, spacing, capitalization, margins, linear reading, composition…all your old reading habits will be useless." Rosen's artworks—drawings and paintings of single words or short phrases—call attention to the unexpected dramas she finds hiding inside letterforms or words, where most of us assume no meaning is to be found. Rosen reveals her discoveries by arranging, scaling, or applying color to series of letters in atypical ways, encouraging a non-linear, associative form

of reading akin to solving a puzzle (usually unlocked, at least in part, by a clue in an artwork's title). Her work always originates from a place of play—she pokes and prods language until what looks like a sign turns into a story (and sometimes a silly one). Occasionally her almost-readymades immediately point to larger elements of culture or history or politics (as in 2012, halfway through the War in Afghanistan, when she found the city *KANDAHAR* inside the expression *BETWEEN A ROC**K AND A HAR**D PLACE*). In many cases, her artworks (even those that initially seem to revel purely in the delight of language, sidestepping any socio-political associations when Rosen first conceives of them) gain additional meaning over time, as years and decades pass, news develops, and history is made. Rosen's light touch and the inherent mutability of language have led to an oeuvre, nearly five decades in the making, with a miraculous ability to shape-shift over time and continually reinvent itself as engaged with the perennial *now*.

Fig in a Frig drawing reads *frig*, in lowercase Garamond Italic. The R is the color of blackberry jam; the other three letters are an even-darker grayish eggplant. She was remembering the fig tree in the backyard of her childhood home—how much she loved climbing it with her sister and the neighborhood kids in summertime Texas. A refrigerator, of course, is a preservation tool, but in the case of this artwork, one that holds a memory rather than food. And although today its colloquialism is usually spelled *fridge*, when the word first made the jump from spoken to written English, perhaps in the late 1930s, it was often spelled *frig* (but still pronounced FRIJ). Eventually it gained a D and an E to arrive at its current form, likely to make its pronunciation more clear and avoid confusion with the other, more vulgar connotation of *frig*. Rosen rather likes this naughty chameleonism, though—the more a single word in her artworks can do, the better.

ED RUSCHA

Single words and short phrases—the way they look when written, sound when spoken, their power in one's imagination—have been a primary medium for Ed Ruscha's reflections on American culture for more than 60 years. He considers them found objects, and they come from everywhere: overheard conversations, cans of food from the supermarket, movies and books, billboard copy, the radio in a passing car. They might be palindromes, non sequiturs, double entendres, brand names, onomatopoeias, or solitary conjunctions.

Although Ruscha's choices of words sometimes seem inexplicable, they are all rooted in personal experience. Much of his work points to Middle America (where he grew up, in Oklahoma City), his Catholic upbringing, his love of women, and the pleasure and delight he finds in language. "Paradox and absurdity have just always been really delicious to me," he says. "I've always been dead serious about being nonsensical."

XAVIER SCHIPANI

Most of the figures Xavier Schipani paints are men—because his work is largely a reckoning with masculinity. What is manliness? What has it meant in the past, what does it mean now, and what are its shortcomings?

History may never have seen another time when the idea of masculinity has been in deeper crisis and more dramatic flux than during the last ten years. Analogously, Schipani's life has been a continuous reckoning with his own masculinity. For almost twenty years now he has lived as a man, after a lifetime of feeling out of place in the female body he was born into.

In his article for the *New Yorker* about masculinity, Joshua Rothman quotes an essay by Thomas Page McBee, a trans man who wrote about his experience training at a boxing gym: "I love the beauty I find in masculinity, the way it can hold a bloody nose and a hug, a sharp razor on the jaw under the tender watch of a barber, the muscle that must be nursed carefully to its potential, the body that can make a puppy or a child feel sheltered, cocooned." Rothman wonders: "Perhaps this is what virility without misogyny could sound like."

Perhaps—but we still have a long way to go.

BRYAN SCHUTMAAT

Schutmaat grew up in Greater Houston, but he has built his career in photography around country drives that accumulate into explorations of the American West. From the first time he picked up a camera, Schutmaat has used photography as an escape—an excuse to get away from the parking lots, billboards, and strip malls that crowded his daily life in the suburbs. He prefers the desert, old mining towns, striking up conversations with ranchers and drifters, and watching sunsets and moonrises without any artificial light dulling the sky. He sees his work as something of an elegy—a clear-eyed reckoning with the mythologies perpetuated by Manifest Destiny, Ansel Adams, and Hollywood. Despite the many rusted promises and unrealized dreams he finds on his wanderings, he brings home stories of beauty and perseverance.

FRANK SELBY

Selby draws and paints from collages he makes, in which he conspicuously combines pairs of photographs or film stills. Recently he has been adapting images from movies and history books, focusing on the middle of the 20th century.

Previously, Selby has drawn specific historical events—often riots or wartime conflicts—to explore miscommunications and misinterpretations. He points at the messy networks of reasons people say and do things and the messy filter through which other people interpret those behaviors. And photojournalism—the primary way over the last century these actions and reactions have been shared with remote third parties—introduces additional layers of unreliability in communication. Philosophers since Plato and Aristotle have wrestled with the problematic relationship between images and the physical world. Selby agrees images continue to provide an infinite potential for misunderstanding.

Although the ideas that drive the new work remain the same, Selby's source material is evolving: instead of drawing overtly political events from the past, he is pulling from classic films, modernist architecture, domestic products, and jewelry design. Selby thinks of each of the things in his drawings and paintings as a "communicative act." A diamond-encrusted broach was made the way it was for a kaleidoscopic array of reasons: the then-current political and economic climate, of course, but also fashion, technology, popular culture, and an infinite assortment of other considerations, mostly lost in the passage of time and impossible to trace. Selby is not just drawing objects, he is depicting vast matrices of information, mostly unknowable.

ARLENE SHECHET

Arlene Shechet's sculptures defy categorization. Some are figurative, some are architectural, others resemble melting vessels or growing biological forms—but they nearly always seem off balance or on the verge of collapse. As Peter Schjeldahl said in the *New Yorker*, Shechet is "an artist with energy and second-nature mastery to burn…Her works in fired clay are visceral masses and heaped strands on brick or cracked-wood-block pedestals and stools. Some verge on the animate; others surge sideways as if in a wind or an undersea current."

Working with clay is a rich experience for Shechet. In her own words: "The things that I build…grow over months because I might be able to add only one inch of material in a day. I'm extending forms and I'm challenging balance and gravity in such a way that they always want to collapse or tip over…In fact, often things do collapse or fall over, and many don't make it, but I love working on that precarious edge. For me, that has obvious emotional, psychological, and philosophical meaning."

Roberta Smith described Shechet's work in the *New York Times* as "terrific, full of references yet almost debt-free…sexy, devout, ugly, and beautiful all at the same time, they move effortlessly between art and religion and East and West, and from painting and sculpture to craft and ritual."

ERIN SHIRREFF

Erin Shirreff works in photography, sculpture, collage, and video, but across all mediums her work is fundamentally image-based. Her practice is rooted in the studio and in process: material translations from two to three dimensions (or from three to two) or from analog to digital (and vice versa) are what form her diverse but interrelated bodies of work. Running throughout, and consistently for almost two decades, is her curiosity about different modes of attention, and what happens within the uncertain moments of an aesthetic encounter.

Ultimately, much of Shirreff's work circles back as an oblique investigation into the passage of time. She explores the way we apprehend images, objects, experiences, and ideas—and how the way we perceive all of these things shifts over time. Her work reminds us of how adrift in our own moment we really are—how alien our children's preferences and world views can seem; how alien *ours* must have been to our parents. We are surrounded by objects and filled with memories that point backwards in time—but what is the past still saying? Can we really access anything outside of the present moment? What do we ever have other than uncertainty? Historical artworks are a recurring motif in Shirreff's work in order to underline the act of *looking* as central to how she thinks through these questions. An open-ended encounter (looking at art or anything else) is where she believes the answers to her unanswerable questions can be felt, if not entirely understood.

LUCAS SIMÕES

Lucas Simões's practice is rooted in looking closely at modernist architecture. His most recent work arose from his investigations into *blurriness*, which is how he describes the separation between how an architect intends a building to be seen and used—and how the public feels about and lives with it in the real world. Norman Foster once said, "Architects design for the present, with an awareness of the past, for a future which is essentially unknown." No matter how thoroughly an architect might anticipate the future needs of a building's occupants, people are irrational and

unpredictable. They use the spaces and objects around them in whatever ways make sense at a given moment, whether or not that use was forecast.

Simões's sculptures have always seemed to defy the basic rules of physics. Through clever engineering, he can make concrete feel as airy as a marshmallow, or steel as drapey as a ribbon of fabric. Despite the intellectual rigor of his practice, Simões is a sensualist forever enthralled by the erotics of tension and balance. Throughout his work, connections abound to the body and its many pleasures.

MICHAEL SMITH

In the summer of 2011 Smith was a resident artist at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, where this photo was staged. The roadhouse-like setting offered Smith the perfect backdrop for a picture where he appears to be the mentor of these younger musicians.

BARRY STONE

Barry Stone makes photographs—many of them diaristic, capturing mundane moments (that seem sprinkled with fairy dust) shared with his family in central Texas or coastal Maine or somewhere in between. He makes books and exhibitions of these pictures.

"Chance has always been a part of photography, from the beginning," Stone says. "We never really know what we've got until we've developed it in the darkroom or see it in the back of our cameras or on our computer screens. There's always something surprising about the world talking back to you." His databent pictures reinforce the centrality of luck both in photography and in life—ultimately serving as a reminder of how little control we have over our own trajectories. But if we can accept the disquietude of this implication, great beauty is to be found in not knowing what will come—in resigning to being present with and attentive to those we love most.

MICHELLE STUART

Michelle Stuart has been making drawings, sculpture, site-specific land art, and photographs since the late 1960s—all of which revolve around an interest in nature, geology, archaeology, anthropology, travel, and the age-old question: "Why are we here?" Since 2009 her output has focused on grids of mostly black-and-white photographs (made with as few as a half-dozen images or as many as 100), culled from an immense archive of images she has found or made herself.

Curator Gregory Volk calls Stuart's dreamlike tableaux "mesmerizing and transportive." They often compress huge stretches of time in a single work. Stuart's work takes us careening through the cosmos, across deserts, into jungles, sailing open seas, and crawling along the ocean floor—always with a curious, sensitive eye that is prone to awe, keen to investigate life of all kinds: whether plants, insects, dogs, indigenous peoples, or Parisians. Volk also writes, "As much as Stuart connects with scientifically minded naturalists and explorers, she equally connects with spiritually charged experiences in nature…her photographic works decisively upend a longstanding anthropocentric worldview and instead situate us (and all our artifacts, tools, and achievements) amid natural cycles of growth and decay, regeneration and entropy."

JIM TOROK

Jim Torok's miniature portraits are incredibly lifelike. Oil paintings on panel, most are five inches high by four inches wide and an inch-and-a-half thick (although some are even smaller). For more than 20 years, he has been painting friends, artists, family, and himself in this mostly unwavering format—face forward, head and shoulders, neutral expression. Despite their diminutive size and his subjects' lack of overt expression, Torok's portraits are powerful (if subtle) exclamations of personhood.

Before starting a rigorous day's work on his portraits, Torok makes a handful of loose drawings on copy paper—drawing in a style he began to develop as a child. He tries to let himself draw whatever is on his mind, no matter how ridiculous, to warm up his hand and mind. The drawings can be block-letter slogans (tender or aspirational, sarcastic or obscene), monologues by bald stick figures with oversized noses (self-deprecating self-portraits), or any sort of inventive and absurd doodle. In colored pencil or felt-tipped marker, Torok's expressive cartoons form a surprising counterpoint to his hyperrealistic portraits. Yes, these two bodies of work are by the same artist.

The cartoons reveal some of Torok's most intimate feelings and beliefs. He worries about not being smart enough, young enough, or good-looking enough. He marvels at the power of the internet but is ambivalent about his attachment to his smartphone. The new political order concerns him. Kindness and dream-chasing are virtues he reaches for. And tomorrow will be better. Surely.

MARTHA TUTTLE

In 2016, Martha Tuttle shared the following impression:

> How wonderful that the secrets of our becoming are held in such seemingly humble form. Holding the universe in a grain of sand, we are the universe thinking about itself. Or we are walking, talking minerals. It would be so easy to dismiss these [observations] as sentimentalities rather than to acknowledge how amazing it is that they are not at all poetic exaggerations, just simple statements of fact.

Trees and plants continue to surprise us with their sophisticated methods of communicating with each other. Rocks, too, likely have a means of relating to their own history and existence. Even atomic structures, Tuttle argues, are aware and intelligent—if on their own terms. What if what we call love, care, intimacy, and tenderness were not experiences solely available to our own species, but the ubiquitous conditions of the mattered universe?

JEFF WILLIAMS

Jeff Williams pushes the materials in his sculptures to their limits by compressing, torching, or corroding them: he forces steel, aluminum, or concrete to teeter on the edge of structural failure, provides the potential for a limestone fossil to erode at an accelerated rate, or otherwise manipulates the relationships air, light, water, and gravity typically have to time. Williams's objects, with their implied or actual transformations, challenge our assumptions about strength and longevity—of the Earth, architecture, even our bodies—and emphasize the inevitability of change.

BING WRIGHT

Windows have been a recurring motif in Bing Wright's work since the late 1980s, when he began making photographic prints and light boxes that appear to be double-hung windows, framing the pastoral vistas from his farmhouse in the Catskills. Last summer at the gallery, he exhibited his first foray into sculpture and moving images, with a *trompe-l'œil* window more convincing than any of his previous facsimiles. The window on view in this exhibition is from his first series of window photographs made with digital technologies.