

ONE REGION
FOURTEEN CITIES
TWENTY-THREE ARTISTS



The Regional

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Cincinnati
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FOREWARD

"I realized my best ideas came to me whilst I was milking cows."

— Grant Wood (1891-1942)

People have often associated American Regionalism with three well-known 20th century Midwestern artists: Grant Wood of Iowa, John Steuart Curry of Kansas, and Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. They were known as the "Regionalist Triumvirate." Public perception of their artwork has been rooted in the fact that these figurative painters were keen to depict life in their mostly rural states, and to celebrate their local communities, often focusing on Midwestern history, small town activities, and farming. As a result, reactions to this artistic movement were not always positive, with art critics at the time (i.e. 1930s and '40s) using derogatory terms to describe their artwork, ranging from "hick" to "commu-nazi," from "caricatures" to "reactionary."

Nearly a century later, as a result of much effort on the part of Midwest cultural institutions, university art history departments, and art galleries, these opinions have started to change. Moves have been made to shift perceptions and to educate the general public in the United States on the remarkable qualities they can expect from Regional Midwestern art. In 2014, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art put on a show entitled *The Center is a Moving Target*, which presented work by a dozen local artists whose evolving practices and works speak to the impact and meaningful shifts in the term regionalism in contemporary art. A key objective of the project was to start a dialogue on what creates a community, region, or arena for artistic

invention and action, and to explore the notion that the center of the contemporary art world is a moving target. A year later in 2015, a second exhibition was presented entitled *The Center is a Moving Target: If You Lived (T)Here*, which addressed the evolving rhythm and elusive modern definition of regionalisms in contemporary art. It featured six artists living and working "along a central corridor of the Midwest—from Iowa, through Kansas City, and to Oklahoma" and who address the history and peculiarities of place in projects that explore architectural concepts of our time.

Since 1939, the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) has also played a pivotal role in shaping the arts and culture of the Midwest. Throughout its eighty-year history, the CAC has worked to promote local artists, and in just the last decade, it has featured Midwestern artists like Jimmy Baker (American, born 1980), Shinji Turner-Yamamoto (Japanese, born 1965), Mark Mothersbaugh (American, born 1950), Chris Larson (American, born 1966), Mark de Jong (American, born 1966), Alison Crocetta (American, born 1968), Tom Schiff (American, born 1947), Kahlil Robert Irving (American, born 1992), and Steffani Jemison (American, born 1981) to name a few. Each of these makers have prompted us to think deeply about key questions and issues that resonate not only locally, but nationally and internationally. An important reminder that the Midwest, is made up of people from all over the world, who call this so-called "fly over country" home. As one of the oldest and largest non-collecting art institutions in the United States, the CAC is proud to call Cincinnati home, bringing innovative and thought-provoking artworks that

challenge our audiences to expand their worldviews. By engaging visitors of all ages and backgrounds, the CAC imagines how art can help to create a more equitable world. *The Regional* demonstrates what we do best—showcasing the groundbreaking artists who engage in the most pressing and critical issues of the present moment.

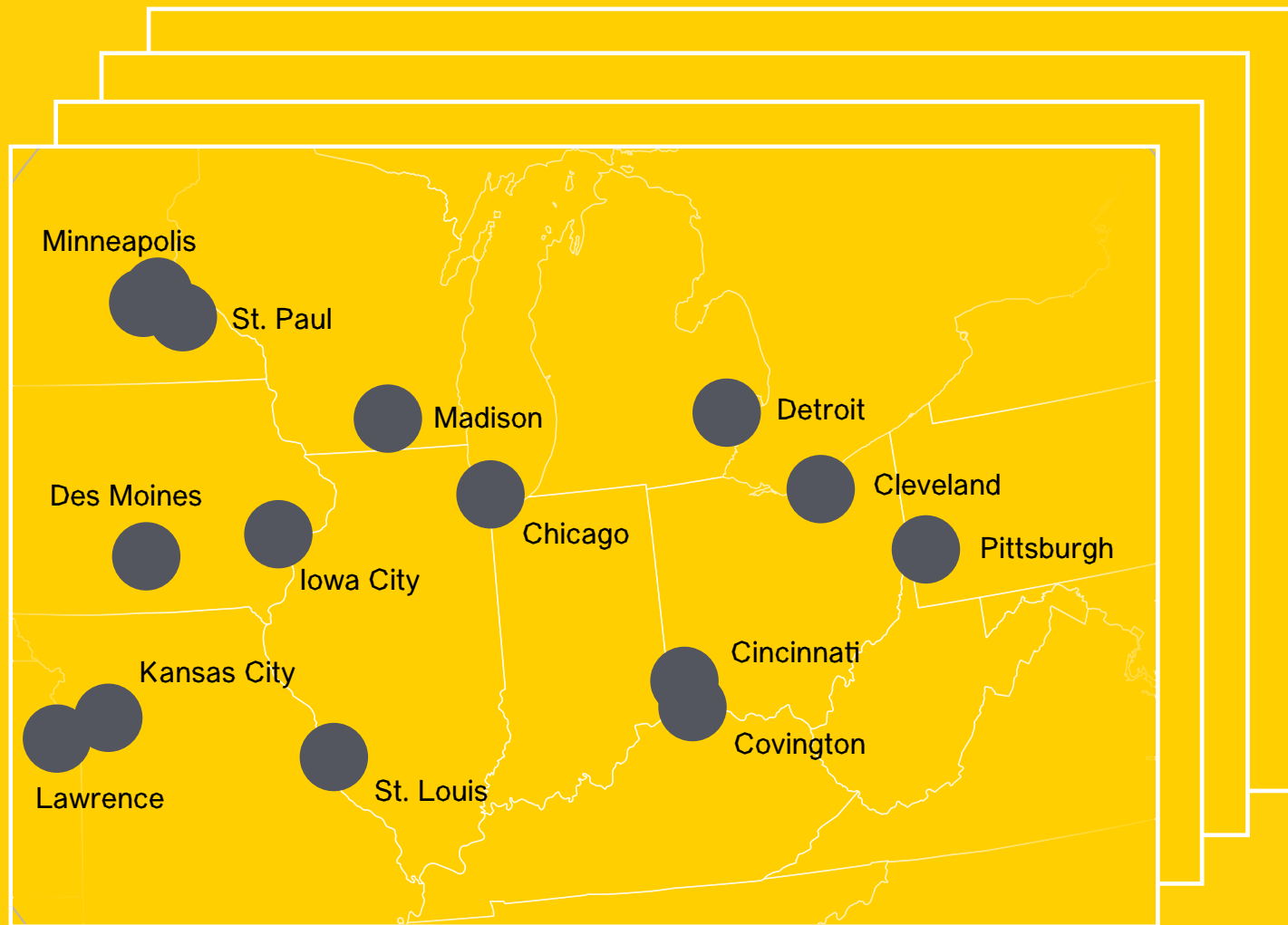
We are thrilled to present THE REGIONAL, which was co-organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati and Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, as two institutions that are equally invested in the Midwest and its locally based artists. As the only multi-museum survey dedicated to contemporary artists in the Midwest, THE REGIONAL is the first exhibition of its kind. Bringing together twenty-three artists from fourteen cities, the exhibition highlights the complex diversity and vibrancy that exists in the Midwest. Each of the participating artists presents a specific outlook on the region and its significant place in the world, both geographically and politically. From an immersive installation that reflects on the histories of coffee production in El Salvador to a photographic series that documents the changing landscape in Covington, Kentucky, the works included in THE REGIONAL are invested in the political stakes of the local and the global. This momentous exhibition brings together a collection of diverse voices that uplift, critique, and complicate the ways that we think about the Midwest and its relationship to land, home, belonging, nostalgia, trauma, healing, and identity.

We would like to thank all of the superb artists in *The Regional*, whose work helped create a most remarkable and engaging exhibition: Hellen Ascoli, Lyndon Barrois Jr., Jonathan Christensen Caballero, Rachel Cox, Mara Duvra, Conrad Egyir, Isa Gagarin, Rashawn Griffin, Dan Gunn, Matthew Angelo Harrison, Pao Houa Her, Anissa Lewis, Dakota Mace (Diné), Gisela McDaniel, Lorena Molina, Hương Ngô, Yvonne Osei, Natalie Petrovsky, Devan Shimoyama, Alice Tippit, Jordan Weber, Margo Wolowiec, and Nikki Woods.

We are also grateful to the curators who made this enlightening exhibition possible: Amara Antilla (Senior Curator with Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati) and Jade Powers (Assistant Curator with Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art), with Stephanie Kang (Assistant Curator with Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati). We would also like to thank Raphaela Platow (Executive Director of the Speed Art Museum, Louisville; former Alice & Harris Weston Director and Chief Curator of the CAC, Cincinnati), Erin Dzedzic (Director of Curatorial Affairs with Kemper Museum), Jennifer Cox (former Communications Director with Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati) and Louise Forster (Marketing and Communications Manager with Kemper Museum), and Designer Ryland Wharton for their hard work on this significant project.

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THE REGIONAL

Amara Antilla and Jade Powers

THE REGIONAL is an exhibition series presenting new work by artists who have or are currently living and working in the Midwest. Loosely defined as the area that stretches from the Dakotas along the Great Lakes to Michigan and Ohio to Minnesota along the Mississippi River through Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, “the Midwest” is largely a construct bound by geography, sociocultural events, and historical commonalities. Works by twenty-three artists living in Blaine, Minnesota, Chicago, Illinois, Cincinnati, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, Covington, Kentucky, Des Moines, Iowa, Detroit, Michigan, Iowa City, Iowa, Kansas City, Missouri, Lawrence, Kansas, Madison, Wisconsin, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Saint Louis, Missouri, and St. Paul, Minnesota are featured.

Engaging in virtual studio visits with the artists prompted open-ended and ongoing conversations. It was especially fascinating to discover the artists were interested in similar topics, and to explore how each employs a range of media to enact those messages. Common, interconnected themes relate to landscape and abstraction, labor and the immigrant experience, architecture and notions of home, healing from ethnic and racial trauma, the influence of Americana and popular culture, and portraiture and identity.

Rather than imposing a strong thematic as a starting point, we developed a curatorial, artist-led methodology, which expanded on ideas already present in the artists’ work, such as unpacking the idea of regionalism itself. In turn, we began a self-inquiry into the nature of the project and our institutions, in relation to the artists and communities we serve: How might we support a regional conversation and prop up local artists? How might we foster conversations between our cities and the many other vibrant hubs throughout the Midwest? What are the values of living and working outside of conventional “art hubs,” financial and otherwise? This and so much more was unearthed.

LANDSCAPE AND ABSTRACTION

Challenging the routinely accepted universality of abstraction, **DAKOTA MACE** (American, born 1991), **HELLEN ASCOLI** (Guatemalan, born 1984), **MARGO WOLOWIEC** (American, born 1985), and **ISA GAGARIN** (American, born 1985) apply strategies of textual fragmentation, visual pixilation and patterning, and image blur or erasure to an analysis of specific sites. Using weaving, photography, and painting, they explore the ways in which contested histories, personal memory, and identity are rooted

in both the landscape of the Midwest and other real and imagined places.

Wolowiec calls attention to urgent environmental and socio-political topics, with a focus on the industry and infrastructure of Detroit, where she resides. Featuring woven panels of found imagery of waterways, severe weather events, and topographic maps alongside brain scans, the works included in *THE REGIONAL* refer to climate catastrophe, infrastructure, and mental health. In *11 Cities* (2019) three woven panels rendered from polymer and linen thread, with acrylic paint and material repurposed from reflective mylar emergency shelter blankets, were then dyed with indigo and stretched on a hand-fabricated steel frame that resembles a folding screen.

The composition features images of waterways in cities vulnerable to flooding, including Bangkok, Boston, Detroit, Dhaka, Guangzhou, Ho Chi Minh City, Kolkata, Miami, Mumbai, New Orleans, and New York. The included image of the Detroit River was taken by Wolowiec when the river was at historically high levels, following an incident in which radioactive elements infiltrated the river near drinking water intake stations that service parts of Michigan and southern Canada. While Canadian officials were quick to alert citizens and discontinue use of that water, the United States deemed it safe for use. As Wolowiec remarks, “Water connects our world” and yet because of this it often becomes contaminated due to the heavy industry situated on the banks of most rivers throughout the Midwest, and the raw goods that travel via freight, such as the iron ore used for steel production. She goes on to describe the significance of the steel used to frame the panels: “The banks of the Detroit River are home to steel mills that have destroyed the land they sit on and pollute our air and waterways yet are an integral part of the US economy.” The imagery present in *11 Cities* appears tranquil, yet their source material alludes to a much more sinister reality that conjures unease and anxiety about our most precious natural resource, which has been exploited for profit at sites throughout the Midwest and internationally.

In a more recent piece, *Wandering Path* (2021), Wolowiec explores the ambiguity of travel and wellness in a pandemic context by tiling and mirroring diverse found images to create a reflective, wave-like “treadling” pattern. Images of maps and geotagged views of Queenstown, New Zealand—one of the top travel destinations in 2021 according to *Forbes* magazine—highlight the rise in travel as vaccines and increased safety measures have allowed for more movement. Juxtaposed with this is an image from an article on neuroscience, which shows grey and

white matter in a cross section of the human brain. It is accompanied by the caption: “You think primarily with the cerebral hemispheres, the two wrinkled masses that look like walnut halves.” It continues, “Brain diversity may have allowed us to be successful on the planet, because the different wirings help us to solve all kinds of problems and adapt to changing circumstances.” An empty prescription medicine case associated with the hashtag “herbalmedicine” alludes to national debates regarding conventional versus alternative medicine as the pandemic rages on.

Mace’s (Diné) *Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places)* (2021) is a powerful meditation on the relationship between land and community. The artist used an indexical printing process to activate landscape as a storyteller and an image-maker, emphasizing the power of nature to record and keep ancestral memory and indigenous knowledge. The work references one of the most appalling episodes in American history, when the US Army expelled the Diné (Navajo) people from their ancestral homeland, Dinétah, as an act of ethnic cleansing. In what came to be known as the Long Walk, close to 10,000 people were forced to make the grueling and dangerous walk by foot for up to 400 miles to the Bosque Redondo Reservation/Fort Sumner in New Mexico, where they were imprisoned and held against their will from 1864 to 1868.

The installation brings together 200 cyanotypes dyed with cochineal, tiled together side by side to create a nearly 10-foot-square composition in shades of black and deep red, with audio excerpts of Diné elders recounting stories about the Long Walk. Cyanotype is a form of cameraless photography, traditionally created by placing objects on light-sensitive paper to capture their forms. Here Mace used the paper to index the environment, placing it directly on the land at points along the trajectory of her ancestors’ path. Wind, water, sand, and rocks are imprinted and leave traces in different ways on each of the prints. Purposefully inverting the act of photography, which historically was used to surveil and exploit indigenous populations, the installation instead focuses on abstraction as a tool for honoring each person who lost his or her life during this forced migration. Rather than show the trauma and destruction of life, which was thought to trigger recurrent suffering, Mace offers images literally created by the landscape to reimagine a site of memory, resilience, protection, and freedom.

Similarly, Ascoli explores the ways in which personal and collective trauma can be bound up with place—in this case, the border wall of the United States. *Lake Lap* (2021) refers to the US immigration crisis by way of Guatemala-native Ascoli’s time living in

Madison, Wisconsin (2014–2020). The title of the work references the daily walks around Monona Lake that became part of her routine living in the Midwest. While these “laps” were a time for communion with nature and relaxation, Ascoli also cites feeling frustrated and helpless while reflecting on the repeated instances of injustice and racially motivated violence, which were reported on in the daily news.

The included phrases were drawn, in part, from a speech US Vice President Kamala Harris gave when visiting Guatemala in June 2021. In reference to the influx of migrants from Central America at the southern border, Harris repeated the statement, “Do not come; do not come.” Ascoli deconstructs this statement in poetic wordplay, inverting the word order and mixing English and Spanish to introduce multiple readings that reflect the contradictions between the ideals of so-called American freedom and the racist immigration policies developed by Trump, and upheld by Biden. Scanning from top to bottom, the composition features the phrases “come not” and “come knots” while further down Ascoli switches to Spanish with the expression “*come nudos*,” which means to eat knots. In doing so, Ascoli cites what Donna Haraway describes as “knottedness,” a tool for thinking about the interconnectedness of content and form or matter and meaning, while referring at the same time to the material of the object itself, which is, of course, woven.

Painter, printmaker, and sculptor, Gagarin works in a site-responsive manner to create haptic environments that are rooted in place. Informed by traditional color theory on the one hand and her careful observations of nature, light, and her surroundings on the other, she creates spaces and compositions that hover between abstraction and representation. For *THE REGIONAL*, Gagarin has created a new work that responds to her research into indigenous Pacific Islander navigation technologies. Rather than using a sextant or a compass, these communities commonly use their outstretched hand as a tool for ascertaining direction by measuring the angle and distance between oneself and the sun. The work’s composition, rendered in pieces of crumpled newsprint, features abstracted hand forms, layered upon curving, imperfect, organic, water-like semicircles in shades of cool blue and grey, with flecks of bright orange, yellow, and pink—a nod to a quintessential aspect of the Midwestern landscape: the prairie. For Gagarin, the idea of wayfinding or navigation is a metaphor for the social and political reorientation needed in America today. *Risáki (Receding Wave)* explores the relationship between body and place, and how something as subtle as a shift in the way we see might trigger greater shifts in consciousness and therefore in action.

IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE AND LABOR

THE REGIONAL emerged in part from a place of questioning the possibility for a cohesive conception of “the Midwest” and with that, emphasizing the constructed nature of geography. Historically, the Midwest attracted robust immigration by German, Irish, and Scandinavian communities in the mid-19th century, and more recently asylum seekers and refugees from countries such as Vietnam, Iraq, and Somalia. These rich diasporic histories are mined by HUONG NGÔ (American, born 1979), JONATHAN CHRISTENSEN CABALLERO (Panamanian-American, born 1988), and PAO HOUA HER (American, born 1982), who highlight the dual ways in which experiences of migration and displacement have shaped the Midwest, and vice versa. MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON (American, born 1982) explores the ways in which the Midwest has been and continues to be a fulcrum for national discourse around race, class, and labor.

And the State of Emergency Is Also Always a State of Emergence (2017) captures the material, spatial, and sensorial relics of Ngô’s 18-month stay at a refugee camp in Hong Kong as a child. The piece is anchored by a three-tiered bunkbed structure rendered from paper covered in graphite to resemble steel. Ngô comments, “[There is a] tension between something that is weak, that is also being strong.” Plaster-caste preserved meat cans are stacked under the frame, referencing the rations given to refugees. The rations were traded for fresh vegetables. Cyanotypes lay side by side on sand acting as portraits of the water and sunlight used to make them, reenacting traces of the very landscapes traversed to leave one’s home seeking a better life. This constellation of objects sparks a powerful commentary on the lived experience of refugees from the perspective of a child, and the fragmented ways that memories stay with us—as a piece of sky in the mind’s eye or a silhouette of a bedframe or the weight and volume of cans stacked like toy blocks.

Furthering this investigation of the way the body contains memory and is marked by migration, *The Voice Is an Archive* (2016) explores the relationship between language, identity, and the body. Ngô writes in a recent interview, “I’ve always been fascinated by how language shapes the way that we see the world and ourselves.” She goes on to describe how persisting at language learning despite nonfluency can create a position of power, “Fluency, on the other hand, has been something that I have struggled with as a refugee who has not been fluent in my mother tongue since I was five years old. As

I began to learn more about histories of languages, it helped me question fluency as a construction tied to colonial practices and push back against those expectations.” In the video, three figures—the artist on the right, with her sister and niece—are pictured facing the camera, side by side, as they attempt to mimic the sound of a woman singing. The soundtrack is actually the artist’s mother singing a Vietnamese lullaby. The two daughters, who were raised speaking Vietnamese at home in a place where English was the dominant language, have a very different relationship to Vietnamese than the two-year-old, for example, who speaks Mandarin and English and yet effortlessly copies the tonal variations. In this video, Ngô demonstrates how the simple act of listening, articulating, and learning a new word might activate the potential to change the body and therefore our reality. In describing this work Ngô cites the words of Beirut-based Syrian writer Lina Mounzer, “[W]hen you cross a border, you are not only affirming its permeability, but also changing the landscape on both sides.” Mounzer continues, “You cross carrying what you can carry, you cross bearing your witness, you cross knowing that you are damageable, that you are mortal and finite, but that language is memory and memory lives on.”

Capturing a different story of displacement due to global conflict, Pao Houa Her’s *Coming Off the Metal Bird* (2006–09) series depicts the artist’s immediate family, close friends, and members of the Hmong community as they adapt to daily life in and around Saint Paul, Minnesota. Her describes the backstory: “I stopped being a voice for my siblings and my culture and started being a voice for myself.” She continues, “Instead of a narrative, it was more about my own opinions and answering questions about life in America and what America is.” The photos are marked by a spontaneous quality, when the artist carried with her a Pentax 67 camera to document moments of rest, care, home, introspection, and coming of age for her closest family and friends. In *Aunt Mai’s 3 daughters* (2006–09), three girls, who appear to be around four years old, wear pink dresses and cuddle on a couch. Behind them is a domestic interior wall with faded wallpaper and an array of framed family portraits. The Hmong language doesn’t have a word for “airplane” and the series’ title is a translation of how *airplane* was described in English, alluding to the personal and social clashes between Midwestern climate, landscape, and culture and that of their native Laos.

Christensen Caballero works with life-sized figurative sculptures to reflect on both Latinx identity and labor force in the United States. Trained as a ceramicist, yet transposing disciplines, he uses earthenware,

industrial materials such as metal and wood, and reclaimed fabrics to highlight the plight of immigrant communities, inherited Mesoamerican mythologies, and his own personal memories. His work often memorializes Hispanic laborers, who make up nearly 20 percent of the workforce in the United States, as well as the anonymous family, friends, and loved ones for whom they do the work. *Envíos a Mi Hermano/Shipments to My Brother* (2021) speaks to the practice of sending money to relatives in another country, commonly called *remittance*. The work features two figures situated at either end of what appears to be a concrete sidewalk. One figure adorned with a blue headdress holds a small toy boat, made from galvanized roof steel sheeting. The other figure, wearing yellow hues, reaches for a toy boat, as additional boats float on a river made from denim pulp, connecting the two figures. Made in reaction to increased political tensions around immigration and border policies in the United States, the work raises prescient questions about the ancestral lineages that connect families across generations, as well as the struggles of families separated by the artificial line of a national border. Cut up used clothes have been blended with paper and mixed with glue, referring to the artist’s experience growing up wearing hand-me-downs, and raising larger discussions about identity, labor, and class.

Approaching questions of labor and class from a different angle, Harrison works with cast resin sculpture and installation to examine the manufacturing histories of his native Detroit and larger discussions around race. Harrison remarks on his connections to the Midwest, “The factory was such an intense, almost violent working environment. Exposure to this environment early on has clearly contributed to my artistic obsession with technology and hands-on fabrication. After getting a degree from the Art Institute of Chicago, I went to work at Ford in the clay modeling department to pay off my student loans. Working with commercial prototypes has certainly affected [my] work.” Using a CNC router and 3D printer Harrison creates objects that are out of sync with time, demonstrating an interest in futurity, anthropology, and composite forms. Responding to the logic of the assembly line, his sculptures, termed “encapsulations,” contain fragments of capitalist society gone wrong, alongside indigenous African wood and bone sculptures. The works featured in THE REGIONAL are part of his *Global Dissidents* series, where he preserved refuse from Detroit’s industry and labor force in a petroleum-based acrylic—in this case, a car headlight—as a way to explore the interconnectedness of labor, technology, and identity.

ARCHITECTURE AND NOTIONS OF HOME

RACHEL COX (American, born 1984), ANISSA LEWIS (American, born 1974), RASHAWN GRIFFIN (American, born 1980), and NATALIE PETROSKY (American, born 1989) use photography, installation, painting, and drawing to examine historical or present-day neighborhoods and environments that hold personal significance. While Griffin is known for creating large-scale room constructions that explore ideas of domesticity and home, for THE REGIONAL he is showing a selection of eighty intimate drawings that act like a visual diary of his travels throughout the Midwest and elsewhere. The drawings are made from India ink with a range of applied everyday materials, anecdotes from interpersonal encounters, such as “I just can’t do the back and forth. My head and my heart hurt” and “We did not see his face as he wore the mask of a baboon,” as well as fictional spaces, dreams, and ideas.

Lewis uses photography, installation, and social practice to explore the connections between community, place, and memory in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Her work pairs personal archives, popular culture references, and documentation of residential communities as they change to explore historical and present-day conceptions of family, Blackness, and class. *The Pleasant Street* series features photographs of the buildings on the street where Lewis grew up in Covington, Kentucky, overlaid with intimate family portraits from the artist’s childhood. By juxtaposing images of neglected or condemned homes with personal photos of Black youth and families from the 1980s and 1990s—a picture of a two-year-old playing in the fountains at Cincinnati’s Washington Park or a woman posing for a senior portrait—Lewis memorializes the neglected block as the vibrant working-class Black community it once was. Stuck by the dissonance between her memories of the place and its current state of neglect, Lewis’s work highlights neighborhood change and the holes in the social fabric that stem from the systemic lack of resources and generational neglect imposed on communities of color historically and today.

Working primarily with photography, Cox engages in self-reflection by documenting the people and places that surround her, with a particular focus on whiteness, the uncanny, and notions of home. The works presented in THE REGIONAL were developed in the early stages of the pandemic as a way to think about the environments that shape implicit bias and structural racism. In particular, Cox locates the suburbs as a site where tribalistic thinking and

the false promises of working-class America were cultivated. Cox describes the genesis of the work as a way to examine “the past, the not so distant past of my childhood, and how those things are shifting now.” She continues, “What the implications of architecture are—community, like-mindedness, but also exclusion [and] isolationism. These [suburbs] were designed, arguably, for many decades to perpetuate a specific racist ideology. [The series is about] waking up to the history of the suburbs.” By unpacking the euphemism “urban planning” and presenting the suburbs as a contingent entity, Cox explores the constructed nature of value, raising questions about access, belonging, and equity.

The works in the series *Wake Up* (2020–ongoing) are composed of hundreds of small-scale homes the artist painstakingly fabricated out of black construction paper. Cox then arranged them in various patterns based on aerial views of sprawling residential developments with uniform homes and photographed them. Inspired by late-19th-century photographers, such as Félix Nadar (French, 1820-1910) and James Wallace Black (American, 1825-1896), who pioneered the practice of aerial photography facilitated by air balloons, Cox’s works replicate the warm patina and the oblique angles in these early photographs. The images were then printed as cyanotypes, a process associated with various practices of scientific or bureaucratic documentation or classification, and toned with tea/coffee to remove their natural blue hue. Cox’s images furthermore create parallels between the historical development of photography as a tool of military documentation and the increased visibility and surveillance facilitated by satellite imagery today.

HEALING FROM ETHNIC AND RACIAL TRAUMAS

Within the twelve states that make up the Midwest, 7.3 percent of people were born outside of the United States, 11.7 percent of people speak languages other than English in their homes, and throughout the region about 10 percent of people identify as Black, 8 percent as Hispanic, and 3 percent as Asian¹. As these areas become more diverse there has been a rise in ethnic and racially charged violence against these communities. LORENA MOLINA (Salvadoran, born 1985), YVONNE OSEI (Ghanaian, born 1990), and JORDAN WEBER (American, born 1984) each look to the land where they live and work to try to flush out alternative narratives and create space for healing as it relates to these traumas.

Land—specifically what is grown on land—inspired Molina’s installation *Reconciliation Garden* (2021). In this work she asks viewers to think about their consumption, specifically of coffee. In the height of the coffee production in El Salvador 95 percent of the country’s income came from coffee crops, yet the land was owned by only 1 percent of the population. This led to the Salvadoran Civil War (1979–1992)², fought between the military-led junta government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, spurn by the unrealized promises of the junta government to create more equitable land distribution. In addition, the United States supported this war with 4 billion dollars in aid, training of elite military units, and supplying sophisticated weaponry³. The war was mostly fought in forests and farms surrounded by coffee plants, banana plants, palm trees, and mangoes. To emphasize ideas of reclaiming these forests, Molina’s *Reconciliation Garden* includes plants that provided the landscape for the devastating twelve-year war. Their properties, calming visual elements, and lush green colors also act as a meditation on accountability and hopefully then healing. An accompanying video and workbook provide opportunities for visitors to self-educate and work through the United States’ role in aiding war atrocities linked to coffee consumption. In this work Molina asks: “How can we make amends for the past actions of our country?” in hopes visitors will consider ways in which this might be possible.

The Bruised, The Burdened, The Laborer and The Naked (2021), the newest site-specific work by Osei, uses photo-based textile designs to address histories of racial injustices, displacement, and atrocities of the past and present. To do this, Osei photographed sites mostly in St. Louis, Missouri, and then manipulated the images to create fabric of these altered scenes. In *Pouring Down Like Rain* (2021) she combines two fabric-based pieces, *Blood Lines* (2020) and *White Flight* (2020). *Blood Lines* is an altered repeated image of hands holding signs that read “I AM A MAN” from the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike. This gesture aligns with the idea that any Black man or woman could be holding these signs and that the injustices being fought in 1968 are still prevalent today. *White Flight* shows the repeated image of a group of white-presenting men running in Forest Park, a public park in western St. Louis. For Osei, this represents that white men are able to move freely through different spaces where Black men and women cannot. In another work, *Dressed in Nakedness* (2021), Osei again uses *White Flight* in close proximity to *No Child’s Play* (2020) and *QuikTripping, Quit Killing* (2020). In *No Child’s Play*, the central figures are Black children playing with a toy gun. She removes the young person running from the child with a gun, creating a human-sized outline of a missing child that recalls the unfortunate

reality that Black and Brown children are not afforded the innocence given to white children. But in the work for *Dressed in Nakedness*, the young girl is removed from her playful surroundings and placed close to the running men from *White Flight*. In *QuikTripping, Quit Killing*, Osei photographed the charred QuikTrip gas station that was the sight of demonstrations related to the murder of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown by a Ferguson police officer.⁴ By placing *No Child’s Play*, *White Flight*, and *QuikTripping, Quit Killing* together, Osei shows the hypocrisy between the lack of concern over a large group of white men running and the over-policing of Black children. By photographing sites of race-related violence, Osei uses land and moments in history to call for justice and reimagine Black experiences.

Many of Weber’s recent projects focus on regenerative land projects and greenhouses. Like Molina, he engages in trauma-informed healing modalities. In *Perennial Philosophies* (2021) two Minneapolis-sourced obsidian boulders placed about six feet from each other include plaques that read “INHALE....” “EXHALE....” As reminders to rest, these plaques highlight the injustice associated with who feels safe in their own environment. He also plays with the juxtaposition of something hard and impenetrable like the obsidian boulder with something soft like the meaning of the words on the plaques to memorialize these shared experiences. Much like Molina and Osei, Weber wants to shift the narrative so that even in the fight for justice those affected are afforded the opportunity to rest.

Molina, Osei, and Weber each takes something that had been used for pain and repurposes it as a source for healing. In Molina’s installation, the tropical plants seen at the site of the war are reimagined as positive, life-giving entities. Osei’s photographic work of manipulated fabrics adorned on pillars enacts a change in narrative around racial profiling and conversations about the history of racial violence and segregation in St. Louis, Missouri. Weber’s boulders overlaid with the calming words *Inhale* and *Exhale* serve as reminders that the fight for justice is long and arduous, and that everyone deserves the opportunity to rest.

AMERICANA AND POP CULTURE

Like the artists who were part of the American Regionalist painting movement before them, **DAN GUNN** (American, born 1980), **DEVAN SHIMOYAMA** (American, born 1989), **ALICE TIPPIT** (American, born 1975), and **NIKKI WOODS** (American, born 1990) are inspired by the specific times in which they

live. Thinking through the mythologies of the Midwest as farmland, the overall landscape of America, and popular culture seen in films, Gunn, Shimoyama, Tippit, and Woods all relate the familiar to ideologies of this region and question the relationship to the present.

Gunn’s work is an investigation of the aesthetic and folklore surrounding the Midwest. In the *Ungrateful Son* series (2018–present), Gunn created large frogs, complete with lights and thorns, inspired by the tale “The Ungrateful Son” from the Brothers Grimm, in which a man who does not want to share his chicken dinner with his elderly father is punished by having a frog stuck to his face. He must feed the frog or else it will eat him. Within his freestanding sculptures Gunn masterfully depicts both the grotesque and the intriguing. The mythological landscape of Gunn’s early memories is always related to “the farm,” which structures how Gunn thinks about both the region and America more broadly. In *Bittersweet Scenery* (2020), a wall-based wooden relief, the diagonal representation of greens, purples, and yellows in the background call to mind the movement of the wind with two roosters on top of a wind vane. *Wetland Scenery* (2021) is a multi-panel wood relief that depicts lily pads, cranes, and an island complete with trees and pools of water. His landscapes are polite yet threatening, similar to how he views the Midwest.

Shimoyama’s *Midnight Ruminations* (2019) and *Black Gentleman* (2018) are part of a series showing Black individuals in domestic spaces reading specific texts about the question, Where are you from? In *Black Gentleman* the main figure is outlined in pink with rhinestones, glitter, and sequins for eyes and hair. He is reading *Boy with Thorn* by Rickey Laurentiis (American, born 1989), a book of poetry that questions what role imagination plays in our fascinations with and repulsion from the national history of racial and sexual violence. In *Midnight Ruminations*, the main figure reads the exhibition catalogues for Tate Modern’s *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* and New Museum’s *Chris Ofili: Night and Day*. Shimoyama reflects a common thread in many of the artists’ works represented in this exhibition—fighting the stereotypes given to the Midwest, such as that the region is a monolith. In doing so, Shimoyama questions how his identity is seen in an area often described by its heteronormative whiteness. These paintings help normalize the questioning of identity and give a voice to marginalized communities.

In *Chakra Chart (Anthony)* (2021), Shimoyama is still negotiating ideas of identity as related to the American experience by thinking through alternative

ways of healing. Inspired by the seven chakras—root, sacral, solar plexus, heart, throat, third eye, and crown—that comprise the energy centers of the body, Shimoyama depicts a figure with the chakras illuminated in different colors. Making this figure Black and adorning him with rhinestones and jewels counters the widespread absence of Black people as figures in descriptive text about healing.

Tippit uses a graphic style and restrained color palette in her paintings, employing a visual language that is based in conventional imagery familiar to the viewer from the history of painting. Tippit reduces this imagery to fundamental shapes, using shifts in scale and perception to produce an image that produces more questions than answers. In both *Cull* (2021) and *Dove* (2021), the mysterious, centrally placed form is evocative of a portrait, even as it recalls other painting genres, such as still life, or landscape. In *Dove*, viewers might find themselves wondering if the shape might represent an abstracted fox, a view of the horizon, or the self. The candle and open book in *Fault* (2020) are symbols very much associated with still life, yet the soft roll of the pages against the neutral, dark blue above also references a landscape, setting the scene for open contemplation. *Fathom* (2021) and *Might* (2020) recall themes of isolation while also working as optical illusions, allowing each work to remain open to interpretation. Tippit’s paintings generously invite the viewer to participate in the creation of their meaning. Familiar yet strange, her work is not as simple as it appears, a characterization that seems essentially Midwestern.

Inspired by Americana and film, Woods creates whimsical paintings that showcase a blend of cultural experiences. *Wild Things* (2021) is influenced by the 1998 American neo-noir erotic crime thriller of the same title. Woods depicts a saturated version of the cover art where the eyes of the two women pierce the viewer. Further examination reveals a set of eyes in the water’s reflection, possibly hinting at the plot twist within the movie. In *Bunny and Sphinx* (2020) the influence of the 1960s American beauty is made obvious by the style of curls in the central figure’s hair and the stark bob hairstyle worn by the other figure. The figure laying among a natural scene complete with flowers and tree branches recalls ideas within art history of showing women closely connected to nature. *Séance* (2020) is taken from a scene in Lewis Allen’s 1944 film *The Uninvited*, where a family tries to connect with a spirit in their home. Her use of popular Hollywood scenes and forms of beauty creates a blend between the past and the present that allows both people familiar with the films and those not familiar to experience her paintings.

Gunn, Shimoyama, Tippit, and Woods imbue pop culture with their own interpretations to create works clearly aligned with the aesthetic of the middle of America, from conversations about how the Midwest is seen and discussions of the familiar to journeys of self-discovery and common themes within film.

PORTRAITURE AND IDENTITY

LYNDON BARRIOS JR. (American, born 1983), MARA DUVRA (American, born 1989), CONRAD EGYIR (Ghanaian, born 1989), and GISELA MCDANIEL (American, born 1995) each create works that discuss how race, ethnicity, and immigration status play into their experiences living in the middle of America. Duvra's multimedia installations explore stillness and interiority as critical modes of self-study. Her work *unfolding a soft horizon* (2021) looks to historical memory and ephemera for moments of interiority, intimacy, and resistance. As part of this installation, Duvra included her photograph of a Black woman sitting on a bed in a dimly lit room looking out a window. The photograph is taken at an angle as if it were a mirror, so the viewer only sees a portion of the interior space. With this photograph is a quote by American poet, essayist, and activist Dawn Lundy Martin (born 1968): "Here's a mirror to show you your ghost self and how it feels the same to be weighted by a body as it does to have a body become transparent." This installation also includes the image of abolitionist and women's rights activist Sojourner Truth (American, 1797–1883). Below her portrait reads: "I sell the shadow to support the substance." Truth used the proceeds from her copyright of the image to help fund the freeing of enslaved peoples. This image works as a moment of refusal, rupture, and imagination. The installation comes together to substantiate a well-rounded version of Blackness that includes tenderness, self-awareness, and strength as well as vulnerability.

Basing her portraits on healing from trauma, McDaniel interweaves assemblage, oil painting, and motion-censored technology to create interactive pieces. Here, the artist created portraits of maternal figures important to McDaniel's growth and development in the Midwest. These works include recordings of each woman discussing her experiences. The paintings also include Plexiglas roughly the same size as the work on canvas and some distance away so viewers can stand between the two to create boundaries while acknowledging the voice of the women. Enabling these women to speak for themselves—being seen and heard as a form of validation—reclaims their agency.

Egyir creates work that uses Afrocentric folklore rooted in political and religious erudition. In *Faculty of Faith* (2020) a large figure wearing doctoral robes makes a clear juxtaposition between the educational robes of Western culture and the African mud cloth on the man's face mask. The four smaller men can be read as different versions of the larger man, each appearing to be in dialogue with the other. The chalkboard in the background reads: "Peace I leave with you," a Bible verse from the Book of John 14:27, where Jesus encourages his believers to follow their hearts and be unafraid of not knowing what will come next. Egyir's decision to depict multiple versions of the same person with the largest in doctoral robes highlights an internal struggle as it relates to the unknown and showcases the importance of faith to the artist.

Looking to the language of print and popular culture, Barrois Jr. investigates underlying ideology and conceptions of value and ethics. Specifically in *Brown Paper Bag Test* (2017), Barrois Jr. questions the ways racial identity and colorism have been used in the construction of race. Part of a body of work titled *New Aesthetics*, here Barrois Jr. combines the words *aesthetics* and *ethnicities* to comment on the ways different groups of people have been influenced by specific aesthetics ascribed to them by others—for example, the infamous "brown paper bag test," which was a form of colorist discriminatory practice within African American communities. This test favored fairer-skinned African American people because of their perceived closeness to Eurocentric ideas of beauty and history of perceived preferred treatment. These constructs of beauty and ability to "pass" were based on favored complexion determined by the color of a brown paper bag or lighter, which contribute to the construction of race and the notion that Eurocentric ideas of beauty are the standard. Considering how formations of desire and aesthetic sensibilities are shaped within print and magazines, Barrois Jr. created *Generative Quotient (Table of Contents)* (2019). In this work, a single page from *GQ* magazine, altered and stripped of all readable text, serves as the image source. He then translates these images of clothing into literal cloth, synthesizing the effect of appearance with the sensation of physical touch. Through the works presented in this exhibition, Barrois Jr. questions the ways we have been conditioned to think about standards of attraction, consumption, and social norms.

Each of the artists in this section look to identity and portraiture as observations of their place in the world, especially the Midwest. Whether through documentation of intimacy and agency as it relates to the Black female body, the reclaiming of one's

narrative, the juxtaposition of Western and African cultures, or the deconstruction of information through imagery, Duvra, McDaniel, Egyir, and Barrois Jr. create work that highlights shared experiences for those negotiating identity within the Midwestern landscape.

CONCLUSION

To further articulate the common themes that emerged throughout THE REGIONAL, we asked the artists in the exhibition to interview each other. Within this catalogue you will find conversations between the curators and artists in addition to the conversations artists had with one another. The artists were equally generous with their time as with their craft in hosting collective artist presentations so that everyone had the opportunity to see and/or hear firsthand about the artwork that would be presented. These interactions facilitated candid conversations on what it means to live in the Midwest, past or present, and how their works contribute to the universal dialogue seeking to change the narrative. We also hope these multiple, sometimes contradictory, through lines reveal how one region, fourteen cities, and twenty-three artists defy categorization, while prompting us to reconsider what the Midwest is and might become.

AMARA ANTILLA
Senior Curator
Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, Ohio

JADE POWERS
Assistant Curator
Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City,
Missouri

NOTES

1 U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Midwest Region, <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/02000US2-midwest-region/>.

2 By the end of the war more than 75,000 people had lost their lives, many of whom were noncombatants.

3 "Civil War," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), accessed October 21, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/El-Salvador/Civil-war>.

4 This land was purchased by the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis and turned into the Ferguson Community Empowerment Center.

THE REGIONAL

Hellen Ascoli

b. 1984, Guatemala;
lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland,
formerly in Madison, Wisconsin

Hellen Ascoli (Guatemalan, born 1984) received her BFA in sculpture from Southern Methodist University, Dallas (2006) and her MFA in sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2012). In her multidisciplinary practice, Ascoli reflects on weaving and its ability to connect the body, environment, and object together through a relational experience. She most recently had her first solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center (2021). Her work has also been exhibited in numerous group exhibitions, including the Bial de Artes Visuales del Istmo Centroamericano (2014); *Bial de Arte*

Paiz, Museo de Correos, Guatemala City (2014, 2018, 2020); *My Body is Here*, Concepción 41, Antigua, Guatemala (2016); *One Stone and the Rain*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston; *Guatemala from 33,000 km: Contemporary Art 1960–present*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara (both 2017); *To Weave Blue: Poema al tejido*, University of Memphis; and *Stone's Throw: Arte de Sanación, Arte de Resistencia*, The Anderson and Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (both 2020). Ascoli previously lived in Madison, WI, and currently lives and works in Baltimore.

HELLEN ASCOLI



Touch Over Fear, 2020,
handwoven cotton and wool, hand-stitched on found fabric,
55.9 x 48.8 inches.

HELLEN ASCOLI

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

For the years that I was in Madison, I felt that many narrow views of identity were placed on me as a Guatemalan woman, backstrap weaver, and white immigrant. I am excited to show two pieces that directly respond to this misrepresentation, particularly because this work is woven on the backstrap loom. In it, I can deconstruct and play with the hierarchies of language and knowledge production.

Tell us more about Lake Lap.

Walking around Monona Lake was always a comforting and discomfoting feeling. On one hand, I felt so lucky to be able to stop looking around my shoulder, to relax my “knots” as I walked. Contact with water and a peaceful setting is a right we should all have—which, at times, made me feel guilty of being able to enjoy this daily encounter.

In June, right before we moved to Baltimore, Kamala Harris visited Guatemala. In this visit she made a statement that she repeated twice: “Do Not Come, Do Not Come,” referring to immigration crisis. As I walked the lake—a loop around—it felt as if I wanted to deconstruct her statement and echo back those words to her.

JORDAN WEBER:

How has the current social justice movement informed your current practice, if at all?

The morning before the first large protest of 2015 in Guatemala, I remember being in a small gathering and chatting with fellow artists about what, if anything, this protest could do. I never knew anything other

than an immune and corrupt government; however, I got the sensation that no matter what the outcome it was important to physically add my body to the mass. We didn't know then, of course, that this would consequently lead to taking down then Vice President Roxanna Baldetti and President Otto Perez Molina.

I can't say that I feel like I belong to the social justice movement in the United States, in part because I struggle to even want to be in the United States. However, similarly to how I felt in Guatemala, adding my body to the [Black Lives Matter] BLM protests in Madison felt equally important. I believe, or at the very least want to believe, in a collective “heartbeat” that moves social justice forward, even if at times I don't quite know where I belong in it.



Achike' rub'anon ak'u'x (¿Cómo está tu corazón?) (How is your Heart), 2020–21, plywood, with cotton, brown cotton (cuyuscate), wool, and foot loom woven, 198 x 198 inches.

Lyndon Barrois Jr.

b. 1983, New Orleans, Louisiana;
lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Lyndon Barrois Jr. (American, born 1983) was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. He received his BFA in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore (2006) and his MFA from Washington University in St. Louis (2013). Using magazines, advertising, cinema, and vernacular imagery as primary subjects of inquiry, Barrois's multimedia practice breaks down and reconfigures the languages of print, design, and popular culture in order to investigate underlying ideology, ethics, and conceptions of value. He is also half of LAB:D, with artist Addoley Dzegede, with whom he has collaboratively staged two exhibitions and co-authored a book of essays. His work has been featured

in solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2016); LVL3, Chicago (2019); and the Rubbery Factory, New York (2020). He has also had works shown in several group exhibitions including *Empowerpoint*, The Luminary, St. Louis (2016); *One Step Ahead*, South Dallas Cultural Center (2017); *Incognito 2018*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2018); *Parallax*, Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam, Netherlands (2019); and *A Field of Meaning*, Callicoon Fine Arts, New York (2020). Barrois currently lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he is an assistant professor of art at Carnegie Mellon University.

LYNDON BARRIOS JR.



Brown Paper Flag Test, 2017,
ink, butcher paper, laser print, enamel pin, chipboard and cedar frame,
24 x 42 inches.

LYNDON BARROIS JR.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL and what does the Midwest mean to you?

Firstly, they are all works that haven't been shown much, if at all. They each represent different approaches to image making, drawing from different kinds of image sources, and rendered in different materials, so I appreciate presenting a diverse range of work at the same time. I hope this allows for multiple opportunities to overlap with other works in the show.

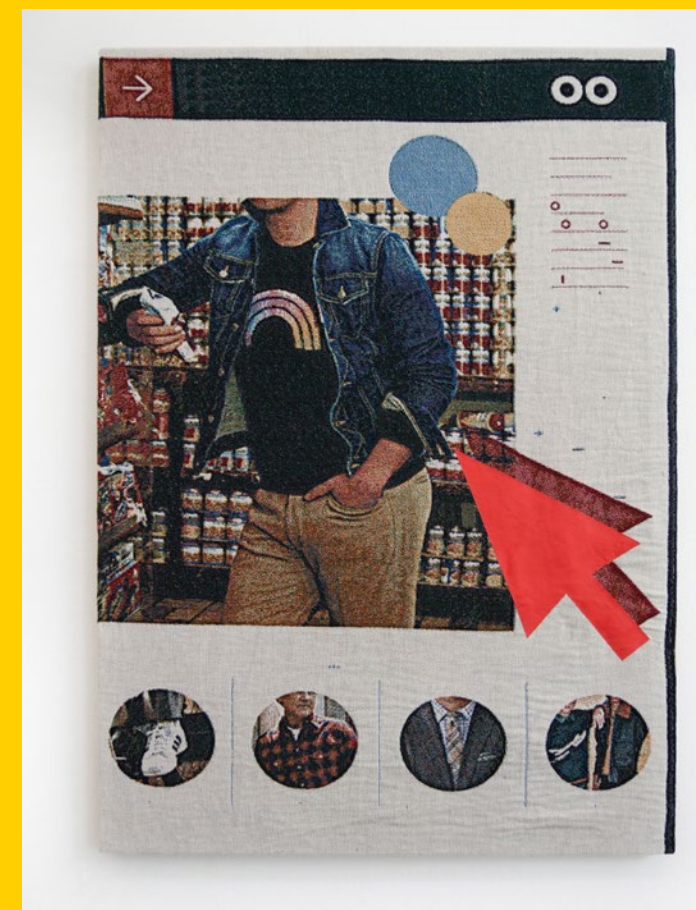
The Midwest is an area of the country where political frictions and historical residue are very apparent in interesting and often uncomfortable ways. Having been raised on both coasts yet spending a significant portion of my adult life in Missouri, it's been quite an education.

Please list five artists from Pittsburgh who you think people should know about and why.

I just moved to Pittsburgh, so I can't rightfully answer this. In the case of St. Louis, where I lived prior: CAYCE ZAVAGLIA is a virtuous portraitist expanding the field of painting; PETER PRANSCHKE is truly amazing, and a criminally kept secret; YOWSHIEN KUO has seemingly unlimited range; JOSE GARZA has a really adept handling of politics and popular culture; MARINA PENG is thoughtful, sensitive, and powerful; and KAHLIL ROBERT IRVING is rigorous in his own practice, in addition to being an important facilitator for other artists. I could go on...

JONATHAN CHRISTENSEN CABALLERO: As a multimedia artist, what guides your choices with the many kinds of materials used in a work?

It really depends, but usually I am trying to choose the material that best suits, or at least complements, the content or reference I am working with, along with a process of production that might inform the resulting work. Sometimes this isn't fully the case: If I happen to be in a temporary situation or don't have access to certain facilities, things tend to lean in a scrappier direction. I've often had to be more economical, which leads to more conversations about perceived value or the elevation of humble materials, which are always interesting to me anyway. I also like the interplay between what I find and what I make, or even treating the things I make as if they are found. It's a fun game.



Generative Quotient (Table of Contents), 2019, woven cotton, acrylic paint, wooden stretcher, 55 x 38 inches.



Selective Focus, 2017, magazine clippings, linen, canvas, nitrile gloves, gold ink, oak, CMYK frame, 31 x 38 inches.

Jonathan Christensen Caballero

b. 1988, Salt Lake City, Utah;
lives and works in Lawrence, Kansas

Jonathan Christensen Caballero (Panamanian -American, born 1988) was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. He received his BFA in ceramics and sculpture from Utah State University, Logan (2013) and his MFA in ceramics from Indiana University, Bloomington (2020). Through his multimedia sculptures, Christensen Caballero merges pre-Columbian iconography and figural forms to represent personal experiences of oppression, exclusion, and resilience within the Latinx community. His recent works have been featured in a solo exhibition, *La Gente/The People*, at Belger Crane Yard Gallery, Kansas City, Missouri (2021). He has also had works presented in several group

exhibitions, including *Carbondale Clay National XI: The Intimacy of Scale*, Carbondale Clay Center, Colorado; *Fine Art University Selection/Selection (FAUSS)*, Tsukuba Museum of Art, Japan (both 2016); *Clay Bodies*, Clay Center of New Orleans (2019); and *Manos y Obras*, Leeds Gallery, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana (2020). He was the recipient of the International Sculpture Center's Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award (2020) and was recognized as an emerging artist by *Ceramics Monthly* (2021). He currently lives and works in Lawrence, Kansas.

JONATHAN CHRISTENSEN CABALLERO



Envíos a Mi Hermano/Shipments to My Brother, 2021,
earthenware, secondhand clothes, metal, wood,
42 x 160 x 64 inches.

JONATHAN CHRISTENSEN CABALLERO

Can you tell us about the works that are being shown in THE REGIONAL?

Envíos a Mi Hermano/Shipments to My Brother shows a brother sending a boat downstream on water made of denim pulp. The boys and the boats symbolize the practice of sharing resources with family abroad. *Niño Dorado/Golden Child* is a grandmother with the light of her world, her grandchild. The headdresses and colors represent the cultural heritage she passed down to him. My works give visibility to Latin American immigrant families. Many people who migrate are seeking a way to provide safety and security for their communities. Whether separated across borders or in the same household, familial bonds motivate people to endure hardships with the hopes of a better life.

Does the Midwest inform your practice in any way? If so, describe how.

I am at the beginning of a project researching historic and present-day Latin American immigrants in Lawrence, Kansas. This research will focus on the Mexican American railroad laborers of the past as well as present-day laborers who continue to contribute to our community. The project will culminate with a body of work based on Midwestern Latin American immigrants and be shown as a solo exhibition at the Lawrence Arts Center.

JORDAN WEBER:

What obstacles have you had to overcome to have a successful art practice in your current city?

My wife and I moved to Lawrence, Kansas, in August 2020, and the biggest obstacle my art practice faced during my first year here was the isolation from our new community. Much of my work focuses on everyday people and their communal bonds. For this reason, social distancing forced me to actively strengthen connections with family and friends who live across the country. Through our conversations, I learned more about their lives, and this inspired me to continue creating narrative sculpture.



Niño Dorado/Golden Child, 2020,
earthenware, secondhand fiber, metal, wood,
27 x 26 x 15 inches.

Rachel Cox

b. 1984, Irving, Texas;
lives and works in Iowa City, Iowa

Rachel Cox (American, born 1984) was born in Irving, Texas. She holds a BFA from the University of North Texas, Denton (2006) and an MFA in photography from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque (2013). In her photographic series, Cox reflects on the human condition, exploring concepts of home, family, and loss. She has had solo exhibitions at the Des Moines Art Center; Devin Borden Gallery, Houston; and Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, Athens (all 2020). Her work has also been

included in national and international group exhibitions like *South East Arts Summit*, the Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center (2014); *reGeneration 3: New Perspectives in Photography*, Musee de l'Elysee, Lausanne, Switzerland (2015); *Nanjing International Art Festival*, Baijia Art Museum, Nanjing, China (2016); and *Re/thinking Photography*, Houston Center for Photography (2017). She currently lives and works in Iowa City, Iowa, where she is an assistant professor of photography at the University of Iowa.

RACHEL COX



House 5, 2020,
tea-toned cyanotype,
9 x 10 inches, variable edition of five.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

My series *Wake Up* has never been shown in its entirety and is also quite new. It is always exciting to see how your work changes once viewed in a larger space, and how being included in a group exhibition can expand the conversations possible between your work and the work of other artists included.

What are your favorite things about Iowa City?

I live in Iowa City, which is a large college town, home to the University of Iowa where I work. Like a lot of college towns, it is busy and energetic during the school year, but gets sleepy and sparse during the summers. This might be my favorite time of year. Likewise, Iowa City has a very supportive and vibrant arts community, and the faculty and students that come here to be a part of this community are probably the best part of living here.

Iowa City has a fabulous farm-to-table restaurant/cidery outside of town called RAPID CREEK. If someone had 24 hours here, I would absolutely take someone there as the old barn that the restaurant is in is super charming and the view of the apple orchard is fantastic. Also, I'd suggest we go to GEORGE'S BUFFET, not necessarily a buffet anymore, but a really lovely dive bar—dark and wooden and serving very inexpensive beverages.

MARA DUVRA:

What role does location and place play in your research and visual practice?

In the series of prints exhibited, I am using the significance of place/location in multiple ways.

First, I am looking at Google satellite views of the street I grew up on in North Dallas as a way to gain compositional understanding. This in turn has led my research towards the community planning aspects of early suburban developments such as Levittown (the first highly planned community development in Long Island 1947, as well as a historic precedent for practices such as racial covenants). Researching the histories behind suburban evolution informs the visual “tone” of the larger prints.

Secondly, in the grid of nine smaller prints, I am examining the construct of a home: an idealized space that visually shifts and changes based on the region one grew up in or is familiar with.



House series, 2020,
tea toned cyanotype,
9 x 10 inches each, variable edition of 5.

Mara Duvra

b. 1983, Silver Spring, Maryland;
lives and works in Saint Paul, Minnesota

Mara Duvra (American, born 1989) was born in Silver Spring, Maryland. She received her BA in studio art and psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park (2011) and her MFA in studio art from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (2015). Through a research-based practice, she combines photography, poetry, and video to explore Blackness beyond themes of resistance or public identity. Rather, she reflects on the possibilities for Black subjectivity to center stillness, interiority, and tenderness. Invested in her local community, she has had solo

exhibitions at several Minneapolis galleries, including The White Page (2017), Soo Visual Arts Center, Schaefer Art Gallery, and Juxtaposition Arts (all 2019). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions like *Selected Works*, Public Functionary, Minneapolis; *YM#10*, Yeah Maybe, Minneapolis (both 2016); and *Living Together*, Gallery 71, Edina, Minnesota (2018). Mara is a current McKnight Visual Arts Fellow (2021) and the instructor of painting and drawing at Saint Paul Academy and Summit School. She lives and works in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



unfolding a soft horizon, 2019,
pigment print,
17 x 22 inches.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

My work has functioned as a restorative and healing process of researching and creating visual narratives that affirm the softness and vulnerability of Black people, which in turn creates identity-affirming space for myself as well as for others. The process of creating new work has always had a beneficial impact on me. I enjoy finding connective threads between my photographic images, poetry, and cultural critique. This work is deeply personal and stems from a desire to see my identity portrayed with care.

Please list five artists from Minneapolis who you think people should know about and why.

TIA-SIMONE GARDNER, JOVAN SPELLER, CANDACE DAVIS, RINI-YUN KEAGY, and PRERNA.

Being in community with these artists and their work reminds me of the visual and conceptual diversity of artists of color in the Twin Cities. These artists are all making work that is deeply moving, intimate and spatial, and critical, while embodying various ways of knowing.

NATALIE PETROSKY:

I was hoping you could speak a bit more to how you think about tenderness in your work or in general. I know that is a broad question, but it's something I think about too, and I haven't quite figured out how to talk about it. I always ask another artist when it is mentioned. I read what is currently on your website, and I can feel it in the words and images.

When I think of tenderness, I think of empathy and vulnerability. An understanding as Leslie Jamison says in the *Empathy Exams* that there are "horizons of context within us that extend perpetually beyond what we can see." Tenderness is supported by care (self-care and communal care); it is coaxed out with practice and sustained vulnerability. To be tender is to be present and open. It produces an awareness of the softness in ourselves as well as others, even underneath hard exteriors (which can be necessary). There's a usefulness in that—the ability to remain tender in the midst of it all.



I disliked solitude and I also craved it, 2019, pigment prints on wood, 10 x 10 (2) and 8 x 8 inches.

Conrad Egyir

b. 1989, Ghana;
lives and works in Detroit, Michigan

Conrad Egyir (Ghanaian, born 1989) received a BA from Judson University, Elgin, Illinois (2015) and an MFA in painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (2018). Blending biblical parables with West African iconography, Egyir creates portraits that represent figurative narratives of the Black diaspora. His works have been featured in solo exhibitions at Jessica Silverman, San

Francisco; Library Street Collective, Detroit, Michigan (both 2019); and the Institute of Contemporary Art, San José (2021). He has also been included in group exhibitions such as *Art Prize 2018*, Grand Rapids Art Museum (2018) and *I Am My Story*, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami (2019). Egyir is represented by Jessica Silverman, and he currently lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.

CONRAD EGYIR



Faculty of Faith, 2020,
oil, acrylic, mounted wood on canvas,
90 x 60 inches.

CONRAD EGYIR

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

It's exciting that the works get to be in conversation with other Midwest artists I admire across multiple states. And that it gets to travel through proper Midwest other than the two well-known major art cities that share Lake Michigan (being Chicago and Detroit).

What does the Midwest mean to you and what are your favorite things about Detroit?

The Midwest to me over the years has become synonymous with home and grounding.

There is a current transformation of the culture and arts here in Detroit that is community driven and very accommodating to incoming and upcoming artists, which I appreciate. [I'd recommend people] visit the DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ART, the CRANBROOK MUSEUM AND GARDENS, and BELLE ISLE (a beautiful island bordering Canada).

How do you use your paintings to tell alternative narratives of the African diaspora?

I create narrative paintings and portraiture. Woven between the fabric of my narratives are borrowed superstitious and symbolic aesthetics from West Africa, anachronisms from different cultures, and a deconstruction and redefining of colorism and identity as defined by Western academia. One parameter of this creative practice is to use subjects that do not fit in the timelines or settings of the borrowed stories that I reprise or conjure. Adults, for example, would interchange with children, women with men, nobles with commoners, etc. The essence is

to transcend the notions of each character's perceived responsibility designated by age, sex, class, and race. The image of oneself, as an immediate template of portraiture, is also often multiplied in my narrative paintings. Concurrently the singular image can become victim and perpetrator, father and son, friend and foe. It is a tool that behooves the viewer to simultaneously step into the shoes of the multiplicitous character, while questioning the relationships within the image and self, be it one's mental faculties that war against each other or side with each other.



Queen Above Deck, 2020,
oil, acrylic, mounted wood on canvas,
78 x 60 inches.

Isa Gagarin

b. 1986, Guam;
lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Isa Gagarin (American, born 1986) was born in Guam. She holds a BFA in painting from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (2008) and an MFA in painting and printmaking from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (2018). In her site-specific installations and mixed media works on paper, Gagarin creates compositions that respond to the ephemeral, transformative nature of light, color, and water. Through her environmental explorations, the artist finds points of connection between her work, her personal experiences of being raised in Hawai'i, and her ancestral lineages in Guam and the Philippines. She has been featured in solo exhibitions at Midway Contemporary Art,

Minneapolis (2009); Rochester Art Center, Minnesota (2011); and Page Bond Gallery, Richmond, Virginia (2019, 2020). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions like *Addendum*, Chicago Artists Coalition; *Objects for Consideration*, Soo Visual Arts Center, Minneapolis (both 2014); *juntos pero no revueltos*, Good Weather Gallery with Parque Galería, Mexico City (2018); and *Phone Home*, The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York (2019). She currently lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she is a lecturer at the University of Minnesota and adjunct faculty at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

ISA GAGARIN



Untitled, Synchronous Series, 2019,
earth pigment, acrylic and collage on paper,
30 x 22 inches.

ISA GAGARIN

Can you talk about the work you are producing for THE REGIONAL and how it relates to the Midwest?

Risåki (Receding Wave) represents a new direction in my work, which introduces ideas related to my maternal Chamorro lineage and Guam as a place of ancestral origin. I think this new direction is a potential strategy for me to assert my presence in a space as much as to respond to it, and possibly invite more beauty and politics into my work. In terms of *Risåki*, there are repeated hand forms that create a wave-like shape, which evokes oceanic waves as well as the architecture of the CAC (there is a distinct curved concrete form on the ground level). There is a rich history of ocean navigation throughout Micronesia and Polynesia, and my interest in visualizing hands was inspired by the way that ocean navigators use their hands to visualize and measure the stars to understand relationships of time and space. In a way, *Risåki* is an expression of a deeply personal journey of reorienting and wayfinding my sense of self and ancestral lineage.

Please list five artists from your city who you think people should know about and why.

LESLIE BARLOW is a valued member of the artistic community in Minneapolis, known for her vibrant oil-painted portraits and her work with the inclusive cultural platform Public Functionary. CHITRA VAIRAVAN is a dancer, choreographer, and artist who often works in collaboration with artists across disciplines. Her work includes deep listening with an emphasis on further understanding spatial awareness and creating space for liberatory practices. I have such admiration for potter, maker, and sound artist SAYGE CARROI. Her artistic practice is woven into her life and community in such a generous and beautiful way. RINI YUN KEAGY

creates compelling and complex video work, including a recent two-channel video work *El Cenote (2021)*, which animates the relationship between caves, ancient architecture, and the moon. CLARENCE MORGAN creates complex, layered mixed media drawings on paper, working in iterative series that evolve in shape, form, and composition. The sheer curiosity that he brings to his work on a daily basis is inspiring to me.

GISELA MCDANIEL:
How is it for you to work as a CHamoru artist in the diaspora and how does your CHamoru culture shape your work in regard to installation?

Si Yu'us yan saina ma'åse (thank you), Gisela. I am thankful to share space in a group exhibition with another CHamoru* artist. In my experience, living a long distance away from Guahan (Guam) has delayed the presence of Chamorro ideas and experiences in my work. My education in painting was oriented to Europe and US artists on the continent, and it is only in recent years that I have reoriented myself to learn about visual artists across the Pacific. One of the unexpected gifts of the pandemic was when Guam-based educator Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua's community-based Chamorro language class, which was originally taught at a coffee shop on Guam, went online. As a result, myself and many other Chamorros across the diaspora gained remote access to Bevacqua's language class. I felt startled to experience Chamorro culture, stories, and community in a contemporary moment, because it made me realize that I had previously only thought of my Chamorro-ness in the past tense.

*I use the spelling CHamoru and Chamorro interchangeably; I am supportive of both spellings and use the latter more often.



Intervals, 2019,
Site-specific installation, acrylic, watercolor, fabric,
9 x 60 feet.

Rashawn Griffin

b. 1980, Los Angeles, California;
lives and works in Kansas City, Missouri

Rashawn Griffin (American, born 1980) was born in Los Angeles, California. He received a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Arts, Baltimore (2002) and an MFA from Yale University, New Haven (2005). By incorporating everyday materials into his works, Griffin expands the boundaries of artmaking and encourages his viewers to reorient their perspectives on the world. He has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Eva Winkeler, Frankfurt, Germany (2006); Smith-Stewart Gallery, New

York City, New York (2008); and the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, Kansas (2012). His works have also been shown in group exhibitions, including the *Whitney Biennial*, New York; *R.S.V.P.*, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; *Freeway Balconies*, Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, Germany (all 2008); and *Threads: Textiles and Fiber in the Works of African American Artists*, EK Projects, Beijing, China (2010). He currently lives and works in Kansas City, Missouri.

RASHAWN GRIFFIN



Everything that happens, 2016–21,
ink, thread, gouache, collage, graphite, and mixed media on paper,
15 x 11 inches each, 80 parts.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL and how does the Midwest inform your practice?

The project at THE REGIONAL has been worked on over a five-year period, and I am most excited to show it in its completion.

For lack of a better term, there's a psychological effect to being from the Midwest. I take comfort in an expansive sky, feeling the air pressure changes from a storm, or seeing the weather come in from a distance. These phenomenological aspects inform the way I experience the world and get translated into experiential effects in my work regularly.

Please list three to five arts organizations or artist-run spaces that you think people should know about and why.

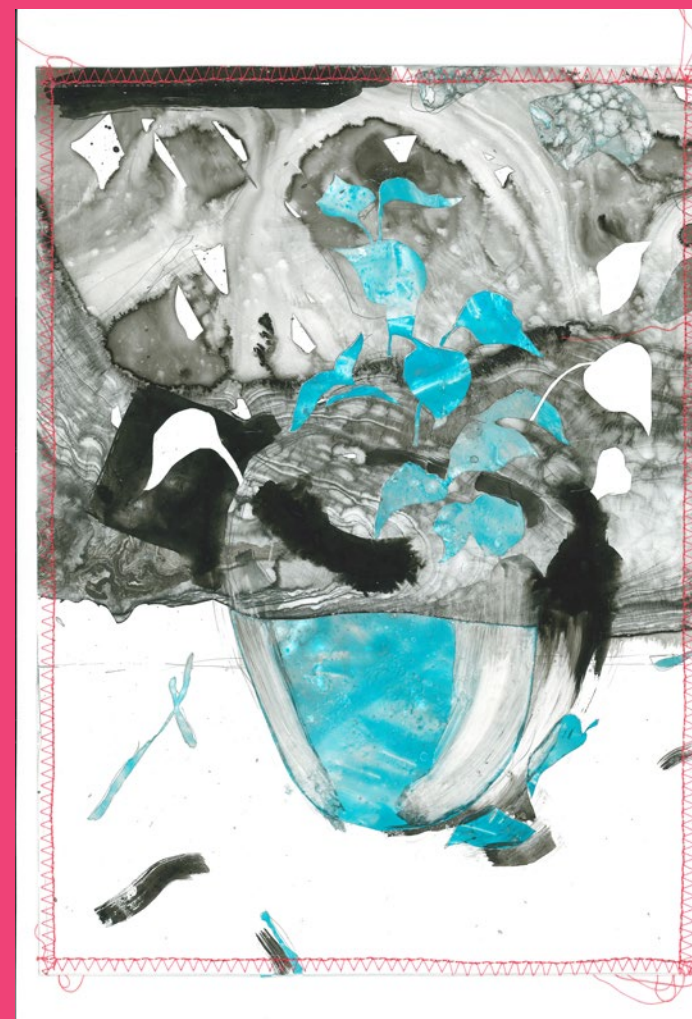
THE CHARLOTTE STREET FOUNDATION just opened a 20,000-foot campus, with galleries, studio residencies, theater, performance spaces, and more. Positioned at a college outside the city, the NERMAN MUSEUM's exhibitions and collection have some of the of best contemporary and international art exhibitions in the greater Kansas City area, along with fantastic exhibitions at H&R BLOCK ARTSPACE at the Kansas City Art Institute. Growing up here, I still often spend time with the Asian Collection at the NELSON-ATKINS. The galleries don't change much, but the shift and scale of the installations in these rooms are still pretty impactful.

DAKOTA MACE:

What are ways you as an artist are giving back to your community? What advice can you give to other aspiring artists who are interested in art?

I serve on my city's public art committee. Also, I'm a board member for The Charlotte Street Foundation in Kansas City, a non-profit organization that specializes in community building through various arts initiatives that seek to "cultivating an environment where artists and art can thrive." This includes financial resources for individual artists, grants and exhibition opportunities, a curatorial residency program, a residency with studio/workspace for visual artists, writers, theater and performing artists, cultural producer grants for small artist-run organizations, travel grants for individual artists, partnership programs with other businesses, and more. I also chair a programming committee for visual arts at The Charlotte Street Foundation, which allows me to engage with artists' work in a different way. It can be difficult to gauge how much of an impact one has, but hopefully there's an importance to being visible in one's community this way.

The best advice I can give to an aspiring artist is to focus on your work. If artmaking is a priority in your life, others will take notice.



Everything that happens (detail), 2016–21,
ink, thread, gauche, collage, graphite, and mixed media on paper.
15 x 11 inches each, 80 parts.

Dan Gunn

b. 1980, Prairie Village, Kansas;
lives and works in Chicago, Illinois

Dan Gunn (American, born 1980) was born in Prairie Village, Kansas. He received an MFA in painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007). Gunn adopts images that encapsulate Midwestern traditions and mythologies to construct his own counterfactual histories. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2011), Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago (2011, 2014), The University Club, Chicago (2019), and Good Weather Gallery, North Little Rock, Arkansas

(2019). He also exhibited work in group exhibitions like *New Icon*, Loyola Museum of Art, Chicago (2010); *New American Paintings: Midwest Edition*, Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, Illinois (2015); *Midwest Mindset*, Center for the Visual Arts, University of Toledo (2016); *Matter Matters*, University of Missouri Kansas City Gallery of Art (2019); and *The Shallow Act of Seeing*, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin (2020). He currently lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

DAN GUNN



The Ungrateful Son, No.12, 2019,
glazed stoneware, rose quartz and agate marbles, light fixture,
19 x 21 x 26 inches.

DAN GUNN

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

It's great to get to present two bodies of my work in the context of the other, with the *Scenery* and *Ungrateful Son* series. The *Scenery* series comprises multipart wooden relief sculptures held together with cordage. I'm drawn to physical pictures because I'm aware of them as both images and things at the same time, akin to a stage set or other types of props. *Wetland Scenery* furthers my foray into sculptural wall relief pictures by incorporating chip carving for the first time. I'm relatively new to carving, so it's exciting to learn and develop the possibilities of the form. My practice uses materials and processes for their historical and social connotations. Both the wood of the *Scenery* series and the stoneware ceramics of the *Ungrateful Son* series are chosen for their relationship to tropes of Americana. I'm excited to exhibit them together with each other the way they exist in my studio, and to get to see them in the context of other Midwestern artists.

Does the Midwest inform your practice in any way? If so, describe how.

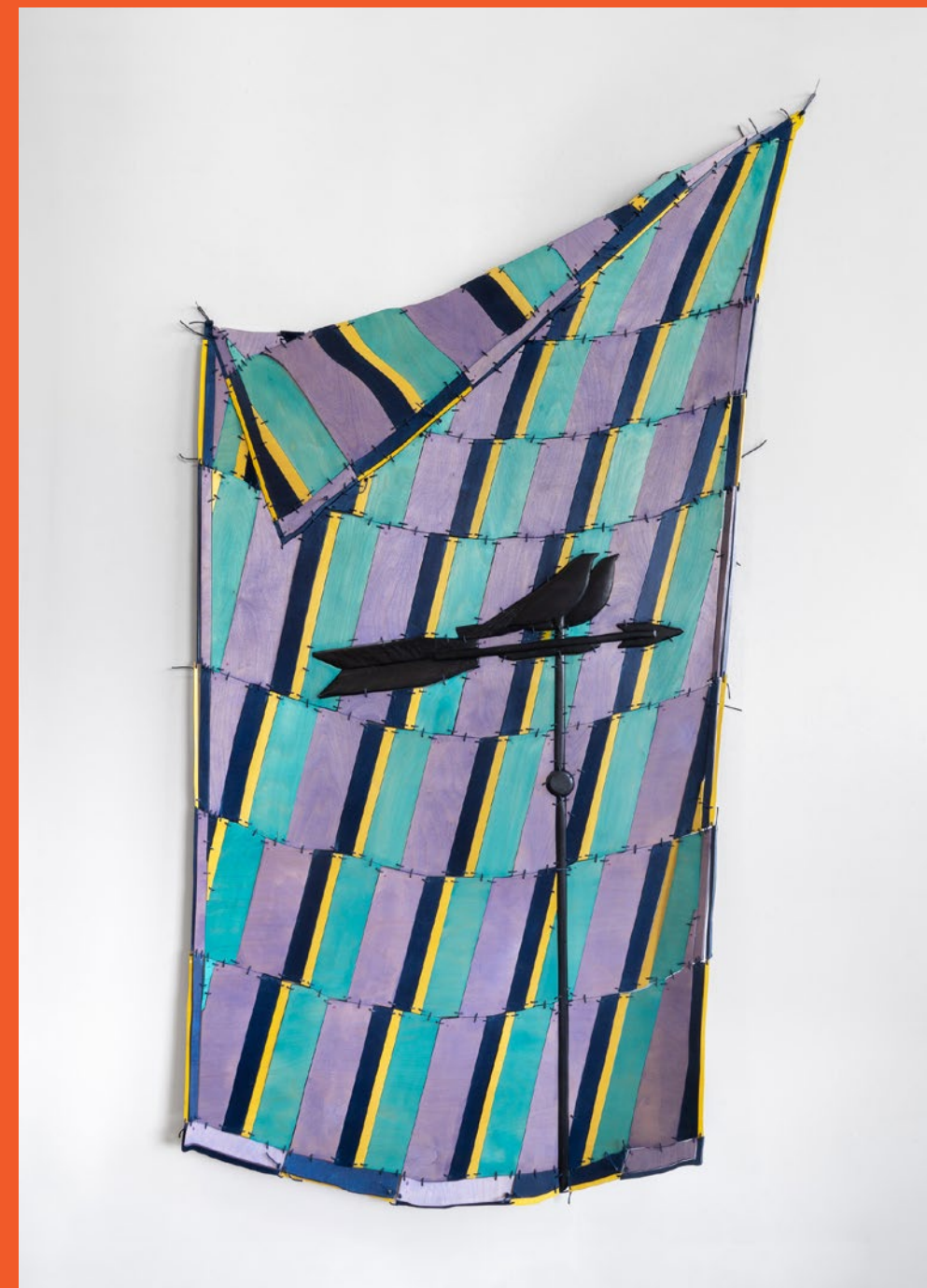
Yep. Well, I draw heavily from the images and aesthetic practices around me. I grew up in a suburban Kansas City home, but both of my parents were from rural contexts. So, the physical landscape was pretty subdued and manicured, but the mythological landscape of my family's memories was always pastoral, i.e., "the farm." The Midwest as an idea has been severed from what actually occurs in that location but functions as a kind of humble core to the American psyche—hardworking, practical, nice, productive, etc. Unfortunately, this is based on a historical period that has

frozen the Midwest as an idea in the past, making its current usage anachronistic. Furthermore, its rosy demeanor obscures darker currents of racism, intolerance, poverty, and environmental degradation that are a part of the Midwest's reality, but not its self-image. So "the midwest" is a theme in the work because it's time for the myth to be interrogated.

ALICE TIPPIT:

In your work there exists for me a comforting quality, because of the references to traditional handicraft, but alongside it a disquieting strangeness. A transformation or translation has taken place that removes it from the zone of the familiar; for example, the scale of the ceramic lamps or the pieces that look like patterned fabric that are instead stained and pieced wood. Is the shift from familiar to strange I am perceiving important to your work, and, if so, why?

I think that the uncanniness in the work is very important. For me, it mirrors my own feeling of estrangement from a type of traditionalist culture that I now view with both fondness and suspicion. But more so it mirrors the very self-conception of that traditionalism in concepts like "the Midwest," which continues to have a fantastical and anachronistic view of itself as primarily agrarian, wholesome, and pragmatic. A position frozen in time, and a kind of nostalgic hallucination that omits the bad bits, like racism, the opioid crisis, environmental degradation, and corporate farming. The handicraft in the practice needs to facilitate this mixed feeling. Or at least it feels truest to me when it does so.



Bittersweet Scenery, 2020,
acrylic, stain, furniture finish on birch plywood and aspen with nylon cord,
82 x 46 x 3/4 inches.

Matthew Angelo Harrison

b. 1989, Detroit, Michigan;
lives and works in Detroit, Michigan

Matthew Angelo Harrison (American, born 1989) was born in Detroit, Michigan. He holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2012). Through otherworldly sculptures that combine organic materials with analog and digital technologies, Harrison explores the cultural identities and “abstract ancestries” that are embedded into contemporary modes of production. He has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (both 2016); Jessica Silverman, San Francisco; Broad Museum of Art, Michigan State University, East Lansing (both 2018); Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; and Salon 94, New York (2021).

His work has also been shown in group exhibitions, including *Take Me (I'm Yours)*, Jewish Museum, New York (2016); *Fictions*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; *The Everywhere Studio*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (both 2017); *Songs of Sabotage*, New Museum Triennial, New York; *I Was Raised on the Internet*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (both 2018); *Colored People Time: Quotidian Pasts*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; *The 2019 Whitney Biennial Exhibition*, New York; *YOU*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (all 2019); and *Other.Worldly*, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands (2020). He currently lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.

MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON



Seer: Peering through Aurora, 2020,
headlight, tinted polyurethane resin, anodized aluminum, acrylic,
20.6 x 10.4 x 6.5 inches.

MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON

What does the Midwest mean to you?

Just having the spirit to face the reality of where you're from and all those complications, and how that built your character growing up, then not running away from it.

Does the Midwest inform your practice in any way? If so, describe how.

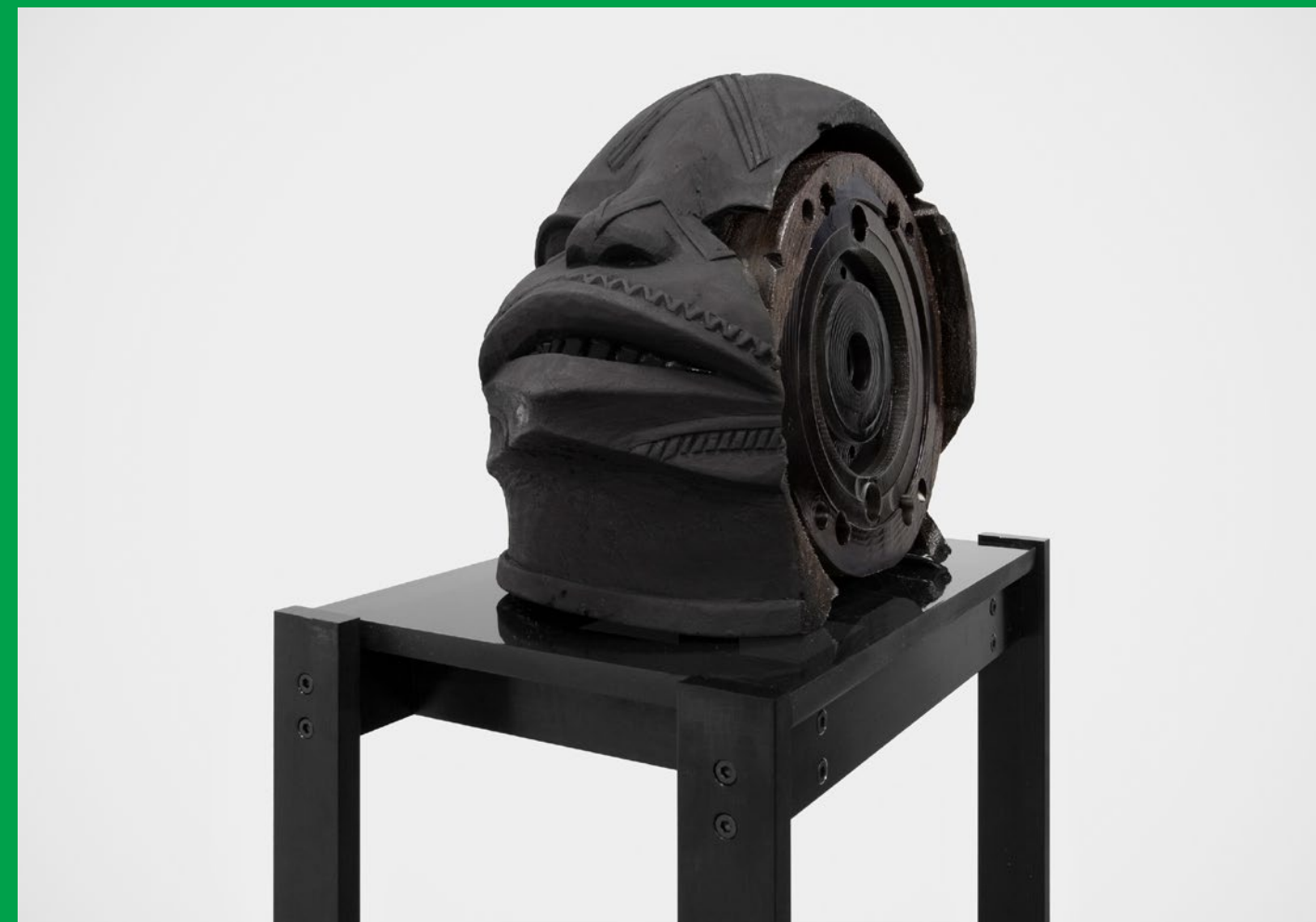
Pretty much everyone in my family has worked at the plant or manufacturing facility [in Detroit]; my family is straight-up blue collar. My mom worked on the assembly line at American Axle, which made drivetrain components for cars. I remember vividly being taken to her workplace when I was ten years old. The factory was such an intense, almost violent working environment. Exposure to this environment early on has clearly contributed to my artistic obsession with technology and hands-on fabrication. After getting a degree from the Art Institute of Chicago, I went to work at Ford in the clay modeling department to pay off my student loans. Working with commercial prototypes has certainly affected at least one ongoing body of work.

ISA GAGARIN:

Considering the role of archives in your work, how do you think of your practice in relation to the present and future?

I like to play with the idea of the archive, with longevity and perpetuity. My resin encapsulations take wooden sculptures targeting the tourist trade—in other words, semi-disposable mementos—and give them a lasting platform, a stage to mean more, like a dragonfly caught in amber. My 3D ceramics take Makonde masks whose forms are

longstanding, due to the traditions from which they emerge, and render them in a mode that is very much of our time. The two bodies of work kind of move in opposite directions.



Dark Silhouette: Synthetic Lipiko no.5, 2018,
wooden sculpture from West Africa, polyurethane resin, anodized aluminum, acrylic,
7 x 13 x 10 inches.

Pao Houa Her

b. 1982, Laos;
lives and works in Blaine, Minnesota

Pao Houa Her (American, born 1982) was born in Laos. She received her BFA in photography from Minneapolis College of Art and Design (2009) and her MFA in photography from Yale University, New Haven (2012). Her photographs of the Hmong community sensitively document the larger ethnic Hmong culture that became increasingly established in various locations in the United States in the late 1970s and 1980s. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Center for Hmong Studies, Minneapolis (2013); the Broad Museum of Art, Michigan

State University, East Lansing, Michigan; the Minneapolis Institute of Art (both 2015); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2018); and Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis (2020). She has also had works included in group exhibitions, like *What Remains*, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; *Migration Series #1*, Telemark Art Center, Skien, Norway (both 2015); *Rethinking Histories*, Minneapolis Institute of Art (2019); and *Phantoms and Aliens | The Invisible Other*, Richard Kho Gallery, Singapore (2020). She lives and works in Blaine, Minnesota.

PAO HOUA HER



Julie in a bathing suit, 2006-09,
digital archival inkjet print, edition of 5, 2 AP,
40 x 32 inches.

PAO HOUA HER



Mai Youa in Hmong clothes, 2006-09,
digital archival inkjet print, edition of 5, 2AP,
40 x 32 inches.

What does the Midwest mean to you?

This Midwest for me is home. It is where all of my family remains. It is where I grew up. It is also the place where my artistic voice finds itself.

Please list five artists from the Twin Cities who you think people should know about and why.

- TIA SIMONE-GARDNER is an artist, educator, and Black feminist scholar, who works primarily with photography, moving-image, and drawing. Her practice is deeply grounded in interdisciplinary strategies that activate ideas of ritual, iconoclasm, and geography.
- JOHN KIM is a theorist and practitioner of new media, who has published widely and created interactive installations and projects at museums and galleries around the world.
- MONICA HALLER is an artist and educator, whose creative work and research span photography, video, design, installation, and writing. Her new work explores philosophies of ownership, the social construction of race, environmental racism, and productive possibilities of this wetland's terrain.
- RINI KEAGY is a moving image artist. Her practice in video and 16mm film is multimodal and research-based, and investigates race and labor, disease, and sites of historical and psychosocial trauma.
- MICHAEL KHUTH is a queer, Khmer-American lens-based artist and independent curator. Khuth approaches collage as a visual language to articulate, explore, complicate, and reflect on queer identity and the process of becoming.

HƯƠNG NGÔ:

I was so excited to see that you are a part of this exhibition. Though our family histories are so different, they are tied together from our shared experience of global conflict. While your work is based so much on the present, it also speaks volumes about past events and how those narratives need to be reconsidered. I was wondering if you could speak to your relationship to history, the archive, and how your work forges—or disrupts—those connections.

Thank you so much for this question. History is really important to me as it informs the work I make. I use the archive as both a research tool and a tool of looking and thinking about imagery. I often think about images of young Hmong guerrilla fighters holding guns bigger than themselves. And while elders in my community find the images nostalgic, the younger generation seemingly has no direct connection to images but finds them rather problematic. I'm interested in posing questions of war and intentions, and Hmong people's contribution to the American war, our complicity, displacement, and trauma that is inherited generation after generation. For me, image making is an examination of the past, the present, and the future.



Aunty Mai's 3 daughters, 2006–09,
digital archival inkjet print, edition of 5, 2AP,
40 x 32 inches.

Anissa Lewis

b. 1974, Covington, Kentucky;
lives and works in Cincinnati, Ohio,
and Covington, Kentucky

Anissa R. Lewis (American, born 1974) was born in Covington, Kentucky. She received a BA in studio art from Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois (1996) and an MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale University, New Haven (1999). As a community artist, Lewis engages in collaborative projects that center women empowerment and civic engagement. Additionally, her photographs, signs, and maps provide physical reflections on her experiences of adolescence, identity, community, and home. She has had solo exhibitions at Park National Bank Art Gallery, University of

Cincinnati-Clermont (2008) and Yeiser Art Center, Paducah, Kentucky (2009). Her works have also been shown in several local group exhibitions in Cincinnati, including *30 Americans Plus...The Region*, Meyers Gallery, University of Cincinnati (2016); *Ohio Artists for Freedoms*, Pearlman Gallery, Art Academy of Cincinnati (2018); and *Revolutionary: Being American Today*, Kennedy Heights Arts Center (2020). She currently lives and works on both sides of the Ohio River in Cincinnati, Ohio and Covington, Kentucky.



309 Pleasant Street (Aunt Connie), 2015,
digital color print,
19 x 15 inches.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL and what does the Midwest mean to you?

What excites me most about my work being presented in THE REGIONAL is that this is an opportunity for the stories of families, places, community moments, words uttered to be acknowledged and relived. Memory and present-day reality that are at painful odds, despite co-existing in the same place, are both affirmed and reconciled.

Just like any geographic location, the Midwest refers to a specific ethos, ways of seeing, and mentality toward the world and its people, places, and things within it. This ethos is shaped by the world's landscape, economy, and culture, which is constructed by social norms and traditional family structure to promote homogeneity. I believe the Midwest most certainly informs my practice. It has shaped my personhood and how I was raised and acculturated to think what Blackness is and isn't. In my work, I spend every breath to intentionally contradict and undermine.

Please list five artists from your city that you think people should know about and why.

- REBECCA NAVA's sensitivity and sensibility for all things color, composition, Mexican culture and womanhood is phenomenal and life loving.
- MARY CLARE RIETZ's social practice work in the urban core of Cincinnati commands you to love and believe in humans and connection; she brings people together and forefronts voice, agency and listening with empathy in all that she does.

- NYTAYA BABBITT's portraits of Black women are breathtaking; the way she renders Black women as they see themselves without the gaze, stereotype, or statistic is humanity personified.
- TARYN ZUST's drawings skills and storytelling are otherworldly, and she has a heart to match.
- EMILY HANAKO MOMOHARA's photographs haunt you. Her language of light and darkness have a crisp clarity that this is stunningly beautiful. Her recent works involving social justice are timeless and for the history books.

LYNDON BARROIS JR.:
What do other disciplines do that you wish art did?

I don't. I don't wish that art did what other disciplines do. Art is art. Great art compels its audience to do what we think traditionally it doesn't do. Great art compels us to think, evolve, course correct, love. It is a timeless companion to humanity. And, on the side of the coin, with certain art practices, it does feed, it does make houses, it does educate, it brings communities together, it even loves.



338 Pleasant Street (Daddy is a marine), 2015, digital color print, 19 x 15 inches.



1313 Garrard Street, 2015, digital color print, 22 x 15 inches.

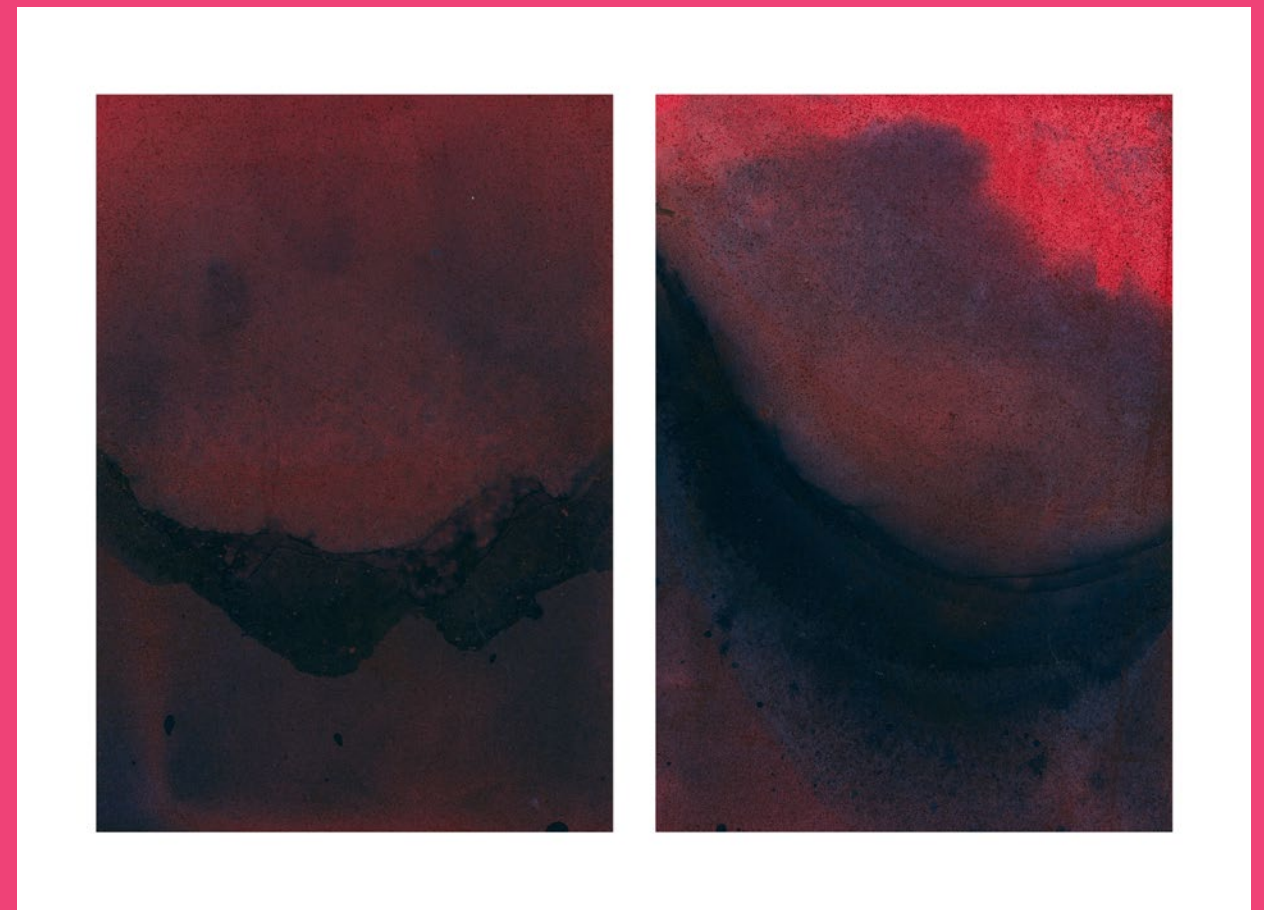
Dakota Mace (Diné)

b. 1991, Albuquerque, New Mexico;
lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin

Dakota Mace (American, born 1991) was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She holds a BFA in photography from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe (2013), as well as an MFA in photography (2017) and an MFA in design studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2019). As a Diné (Navajo) artist, Mace uses alternative methods of photography, weaving, beadwork, and papermaking to translate the language of Diné weaving and its history. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Kohler Art Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Travois Gallery, Kansas City, Missouri (both

2018); and The Alice Wilds Gallery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2021). She has also had work included in group exhibitions, like *Native Fibers*, Wisconsin Museum of Quilts and Fiber Arts, Cedarburg, Wisconsin; *2019 Wisconsin Triennial*, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (both 2019); *Ossuary*, Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (2020); and *Unraveled. Restructured. Revealed*, Trout Museum of Art, Appleton, Wisconsin (2021). She currently lives and works in Madison, Wisconsin, where she is a lecturer at University of Wisconsin-Madison and a photographer for the Center of Design and Material Culture.

DAKOTA MACE (DINÉ)



Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places), 2021,
cochineal dyed cyanotypes,
5 x 7 inches each, 200 parts.

DAKOTA MACE (DINÉ)

Can you please talk about your work that is being shown in THE REGIONAL?

Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places) is a personal series that focuses on the traumatic history of the Long Walk to Hwéeldi (Bosque Redondo) and the stories told through Diné elders. Each cyanotype is made within the New Mexico landscape or with materials from the region and represents our ancestors whose memories were removed from US history. Yet, their stories live on within our land, and each one connects us to them.

Please list five artists from your city that you think people should know about and why.

- NIBIIWAKAMIGKWE is a Métis, Onyota'a:ka, Anishinaabe and Two-Spirit artist currently working as an artist, educator, co-owner and cultural coordinator at giige on Williamson Street, a queer, Indigenous-focused collective space.
- JENIE GAO is a full-time artist, creative director, and entrepreneur. Her arts practice is based in printmaking, public art, social practice, and storytelling. She currently works on consulting in equitable best practices and systems for cultural organizations within the arts.
- ADRIANA BARRIOS is a queer, biracial, Latina, artist who grew up on the coastal borderlands of San Diego, California. She is actively part of the Madison art community and bringing more awareness for diversity in the arts.
- TOM JONES is a Ho-Chun photographer that creates art that challenges stereotypical ideas of Native people by questioning the past and reevaluating the present. He is also the head of the

photography department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and works to bring more Indigenous representation on campus.

- ROBERTO MATA a Latino artist who currently lives in Madison, WI with a specialization in printmaking. Torres Mata draws on his family background and identity to explore the complexities of migration within his work.

ISA GAGARIN:

How does color function in your work in THE REGIONAL?

I am curious to hear about your relationship to color in terms of your creative process, materials, and/or language.

The use of red represents my connection to my community and my ancestors. There are stories of Diné women reusing materials from Hwéeldi (Bosque Redondo) as a means of survival. Some of these materials included soldier's coats, older weavings, or unused fabric. Some of these materials were dyed with either cochineal or aniline dyes, and the intensity of the red reminds us of our resilience and the strength of each generation.



Untitled, *Dahodiyinii (Sacred Places)*, 2021, digital archival scan and cochineal dyed cyanotype, 11 x 15 inches.

Gisela McDaniel

b. 1995, Bellevue, Nebraska;
lives and works in Detroit, Michigan

Gisela McDaniel (American, born 1995) was born in Bellevue, Nebraska, and holds a BFA from the University of Michigan (2019). McDaniel is a diasporic indigenous Chamorro artist who merges portrait painting, motion-sensored technology, and meaningful objects to generate a space of empowerment and healing for survivors of sexual violence. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions

at Playground Detroit (2019); Pilar Corrias, London (2020); and The Mistake Room, Los Angeles (2021). She has also been a part of several group exhibitions, including *Heat Wave*, Ann Arbor Art Center (2018); *Dhaka Art Summit*, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2020); and *Dual Vision*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2021). She currently lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.



Lola, 2019,
oil on canvas, jewelry from subject-collaborator,
42 x 52 x 5.5 inches.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL and what does the Midwest mean to you?

As a mixed-race white and Chamoru woman, I am descended from a matrilineal people from the Marianas islands in the northwestern Pacific. For THE REGIONAL, I celebrated three different matriarchs: one of whom is my own mother, the other who is an Albanian immigrant, and the third who is a Black woman from Detroit. This body of work honors my ancient Pasifika culture and two additional matriarchs who have nurtured or influenced me in some manner.

I grew up on the indigenous lands of the Eerie and Kaskasia peoples, currently known as Cleveland, Ohio. My mother, like the other two matriarchs, has roots in other parts of the world but settled, worked, and struggled to raise her family in the Midwest.

The Midwest informs my practice as this is where I was raised and also where my father's side of the family has roots. My grandmother's family were farmers in Millersburg, Ohio, and can be traced back to the founding of Wayne County. My paternal grandfather's people migrated north as coal miners from Kentucky before WWII. Navigating the Midwest as one of the only mixed-race CHamoru/Pasifika persons in the area often felt isolating. It also made me long to learn more about my CHamoru culture for that very reason.

Please list five artists from your city that you think people should know about and why.

→ LANCER CASEM is one of my favorite lens-based artists in the city and someone I love to collaborate with.

→ CYNDNEY CAMP is an incredible painter to watch out for, her work is so expressive and moving.

→ JOVA LYNNE is a multidisciplinary conceptual artist and curator doing incredible things both in her own practice and at MOCAD.

→ DARRYL DEANGELO TERRELL is another one of my favorite lens-based artists and one of the sweetest artists in Detroit. I am always impressed by their work.

→ BREE GANT is multidisciplinary artist whom I have looked up to in practice.

NIKKI WOODS:

Your paintings are really physical. I love the way material is piled on in decadent gobs of color. How do you understand painting as a means for creating a space of comfort or healing?

My paintings are always indelibly linked to the stories shared with me by the subject that is conveyed in the accompanying audio. It's crucial to know that I conduct the interview with subjects just before asking them to sit for the painting and that the final question I ask them is "What are you proud of yourself for?" Having just meditated on the arc of their journey and ending on this note of reclamation, the paintings capture an intimate turning point in their spirit and embodied self. There's a sense of release and a wonderful affirmation that they are so much more than their trauma. They feel and are beautiful. They are strong. They are truly self-possessed in the most loving, positive, and peaceful sense of the term. In that sense, the portrait captures rather than creates a space of comfort and healing. As an artist, and particularly as an indigenous woman artist, it is an honor to render that moment.



Tiningo' si Sirena, 2021,
oil on canvas, found object, jewelry from subject-collaborator, sound,
45 x 60 x 5.5 inches.

Lorena Molina

b. 1985, El Salvador;
lives and works in Cincinnati, Ohio

Lorena Molina (Salvadoran, born 1985) received a BFA from California State University, Fullerton (2012) and an MFA from University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (2015). Through a multimedia practice, Molina explores the liminal space, which the artist sees as both a site of painful violence for displaced peoples and potential for contentious dreaming. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at 621 Gallery, Tallahassee (2018); Delaplaine Arts Center, Frederick, Maryland (2019); and Vox Populi, Philadelphia. She has also performed at institutions like the Walker Art

Center, Minneapolis (2012); Weisman Art Center, Minneapolis (2014); and Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2019). Additionally, her work has been included in several group exhibitions, like *IMAGE/Transition*, Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis (2014); *Combined Talents*, Museum of Fine Arts, Tallahassee (2019); and *This Must be The Place*, Roy G Biv Gallery, Columbus, Ohio (2020). She currently lives and works in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she is an assistant professor of art at the University of Cincinnati.



Reconciliation Garden, 2021,
plants, ceramic, plastic, wood, coffee, iPad, with grow lights,
dimensions variable.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

Reconciliation Garden brings plants and sound into the gallery to create a site for meditation, conversations, and acknowledgment of the history of the United States in El Salvador. It specifically highlights, how our actions that we might take for granted in our daily routines, such as having coffee, are loaded with histories of exploitation, genocide, and imperialism. The work also questions preconceived ideas about freedom and safety and the price paid for these ideas.

I'm specifically interested in how people will respond to the prompt on the wall that asks the visitors, "How do we make amends for the action for this country?" The prompt has already gathered fifty-plus responses at The Welcome Project. It will be interesting to see how and if the answers differ or how they are in conversation with each other depending on the institution and the city in which they're shown.

What does the Midwest mean to you?

The Midwest has been my home off and on for the past nine years. It was not an easy transition for me at all as a person who lived in El Salvador until I was fourteen and then in Long Beach, California, with my family until I was twenty-eight. In the Midwest, I felt further displaced, away from family and close networks. It was the first place where I felt very aware of my body and my presence in predominantly white art spaces. The Midwest completely changed the way I saw my role as an artist and my art, because if I was going to exist in spaces that othered me, then to me these institutions became sites for resistance.

In the beginning, I resented the Midwest, but this anger brought me to amazing radical groups of people who felt the same way and who were doing incredible things to change it. The Midwest gave me the language around white supremacy, oppression, organizing protests, and volunteering. And little by little, I started to build a home here. I won't sugarcoat it—the Midwest and specifically Ohio is not an easy place to be a Brown woman. But the ground feels active and hungry for change, and I do think this is where my presence and work can have the most impact right now, especially when I am part of a community that supports and roots for each other.

MARA DUVRA:

Vibrant colors, lush greenery, and layered patterns are all visual motifs of your recent photographic installation work. How have these visually striking motifs developed in your practice over time and what do they symbolize?

I love the way you are describing my work. I use the layering in different ways depending on what I'm thinking about in the piece. Many of the times the layering of objects, photographs, or plants for me represent the markers of what making a home in the margins looks like. Also, when you're displaced because of war, the landscape and natural markers of home become extremely political and meaningful. You miss everything and you ache for the smells, sounds, and sights. By using certain plants, or fruits, I am trying to bring some of El Salvador with me. Some of California with me. Some of New York with me. Some of Ohio with me. My home in the margins is a hybrid of every place I loved and been loved. Some plants are sometimes used as representations of a yearning or a wish for safety.



Reconciliation Garden (detail), 2021, plants, ceramic, plastic, wood, coffee, iPad, with grow lights, dimensions variable.

Hương Ngô

b. 1979, Hong Kong;
lives and works in Chicago, Illinois

Hương Ngô (American, born 1979) was born in Hong Kong. She received her BFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2001) and her MFA in art and technology studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2004). As a refugee who grew up in the American South, Ngô delves into the archive, engaging histories of colonization, migration, and knowledge production in her work. Through a process of translation, she reorients the hybridized and nonfluent as sites of survival. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Chicago Artists Coalition (both 2017); and The

Factory, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (2020). She has also had works included in group exhibitions like *The Making of a Fugitive*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2016); *In Search of Miss Ruthless*, Para Site, Hong Kong (2017); *Being: New Photography 2018*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2018); and *Prospect 5*, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans (2021). She currently lives and works in Chicago, Illinois, where she is an assistant professor in Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

HƯƠNG NGÔ



And the State of Emergency is Also Always a State of Emergence, 2017,
black poster paper, black gaffer's tape, cyanotypes, sand, plaster, studio refuse, framed archival
pigment prints, dimensions variable.

HƯƠNG NGÔ

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

This body of work means so much to me as it has helped reframe concepts of language and archive based on my own family's history. *The Voice Is an Archive* is a video made with my sister and my niece where we are attempting to mimic a song sung by my mother. While it was made quite quickly and intuitively, it continues to nurture me and offer fresh models for thinking about the archive, hybridity, and connection. *And the State of Emergency is Also Always a State of Emergence* animates stories of immigration and living in refugee camps that my siblings and I have discussed, using materials and processes that are generative and embrace their imperfections. The work speaks to where I want to head toward, which is a space of abundance and radical acceptance.

Please list three to five arts organizations or artist-run spaces that you think people should know about.

- 3ARTS CHICAGO is a granting organization that supports historical underrepresented artists.
- CHICAGO ARTISTS COALITION offers a range of residency and studio programs aimed toward building a strong community of artists and curators that are empowered to organize among one another.
- LATITUDE CHICAGO is a printing lab that has taken on every aspect of photo production and organization management as an opportunity for education and leadership.
- 4TH WARD PROJECT SPACE is an artist-run project space that carries on

the history and ethics of DIY artist-run "apartment galleries" for which Chicago is known.

JONATHAN CHRISTENSEN CABALLERO:

What role does language and fluency have in your art?

I've always been fascinated by how language shapes the way that we see the world and ourselves. When I started making art, I began incorporating the material aspects of language pretty early on, even before being conscious of it. Fluency, on the other hand, has been something that I have struggled with as a refugee who has not been fluent in my mother tongue since I was five years old. As I began to learn more about histories of languages, it helped me question fluency as a construction tied to colonial practices and push back against those expectations. That process has been really helpful to understand how non-fluency can become a position of deep investigation and power.

I recently came upon this moving passage by Syrian refugee, writer, and translator Lina Mounzer, who writes in her essay "War in Translation" that language is the best form of resistance in a world scarred by borders: "The only way to make borders meaningless is to keep insisting on crossing them: like a refugee, without papers, without waiting to be given permission, without regard for what might be waiting on the other side. For when you cross a border, you are not only affirming its permeability, but also changing the landscape on both sides. You cross carrying what you can carry, you cross bearing your witness, you cross knowing that you are damageable, that you are mortal and finite, but that language is memory and memory lives on."



The Voice Is an Archive, 2016, digital black-and-white video, with sound, 6 min.

Yvonne Osei

b. 1990, Hamburg, Germany; lives and works
in St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois

Yvonne Osei (Ghanaian, born 1990) was born in Hamburg, Germany. She holds a BFA in graphic design from Webster University, St. Louis (2013) and an MFA from Washington University in St. Louis (2016). Through a transnational practice, Osei uses textile designs and garments to explore themes of beauty, colorism, and historical authorship in postcolonial West African and Western cultures. She has had solo exhibitions at several local St. Louis institutions, including

Laumeier Sculpture Park (2017) and Bruno David Gallery (2016, 2018, 2019). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions like *Video in America*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; *Adornment*, Millstone Gallery at COCA, St. Louis (both 2019); and *Textiles: A Social Media*, Brick City Gallery at Missouri State University, Springfield (2020). She currently lives and works in St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois.



Africa Clothe Me Bare, St. Louis IV, 2016,
photographic print over clear Plexiglas, mounted on aluminum,
40 × 30 inches.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

I am thrilled about the opportunity to create a site-specific installation that concurrently interrupts and interacts with the physical and social structure of the museum. The concrete pillars that support Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati's indoor spaces drew my attention on my first glance of the museum space. In my work, I am clothing these pillars in photo-based textile designs that address histories of displacement, racial injustices, and atrocities of the past and present. I am adorning commonly overlooked but significant architectural elements of the museum—pillars—in Black experiences, contributions, and stories that have been erased and excluded from our collective memory. I am also excited about how the work serves as a temporal monument utilizing visual oxymorons. It is reclaiming white spaces of exclusion to articulate Black pain through the soft medium of textiles against hard concrete structures.

Please list five artists from Saint Louis who you think people should know about and why.

YOWSHIEN KUO, KATHERINE SIMÓNE REYNOLDS, KAHLIL ROBERT IRVING, BASIL KINCAID, and DAMON DAVIS, to name a few artists of color who are crushing it at the moment. I love that each of these artists has a strong sensitivity for community and engages the community through their individual practice. They are challenging the status quo in many ways and addressing racial injustices that have plagued the United States for centuries and continue to be a major global crisis.

ANISSA LEWIS:

In your *Africa Clothe Me Bare* works, which is more powerful for you: the physical act of your wrapping the sculptures in African cloth or having the sculptures be seen by passersby wrapped in African cloth?

The act of passersby witnessing a nude Caucasian female sculpture styled in West African dress sensibilities, I believe, is more powerful because the work transcends my experiences and impacts others. Interaction is one of the many reasons I fell in love with making art that thrives in public space. However, the potency of *Africa Clothe Me Bare* does not lie in the clothing of the nude public sculptures alone; it is also established in the unclenching of these sculptures.

The power of this body of work rests on perception, which is created by the presence and absence of the cloth. My performances are not complete until the sculptures I clothe are returned to their original state. Once the cloths on the public sculptures are taken off, there is a heightened sense of bareness that the viewer cannot unsee. The "nude objects" we passively experience are transformed into "naked subjects" as they attain presence and humanness.

Africa Clothe Me Bare is an ongoing series of performances characterized by redefining and recontextualizing outdoor nude female sculptures in Western countries. It interrogates some of the following questions: What is the difference between nudity and nakedness? Who gets to define which bodies are deemed as nude or naked? At what time in history were these sculptures made and to serve what purpose? Whose gaze do they honor and for whose pleasure and consumption? Why do the sculptures exist in the spaces they do today?



US POWER, 2017,
photographic print over clear Plexiglas, mounted on aluminum,
30 x 45 inches.

Natalie Petrosky

b. 1989, Cincinnati, Ohio;
lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio

Natalie Petrosky (American, born 1989) was born in Akron, Ohio. She holds a BFA in painting from Kent State University, Ohio (2012) and an MFA in painting and drawing from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (2016). In her mixed-media works, Petrosky presents colorful and abstracted formal explorations that reflect her observations and experiences. She has had solo exhibitions at Murphy 550, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

(2019); KINK Contemporary, Cleveland, Ohio; and The Suburban, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (both 2020). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions like *TN Contemporary*, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (2018); *Blue Tape, Black Gloves*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (2019); and *Over the Structures*, CICA Museum, Gimpo, South Korea (2020). She currently lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio.

NATALIE PETROSKY



We Stopped and Named Every Rock Along the Way, 2020,
fabric and acrylic on satin, 24 x 18 inches.

NATALIE PETROSKY

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL and how does the Midwest inform your practice?

I am excited that I have been able to combine two modes of making (painting and glass casting) into singular pieces. I usually function as a painter, but I have maintained a glass practice on the side throughout the years. This is the first body of work where I have been able to join these two interests in a way that makes sense to me. I've struggled in the past to have them carry equal weight, and now I see them supporting each other.

I think about the way I approach color choices in my paintings when I try to describe how living in the Midwest has informed my practice. We all know how long and cold the winters can be here. There is a specific point in the cold season where everything is grey. The sky, the ground, the lake, and the buildings. The diffused light during this time can actually be quite beautiful and flat. Imagine driving down a street with dirty snow sludge piled up on the sidewalks. In between the old industrial factories there will be a block of houses that are painted the brightest blues, yellows, and pinks you've ever seen in your life. That is what I want my paintings to be.

Please list three to five arts organizations or artist-run spaces that you think people should know about and why.

- OOO is a nomadic curatorial collective based in northeast Ohio. This group curates thoughtful shows at various locations, outside of the white cube. They take time with each show and make an effort for artists to have critical conversations.
- THIRDSPACE ACTION LAB is located

in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood. They are a grassroots cooperative that focuses on the importance of place. The space was created, in their words, "to disrupt the vicious cycle of disinvestment and displacement that negatively impacts the vitality of low-income communities of color."

- SPACES has been doing the work for a long time in Cleveland so that artists can explore and experiment with work in response to timely issues.

DAKOTA MACE:

What are some of your favorite art pieces or murals around Cleveland?

Isamu Noguchi designed a sculpture outside the Justice Center in downtown Cleveland in 1976 titled *Portal*. It is simple and complex at the same time. It is always a pleasure for me to see his work, especially at such a large scale.

Lars Fisk has one of his round sculptures in a seemingly random parking lot a little east of downtown Cleveland. It is a massive ball titled *Lot Ball or Perpetual Motion*. It looks as though a parking lot has been rolled into a globe. I enjoy his work, and it was a nice surprise to see it pop up one day.

There are quite a few murals I enjoy in Cleveland. I do not know all of the artists, but some of my favorites can be seen side by side riding the RTA red line west of downtown. My friend Lynnea Holland-Weiss painted a lovely mural titled *Lovers Hustle, Slide and Dip* seen on E. 34th and Broadway, which is also by an RTA station. I would suggest riding the train if you visit Cleveland.



the sky is the same color as the lake, 2021, acrylic and fabric on stretched satin in kiln-casted glass frame, 25.5 x 19.5 inches.



the ground is waiting, 2021, acrylic and fabric on stretched satin in kiln-casted glass frame, 25.5 x 19.5 inches.

Devan Shimoyama

b. 1989, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania;
lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Devan Shimoyama (American, born 1989) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received his BFA in drawing and painting from Pennsylvania State University, State College (2011) and his MFA in painting and drawing from Yale University, New Haven (2014). Inspired by fashion, Tarot, drag, pop culture, and craft, Shimoyama references works from the art historical canon and reframes them through the Black, queer, male body. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2018); Kavi Gupta, Chicago (2019); and Kunstpalais

Erlangen, Erlangen, Germany (2021). He has also had works included in group exhibitions like *Fictions*, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2017); *Getting to Know You*, Cleveland Institute of Art (2019); *Translating Violence: Redefining Black Male Identity*, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, Michigan; and *Friends and Friends of Friends*, Schlossmuseum, Linz, Austria (both 2020). He currently lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he is an assistant professor of art at Carnegie Mellon University.



Black Gentleman, 2018,
oil, color pencil, collage, glitter, rhinestones, sequins, jewelry,
fabric, and Flashe on canvas, 84 x 72 inches.

What excites you most about your body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

These works examine ways in which I've explored my Black queer identity through art, essays, poetry, friendship, meditation, and magic. In recent years, much of my work has illustrated the ways in which those who identify similarly to me have developed personal, spiritual, or ritualistic practices that have become vehicles for unpacking and sharing ideation related to identity construction and presentation.

Does the Midwest inform your practice in any way? If so, describe how.

In my sculptural practice, I'm constantly influenced by how gentrification is rapidly changing the Midwest—particularly the rust belt. Industrial cities such as Pittsburgh are undergoing a tech boom and many lower-income communities are being pushed out. The history of those places is being erased in favor of luxury apartment complexes and office space. I hope to pay homage to those communities through the visual and material language of the spontaneous memorial.

NIKKI WOODS:

Your paintings are so beautifully layered, both materially and conceptually. How do you think about embellishment or adornment in relationship to your subject?

Embellishment and adornment are ways in which beauty and dazzle can be applied, transforming an individual or in my case, the subject of a painting. I think of the materials I use as being very much the same as something a drag performer might wear to

create an illusion of another, perhaps more luxurious version of themselves or an entirely new character. Many of the materials in my paintings make me think of the power of constructed beauty and fantasy.



Midnight Ruminations, 2019,
oil, acrylic, color pencil, jewelry, Flashe, glitter, collage, sequins, and fabric on canvas stretched over panel, 72 x 84 inches.

Alice Tippit

b. 1975, Independence, Kansas;
lives and works in Chicago, Illinois

Alice Tippit (American, born 1975) was born in Independence, Kansas. She received a BFA and MFA in painting and drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2009 and 2013). Through a graphic style and restrained color palette, Tippit plays with the twofold recognizability and ambiguity of her images, allowing viewers to formulate their own questions and interpretations. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Paris London Hong Kong, Chicago (2015, 2018); Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2016, 2018, 2020); Kimmerich, Berlin (2017, 2019); Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2019, 2021); and Patron Gallery, Chicago (2020). Group exhibitions include *Two Steps Forward*, 47 Canal, New York (2015); *A Summer Painting Show*, PSM Gallery, Berlin (2016); *Common Forms*, Peana Projects, Monterrey, Mexico; *Class Reunion*, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria (both 2018); and *Small Paintings*, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago (2019). She currently lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.



Fathom, 2021,
oil on canvas,
24 x 20 inches.

What does the Midwest mean to you?

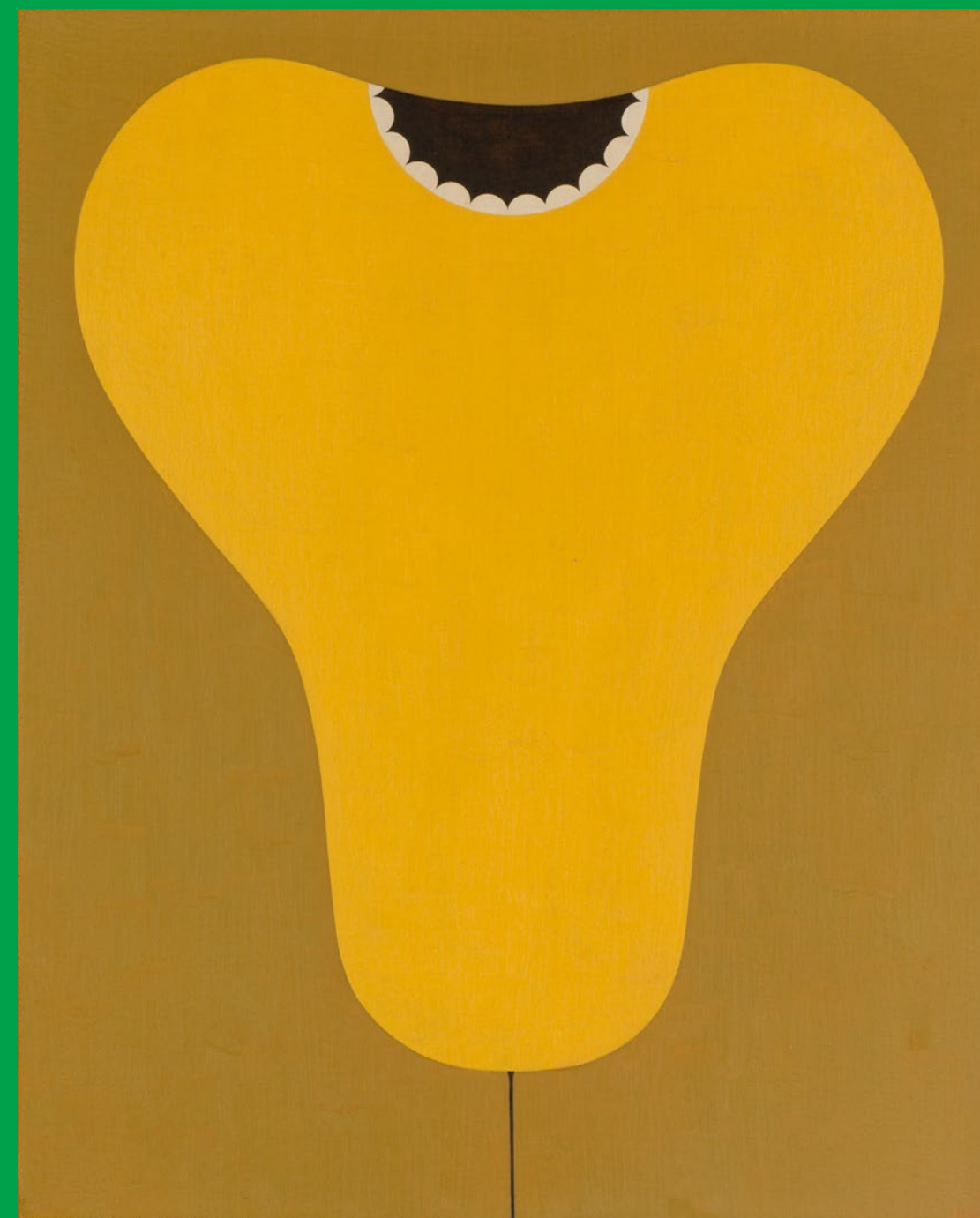
There are a lot of Midwestern myths that I won't invoke here. It is not as uniform or monolithic as those with no experience of it would have you believe. I grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City and have spent most of my adult life in Chicago. In between I left, but I returned to the Midwest for its centrality, to my family but also to all of the places I want to visit but don't want to inhabit. The pace of life is indeed slower here, and that time is a gift to artists because there is less external pressure, so you can really focus on your work.

Please list five artists from Chicago who you think people should know about and why.

- BRITTNEY LEANNE WILLIAMS's paintings of bodies as portals of becoming are emotionally affecting, unusual, and gorgeous to look at—everyone should know her work.
- ALEX CHITTY's sculptures have a peculiar strength, delicacy, and humor that is always compelling to me.
- IRIS BERNBLUM's watercolors, videos, and sculptures are tender yet fraught with danger, a tension that keeps me interested.
- MIKA HORIBUCHI's exquisite and provocative trompe l'oeil works are wonderful to behold.
- ALEX BRADLEY COHEN's portraits and figurative paintings that veer into abstraction are great not only for the way he uses color and form but for the ways the works talk about connection between us and the world as we make it for ourselves.

HELLEN ASCOLI:
Can you tell us about your relationship to humor?

My work addresses the mutability of meaning. I'm very much aware that many folks approach my work as a sort of visual puzzle that must be solved, even as there isn't a correct answer to the question that any one work poses. And even if there were a solution, what difference would it make? This is the realm of the absurd, in which—for me certainly—humor is the heroic agent, allowing one to embrace this conundrum with some measure of grace.



Cull, 2021,
oil on canvas,
16 x 13 inches.

Jordan Weber

b. 1984, Des Moines, Iowa;
lives and works in Des Moines, Iowa, and
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Jordan Weber (American, born 1984) was born in Des Moines, Iowa. In his community-based projects, Weber works to open community landscapes and counter environmental racism. He has had exhibitions at The Walker Art Center, Minnesota (2021); Des Moines Art Center, Iowa (2016); NO Gallery, Los Angeles (2019); and Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota (2018). His works

have also been included in group exhibitions like *Make America "Great" Again*, White Box Gallery, New York (2016); *All Together Now*, Bemis Art Center (2017); and *America's Mythic Time*, The Luminary, St. Louis (2020). Awards include the Harvard LOEB Fellowship, Joan Mitchell Award, and Creative Capital NYC. He currently splits time at Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Des Moines, Iowa.

JORDAN WEBER



Perennial Philosophies, 2021,
obsidian, bronze, chrome,
dimensions variable.

JORDAN WEBER

Can you talk about the work that is being presented in THE REGIONAL?

The work is meant to offer a bit of possible respite and contemplation within an institutional space, while speaking on the extreme difficulty to rest and feel safe in our communities. The ease to sit in this space, to simply breathe, is of extreme privilege and at the same time uncomfortable for those that feel othered in institutional spaces, such as contemporary museums. The act of the work—to place rocks to rest on—brings so many questions to mind of how we must move outside of the institutional space, strategically. I want the viewer to know and feel the tension and duality of how we feel constantly in danger while they breathe in deeply and exhale. I've chosen obsidian boulders because of their mythical uses in ritual practices all over the world to ward off or absorb negative energy.

Please list 5 artists from your city that you think people should know about.

The five artists I would like others to know about in Des Moines are MITCHELL SQUIRE, PHILLIP CHEN, BEN GARDNER, JILL WELLS and DARON RICHARDSON.

NATALIE PETROSKY:

I've been looking into your projects, like *Deep Roots* and *4MX*, that have to do with engagement of land and the healing/empowering properties of cultivation. I think they are just wonderful. I'm always curious about where an artist's interest starts. You mentioned in an interview about *4MX* that you know a lot about agriculture because you were from Iowa, but I was hoping you could go into a little more detail about that. Have you had

your own experiences before these projects where tending to land/plants was beneficial to you and you wanted to share that with others?

Thanks for this great question, Natalie! Being from Iowa is exactly what you'd imagine with monocropped landscapes of corn, but there are still forests, although very few since Iowa is the most altered landscape in the United States. This being said, Des Moines, Iowa, is a grey space just like any other capital city with lots of concrete. I come from one of the most diverse areas of the state, which is North Des Moines, where there were over 40 languages spoken at my high school. A mini Queens in many ways. This diversity at my school was in stark contrast to the vegetation in the state, and I was lucky enough to have an aunt and uncle who owned land south of Des Moines as a child. My Uncle WC was extremely knowledgeable about plants and trees, so when we went to their house on Sundays to get out of the city he'd take my brother and I into the Forest¹. He would spend hours pointing out the different species of trees and plants to us, which I'll be forever grateful for. This time in the Forest was extremely calming for us, especially coming from the north side of Des Moines in a cramped apartment complex. We were literally Forest bathing as kids each Sunday not knowing how beneficial this Japanese practice was and is for the human psyche. Plants and trees were and still are very much a sanctuary for us. This early spiritual connection with the Forest and its healing effects is what drew me to the realization that all my work should be centered around the study and practice of creating green spaces (especially for youth) for decompression and meditation in communities with high rates of daily toxic stressors and trauma.

¹ My father and brother's names are Forest so I always capitalize it.



American Dreamers (Phase 2), 2015, police vehicle, earth from Ferguson, various fruit trees and plants, dimensions variable.

Margo Wolowiec

b. 1985, Detroit, Michigan;
lives and works in Detroit, Michigan

Margo Wolowiec (American, born 1985) was born in Detroit, Michigan. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007) and her MFA from California College of the Arts, San Francisco (2013). Through an intricate process that merges weaving with algorithmic technologies, Wolowiec transforms digitally printed images into handwoven textiles. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles (2014, 2016); Laura Bartlett Gallery, London (2016); Jessica Silverman, San Francisco (2017); and Marlborough Contemporary, New York (2018). She has also been in several group exhibitions, including *Zeroes and Ones*, Di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, California (2014); *No Evidence of Sign*, LUCE Gallery, Torino, Italy (2017); *No Time*, McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco; *Textile Abstraction*, Galleria Casas Riegner, Bogota, Colombia (both 2018); and *We Are Here*, Jessica Silverman, San Francisco (2021). She currently lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.

San Francisco (2017); and Marlborough Contemporary, New York (2018). She has also been in several group exhibitions, including *Zeroes and Ones*, Di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, California (2014); *No Evidence of Sign*, LUCE Gallery, Torino, Italy (2017); *No Time*, McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco; *Textile Abstraction*, Galleria Casas Riegner, Bogota, Colombia (both 2018); and *We Are Here*, Jessica Silverman, San Francisco (2021). She currently lives and works in Detroit, Michigan.

MARGO WOLOWIEC



Wandering Path, 2021,
handwoven polymer, linen, dye sublimation ink, acrylic paint, deadstock organic cotton,
reflective mylar from emergency preparedness kits, sterling silver leafed thread, mounted on linen support,
45 x 52 inches.

MARGO WOLOWIEC

Can you tell us about *11 Cities*, one of your works being presented in THE REGIONAL?

These panels are composed of ten images of water from cities around the world that are vulnerable to flooding, including one image I took of the Detroit River, which is at a historically high level. The Detroit River has water intake stations that serve drinking water to Michigan and parts of Canada. Our drinking water is constantly at risk and affected by political struggles. The Flint water crisis was spurred on by a distrust of the Detroit City government and a mismanagement of waterworks facilities. A radioactive site along the Detroit River recently collapsed into the river near two intake stations due to high water levels and crumbling infrastructure. Canada sounded the alarm, yet the issue was quickly deemed as “safe” by US officials and has gone quietly under the radar since. Water connects our world; our shipping industries travel waterways bringing consumer products and bulk goods like iron ore for steel production throughout the world. Ports and cities around the world are vulnerable to severe storms and flooding that are prompted by our changing climate. It is a double-edged sword that the woven panels are supported by a steel armature. The banks of the Detroit River are home to steel mills that have destroyed the land they sit on and pollute our air and waterways, yet they are an integral part of the US economy. The steel armature was hand-fabricated by my friend who works at his family-owned metal shop in Detroit that has been in operation since the 1940s.

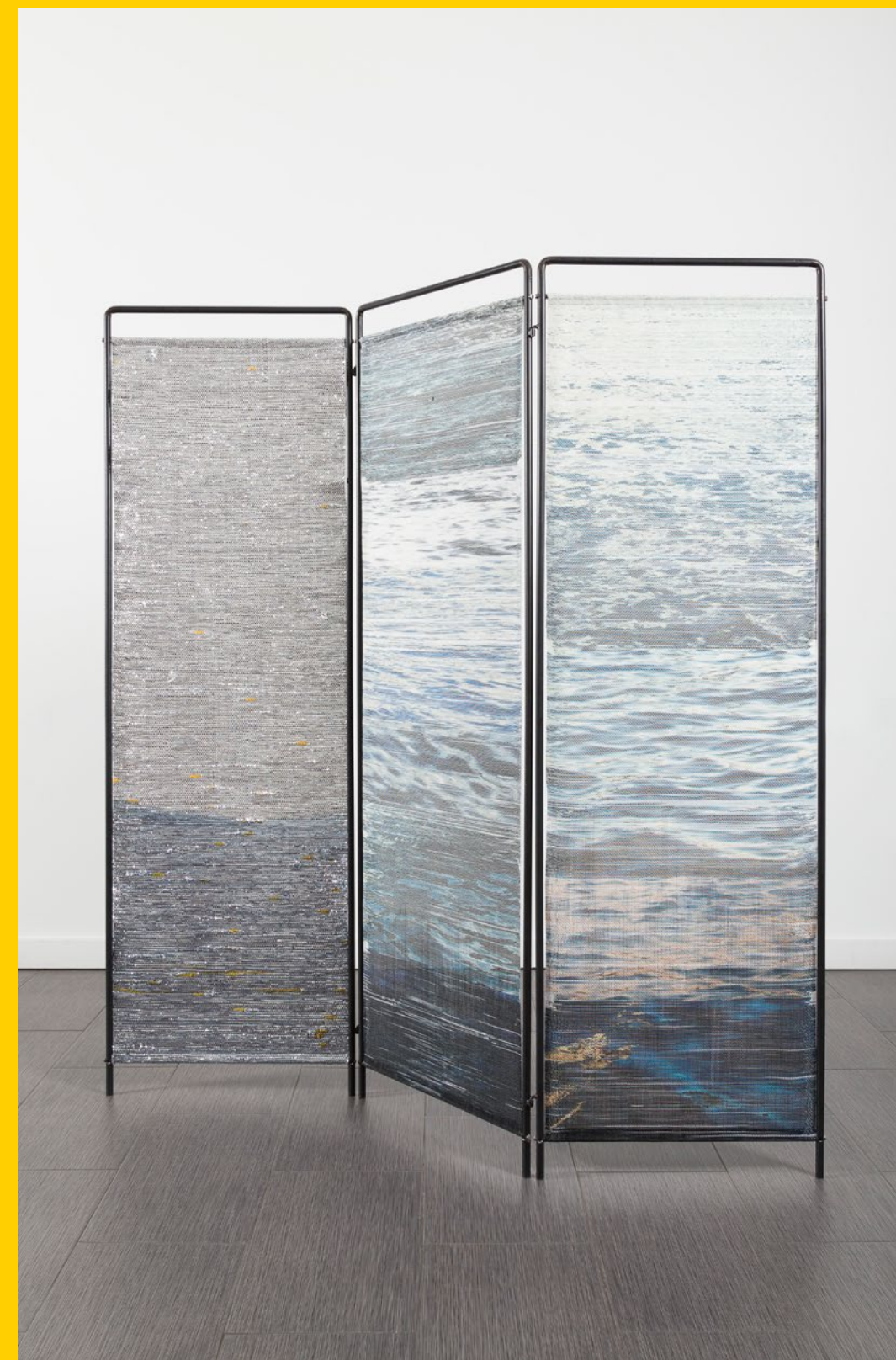
What does the Midwest mean to you, what are your favorite things about Detroit?

I think the Midwest has a sensibility of practicality while valuing family life, friends, and leisure time. I’ve lived on both coasts, and I think the Midwest most suits my lifestyle—it’s a bit slower here. There is an endless amount of gorgeous nature to spend time in and explore, and a pretty high quality of life is relatively affordable.

My favorite things about the city include the complex history of Detroit, the down-to-earth friendliness of the people who live here, Detroit’s architecture, and the Detroit River that connects to all of Michigan’s Great Lakes.

YVONNE OSEI:
What is the relationship of your work to time?

My work attempts to slow time down while analyzing our relationship to digital media. The images and texts embedded in my weavings are collected from sources that are interacted with virtually—images from social media and photo sharing platforms, texts from news media sites, maps and radar imagery from weather apps, etc. There is a vast amount of media and information available at our fingertips that moves in rapid, daily cycles, often evading scrutiny by design. Each piece I make takes a tiny bite out of this information train and slows everything down through the material and time-intensive tradition of weaving. Each image and text that is translated onto threads takes on a new form, shifting and sometimes disintegrating, creating some breathing room and allowing extra time for digestion.



11 Cities, 2019,
handwoven polymer, linen, dye sublimation ink, acrylic paint, indigo dye, reflective mylar
from emergency preparedness kits, hot rolled steel, 70 x 66 inches.

Nikki Woods

b. 1990, Cleveland, Ohio;
lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio

Nikki Woods (American, born 1990) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and she received a BFA in painting from the Cleveland Institute of Art (2012). Her lush and psychologically resonant paintings depict subjects ranging from Playboy bunnies to ghosts, mystical creatures, and porcelain tchotchkes. With confident brushwork and an exuberant color palette, Woods deftly negotiates pop culture, art history, and mysticism to conjure a glimpse of another world. Her paintings have been exhibited in two solo exhibitions at Hedge Gallery in Cleveland, *Regrets Only* (2017) and most recently *Vivid Wild Things* (2021). Her

work has also been exhibited in numerous group exhibitions in local Cleveland galleries such as *Curious Things*, Survival Kit (2013); *The Sunroom*, Sunroom Project Space (2014); *I Came So Far For Beauty*, Cleveland State Gallery (2016); *No More Tears*, Survival Kit (2019); *America's Well Armed Militias*, SPACES (2019). Her work is represented in prominent collections such as the Progressive Art Collection and the Cleveland Arts Association (CARTA). She currently lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio, where she is the director of the Reinberger Gallery at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

NIKKI WOODS



Bunny and Sphinx, 2020,
oil on canvas,
54 x 46 inches.

NIKKI WOODS

Can you tell us about the body of work that is presented in THE REGIONAL?

My works presented in THE REGIONAL were part of a body of work created for my show *Vivid Wild Things*, which opened in Cleveland in July of 2021. My work mines art history and popular American culture, placing them on equal but precarious footing, recasting Playboy centerfolds and 1990s B-movie queens as dreamlike protagonists in worlds both strange yet familiar. I'm interested in how painting speaks to and through time, conjuring spirits through its material, summoning glimpses of worlds in-between and just out of reach.

Please list 5 artists from your city that you think people should know about and why.

In no particular order:

- MICHAEL MEIER is one of my favorite Cleveland artists. He is also my closest friend, confidant, and partner of over ten years. His drawings and paintings demonstrate raw power in material form, mining the contemporary American psyche through heaps of images ranging from the art historical to the profane, executed like a hardcore punk song—hard, fast and loud.
- KATY RICHARDS: When Katy and I first met in undergraduate school we were instant friends. Her gooey, indulgent, feminine figurative paintings and still lifes embody a range of complex emotional layers that express tender meditations on heartbreak and desire. These are paintings to break your heart and then some.
- BIANCA FIELDS is from Cleveland but is currently living and working in Kansas City, Missouri, and is one of my favorite painters working today. In a recent

interview, she said she liked to “paint like she had a cake baking in the oven,” which has become my favorite way to describe her lush, frenzied, and efficient paintings that feel like a sucker-punch to the gut.

- I relate SARAH KABOT's artistic practice to that of an archaeologist, excavating what is overlooked in plain sight to reveal hidden meanings. Her work takes many forms, such as paper sculptures, intricate cut-outs, graphite drawings, rubbings, animations, and more, exploring the limitless possibilities of close looking.
- ZAK SMOKER: Taking broken toys, thrift objects, and abandoned tools to create idiosyncratic post-apocalyptic-looking sculptures and assemblages, Zak's works are equal parts humorous intervention and cultural critique. I love them.

LYNDON BARROIS JR.:
What are the biggest challenges in your studio? How do you stay engaged with what you are working on?

Sometimes the biggest challenge in the studio is getting there. Like most artists, I work a full-time job and then work in the studio when I can, which usually means late evenings and weekends. It's a lot to negotiate, and I feel like I never have as much time as I want in the studio. When I get there, I feel like it's easier to stay engaged because I understand it as privileged time. It's the space that is 100 percent my own and it's where I can be myself. Some workdays are better than others—sometimes you just feel like everything you make is terrible or that your ideas are uninteresting—that's when you take a break, but I always end up coming back. I think to me the studio represents hope and limitless possibility.



Seance, 2020,
oil on canvas,
22 x 22 inches.

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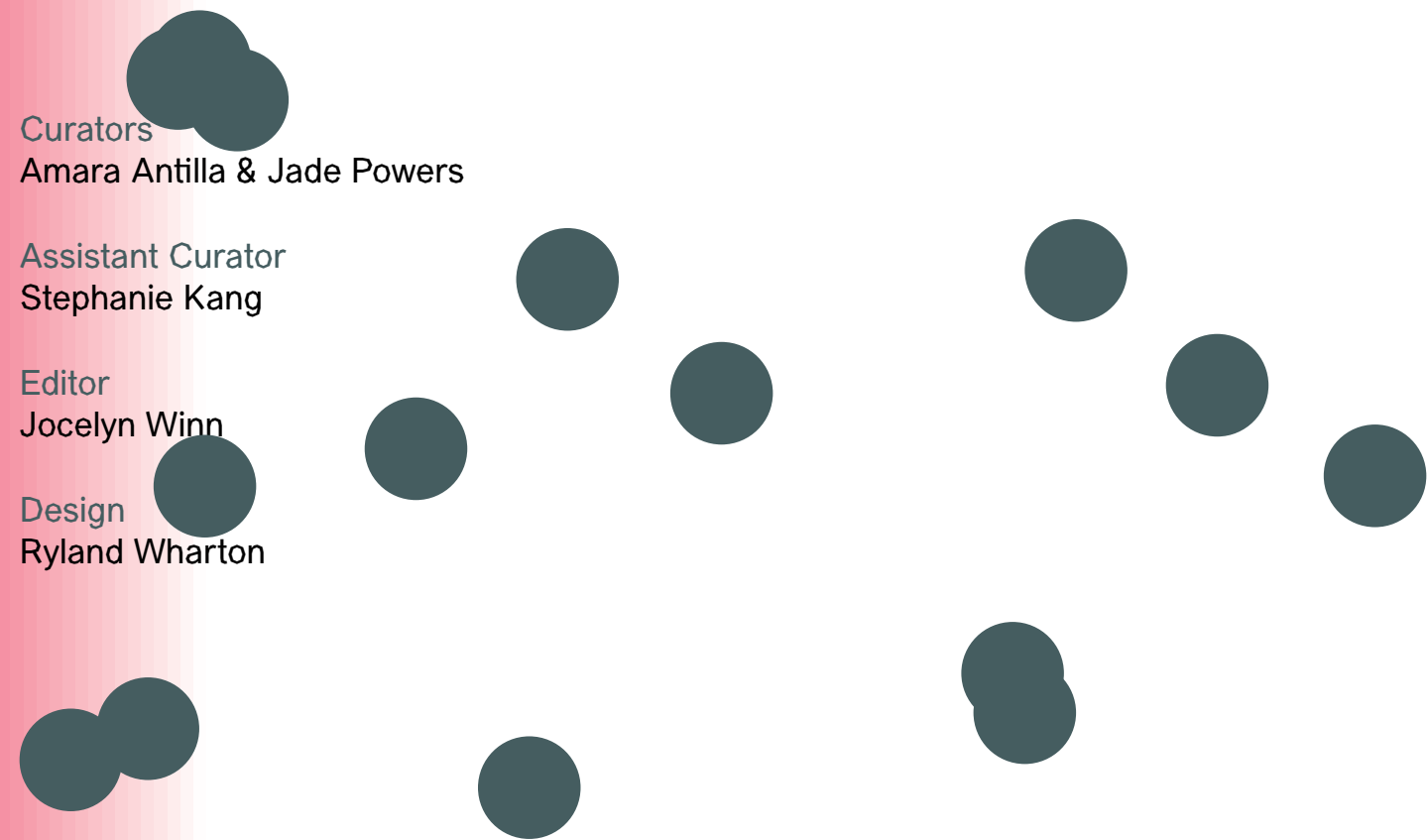
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Artist-Run Spaces

Artist-run and independent spaces are critical to the promotion and advancement of regional art, as they are often able to pivot and react to current events much faster than larger institutions. Visit these Ohio and Kentucky-based independent arts organizations, non-profits, and collectives, which will be featured in the Contemporary Arts Center's upcoming exhibition *Artist-Run Spaces*, co-organized with Wave Pool, Cincinnati.

ATNSC (AKHSÓTHA GALLERY)

11808 Cromwell Avenue,
Cleveland, Ohio 44120

ATNSC: Center for Healing & Creative Leadership (pronounced Ata-en-sic) is an artist-run, urban gathering space that facilitates healing and creative leadership. Located in the historic Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood of Cleveland, ATNSC seeks to reclaim the place for people to collaborate and forge relationships.

BASKETSHOP

3105 Harrison Avenue,
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211

The Cincinnati-based gallery Basketshop is an artist-led space that offers artists an opportunity to develop their visions, take risks, explore their personal convictions, and experiment with new concepts or directions that are crucial to their established practices.

THE BLUE HOUSE

3325 Catalpa Drive,
Dayton, Ohio 45405

Through its events, exhibitions, and residencies, The Blue House supports artmaking on a regional and national level, inviting artists to collaborate, create, and contribute to the regional culture.

CINCINNATI ART BOOK FAIR

Cincinnati, Ohio

The Cincinnati Art Book Fair is an artist-run fair showcasing books, catalogs, monographs, periodicals, prints, and zines by artists from the Midwest and beyond. The Cincinnati Art Book Fair is committed to the ethos of self-publishing and the enduring possibilities of books as an artistic medium.

THE LODGE KY

231 6th Avenue,
Dayton, Kentucky 41074

The Lodge KY, based in Dayton, Kentucky, is an art collective and space that offers a range of services, like audio recording, photography, mural making, studio rental, analog equipment repair, and music video and event space for members and local artists.

THE NEON HEATER

400 1/2 S. Main Street, Room 22,
Findlay, Ohio 45840

The Neon Heater is a contemporary artist-run gallery in Findlay, OH that is committed to offering the community access to engaging, diverse, and conceptually challenging contemporary art exhibitions.

PIQUE

210 Pike Street,
Covington, Kentucky 41011

PIQUE, a gallery that was founded in Covington, Kentucky, is an open-ended art experiment. Through exhibitions, workshops, classes, and events, PIQUE provides opportunities for connection and funding to artists in the community.

STOREFRONTS

1300 Vine Street,
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Cincinnati-based collaborative project Storefronts produces art interventions in the storefront windows of the Miami University Center for Community Engagement (MUCCE), transforming the space into an artistic platform that invites viewers to engage with challenging issues impacting social life.

RAINBOW

4573 Hamilton Avenue,
Cincinnati, Ohio 45223

Rainbow is a Cincinnati-based gallery and project space that hosts exhibitions, events, performances, and screenings that highlights the joy, politics, and work of queer and BIPOC artists.

