

SELF/ REALIZATION

2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

Self/Realization

The years dedicated to earning a Master of Fine Arts degree in studio art encourage intense self-reflection and the development of new ways of looking, thinking, and making. *Self/Realization* features work by 15 graduate students from Miami University's College of Creative Arts and the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning at the University of Cincinnati, executed in a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional media.

Each artist in *Self/Realization* draws from their own lived experiences. They record their observations, express their emotions, incorporate their own belongings or bodily substances as material, and examine the cultural phenomena and societal norms that have shaped their identities. At the core of each practice is a strong sense of self, sharpened by the MFA studies that have transformed these graduates into some of Cincinnati's most fresh and ambitious artistic voices.

This exhibition is organized by the Contemporary Arts Center in partnership with Miami University and the University of Cincinnati.

Miami University Studio Art Faculty

Amanda Alexander (Chair)
Joel Armor
Andrew Au
Joomi Chung
Tracy Featherstone
Richard W. James
Rod Northcutt
Jennifer Purdum
Geoff Riggie
Robert Robbins
Dana Saulnier
Michael Stillion
Ann Taulbee
Roscoe Wilson
Jon Yamashiro

University of Cincinnati School of Art Fine Art Faculty

Mrinalini Aggarwal
Caroline Anderson
Kate Bonansinga (SOA Director)
Denise Burge
Mark Harris
Matt Lynch
Neil Daigle Orians
Emil Robinson
Edward-Victor Sanchez
Jordan Tate
Jenny Ustick
Xia Zhang

Annual exhibition support is provided by Gale & Dave Beckett, Helen & Brian Heekin, Barbara Myers, John & Ronnie Shore, and Barbara Weston Sasser & Carol Weston Roberts.

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Graphic Design: Stephanie Racale Design



February 23rd - March 17th

Levels 4-5



Andy Demczuk, UC
One
Acrylic on panel

Demczuk works with painting, music, writing, and film to explore visualized sound, involuntary memories, and literary archetypes in dreams. He created each of his twelve paintings in the MFA exhibition as an intuitive response to specific, hour-long portions of his soundscape opera, *Amoeba Variations*. Demczuk studied guitar at the Musicians Institute and holds a Master's degree in English from East Tennessee State University.



John Ford, UC
The Ultimate Warrior
Oil on canvas

Ford's interactive paintings and sculptures poke fun at hypermasculinity and call attention to how it shaped the mainstream culture of the 1980s and 90s. He depicts celebrities and toys popular with boys of the era, such as He-Man and The Ultimate Warrior, in scenes that undermine their macho facades. Ford studied painting and drawing at the Art Students League. He earned his BA in Sociology from Ohio State University in 2005 and earned a Masters in Secondary Math Education from St. John's University in 2007.



Holli Friley, UC
Excessive (a big bag)
Nylon and thread

For her sculpture *Excessive*, Friley created a 14-foot-tall bag out of nylon resembling flexible plastic. This absurdly large sack serves as a metaphor for the invisible mental load carried by members of society today. Alternately, the bag can be seen as a method of gathering and redistributing resources, becoming a symbol of mutual support and respect. Friley earned a BFA from Transylvania University in 2011.



Margaret Kammerer, UC
Found: Lost Media
Ceramic

Kammerer finds inspiration in tangible, time-honored materials such as clay, as well as her deep-seated desire to fuse innovation and tradition. She considers her sculptures to be relics of humanity's evolving relationship with technology. The title of her work in this exhibition, *Touch Glass*, is a slang phrase that refers to the act of getting off the internet and going outside. Kammerer earned a BFA from the Columbus College of Art & Design in 2019.



Kelsey "SLiNK Love" Linder, UC
Not Titled
Installation

Linder's installation, which she describes as "something like a hairball," is composed of smaller works of art in addition to items from everyday life, including receipts, single-use packaging, poetry, family portraits, a laptop, and hair. The artist believes that the only way to change society is to take accountability for it and considers this work a living offering toward collective liberation. Linder earned her BFA from the University of Cincinnati in 2018.



Peiyu Liu, UC
Be Prepared to Leave
Photography

Liu's work addresses ideas related to immigration, assimilation, and identity. She uses caution tape and traffic cones—barriers that control access—to spell out the Chinese character 福 (fú), which means "blessing" or "good fortune" in English. In her installation, *Be Prepared to Leave*, she uses empty cardboard boxes to explore notions of home, stability, and belonging. Liu earned her BFA in Photography with a Minor in Visual Communication from Kent State University in 2022.



Libby Morgan, Miami U
Moving Blanket
Hand-set letterpress and linocut on cotton

Morgan channels her nomadic childhood spent moving from place to place and leaving behind friends, homes, and belongings, to create her series, *at Rest: Mending a Fragmented Woman*. She combines printmaking and fiber art methods to stitch together works embodying memories of loss. Morgan earned a BFA in printmaking and sculpture from Wright State University in 2020.



Kelsey Nolin, Miami U
Untitled
Silver gelatin prints

Nolin grew up on a small farm in the Appalachian foothills of Pennsylvania—an upbringing that led to a deep attunement to the natural world. To create her work, she integrates organic material collected from the farm, such as hay and leaves, into her cameraless photographic process. She received her BA in Studio Art from The College of Wooster in 2020.



Brooke Owens, Miami U
Cicatrix
Watercolor, absorbed stains, acrylic, pimple patches, and hair on linen

Owens' series, *Abject Bodies*, references the human form through abstraction. She works directly on the floor, creasing and rubbing raw canvas to absorb watercolor paint in a palette of purples, pinks, greens, and browns that reference bruised and blemished skin. A native of Fort Wayne, Indiana, Owens received her BA in Studio Art from the University of Saint Francis in 2020.



Katrina Shafor, UC
STOP! Check your self
Felt, glitter felt, quilt batting, and embroidery thread

Shafor incorporates memory-laden clothing, bedding, and other textiles from her childhood into her work to care for and heal herself. For the artist, the act of creating is inextricable from processing her past and discovering newer versions of personhood. Shafor earned her BA in Community Arts and BS in Art Education from Miami University in 2022.



Ryene Smith, UC
Irregular Patterns: Image 1
Mixed media

With her series *Irregular Patterns*, Smith continues the artistic legacy of her mother, a makeup artist for M·A·C Cosmetics. Trained as a painter, Smith turned to photography and cut-paper sculpture to create work that sheds light on how Eurocentric beauty standards have negatively impacted Black women. These highly layered works transform images of the artist's face—revealing, concealing, and embellishing it in each piece. Smith earned her BS in Integrated Healthcare Studies from Ohio University Athens in 2020.



Sarah-Faith Strait, Miami U
Rolling Horse with Purple
Oil on canvas

For Strait, the horse is an enduring personal symbol, and she captures the animal's spirit and vitality in her work. Using digital methods, she fragments an image of a horse into parts, and paints a new form that straddles abstraction and representation. Through this ambiguous depiction, Strait encourages new ways of seeing these spirited creatures. Strait earned her BFA from Ohio Wesleyan University in 2020.



Isabel Rose Wolke, UC
Saint Catherine of Alexandria
Oil and acrylic paint on canvas

Wolke's series *Divine Bonds* consists of large-scale oil and acrylic portraits of contemporary queer-identifying individuals as historical Catholic saints, such as Catherine of Alexandria and Joan of Arc. Though the dogma of the religion she grew up with continues to impact her today, she relentlessly pursues her authentic self and uplifts the nonjudgmental self-expression of her peers. Wolke earned a BFA in Studio Art from Bowling Green State University in 2021.



Xinghong "Michelle" Yang, UC
She disappeared
Oil and acrylic on canvas

Yang covers her canvases with hundreds of simple, ghost-like figures of girls. Her work calls attention to female infanticide in China, where families kill baby girls in the hope of conceiving sons instead. "These girls are floating in the dark life star, they are on the side of the road, in the well, in the dirt, in the trash can, under the knife under the feet, under the pillow, and in the toilet," Yang writes. "They are everywhere but not in the world." Yang earned her BFA in Graphic Design from Fort Hays State University in 2020.



Zoe Yates, UC
Too Young To Know
Oil and acrylic on repurposed textiles

Yates draws on her own emotions and experiences as a native West Virginian and lesbian to address real and perceived tensions between these identities. For Yates, there are more similarities than differences, and her work highlights the vitality and joy found in both communities. Yates earned degrees in Fine Arts and English from Glenville State University in 2022.