



PERPLEXITY



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The Kreeger Museum
Washington, DC



THE KREEGER MUSEUM



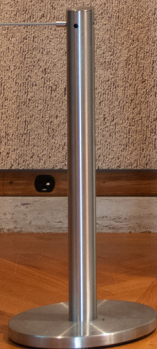
hamiltonian
artists



Still Life with Flowers
by J.M.W. Turner
1840



Abstract Painting
by J.M.W. Turner
1840



THE COLLABORATIVE

“A city without a rich artistic landscape is not a city”

David Lloyd Kreeger
February 1980 Washington Dossier

David and Carmen Kreeger were devoted patrons of the arts and the Washington, DC arts community. They supported countless Washington-area artists including Sam Gilliam, Simmie Knox, Thomas Downing, Gene Davis, Morris Louis, Ed McGowin, and Albert Stadler, purchasing their work at the Corcoran Gallery of Art biennials, area galleries, and directly from artists in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Kreegers believed that the key to a good life was sharing; they shared their love of art and their collection by opening their home to visitors a few times a year and they loaned many paintings to art museums as well as universities. In addition, the Kreegers established arts awards at Georgetown University, George Washington University, and Catholic University.

I am pleased to honor the Kreeger legacy of supporting Washington artists through The Collaborative, a program presenting powerful and thought-provoking exhibitions. We are thrilled to be in partnership with Hamiltonian Artists to present this exhibition and honored to champion these artists, providing many of them the opportunity to present their work in a museum for the first time.

Helen Chason
Director
The Kreeger Museum



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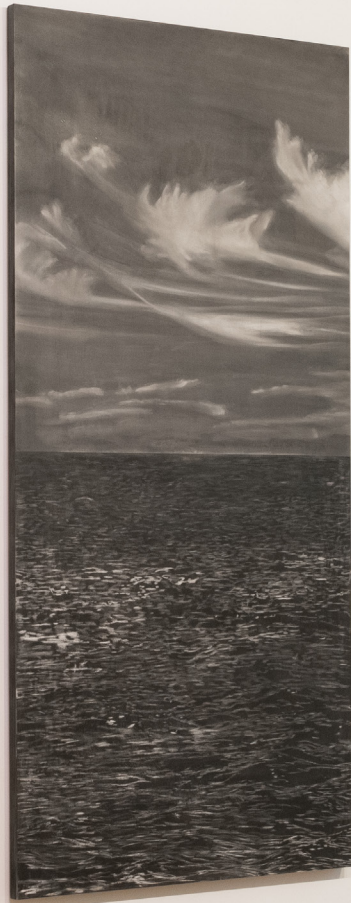
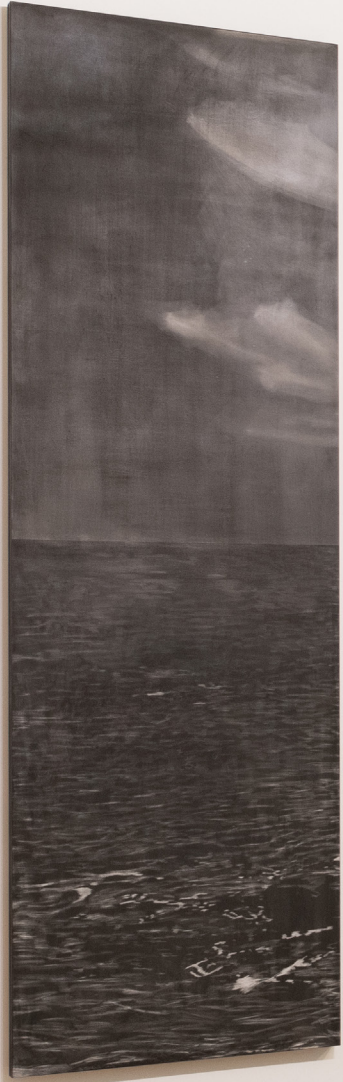
HAMILTONIAN ARTISTS

Hamiltonian Artists' mission is to build a dynamic community of innovative artists and effective visual art leaders by providing professional development opportunities and advancing their entrepreneurial success.

It is a dynamic catalyst for DC's creative economy and a vibrant center for contemporary art in Washington, DC. Through its unique investment into the next generation of cutting-edge artists, Hamiltonian helps artists to develop important business skills, professional experiences, and visibility to support and sustain their art career. Through its Fellowship Program, artist talks, and public events, the organization contributes to the vitality of DC's burgeoning arts scene by deepening the appreciation for contemporary art and culture throughout Washington, DC and beyond.

hamiltonianartists.org

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CURATOR'S FOREWORD

The interlacing mediums used and subjects addressed by the artists in this exhibition deluge our senses, inviting us to question what and how we see; what is fiction, fact, or something in between? *Perplexity* asks how our interventions in the world give materials new meanings and portrays the human impact on objects, materials, and environments we interact with daily. Symbolic texture, manipulated texture, and implied texture, all take form as we understand why the artists in this show have chosen certain materials to address humanity. Seven Hamiltonian Artists alumni—Amy Boone-McCreesh, Brian Dunn, Michael Dax Iacovone, Sarah Knobel, Joyce Yu-Jean Lee, Helina Metaferia, and Jerry Truong—explore aesthetic possibilities, enhanced and manipulated by human interaction, highlighting the malleability of certain materials and textures.

Using photography and metaphoric imagery, both Knobel and Lee reflect on how we consume, produce waste, and directly impact our natural world. In approaching Lee's piece *Reflections of Taha'a* (2022), one might think of oil contamination in water. While the two make beautiful geode-like forms with unexpected colors, it depicts a type of destruction to our natural landscapes.

Knobel collects and stages her trash products—used and discarded paper, plastics, and metals. The artist then uses colored smoke to emphasize the toxic nature of pollution; we can almost smell the rot and off-gassing that our common waste contributes to the world. Knobel's photographs *Untitled #1* and *Untitled #4, from Trash #3* (both 2014), sit across from *Pond* (1972) by Albert Stadler, from the Kreeger collection, calling attention to the thin line between beauty and excess.

Unruly and layered with color, McCreesh adorns The Kreeger space with a decorative mixed media collage and garland in *Flowers Through the Gate* (2022). Her contemporary take on a still life sits next to a series of Vincent Van Gogh paintings, asking the viewer to question ideas of economic status, access, beauty, and who dominates and has access to these echelons. Her painting hints at urban architectural metaphors such as the fences and gates used to separate, keep out, or keep-in people of a specific economic status.

The resilience of Black lives is presented as a complex collage of histories in Metaferia's video and mixed media assemblage. Both pieces, *Tapestry (The Griot)* and *The Willing* (both 2022) investigate ritual, repetition, and pattern, layering meaning from the past to inform future generations. Metaferia takes on the responsibility of being a storyteller, weaving together America's civil rights history and the legacy of women in her family over five generations who participated in activism. She focuses on our imprint as a society, how people have enacted change in their communities, and participated in movements that have shifted cultural systems.

Iacovone and Truong use malleable textures to translate images into landscapes that recall labor, migration, and home. We become fully immersed in the action of digging and tracing as Iacovone produces new textures emerging from the ground extending for miles in *Salt* (2022). His relationship with the land is a mathematical investigation and existential impulse. From sky to water and water to land, we are consumed in the movement of natural landscapes illustrated by Truong in his work *Từ Nước (To Be from Water/To Leave the Motherland)* and *Từ Nước (To Be from the Homeland/To Leave the Water)* (both 2018). But the artist has deeper connections to these environments, as they represent migration, refuge, passage, and memories of resilience

inherited from his parents. An invisible texture is incense ash from a Vietnamese incense altar used in ritual. Sitting adjacent to Truong's works is *Claude Monet's Meadow at Giverny (Prairie à Giverny)* (1888), standing out as if it doesn't belong. While they move together in muted tones, you can almost hear where the land meets the water and where the water meets the sky.

Dunn teases the real and unreal, contrasting the imagery of daily life with the subjectivity of experience. He uses words such as weave, layer, pattern, and dimension to describe his painting style in *Deluge* (2021) as it relates to our optical understanding. His work *Poolside* (2015) offers contradictions and challenges visual truths as he uses painted sheet metal to mimic a pool towel.

Each artwork lives within its own system of textures and physicality. The implications of our social environments are reflected as the artists explore the depths of our sensory experiences. By placing these contemporary works in the context of The Kreeger's impressive permanent collection, *Perplexity*, offers a space for discovery, focus, and intrigue for all the senses.

Tomora Wright
Curator



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AMY BOONE-MCCREESH

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Amy Boone-McCreesh was born on Loring Air Force Base in Maine to a British mother and American father. Her upbringing instilled in her an interest in the connections between aesthetic leanings within economic and cultural status. She has a heightened visual awareness of the ways people and spaces flaunt class, taste, and access. Amy received her BFA from Pennsylvania College of Art and Design and MFA from Towson University in Maryland, and shortly thereafter was awarded a two-year Hamiltonian Artist Fellowship in Washington, DC. Her work has been included in exhibitions across the country, notably at Dinner and Asya Geisberg Gallery (NY, New York, (2020 and 2022), David B. Smith (Denver, CO, 2021), Transmitter Gallery (Brooklyn, NY, 2015), and many more. Her work has been supported by institutional exhibitions at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, Goucher College, in Baltimore, MD and Marymount University in Alexandria, VA. Amy's large-scale works have been acquired by the Department of State in the U.S. Consulate in Monterrey, Mexico (Art in Embassies, 2013), Facebook (2019), and Capital One (2018). Her work is featured in *New American Paintings* (issues 106 and 118) and *Handmade Life*, published by Thames and Hudson (2016). Amy is also a two-time recipient of the Maryland State Arts Council individual artist award for works on paper. In addition to her own studio practice, Amy has a committed relationship to visual arts education, running the studio visit series INERTIA, and is currently visiting faculty at Dickinson College.







The signifiers of status and class present themselves culturally in overt and nuanced ways. Decoration is subversive, even polarizing. It quickly identifies taste, class, and access. Through an abstracted and materialistic visual vocabulary, Boone-McCreesh questions the optics of classist structures, while tantalizing with maximalist aesthetics. Highly saturated colors and a rich variety of textures create an initial attraction, while at the same time challenging assumptions of “good” taste. Cross-cultural ideas of beauty and perception of class are present, with objects of beauty often acting as determiners of worth. A decorative approach is partnered with detailed and hand-driven processes often associated with craft. The utilization of technology and digital components are combined with the handmade processes to create a direct shift in value and labor. These decisions aim to mimic the seemingly arbitrary lines that are drawn in cultural markers of luxury, mass production, and the defining features of access.

Left:
Amy Boone-McCreesh, *Flowers*
Through The Gate, (2022), Mixed
media and collage on paper

Right:
Amy Boone-McCreesh, *Good Luck*
Charms, (2022), Laser cut acrylic,
beads, and found objects

BRIAN MICHAEL DUNN

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Brian Michael Dunn creates paintings and sculptures that mine the visual language of mass reproduction. Born in Milwaukee, WI, Dunn received a Bachelor of Fine Art in Painting from Boston University and a Masters of Fine Art from Cornell University. Dunn is an alumni of the Hamiltonian Artists Fellowship and was awarded a DC art Bank Grant in 2020 and a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Grant in 2019. Dunn has attended the Millay Residency in Austerlitz, NY, the Byrdcliffe Residency in Woodstock, NY and the Yale Summer Painting Program in Norfolk, CT. Recent commissions include Google Headquarters in Arlington, VA and Costa Palmas Casitas, Cabo, MX. Dunn has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the region, most recently at But, Also, Washington, DC; Hamiltonian Gallery, Washington DC; Mono Practice and the Reinstitute, Baltimore; and Tiger Strikes Asteroid, New York.



In my paintings, the visual language of both physical and digital screens and their role in image reproduction is woven into invented depictions of nature and commerce. *Deluge* (2021) draws from the gridded fragmentation of screens and the interlocking strands of woven textiles to form an image of banal consumption: a sunglasses shop window on a rainy day. I'm interested in layering textures and patterns from daily life, linking our visual experience of the world to ingrained systems of image mediation and multiplication.

Left:
Brian Michael Dunn, *Deluge*, (2021),
Acrylic on canvas





I mine the visual markers of image reproduction to invent scenes of nature and commerce, two opposing poles of contemporary experience. I draw from disparate pictorial traditions including botanical and children's book illustrations, weaving, comics, American quilt traditions, early modern textile design, and ukiyo-e woodblock prints, with a special focus on the language of (re)production inherent to each. I reposition elements from these functional and decorative traditions into organic, life-size expressive spaces. In this body of work I ask: How does the visual language of mass production inform an experience of our everyday surroundings?

In my sculptural installations, I engage with texture through reference and material translation. In works like *Pool Side* (2015), the actual texture of folded and painted sheet metal lies in stark contrast to the depicted softness of a bath towel. Translation of texture in these works serves to highlight our haptic experience of these everyday objects and to create a liminal space of relation for the viewer, suspended conceptually between the sculpture's real and depicted physicality.

Left:
 Brian Michael Dunn, *Pool Side*, (2015),
 Acrylic on steel

SARAH KNOBEL

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Sarah Knobel is a photographer and a video and installation artist that works with everyday items to find new ways to identify our relationship with ideas of the natural, artificial, beautiful, and repulsive. Sarah was a Hamiltonian Fellow from 2010 – 2011. Her work has been featured in exhibitions nationally and internationally, including Miami, Seattle, Portland, Kansas City, Washington, DC, Germany, Belgium, Korea, and Greece. Sarah holds an MFA in Photography from the Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning Program at the University of Cincinnati and a BFA in Studio Art from Texas State University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York.



I'm an artist that creates videos, photographs, and installations. For the last few years, I have been looking at materials part of my everyday life; the mundane remains that seem unremarkable at first glance. I question the metaphysical makeup, what they symbolize, and their existence beyond meager utilization. But I also take a closer look at the beauty in their distinctive form once their intended purpose is done. I create images relating to our environments and how imperishable relics engage with the natural and potentially make a beautiful yet disturbing correlation.



The photographs in the Trash 3 series specifically relate to my waste within a week. I created quick temporal interactions that feel finite through the photographic frame, which result in a new landscape or artifact. Trash 3 was created in 2014 and represents my beginning explorations of looking at the physical representations of my consumption.

Left:
Sarah Knobel, *Untitled #1 from Trash*
#3 (2014), Photograph

Right:
Sarah Knobel, *Untitled #4 from Trash #3*
(2014), Photograph



MICHAEL DAX IACOVONE

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Michael spends his time investigating public space, walking through cities, driving across bridges and borders, and digging trenches in the desert. He is interested in formulas and generating labor systems to experience spaces, leave marks, and trace history. He has a BS in Photography from the State University of New York, an MI in Contemporary Art History from Middlesex University in London, an MFA in Photography from VCU, and an MFA in Studio Art from MICA. His work has been exhibited internationally in Sarajevo, Belgrade, Warsaw, Budapest, Paris, London, and Pyramiden (a soviet ghost town in the Arctic Circle). Domestically he has exhibited in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St.Louis, Orlando, Baltimore, Salt Lake City, and Washington, DC, among other places. He has written art reviews and articles for Sculpture Magazine, BMoreArt, and The Brooklynite. He lives and works in Washington, DC, and hopes to someday have representation in Congress.



My work is based in studying and investigating open public spaces, either in urban environments, or in the solitude of the great outdoors. I study maps and create formulas to guide these investigations, and spend months designing projects before I set out to document the spaces.

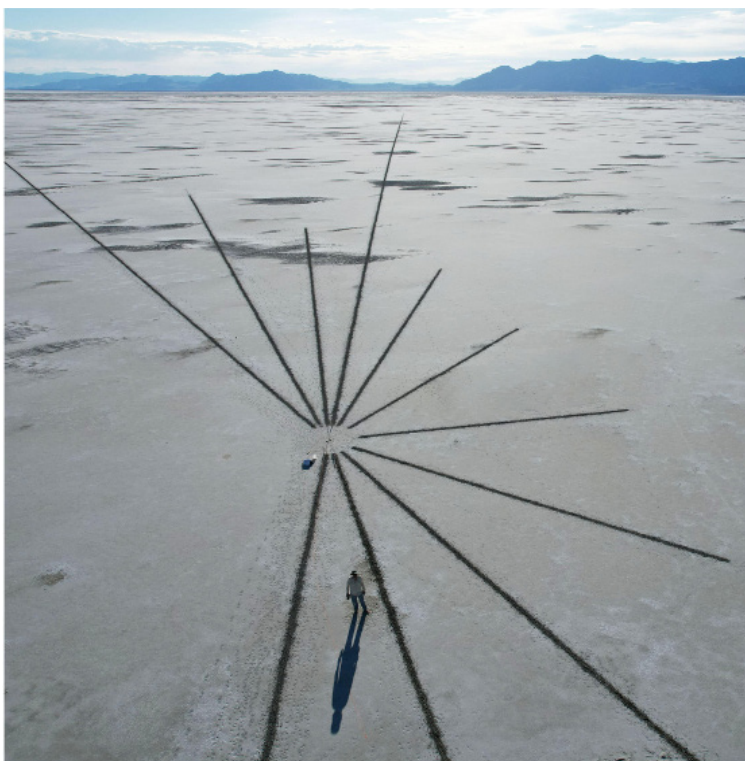
There is an overwhelming corporeal sense of scale that can be felt when standing in the desert, miles from civilization. I have been going to the desert in Nevada and Utah each summer for the past six years to work in the landscapes, and document my interventions in those spaces. I'm interested in immersing myself into a location, and spending days working in the quiet desert to leave my mark, however fleeting and anonymous.

I spend months looking at maps, drawing diagrams, and creating formulas to create a work specific to a space, and time. The idea, the planning, and the formula lead me to a performance of labor that takes place in solitude. To document the labor I use a drone to capture photo and video as artifacts of an intervention. I am hopeful that those documents will draw attention not only to my process and intervention, but also into the fragile beauty of the landscape.





The above system is based on the Golden Ratio to create circles that relate to each other on a rotational axis. The first circle is created by using myself as a scale - each unit is the length of my height - 6 feet. From there the Golden Ratio informs the radius of the next circle. 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,33,54,87.



For the adjacent system, I put two stakes in the ground 400 meters apart on an East/West axis. Along that axis I created a sundial pointing in seven directions at two hour intervals based on the available hours of sunlight. For each of those intervals I created a triangle of equal size to point in the direction of the sun.

Top:

Michael Dax Iacovone, *Golden Ratio*
(2022), Archival print

Bottom:

Michael Dax Iacovone, *Seven
Triangles of Equal Size* (2021),
Archival print

JOYCE YU-JEAN LEE

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Joyce Yu-Jean Lee is a visual artist that combines photography, video sculpture, and interactive installation with social practice and institutional critique. Her project about Internet censorship, *FIREWALL*, garnered backlash from Chinese state authorities in 2016 and has exhibited at Lincoln Center in New York City, the Oslo Freedom Forum in Norway, the Hong Kong Center for Community Cultural Development, and the Austrian Association of Women Artists (VBKÖ) in Vienna.

Joyce's artwork has been written about in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Hong Kong Free Press, China Digital Times, Huffington Post, Hyperallergic, and been featured by James Coomarasamy on BBC Radio. She is the recipient of grants from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council; Arts Mid-Hudson, Asian Women Giving Circle; Franklin Furnace Fund, Maryland State Arts Council, and The Walters Art Museum; fellowships at the Vermont Studio Center supported by the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the C. Sylvia and Eddie C. Brown Studio at Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower and Hamiltonian Artists. *FIREWALL* is fiscally sponsored by NYFA and she is an Assistant Professor of Art & Digital Media at Marist College.





Japan's New Wave
Reflections of Nature
2019
Mixed Media
100 x 100 cm
© 2019 Japan's New Wave





As a transnational Taiwanese-Chinese American artist, I study the act of seeing when mediated by technology. My artwork slows our observation of the natural and built worlds in order to challenge the metanarratives in mass media and bring under-represented perspectives to the forefront. I am curious about how visual culture shapes notions of truth and scripts dominant ideologies about the “other.” I utilize images, form, networked activities and performance to critique institutions of power like mainstream journalism, corporate marketing and government censorship.

Reflections of Taha'a is a photo collage UV printed onto metal with mirrored glass cut outs. It is part of my Mesophotic Sanctuary series inspired by the adaptive technologies of nature to survive global warming. This work re-imagines a wild future for Earth by creating new ecological forms that reference the mesophotic zone of the Polynesian seas. “Mesophotic” means “middle light” and is a depth of the ocean once thought impossible for coral reefs to thrive. Scientists recently discovered coral reefs growing there for the first time, perhaps a hopeful sign that Mother Nature is evolving to survive human destruction. The inset mirrors reflect the viewer, implicating their collective responsibility in caring for our planet.

My creative process starts with collaging photographs; then abstracting shapes or symbols from the environment or appropriated visual culture; from which I make minimal sculpture and installation integrated into its architectural and physical contexts. My practice expands the discourse of mark making and the mechanical image by transcribing digital information into three dimensions, engaging viewers with reflective materials, lighting design and immersive video projection. I enjoy playing with attention, duration, and the optics of light to create space for asking ethnographic questions.

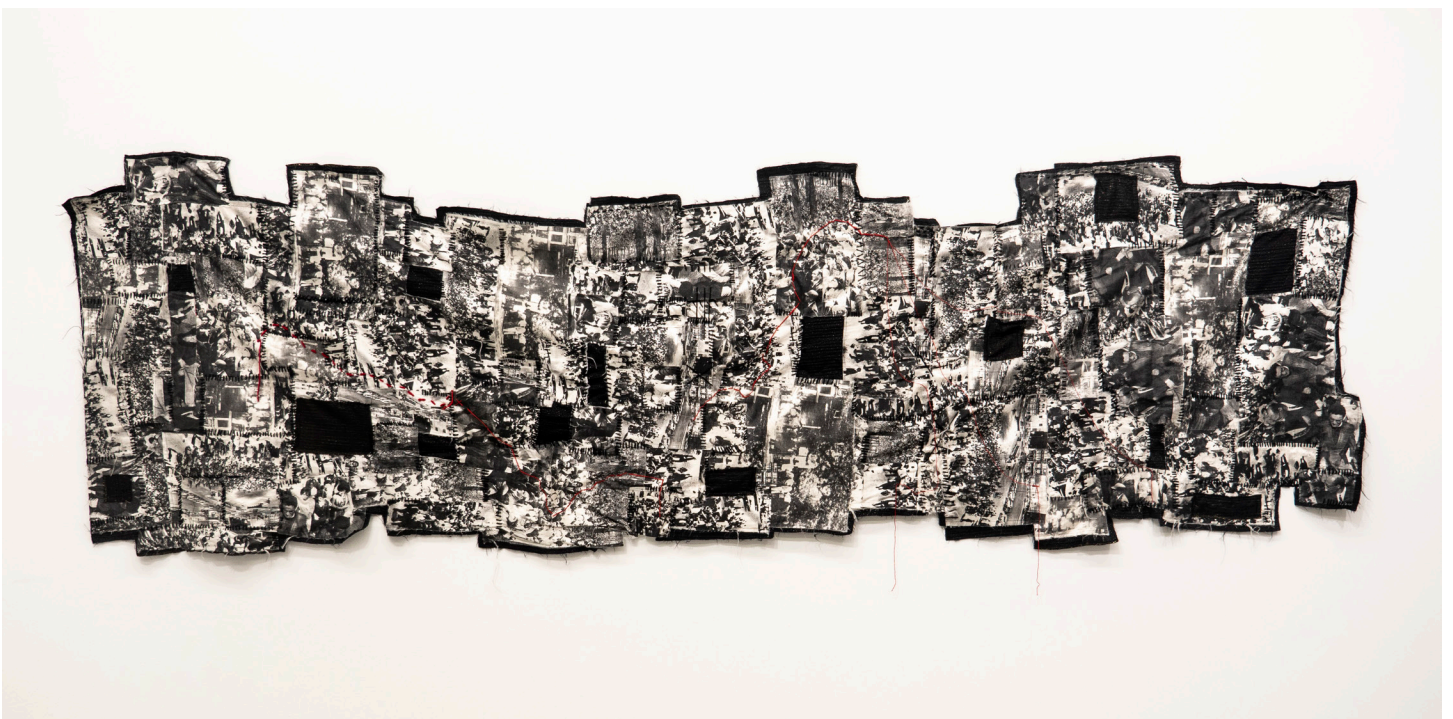
HELINA METAFERIA

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Helina Metaferia is an interdisciplinary artist working across collage, assemblage, video, performance, and social engagement. Her work integrates archives, somatic studies, and dialogical practices, narrating untold stories that amplify BIPOC/femme bodies. Recent solo exhibitions include Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2022); New York University's The Gallatin Galleries, New York, NY (2021); Michigan State University's Scene Metrospace Gallery, East Lansing, MI (2019); and Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2017). She will present her work at the 2023 Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates. Metaferia's work is in the permanent collection of several institutions, including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY.

Metaferia received her MFA from Tufts University's School of the Museum of Fine Arts (2015) and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2016). Her work has been supported by residencies including MacDowell, Yaddo, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, and Silver Art Projects at the World Trade Center. Her work has been written about in publications including The New York Times, Financial Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, Artnet News, Hyperallergic, Artsy, and The Art Newspaper. Metaferia is an Assistant Professor of Visual Art at Brown University, and lives and works in New York City.



I am an interdisciplinary artist working across performance, video, installation, collage, and social engagement. Through a hybrid of mediums, I tell overlooked stories that center Black bodies in positions of power and vulnerability. As a research based artist, my work is informed by written and oral archives, dialogical art, and somatic practices. My work interrogates complex histories of institutionalized and systemic oppression, and asks how it informs our personal experiences and interpersonal relationships.

I often use my own body as a medium in my practice, as well as the bodies of participants or collaborators in my community. I am interested in how documentation and relics preserve live art in the absence of the artist, expanding the lifespan of the work beyond ephemeral moments and becoming art unto themselves. As an Ethiopian-American, my work draws upon traditional African art sensibilities, where visual art and ritual often intersect, and art objects are infused with an experience or aesthetic that can layer their meaning.



Left:
Helina Metaferia, *Tapestry (The Griot)* (2022), Hand-stitched
textile and silkscreen on fabric



The subject of my interdisciplinary projects have ranged from critiquing the bias in art historical canons that perpetuate myths of Western male exceptionalism; advocating for the overlooked labor of BIPOC women activists; redefining notions of citizenship as it relates to forced (im)migration; and more. In our trying political climate, where Black lives are continuing to fight to matter, and women are courageously calling out sexual violence, my work seeks to reconcile with the complex contradictions of what it means to be an American.

Tapestry (The Griot) is a hand-stitched textile of silk screened images from archives of civil rights protest. Made to be hung as a stand alone object, or worn as a wearable sculpture, *Tapestry (The Griot)* draws inspiration from both African-American quilting traditions and African garments worn for ritualistic occasions. It was activated during a live performance, titled *The Willing*, at my recent solo show at Praise Shadows Art Gallery in Boston. I will make textile and performance for my exhibition at the Sharjah Biennial in February 2023.



The Willing is a live performance, which activates *Tapestry (The Griot)*, and several other sculptures within my recent solo show at Praise Shadows Art Gallery in Boston on April 7, 2022. During the performance I engage in song, movement, and text, to share the stories of five generations of women in my family who participated in defiant actions against colonization, racial, and patriarchal oppression in Ethiopia and the United States. I pass *Tapestry* and a brass crown with archival etchings on to my eleven-year-old niece, who wears it while asserting her own narrative. The sculptural components point toward the aesthetic of royalty as a way to elevate one's position in a society that is fraught with institutionalized and systemic oppression against Black women's bodies. I will be presenting a version of *The Willing* and *Tapestry* at the Sharjah Biennial in February 2023.

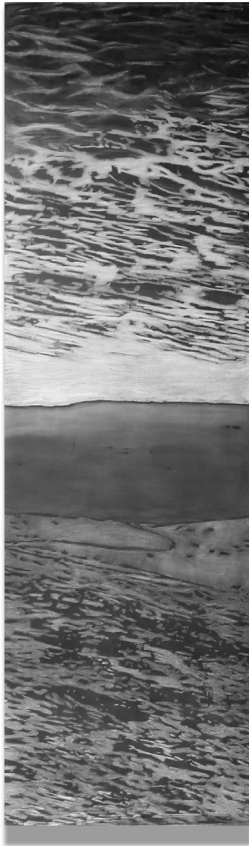
JERRY TRUONG

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Jerry Truong is an interdisciplinary artist, whose work deals with history and memory as they relate to the exercise of power and the residuals of trauma. Truong received his B.A. in Studio Art from the University of California, Irvine and his M.F.A. in Visual Arts from the University of California, San Diego, where he was also a recipient of the San Diego Fellowship. He has had solo exhibitions at the Arlington Art Center (VA), Northwestern University (IL), Hood College (MD), and Lycoming College (PA). His work has been shown at venues such as the VAALA Cultural Center (CA), American University Museum (DC), BlackRock Center for the Arts (MD), CUE Foundation (NY), and Flashpoint Gallery (DC). He was a fellow at Hamiltonian Artists from 2012-14 and a member of the Sparkplug Collective at the DC Arts Center from 2014-16.

I grew up in a small town in Northern California, coddled by the suburban American dream, oblivious to the social and political mechanisms that made our way of life possible. Even in my own home, I was blissfully unaware of the sacrifices my parents made to arrive in this land. They never once spoke of the horrors they survived when they escaped in 1979 from war-torn Vietnam by boat: the constant fear of pirates, suffering from starvation, and witnessing family members drown.





My artistic practice draws from the incomplete and informal archive of images and memories I inherited from my parents. The pieces in my recent series, *Từ Nước, Tu-Sinh (Leaving/Living/Lost)*, are large-scale drawings created from charcoal and incense ash from a Vietnamese ancestral altar. The drawings depict land, water, and sky, imagining the landscape that acted as both escape route and mortal threat to those fleeing their homeland. Mixing the charcoal with incense ash was a personal act of commemoration, oscillating between mourning and hope.

It is our job as thinkers and art practitioners to draw attention to the inequalities and injustices in our social institutions, but this must be done in clever and covert ways; otherwise, we risk becoming silenced by the very powers that we are trying to critique but at the same time depend upon. My goal is to create situations that allow for an abrupt awakening for the unsuspecting viewer. Using transformation, deception, and multiplicity as conceptual strategies, my intention is for the viewer to be forced to peel back the formal façade. In the process, questions about identity, memory, and history are revealed in the work, offering the potential for a better understanding of the self and our individual roles within civil society. I believe there is no greater accomplishment than to be a catalyst for change, a force that is able to break people out of the mundane routine of passive acceptance.

Left Top:

Jerry Truong, *Từ Nước (To Be from Water/To Leave the Motherland)* (2018), Charcoal and incense ash on panel

Left Bottom:

Jerry Truong, *Từ Nước (To Be from the Homeland/To Leave the Water)* (2018), Charcoal and incense ash on panel

This catalogue was produced in conjunction with an exhibition featuring alumni from Hamiltonian Artists and organized by The Kreeger Museum.

Perplexity

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Cover Image:

Michael Dax Iacovone, *Seven Triangles of Equal Size* (2021), Archival print

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Amy Boone-McCreesh, *Flowers Through The Gate*, (2022), Mixed media and collage on paper

Amy Boone-McCreesh, *Good Luck Charms*, (2022), Laser cut acrylic, beads, and found objects

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Sarah Knobel, *Untitled #1 from Trash #3* (2014), Photograph

Sarah Knobel, *Untitled #4 from Trash #3* (2014), Photograph

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Jerry Truong, *Tù Nước (To Be from the Homeland/To Leave the Water)* (2018), Charcoal and incense ash on panel

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Brian Michael Dunn, *Pool Side*, (2015), Acrylic on steel

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