

2017

Department of Art

Senior

Colby College

- Exhibition

Waterville, Maine

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2017 Senior Exhibition

May 4 - May 22, 2017

Opening Reception: May 4, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Colby College Museum of Art

Waterville, ME

ART DEPARTMENT
2016-2017

AR 401-402 / STUDIO CAPSTONE STUDENTS

Ernie Aguilar-Arizmendi / Photography
Danielle Bagley / Painting
Silas Eastman / Sculpture
Sarah Grady / Photography
Jackson Hall / Photography
Emily Held / Printmaking
Patt Lamom / Painting
Esther Mathieu / Photography
Teddy Simpson / Photography
Anne Vetter / Photography

AR356 / WRITING ART CRITICISM STUDENTS

Leah Bilodeau
Wilder Davies
John Egner
Sara Heilbronner
Madeleine Joern

STUDIO FACULTY

Bradley Borthwick
Bevin Engman
Gary Green
Garry Mitchell
Scott H. Reed III
Alison Stigora

ART HISTORY FACULTY

Mariola Alvarez
Marta Ameri
Daniel Harkett
Véronique Plesch
Tanya Sheehan, Chair
Ankeney Weitz

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Kristine Johnson

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

This catalogue is not only the first publication to accompany the Senior Exhibition at Colby College; it represents a unique collaboration among students and faculty, studio artists and art historians. Featured on its pages are selected artworks and artist statements produced by the studio art majors and minors in their senior capstone seminar, co-taught by the studio faculty and coordinated this year by Professor Gary Green. Readers will find these images and texts paired with catalog essays developed in a new art history seminar on writing art criticism taught by Professor Daniel Harkett.

The Art Department is grateful to the many people who made this collaborative project possible. They include Elizabeth Finch, Lauren Lessing, Greg Williams, Stew Henderson, and Andrew Gelfand at the Colby College Museum of Art, who curated and installed the exhibition. Our own Gary Green created the catalog's beautiful design. Jennifer Liese, director of the Writing Center, Rhode Island School of Design, conducted stimulating workshops on art writing that guided the work of Colby faculty and students this spring. Her visit was supported by the Colby Writing Program, directed by Stacey Sheriff, whose partnership with the Art Department helped motivate the catalog project. Finally, there are the students themselves, whose dedication to the process of creating original work—with all of its challenges and transformative potential—inspires us each day.

Tanya Sheehan
William R. Kenan, Jr. Associate Professor of Art,
and Chair, Art Department

Words and Images

Ernie Aguilar-Arizmendi's *Letters to My Father*

by Wilder Davies

In the ten or so years since he last saw his father, Ernie Aguilar-Arizmendi has periodically received letters from him, asking how he was doing as he got older, and offering repetitive yet hollow promises of return. By high school he stopped responding to his father's letters, choosing to exclude him from the life he had. Now, through his photo series *Letters to My Father*, Aguilar-Arizmendi has crafted a response to what he had left unanswered that both reveals and conceals who he is today.

Aguilar-Arizmendi writes his response in images, suturing together glimpses of himself, all the while concealing his face. He bares his hair, tattoos, insomnia, his love for his mother, his queerness, and creates images meant to evoke specific memories he has of his father. As both a dialogue between the two and a self-portrait of the artist fashioned from a range of iconography, many of the images are motivated by a context we as spectators cannot access. After all, we are not the intended recipients of these images.

We can peek through a window and hold a glass to the wall, acting as voyeurs of a deeply intimate exchange of lived history and visual identity that we are not entirely privy to as viewers. The story behind a tattoo, the significance of a bathroom filled with steam, images of his mother and grandmother resting beside each other all serve to illuminate disparate parts of his present self, revealing what has changed, what is remembered, and what still remains. Aguilar-Arizmendi evokes the process of letter writing in his photos using a platinum-palladium process, which requires a lot of manual handiwork.

Platinum-palladium produces an incredibly stable print that can last well beyond a human lifetime. Perhaps in making these aspects of self permanent, Aguilar-Arizmendi solidifies their mass and asserts their significance. The images are darkened, heavy like neutron stars, containing an expansive and complex store of personal history, yet they remain compact, simultaneously inky and subdued. Some of the photos may flicker with hints of subtle familiarity for viewers, sparking a personal memory or connection; others are left dim and unfamiliar, meant only to be seen from a distance. For Aguilar-Arizmendi, these images form a constellation that communicates different aspects of who he is today to his father.

For Aguilar-Arizmendi, the project is not a begrudging one, as he states that he is not resentful of his father. Rather it is more an act of catharsis. Found in each of these photos is a willingness to let go, relinquishing a sense of bitterness to be OK with what never was. ✓



ERNIE AGUILAR-ARIZMENDI / *Letters to My Father* / platinum-palladium photograph / 6" x 9" / 2017

Danielle Bagley's *Purple No. 1*

by Sara Heilbronner

Danielle Bagley's catchphrase? "Strategically playful." Bagley explores the relationship between color and shape, investigating the conditions that make these elements friends (and enemies). Bagley does this pigment and pattern probing within the confines of a self-imposed system of painting. She makes her own rules within which to work, a process that she finds both engaging and comforting.

What lies inside Bagley's mental rule book? Personal maxims like *Don't ever use soft edges in a pattern, only shapes with straight edges and sharp angles*. Why? "Because," Bagley explains to me matter-of-factly, "soft edges just don't fit as well." It's things like Play with neutrals. They're friendly. Bagley loves neutrals. "There are so many different kinds of neutrals. That's why they're fun to work with." It follows then that Bagley doesn't much fancy vibrant colors. Vibrants scare her. Like those loud, attention-seeking guests at a party, vibrants compete with each other too much. (Bagley is currently irritated with bright colors.) The rule book also contains things like *Try to be unique*. Bagley follows this rule by experimenting with texture. "Texture makes the work more special. I mean, all artists start with shape and color, but it's what they do with them that changes things." So Bagley uses a palette knife. She layers, scrapes; layers, scrapes. (Layers, scrapes.)

Bagley's rules come alive in her paintings. Take *Purple No. 1*. When I look at this painting, I see a composition that is as visually stimulating as it is meticulously planned.

Horizontal rhombuses sit snugly inside vertical rhombuses; vertical rhombuses sit snugly inside horizontal rhombuses. Lime green is scraped over burnt maroon, Creamsicle orange over bright purple. Unusual, intriguing combinations of form and color fill the entirety of the square canvas; they become unified less through their optical harmonies and more through their unexpected, risky boldness. Bagley's paintings are more striking as a result. It's like a group of friends: chances are you'll have a better dynamic if you're all a little different, if your personalities contrast in enlightening ways. After all, harmony isn't always satisfying. Sometimes it's vapid.

I find it slightly ironic that Bagley savors the privacy of her practice, for she speaks of her process almost as if it possesses a personality of its own. Thus it seems to me that even in the studio, a space that Bagley likens to a sanctuary, she is not truly alone. I think her rule book functions as a companion, one that keeps Bagley from falling into the loneliness, the eeriness, of artistic solitude.

I wonder what would happen if the rules disappeared. Who (or what) would remain in control? That is, what (or whom) is a rule book truly directing, the artist or the work? ✓



DANIELLE BAGLEY / *Purple No.1* / oil on panel / 12" x 12" / 2017

Silas Eastman's *Sanctuary*

by Leah Bilodeau

After making a ten-minute trek uphill to see Silas Eastman's site-specific sculpture, it's obvious he's an artist who creates work for a few lucky wanderers. Half hidden by snow in the woods of Runnals Hill behind Colby College, Eastman's piece is titled *Sanctuary*, and that's just what it is. The refuge is a large, gently sloping wooden shell, made up of nine finished strips of wood pinched together at the ends by iron binds. Situated on its side, like a boat tipped over, the piece has a height of around four and a half feet, high enough for an adult to duck under and sit within, protected from the elements. A small wooden bench (not pictured here) inside the structure provides a place for a solitary visitor to take a breath and peer out at the surrounding landscape.

For Eastman, the auditory experience for visitors is as important as the visual one. After all, his work is a tool to facilitate sensorial interactions with the natural world. He imagines *Sanctuary* as a means of escaping "the hubbub of downtown" as well as the sounds of traffic from the nearby interstate. Sitting inside the constructed hill of wooden beams on a winter morning, I become acutely aware of the silence in the woods. The snow muffles the already muted surrounding sounds. It's a penetrating quiet that renders a familiar landscape strange.

Made from wood, *Sanctuary* testifies to Eastman's interest in woodworking, which began over a decade ago in his father's sawmill, located in the small rural town of Chatham, New Hampshire. When he arrived

at Colby, he saw himself transform from a wood craftsman into an artist fascinated by creating purposeful and aesthetically pleasing work. Eastman's interest in site-specific work located in rural settings is rooted in his strong connection to the outdoors around his childhood home. *Sanctuary* rests in a forest of trees planted in neat rows, a landscaping detail only obvious after a few minutes of careful observation. Eastman drily remarks that even in this remote location, the woods are not "natural" but rather artificially planted. What's natural turns out not to be so, while what's artificial, *Sanctuary*, allows us to see what's really there.

As one travels back down toward the center of campus and away from the trees, a glance backward makes it clear that *Sanctuary* will be camouflaged by snow or foliage for a majority of the year. Eastman is well aware of the climate's unforgiving and overbearing grasp on year-round outdoor sculpture, but perhaps this unrelenting power is exactly what he hopes to display. Sadly, the rules of the college demand the removal of the sculpture before it will have the chance to witness such a history. Before its inevitable relocation, perhaps a few more wanderers will discover *Sanctuary* and participate in Eastman's carefully curated experience of nature. ♥



SILAS EASTMAN / *Sanctuary* / wood and steel / 25' x 6' x 6' / 2016-17

Sarah Grady's *Last Year*

by Leah Bilodeau

Sarah Grady is a senior who has felt the waves of nostalgia a year too soon. After surviving a personal trauma, her original plan to graduate in 2016 alongside her fellow classmates was disrupted. She took a year of absence but continued taking photographs for the series presented here. Documenting what she once believed would be the end of her college career, Grady's project has evolved into a project meant to inspire an appreciation for the ephemeral moments of the present.

In Grady's photographs, groups of young and beautiful college students lounge around, often outdoors on a lakeside dock or in a boat. Gathered in quiet conversations or bursting with laughter, the figures project the confidence and happiness of people with all the time in the world. One of Grady's works, reproduced here, depicts three people with disheveled hair and fresh faces, traces of their outdoor locale. The photograph's perspective is closely focused on a young woman blissfully sleeping in a hammock. Her perfectly relaxed face and slightly parted lips breathe trust and tranquility. The palpable intimacy of the scene comes from the quietness of the moment. No mouth is opened to speak, no one moves. It is an absolutely still instant in a year that is rushing by.

These idealistic figures are some of Grady's best friends. To her, these scenes stand as fond memories of close relationships. And yet the bittersweet nature of these photographs is undeniable. The figures presented

in them are constant reminders of the divergence between Grady and her friends' experiences of senior year.

Although Grady's photographs are deeply personal, they resonate with feelings of loss and longing that are universally relatable. To connect with a larger audience, she avoids titling and dating her works. The figures in her photographs are anonymous and their relationships undefined. Their purposefully ambiguous identities are an invitation for viewers to reflect on their own intimate moments and be conscious of their transience. ✓



SARAH GRADY / *Last Year* / gelatin-silver photograph / 11" x 14" / 2015-17

Jackson Hall's *Roadside Portraits*

by Sara Heilbronner

Jackson Hall's photographs are far from spectacular. (And trust me, he would want you to say that.) Hall curates the everyday, documenting today's man-modified landscapes and drawing our eyes to the exquisiteness of the ordinary.

Hall drives throughout his home state of Maine taking pictures of spaces that are injected with traces of our human presence. Unassuming scenes pepper Hall's body of work—scenes like a rusty metal fence on the outskirts of a wintry, barren forest; an out-of-service gas station in rural Maine, its paint aggressively chipped and faded; a large, dirty-white house encircled by dense, lushly green woods.

Hall's photographs encourage us to reconsider how we look at our local environments. Choosing to capture commonplace landscapes rather than clichéd views of nature (think: the autumn mountain scapes and starlit woods that plaster Instagram feeds and desktop backgrounds), Hall reframes environments that are often considered mundane and valueless as spaces worthy of people's attention and respect.

What I find refreshing about Hall's images is that they depict accessible environments—that is, spaces that represent the familiar comfort of that “everyday” brand of nature in which nearly all of us find ourselves cocooned. For Hall, “You have to be able to find the beauty in what you see around you, what you actually come across on a daily basis.” Representing spaces that people are likely to find in their own neighborhoods—for Hall's images, as the artist himself attests, “are not inherently Maine”—the photos acquire both an aesthetic and ethical power that is rooted in their pragmatism. Hall

works solely with what surrounds him, a practice that affirms the idea that one need not travel far to find landscapes worth noticing, treasuring. Similarly, one need not document disaster to prove that nature is in need of more allies. One of Hall's aims with his photographs is to persuade people to stop destroying the environment, but Hall believes that “there are so many ways to get at that goal. I don't want to get at it by just shooting an oil spill. I think it has to be very real . . . and very real means what you see every day; it means the changes that you can actually quantify as a regular citizen looking at the world. These aren't newspaper photographs, these aren't about news. They're about the ordinary.”

Hall's photographs, despite their ordinariness, still possess beauty and intrigue because he exploits the everyday as if it were a medium itself. He plays with its shapes, colors, and textures to highlight the wonderful formal qualities of the happened-on spaces and objects. Take, for instance, *Outside Mr. Woodchuck's* (Fairfield, Maine), the image we see here. The sliced planks of snow-dusted tree trunk are geometrically stable, centered sturdily in the picture plane. Two circular pieces of trunk bookend the row of planks so tidily, so symmetrically, that I feel compelled to gaze more attentively. As if I were looking at a carefully constructed abstract painting. Hall's photographs may depict scenes to which people give little to no thought, but they are far from having been thoughtlessly taken. They may be ordinary in content, but they are formally and aesthetically engaging. They picture not the breath-taking but the recognizable. And that's very kind of them to do so; they give us all another chance to acknowledge what has always been. ♥



JACKSON HALL / *Outside Mr. Woodchuck's (Fairfield, Maine)* / archival pigment print / 14" x 21" / 2016

Emily Held's *Peregrine Falcon*

There is a long and rich tradition of artists and writers who find their muses in nature and its resident fauna. Emily Held situates her work in that tradition and, further, is someone who cares deeply for the animals she depicts in her poignant relief prints. Perhaps the following quotes by two of Held's compatriots can explain some of the passion one finds embedded in these small printed wonders.

But I had an obsession. Birds. Birds of prey most of all. I was sure they were the best things that had ever existed. My parents thought this obsession would go the way of the others: dinosaurs, ponies, volcanoes. It didn't. It worsened. When I was six I tried to sleep every night with my arms folded behind my back like wings. This didn't last long, because it is hard to sleep with your arms folded behind your back like wings. Later, when I saw pictures of the ancient Egyptian falcon-headed god Horus, all faience and turquoise and with a perfect moustachial stripe below his wide, haunting eyes, I was stricken with a strange religious awe. This was my god, not the one we prayed to at school: he was an old man with a white beard and drapes. For weeks, in secret heresy, I whispered Dear Horus instead of Our Father when we recited the Lord's Prayer at school assemblies . . . [I] stuck pictures of raptors on my bedroom walls, and drew them, over and over again, on the edges of newspapers, on scraps of note-paper, on the margins of my school exercise books, as if by doing so I could conjure them into existence.

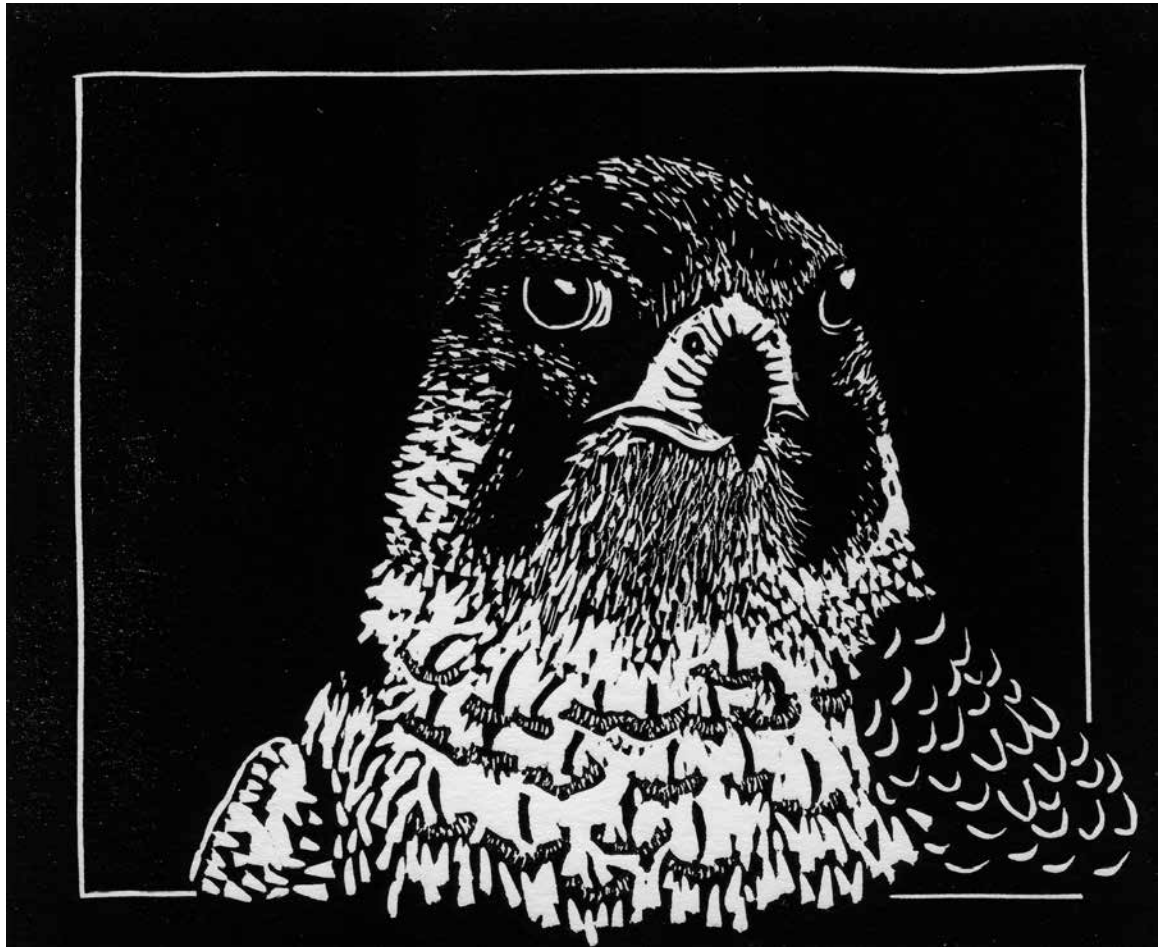
—Helen MacDonald
from *H Is for Hawk*

Along with my studies of insects, I'd had since childhood an intense interest in birds. As a side-project (after deciding to leave California and return home to Maine and try living one summer with my new bride, Maggie, in my shack there in the woods) we got to know two wild young crows and a great horned owl that lived there free in the woods with us. It was magical to be with all four of them, to have them as close full-time companions. Wanting to never forget, I took extensive notes and photographs, and aside from a couple of insect projects, examined the famously intense mobbing behavior of crows on owls. The two crows grew up with the owl, and all ended up tolerating and/or ignoring each other. It had turned out differently than I expected, and though the data were not of the type suitable for a scientific research report, it made for an information-rich journal.

. . .

*The experience had been one of visual images, and so I consulted my photographs and went back to pencil drawing from them, including making one large color portrait of *Bubo*, the owl. I had not really seen the owl, I realized, until I tried to draw it. Nor had I known it, until I had written his/her (its) story.*

—Bernd Heinrich
from *An Owl in the House*



EMILY HELD / *Peregrine Falcon* / relief print / 4 7/8" x 5 7/8" / 2016

Patt Lamom's *Flesh*

by John Egnor

I took my seat in the painting studio and finalized preparation for our interview session, then asked Patt Lamom to describe her work. Her response took the form of a soft and tender gesture, as she stared down at her hands and then gently reached for mine. Taking my palm, she urged me to look at it, to study its form, its colors, to think about its anatomy: the layers of skin, the sinews and tendons, the muscles and bones, the flowing blood, the subtle intricacies we so often overlook. Soon there began a shift in my perception. My hand no longer existed as a familiar element of my body. It had metamorphosed into a complex source of wonderment: a visual synthesis of ornate beauty.

Viewing Lamom's work requires an investigative gaze, the kind she urged me to use when studying my own hand. Take her painting of a clenched fist. While the image is small—confined within a wooden surface of only a couple of inches—it is assertively present. It is all we see and all the artist wants us to see. Lamom zooms in on the hand, capturing its fine detail, meticulously rendering the fingers and knuckles and skin as they would respond when clenched tightly. The fist pulses with kinetic energy; the muscles are strained and the skin is tense.

Lamom succeeds in representing the human hand with such clarity and naturalism that from a distance the picture might appear to be a photograph. However, she does not consider her work to be hyperrealistic. Rather, by inviting the viewer to scrutinize an image of a familiar body part, Lamom

renders it strange, turning it into a new object of perception.

Lamom discovers beauty in the range of tones found within skin. Hands and anatomical features are void of any tangible existence. She sees them as abstract vehicles for color: imaginative canvases atop which pigments and hues are blended and layered. Lamom views the process of painting as a metaphor for the organization and makeup of the human body; layers of fatty tissue and blood and muscle and flesh are replicated through the layering of paint and color. Her paintings are painstakingly wrought, and precisely detailed, but they are abstraction disguised as realism. Hands and bodily features—lips, collarbones, and toes—become extraordinary fields of color. Lamom's work triggers a paradoxical metamorphosis of perception: the mundane becomes compelling, and things perceived as simple, habitual, and ordinary transform into riveting and perplexing abstract elements of unexpected beauty. ✓



PATT LAMOM / *Flesh* / oil on panel / 3" x 3" / 2016

Esther Mathieu's *Atlas: Hallowed Ground*

by Wilder Davies

Sitting on the shelf in Esther Mathieu's dorm room is a copy of *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, one of her favorite books. The story follows a boy named Milo who is bored by the monotony of his schooling and daily life, who sojourns to "the land beyond" in an electric toy car. "The land beyond" is less Wonderland and more an epistemological topography of the mind, where he explores places called the Mountains of Ignorance, the Foothills of Confusion, and visits two neighboring kingdoms that each hold jurisdiction over knowledge concerning numbers or letters, respectively titled Digitopolis and Dictionopolis. Upon his return to reality, Milo is left with a vivified curiosity to learn. While Juster's beloved story is primarily celebrating the wonders of education, it poses a brilliant set of questions: What would a landscape of the mind look like? Would it have rivers and valleys? Different ecosystems? Would there be a feudal system?

Providing her own answer, Mathieu has been working as cartographer, scaling out and navigating the geography of her psyche, forgoing the little car for cyanotype prints in her photo series *Atlas: Hallowed Ground*. Yet rather than a story of how to find the joy in elementary curricula, Mathieu charts the dynamic tension between her psychological and somatic senses of self. Marking the body as landscape, she documents herself and her surroundings to, in her words, "[create] an atlas of the space I occupy."

Mathieu's photos rest on a subtle legibility: we know that we are looking at a body, but can't

immediately place where. Instead, we notice the geographic qualities of bones beneath skin, of old scars, a silhouette from a distance, giving her experience with mental illness and self-understanding corporeal weight. While these are photos of Mathieu's body, they assume no identity and are instead fragmentary and incomplete. The untitled photograph we see here appears as a clear and visceral evocation of bodily dysphoria. Her hand is seemingly disembodied by shadow, gripping tightly to an ambiguous plane of flesh. The subtle gradation of tone and the closeness of the image diminish any sense of clarity, and we are left to consider the forms presented for their observable qualities, noticing the curves of skin and how they contrast the ridged and angular structures of the fingers. The remaining images are her "close to me spaces," depicting her unmade bed or her windowsill occupied by plants and pills, things external to her body but that are no less bound to her interior self. The blue hues of the cyanotypes further infuse a dreamlike distance in each photo of the series, reiterating Mathieu's dissociative feelings from body and space. A hands-on and fickle process, cyanotyping is most commonly used for making blueprints or horticultural documentation, images that are unhindered by the medium's weakness in capturing depth. Mathieu takes advantage of this shortcoming, using the murkiness to make a world that is just nearly physical, but not quite there. What materializes from the hazy wash of deep blue is a map of Mathieu's own "land beyond," offering subtle glimpses of a place we cannot venture. ♥



ESTHER MATHIEU / *Atlas: Hallowed Ground* / cyanotype / 4" x 5" / 2016-17

Teddy Simpson's *Constructed Memories*

by Madeleine Joern

My first encounter with Teddy Simpson's photographs left me comfortably lost for words. Frustration with my inability to access a vocabulary fit to communicate my interest was soon overwhelmed by a lingering feeling of nostalgia. But I was unable to put my finger on the exact cause for this. I found myself likening these images to scenes from my childhood in Minnesota, a far geographical leap from their actual settings throughout New Jersey and New England. Perhaps the effect of his work can be encapsulated in the words "constructed nostalgia," a phrase Simpson is toying with to describe his project's unifying concept.

Simpson's snapshot of a domestic exterior fits well within this photographic study of the intangible. Here, we look out from a back porch toward a neighboring home painted simply in shades of gray. Despite these muted tones, the scene maintains an overall sense of warmth, created by touches of scattered fall leaves and the soft afternoon sunlight. These sharply angled shadows remind me of looking around in my own neighborhood just after getting home from school. With this view, I can imagine peering into the neighbor's yard, wondering if their kids were available for a game of four square, or if today they were busy with piano lessons.

These small details, like the careful inclusion of a few fallen leaves, or the angle that barely reveals the presence of a small plastic bucket, function as purposeful allusions to reality, further grounding the viewer within each scene. This affectionate curating of space

gives Simpson's work a sense of craftsmanship that this medium can often lack. The artisanal, handmade quality only serves to further strengthen my own attachment to the project, just as my mother's chocolate chip cookies will forever outshine even the gooiest Toll House version. None of the convenience of ready-made dough can make up for the buttery associations of my mom's cookies. Like delicious time capsules, each contains memories of cookies past as well as representing the happy experiences to come. I find looking at Simpson's photographs provides a similar sensation, simultaneously evoking the many memories held by each space and highlighting a sense of limitless possibility of memories yet to be created.

For me, these works are incredibly experiential. They transcend the confines of the purely visual, reaching out and engaging my other sensorial memory. I can smell a freshly clean kitchen, and hear the wood floors creak beneath my feet. Memories flash like time-lapse photographs as my own set of characters enter and exit each scene. But that's just the thing—these aren't really my memories. Simpson's photographs have done the remarkable, hypnotizing me under their warm blanket of constructed nostalgia. However, I do not wish to escape the delusion, but only to succumb further—next time with a chocolate chip cookie in hand. ♥



TEDDY SIMPSON / *Constructed Memories* / archival pigment print / 20" x 24" / 2017

Anne Vetter's *Self-Portrait of My Brother*

by John Egner

For Anne Vetter, the camera is an accomplice: a creative sidekick that helps her uncover beauty, construct identity, and ultimately alter our perspective of reality. Taking inspiration from writer Robin D. G. Kelley's idea of the "freedom dream" as a driver of black radical thought and action, Vetter has developed a project of gendered liberation likewise focused on imagining a future reality in the present moment. With her camera, Vetter imagines freedom from the constraints of conventional gender identities in a meditation on intimacy, togetherness, closeness, and vulnerability.

Such a dream can be found in Vetter's *Self-Portrait of My Brother*, which reveals the liminal space existing between the siblings' genders. The young man, the artist's brother, becomes a staged performance, a metaphorical canvas for Vetter's creation of an imagined identity. Their mimicking poses and postures and their matching pink outfits (a color Vetter enjoys injecting within her work) suggest connection and closeness; however, her brother's true identity is camouflaged by Vetter's projection of herself. This image hints at what she refers to as the "betweenness of this project. It is both a portrait of my brother, a self-portrait of myself as my brother and my brother as me, and a portrait of the person who exists between us."

In order to break free of the social conventions of gender, Vetter creates "blurred realities"—ethereal utopian spaces where gender is fluid. She finds beauty in softness and sweetness, qualities associated with femininity

but imagined here to reach across gendered boundaries. Her male figures often have long, flowing hair. Expressions are muted and tranquil. Vetter views the body as possessing a powerful openness and explores her idea of beauty through subtle and intimate moments of touching: bodies are close to one another, skin touches skin. "Photography is a way of shining light on what you think is beautiful," she says. Despite its subtlety, beauty in this context is a radical proposition, a quality found by Vetter in those who are not conventionally held up as beautiful. Beauty is the vehicle through which Vetter conveys her renegade voice and engages with her viewers; it is her freedom dream's alibi.

Visually, Vetter's work blends elements of Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic painting—its serene, airy, mystical landscapes—with the constructed and alluring surreality of Diane Arbus's photographic portraiture. Conceptually, Vetter's photographs seek to answer her own self-imposed questions: "How can you capture vulnerability? Softness? What does it mean to create intimacy with both the audience and the subject? Who represents themselves as they truly see themselves?" Her images are the symbolic visual answers to these questions. They are gateways into Vetter's imagined reality of liberated gender identity, her subversive freedom dream. ✓



ANNEVETTER / *Self-Portrait of My Brother* / archival pigment print / 20" x 24" / 2016

Artists' Statements

ERNIE AGUILAR-ARIZMENDI



Whether he was out of town or spending time behind bars, my father began writing letters to me well before our last in-person encounter ten years ago. They continued after he was deported to Mexico when I was only eleven years old in the form of emails, voice mails, and text messages. His attempts to maintain our father-son relationship only dug deeper into the void with each of his repeated messages, constantly reiterating that I should wait for him, that he would be with me again to support the whole family once more, that my spiritual father would look over me in the meantime so I should pray, everything would be all right again, just hold on. As a kid in high school, I believed he did not deserve to hear from me, listen to my voice, or watch me grow up anymore. I stopped responding to his letters, though I kept them as a token of what my father taught me not to become.

I used to be angry, hesitant, sad, and uncomfortable; this list goes on. I've grown up now and as I am preparing to graduate from college, the chapter closes for many things, including my identity as someone growing up fatherless. I should not let this go on any further. These photographs are my response. The photographs themselves are not meant for you.

Think about what things you already know about me, whether we met when I was born or for the first time through these photographs. That knowledge is a privilege, a gift, I have given you and not my father. You may know what my face looks like. Should my face be visible in these photographs? You may know about my character. How do you then perceive the tone through my narrative? You may know what parts of my identity are being photographed. Other times, my story may make you feel left out. If you come across a photograph whose specific narrative seems to you to be missing something, that's where your privilege has become limited.

ABOVE: *Letters to My Father*,
platinum-palladium photograph,
6" x 9", 2017.

DANIELLE BAGLEY



As the artist picks her way along, rejecting and accepting as she goes, certain patterns of inquiry emerge.

—Bridget Riley

The studio is my sanctuary. I love feeling the texture of my work—the smoothness, the raised edges, the cracks and bumps shaped by the palette knife. I paint because of the ways colors interact when placed side by side or on top of one another; because colors can become more vibrant or subdued once they have contact with one another; because my process can create organized patterns to form a backbone for the paint, yet even the most predictable of patterns offers uncertainty once paint is applied; because I am able to explore the opportunities the paint and patterns create together; because painting is a place where predictability and risk are not separate ideas, but intertwined with one another.

ABOVE: *Green No. 1*,
oil on panel,
12" x 12", 2017.

SILAS EASTMAN



My childhood was spent playing with my older brother in the woods and fields surrounding our house. Living on a small farm fifteen miles from the nearest grocery store, gas station, or restaurant, we were responsible for coming up with activities to pass the time. As I got older, I realized how lucky I was to have hundreds of acres of woods as my backyard. Living on a road that was a dead end for almost half of the year, I was often frustrated when summer rolled around and the traffic would swell once again with tourists coming to the mountains. Much of my childhood desire to explore the woods was rooted in wanting to escape from these people. Even now, when I am hiking, hearing the distant roar of a motorcycle or the loud voices of other hikers on the trail makes me wish that I could leave the beaten path to discover my own. I want to experience the calm murmur of the mountain stream, the wind in the trees, the peepers on a cool spring evening, and the hushed silence of a forest right after a snow-storm. I want to find a place where I can be alone.

ABOVE: *Sanctuary*,
wood and steel,
25' x 6' x 6', 2017.

SARAH GRADY



My past four years at Colby have undoubtedly been the most academically and emotionally challenging years of my life thus far. Although so many things have changed and been unstable during this time, photography has remained a constant for me. Whether I am happy with my work or not, I have always found great satisfaction in the photographic process, which is integral to my work as a black-and-white film photographer. Though I have control over few things in my life, my photographic process has given me the opportunity to control one of the most important aspects of my life, art.

One of the things I've struggled with the most during my time here is being content with my life when things are good. I always find myself anticipating the passing of time or waiting for something to go wrong. Photography has helped me embrace time rather than wish it away.

The images in this series that were made during my senior fall in 2015 portray a lot of different emotions that I felt with my friends and that I watched them feel. Ultimately, though I left Colby for a year after a traumatic experience in the fall, the experiences I shared from my visits last spring and the images that followed evoke emotions that I always knew existed, but found to be indescribable. My work aims to access and depict these emotions that are otherwise too sublime for words.

This spring, I returned to Colby after a year of absence. Although my friends who graduated are gone, the images I created in our final months in Waterville together help me to regain memories from a time in my life that I will never get back.

ABOVE: *The Last Year*,
gelatin-silver photograph,
11" x 14", 2015-2017.

JACKSON HALL



To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.

—Terry Tempest Williams

Scientists say we are living in the Anthropocene. Every inch of our earth has been changed by human existence. The reality we live in is one of human dominance over the earth. In the fall of 2014, when I returned home from college I found the woods behind my house filled with bulldozers and backhoes. My childhood stomping grounds, where my friends and I built trails and forts, were being cut down to make room for a new housing development. Throughout my life I have been drawn outdoors and have become more and more aware of the dichotomy between humans and nature.

These images are inspired by the destruction I watched in my own backyard. For this series, I made my way around the state, driving slowly along the rural back roads, stopping frequently to look closely at the everyday scenes our eyes often quickly scan over. It's hard to quantify the value of the land I saw. Some of it was freshly worked with new buildings and shops while other plots had houses left to rot away. We live in a society focused on the monetary value of things. Nature, and specifically land, has become a commodity to be consumed, and then left behind when its resources have been used up.

Blinded by our consumption, we have forgotten about the spiritual value of land. We are a society increasingly disconnected from the world we depend upon—Americans on average spend about 93 percent of their lives indoors. As the spiritual connection between humans and nature has decreased, our reliance on—and consumption of—the natural world has grown. And, although many of us may not be paying attention, even small events, like vines growing up the sides of an old farmhouse or saplings beginning to occupy a neglected field, remind us of nature's resistance and resilience in negotiating the human-made landscape.

ABOVE: *Fairfield Transfer Station*,
archival pigment print,
14" x 21", 2017.

EMILY HELD



Canoeing through dusty-gray dusks, with dragonflies landing on my arms, and in companionable quiet with turtles, beavers, and loons, I became aware of my passion for nature at an early age. One image forever emblazoned in my memory is of sitting, legs dangling over the bank of my creek, watching giant salmon desperately and determinedly scraping themselves over shallow rocks in the final days of their spawning migration. The following day their powerful, lifeless bodies lined the banks of the river, having completed their journey. As a printmaker, I hold on to images such as these while carving linoleum blocks between proofs.

My choice to work on an intimate scale for this show reflects my approaches to ecological education. I prefer to draw someone in and fascinate them, providing new connections to species in their bioregion. Each of my prints represents a species currently engaged in human-wildlife conflict in Maine. Whether this conflict is due to direct overfishing and trapping or habitat loss, damming, or pollution, researching the human-wildlife conflict of each species is emotionally motivating and fascinating. My interests in biology are reflected in my careful study of the anatomy and patterns of each subject I choose. Carving each linoleum block is a meditation on these textures and forms. The physicality of carving and cutting each subject becomes the completion of an intimate experience with and connection to that species.

ABOVE: *Lynx*,
relief print,
6" x 6", 2017.

PATT LAMOM



Have you ever looked out your window on a foggy, rainy day and gazed into that hazy space to marvel at the pooling colors and blurred shapes?

Beyond the threshold of the foggy windowpane lies a territory that leaves me enamored and overwhelmed. Painting from observation allows me to enter this world. For me, observation is a process of deconstruction, and painting is a process of reconstruction—slowing my vision down to notice the seemingly separate details and putting them back together as I mix colors for my work.

I have recently become intrigued by the intricacy of human skin. It is such a strange feeling to realize that a patch on my hand is not actually uniform, but is thin layers of value, color, and texture all built up upon each other. The qualities of skin that I am most interested in find keen expression in the twisted shapes of foreshortened hands and fingers.

ABOVE: *Flesh*,
oil on panel,
3" x 3", 2017.

ESTHER MATHIEU



Sometimes I see my face in the mirror and see her as a stranger. Sometimes I see my face in the mirror and I can feel myself watching myself looking at my face in the mirror like another person in the room. The gap between my understanding of myself as I am and myself as I perceive the world sometimes gapes like a hiccup in time, off by just a fraction of a second, a slight divergence that separates real-time me from some other me, belonging to a different truth. Rather than learning it, I have become lost in the gap. I have lost the ability to see my body as hallowed ground.

This work is an exploration and a reclamation of the dark terrain of my body, against which I have waged war through self-harm and self-loathing and disordered eating. I want to hold myself in reverence. I want to hold my scars in reverence too. I want to hold my blood and relapses and pain in reverence. I want to hold my healing and joy and growth in reverence. I want to be true to the way in which I cannot exist in either the world of the tangible or the world of my mind, but must exist in a shadow space between the two. I want to be true to the way I experience the world.

My body is a landscape. My mind is a landscape and an architect of landscapes. This is an atlas, a topography of myself, of the ground I walk and occupy. I have never lived in the world other people tell me about. I will never live there. This is my face and my skin again and again, but it is a landscape too. It is an atlas of the only world I will ever live in, my body and just beyond it, the things my fingers find each day. It is an atlas of a ground I am learning again to recognize as sacred.

I want to make visible the way in which my mental illnesses transcend a list of symptoms and shape my experience of the world. The world for me is different from what it seems. I myself am often different from what I seem to be. This space in which I live is a place I am trying finally to make evident. Here are the parts of myself I have spent so long carefully hiding. Here I am.

ABOVE: *Atlas: Hallowed Ground*,
cyanotype, 4" x 5", 2017.

TEDDY SIMPSON



At first I photographed spaces to which I have little or no connection, but I found they reminded me of places that I know. In the end I straddled the two: one foot in rooms where I've been and the other in ones I haven't. I photographed towns in Maine and islands off the coast, friends' houses, my family's home. I watched the light till it filled the room as much as a person.

Then I surprised myself: in all these places we have an apparent ability to settle, to carve nests, to construct warmth. And I found myself remembering times in these lived-in spaces, or hoping to go to them later. They invited me back.

The act of looking at pictures is often nostalgic; we so ardently believe that photos have accurately captured a moment that we trust them fully. I imagine what it would be like to step back into that space, sit there, sip that. These photos celebrate the ways in which I value sense of place.

ABOVE: *Constructed Memories*,
archival pigment print,
20" x 24", 2017.

ANNE VETTER



I believe in dreaming as a tool of revolution. I believe in dreams that stretch between bodies, float suspended between us. Photography is a way of holding something in reverence. I want to hold sweetness in reverence. I want to reframe sweetness and softness as forms of power, power to be held, power to be shared.

This dream, maybe, is about the sweetness that could surge from open spaces. This dream, maybe, is of intimacy. This dream, maybe, is of veering off course from what has been set and just floating in honeyed suspension.

This project has been a process of visually dreaming: with and for and of. This project is a shift, a subtle turn of the eyes over the shoulder. This, maybe, is a look into a realm (a way of being) that both exists here and now, and has to be created. This, maybe, is the space between dream and waking, between fantasy and what exists in the physical world around us. It's real, and it's not real; it's both/and. This project is an opened space, a changed world that some already live in. This project is an open invitation for anyone to join.

ABOVE: *Nymphs*,
archival pigment print,
20" x 24", 2017

2017 Senior Exhibition Catalog

This catalog was published on the occasion of the Art Department's 2017 Senior Exhibition at the Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine.

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