

# Claire McMahon

My paintings are a partnership with my younger sister Laine. She is on the autism spectrum, and people frequently underestimate her abilities because of it. Through my work, I explore one of Laine's comforts: annotating books. I enact a parallel practice through my artmaking, both becoming closer to my sister and acknowledging the overarching humanness in our search for order. Laine boxes, underlines, and highlights words that end in "ence," "ent," "ance," "ant," names, numbers, and places. Her annotations, while calming to her, are chaotic and overwhelming to view at first. My sister finds comfort in her process of searching for patterns within the words of books. Likewise, I seek patterns in the words and colors chosen in Laine's annotations and transcribe this data through paint, becoming an archivist and interpreter of my sister's rituals enacted to find comfort.

My cross stitching and my portraits and abstractions on quilted canvas call upon quilt making's domestic and collaborative history. My stitching process recreates the repetitive and meditative movements of marking words. In my collages, I take photos of Laine, dissect them for their abstract shapes, and reorder them into harmonious structures and compositions, thereby creating a parallel artistic order. Just as I extract data from Laine's markings and translate them into my portraits, the collages I create are a reordering of information that mirrors the organization of words completed by my sister. The colors used in my paintings are the colors of the markers, pens, and pencils used by Laine in her annotations.

My work is an intimate exploration of my sister's comfort and coping mechanism that allows me to become closer to her and learn more about her. However, the viewer and I will never fully understand my sister's individual experience. Though my work attempts to access the inaccessible, ultimately, my paintings explore the human impulse to seek out or create patterns and find comfort in their presence.

# Déjà David

These series of sculptures are built around my anxieties about the vulnerabilities of my body—my race, my gender, but especially my disability and my illness. I create monuments for specific instances in my life when these anxieties were heightened—particularly an instance when I contracted flesh eating bacteria. My work is also based on my study and observances of historical events when destruction of the Black body is not only seen as a cultural custom, but necessary for the advancement of society. The unease I explore in my work is rooted in both the realities of my own body and an awareness of other marginalized bodies that must also exist in and navigate a culture that does not honor the ill and disabled. This work says, if you want evidence of the harm that racism, homophobia, misogyny, transphobia, and ableism cause; look no further than their effects on our flesh.

To further communicate this, I construct large-scale forms resembling body tissue and flesh wounds. Consuming the gallery in the same way they consumed my body; these structures are so large that they challenge the viewer to look away. They are composed of plant-dyed protein and cellulose fibers; materials with a relationship to the human body. Soft-to the touch, but wound-like, my work is both inviting and revolting. Because fiber is a material that decays over time, these materials also hold a vulnerability and temporality that is like our bodies.

Using techniques such as wet felting, shibori, crochet, and natural dyeing—I reconstruct experiences with pain and disability, as well as how they are shaped and influenced by the ways we are identified, isolated, and othered. I utilize metal materials to juxtapose how we perceive ours against the actuality of our bodies. We are less well-oiled machines and more soft animals, susceptible to the hazards of our environments. “Wellness” and “Health” are constructs, while illness and disability are an inevitability for most of us. My work is a reminder that we have a responsibility to care for ourselves and each other.

# Connor Elston

My artwork explores the self-discovery and sense of calm that I find when I am walking a trail. I believe it to be advantageous for health of body and mind to make treks into nature. We are natural beings, but the natural world is an unknown entity which can cause apprehension to our modern sensibilities. Throughout the earth's history, humans have attempted to control nature regardless of the cost to the environment. Whether on a large or small scale, we create artificial nature such as our lawns and parks, so we can have nature around us but at the level of containment and control we desire.

I create sculptural forms which lead viewers away from the structures around us to give them an opportunity to contemplate natural spaces within manmade structures while also clearing their minds from the stresses of our society. What my artwork does, is create the beginning of the journey, the start of the path to this expedition of clarity into the nature set before us. I weave found natural materials together to create a blend of the natural and artificial ideas we have of nature. These materials are often discarded after yardwork and are the byproducts of such attempts to control the natural world.

In this way, my work creates liminal spaces which make the transition from more regulated and restrained natural spaces to less manicured and manipulated areas of nature gradual and less intimidating for the viewer. My goal is to have you venture onto the path I have laid before you to contemplate nature. I hope you achieve a sense of calm or self-discovery on any scale, small or large, but you must make the first step into the unknown.

# Michael Hewlett

My work explores not only how intrusive thoughts can affect someone's mental health, but also demonstrates how people like myself and others attempt to act as if nothing is wrong during such experiences. Often, intrusive thoughts and negative emotions are covered up with common sayings in order to hide an individual's true feelings. These intrusive thoughts are represented in my work through intaglio prints with dark marks and hands grabbing at either a figure or obscuring the individual's face.

Accompanying these images are excerpts of poems by Hunter Summerall from his collection called *It's A Lonely Love*, which are typewritten on the prints. This text is used not only as a typographical element but as a way of understanding how dark and extreme these emotions can feel to the individual. These poems surround the images and using a type writer to create them reiterates the delicacy of the intaglio prints as well as the dark imagery that is used throughout my body of work. They provide an explanation for how these depressive emotions interact with both the individual and the blanket sentence that is used. Once framed, these intaglio prints are covered and partially obscured by frames which are silkscreened with a single sentence in red; broken up among the individual prints.

Red is the only color that is used outside of the black and white prints in order to provide contrast to obliterate some of the imagery and text beneath. When viewed from afar, the printed frames come together to form a sentence that can be rearranged but is ultimately used to cover these intrusive thoughts. The red text is not only different in color and size, but typographically as well. This bold, blocky text best differentiates itself from the delicate imagery and smaller typewritten text of the intaglio prints and is the first text viewers encounter from a distance. In this way, my work showcases the intense feeling and emotions of someone who sees themselves struggling with intrusive thoughts, issues of self-worth, and negative emotions. This series also examines how individuals hide from these emotions until you step in close, both literally and figuratively, to truly understand these experiences and how individuals carry on with their day to day lives.

# I. A. Laws

Swag = discipline + style + laughter

I created the concept of girls in hoodies crushing a city as a vessel for a phrase my grandmother repeated when she was passing away last fall, speaking through pain and anti-anxiety medication; FEMALE 1111111111111111. I thought it was funny. A hoodie girl is a blank of human consciousness wearing a thrift-store knight's costume (hoodie and basketball shorts) made of cardboard. This work is part narrative illustration, part personality quiz, and part Fine-Art. I use dialectics between industrial subject matter; the 'softness' of femininity; cardboard; and technology to visualize the creation of energy, or to synthesize swag!

The identity of a hoodie girl is twofold. Half is defined through her environment; an abstracted underpass with monumental pylons and open-pit mines. She walks through an open construction site alongside another hoodie girl, in whom she finds comfort and reflection. By creating this environment, I am creating proof that I exist. Creation is the only way to negate a void, an apathy, which is unavoidable when faced with how small and ineffective industry and globalization makes you feel. I use cardboard to reduce waste, to save money (so I can leave good tips), and to connect with a very tangible and common material. It also works well with my rapid thought process (I finished most of this project in the last two weeks.) Being truly seen by others and returning the favor is the purest form of energy transfer. Please take the personality quiz by scanning the QR code and have fun and do whatever you want with the paper proof that you exist!

My grandma, a stylish, stubborn, joyful woman who refused to get old, gave me some of her energy when she died and I couldn't have made this project without it. (Alongside the energy from my sisters, my parents, Andy, Ashley, Emily, Geordie, Lucy, Melanie, Monica, Shelby, Sohara, Vanessa, and Will.) All things are connected. Art cannot exist without computer science, beer cannot exist without mining drums, flowers can't exist without instagram. FEMALE 1111111111111111[E] was a test for me. I wanted to make myself and others proud. And connect with the world around me in an intuitive way. I hope you get something out of it ;-]

# Corey Lucas

This work is influenced by film, and more specifically the language created in the edit; what is referred to as montage. Viewers understand the universal logic of the edit, and comprehend a cohesive story between transitions. Although entire locations are not shown, we build them in our minds the same way we construct stories from fragments in time. Manipulation of mirrors in physical space, as opposed to artificial manipulation, proves suitable as a way of building this sort of montage in reality - a way to examine the present from multiple perspectives by way of process.

Mirrors display multiple angles simultaneously, and therefore highlight how the mind synthesizes information to build these realities. Each reflection is representative of the perspectives that make up and influence the world around us. And, furthermore, how the truth we choose is made up of these individual pieces we put together every day. Deconstructing spaces expresses the subjectivity of perspective, and the nature of individual reality. Even though these images are fragmented, there still exists the possibility for the viewer to formulate and interpret a whole.

# Jacklyn Offutt

This work, *Withering Memories*, is focused on my grandmother's experience with Alzheimer's disease. Utilizing snapshots of my grandmother throughout her life, I have both altered and blurred them through digital editing and printmaking techniques. I then embroidered clear glass beads over these prints to illustrate how her memory deteriorated and the loss of the person that she was. By editing the photos of her throughout her life, I have distorted the way these memories are preserved and try to interpret how she may have remembered them. The glass beads I have embroidered onto the photos represent the Alzheimer's disease spreading, affecting, and deforming her memories. I have individually stitched each bead in order to create an abstract and organic form, free from any recognizable patterns to show how this disease grows overtime and is a unique experience for each person.

Every person undergoes Alzheimer's in a different way, but they all continually deteriorate over time as the disease spreads. I have experienced this firsthand in my own family, as both my grandmother and great grandmother suffered from this disease. My great grandmother had already been suffering from Alzheimer's disease by the time I was born and passed away when I was little. She had also suffered from a few strokes that left her unable to talk, so all I really knew of her was what my mom had told me.

However, as a kid I watched my grandmother go from mentally healthy to slowly losing herself and eventually succumbing to Alzheimer's. The disease did not just take away my grandmother's memories, it also took away who she was. The most difficult part of this process was seeing the effect it had on my mom who was her main caregiver through it all. My greatest fear is that this disease will pass down to my mom, but I am hopeful that a cure can be discovered before that happens. The goal of this work is to honor my grandmother and spread awareness about the seriousness of dementia and to show how much this condition deteriorates people. There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, so it is very important to create dialogue about this illness.

# Melanie Osborne

While engaging in conversations of art history through portraiture canons in painting and photography, my paintings specifically target the nuance within interpretations of the self and its manifestations of the self through performance. The body upon birth is prescribed and inscribed with societal expectations as to how one must embrace and grow into their identity. These ideas extend from antiquity, as well documented within works of visual arts- typically portraiture- and literature, and are now fused with an influx of advertisement and reproductive media heightened with the age of the internet.

My work inhabits a space in visual history where the truth about femininity, masculinity, and ethnicity converge and are influenced by a markedly digital age. Other core social identifiers have already been embellished in its replication of reality; with the age of reproduction and mass media, these embellished truths are continuously circulated, exaggerated, and replicated to the extent that its origin is erased and replaced, and new understandings of a “norm” are accepted. The malleability of these ideas then extends to the malleability of the body, which chooses to look and perform in a way that one believes to look, how others tell it to look, and how history has informed the process of looking and behaving. Thus, who we are and what we believe can be reduced to nothing more than an elaborate fantastical performance and a simulated reality in which these core identifiers can be considered truths.

These paintings seek to analyze preconceived notions of my identity exaggerate, reject, or accept the existences of these ideas that they inhabit their own universes of truth and reality. The recognition and play with these abstract ideas create a space in which a new universe exists but the presentation of that universe as merely a painting reveals its existence as a mask for the reality from which these ideas were based on. What it means to be feminine, masculine, white, Asian, queer, etc. is complex on its own, but are classifiers that are often simplified and made identifiable through specific visual choices. Thanks to the age of reproducibility and capitalism—they can be replicated and sold to millions around the world.

I allow my body to act as a catalyst for conversation of personal identity. Through scrutinizing and presenting my own signifiers as individual commissioners, viewers may make assumptions about me and further blur the line of who the artist and the subject is. Though restricted to analyzing my own experiences of identity and identity-play, the viewer is invited to analyze the ways in which their signaling and performance compares or contrasts with the subject (me) they see before them. This body of work, then, in the multiple layers in which it attempts to separate itself from our reality, allows us to pretend that the ideas that it exaggerates are not within our reality and are not parts of our identity. These paintings remind us that we can engage in conscious decisions which involve the self. Each concept of personal identity is not without influence upon the false narrative—generated through imagery and highly circulated visual culture—the simulacra, in which much of contemporary reality is based.

# Julia Scott

The act of embroidery is like an umbilical dialogue with the history of women's craft and line of my inheritance. In addition to this practice, processes such as beading, sewing, and scrapbooking are ways of performing in one of the archetypes of the domestic woman that exists in the American unconscious as a mediator and recordkeeper. She functions to mend, commemorate or protect memory. In this body of work, I reflect on these roles and the impulse to romanticize the past by organizing and recreating a collection of images that I have deemed have a sacred quality and evoke a sense of nostalgia. Once images are selected, I then transform them into artifacts that express disfunction and delicacy.

These works include naturalistic paintings and drawings combined with destructive practices, such as torn canvas, obstructive collage, and cut boundaries which are executed and repaired with what are often understood to be historically feminine skills. I am visually compelled by empty, negative space that highlights and disrupts controlled "high art" elements. This comments on my misplaced impulse to be attracted to and find solace in what is fractured, as well as the nature of our memory to be selective. Negotiating with memory results in loss.

My work is based on images that are sourced from my own family archive, staged scenes of personal heirlooms, as well as depictions of found items and persons to whom I have no blood relationship to but am compelled to render. I am drawn to paint these moments because I perceive a thread of shared experience in homelife and the domestic interior.

Destroying and repairing art objects to either expose or camouflage imperfection is my way of meditating on my hybrid yet conflicting identities as a woman and an artist. To organize the disparate pieces in this work therefore gives an audience access to experience a sentimentality for what may not be theirs but, can be stitched together.

# Natalie Shain

I use the vehicle of *memento mori* (imagery that reminds us of our mortality) to address my own anxieties. Anxiety is a cognitive and emotional response that is supposed to help us navigate situations for survival. For people like me, however, it can become a persistent feeling of worry about everyday situations where it shouldn't. My relationship to the concept of death is a complex one that both fascinates and terrifies me. This body of work functions both as a visual diary of my mental health and as a way to capture the abstract feelings of anxiety and death. While the concept of *memento mori* is one meant to comfort the viewer, a reminder of my own mortality can bring me spiraling into a maelstrom of anxious thought.

I want to create a push and pull of attraction to imagery found aesthetically calming and beautiful such as flowers and bubbles in stark contrast against unsettling themes and warped self-portraits. I create the distortion of my image through the use of blocky brush strokes, negative space in the cutouts I paint on, and pictorial distortions of the anatomy. The surfaces of the paintings are abstracted woodcuts of different flower shapes, ranging from flowers that are highly poisonous, symbolic of death, or medicinally used to help anxiety. Painting horror and traditionally aesthetic imagery into the same space, I work to create a harmony between the two. By combining these two concepts, I want to provide a new perspective on mortality, one that lies uncomfortably between the calm of *memento mori* and unsettling anxieties.