

Abigale English

My objective for this body of drawings is to portray the majesty and beauty of the Virgin Mary in a style evoking early British and American photography. The dreamy atmosphere which characterizes the compositions of the early photographs I reference highlights a richly mysterious quality. As this quality is a hallmark of early photography, I think, sadly, it is one most often missing in today's technology-laden age. While I believe the style employed in my drawings reflects this, it also represents the mystery in the life of Mary.

After semesters of art history classes in addition to being a Roman Catholic myself, my love and affection for the Blessed Virgin continues to deepen over time. The bulk of my pieces imagine brief, intimate glimpses from Mary's life, both during and after her earthly existence. My arrangement of the works creates a visual triangle, where the pinnacle is ultimately the Virgin Mary standing as queen of heaven and earth. Ultimately, as I will never be able to render the full glory of Mary, I hope to at least honor her to the best of my ability. Through the aesthetic of early photography, my collection portrays both the mystery and beauty of the Virgin Mary, in her roles of mother and queen.

Amany Ismail

To Be Flowerlike

“انتى حلوة زي الوردة” Translation: “You are as sweet as a rose”.
“ليه انتى حسن صبي” Translation: “Oh, you are a tomboy”.
“لوسمحتى اقعدى واسكتى” Translation: “If you please, kindly sit down and shut up.”

These are statements that have been repeated to me in different variations as a female Palestinian Arab American. Due to the constant cyclical nature of these statements, I have grown to greatly dislike both the idea of flowers as well as being compared to a flower by others. To see yourself in a flower feels a lot like being something that can be picked and casually discarded. Cut flowers have both a banal romantic and feminine association in the cultures I inhabit, while also acting as complex symbols of value, morality, and transience.

I create objects and spaces that draw on the fallacy of the floral feminine ideal and the misconceptions within my culture that go with it. The work is a symbolic representation of how I have been made to feel like a wilted flower. Like a wilting flower, there is a lack of value that is attributed to the role of woman. My work holds symbols that are attached to the process of oppression that I have experienced and are specific to me. The work has an aesthetic value with no vibrancy, and like a dried petal, it sits in a cycle of its own decay and impermanence.

I provide agency and control through the objects in a way that makes it unavoidable to look elsewhere. By creating utilitarian works, like cabinet doors, lanterns, and chairs that are rendered nonfunctional by the tedious application of real and handmade flowers and petals, I invite viewers to contemplate an impossible task. I focus on the ornate details, specifically those that often get overlooked or require closer inspection, and often render the objects somewhat inoperable.

The work is more a contradiction than an expression of accommodation; for this reason, these objects are in their own precarious state, and not being resolved because it's outside of my personal realm of power to change the perspective of others. I aim to critique the expectations that are placed upon me and the work alike to highlight the making useless of useful entities.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, I incorporate patterns, scale, and texture to generate an atmosphere of ornate decoration, complexity, and incongruity. The objects contradict themselves through manipulation, making it up to the viewer to decide whether they choose to place value on these objects outside of their functional use. Like a flower capturing someone's eyes, my work draws the viewer in, amplifying the feelings of self-contradiction that I face, but with it a refusal to accommodate. Much like a chair so encrusted with flower petals that you cannot sit on it, I make spaces that subvert traditional floral symbolism and redefine the usefulness of flowers.

Brooklynn Collier

I am exploring my identity as a Black person through photography. I portray this through visual interpretations of phrases that have been said to myself and many other Black people. These photographs and digital texts reflect the dichotomy between my self-perception and the outer societal perception. Self-portraits and text combine as diptychs to analyze the double consciousness I have experienced as a Black person and how the world labels me through stereotypes, stigmas, and societal expectations.

My work gives other Black people something to relate to while challenging non-Black people to ruminate on a perspective they have not experienced. My self-portraits and text hold the same visual space against a white wall, paralleling the primarily white spaces these experiences are derived from. Their large scale compels viewers to confront and reflect on the impact of stereotypes and microaggressions. This consideration is prompted by phrases that may superficially seem normal or acceptable to say, but on a deeper, analytical level belittle the psyche and identity of Black individuals. Through the juxtaposition of image and text, I make social statements to confront and subvert the standard ideas of what it means to not only be Black in America today, but to also persist as a Black American.

Diamond Wade

I am captivated by the tonality and energy of abstract surface design that showcases evidence of the human hand. It prompts me to question who created this and how, as well as their background and inspiration. Most importantly, it inspires me to create. Thus, my work exemplifies this dramatic yet positive personal experience through the creation of surface designs based in mark-making, which are meant to be worn. As I construct wearables printed with my designs, I document, magnify, and celebrate the active and important energy of the human hand while infusing it into the everyday life of the wearer.

In creating these surface compositions, I layer imperfect marks of acrylic paint, dye paint, oil pastel and marker, with special attention to texture and depth. These marks, applied either directly onto fabric yardage or scanned and transferred by digital means, work in concert with a flexible palette of bright colors and large-scale composition to induce immediate excitement and joy. This mixture of traditional fiber practice and digitization salutes an intuitive arrangement of the inherent irregularity of the malleable mediums I use to create patterns. The resulting combination exposes the audience to the process and energy of the creator. Digital replication magnifies my marks on an almost infinite scale, recording and repeating each singular expression.

I believe these design characteristics and processes are important to champion because they demonstrate a relatable human expression. One that has the potential to be a source of inspiration and release from the uniform and routine. By placing these joyful designs onto wearables for everyday use, I infuse each day with their energy and vitality. By positioning this spirited evidence of the human hand on the body, I remind each individual of the creative energy endowed within. Ultimately, I intend to prompt people, as the work does for myself, to live an inspired and creative life — my work acting as a creative catalyst in any space it inhabits, for anyone on which it is worn.

Hannah Weisenberger

I am drawn to the subject of secondhand consumerism because I believe shopping sustainably is something that everyone is capable of doing for the sake of the environment. Considering the environmental impact, I utilize the medium of digital photography because of the minimal physical waste it creates. By only purchasing used items for this exhibition, I show the possibilities buying secondhand offers while not contributing to the amount of waste that buying new items creates. Following this rule, I was able to create and photograph four interior design displays making up most rooms found within a house.

My images invoke a desire for a similar space within the viewer's own home. This work is a combination of praise for those that are environmentally aware and an invitation to those that refuse to do their part. This critical invitation is seen through the installation of the "junkyard". The installation represents a small fraction of the nearly 10 million tons of furniture that ended up in landfills in America in 2017 alone. Having a display such as this within a gallery reinterprets the environmental problem at hand while also demonstrating the access of readily available secondhand items. My photographic work gives viewers a space to rethink their relationships with purchasing new material possessions. Meanwhile my installation stands as a monumental pile to weigh on their consciences.

Jill Gries

As an adoptee, family has been a big part of my life for as long as I can remember. Growing up, I vividly remember spending time painting and drawing with my mom, throwing the baseball back and forth with my dad, and overall spending a memorable childhood with my parents. I fully understand that others are not so fortunate, and I feel fortunate to be able to say that I had such a remarkable childhood. It never really dawned on me though, that my biological parents gave me up in hopes for me to live a life like the one I live today. As a small child, I was abandoned by the Guangzhou airport, found by passerby who contacted the police and taken to the Nanning Social Welfare Institution. I spent five months at this orphanage, and five more with my foster family before I was adopted and brought to America.

Through my digital drawings and installation, I attempt to portray the gratitude I have for my adopted family and current situation as well as the unknown of what my life could've been. Where would I be if I hadn't been found? Would I still be as fortunate as I am today? I want to explore this idea of the known and the unknown, of supposition and celebration. I was a product of the One-Child Policy in 1999, and knowing the horrific conditions they imposed on women and mothers at the time, as well as the slim chance I had of survival, I feel compelled to create art in order to explore my understanding of this specific time period and how it impacted people like my biological parents, and children like me.

John Clay

We experience life in the context of an interior/exterior relationship in which the mind is the former and the body, the earth, and everything else is the latter. Although there is constant exchange of information, action, and reaction between the interior and exterior, the two never truly overlap. The Internet appears to be a mirror image of the mental experience; it seems boundless and perhaps also exists outside of space. Many of us mistake the internet for a reflection of our own interior or even that of another person, like a child's first glance at their own face on the surface of a low-lying kitchen appliance. This case of mistaken identity leaves the mind in a state of confusion, open to manipulation by other internet users through advertising and misinformation. Hindered by this illusion, the interior loses its ability make informed decisions about how it engages with the exterior. This misaligned connection can lead to destructive behaviors that harm both the interior self and the exterior selves.

This body of work uses the physical properties of glass to explore these concepts allegorically. Stress in glass is invisible to the naked eye until its force becomes too great for the piece to bear—the timing of which is impossible to predict. Meanwhile, an infinity mirror ironically creates its illusion of the infinite through the act of entrapment. Furthermore, glass is a ubiquitous part of the online experience; as a barrier, it delineates a new interior/exterior relationship between human and internet; as a transducer, it converts touch into command; as a prism, it splits objective reality into subjective realities.

In the same way that glass defines our physical boundaries and means of interaction with the Internet, these works are also conduits. Some of the objects in this body of work are meant to be encountered by more than one person at a time, while others are meant for a more singular experience. Regardless of how they are encountered, each piece is a vessel containing a specific interaction one might have online.

Jonathan Loyd

I make sacred objects that exist without a contextualizing ceremony and history and as a result, are non-operative and oblique in meaning and purpose; this parallels the way that I and many others struggle with a fragmented sense of identity resulting from cultural disconnection. Being of Korean ancestry but having no significant relationship to the culture of Korea has produced a feeling of estrangement that is expressed in these artifacts: they are the imaginary musings of a disembodied hand attempting to complete its body.

Guiding my work is the idea of 'suitability', meaning I attempt to make work that is fitting for a spiritual host, most often this involves the assemblage of wood, bronze, fiber and other things common to traditional Korean material culture. The idea of objects housing spirits is a belief important in Korean indigenous spiritual practices, and the objects that are spiritually endowed play an active role in both ceremony and everyday life. I apply this belief as an outsider to construct a new cultural context for myself, in hopes that it might help me reconnect with something I feel I've lost.