

Anatea Cahill

Many times in my life, I have been told that my body's appearance defines my worth more than my education or passions. I have grown up as someone society would define as fat and have continued to take in media that tells me how to no longer be perceived that way. Society has always had idealized beauty standards, often impossible or unrealistic, which cannot be easily achieved without access to money or genetic predispositions. The media and various industries have and continue to give women ways to meet these standards by altering their physical appearance, body shape, weight, makeup applications, and diet. In this work, I explore the specific ways the media has told women to improve their bodies. Whether appropriating found, outmoded magazine advertisements from the past or examining the role of social media in the propagation of contemporary idealized beauty standards, I confront them with satirical images and self-portraiture in response to society's expectations.

I use diptychs to allude to the experience of flipping through magazines and seeing the images "before and after" of women fulfilling the expectations of society we still experience today. I take colors, and hues in the advertisements and use those in my images to portray my response and confrontation. I also use triptychs to allude to social media, more specifically, Instagram. Assuming the role of both model and photographer allows me to create a personal dialogue with these idealized standards which I have experienced firsthand. I use this work to directly resist and actively oppose societal expectations and become more in tune with my confidence and self-esteem, which society assumes I do not have.

While my photographs explore my relationship with my body and the camera lens, my mirror installation asks viewers to engage in a similar experience. By interacting with this piece, the viewer also becomes seen, which allows the audience to confront their ideas of themselves, and to leave their own body-based discrimination and biases at the door. The mirror relates to the feeling of viewing yourself through the eyes of society, feeling guilt and shame, while using the camera allows me to confront my feelings of myself and allow other fat women to become confident and proud to be who they are. My work ultimately empowers viewers to change their assumptions of fat women from sadness and shame to admiration and acceptance.

Lou Conley

The foundation of my art has always been within the realm of color and nature. When creating, I always reflect on the energy of life or color theory principles that attempt to create harmonious combinations representative of energy and emotion. Color is the most powerful and essential tool of visual communication as it reflects and affects the many ranges of emotions and behaviors of humans and animals. The characteristics of color increase with changes in seasons, and with the blooming or decline of natural environmental stimuli.

Using various techniques and processes, my work in glass explores how color impacts the emotion of those environmental changes, and ultimately, the essence of life. Even without artificial stimulation of color, nature can provide a color spectrum that reflects the emotions, energy, and psychological status of an observer. Seasonal presentations of colors can often demonstrate emotions that parallel that essence of life. As seasons change, one can see a range of natural colors combined with manipulated shades such as grays and silvers. Fall often presents warm, rich colors as seen with the leaves changing. The autumn shades from cinnamon red to chocolate brown can elicit emotions that flow up and down. For instance, red can evoke feelings of passion and desire. Red has a variety of contradictory meanings including joy, energy, prosperity, and danger.

I've found glass as the one channel through which I can incorporate many combinations of media and styles to explore nature and color in an artificial environment. I work with processes and techniques to evoke a variety of emotions that are personal interpretations that vary with each observer.

Bethany Figueroa

Questioning the hypocrisies of institutional religious values in Catholicism is the impetus of my work. Each piece addresses an underlying issue that draws both an emotional and physical connection to the Catholic Church. From personal investigations of faith to global controversies within the Church.

Growing up I was often plagued with, what I thought were, heretic and secular assumptions. I couldn't accept the indoctrinated scripture or teachings willfully. Instead, I asked questions, I read books, and I opened my mind to the many possibilities of other religions and sciences.

I continued that questioning through my artistic practice and this body of work. Each piece investigates a particular issue that I have with the Church. Some explore the fragility of my thoughts and understanding of faith, while others speak to the injustices and abuses of the institution itself, and the robust perceptions of anguish I feel in response to those violations.

As an artist, my work vocalizes these issues while still using metaphorical imagery and symbolism that is easily recognizable as divine in nature. My sculptures and installations unapologetically question faith and beliefs as well as inconsistencies and corruption in both the Bible and in headlines. Ultimately, I am creating a space and conversation for viewers to question for themselves their understandings of faith and religious institutions.

Sam Lawson

This body of work centers around memories and attempts to preserve both the past and the present. Using scale, mark making, and monotypes processes, I attempt to recreate memories I had of growing up to keep them from fading as time progresses. Additionally, I aggrandize my experiences of the present in an effort to mentally preserve my life in the current moment. My memories are portrayed as 2D representations through reductive monotypes while additive monotypes are the product of my processing personal current events. From visceral childhood memories of seemingly mundane events to my current episodic junctures within my family, monotypes allow me to explore these lived events while also monumentalizing them.

I rely heavily on sharp angles and high black and white contrast inspired by early 20th century German expressionist film makers such as Robert Weine and Fritz Lang for my large prints. By using mostly non-realistic, geometrically absurd images, I enhance the actual remembered event. Through both the physical process of mark-making and visualizing remembered imagery, I defer the loss of my memories. These works are reductive prints, created by removing ink to create negative space. Through this process, I correlate a relationship between my art, the passing of time, and the way in which details of my memories fade as I get older. By introducing small amounts of color back into my black and white prints, I draw attention to particulars in design the same way a single person, place or thing might illuminate a memory.

Many of my additive works employ concepts portrayed in magical realism, where fantastical events are accepted as part of reality within the narrative structure. In a similar way, I combine nonobjective, saturated color application with more recognizable abstracted forms. This method of creating helps me to deal with my own reality with an acceptance rather than hostility or fear. Abstract mark making along with intentional applications of profuse color create visual records of my current milestones. Working on a large scale not only allows me to memorialize these memories physically, but to also preserve them mentally.

Andrea Mackin

My foundational concepts of Womanhood, Fertility, and Reproduction were shaken by sexual assault, illness, a terminated pregnancy, and emotional unavailability plagued me. Feeling degenerate and diseased, I began to use that energy to create ceramic and sculptural work that reflected my experience and role in society as a woman. Having the ability to work through my own pitfalls, and form stances on women's bodily autonomy (i.e., reproductive and sexual health, fertility, and women's accessibility to healthcare) I want to use art as a means of communication and healing.

My work ultimately asks the question, "What Does It Mean to Be a Woman?"

Is it the length of her hair, the fullness of her breast, the depth of her cervix? Was it the vagina itself, the ability to reproduce, the hypersexual phenomena of the nipple, the potential of the fruit-bearing seed, the delicacy of her touch? Do her experiences comprise her worth and virtue; her things to offer to the world? My answer to that question was shaped by my grandmother, the master craftsman, the independent provider, the matriarch; the woman who left the farm to move to the city in hopes of raising her youngest daughter and providing a life as a widowed wife and mother to six kids. The woman who raised a huge garden well into her seventies - and the only thing to handicap her existence was the onset of dementia and a broken hip. I pay homage to her creative hands by incorporating blackberry casts, and real blackberries into most of my pieces.

Much of my fixation with anatomy, bones, and decay regard the lifecycle of the human body, focusing on how we embody and become our trauma. I have been expanding my experience with mold-making, life-casting in silicone, alginate, plaster, and slip. As if taking a photo of organic material at a particular moment in time, forever, life-casting is a way to embody that precision/likeness. My pieces are narratives in and of themselves as they are also replicas. I am literally putting myself into my work and in this way can process those aspects of my life that I otherwise struggled to visualize or accept physically. Creating is a processing function for me on both a physical and spiritual level, through my investigation of material, I explore deeper conceptualizations with absorption - be it actualized or inherited trauma.

Michael “Mikey” McDonald

My digital illustrations are a direct result of how social media inspires my creative endeavors. Recently, my social media feed has exposed me to several natural disasters that correlate with the results of global warming. Due to the overexposure of available information online, it felt necessary to address these issues as the impact of global warming affects everyone.

When it comes to digital art I've always been interested in the lack of limitations that it has. I've always been fascinated by the work of an artist who chose to teach themselves to draw using these computer programs (i.e. adobe apps.) rather than following the traditional methods. Since there was no other medium like it, it encouraged me to teach myself how to transfer my drawing and printmaking knowledge into a digital canvas.

This body of work represents the duality between life's extremities through the use of natural disasters with a tendency for escapism through doodling characters and designs. Exposing yourself to the constant news and imagery of horrific events on social media can easily feel overwhelming. So, combatting these negative incidents through illustration became an outlet for digesting negative topics without them having a negative impact on my sanity.

John Ricketts

I reproduce influential images of suffering and harm that humans have inflicted on each other dating from the Civil War to the present day. I take defocused photographs of the original image and composite them together to create works that investigate the clarity and confusion we feel when we view these images. I do this because pictures, still or moving, entice us to believe we understand what we are seeing. Using a digital camera and photo editing software I combine the representational with the non-representational to show how we ask more questions than we realize when we see brutality, war, and suffering. “Why did that happen? What were they thinking?” This shared confusion is why I create images which are intentionally obfuscated.

Exploring similar subject matter, my short film contains footage of protests from around the world at different moments in history. The footage is defocused and the audio from the protests is manipulated to sound like the singing of a choir. I made this short film because protests are the moment people call for change and are met with human opposition to the change they are calling for. I have observed most of our conflicts derive from various titles and labels we place upon ourselves and others. We do not see each other as equals; we see each other as colors, religions, political affiliations, and nationalities. The use of defocusing in this body of work obscures race, religion, nationality, or any ideology which separates us, asking viewers to question their own biases and why we have them.