

2019 // 2020

Sophia Chai Kaamil A. Haider



Sarah Abdel-Jeill Zachary Betts

Jerome Fellowship Exhibition

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Sarah Abdel-Jeil

Zachary Betts

JEROME

Kaamil A. Haider

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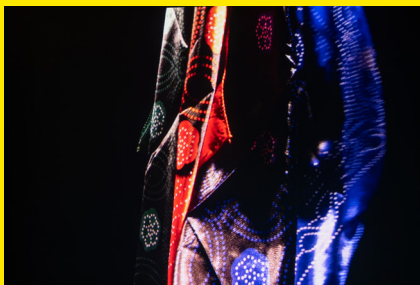
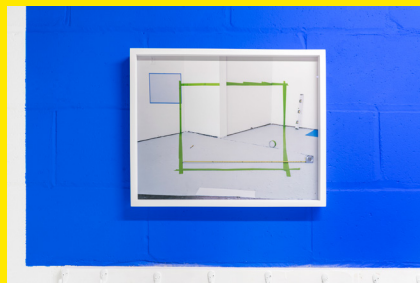
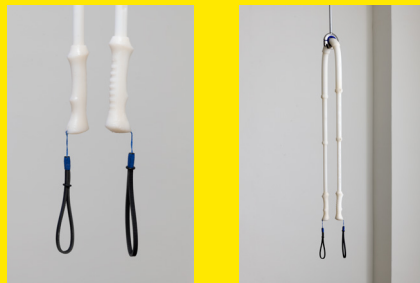
Essays by Christina Chang

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MCAD

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Sarah

Abdel-Jelil



Detroit Lakes, Oregon, 2019, video, dance time-lapse,
Credits: created in collaboration with Gisell Calderón at Caldera Arts Center

Sarah



Batikh, 2018, video, dance time-lapse. Cinematographer: Gisell Calderón, Director: Sarah Abdel-Jelil. Credit: "Batikh is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a 2017 Artist Initiative grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund." (top)
La Napouie, 2019, video, dance time-lapse (bottom)

Abdel-Jelil

Have you watched a sunset recently? Sat still and focused on the whole duration of the spectacle? It takes about thirty minutes from the moment when the horizon first cuts across the bottom edge of the diffuse disk of light to when the last rays disappear. It is one of two times during the day (the other being sunrise) when the natural rhythm dictated by the rotation of the earth on its axis is perceptible to us in a tangible way. If you are not accustomed to being still and present for an extended period of time, then the speed at which the sun disappears seems agonizingly slow. Combining dance with time-lapse photography, Sarah Abdel-Jelil's artistic practice explores the disjunction inherent in this disconnect between the pace of a day and the speed at which we move through it.

Abdel-Jelil's choreography is rooted in a deep, embodied awareness of a particular setting and draws on her sense impressions of the space—what she describes as “listening with the body.” These gestural “impulses” are broken down into incremental movements for the purposes of time-lapse photography. Typically, a dancer completes a move in the space of a beat of music, often a small fraction of a second. Performing Abdel-Jelil's choreography is an altogether different feat of endurance. For example, in *Kerkethen* (2015), her first foray into combining dance with the time-lapse technique, a “beat” lasted several minutes, with a simple gesture such as raising and lowering an arm taking course over an hour. The resulting images, taken at much longer intervals than the standard twenty-four frames per second for film, compress time when played back at the normal rate. The dancers' glacial movements regain a semblance of “proper” speed at the same time that subtle natural phenomena, like the slow creep of clouds across the sky, take on the sweep of human drama.

Sarah

Although Abdel-Jelil is a moving image and movement artist, it is more accurate to say that her work is concerned with stillness. The conflation of timescales that she achieves through the dilation of action for time-lapse photography heightens our awareness of the gaps between each frame. She inadvertently alludes to the sustained focus and physical stamina required for time-lapse dance shoots in a recent work created during her 2019 residency at La Napoule Art Foundation in France: she melts from her chair onto the floor in an expression of what one might interpret as “dying of boredom,” particularly relatable as we move into a third season of restricted movement and socialization in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, the end result, where the natural environment changes in time with human gestures, is enthralling.

Abdel-Jelil had a peripatetic childhood because of her parents’ work for international organizations. A so-called third-culture kid (as distinct from the first culture of her parents’ homeland and the second culture of her various childhood homes) accustomed to continual displacement, she had lived in eight countries on four continents by the time she went to college. Given the constant moving—highly destabilizing for a child even without the added pressures of having to learn a new language and culture—it is not surprising that Abdel-Jelil’s creative practice would center stillness over movement. Her characterization of what she terms “dance time-lapse” is particularly telling: “I wanted people to be the anchor and the world to move around them.” One could argue that her films also function as anchors, holding us fast to a position for the length of time it takes to watch them.

Because time-lapse photography makes us conscious of the passage of time, the rituals and routines that structure each day and ground us in our body are particularly apparent in Abdel-Jelil’s films. A scarf drapes itself up and down in a stop-motion animation of dressing and disrobing. Performers hunch their shoulders and roll down their spine until they are fully bent at the waist in a pantomime of shutting down. Bodies slowly spinning in circles with arms extended reference the hands of a clock. In one memorable sequence, Abdel-Jelil’s seated figure travels around a circular stone form reminiscent of a sundial.

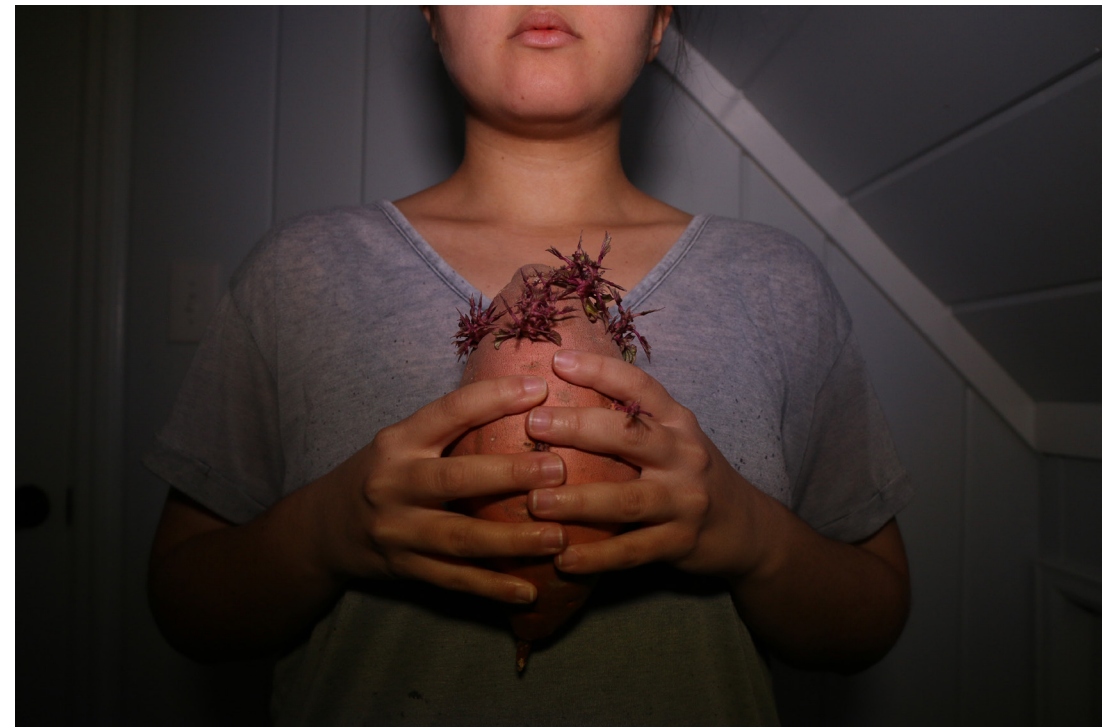
Accustomed to working closely with dancers to develop and film her dance time-lapse choreography, Abdel-Jelil, like all of the MCAD–Jerome fellows, has had to adapt her practice to the limitations imposed by the coronavirus, though not necessarily in unproductive ways. She is experimenting with outsourcing the production of images for her dance time-lapse films, asking her subjects to photograph themselves at the same time each day for three months. A houseplant will register the passage of time, harking back to her childhood fascination with time-lapse photography of the growth and decay of plants that first piqued her curiosity about the subjective nature of how time is experienced.

Abdel-Jelil’s films, by inviting us to pay equal attention to the spaces between those significant milestones we use to measure progress, ask us to be patient and present through stretches of time when we don’t seem to be going anywhere—a welcome message during this period of disruption and stalled plans. We impose order on any sequence of impressions, which lends an air of inevitability and continuity to the arc. To a certain extent, life is a series of events moving fast enough to read as choreography.

Abdel-Jelil



Room, 2019, video, dance time-lapse (top)
Sweet Potato, 2020, video, dance time-lapse (bottom)



Sarah

Abdel-Jelil



La Napoule, 2019, video, dance time-lapse

Zachary



slipping touch (detail), 2020, cast silicone, stainless steel, leather, twine, 87 x 1.5 x 3.5 in. Photo: Rik Sferra

Betts



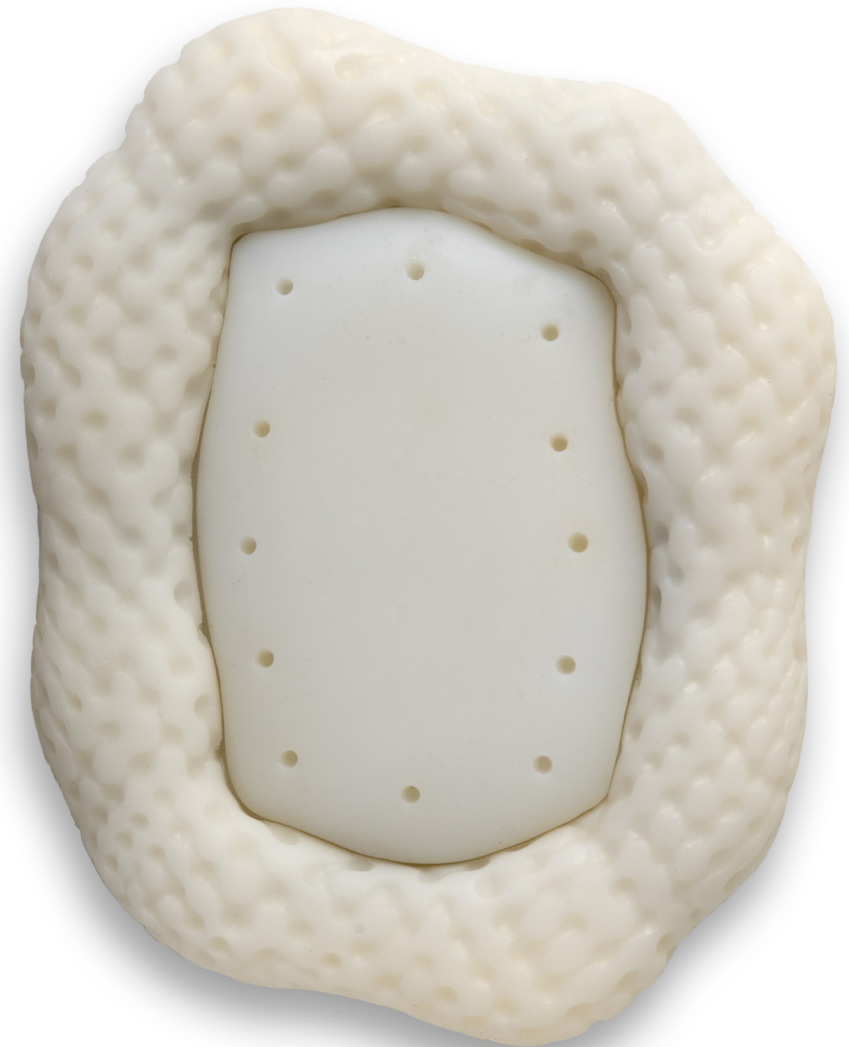
slipping touch (detail), 2020, cast silicone, stainless steel, leather, twine, 87 x 1.5 x 3.5 in. Photo: Rik Sferra

Zachary

One measure of a society is to look at how its most vulnerable and disenfranchised members are treated. Zachary Betts goes a step further to consider how we treat the least valued and most overlooked objects in our society and what that says about our humanity. Consumer capitalism has conditioned us to jump at any opportunity to replace something we already have with something new (synonymous with better), continually supplying a mass of castoffs that are still serviceable but no longer desirable. Some of the items Betts has rescued from this functional limbo of post-use oblivion include an aluminum bat, a white-noise machine, and the metal frame of a folding lawn chair.

Betts is particularly drawn to things that are all but invisible in their absolute and abject practicality. Hannah Arendt wrote, “The things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that—in contradistinction to the Heraclitean saying that the same man can never enter the same stream—men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table.” Relating to the same objects over and over again, Arendt argues, serves to anchor one’s core sense of self even as one is continually changing. Betts likewise finds comfort in those things he can rely on day in and day out—precisely those things that fade into the background because they are so familiar.

Betts



run out, 2020, cast silicone, 13 x 10.5 x 2 in. Photo: Rik Sferra



over and over and over, 2020, cast silicone, 9.75 x 8 x 2.25 in. Photo: Rik Sferra

The labor-intensive means by which Betts transmutes found objects into art proceeds through a series of value inversions. Relying heavily on mold-making, a process typically used to create multiple copies, he counters the mass-produced and commercial nature of the original with what he describes as a “monstrous effort” of handwork and craftsmanship that results in a single object. By recasting commonplace commodities as sculpture, severed from their original utility, he restores a measure of their autonomy as aesthetic forms. At the same time, they become more than form. We are used to encountering the objects Betts uses to cast his forms in the world of things, in relation to other things—more often than not, too many of them. (Seeing his father, a mechanical engineer, whose lab was in the basement, create a new machine to solve a single problem made him realize how cavalier we are as a society about bringing new things into the world.) When removed from that cluttered context and displayed as singular objects in the proverbial white cube of an exhibition space, the objects lose the generic anonymity of their origin and attain something akin to interiority. Seeing an installation view of his sculpture at the White Page gallery in Minneapolis, I was reminded of the lone figures in Edward Hopper’s paintings of modern isolation, who appear forlorn and lost in thought. It is as though objects, like us, when free from the distraction of working and of crowds, are burdened with introspection. Given that Betts invariably uses objects that have fallen out of favor or use, one imagines them questioning their purpose.

When I met Betts in his live-work studio space in Lowertown, St. Paul, we were standing on the other side of the mass uprising against racial injustice sparked by the killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police that spread from the Twin Cities across the United States and around the world. The mood was heavy, and his mind had been on support systems—or the lack thereof. He had already been

working on a series of objects based on the tread of his running shoe, undulating waves of translucent rubber the color of no-color, what he terms his “ghost palette.” The sole of an athletic sneaker does far more than the stylings of the shoe’s upper—absorbing the shock of every step, supporting our posture, keeping our footing sure and in firm contact with the ground. Yet all of our attention and desire is given over to what is little more than a glorified strap keeping the sole attached to the foot.

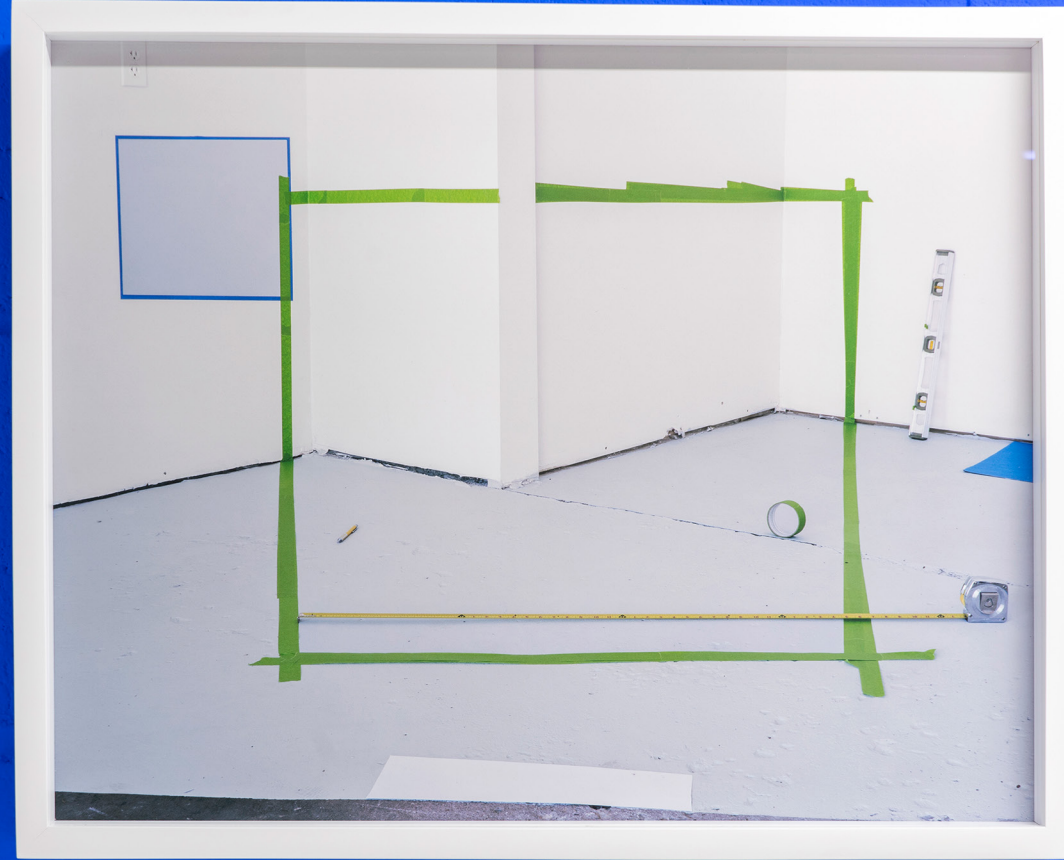
With the same sensitivity to the overlooked that finds formal beauty in the part of the shoe we invariably ignore, Betts had been noticing the hooplike structures held by infrastructural buttresses beneath highway overpasses. He was working on translating these forms into a sculpture, perhaps incorporating touch if COVID precautions didn’t preclude it. Again, in a process of subverting our expectations and perhaps a comment on the flimsiness of social safety nets revealed by the economic and medical fallout caused by the coronavirus, these forms are cast in silicone. While they look the part of structural support systems, they buckle under their own weight, sagging in the middle.

The surrealists centered in Paris in the 1920s and ’30s were interested in outmoded objects because they seemed haunted, embodying the alienation of modern life. Betts’s interest in the obsolescent is not so much as a cipher for the unconscious, which the surrealists believed held the key to social revolution, but rather its appeal to conscience. What if we had a conscience about our behavior toward all things, not just objects of cultural or personal value? It would be nothing short of the type of revolution that the surrealists imagined, Betts implies. Becoming more conscious of our relationship to things and bringing our moral principles to bear on how we treat them could lead to a change in how we treat one another, getting us closer to a society that takes care of and supports those who can’t fend for themselves, no matter the reason.

Zachary

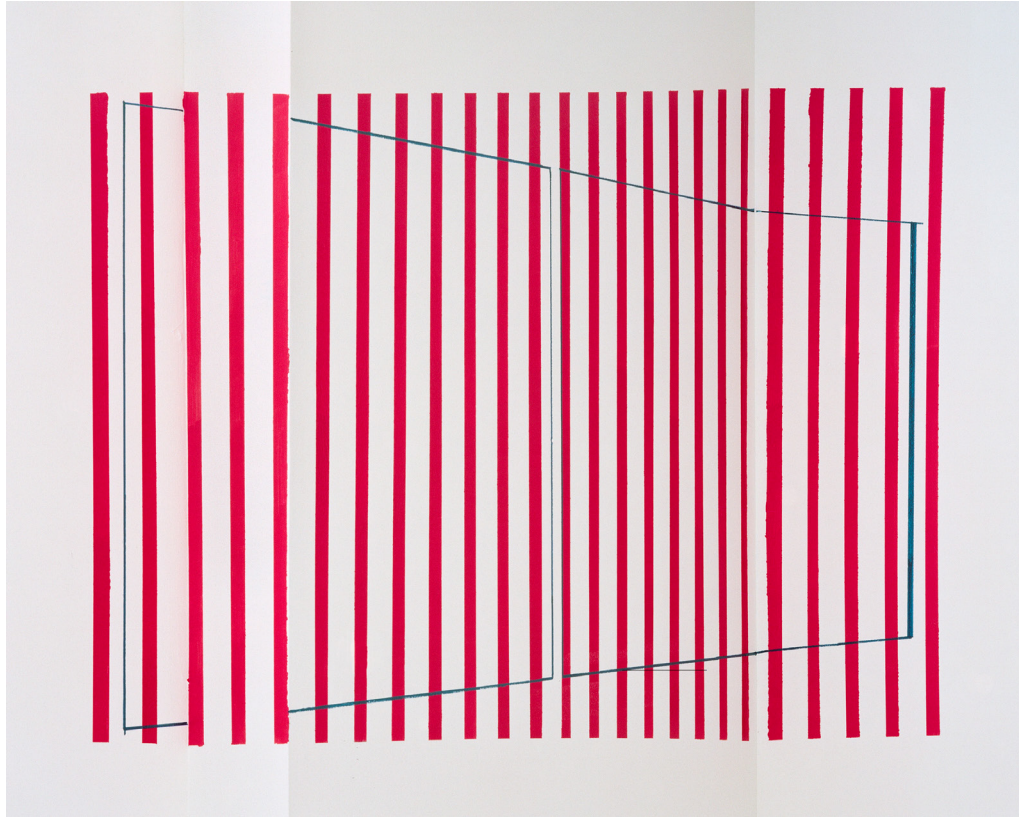
Betts





Untitled (green tape) (installation view), 2019–2020, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper mounted on Dibond and framed, Chroma key blue paint, 16 x 20 in., Interpolation, Hair + Nails Gallery. Photo: Meagan Marsh

Sophia



Shaft Composition #6, 2019–2020, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper mounted on Dibond, 40 x 50 in. (top). Shaft Composition #5 & #6 (installation view), 2019–2020, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper mounted on Dibond, wall paint, 40 x 50 in. (each), Sight Lines, Rochester Art Center. Photo: Aaron Van Dyke (bottom)

Chai

One late spring afternoon, Sophia Chai invited me into the camera obscura set up in an unused room at the Rochester Art Center as part of her exhibition. To create the “dark chamber,” as it is translated from the Latin, the room’s windows were papered over except for a small pinhole fitted with a lens through which the streetscape outside the Center was projected in, the image upside down, left and right reversed. We sat in silence as our pupils adjusted to the darkness and the projection came into sharper relief.

The downtown scene was unnaturally quiet. Though Governor Tim Walz’s stay-at-home order to combat the spread of the coronavirus had expired, many nonessential businesses remained closed, and people were choosing to stay close to home. Chai pointed to a car on the wall to our left. “It’s moving in a straight line outside, but see how the path it’s traveling bends at the corner where the two walls meet.” Indeed, the whole scene was bent at an angle on the left and right walls. The camera obscura, an antecedent to film cameras, was used by artists at the height of the Renaissance to study and perfect one-point linear perspective. The precisely rendered recession into space of such paintings gave the illusion of peering through a window into a parallel world arranged according to the same spatial rules as the one we stood in. That illusion depended, however, on fixing the viewer’s position and keeping a tight frame around the image.

Sophia

By bringing viewers into the camera obscura, Chai reveals the extent to which these contrivances have conditioned our expectations of pictures. The proliferation of screens in our lived environment has further inured us to the tenuous fiction of cohesion and order achieved with fixed perspective and selective framing: it only works if we stand still and pretend that everything outside our frame of view doesn't exist. This applies to more than pictures, of course. These are precisely the conditions that enable injustices to persist unchallenged. Herein lies the politics of Chai's work.

A series of translations between several mediums goes into the process of making Chai's current body of work, and as such it confounds easy categorization. She begins with drawings in a notebook. Since April 2019, her canvas has been a corner of the small studio she maintains in a detached garage in Rochester. The sloped roof forms an alcove with a lower ceiling where the front end of a car would fit. The zigzag of shorter wall sections and structural supports—the eponymous shafts of the *Shaft Compositions*—creates a complex interplay of angles and planes, shadow and light.

The first act of translation is to take a drawing made on a flat sheet of paper and make the shapes “read” the same way through the lens of Chai's 4x5 camera even as they bend at corners and range through space. She moves back and forth between the camera's position and the painting on the wall in order to compose the distorted image that will be photographed into a semblance of two-dimensional cohesion (rather than using mathematical formulations to derive the image, for example). The large-format film negative is able to capture the full range of subtle tonal variations in the shapes as they bend in space.

Chai's palette hews closely to the primary colors of the print and digital landscapes: CYMK (cyan, yellow, magenta, black) and RGB (red, green, blue),

respectively. We already associate these colors, much like white, with flat and uniform tone and so are more apt to notice how contingent they are to their environment. The mark of her hand is also evident in the deliberate “messiness” of brushstrokes and lines. When she installs her photographs for exhibition—another process of translation—on walls painted a corresponding color, she draws our attention to the same perceptual phenomena at work in the gallery as in the studio compositions documented in her photographs.

Some of Robert Rauschenberg's earliest photographic experiments using blueprint paper to create life-size photograms of his body play into Chai's origin story as an artist. He said of his way of working, “I've always felt as though, whatever I've used and whatever I've done, the method was always closer to a collaboration with materials than any kind of conscious manipulation and control.” There is a similar sensibility to Chai's process. Her aim is not trompe l'oeil, “tricking the eye” into thinking that the composition painted into a corner in real space is a two-dimensional painting on a flat wall. Light refracting off a mark's actual position in space relative to the others refuses to show it is anywhere but where it is, defiantly three-dimensional to the flattening tendencies of the photograph. The poetics of her practice lie precisely in these small acts of resistance to being flattened, to being subsumed.

I cannot help but relate the micro-adjustments necessary to square Chai's wall compositions to the camera's film plane to our own process of positioning ourselves in the world. We are constantly negotiating how much to bend for self-preservation, and what to do when the image we had in our minds of how things were supposed to be simply won't match up with the possibilities of the present. The path between two points is not always a straight line.

Chai

Shaft Composition #7 (installation view), 2019–2020, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper mounted on Dibond, wall paint, 40 x 50 in., *Sight Lines*, Rochester Art Center. Photo: Aaron Van Dyke



Sophia



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Chai



Untitled (blue T-square) (installation view), 2019-2020, archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper mounted on Dibond, Chroma key blue paint, 16 x 20 and 40 x 50 in., Interpolation, Hair + Nails Gallery. Photo: Meagan Marsh

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Sweet & Sour: The Perpetual Transpose, 2020, video installation. Photo: Rik Sferra

Kaamil A.

I met Kaamil A. Haider at Soomaal House of Art, the Somali artist collective in Minneapolis that he cofounded with fellow artists Mohamud Mumin and Khadijah Muse, which doubles as his studio. He showed me around the space and walked me through the exhibition that had been on view before the state’s response to the coronavirus pandemic forced everything to shut down mid-March. He had been talking about the work of other Somali artists for nearly half an hour before we turned to talk of his own. Thus, he made it clear that Soomaal House, not only the graphic design work he does for the collective but the wider field of its activities, was as much a part of his multidisciplinary community-based practice as the artworks we talked about that day.

Founded in response to a lack of Somali-run and Somali-centered art spaces, Soomaal House of Art presents programming for the Somali diaspora in the Twin Cities, over 50,000-strong, and around the world. “It seemed like we were always being put in certain boxes,” cofounder Mumin has said—boxes of others’ making. Soomaal House is less interested in having Somali art represented in other institutions’ programs than it is in taking control of the narrative—in short, self-determination. The hope is to support both emerging and established Somali talent and to model creative practice as a possibility to Somali youth. Haider’s visual art practice, which grew out of his research into an indigenous Somali design aesthetic for Soomaal House’s graphic identity, is a testament to the importance of modeling possibilities.

Memory plays a central role in the original cultural forms of Somalia, which privilege the communal experience of the oral tradition for transmission of history and knowledge. By extension, memory is what connects Haider’s work to this cultural heritage. His latest work, *Sweet & Sour: The Perpetual Transpose*, takes inspiration from the popular Somali poem “Macaan iyo Qadhaadh (Sweet and Bitter)” by Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye ‘Qaasim.’ The poem embodies the stylistic hallmarks of Somali poetry, which are oriented to performance: alliteration, complex rhythmic patterns, the use of repetition, and richly resonant imagery. It begins:

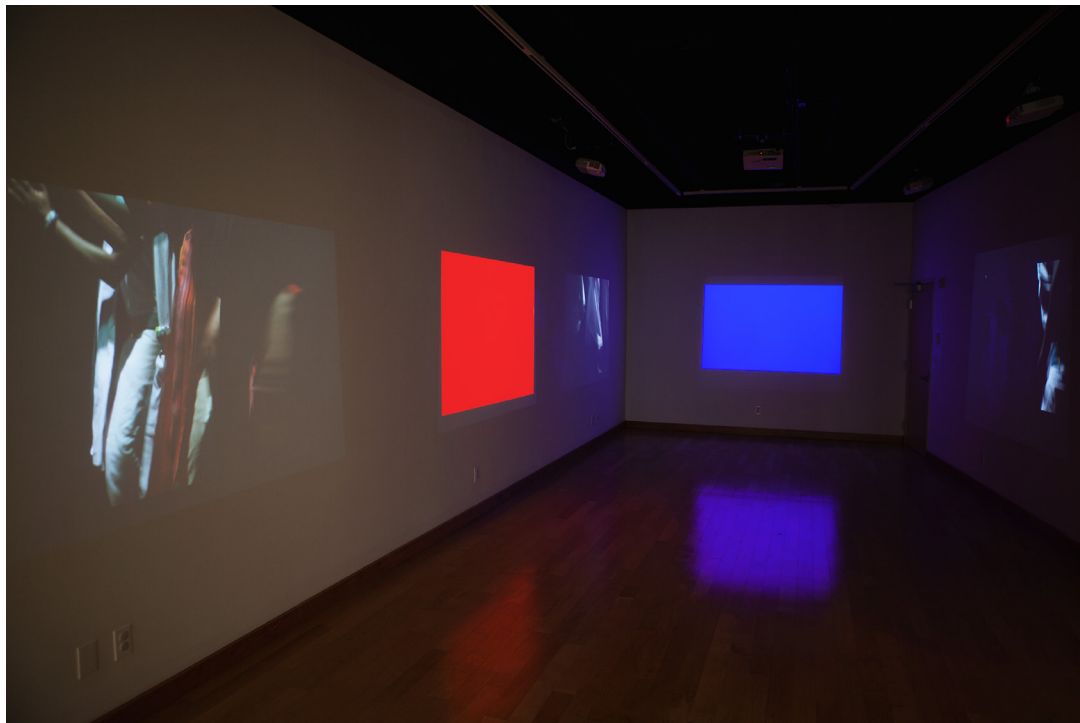
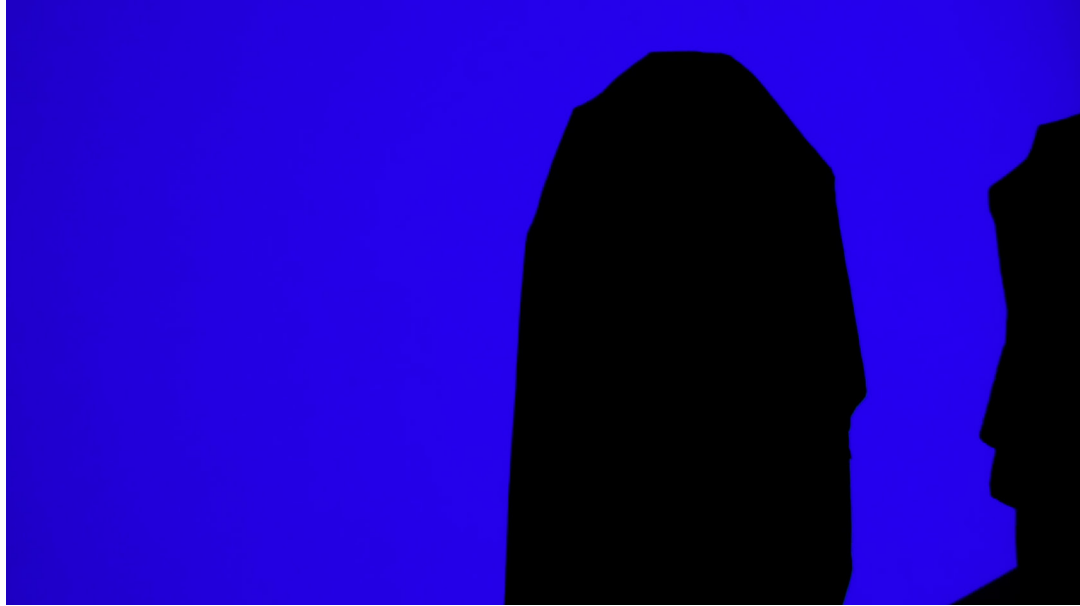
Dacartuba mar bay malab dhashaa, aad muudsataa dhabaqe
(The aloe sometimes produces honey which you suck as sweet)
Waxaan ahay macaan iyo qadhaadh, meel ku wada yaalle
(I am sweet and bitter together in one place)
Midigtayda iyo bidixdaydu waa, laba mataanoode
(My right and left hand sides are two twins)
Mid waa martida soora iyo, maato daadibise
(One entertaining guests and looking after dependents)
Mid waa mindiyo xiirayyo, mur iyo deebaaqe
(And one being sharp knives, myrrh and aloe)
Masalooyin talantaalliyaan, maandhow leeyahaye
(Brother, I have alternating characteristics)
Nin majiro keliyuun qabsaday, hay malaynina ee
(Do not think of me as a man following one path only)

Haider



Sweet & Sour: The Perpetual Transpose, 2020, video installation (top)
 Talintaalis (Duet), 2019, installation made of fabrics and wood, 3 x 2 ft. (each) (bottom)

Kaamil A.



Sweet & Sour: The Perpetual Transpose, 2020, video installation (top). *Soo Bood, Bood / Come Jump, Jump*, 2019, five-channel video installation, *Soo Bood, Bood, Gage Gallery*, Augsburg University, as part of Soomaal Fellowship, an initiative by Soomaal House of Art in partnership with Augsburg University Art Galleries. Photo: Mohamud Mumin (bottom)

Haider

Haider was particularly drawn to the poem's vivid representation of the dualities of human nature, which appeals to all of the senses, powerful triggers of memory. Opening with more secular attributes, the poem moves on to characterizations of religious piety and sin, closing with a direct address to listeners of the poem to follow whichever path they would choose.

Haider represents the dualities that structure human nature and experience through the juxtaposition of the traditions and material culture of Somalia with abstract fields of color, a formal element introduced in his 2019 work *Talantaalis*. Comprised of four panels, the title tellingly translates to “duet.” Borrowing garments from his siblings, Haider makes no attempt to hide the awkwardness of their fit, meant for the human figure, on flat canvases covered in fabric in his signature colors of red, green, blue, and black, drawn from traditional Somali textiles and the color of the national flag. They read as four different attempts at getting the garments on—twice from below, as one would step into a dress and pull it up over the body, and twice over the head. Haider deliberately refuses to cede the autonomy and integrity of the garments, leaving their armholes, necklines, and hems intact. He thereby demonstrates

the incompatibility of the rich and complex lives of the garments' wearers, the memory of which is invoked by the smell of incense lingering on the clothes, with one-dimensional abstractions.

In *Soo Bood, Bood / Come Jump, Jump*, 2019, a five-channel video installation, projections of exuberant and unselfconscious Somalis performing traditional dance and music alternate with the same fields of color. Here the interruptions to the video feed are analogous to breaks in memory, much like how our recollections exist as a series of vignettes in the mind's eye rather than as a continuous, seamless narrative. These gaps are also opportunities for collective memory to join in the work of communal remembering. Haider gives the example of telling a story from his childhood only to have his siblings interject, saying “that is not how it went,” layering in their own memories of the event with Haider's own. Indeed, the gaps or silences in the projection were seized upon by community members to serve as backdrops for group photos, flanked by images documenting their cultural heritage and becoming a part of it. Haider's community-based practice provides a space for anyone to tell her story. The silence fills so much faster when everyone is allowed to participate.

Kaamil A.



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Haider

Soo Bood, Bood / Come Jump, Jump, 2019, five-channel video installation

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Artist



Sarah Abdel-Jelil

Sarah Abdel-Jelil is a Mauritanian American filmmaker, dancer, and choreographer. As a dancer/movement artist, she centers the body as a primary way of knowing and experiencing the world. Inspired by her nomadic upbringing in eight different countries in a multicultural, interfaith household, Abdel-Jelil explores the relational nature of home, movement, and liminal spaces. She is drawn to the ephemerality of dance and performance art, as well as to the seemingly permanent nature of film and photography. Her work questions notions of time and bodily wisdom by investigating the intersection of the artistic process and “what remains.” Her creative practice prioritizes somatic intelligence, trusting the instinct of one’s body in space and time, and inspires reflection on the embodied nature of the lived experience. Her current practice of “dance time-lapse” combines slow movement with time-lapse photography as an invitation to move in tandem with cycles of the natural world. As a community educator, Abdel-Jelil holds creative movement workshops across age groups to facilitate dialogue through movement in order to build community, connection, and a sense of groundedness in one’s body. She holds a BA in cinema and media studies from Carleton College and is a recipient of a 2017 Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant. Her work has been screened at numerous venues and festivals, including the Twin Cities Arab Film Festival, St. Cloud Film Fest, and Altered Esthetics Film Festival. Recently, she completed residencies at Caldera Arts Center in Sisters, Oregon, and Château de La Napoule in Mandelieu-La Napoule, France.



Zachary Betts

Zachary Betts’s equivocating sculptures are simultaneously familiar and difficult to decipher. Like artifacts from a world that is akin to but not our own, these objects emulate the forms of everyday objects while obscuring their purpose. The use of silicone and various metals intensify their cold, smooth, and machinelike appearance, heightening qualities of the sterile and melancholic while still being emotionally charged. Sometimes made of collaged ready-mades and sometimes reproductions of newly made objects, each sculpture combines elements that are industrially fabricated with those that are meticulously handcrafted using a variety of traditional techniques. Betts has shown his work nationally at various galleries, including SOIL Gallery in Seattle, FJORD Gallery in Philadelphia, Adler & Floyd in Chicago, and the Visual Arts Center in Austin, Texas. He has completed residencies at the White Page in Minneapolis, FOGSTAND Gallery in St. Paul, and the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson. Betts received his BFA from the University of Wisconsin–Stout, and his MFA in sculpture and extended media from the University of Texas at Austin. He currently lives and works in St. Paul.

Biographies



Sophia Chai

Sophia Chai is a Rochester-based artist who was born in South Korea and immigrated to New York City at the age of fourteen. Chai’s studio practice began with the camera as a constructed site where the phenomenon of light and space unfolds in order to ask the question, “What is a photograph really?” With her most recent work, Chai has expanded on that inquiry by looking at the lines drawn between photography, painting, and architecture by means of site-specific installation of her photographs. Chai received her BA in chemistry from the University of Chicago and her MFA in photography from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Before relocating to Rochester in 2017 from Brooklyn, New York, Chai showed her work in group exhibitions at venues in New York City, including Trestle Projects, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Knockdown Center, A.I.R. Gallery, and TSA Gallery, among others. In addition to a solo exhibition at 106 Green (Brooklyn) in 2016, Chai mounted two solo exhibitions earlier this year: *Sight Lines* at the Rochester Art Center (Minnesota) and *Interpolation* at Hair + Nails Gallery in Minneapolis. Chai is a 2019 recipient of the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council (SEMAC) grant for advancing artists, and a 2020 recipient of the Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant. She is one of the three Rochester-based artists selected for an art integration project for Discovery Walk, a new green parkway spanning five city blocks in downtown Rochester.



Kaamil A. Haider

Kaamil A. Haider is an interdisciplinary visual artist whose work examines the relationship between objects, meanings, and heritage in contemporary Somali art, with an emphasis on memory, both private and public. He draws from diverse cultural, archival, and oral tradition references. As a cofounder of Soomaal House of Art, a Minneapolis-based Somali artists collective, Haider has supported a growing number of emerging and established Somali artists living in Minnesota and beyond. He is currently a teaching artist at Ubah Medical Academy High School, where he teaches design and art. Haider received his BFA in graphic design from the College of Design, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and is the recipient of the 2018 University of Minnesota Alumni Association’s U40 Alumni Leader Award for his academic achievement and community engagement. In 2019 he was a Soomaal Fellow, an initiative by Soomaal House of Art in partnership with Augsburg University Art Galleries. In the past year Haider received a Springboard for the Arts 20/20 Artist Fellowship and a Forecast Early-Career Research + Development grant, and is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Heritage Studies and Public History (HSPH) Fellow.

Acknowledgments

In mid-November 2019, juror Marcela Guerrero, assistant curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, reflected on the process of selecting the 2019/20 MCAD–Jerome Foundation Fellowship recipients. The “selected fellows stood out,” she explained, “because of their inquisitive approach to materials and methodology as well as the urgency of their ideas.” What resonated so strongly in the work of Sarah Abdel-Jelil, Zachary Betts, Sophia Chai, and Kaamil Haider over a year ago has only been amplified by the unfolding crises of 2020. How do we embody the passage of time? What does it mean to move with and listen to the natural world? What in our everyday world is overlooked or forgotten? How do we make sense of things when they seem simultaneously familiar and strange? To what degree are we cognizant of how we see and come to believe certain things? What are the stories that bind communities together? How does memory live in objects and traditions? The culminating projects by these four early-career artists plumb these questions, leaving us fuller and more in awe of the world and relationships we have inherited and are called to reimagine.

The panelists—Marcela Guerrero; Seattle-based artist Dave Kennedy; and Tweed Museum of Art curator Karissa Isaacs—chose the fellowship recipients out of a pool of 157 applicants. In doing so, they enjoyed the semblance of normalcy when they conducted in-person studio visits with ten finalists and shared meals together as part of the deliberation process. Since then, not much of the fellowship year has unfolded according to plan. Luckily, the 2019/20 fellows were able to choose their local writer, Twin Cities-based curator Christina Chang, and meet with her as a group in Zachary Betts’s home studio before the COVID-19 pandemic upended the ability to gather together. Christina had to wait more than three months before meeting with the fellows again, and this time the one-on-one visits included masks and maintaining safe distances. The high-touch objects that Zachary envisioned making and the collaborative work with live dancers that Sarah anticipated doing had to be reimaged. Kaamil’s plans to involve community members in his video work came to a



standstill, as did Sophia’s printing options. In May we decided to postpone the culminating exhibition in MCAD Gallery, giving more time for the fellows to access needed facilities and to pivot their projects.

In the midst of so much chaos and constant uncertainty, the fellows and Christina have been incredibly supportive of one another. Her essays demonstrate the high esteem in which she holds each of the artists, teasing out and amplifying aspects of the fellows’ artworks and making connections that encourage deeper reflection. The fellows will have

the opportunity to receive more feedback about their newest work while the exhibition is on view. Local and national curators, art historians, and writers will see the show—some virtually and some in-person—and meet with the fellows to delve deeper into where their practice goes from here.

The Jerome Foundation has been most generous throughout this difficult period, enabling us to adapt the program timeline to benefit the four fellows. Facing enormous economic setbacks due to the ongoing pandemic, our early career artists are profoundly grateful for the financial and professional support that the foundation has provided them. A heartfelt thanks to the small but mighty Jerome staff headed by President Ben Cameron and facilitated by Program Director Eleanor Savage, Program Officer Lann Briel, and Grants and Program Administrator Andrea Brown. They have modeled empathetic leadership and are to be commended for their advancement of racial equity in their funding commitments.

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) has had the honor of administering these fellowships for almost forty years. I am personally grateful for the continued support that MCAD’s newest leaders—President Sanjit Sethi, Vice President of Academic Affairs Robert Ransick, and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs Melissa Rands—have provided. Artists themselves, they understand what early career artists continue to need today: financial resources, access to facilities, opportunities for critical feedback and mentorship, encouragement to take risks and experiment, and venues for making new work and sharing it with the general public. Almost every college department has some role assisting with the fellowship program. Most of the behind-the-scenes work is done by the Fellowship and Gallery Coordinator Melanie Pankau. Conscientious, engaged, and thoughtful, she should be given credit for making the program run so well. MCAD’s former Grants and Programs Administrator Kate Mohn was also essential to ensuring we stay on top of deadlines and to parsing sentences in biannual applications and annual program reviews.

Our colleagues in DesignWorks, MCAD’s in-house design studio, work to make the fellowship program look professional every step of the way, most visibly in the catalog that accompanies the exhibition. Creative Design Manager Kayla Campbell designed this year’s identity; she is supported by Hannah Taylor and a team of talented student designers. Our communications and external relations team has also been instrumental in keeping things on track and promoted to the wider world. To this end, we extend our appreciation to Steven Candy, Annie Gillette Cleveland, Abha Karnick, Canaan Mattson, Shelby Pasell, and Brandie Zaspel.

Annually, our stellar MCAD Gallery installation team makes sure that the fellows’ artwork is presented with great care and attention to detail. They paint walls, hang artwork, edit and cut labels, apply vinyl, and creatively solve problems as they arise. You name it, and Bo An, Michaela Chorn, Sarah Evenson, Pader Fang, Madeline Garcia, Jamie Kubat, and Sara Suppan can figure out how to do it.

As the catalog for the fellows’ exhibition is the most long-lasting and tangible reminder of what is accomplished during the fellowship, we owe a great deal of thanks to Rik Sferra for his willingness to travel wherever he is asked and for taking ridiculously good photos of other people and their art, and to Mary Keirstead, our catalog copy editor, for paying close attention to not only what is written but how.

Although it might sound overused by now, the slogan “stronger together” is an apt summation of how communities of creatives like ours have dealt with unexpected challenges and embraced new opportunities for growth and transformation.

Kerry A. Morgan
Directory, Gallery and Exhibitions Programs
Program Director, MCAD–Jerome Foundation
Fellowships for Early Career Artists

Past

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018 Mara Duvra Marjorie Fedyszyn Tucker Hollingsworth Boone Nguyen | 2011 Richard Barlow Gregory Euclide Lauren Herzak-Bauman Alison Hiltner Jehra Patrick |
| 2017 Alyssa Baguss Josette Ghiseline Sarah Kusa Joshua McGarvey Lela Pierce | 2010 Greg Carideo Teri Fullerton Julia Kouneski Brett Smith Jonathan Bruce Williams |
| 2016 Nikki J. McComb Kelsey Olson Edie Overturf Jovan C. Speller Amanda Wirig | 2009 Steven Accola Caroline Kent Tynan Kerr/ Andrew Mazorol Tony Sunder |
| 2015 Star Wallowing Bull Emmett Ramstad Holly Streekstra Lindsay Rhyner Samual Weinberg | 2008 Evan Baden Barbara Claussen Kirsten Peterson Benjamin Reed Lindsay Smith |
| 2014 Miranda Brandon Regan Golden-McNerney Jess Hirsch Sieng Lee Jason Ramey | 2007 Matthew Bakkom Monica Haller Colin Kopp Liz Miller Rosemary Williams |
| 2013 Kjellgren Alkire Pao Houa Her GraceMarie Keaton Robin Schwartzman Nate Young | 2006 Ernest A. Bryant III Brian Lesteberg Cherith Lundin Monica Sheets Marcus Young |
| 2012 Susannah Bielak Amanda Hankerson Michael Hoyt Melissa Loop Lauren Roche | 2005 Janet Lobberecht Megan Rye Angela Strassheim Dan Tesene Megan Vossler |

Recipients

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1997 Jean Humke Carolyn Swisocz Amy Toscani Cate Vermeland Sara Woster | 1990 Andy Baird Mark Barlow Keri Pickett Ann Wood Christopher Wunderlich | 1983 Jana Freiband Janet Loftquist David Madzo Jeff Millikan Steven Woodward |
| 1996 Therese Buchmiller Todd Deutsch Celeste Nelms Mara Pelecis Mike Rathbun | 1989 Lynn Hambrick Vince Leo Stuart Mead David Peltó Alyn Silberstein | 1982 Jane Bassuk Frank Big Bear Jr. Laura Blaw Matt Brown Kevin Mangan |
| 1995 Robert Fischer Anne George Stephanie Molstre-Kotz Todd Norsten Carl Scholz | 1988 Phil Barber JonMarc Edwards Jil Evans Dave Rathman George Reboloso | 1981 Ricardo Bloch Bruce Charlesworth Alison Ruttan T.L. Solien Scott Stack |
| 1994 Terence Accola Mary Jo Donahue Jonathan Mason Karen Platt Elliot Warren | 1987 Michelle Charles Leslie Hawk Paul Shambroom Viet Ngo Diana Watters | |
| 1993 Mary Esch Damian Garner Shannon Kennedy Linda Louise Rother James Whitney Tuthill | 1986 Gary DeCosse Christopher Dashke Jennifer Hecker Michael Mercil Randy Reeves | |
| 1992 Angela Dufresne Tim Jones Chris Larson | 1985 Betina Judy Kepes Peter Latner James May Lynn Wadsworth | |
| 1991 Andrea McCormack Shawn Smith Hans Accola Sara Belleau Franciska Rosenthal Louw Colette Gaiter Annette Walby | 1984 Doug Argue Remo Campopiano Timothy Darr Audrey Glassman Robert Murphy | |

About the Jerome Foundation

The Jerome Foundation, created by artist and philanthropist Jerome Hill (1905–1972), seeks to contribute to a dynamic and evolving culture by supporting the creation, development, and production of new works by early career/emerging artists.

The Foundation makes grants to early career artists and those nonprofit arts organizations that serve them in Minnesota and the five boroughs of New York City.

Values

The Foundation’s core values, which we strive to model in our practice as grantmakers and to support in our grantees, are:

Diversity: We consciously embrace diversity in the broadest sense. We support a diverse range of artists and organizations, including but not limited to those of diverse cultures, races, sexual identities, genders, generations, aesthetics, points of view, physical abilities, and missions. We support a diverse range of artistic disciplines and forms, created in a variety of contexts and for different audiences.

Innovation/Risk: We support artists and organizations that explore and challenge conventional artistic forms.

Humility: We work for artists (rather than the reverse) and believe that artists and organizations are the best authorities to define their needs and challenges—an essential humility reflective of Jerome Hill, our founder. The artists we support embrace their roles as part of a larger community of artists and citizens, and consciously work with a sense of purpose, whether aesthetic, social or both.

Minneapolis
College of Art and Design

Mission Statement

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design educates individuals to be professional artists and designers, pioneering thinkers, creative leaders, and engaged global citizens.

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Minneapolis College of Art and Design does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, disability, marital status, or age in its programs, activities, scholarship and loan programs, and educational policies.

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