

The  
Sound  
Crickets  
Make



# Letter from the Director

It is with immense pleasure and pride that I introduce the Parsons Master of Fine Arts in Photography class of 2023. As the Program Director, I am honored to present to you the exceptional work of this talented cohort of emerging photographic artists.

In this catalog and exhibition, you will take a visual journey that captures the values of our program and showcases the remarkable growth and creative explorations that the graduates have made in the past two years. You will see the diverse range of artistic visions and approaches they embrace.

These young artists use the medium of photography and imaging as a language to communicate complex ideas, challenge societal norms, and shed light on our shared experiences. They have explored a range of themes, from social justice and climate change, to personal identity and cultural heritage. From the most private to the public and political, they have challenged our notions of what photography is and what it is becoming. Their work serves as a powerful tool to initiate conversations, provoke emotions, and inspire change.

To the graduates, I offer my sincerest congratulations on your exceptional achievements. Your tireless pursuit of artistic excellence, your willingness to take risks, and your unwavering commitment to your craft has resulted in a body of work

that speaks volumes to your talent and dedication. I am confident that you will continue to make significant contributions to the field of photography and shape the future of visual arts for years to come.

This catalog and exhibition owe its success to the collaborative efforts of numerous dedicated individuals. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Interim Executive Dean Yvonne Watson and the Dean's Office for their unwavering support of this program. A special note of appreciation goes to AMT Dean Shana Agid for their constant encouragement. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our valued faculty members, whose expertise, mentorship and unwavering support have shaped the artistic trajectory of our students. To the program's administrative and technical staff, I offer my sincerest gratitude for your tireless contributions to the success of our program. Their dedication and hard work are essential to the overall success of our students. Finally, I want to extend my thanks to Dexter Lopez, Sidian Liu, Sawani Chaudhary, Yulin Gu, Trenton Teinert and their colleagues for their exceptional design of this catalog and website.

- Jim Ramer  
Director of MFA Photography

# The Sound Crickets Make

*There's a name for the animal*

*Love makes of us—named, I think,  
Like rain, for the sound it makes.*

- Nicole Sealy, *Object Permanence*

I'm going to begin from a place of assumptions. If I ask you to think about the sound crickets make, I'm going to assume that you'll immediately think of darkness, as crickets, being nocturnal, only sing their song during the night. Maybe you'll move over to thinking about your skin and the crusted old ooze from your mosquito bites, for it's summertime and the place you're in must be sticky and wet. Or maybe you're in the city, nervous about what caused a hush to fall over the room, creating a silence so quiet that you can hear crickets.

Audre Lorde once said that every poem is a love poem. I'm convinced that every love poem is a kind of image production, creating either one or many photographs positioned from the heart (of course), in either a point of pain, pleasure, desire or all of the above. In Nicole Sealy's poem *Object Permanence*, she tells us how love has transformed her and her partner into animals. But the focus is not on the kind of animal or even what it may look like, but its name. A name whose etymology is in its sound. So the name exceeds its purpose of being a mode of identification, but also becomes a reference to a sonic happening.

In Tina Campt's book *Listening to Images*, she encourages us to go beyond the practice of simply looking at photographs; to consider what can't be seen in the image's frame, but can be felt or heard in its details. "Listening attentively to [the] mundane details means not accepting what we see as the truth of the image. Attending to their lower frequencies means being attuned to the connections between what we see and how it resonates." The Parsons School of Design MFA Photography class of 2023 collectively chose the title, *The Sound Crickets Make*, for

their thesis exhibition which I believe astutely and poetically describes the magic of image making. The phrase "the sound crickets make" acts as an invitation. It calls us to think about the multi-rhythmic, jazz-like chirp of the insect, but first places us into a particular space of personal referent. I have not actually ever seen a cricket but have been enveloped by their sound. In order for me to notice that I can hear it, I'm usually alone or with others sitting in silence. I'm most likely outdoors, or in an interior space that's somehow vulnerable to the exterior: a window open, a screen door, et cetera. You see what just happened there? The title of this exhibition invited me to revisit the images my memory holds.

The artists — athena, Azelion Manuel, Beiyuan Zhang, Bella Okuya, Ben Rybisky, Blaine Williams, Camilla M. Mecagni, Dexter Lopez, Drishti Verma, Frida Braide, jude Lives, Kuan Hsieh, Paria Ahmadi, Sawani Chaudhary, Sidian Liu, Thomas O. Iacobucci, Trenton Teinert, and Yulin Gu — collectively challenge the notion that photography begins and ends with some sort of physical or digital material that has frozen a moment in time. The work in this exhibition, like reading love poems, like remembering what a cricket sounds like, awakens all of our senses and requires us to consider what lies beyond the frame. Whether it's to reckon with our personal history and how it shapes our relationship to gender and our ever changing state of becoming, or intervening with the archive as a political strategy, attempting to shield those historically vulnerable to photography's colonialist ethnographic practices. Or to further complicate our understanding of the true importance of representation and visibility. I'd like to extend this invitation to the wonder and beauty that is the thesis exhibition, *The Sound Crickets Make*, and would like to encourage you that when you come in, make sure you listen.

—Shala Miller



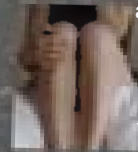
Frida Braide

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Trenton Teinert

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athena

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Dexter Lopez



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Thomas O. Iacobucci



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Yulin Gu



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Drishti Verma

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Camilla M. Mecagni

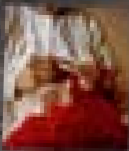
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Kuan Hsieh

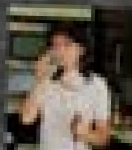
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Sawani Chaudhary



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Sidian Liu



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Azelion Manuel

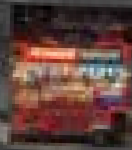


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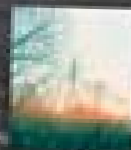
Blaine Williams

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Beiyuan Zhang

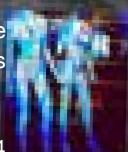
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Ben Rybisky

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Paria Ahmadi



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# FRIDA BRAIDE

## *Looking for the Ocean*

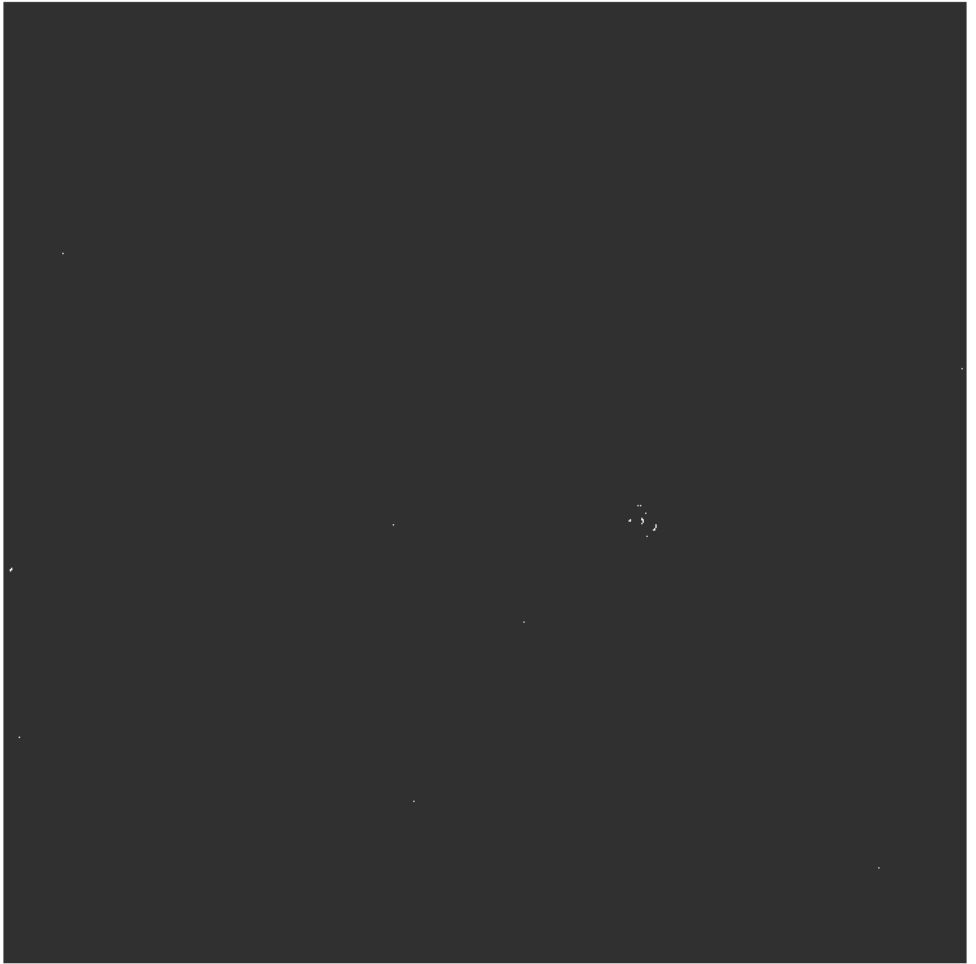
In looking for the ocean, Braide found concrete. This rock hard second skin, the most destructive material on earth, is making the built environment outgrow the natural one. Unlike the natural world however, concrete does not actually grow. Instead, its main quality is to harden and then degrade so slowly that it will outlast human civilization.

In looking for the ocean, Braide found that New York City will be underwater in less than a hundred years. This urban fortress that encapsulated humanity, keeping nature at bay, will be everlasting. It cloaks the past, covering what we wish to forget and what does not belong. It serves as the foundation of modern life, hiding time and taming nature. The concrete structures that the city is made of will remain, as it can resist nature for decades. Nature will crack the surface in due course, and we will do what we do best; cover it with more concrete. Even under water, New York City will remain intact.











TRENTON TEINERT  
*can I come too...?*



*can I come too...?* is an exploration into the intertwined relationship between society and its urban environments. Drawing from Teinert's observations through long walks, he exposes the intricacies of urban movement and challenges the societal norms that shape our interactions.

Teinert is captivated by the transient nature of our built environments and the authoritative undertones embedded in their design. The work encourages observers to question the authority and motives behind urban planning that influence our behavior and interactions. Utilizing various techniques such as still image, painting, and sculpture, Teinert depicts these urban interactions in an ambiguous, thought-provoking manner. Ultimately, he aims to highlight the dance society performs within the urban atmosphere, revealing the power dynamics of our shared spaces and sparking a desire for active participation in shaping our urban landscapes.





# athena

## *glass walls*



athena combines self-portraits and videography to demonstrate her relationship to self-understanding, queerness, and the gender binary – pondering notions of the *masculine*, the *feminine*, and the *androgynous*. athena is representing the metaphorical closet she often finds herself coming in and out of by making art within her own physically confined spaces. athena's work, *glass walls*, is written entirely in lowercase letters to emphasize her fragility, anxiety, and desire to minimize her physical and emotional presence. expected and occasionally demanded to be so vulnerable with her own sexuality, in an environment that grows increasingly more hostile to openly queer people, *glass walls* is a window to understanding her search for acceptance.









# DEXTER LOPEZ

## *In A Different Time: Si No Sana Hoy, Sanará Mañana*

Dexter Lopez was born and raised in New York City to Colombian and Dominican parents. His practice has evolved from painting, to illustration, to photography. Now, he has taken the skills he has learned to construct a virtual world.

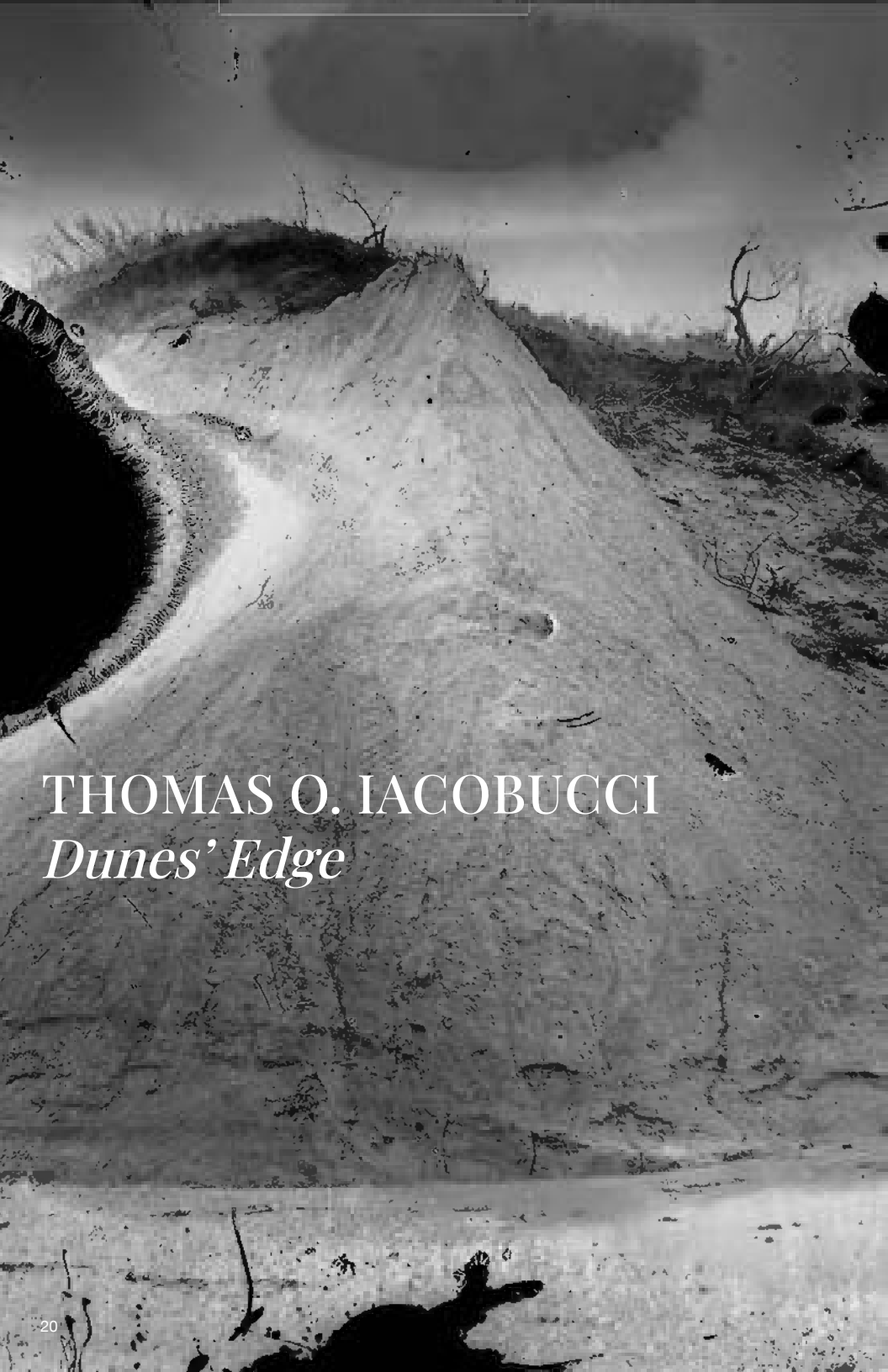
Growing up with toxic patriarchal relatives, Lopez's perspective of Colombian and Dominican cultures became muddled. The actions of his relatives shaped his perception of what it meant to be a Lantine, and what was expected if he presented himself as Latino. Lopez grew up to resent the cultures of his parents' homelands, preferring to embrace his American identity.

*In a Different Time: Si No Sana Hoy, Sanará Mañana* is a playable, dream-like, virtual world where players are house-sitting for the character of "Dexter" and his wife "Rebecca." They are invited to investigate and piece together clues about why "Dexter" and "Rebecca" have left, ultimately uncovering a hidden story about patriarchal tendencies in his family. The player is asked to explore as much – or as little – of the world as they wish, and to piece together the narrative of how patriarchy can still play a role, even in this fabricated world.









THOMAS O. IACOBUCCI  
*Dunes' Edge*



*Dunes' Edge* takes place amongst a region slowly receding to the sea. Exacerbated by the effects of climate change and human impact, the images depicted are an elegy to the outer shores of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where the onslaught of coastal erosion has been a yearly constant. Carefully crafting photographs of the personal alongside the landscape, combined with Iacobucci's familial archive and broader historical imagery, this work acts as a tool for memory, examining the periphery as what once was and what is. Resulting in a monograph, this series interweaves the present and the past, existing in a transient state between.

Utilizing film as a fleeting material, a selection of the negatives exposed become degraded through an intentional process. This is done in a controlled environment, where the film is soaked in ocean water and sand for the length of a full tidal cycle. What occurs is a deterioration, allowing the relationship between the elements and the eroding coastline to appear within the damaged emulsion. Just as the eroding coast can reveal remnants of the past, the altered film can unveil nature's burgeoning unpredictability.







# YULIN GU

## *Over Exposure*



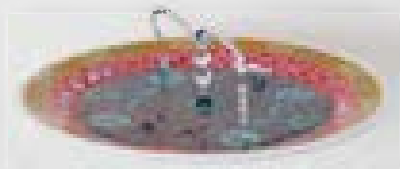
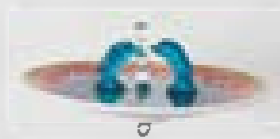
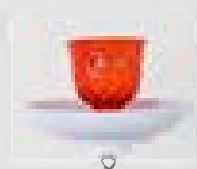
Yulin Gu's *Over Exposure* derives from her attachment to plastic and the collective memories the material is able to carry. Through her experiments with photography and sculpture, Gu expands the potential of domestic objects and studies their connections to urban infrastructures.

Behind the aesthetics of plastic products is the simple understanding of life, which is formed in the accumulation of time as unconscious originality and collective memory. Akin to *contemporary folk art* mass produced by industry, the plastic products are forms without fraud and symbols without purpose. These objects are simultaneously prevalent and marginalized, but Gu absorbed them into her artistic practice. The raised or recessed centers in plastic structures symbolize the birth process, resembling lovely navels left behind by industrially produced mothers for their offspring. By puncturing these centers and stringing them together, she achieves balance and performs a metaphorical act of cutting umbilical cords.

She finds warmth and harmony in the chaos of life, its colored plastic, and the balancing act.







DRISHTI VERMA

*I Can See it if I Squint*





Growing up, Drishti Verma was always enthralled by the epics and legendary tales of Indian mythology. It gave her a fantasy world where magic genuinely existed, separate from reality and its limitations. *I Can See it if I Squint* is inspired by her memories of these myths.

Through these images, Verma aims to reconstruct this world that embraces individuals' idiosyncrasies by distorting or expanding reality. This landscape of childhood and morality stories is ripe territory for boundary-pushing perversions to take root.

Verma focuses on fictional narratives that interact with the process of deriving meaning from photographs, transforming them into metaphors or illusions. Ultimately, these photographs act as an entry point into assembled worlds. *I Can See it if I Squint* is momentarily held together by the lens, acting as a documentation of a destroyed object.







# CAMILLA M. MECAGNI

## *Corpo Chimica*

*Corpo Chimica* is a response to the hegemonic, tragically sardonic, treatment of women's bodies. This work is inspired by Italian Renaissance art that legitimizes and fetishizes rape culture which promotes dominant patriarchal value systems. With an acute sensitivity to cryptic language, Mecagni unravels the complex ideas and ambitions signified within a photograph where diverse realities co-exist. Often realized in urban epicenters, – New York and Milan, the two cities she calls home – Mecagni's photographs have been enriched by the fusion of individuals, high fashion, and culture that inhabit these places. With an adaptively fluid practice, Mecagni's presence is autonomous. Her discerning eyes stare back at us in the *Not so Nude* self-portraits within *Corpo Chimica*. Through the strategic concealment of her body, Mecagni becomes a presence – the observer who wants more.









KUAN HSIEH  
*The Ghosts That Linger*



Born and raised in Taiwan, Kuan Hsieh never questioned the knowledge instilled in him while growing up. It was only when he studied abroad and was shocked by the cultural diversity in New York City that Hsieh once again tried to sort out his perception of Taiwanese identity. Through his body movements and suffering in performance, Hsieh questions the unsolved historical entanglements between communities, challenging the ambiguity of Taiwan's status in the world. Rather than presenting answers, *The Ghosts That Linger* means to initiate the conversations and discussions that Taiwan desperately needs.

This project is dedicated to the lost cultures, ethnicities, and the truths of historical events submerged by the tides of time. One day, the Taiwanese will free themselves from the entanglement of historical ghosts. Then future generations will no longer need to bear the burden of the past, allowing repressed emotions to be expressed again.



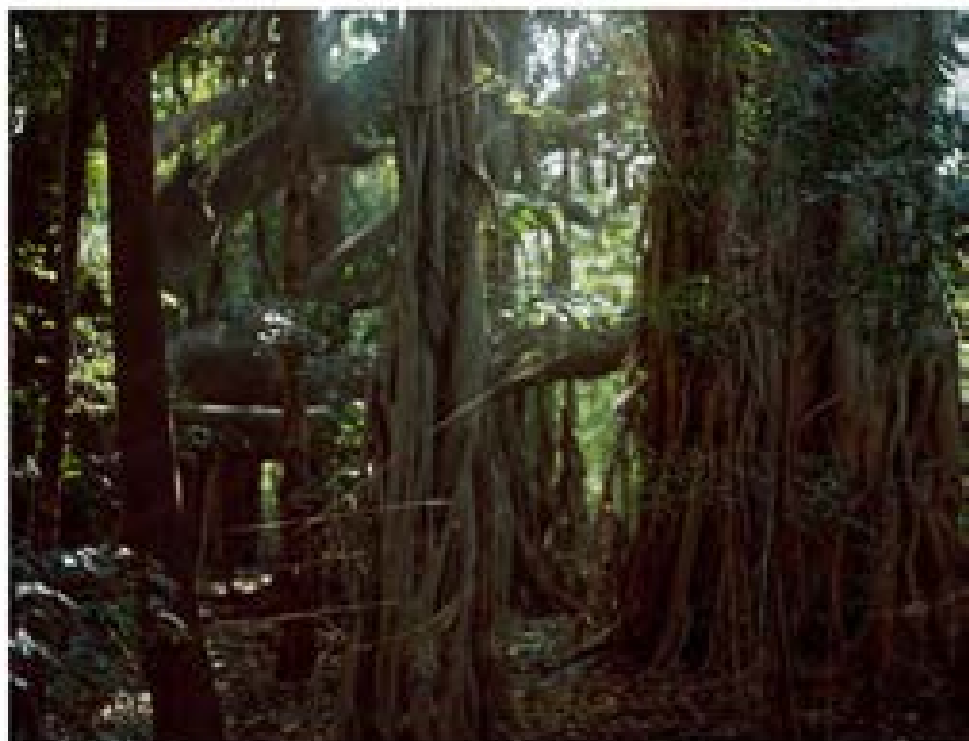




# SAWANI CHAUDHARY

## *The Buoyancy of Self*

Sawani Chaudhary's *The Buoyancy of Self* explores the multiplicity of memory, time, and space. Chaudhary sees herself afloat through the spaces she photographs, where a sense of restoration, remembrance, and reenactment is present throughout. Connecting these images subtly by including her own drawings on the photographs, the lines blend in with the black and white film grain and challenge the perceptions of the viewer. These images include moments with her family, found objects, landscapes, and street scenes from her hometown and New York City. These images do not specify any location and instead talk about something more abstract. This placelessness translates into the form of landscapes that she frequented as a child. There is an element of making, repairing, and mending involved in *The Buoyancy of Self*. Chaudhary sees the strands of fabric as she sees her own pencil graphite lines weaving through the images and binding them.









**SIDIAN LIU**  
*The Conch Girl Project*



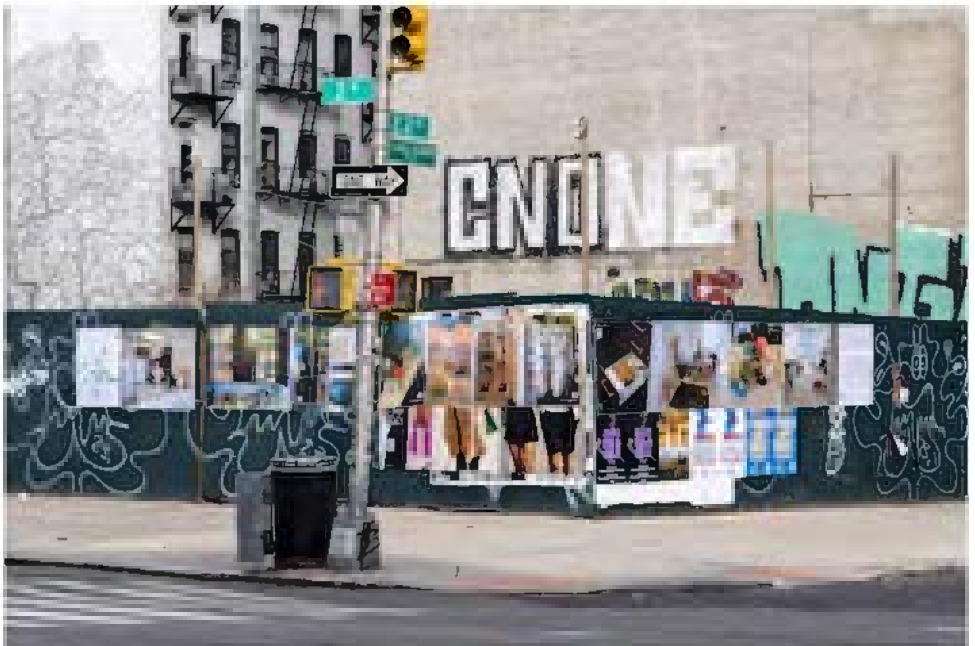
In the Chinese myth, “The Conch Girl,” a conch turns into a goddess who takes on a secret nurturing role. It is a name that bears the cruel tradition of marking domestic work as women’s virtue. In *The Conch Girl Project*, Sidian intends to reclaim this name and highlight the reciprocal relationship it takes to perform radical care.

Dealing with feelings of displacement after immigration, Sidian asks strangers to let her use their kitchens in solitude. In return, she cooks them a meal and takes photos to document the experience. In this process, reciprocal care takes place: she gets entrusted with a private space that she can feel at home in, while the kitchen owner receives an act of service. The resulting photos are shown to the kitchen owners first, who give their responses and make editing advice. The correspondences from each kitchen owner and the photos taken within the kitchen are made into poster-size prints, as both a publication and as an open call for future participation. They are then wheatpasted and displayed on construction boards on the streets of New York City.

For more information:

[theconchgirlproject.com](http://theconchgirlproject.com)

Instagram: [@theconchgirlproject](https://www.instagram.com/theconchgirlproject)







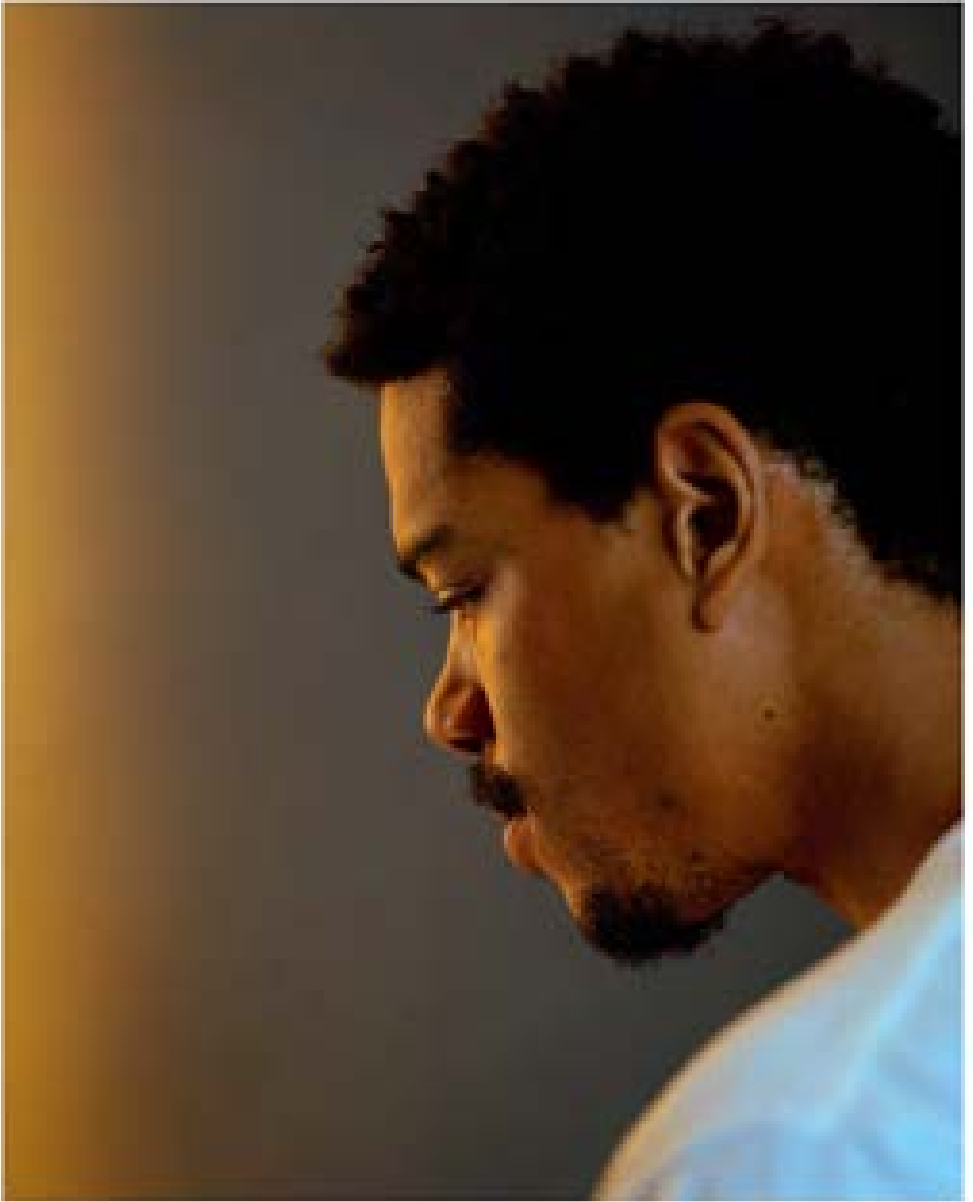
AZELION MANUEL  
*From the Ether*





*From the Ether* is a body of work that delves into the psychic spaces occupied by black individuals to explore the intricacies of black consciousness. The essence of black consciousness is embodied in the *ether*, a metaphysical substance that originates from the mind and shapes its fabric. These images employ the interplay between light and darkness. By revealing and concealing aspects of the subjects' being, Manuel forces the audience to confront the ambiguities and gaps in between what is visible and what is hidden.

These ephemeral scenes serve as an archive, capturing the transformative interactions between the camera and the subject. By doing so, it disrupts conventional notions of black consciousness as a monolithic construct, and instead, illuminates its dynamic and multifaceted nature. Through Manuel's work, he affirms the diversity of black consciousness, offering an empowering alternative to reductive stereotypes.





# BLAINE WILLIAMS

## *Etchings*

Blaine Williams is an artist who primarily examines both the medium of photography and the structure of the built environment. This particular work is a collection of original 1-of-1 pieces referred to as *Etchings*. They are made through a method that Williams himself created, where light-sensitive paper is placed face-down onto the surfaces of streets, sidewalks, and other urban structures. The paper is then lit with an external flash from the side. Through this process, the surfaces of sidewalks and roads create photographic impressions, *etching* themselves onto the paper. By tracing these surfaces with light, they are recorded in the way one would experience them: through physical touch. This series recreates a collage of isolated urban experiences; by linking them together, one can understand the associated landscape both physically and phenomenologically.



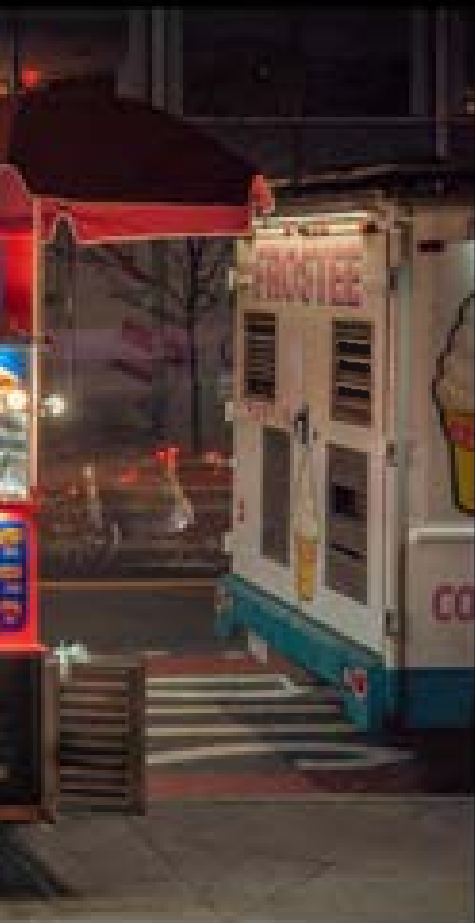








**BEIYUAN ZHANG**  
*New York Food Truck*



*New York Food Truck* goes beyond showcasing the vibrant food truck culture of New York City; it explores the food truck as a form of dated urban installation art, and brings small but meaningful bits of the past to future generations. The food truck has become a part of the cityscape, often standing out with its bright colors, flashy signage, and individualist design. It is a mobile platform for culinary creativity and an embodiment of the entrepreneurial spirit that thrives in major cities.

The food truck is a multi-layered art form incorporating visual elements, sounds, and smells. The top layer often includes a parasol or an LED screen, serving as a visual attraction and advertisement for the food being sold. The middle layer is the window, which provides a view of the kitchen and the prepared food. The bottom layer is the picture or sign that displays the menu or brand identity. The minute differences between each truck's interpretation of these broad characteristics – and the meaning behind the individuality – is the focus of *New York Food Truck*.







BEN RYBISKY  
*Waciq Yuza*



Ben Rybisky is an artist of Dakota descent based out of the Twin Cities and New York City. His work has evolved from his earliest experiences, beginning with his use of disposable cameras, to the making of his own digital large format camera. Using this camera, he works to create his own relation to his Indigeneity, speaking to others similarly caught between worlds with severed connections.

Plagued by stereotypes perpetuating the falsehood that Indigenous people are a people of the past; a people conquered, killed, and since lost to time, Rybisky reclaims his presence from them by stating *we're still here*.

The photographs distort reality in such a way that viewers are confronted with their preconceived notions of what Indigenous people are. The connection to his people and history is passed down by the grandmothers and aunts that have shaped him. *Waciq Yuza* defines what his Indigeneity means to him through this legacy.







# jude Lives

## *Thesis Antithesis*



*Thesis Antithesis* is an exploration of theory derived from inner-city economics and semiotics through the lens-based practice of New York native and world traveler jude Lives.

Personally satisfying his own appetite to be seen – *look at me world! See what I'm doing; blending the boundaries of street and fine art while painting a picture a blind person could see* – his work has been described as edgy and cherished for pushing boundaries utilizing a multidisciplinary approach.

Lives' interest in photography began at an early age. Raised by a single mother and identifying as a cisgender male has shaped his work, along with race, culture, and inequality. What does it mean to be a man, a black man, living in a world with signs that say you are not welcome here?

Decoding symbols and reintroducing a new message while creating formative images from redundant, ubiquitous signs into art is his *Thesis Antithesis*.







PARIA AHMADI  
*Safety Matches*





Paria Ahmadi is an Iranian artist/safety match/کبریت بی خطر based in New York. In her practice, she focuses on the politics of memory and archive and the poetic relations of language, image, and objects. She works in printmaking, sculpture/arrangements, video, and harmless humor.

*Safety Matches* is a series of prints on red phosphorous paper, where every image, based on its political cultural context, can be a trigger to start a fire. It comes with a short film called *Every time I caused a flame, it left an ugly mark*, in which she keeps striking matches on an image of her own smile until the image fades away.

*Yellow to You, Red to Me* is a poetic archive of fire, based on images of protests in Iran through video calls with her family, friends, and footage circulating on social media, printed into a felt rug.





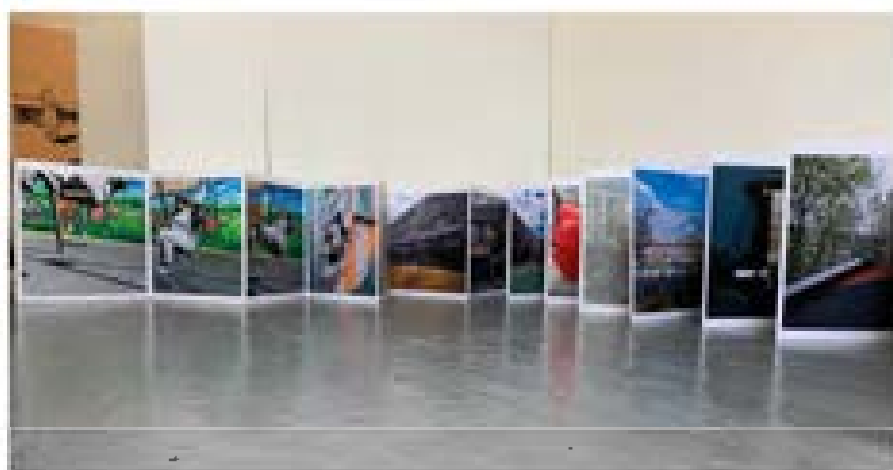


# BELLA OKUYA

## *Present Tense, Future Perfect*

Bella Okuya is a British visual artist working across film, photography, and installation. Her work is about navigating the collective experiences of people of color in relation to placemaking, wellbeing, and class, using the frame of the elemental nature of human existence through meditative imagery, sound, and silence. Bella is the founder of the London-based collective *Red Rolled and Seen*, with whom she has created two photobook publications.

*Present Tense, Future Perfect* is a sensorial experimental moving image installation about the external violent erosion of working class communities through the gentrification of landscapes. In turn, this produces an internal violence within the original people who inhabited those spaces, impacting their wellbeing and producing a fragmented and wounded community. The photographs accompanying this statement are moving image stills from the video. An experimental photobook featuring traces of the landscape and community will also be shared during the exhibition.







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THE  
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**PARSONS**