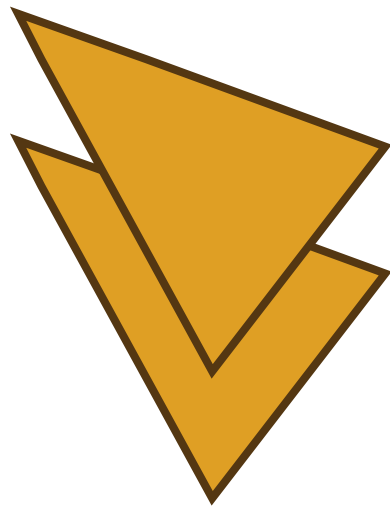




IN AN ECHO

**PARSONS MFA PHOTOGRAPHY
THESIS EXHIBITION 2016**



An image can never be trusted David Everitt Howe

An image can never be trusted

It's hard enough writing about one person's work, let alone nine graduating from an MFA program, even if the work is relegated to photography only—"relegated" being an asshole thing to say, and "photography" seeming on inadequate as a descriptor. It's so limited and medium-specific, a relic of modernism long since undone by that pesky –post. But if anything, photography is just one framework of many to think about the image and images in general; what they are, what they stand for, but most importantly, who's in front of and behind the camera. Or to push it further, why a camera at all? It's the job of us creative types to ask who, what, where, when, and why, and if there's any lesson to be learned about art, it's that an image can never be trusted. Repeat: an image can never be trusted.

Elizabeth Harnarine doesn't trust textbooks, and rightly so. Cut everything out of it unrelated to women and there's barely anything left to look at—it's so skewed towards men. Or why she cut out women's crotches in fashion magazines, or asked her friends to desecrate the dollar bill with doodles and drawings. The socioeconomic system we live in maintains a pronounced gender inequity. Never trust it. Neither should you trust the work of Cecilia Mezulic or Zhongjia Sun—or Varvara Mikushkina, for that matter. All three make strange use of objects. Mezulic turns their function into dysfunction; a pegboard becomes a column, where one surface ends and another begins is very vague. Interestingly, Sun also makes great use of pegboard, this time as a background surface, while hum-drum household objects like a bottle opener, a barbecue rack, and sugar cubes are photographed in strangely placeless places. Was that shot composed or found like that? In a studio or elsewhere? It's left unclear. Mikushkina's dollar store finds don't look cheap at all, but rather like small, reflective worlds of their own. There's a prism on a washed-out terrycloth-like fabric, and it's lovely. That woman looking back at you in that portrait seems to know something you don't.

CHRIS REEL has been asking relative strangers to wrap a prized object in foil, which he photographs; sometimes it's easy to tell what the object is (the bat is pretty obvious), but other times, again, it's very vague. Mengya Xiao's small, rock-like objects are made of clay and resin, and the photographs he pairs them with—featuring fluorescent pigments under black light—look like something extraterrestrial, like small galaxies forming. Kyle Meyer and Fernanda Kock are both updating tropes of portraiture; Meyer is re-photographing seminal queer portraits with himself as the subject. Using expired film, the resulting negatives are grainy and elegiac, functioning as something like tributes to the many artists affected by AIDS. Kock, meanwhile, situates herself in the natural landscape, asking us to question how both are related (or not).

Lastly, taking photography off the page entirely, Alex Kwok turns photographs of colored gels into fin-like appendages that come off the wall. Nodding to conceptualism, the reproducibility of the photograph is turned into handmade objects; many are discarded due to his imperfect hand. Never trust that hand! And while we're on it, never trust that photograph! On the occasion of *In An Echo*, this is as good a time as any to re-state that authenticity and originality are never what they seem, and givens should never be "given," but always challenged. Maybe this is the lesson of an echo: when it calls, respond.

David Everitt Howe



Alex Kwok

Alex Kwok (b. Hong Kong, 1991) received his BA in English Literature from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Hovering between painting, photography, and sculpture, his work is a continuous investigation of how photography complicates seeing and the experience of being through presence, appearance, and absence. Light is treated as both a source material and a point of departure. Nodding at the critical reflection on the photographic medium during the Conceptual Art Movement, this process involves translating light from the photographing of color gradients to the sculptural representation of light constructed from inkjet prints. Kwok's work examines the points of intersection between image and object and where the photograph lies between those definitions. His work has been shown at the 15th Pingyao International Photography Festival, China; Tyler School of Art Temple University, PA; Auckland Festival of Photography, New Zealand and Photoville, NY.

alex-kwok.com

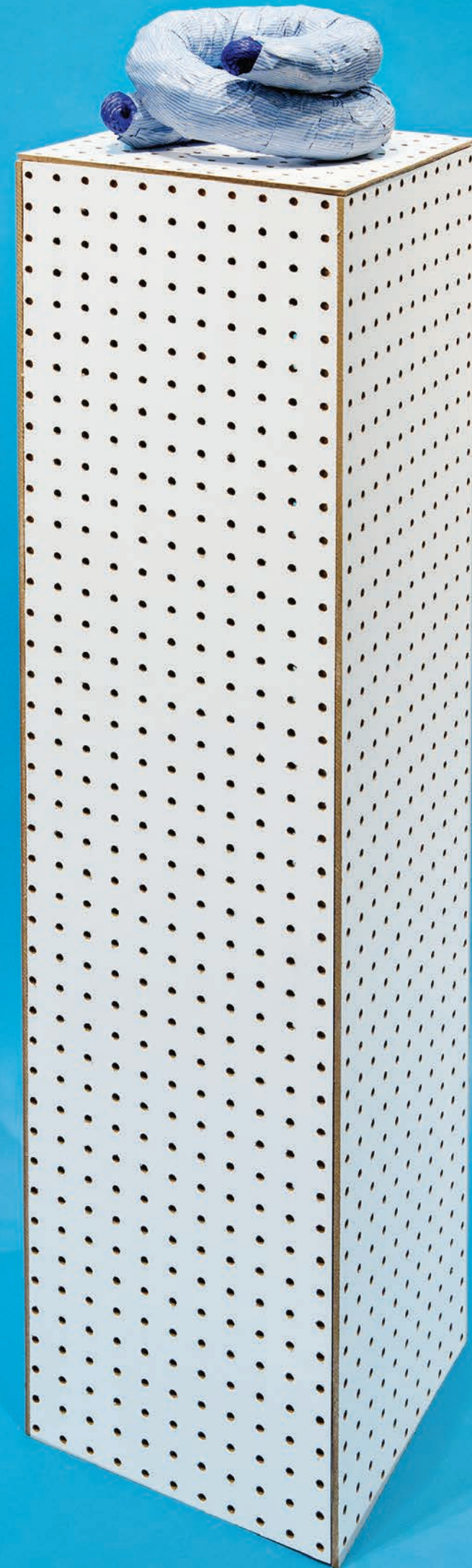


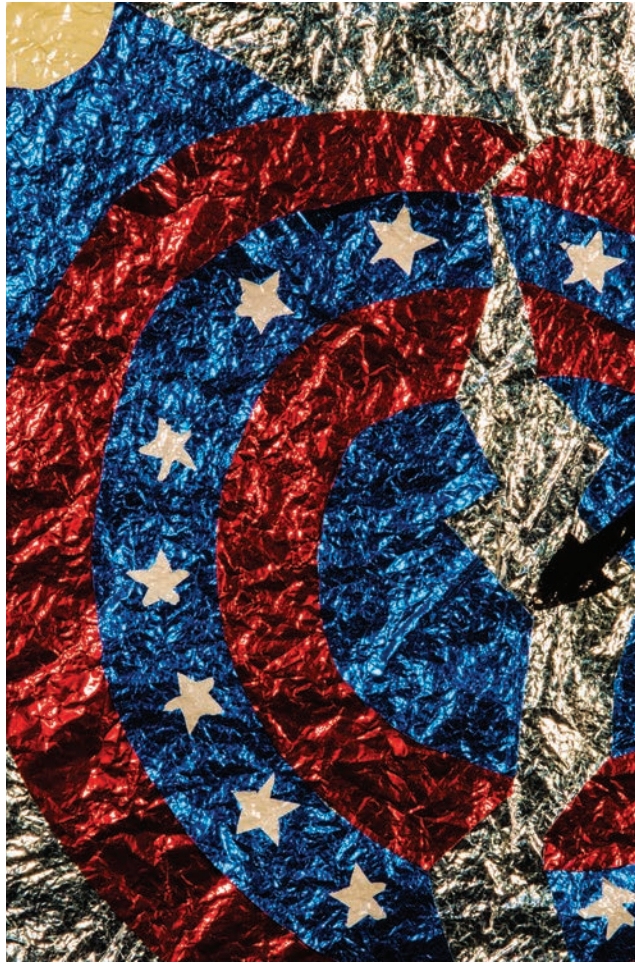


Cecilia Mezulic

Cecilia Mezulic (b. Italy, 1986) is a visual artist working in photography, video and installation. She earned a BSC in Political Science and International Relations at the University of Padova. Before moving to New York, Mezulic studied photography at the Academia de Artes Visuales in Mexico City. Her work deals with the structure of signs and the creation of meaning between signs and objects through representation. Inspired by contemporary culture and the Internet as a form of communication, she designs a set of rules to recombine simple everyday objects and how-to instructions with elements of chance and absurdity. Her work has been exhibited in Auckland Festival of Photography, New Zealand; Pingyao International Photography Festival, China; Tyler School of Art Temple University, PA and Photoville, NY.

ceciliamezulic.com





Chris Reel

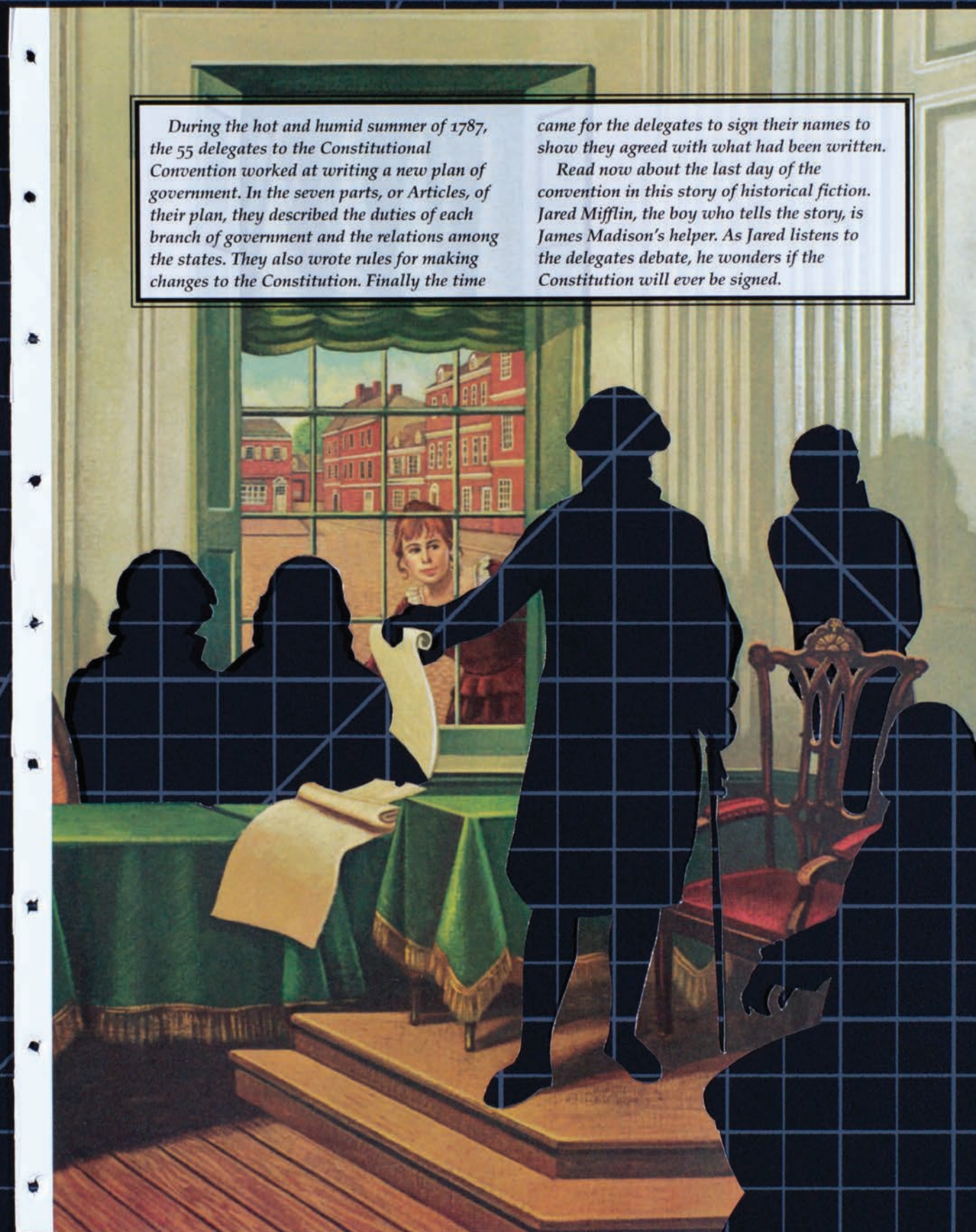
CHRIS REEL (b. US, 1975) in the year of The Rabbit and based in New York City, is a visual artist working in photography and film. He creates work that combine both the “why” conceptually – and the “how” physically. Being formally educated in fine art photography, he feels that knowing the history of photography and other various artistic mediums, is essential to his creative process. He creates work that celebrates realism while drawing the viewer into the possibility of a satirical perspective.





Elizabeth Harnarine

Elizabeth Harnarine (b. US, 1981) received a BS in Psychology from Kutztown University, an MPS in digital photography from the School of Visual Arts, and a Graduate Certificate in Gender and Sexuality Studies from The New School University. Harnarine's work questions the authority of the power structures that continue to embed gender inequality into all aspects of American culture. Through strategic alteration of appropriated materials, Harnarine creates a space to reimagine, among other things, advertising, education and the financial system. Her work has been exhibited both in New York City and internationally, including most recently at the Pingyao International Photography Festival, Pingyao, China; Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia and the Institute for Art and Art Theory, University of Cologne, Germany.

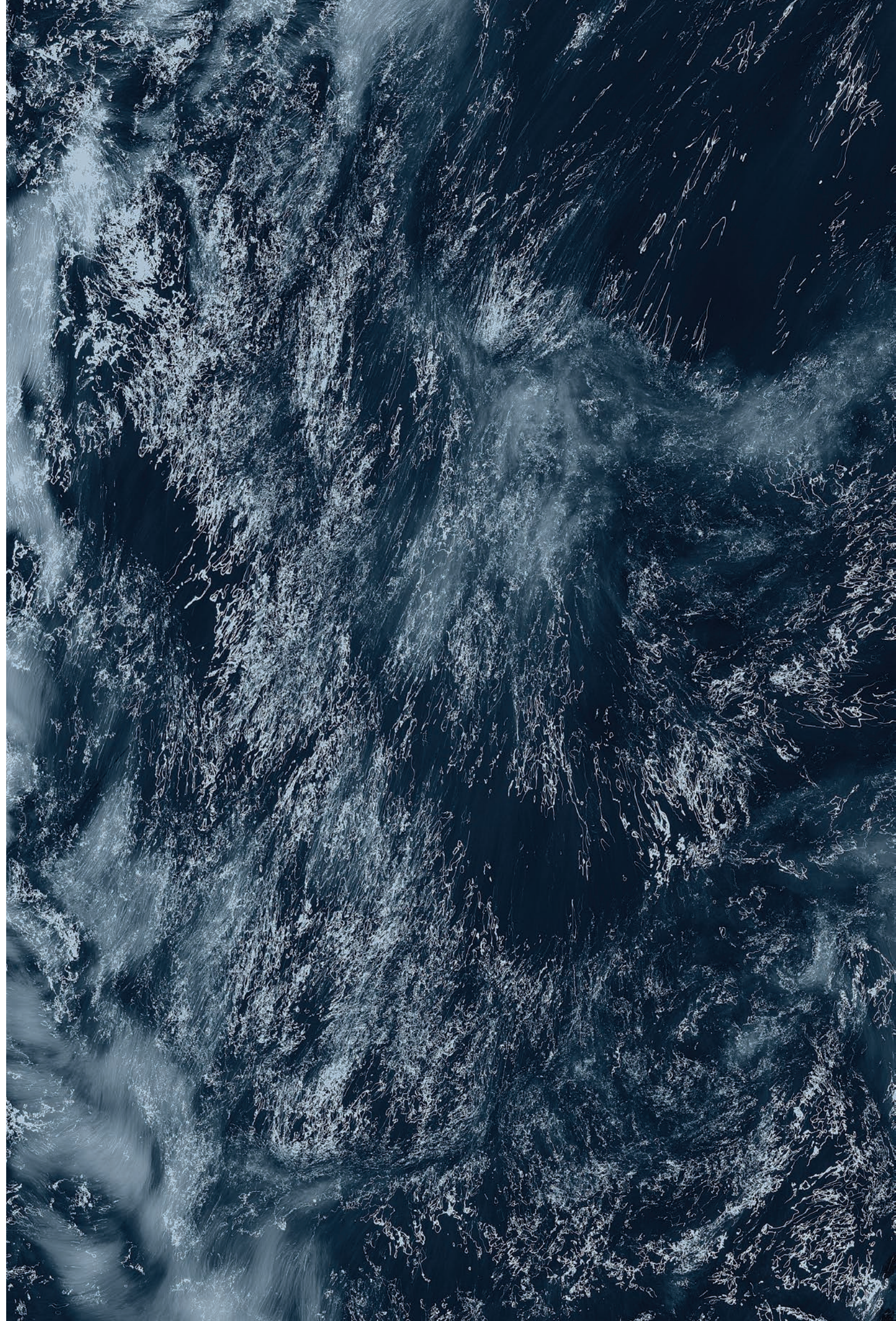




Fernanda Kock

(b. Brazil, 1981) is a fine art photographer who works in self-portraiture. Through photography she combines the interiority of her life experiences with a collection of extracts of her surroundings. She began her formal education in photography in 2005, when she attended several photography-based workshops. After her undergraduate work and the publication of her book about outdoor sports, she completed a certificate in photography at Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, in 2008. In 2013, she was invited for the group show on Brazilian Contemporary Photography, at the Museum of Arts of Santa Catarina (MASC, in Florianópolis, Brazil) where she exhibited the series Chrysalis, a representation of a symbolic rebirth. Her latest exhibitions were at Soho20 Gallery, Pingyao International Photography Festival and Tyler School of Art. Since 2012, when she relocated to New York, she has studied and worked as a Teaching Assistant at the International Center of Photography before attending the MFA Photography program.

fernandakock.com

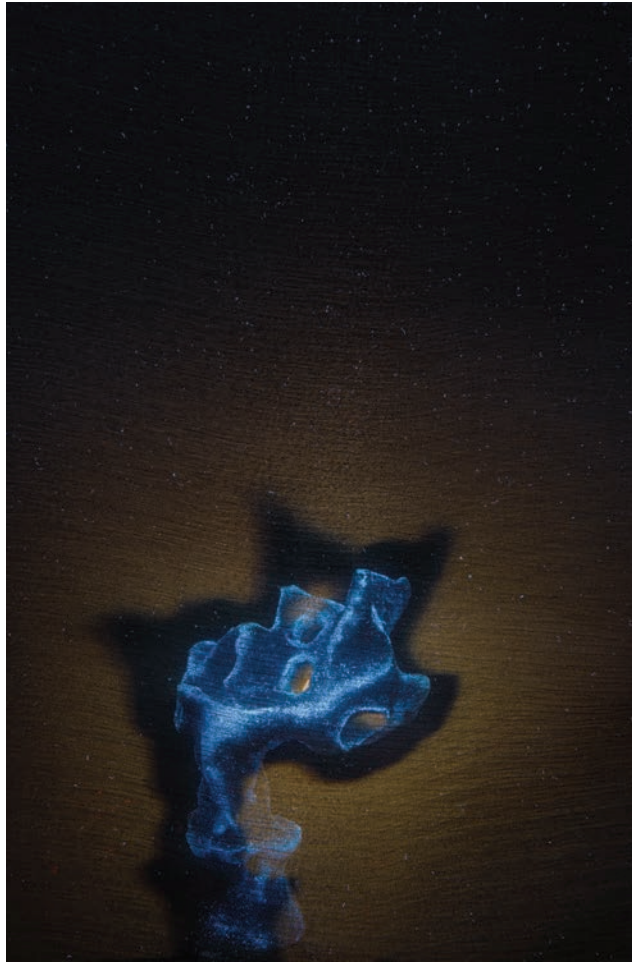




Kyle Meyer

Kyle Meyer (b. US,1985) is a multidisciplinary visual artist. He graduated in 2009 with a BA in Photography from The City College of New York. After graduation he received a Mortimer B. Hayes Brandeis traveling fellowship to work in Swaziland. During this time he focused on several long term projects dealing with LGBT rights, HIV awareness, and ritualistic religious practices. In his current practice he utilizes his experiences from Swaziland through sculpture, performance, and photography engaging in ideas of gender, sexuality, life and death. His work has been exhibited at the Photographic Resource Center, MA; Fuller Craft Museum, MA; Sheldon Museum of Art, NE; State Hermitage Museum, Russia; GuatePhoto, Guatemala and Photoville, NY.

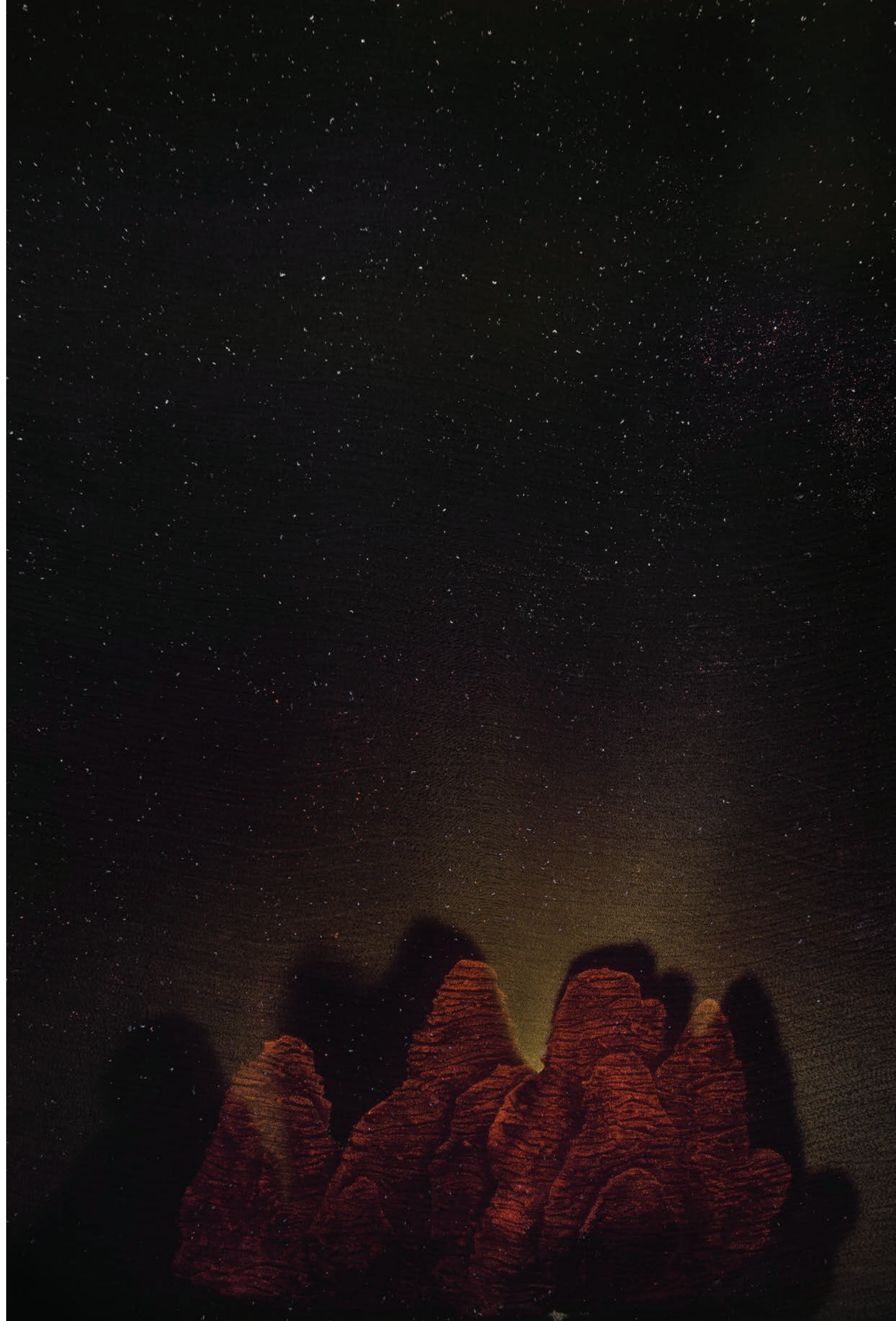




Mengya Xiao

Mengya Xiao (b. China, 1991) is a visual artist based in New York City. He received his BA in advertising at Capital University of Economics and Business in Beijing in 2013. His works focus on photography and sculpture and employ various materials and special light settings to produce the fantasy of an uncertain visual world. His sculptures, which are inspired by the Chinese symbolic icons called Scholar's Rocks, critique the consumerization of culture and human desire of luxury and vanity. His work has been exhibited in Pingyao International Photography Festival, China; Tyler School of Art Temple University, PA and Photoville, NY.

mengyaxiao.com

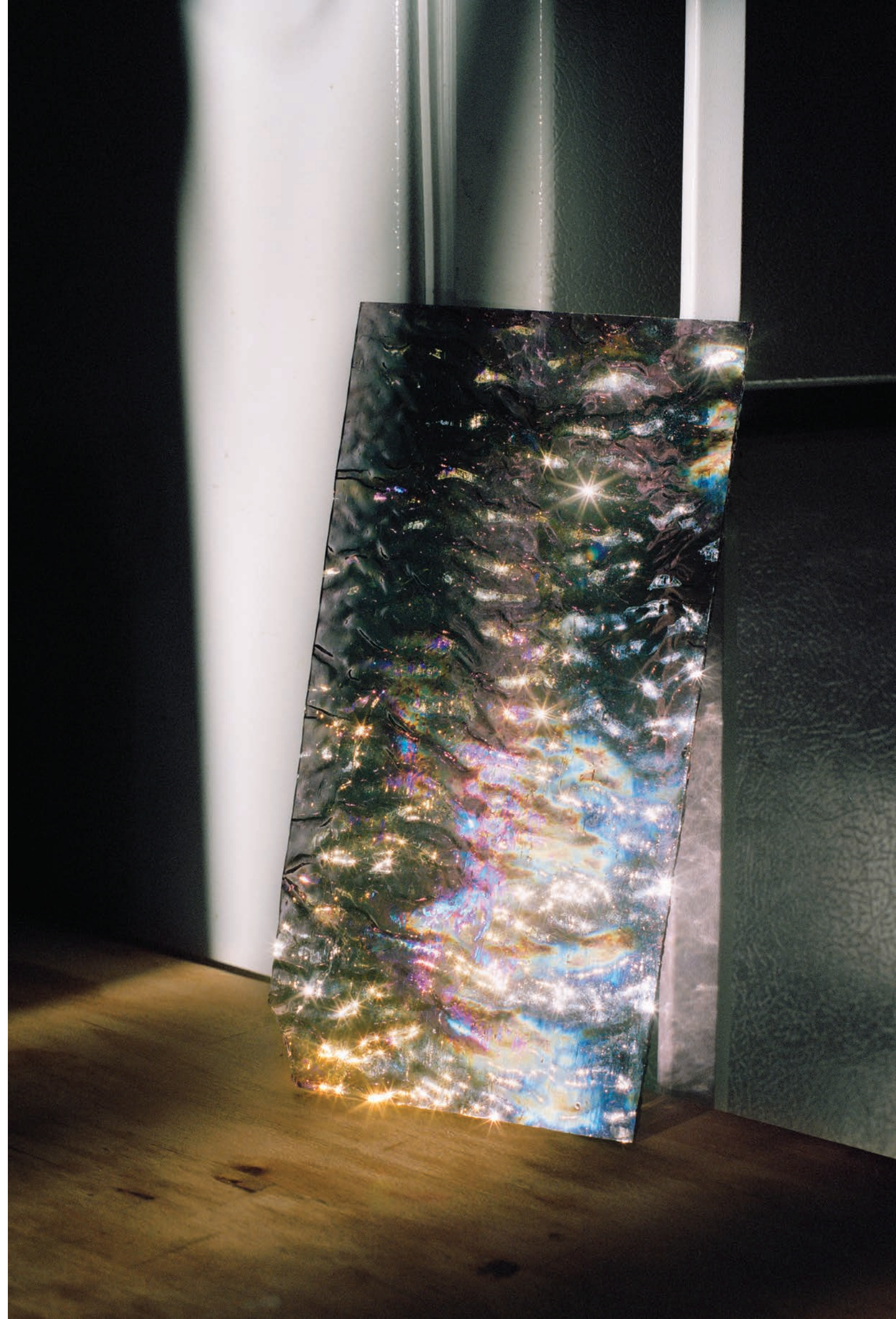




Varvara Mikushkina

Varvara Mikushkina (b. Russia, 1989) is an artist that lives and works in New York City. Her work revolves around the romanticization of light and the decontextualization of experiencing illuminated moments. These moments are seen in mysterious settings or makeshift studios that construct an ancillary aesthetic around light. She received her BFA in Fine Art Photography from Syracuse University in 2011. Mikushkina has exhibited at institutions such as the Hermitage Museum of Art, Russia; Everson Museum of Art, NY; Aperture Foundation, NY and Center for Photography at Woodstock, NY.

varvaramikushkina.com





Zhongjia Sun

Zhongjia Sun (b. China, 1990) is a visual artist who currently lives and works in New York City. She creates images that subvert the language of still life photography as it is used in consumer culture. Drawing on the language of advertising and fashion, her images provide a delightfully humorous take. Her work is full of unexpected material combinations, representational twists, and quirky object associations that combine to create a witty visuality. She aims to capture viewer's imagination, engage their criticality and question their underlying assumptions of the everyday. Her work has been exhibited both in New York City and internationally, including most recently at the Pingyao International Photography Festival; Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia and Photoville in Brooklyn.



Works



Light Arc_25_1500K – 15000
2016
17”x 22”x 2”
Archival Azuka Inkjet print



Light Arc_15_2200K – 15000K
2016
17”x 22”x 2”
Archival Azuka Inkjet print



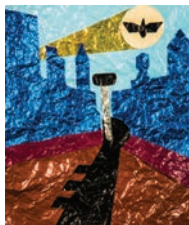
Rotational Division_01
2016
9”x 4”x 4”
Archival Azuka Inkjet print



How to (Blue, Yellow, Aqua, Gray, Pink, Orange, Blue)
2016
20:41 HD video
Video still



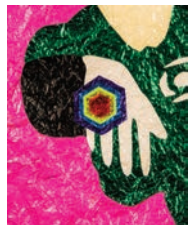
The Answer to the Life Long Questions
2016
Pegboard, Rope, Tape
Installation View



Bat Selfie
2015
24” x 30”
Digital C Print



Captain Southern America
2015
24”x 30”
Digital C Print



Green with Envy
2015
24”x 30”
Digital C Print



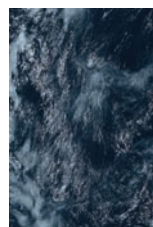
Untitled
2016
From the series 100 Dollars
8.5”x 11”
Archival Pigment Print



Untitled
2016
From America’s Story, 1997
9” x 12”
Hand Cut Textbook



Untitled
2016
20”x 30”
Archival Inkjet Print



Solid Surface
2016
19”x 25”
Archival Inkjet Print



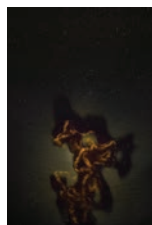
Untitled; After Jack Smith 1
2016
8”x 10”
Expired Negative from 1985



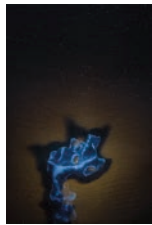
Untitled; After Leigh Bowery 1
2016
8”x 10”
Expired Negative from 1985



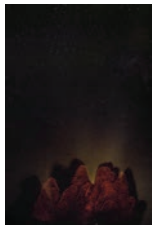
Untitled; After Peter Hujar 1
2016
8”x 10”
Expired Negative from 1985



Phantom and Infinity
2016
Clay, Resin, Pigment
Photography 24”x 40”
Sculpture 4”x 4”x 8”



Phantom and Infinity
2016
Clay, Resin, Pigment
Photography 24”x 40”
Sculpture 4”x 4”x 8”



Phantom and Infinity
2016
Clay, Resin, Pigment
Photography 24”x 40”
Sculpture 4”x 4”x 8”



Maria
2015
20”x 30”
Archival Pigmented Ink



Dollar Mirror
2015
20”x 30”
Archival Pigmented Ink



Stained Glass Ocean
2016
32”x 40”
Archival Pigmented Ink



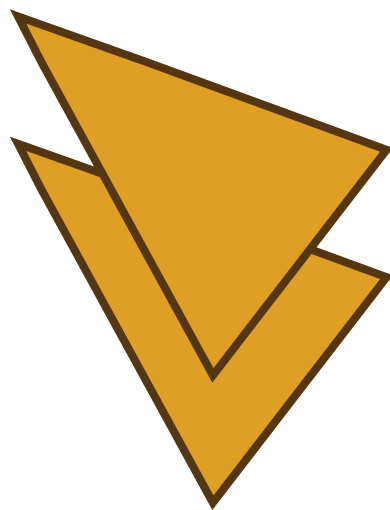
Names of things
2016
18”x 25”
Digital C print



Names of things
2016
18”x 25”
Digital C print



Names of things
2016
18”x 25”
Digital C print



Acknowledgments

Jim Ramer

Acknowledgments

Here we are at the end of another academic year and the opening of the 2016 MFA in Photography Exhibition. The nine emerging artists presenting in this exhibition, after long hours of deliberation and endless hours of work in the field and studio, offer us glimpses of the future worlds that they endeavor to shape. They are skilled in their craft and committed to this pursuit. During their time at Parsons, each of these artists have refined their skills, confronted and over come many challenges in their practice, struggled with the limitations of the medium and discovered its greatest potentials.

Armed with knowledge of the past, experienced in the latest in the photographic technologies and fortified by imagination, they have created works that reflect the complex world that they inhabit. Within the works presented in this exhibition one finds clarity in abstraction, contemplations on the real and the imagined, political proposals, personal reflections, discovery in times past and potential visions of newly imagined futures. Most importantly, what we find in this exhibition are nine incredibly talented young artists who have found their voices.

It has been a true pleasure to work with this group of emerging artists and I wish them well in all their future endeavors. As they continue to strive for the highest possible standard of excellence, I look forward to witnessing their ongoing growth and success.

It is my great pleasure to introduce the MFA in Photography Class of 2016.

This catalogue and exhibition were made possible through the combined efforts of many dedicated and talented people. Thank you to Joel Towers, Executive Dean of Parsons School of Design and the Dean's Office for the ongoing support of this program. My heartfelt, thank you to Anne Gaines, Dean of The School of Art, Media and Technology, for her guidance, commitment and leadership. It is with the greatest appreciation and respect I say thank you to the faculty for their extraordinary commitment, hard work, and dedication. To the departmental staff: special thanks for your tireless contributions to this program's success. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the talents of Fernanda Kock, Kyle Meyer and Varvara Mikushkina and their colleagues for the outstanding design of this catalogue, thank you.

Jim Ramer, Associate Professor
MFA Director

THE NEW SCHOOL

PARSONS