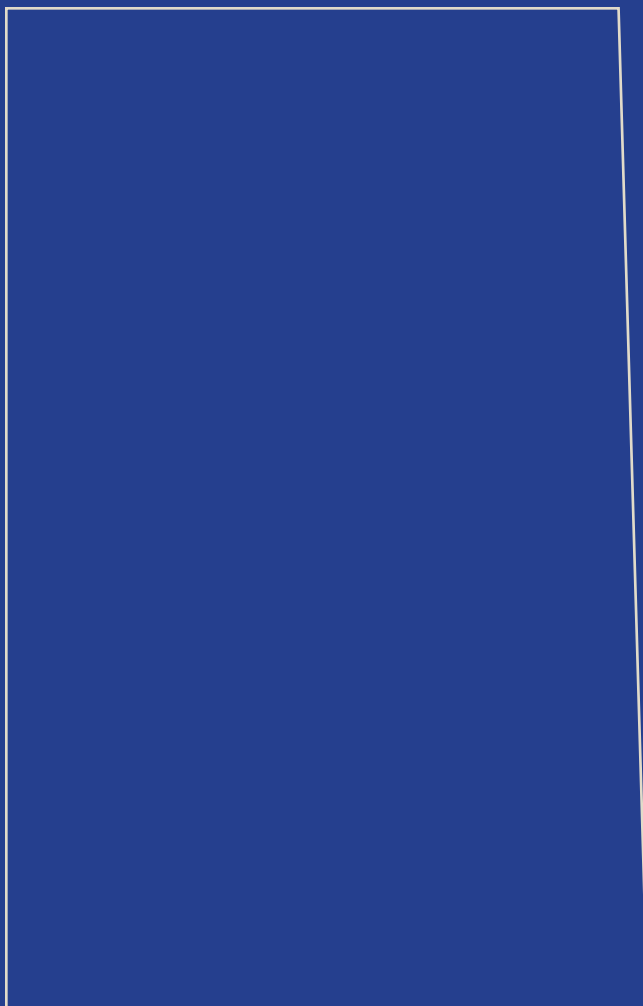


OBVIOUS RECTANGLE



BARNARD
VISUAL
ARTS
THESIS
EXHIBITION
2019

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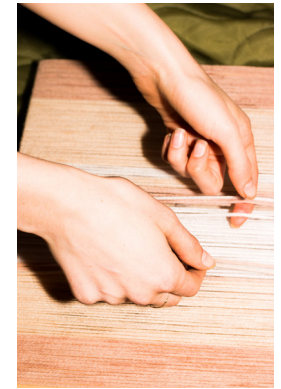
ARTISTS



**GEORGICA
PETTUS**



**BIANCA
RICO**



**HELEN
SHAPER**



**CHLOE
CARBERRY**



**AURIAN
CARTER**



**SHELSEA
CATO**



**CHLOÉ
SLAZAS**



**TESLA
TEED**



**CAROLINE
WALLIS**



**JULIA
GIRARDONI**



**JUSTINE
HU**



**HANNAH
HUNGERFORD**



**IRIS
WECHSLER**



**SUYI
XU**

**THANK
YOU**

**JOAN SNITZER
JOHN MILLER
ADA POTTER
IRENA HAIDUK
EMMA QUAYTMAN**

INTRODUCTION

The senior thesis exhibition comes at a time of great change for the Visual Arts majors of Barnard College's class of 2019 as they prepare for graduation and beyond. It is all the more impressive, then, that so many of these student artists have dedicated and consistent art practices, taking place in studios at school, on commutes from off-campus, or across America by car. Several themes emerge within the varied disciplines of this group. One that notably stands out is the enunciation of process, which is visible in many works that range from soft sculpture to furniture to painting. There is a high level of care present in the techniques many of these artists embrace, indelible in the final works themselves. By making their presence as artists known through visible markers, these women unequivocally lay claim to space of their own, an act that is perhaps less overtly political than tackling issues head-on, yet no less radical in a time marked by polarization. The title of this show, *Obvious Rectangle*, likewise offers a space, a framework, and a plot where meaning can be constructed and made. Open and curious, this class of art majors stands self-aware and clear-eyed from their distinct vantage points, presenting work that is as generous to us as viewers as it is wide-reaching in focus.

The soft sculptures that emerge from **Iris Wechsler's** fiber practice take the body as a site of reinvention and malleability. A carefully constructed cream-colored glove incorporates hand-drawn lines and shapes that suggest a delicate infrastructure of skin and veins. Multicolored threads and embroidery run over these elements, which Wechsler said she partly completed while riding the subway. In emphasizing the handmade qualities of these works, the artist amplifies her voice as their creator. At the same time, intimacy is intrinsic to these pieces, whose texture and material cannot be separated from the distinctive style of the marks that run along their planes. Wechsler chooses to

display her sculptures so that viewers might see through or into them, ultimately revealing a lack of volume and mass at odds with their corporeal references. Reiterating this subversion by overlaying depictions of figures onto garments that are created to conceal the body, the artist questions the reliability of surface and facade by turning insides out.

Also engaging with fiber and suspension, **Chloe Carberry** uses fabric starch to puppeteer voluminous forms out of flat, weighty materials. Influenced by a background in printmaking, the artist silkscreens over the surfaces of moving blankets she then builds into freestanding and suspended sculptures. Carberry transfigures the blankets into forms that appear both hollow and heavy, the drapes and folds suggesting invisible armatures, or hanging as partitions meant to conceal and create space. The ghostliness of these works is tempered by the sturdiness of the moving blankets or the quotidian nature of the cotton in her newer works—another, lighter material might edge too close to the ethereal. Instead, Carberry's sculptures are firmly grounded in their surroundings, while at the same time revealing windows to contemplate what might remain yet to be seen.

Visibility as a theme is central to **Shelsea Cato's** photography, which focuses on close acquaintances and complete strangers, all connected through her eye. In one series of three images, a wooden dock with a posted sign reads "WARNING Stay Off Ice" positioned in the middle of a frozen landscape. A small story unfolds: the artist's father appears walking on the dock, then faces the camera smiling, and then, is gone, leaving only unanswered questions. Cato's interest in psychology informs her photographic techniques, and she frequently uses a telephoto zoom lens to capture subjects too unfamiliar to approach in person. In doing so, Cato fills the space between the viewer and the subject with a heightened sense of risk and curiosity. Just as the sign on the dock is both an alert and a clue, we are carried along by the artist's own trespassing through the practice of photography.

A similar sense of commingled intimacy is present in **Julia Girardoni's** latest project, which dissects our relationships to technology. In her cast works of computers and cell phones, Girardoni creates concrete objects that confront viewers with physical obsolescence to eerie and unsettling effect. Using ubiquitous and decidedly analog media as her prime means of disentangling function from form, the artist challenges dependencies that are seamlessly woven into contemporary life for much of the developed world. These sculptures, which call out for a haptic encounter, especially in the example of the iPhone 6 casts, are ironic, evoking the simultaneous calm and panic brought on by the denial of typically accessible information. Similarly, the artist plays with what it means to 'scroll' through one's own records: Girardoni has taken a year of her iPhone photographs, and printed them on a long roll of fabric. As it is intended to be hung high on a wall, cascading in snakes and creases, only parts of her personal information are visible in any given installation. By manipulating common apparatuses and displacing the data they house through the use of incongruent materials, Girardoni pinpoints the precarious link between digital content and its containers.

Harnessing seemingly opposite formal imperatives, the restrained surfaces of **Hannah Hungerford's** two-dimensional works are rooted in an enthusiasm for texture and tactility. The pieces comprising her thesis selection are the paired down results of earlier, more ebulliently messy paintings made with materials including glitter, wire, and brightly colored crayon. Committed to experimenting with different media, Hungerford has chosen glue gun hot-melt sticks and matte plaster as the primary media in her latest works, whose aesthetics coincidentally mimic the antiquities she researches as an Ancient Studies double-major. There is an implicit tension in these monochromatic paintings produced by their ambitious scale in contrast to the meticulous detail of the artist's marks; together they recall both craft traditions and a sensual Minimalism. Hungerford

maintains an openness to chance, considering each stage of a painting carefully before adding new layers. This inquisitiveness comes through in the individual gestures of each canvas, which eschew mechanistic repetition and instead delight in the variations of a visible process.

Helen Shaper's lamps exude warmth owing not only to the physical light they emit but also from the artist's own joy in manufacturing them. These small furnishings stand unassuming yet are magnetic. Over the past year, Shaper's attention has shifted from minimal woven wall works to these utilitarian objects. This transition towards functionality is in step with her interest in natural materials, recycled clothing, and eco-conscious living practices. Shaper uses natural dyes to color the yarn of the lampshades, and has also noted that while she has mostly taught herself the natural dye techniques that provided a foundation for these works, she is keenly aware of the longstanding yet often oral traditions of knowledge she is drawing from.

Analogous yet distinct spheres of knowledge inform **Aurian Carter's** zines, paintings, and drawings, which all stem from an ongoing sketchbook practice that plays with notions of identity and influence. Through cartoons and witticism, the artist takes as her starting point renderings of her Iranian-American family as well as ancient monuments and reliefs painted primarily in black ink that make reference to Persian calligraphy. Carter addresses the magnitude of these histories with humor. In one drawing, she transforms a sketch of an Assyrian bust into a self-portrait, a diaristic and decisive gesture that asserts her own relationship to the artifact—housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Additionally, over the past few months, the artist has produced a series of zines that contain sketches of professors and celebrities alike. These self-printed booklets—rooted in punk and DIY cultures—further challenge traditionally monolithic forms of institutional authority, like those upheld by museums and universities.

Instead of addressing the cultural touchstones housed in New York, **Justine Hu's** sculpture installations and digital artworks revolve around notions of isolation and deterioration within the city. Using digital drawing software, she has made architectural and stylized drawings of the city: empty subway platforms, an ant's-eye view of Financial District skyscrapers. These renderings are accessed continuously on a screen as well as through large-scale prints, which reference the perspectival and spatial organization of historical Chinese landscape painting. Recently, Hu has taken these otherwise clean prints and altered them to the point of near-total destruction, the original paper barely recognizable in their current blackened states. The Hobbesian nature of Hu's commentary on contemporary life contains few silver linings, and the artist intends to punctuate her final installation with a pile of ashes, the remnants of another work's demise. She explains that her aim is to reflect reality and that this series is "not a celebration of humanity, but a funeral."

Equally morbid in theme, **Tesla Teed's** work asks: What does the end of the world look like? This is one of the questions at stake in her recent body of sculpture, whose biomorphic slimes bloom and crawl over the sanitized surfaces of a gallery's white walls. Choosing to create these forms from bioplastic, the biodegradable alternative to petroleum plastic, Teed calls into question our attempts at 'green' living to combat climate change, offering instead a picture of a landscape just as dire, even when made with organic materials. The resulting fleshy black and warm-toned sculptures are as grotesque as they are alluring. This contradiction is informed by her interest in the Pacific Ocean and its islands, places that have been fetishized by scientists and tourists alike both for their fecundity and isolation. Paradox is at the heart Teed's work, which makes its home in the discomfort of living in what is likely earth's twilight.

If Teed's work ponders terrestrial exploitation, then **Chloé Slazas'** practice contends with material and corporeal manifestations through fashion photography. Set in nondescript offices, rooms, and gyms, the series depicts women in various poses, surrounded by an array of objects and commodities. Slazas undermines the, at times, one-dimensional relationship between photographer and sitter in fashion photography, a world she both parodies and pays homage to. The images are the result of careful negotiation with her models, whose clothing or angle preferences Slazas considers in each shot. In one photograph, a woman wearing assless chaps and red dish gloves is curled into a glamorous squat on a treadmill. Vivisecting the composition, the foregrounded arm of the exercise machine sports the words "Life Fitness" in a red that echoes the model's gloves. The subject glances boldly at Slazas' camera with a smize perfectly at home in a fashion spread, yet no object stands out as purchasable. We are left to wonder what is for sale: a lifestyle, an exercise regimen, or our attention? The precision with which the artist balances each composition encourages our focus to circulate, thereby destabilizing the seemingly fixed hierarchies inherent to images with something to sell.

With a similar investment in sumptuous tactility, **Suyi Xu's** moody and melodramatic paintings open onto pseudo-surreal interiors. Zoomed-in objects obscure much within these domestic landscapes as she invites her viewers right up to these painterly veils of concealment. Xu installs her paintings in salon-like clusters interspersed with the very objects that appear within her tableaux. The artist positions many of her recent works as studies, reinforced by the object pairings as if to interrupt potential trompe-l'oeil effects. Yet there is a sense of mystery that carries through these scenes, as figures are doubled and transposed. One portrait of a woman, whose serpentine neck lengthens above crossed arms, recurs in miniature in another painting of what appears to be a bedroom, sheets rumpled. Xu's interest in motif is evident in these repetitions, but also in her preference for

deep red walls onto which these displays are installed, echoing the rich colors of her palette. By extending the paintings' interiors to the walls they adorn, Xu envelops us in claustrophobic environments in which we become voyeurs.

Bianca Rico's thesis work is also influenced by Surrealist themes, though they notably unfold within a dark short film: the culmination of a year's worth of writing, filming, and editing. The piece opens with a dissection of fake news and videos gone viral, immediately seeding an air of mistrust. Rico introduces her main subject, named Binaca, who is supposedly an art student at Columbia. Rico plays the first-person narrator who decides to follow Binaca in order to find out how social media culture "is affecting young artists today." Details about Binaca emerge, and our trust in the character erodes. The narrative winds in disorienting ways: in one scene the camera focuses down a long hallway, at the end of which stand feet that begin to step, hauntingly, nearer to the foreground. The limbs twist and creep almost as if possessed, but we are left no explanation. In the end, Binaca's identity and sanity unravel, providing an answer to the question posed at the onset. Rico implies that the fracturing and dissolution of identity are the consequences of an obsession to one's online avatar, yet leaves us wondering: Will she, as a "young artist" herself, fall prey to the same fate?

Taking a different, albeit equally eerie approach to video, **Georgica Pettus'** filmic practice explores traditional fables gone awry, with subtle yet damning consequences. These scenes open with the pep of an afterschool special, yet the plots steadily deteriorate, leaving protagonists done in and villains reigning triumphantly. Set in the early aughts, these vignettes include hokey read-along subtitles, stock footage of rooms or offices, and characters donning exaggerated and comical costumes such as huge claw oven mitts to signify a crab. Pettus is careful to avoid gruesomeness as things fall apart: perhaps the most unnerving aspect of her anti-fables

is their uniform tone, which insists on an outward calm in the face of disaster, evidenced in the 70s muzak playing throughout. Originally inspired by the demotion of Pluto's planetary status, which occurred in 2006, these videos contemplate what happens when the underdog loses. The consistently maintained aesthetic permeating these videos makes the message all the more sinister: in glossing over dystopian plot twists without breaking the sing-song pacing, Pettus emphasizes our helplessness by turning us into bystanders.

Positioning the viewer as outside looking in, **Caroline Wallis'** photographs draw on the long tradition of the American road trip, yet she subverts this history by surfacing information that is often erased. Each photograph corresponds to a small card that contains facts and figures about the site's history before it was settled by white colonists, which visitors are invited to take home. Wallis avoids sentimentalism through a commitment to the archive: her practice rebuffs the notion of the artist's vision as predominant, instead working studiously to serve viewers with interpretive tools. Doubly illustrating this endeavor, she intends to present this series in a self-produced book. Though skillfully photographed, her subjects are firmly quotidian, and the neon signs, dogs, and sloping hills all receive the same forthright attention. By complicating entrenched historical narratives at a time of increased nationalism, Wallis democratizes the gaze and challenges predominant accounts of this country's past and present.

Many of these student artists' works crawls, hangs, or reflects their environments. They make claims, both principled and aesthetic, that demand our attention as viewers and reject the notion that art stands solitary, no matter its audience. Spilling out into our worlds, these works create a fabric of consideration that involves us immediately, and lingers long after our time in front of them.

-Emma Quaytman, Exhibition Curator

CHLOE CARBERRY

Moving blankets are designed to cover and protect. Blankets may be blue, black, red, white, quilted in a range of different patterns. The quilting is functional, it holds the batting inside in the blanket. Weighty and solid, it shields and guards.

Stripped from the blanket, the formal pattern of the quilting transforms. Broken down into modular units, it can be used to create a new system for composition. Time to play!

The fabric takes the illusion of quilting, but it does not protect. It covers an object that was never there.

Rather than making immaterial space material/concrete, the fabric embraces air and space.

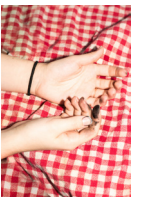
Soon this will be gone too.





AURIAN CARTER

My first language, Farsi, exists to me like a phantom limb whose shapes and sounds are now only vaguely familiar to my English-speaking tongue. Though I lost the language to connect with my Iranian heritage, I look to the arts of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East in order to construct a personal style of visual language based upon art objects that have already spoken for thousands of years about the relationship between east and west. Through self-portraiture, studies of museum objects, scenes of daily life, and narrative, I approach what it means to be both American and Middle Eastern as a learner rather than an educator, assembling books and prints that use art in lieu of words to communicate the knowledge I have acquired.



SHELSEA CATO

I'm fascinated by the differences between candid and posed photos. At times I question if there even is a difference. I'm drawn to what it means to be human seen through the lens of the camera. All of my images are candid capturing people I know, including friends, family, and classmates, and people I don't know, strangers. My images create a third mental category of people I somewhat know because they are all reminiscent of someone I've crossed paths with in my life.





JULIA GIRARDONI



How many photos are “inside” my phone?

Concrete is the second most consumed resource in the world after water.

I see a series of images changing as they repeat themselves.

Concrete gets stronger over time. Most New York City sidewalks are made of concrete.

Even if a sidewalk is made of a different material, like granite or another stone, there is a layer of concrete beneath it.

In the last week, I spent 24 hours and 32 minutes on my phone, an average of 3 hours and 25 minutes per day.

Concrete is quite simply a permanent grey material, a grey matter.

Sometimes I just scroll and scroll and scroll.

Grey matter makes up our central nervous system. It contains most of the brain’s neuronal cells which are responsible for muscle control and sensory perception. Seeing, hearing, memory, emotions, speech, decision making, and self-control.

There is grey matter inside my head and outside my body. I live inside it, I walk on it. At the same time, I exist in a virtual realm. The grey matter inside my head processes my virtual presence in my computer and phone and also my physical existence, always supported by a permanent ground of concrete on some level.

I am obsessed with screenshots, with the idea of a screen as a camera.

Space contains everything. Memory space is limited.

The digital object relies entirely on the use and storage of digital signals, binary values of voltage. There could never be a computer made of concrete.

I did not take these 3,871 pictures and 440 videos for an art project.

This is my camera roll.



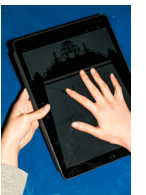
JUSTINE HU

I have been feeling a little lost and a little lonely.

What am I supposed to do with my life? Am I making the right decisions? How do I become successful – and what exactly is success? Everyone around me seems to have a plan. Questions like these never seem to solve themselves.

In an effort to find answers, I created a graphic novel inspired by life. Yet the more I wrote and the more I drew, the more my character deviated from her real-life counterpart. By the end, the character receives a happy ending, and the true me doesn't. The story is a lie, yet I don't want to change it. If I ultimately can't have a happy ending, at least this version of me can.

The truth is there are a lot of people in this world who really suck. There are a lot of people who are relentlessly cruel and will do terrible things to those they think are weaker than they are. They tear apart, impale and stab, stamp to the ground, crumple up like trash, or burn alive all we hold dear. Happy endings, rainbows, and unicorns can be destroyed by the flick of a hand. Characterized by scenes from my graphic novel treated in this torturous way, this project is a funeral of humanity.





HANNAH HUNGERFORD

All I've ever wanted to do in museums is touch things - the objects, paintings, and sculptures alike. When I was younger, I tried to touch art because I desperately wanted to understand how it was made, and I knew that I would only gain that knowledge by physically touching it. To this day, when I enter a museum space, I want to run my hands along sculptures and gently poke at paintings in order to verify their existence in my mind. For preservation and other reasons, the taboo against tactility is built into our modern art historical conventions. These politics of museum display inform my pieces, as art viewing is a multisensory experience. I have been exploring different ways to confront these by bringing in other senses. I want to evoke a sense of tactility with my work, but rather than breaking the touch barrier, I examine the tension that is created by the compulsive need to touch it.



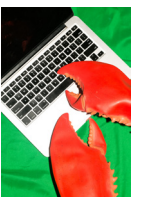
GEORGICA PETTUS

On August 24, 2006, Pluto was robbed of its status. What was once a planet, a physical manifestation of a god in the heavens became a dwarf overnight. It had no say in the matter either; it was expelled, banished without a moment's notice, and without consolation.

The men who took the title were not punished, but rather, revered. With Pluto's pseudo-death came the death of any notion of objective, scientific truth.

It wasn't long before other so-called truths began to falter. The Fable once considered a universal moral compass, stopped pointing north. In the wake of this great loss, and with 13 years of hindsight, I have compiled a selection of post-Plutonian Fables. There is no such thing as reward or repentance, no triumph of Good over Evil.

(at right: *Axis of Evil*)





BIANCA RICO

I have a vivid memory of watching a Scooby-Doo movie at a Halloween event at school when I was six years old. In one scene, a witch soars towards the viewer on her broomstick. After the movie, I stayed inside during recess, processing the scene that would go on to spawn nightmares for months to come. I couldn't shake the image of the cackling woman from my mind.

Despite my continuing terror, I was stirred to design my own sinister character. By age eight, I had convinced myself that an evil woman lived under my bed, and took great pleasure in concealing myself under blankets and pillows each night before falling asleep, hoping to catch a glimpse of the figure should she decide to emerge from the shadows. Around the same time, I started a rumor that there was a ghost in the girls' restroom, scaring so many of my peers in the process that the principal had to make a school-wide announcement dispelling my myth.

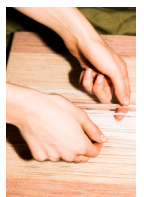
This year, I invented a new villainess. Our current age of fake news, blurred truths, and viral stories offers an ideal setting for a new kind of antihero. Inspired by the true story of Zardulu, the enigmatic artist whose work often creates viral disruptions across social media, my movie takes place in a fictional art world and revolves around a young filmmaker's attempts to document an ambitious, yet devious, artist.



HELEN SHAPER

In a moment of increasing disconnect between the built world and the land, my work seeks to re-discover the relationship that exists between the two - tracing material origins as a mode of urging viewers to consider the implications of their own consumption.

Comprising a systematic up-cycling of used and discarded objects into functional lampshades, the process by which the work is created positions forgotten physical materials in direct dialogue with energy (in the form of light), raising questions about the relationship between the two. Through this line of questioning, the work encourages a meditation on the economy of material goods, the footprint of both physical and non-physical goods, and the possibility of long-term sustainability within a culture of mass consumption.





CHLOÉ SLAZAS

This work exposes my absolute love for fashion as well as problematic ideals of the industry. Color, texture, and glamour are the elements that I have focused on throughout this series. While shooting, the high fashion editorial “formula” is in the back of my mind but rather than follow it, I toy with the rules. As someone who works in the fashion industry it often times becomes hard to differentiate ethics behind the methods in selling a product and what should be advertised as the societal standard. With these series, I am pushing “false advertising” into the realms of the fashion community.



TESLA TEED

There's no big wipeout. That's a fantasy.
The reality is that they survive
while losing more and more.
That's worse than the wipeout.





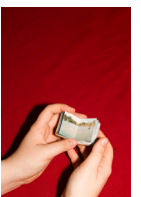
CAROLINE WALLIS

Between the Crickets and Coyotes is a photographic project examining what America looks like today and how that physical reality contradicts the written and unwritten histories of land transfer, as told through the etymology of place names and brief histories of those places. America's diversity of name origins (Dutch, Iroquois, Spanish, Apache, English) can be used as a tool for revealing the violence and cultural erasure that are products of white settler-colonialism.

Before college I hadn't seen much of this country. Growing up in New York City, I had a vision of the "rest" of America formed only through television and advertisements. New York can feel removed from the past, in a constant state of rebuilding, as evidenced by scaffolding and newborn skyscrapers. So the west, where America's history of eliminating peoples in a continuous quest for gold, God, and glory is relatively recent and accessible, was a revelation to me.

From that first visit, a reckoning with my claim to America, Americanness, and the land I've lived had begun. Drives to the south, in its tangled denial of and reconciliation with its brutal history, and the midwest, filled with the flattest fields and an abundance diverse cities, filled in my vision. Through my portraits of the objects and scenes that make up America's quotidian experience I aim to create an incomplete, patchwork narrative that spans our country.

(at left: *Dodge City*, 2017)



IRIS WECHSLER

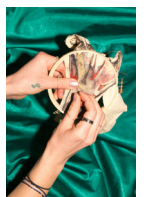
Embodiment is both a universal experience and the most fundamentally personal element of human identity.

But bodies don't exist in a vacuum.

Meaning begins to accumulate upon them before we are even born. Societal preconceptions, self presentation, and personal relationships intertwine to shape our encounters with our own and others' bodies.

My work evokes this experience of being in a body. I enact the processes which weave meaning into and onto us, layering line, color, and thread. Artifacts of strange, human creatures emerge, carrying and disrupting these burdens. The hollow volumes of the figures imply an absent body. In the interplay between positive and negative space, this absence becomes presence. Costumes vacated or waiting to be filled, the works gesture to the performative nature of embodiment.

At its core all of my work deals with how we understand each other and ourselves, beginning at the level of flesh and spiralling outwards.





SUYI XU

Red, Bleeding on Canvas, 2019



CHLOE CARBERRY
AURIAN CARTER
SHELSEA CATO
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JUSTINE HU
HANNAH HUNGERFORD
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