

WARP

the SFSU 2022

Master of Fine Arts

in Art Thesis Exhibition

**APRIL 22
|
MAY 12**

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INTRODUCTION

It is a rare occasion when I feel I can speak on behalf of another human, and yet in this case I can confidently speak for a large majority when I say we are all looking for connection. We all want to connect to and with, be it another human, land, history, and our own bodies. Even before the world as we knew it would begin to crumble, we sought connection. In the last two years, we have amassed an enormous amount of data that points to the many attempts at finding that, successful or otherwise. We log in and scroll to look for a sign that someone is close to us. We go for walks around our neighborhood parks, not just to escape boredom, but to remind ourselves that the earth is still green. We risk our own health to fly to another part of the globe to make sure our loved ones on the other end are still there waiting for us. Even when fulfilled, we continue to search for more. How can we — how do we — satisfy this endless desire to connect?

Some of the answers can be found in the work of the 2022 MFA at SFSU, who through their widely varied practices and conceptual approaches, have discovered many ways to find connection or have at least found a way

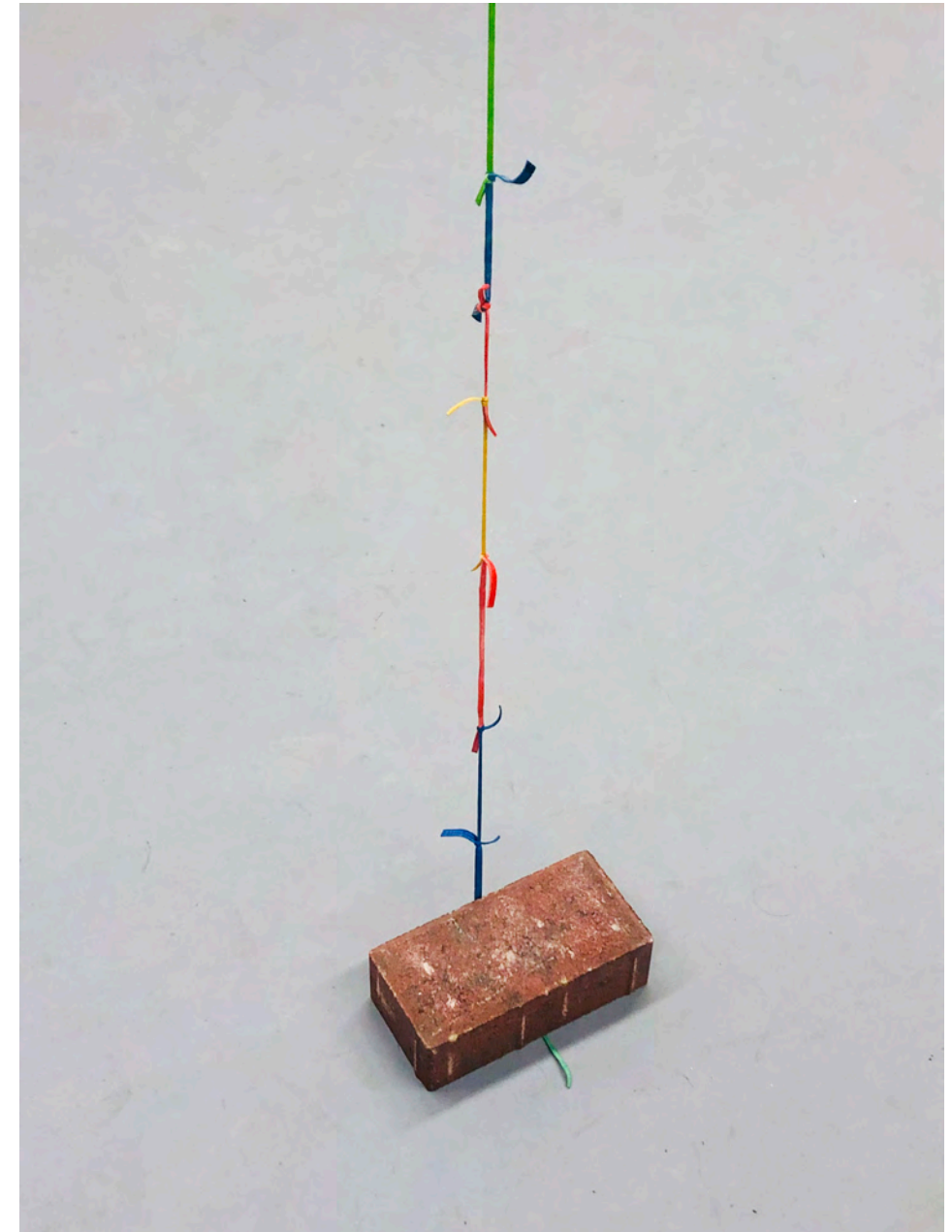
to materialize the desire. The body of work from this cohort exemplifies a desperation, a deep-seated need, to understand how our bodies function and exist in the future, even if it means looking to one's own personal history to unearth.

This moment in world history has created a void in us, with no instructions for how to remedy it and with less material with which to fill it. Despite the palpable and collective emptiness, these four artists — Claudia Huenchuleo Paquien, Nicole Shaffer, Haley Summerfield, and Natasha Loewy — have figured out a way to transmit a shared desire. This transmission results in an intensified bond between object and artist, and artist and audience, that becomes more apparent once you feel your way through the spaces. For there are invisible ropes tying each of these practices together, look closely and you'll find one is made up of clay, another textile, wool, and rubber. Satisfaction is found in the acknowledgment of shared longing. *Warp* — is the shapes we attempt, the stretches toward, and the rearranging of ourselves to reach that point of connection.

IN ORDER TO START THE PROCESS OF HEALING,
WE NEED TO ALLOW FOR THINGS TO BREAK.
DRAWING FROM PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF
FAMILY TRAUMA AND OUR SHARED SOCIO-
POLITICAL CLIMATE, I CREATE WORKS THAT
USE TENSION AND FRAGILITY TO EXPLORE
THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ANXIETY
AND HUMOR.

Natasha Loewy does what thoughtful minimalist aesthetic does — problematizes its simplicity and repurposes its own troubled history to make way for depth and complexity. She is a collector of evidence that humans are bound to fail. *One and two and three and four and*, the counting in this title of Loewy's work feels all too familiar. The counting has an anticipatory rhythm. As if I'm waiting for someone to say, "breathe" after the fourth count. The objects in her sculptural arrangements carry the same familiarity, waiting for the other shoe to drop as I hold my breath in anticipation. These remnants of the everyday are oddly positioned, stacked awkwardly, hanging in the balance. If you stare long enough it can feel a lot like our everyday, attempting the futile work of holding ourselves together when everything is seemingly falling apart.

Loewy's configuration of materials is like a series of cognitive entanglements. In *one stretch at a time*, a thick and seemingly heavy piece of plexiglass rests against an inflated rubber balloon.



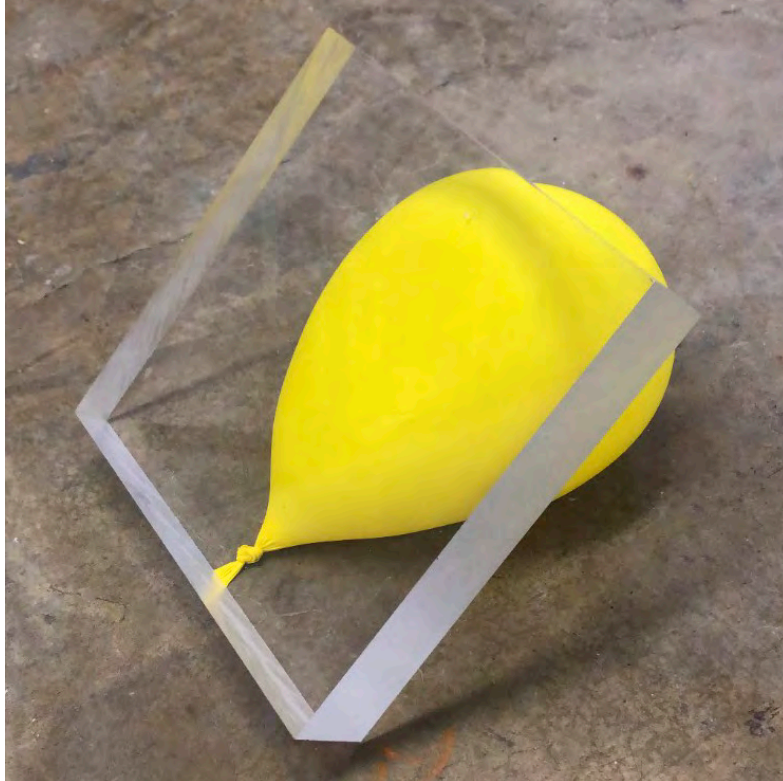
holding together / falling apart
Rubberbands, red brick, floor, ceiling, time
Time and dimensions vary



how are you holding up?
Two cinder-blocks, wall, floor
32" x 6" x 13"



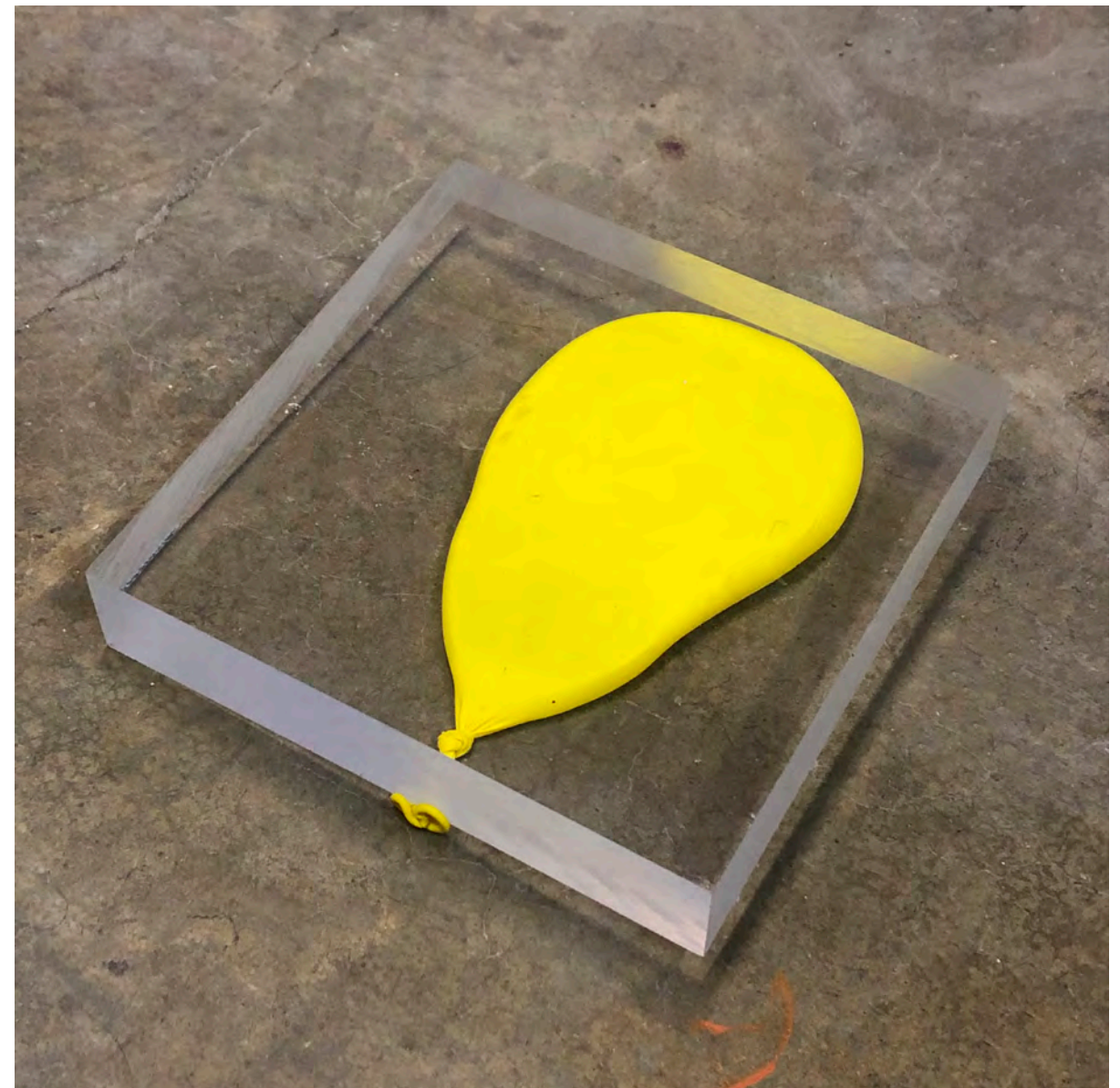
bent out of shape
Cinder-blocks, cart with wheels
32" x 66" x 24"



one stretch at a time
Yellow balloon, plexiglass
Time and dimensions vary

This evidences an obvious labor but in its absurdity, also exposes unrealistic expectations and a predictable failure. Her practice is an investigation of the dynamics present in the everyday, where we seek success and instead find failure, and through that process somehow find healing. *bent out of shape*, a display of stacked cement bricks on a slim piece of plywood on wheels, is a testament to giving in when something gives way. There's a sigh of relief one can feel when you're in sustained observation of tension and stress. It's a strange and stabilizing experience.

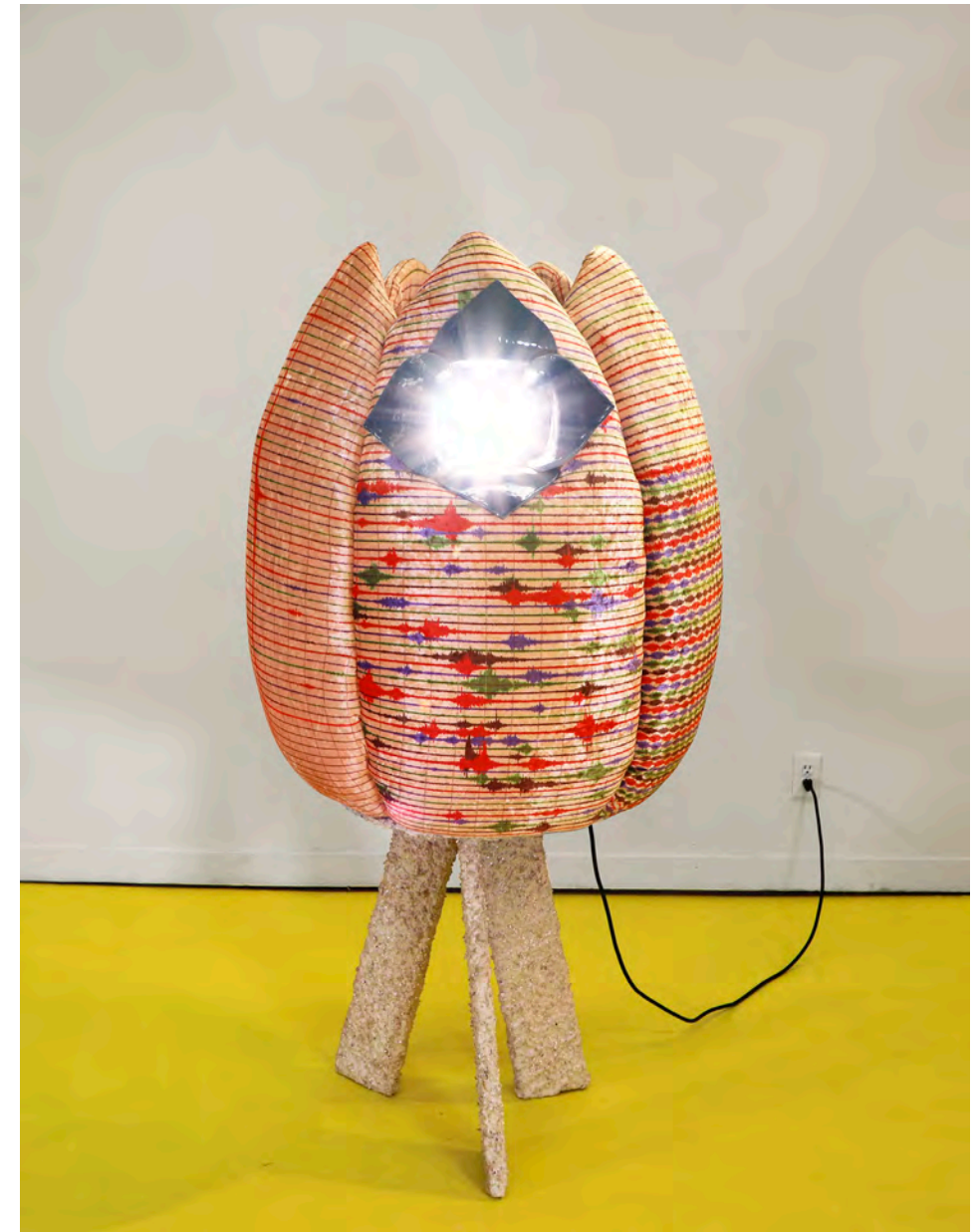
There are uncanny alliances forged between these object bodies which have found themselves in a precarious state. Feeling the pull of gravity against its surface much like life's pressures. We constantly hold onto our own traumas and somehow still find what little strength we have left to hold someone else. Her materials have unspoken agreements to hold one another while the tension and friction are a matter of fact. Sometimes you have to ask, who's holding whom? And if one of us gets tired and falls or lets go, then we both fail. Loewy reveals to us that no matter how hard any of us try, failure is inevitable and depending on your perspective, maybe, it can even be funny.



I use the process of research to locate & revise narratives that have been used to flatten queer, gender variant, & mad bodies into pathologized representations. Aesthetics that were originally created to claim coherence are now making space for poetic & experiential understandings.

What measures can be taken to close the gap between what we know of our past and how we experience our future? Nicole Shaffer constructs objects which can be considered furniture. Not the kind of furniture that sits comfortably in a traditional domestic space, their oblong shapes make them rather impractical for a home. These sculptural objects — non-normative bodies — are the accessories and fixtures poetically situated inside a mysterious interior, operating against the logic of normative spatial dynamics. This upholstered environment reflects a curious world made up of repurposed scientific documents and family chronicles.

Shaffer doesn't have much of a connection with their biological family, outside of a close connection to their nuclear family. Though there are traces of their family in the fabric of their work, the distance for them is literal, having had little to no relationship much with their own bloodline. However, despite the distance, there are remnants of their familial history that usher them toward a material breakthrough in their practice. Their interest is in an expansion of connection and belonging.

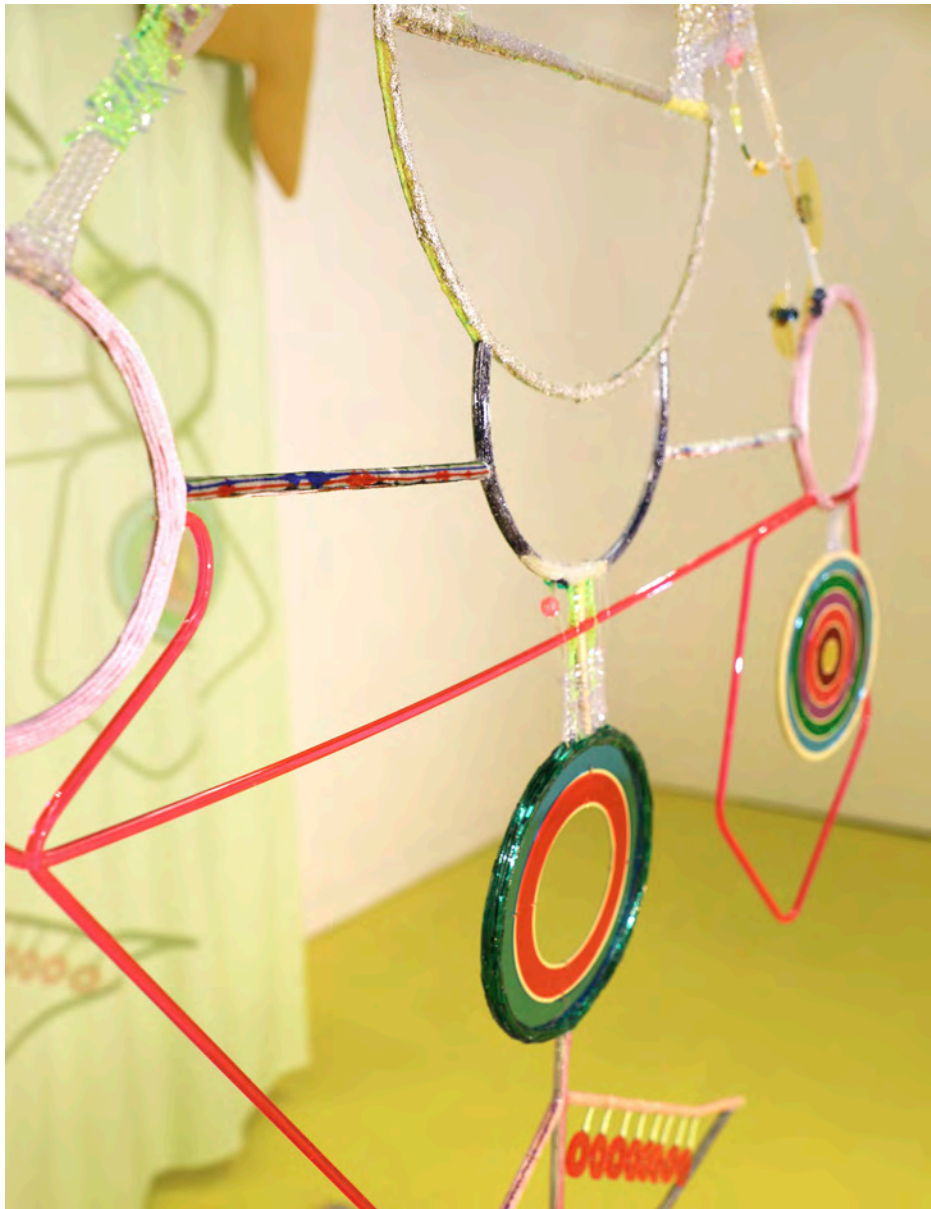


Polar-Opposite forms of the third ground

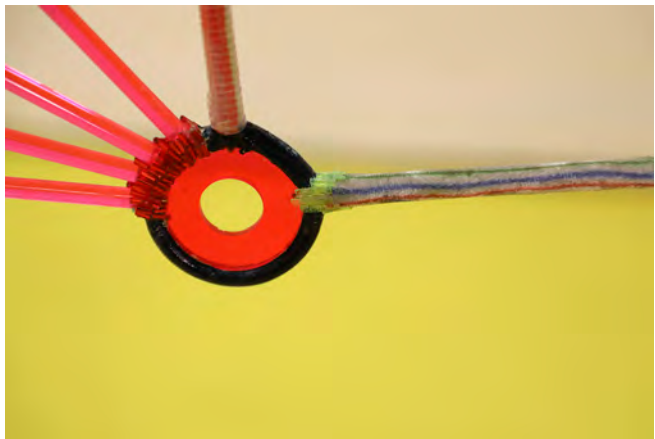
Deconstructed projector, fan, custom printed velour fabric with 5 days of CA seismographic data. The form is modeled from Benjamin Brett's schematics of "The horn-shaped onde corolla" as delineated in his book, *Geometrical Psychology, or, The Science of Representation*. Paper mache, wood, pearlite, and mica stand 66" x 30" x 30"



Polar-Opposite forms of the third ground (detail)



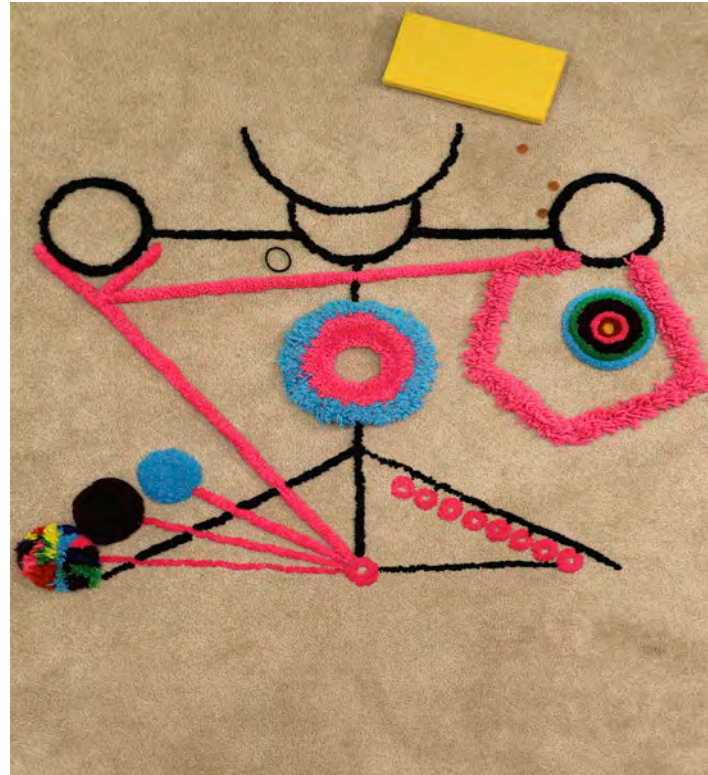
Object of chance occurrence (like luck)
Transparent acrylic sheets, rattan,
glass and plastic beads, woven rexlace
and fishing line, yellow flocking, nail polish,
custom printed velour fabric with one
hour of CA seismographic data
40" X 40" x .25"





Apartment floor oracle

Carpet remnant, vintage yarn,
latch hooked infographic, 3 pennies,
one hair tie, yellow book
48" x 60"



The fabric of Shaffer's furniture has an embodied temporality, with its thread holding evidence of former lives. The print on the fabric, made in collaboration with artists Leonard Reidelbach and Maura O'Docharty, bridges the mysteries of unknown history to a tangible reality. Two works, *Furniture for relieving or aggravating an injury (endless softness trick)* and *All the things you could have been*, use archival photographs of burn piles and hybrid plant life from early 20th century California horticulturist and botanist, Luther Burbank. *Polar-Opposite forms of the third ground*, an upright bulb-like structure with a beam of light projecting from the center of four petals, is wrapped in a fabric with a seismographic data print. It computes psychological geometries and translates them into a strong visionary light that fills this world of Shaffer's creation.

Furniture for buoyancy is inspired by their grandma, Gladys Mullen, who had an affinity for making and selling miniature furniture. Even more than a creative outlet, these tiny objects were a method of survival. Using screen-printed textile based on the fabric used in Mullen's work is Shaffer's way



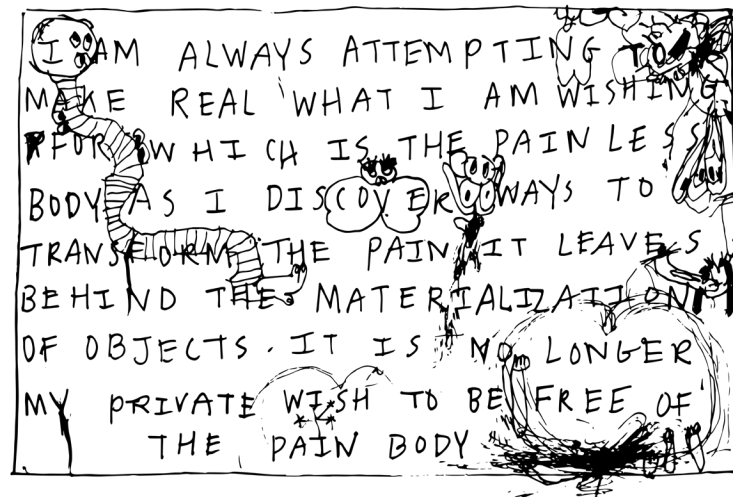
*Furniture for relieving or aggravating an injury
(endless softness trick)*

Repurposed mattress, ceramic step stool and ceiling tile,
orange velvet, mobility handles, rainbow catcher, mylar
streamers, cotton piping, mirror, custom printed velour fabric
with altered photo from the archives of Luther Burbank
46" x 36" x 26"

of closing a familial gap. As it suggests in the title, they look to this process of craft making, which was a skill passed down from their own mother, for guidance on how to find buoyancy.

Encountering this staging of objects is to welcome mystery. Like many a world unknown, curtains greet you at the entrance with a silhouette of an unidentifiable object cast onto their surface. It appears like a vision, ornate and illuminating, sparking a kind of wonderment that is hard to grasp. Shaffer invites us into a world that, with its embrace of an aestheticized madness and deviant crafting techniques, houses a queer-spirited and gender variant milieu. This world made up of fabric that stretches all the way from the personal psyche to the pathologized life of plants, is comprised of a deep historical texture, connecting patterns of a history that can always be accessed.

HALEY SUMMERFIELD



In a world where your body is an avoidable guest in the mind's landscape of fantasy and pleasure, you must welcome the inevitable pain that lurks closely behind desire. Haley Summerfield visualizes a world of fantasy that renders the complexity of human emotions and the grotesque evidence of the body's presence. Of course, with the complicated nuances of fantasy, spontaneity, humor, and play, are natural ingredients and Summerfield's ceramic work absorbs all of that kinetic energy. Her ceramic pedestals are disembodied limbs, bending to the weight of their own bodies, with an ability to hold the weight of a body's suffering.

As an artist with a close relationship to discomfort and suffering, Summerfield's work is a result of a body's desire to find release through mark-making and world building. *Twin Heads* and *Primal Night* are doodles turned etchings which are documents of a body that is used to living in a reality where everything is rigid and regimented for survival, and that needs an escape. In these clay figures and etchings, there's an obvious embrace of chaos. Scratching, clawing, as seen in *Touching Light*, are residues of angst and endless attempts to flee.



On Becoming a Thorn

Ceramic
3" x 5" x 1"

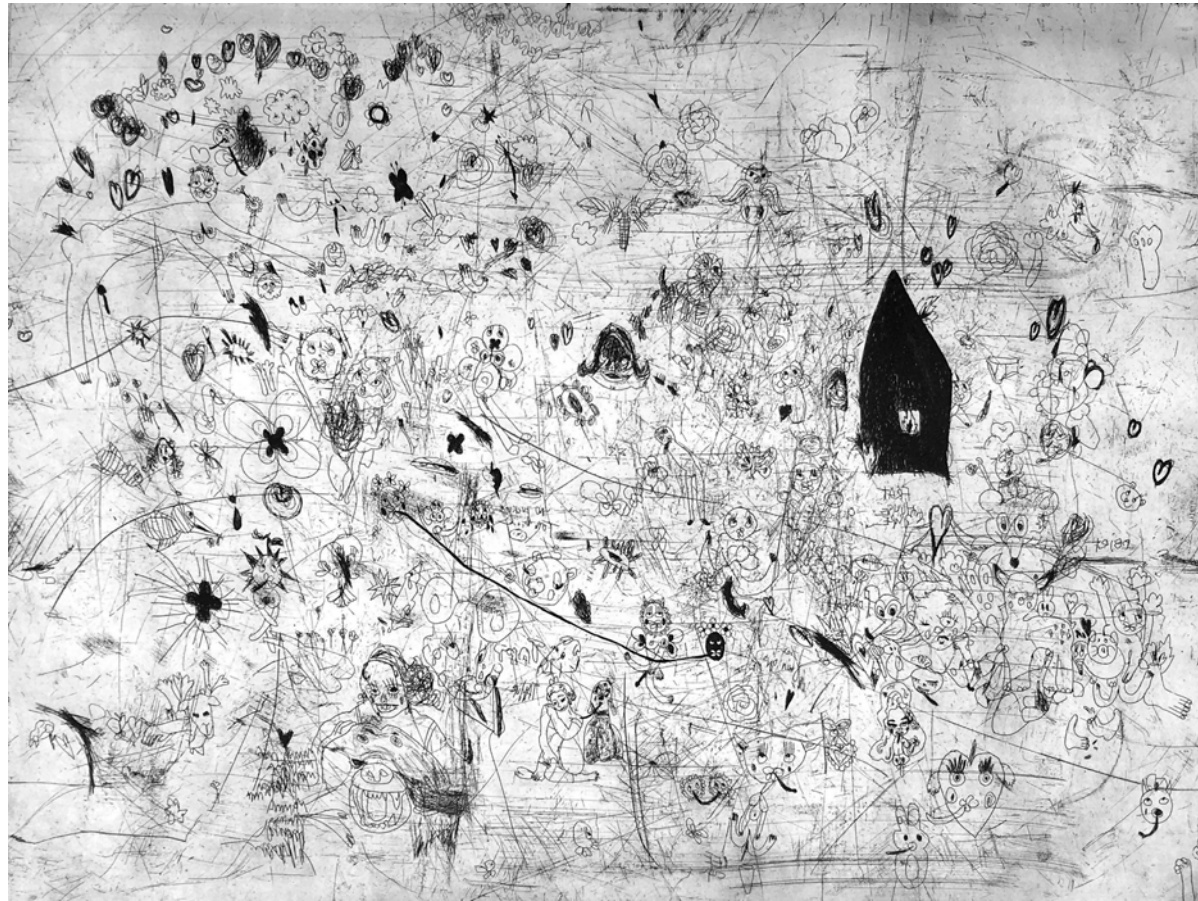


Starling
Ceramic
8" x 3" x 3"



Touching Light
Ceramic
7" x 5" x 4"

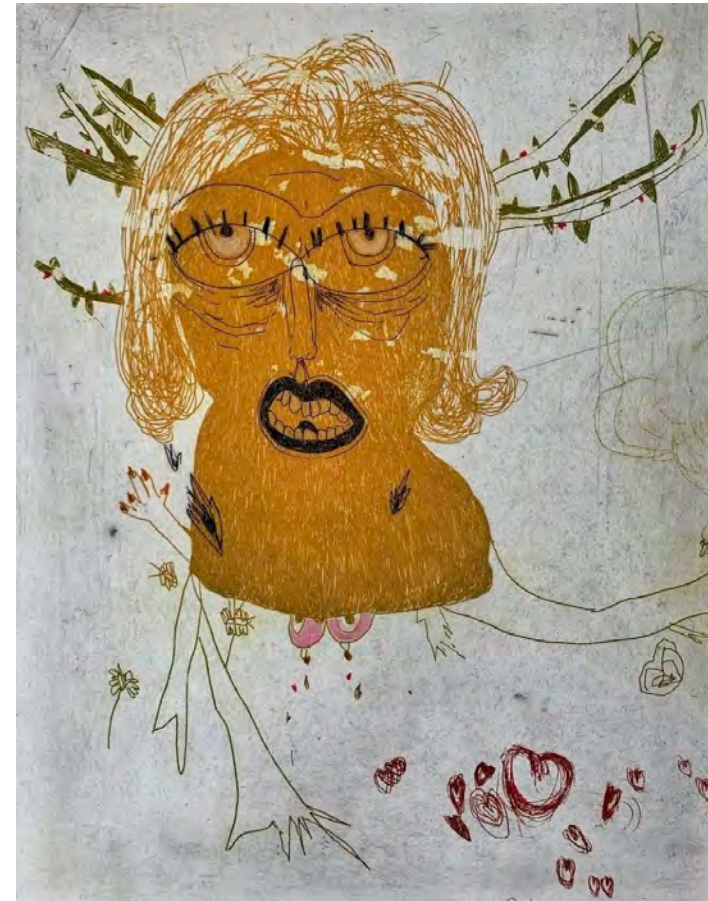




Primal Night
Etching
22" x 30"

Viewers are drawn into an experience where repulsion and attraction are inseparable. The sharp points and jagged surfaces may increase caution, but with closer, more intimate interaction, you might find those same points to be tender. Bodies bleed and these sculptures bleed bright yellow in a muddy, browned utopia.

Her works ask our notions of fantasy to reconcile with the reality that the body isn't free. In this zany environment of defecating, dancing figures, the path to relief is through humor — the uncomfortable kind of humor that might cause a cramp but give momentary ease to the mind. The faces that appear in the dismemberment are open-mouthed and full of teeth — maybe screaming for help or evoking laughter, but in this world, probably both. While this work might at first feel fun and spontaneous, Haley Summerfield's fantastical distortion is highlighting the need for acceptance — accept that the body in its abnormalities and dysfunction is a vital part of the fantasy.



Self Portrait
Etching
12" x 8"



Twin Heads
Etching
13" x 19"

I create from states of being
intrinsically connected to places
and territories...

Across a constellation of assemblages
where the material collides with the
incorporeal my practice interrogates
in-betweenness, rootlessness, and
mobility as forces in the experience
of contemporary indigeneity. —

Home. Many lives have been spent searching, defining, and trying to connect to home — that space where we should feel comfortable, welcomed, where we see reflections of our current and past selves, where other bodies echo ours. Home is a structure that can sometimes be as elusive as the idea of belonging. Some find home in people, others find home in land. What we search for in the concept of home is something tangible, a sensorial connection to anchor us.

Claudia Huenchuleo Paquien has built a practice of feeling her way through the search for home in hopes of discovering a familiarity in the material world, sourcing the land from which her people came. Traces of her ancestral connection to the land begin with her name. Within the name Huenchuleo is *leo*, a fragment of the Mapuche word *leu-fü* for *rivers*. Through this name Huenchuleo was granted access to a passage, one that would lead her to source the language of the land — to build roots.

Imagine a headless tree, uprooted and equipped with a handle for mobility.



Embodied Resistance, Epu

Archival inkjet print
30" x 20"

Series of performative gestures holding a branch of foye tree (*Drimys Winteri*) collected at the San Francisco Botanical Garden 2021–2022.



Made to Move

Plant-dyed sheep wool, alpaca wool, suitcase handle, ritual
48" x 60" x 32"

"To be in transit is to be active presence in a world of relational movements and countermovements.
To be in transit is to exist relationally, multiply." —Jodi A. Byrd





Indissoluble Geographies

Alpaca wool, horse hair, my father's calligraphy
103" x 90" (dimensions vary)

Like her monumental tree sculpture, *Made to Move*, much of Huenchuleo's work finds inspiration in the rhizomatic nature of the tree. She believes deeply in its ability to embody many histories and connect our seen and unseen worlds. This tree unites different corners of the animate world, as it has been constructed of sheep's wool, dyed from Chilean plants, and taken the form of thick and fibrous tree roots. These materials carry with them a historical resilience, once attached to the mane and tail of a horse and the backs of sheep, these tufts of wool and hair migrated all the way from southern Chile to her studio in San Francisco.

In other works, Huenchuleo works collaboratively to bring an intangible experience to the physical world using elements of the tangible world. Through an augmented reality presentation, *In Defiance of Gravity, They Rise*, with Jeffrey Yip, brilliant blue leaves cascade above the crowns of our heads choreographed to resist the pull of gravity. In Mapuche culture, the color blue is a symbol of power, so rendering these leaves of resistance green would be incorrect. She also worked with sound engineer Maya Finlay to build a 4-channel sound experience, *The Four Winds*, which bathes the architecture in the sounds of her drum.

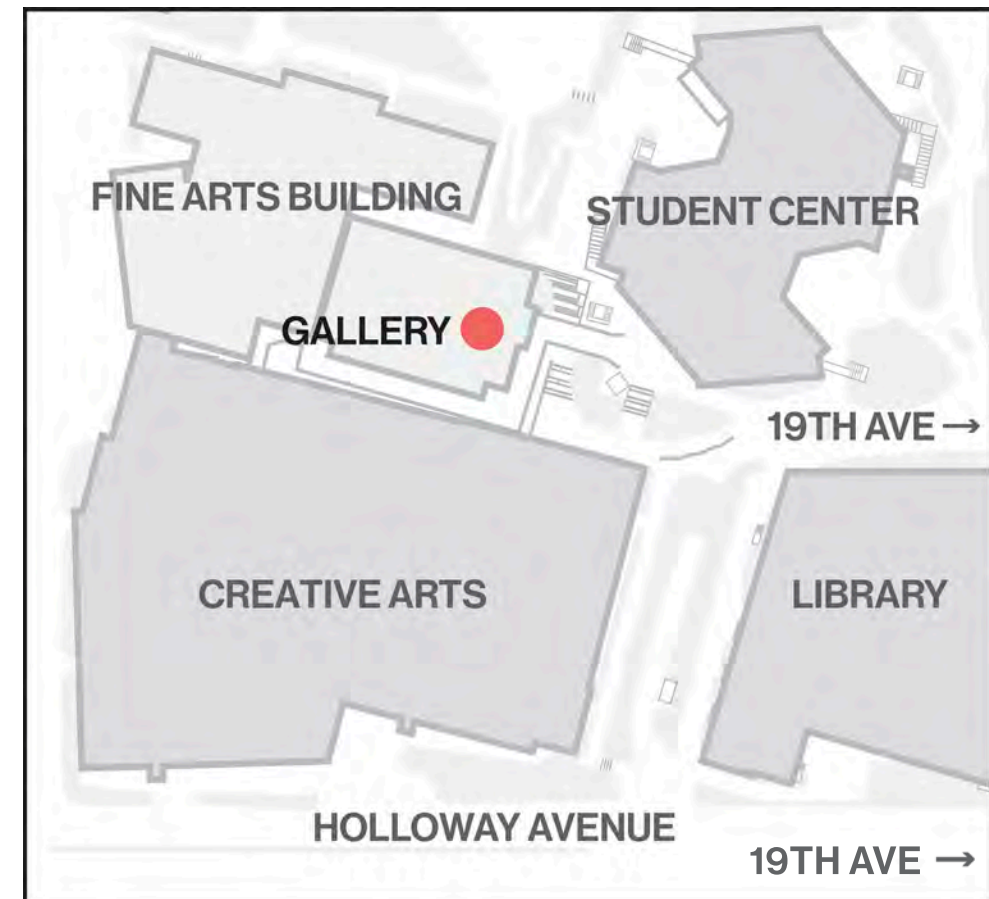


An additional element of the unseen is an important numerical reference, the number four. There are four channels to reference four winds which guide us through four directions and call upon four gods and four grandparents to remember family lineage. In each of these works, Huenchuleo has created a multi-sensory composition that not only reaches toward past generations but the future, leaving traces of home.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

San Francisco State University's Master of Fine Arts program in Art provides a dynamic interdisciplinary environment within which students are encouraged to develop their creative practice as professional artists. The School of Art has facilities for printmaking, painting and drawing, sculpture, photography, textiles, digital media and emerging technology, and ceramics. MFA students have access to all of the School of Art facilities as well as individual and communal MFA studio workspaces. Our faculty are distinguished and professionally active artists and art historians. Students work closely with a graduate advisor/mentor to chart their individual path through the program, including studio seminars, critiques, and individually supervised tutorials. Coursework and seminars in art history and other academic fields complement studio courses, and students are encouraged to develop rigorous research and writing skills to enrich their art practice. All students are provided with individual studio spaces, and there are opportunities for teaching, either as a teaching assistant or instructor of record. Our vibrant visiting artist program introduces students to artists in the Bay Area and beyond, connecting students to the local art community. The MFA degree culminates with a written thesis report and a thesis exhibition in which students exhibit an original body of work.

Website
art.sfsu.edu



WARP The SFSU 2022 Master of Fine Arts in Art Thesis Exhibition April 22nd – May 12th

The Fine Arts Gallery School of Art

San Francisco State University
Fine Arts Building, Room 238
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

Opening Reception

Friday, April 22nd, 5pm – 7pm

Closing Reception

Saturday, May 7th, 2pm – 4pm

Exhibition Dates

April 22 through May 12, 2022

Reservation information is available on our website, gallery.sfsu.edu.
Masks and proof of vaccination currently required.

This project is supported by San Francisco State University's Instructionally Related Student Activities Fund.

Artists

Natasha Loewy
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Nicole Shaffer
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Haley Summerfield
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Claudia Huenchuleo Paquien
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Essayist

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Hours and Location of Fine Arts Gallery

Tuesday through Friday, 12pm – 4pm
The Fine Arts Gallery
School of Art
San Francisco State University
Fine Arts Building, Room 238
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132

Website

gallery.sfsu.edu

Instagram

@sfsugallery

Gallery Director · Sharon Bliss
Resident Curator · Kevin B. Chen
Faculty Design Advisor · Joshua Singer
Design · Anton Holmgren, Vanessa Cuevas, Millie Santos
Typeface · Neue Haas Grotesk
Print · Colpa Press