

# THANK YOU IN ADVANCE

2025 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



# THANK YOU IN ADVANCE

2025 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

Published on the occasion of *Thank You in Advance: 2025 MFA Thesis Exhibition* on view April 4 – May 10, 2025 at the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa.

Co-published by

USF Contemporary Art Museum
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CAM 101
Tampa, FL 33620, USA
(813) 974-4133
www.cam.usf.edu
caminfo@usf.edu

USF School of Art & Art History
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, FAH 229
Tampa, FL 33620, USA
(813) 974-2360
www.usf.edu/arts/art/

ISBN: 978-0-9860768-4-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

Copyright © 2025 the authors, the artists, the photographers, and USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa, Florida, unless otherwise noted.

Editor: Sarah Howard
Editorial Coordination + Design: Don Fuller
Essay by: Laurie Rojas
Contributors: Jocelyn Chase, Olin Fritz, Adrian Gomez, Michael Lonchar, Emily Martinez, Margaret Miller, Tom Rosenow, Andrew Scott Ross
Copy Editing: Mark Fredricks, Ryne Heslin, Sarah Howard, Noelle Mason
Proofreading: Amy Allison, Shannon Annis, Kenzie Ferrell, David Waterman

All images courtesy of the artist, unless otherwise noted.

Printed in an edition of 1550 copies.

Printed and bound in the United States of America by Roberts Printing, Clearwater, Florida.

*Thank You in Advance* is supported in part by The Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation, the USF School of Art & Art History, the USF College of Design, Art & Performance, the Allen W. and Janet G. Root CAM Endowment, the Kathleen Binnicker Swann Endowment, and the Sara Richter IRA Operating Fund. The USF Contemporary Art Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA
College of Design, Art & Performance

STANTON STORER EMBRACE THE ARTS FOUNDATION

American Alliance of Museums Accredited Museum

Cover: Tom Rosenow, *Demolition Ranch I*, 2025. cyanotype on rag paper; 22 x 30 inches.
Back cover: Emily Martinez, *Runaways*, 2024. Acrylic on canvas; 71 x 165 inches.
Frontispiece: Michael Lonchar, *Supply and Demand*, 2023. filing cabinet, 3D printed PLA plastic, joint compound, fabric, plywood, paper, cardboard, acrylic, enamel, spray paint, coffee, beer, plastic bag, taxidermied bird; 60 x 15 x 28 inches.

# CONTENTS


**INTRODUCTION** 1
Andrew Scott Ross

**SIX ENIGMATIC ENCOUNTERS: the future of contemporary art** 5
Laurie Rojas

**ARTIST PROFILES**
Laurie Rojas

**Jocelyn Chase** 9

**Olin Fritz** 15

**Adrian Gomez** 21

**Michael Lonchar** 27

**Emily Martinez** 33

**Tom Rosenow** 39

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** 45
Margaret Miller



# INTRODUCTION

Andrew Scott Ross

As I settle into my new role as director, these last few months have afforded me an invaluable perspective. It is a perspective, first shaped by my distant admiration for a program, of a place where the dialogue on what it means to be a creator of images and objects in the 21st century is approached with almost exorbitant gravity. My experience here has confirmed these initial impressions, and I find that this year's graduating class truly exemplifies the core philosophy of our program—which, above all else, is based on the unwavering belief in experimentation.

The work from this graduating class is unapologetically ambitious, often large in scale, and wonderfully cross-disciplinary. It commands attention, fosters meaningful dialogue within the cohort, and maintains a distinct and unyielding voice. Furthermore, it resonates far beyond the confines of our exceptional exhibition spaces, with pieces showcased in museums and art institutions both regionally and nationally. For this success, and their hard work over the past three years, I wish to congratulate them.

The USF MFA program, recognized for its strong commitment to excellence, may initially seem similar to others. However, beneath the surface is a well-structured three-year journey, guided by our distinguished faculty and integrated into the ethos of USF, a prominent public research institution within the AAU. This program balances academic rigor with artistic discovery and professional preparation, empowering students to explore new ideas while preparing for a successful career in the arts.

Our curriculum offers a thoughtful combination of independent work, faculty mentorship, and peer critique. Students engage with a variety of visiting artists from around the world, facilitated by the esteemed Kennedy Visiting Artist and Scholar program. Annual trips to Art Basel in Miami and New York City provide valuable exposure to the global art scene, while the proximity to the USF Contemporary Art Museum, steps away from the graduate studios, ensures a vital connection to the broader art world. Students also benefit from working with Graphicstudio, a preeminent print studio known for collaborations with the world's leading artists.

This framework is supported by Chris Garvin, Dean of the College of Design, Art, and Performance. Our NASAD-accredited, 60-credit program is offered tuition-free, with stipends provided for each student. Many students also have the opportunity to teach, enhancing their professional development. The MFA students become part of a vibrant and dynamic creative community within the college, alongside peers in architecture, music, theater, and dance.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to Noelle Mason, MFA Graduate Coordinator, and Ryne Heslin, Graduate Program Facilitator, for their exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication to our students. We also extend our thanks to Sarah Howard, the program's Assistant Director, without whose stewardship efforts this catalog, among other initiatives, would not have happened with such success, and to our staff members—Irineo Cabreros, Don Corbin, Forrest MacDonald, Chuck McGee, Marie O'Neil, and Cassidy Santos—for their steadfast support of our students and the program at large.

Thanks to Margaret Miller, Director of the Institute of Research in Art, and the USF Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) team, our students are provided with an extraordinary platform to present their thesis exhibition work.

Adrian Gomez, *Torito Torito*, 2023. fiberglass, resin, steel, paint, mechanical components; 52 x 36 x 76 inches.

The museum's talented and professional staff assists with exhibition design, installation, lighting, labeling, and documentation, ensuring each thesis exhibition is presented to the highest standards. We are deeply grateful for their invaluable contributions.

We would also like to extend special thanks to The Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation. The foundation's generous support has made this catalog possible, and we are incredibly thankful for its ongoing commitment to nurturing and strengthening our MFA program through its patronage. Their enduring partnership is a vital part of our program's continued success.

Finally, we would like to thank Laurie Rojas, this year's guest catalog writer, for her insightful and thoughtful essays reflecting on our graduating class. We were fortunate to have her visit Tampa, engage with our MFA students, and offer such a meaningful response to her experience. Her contributions to this catalog provide a lasting and thoughtful record of their remarkable achievements.

—
Andrew Scott Ross
Professor and Director
The School of Art and Art History

Jocelyn Chase, *The Weight*, 2024. paperclay, steel, rope, paint, resin, motor; 70 x 37 x 8 inches.


THE
BOX

# SIX ENIGMATIC ENCOUNTERS: the future of contemporary art

Laurie Rojas

Fresh from the whirlwind of Miami Art Week 2024, with its sensory overload of installations vying for attention and the cacophony of art world chatter, I found myself seeking a different kind of artistic experience. My journey took me to the University of South Florida School of Art and Art History's Master of Fine Arts department; a space seemingly worlds away from the glitz and glamor of Miami. Here, in the relative quiet of the USF campus, a group of emerging artists have been diligently working, honing their skills, and developing their unique artistic voices.

*Thank You in Advance: 2025 MFA Thesis Exhibition*, featuring the work of Jocelyn Chase, Olin Fritz, Adrian Gomez, Michael Lonchar, Emily Martinez, and Tom Rosenow, offers a refreshing glimpse into the creative energy and critical engagement that defines contemporary art practice. It is a testament to the transformative power of dedicated studio practice, a space where emerging artists can experiment with new ideas, push the boundaries of diverse mediums, and grapple with complex themes, all within a supportive and nurturing environment.

Chase's sculptural installations, constructed from discarded industrial materials, are poignant meditations on civilization's fragility in the face of environmental decay and post-human anxieties. Their works are monumental yet ethereal, evoking both the ghostly ruins of a bygone era and the latent promise of renewal amidst the debris of our disposable culture. Gomez's ceramic installations, steeped in pre-Columbian aesthetics and informed by his Mexican-Guatemalan heritage, offer a powerful critique of the commodification of cultural artifacts. He transforms familiar food vendor motifs into a mobile marketplace of memory and critique, exposing the tension between inherited traditions and the relentless forces of the market.

Fritz's helmet sculptures, with their surreal theatricality, blur the boundaries between ritual and performance. Constructed from an eclectic mix of materials, these helmets evoke the regalia of ancient warriors and the flamboyant finery of a bygone aristocracy, sprouting organic, almost "cancerous" growths that disrupt conventional forms. Martinez's immersive large-scale paintings reconfigure personal and familial narratives into grand, allegorical spectacles. Drawing on the dramatic rigor of history painting and the flamboyant energy of high-fashion runway shows, she transforms vintage family photographs into epic compositions that explore the interplay between memory and myth, tradition, and reinvention.

Lonchar's sculptural installations offer an unvarnished meditation on memory, mortality, and the human condition, rooted in the aesthetics of working-class America. He harnesses the raw, utilitarian qualities of two-by-fours, tarps, and found objects to construct immersive environments that evoke both the comfort of domesticity and the inescapable specter of death. Rosenow's work interrogates the digital age by transmuting the ephemeral detritus of online life into enduring, analog artworks. He meticulously archives digital ephemera—screenshots, memes, and fleeting image fragments—and then reimagines these elements through traditional printmaking techniques. This translation from digital to physical not only reasserts the tactile presence of the artist's hand but also exposes the inherent contradictions of aesthetic production under capitalism.

Olin Fritz, *Do You See Me?*, 2022. mixed media; 84 x 12 x 12 inches.

The MFA program, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches and dedicated studio practice, has provided these artists with a fertile ground for experimentation and growth. Located outside the traditional art world centers, the program offers a unique environment where artists can develop their voices without the distractions and pressures of the market. This emphasis on process over product, on experimentation over immediate commercial viability, is evident in the diversity and depth of the works on display.

The MFA Thesis Exhibition is not simply a showcase of finished works; it is a testament to the transformative power of artistic education and mentorship. It is a celebration of the dedication, passion, and resilience of these emerging artists, who have spent the past three years honing their skills, refining their ideas, and developing their unique artistic visions. As they prepare to enter the professional art world, they carry with them the knowledge, experiences, and critical perspectives gained during their time in the program.

In a world where the art market is often driven by trends, hype, and financial speculation, USF's MFA program offers a refreshing alternative, prioritizing artistic integrity, critical engagement, and the pursuit of personal vision. This thesis exhibition is proof of this commitment, showcasing the work of artists who are not afraid to challenge conventions, experiment with new ideas, and grapple with complex themes. These artists are the future of contemporary art, and their work is evidence of the enduring power of creativity, critical thinking, and artistic expression.

The critic's task in this context is not merely to evaluate or interpret the works on display but to engage in a deeper reflection on the role of art in contemporary society. It is to ask questions about the nature of aesthetic experience, the relationship between art and the market, and the potential for art to contribute to social and political discourse. It is to recognize the ambivalence that often characterizes our relationship with art, embracing the tension between doubt and certainty, attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain.

The works in this exhibition embody this ambivalence, challenging viewers to confront their expectations and assumptions about art. They invite us to question the boundaries between the digital and physical worlds, the personal and the political, the ephemeral and the enduring. They remind us that art can be a powerful tool for critique, self-reflection, and social commentary.

In an age of cultural fragmentation and rapid technological change, the critic's role is more important than ever. Its function is to provide a space for thoughtful engagement with art, foster critical dialogue, and challenge the prevailing narratives that shape our understanding of the world. Its role is to recognize the potential for art to embody contradictions, raise nuanced questions, and spark critical inquiry.

The MFA Thesis Exhibition is proof of the enduring power of art to inspire new generations and provide new aesthetic experiences under new historical conditions. It is a celebration of experimentation and a reminder of the importance of supporting emerging artists as they navigate the complexities of the contemporary art world. It is a space where the seeds of critical and creative inquiry are sown, where the boundaries of artistic practice are pushed, and where the future of contemporary art takes shape.

As I reflect on my visit to the MFA candidates' studios, I am struck by the sense of optimism and possibility that pervades the work on display. These artists, with their diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and approaches to artmaking, offer a refreshing glimpse into the future of contemporary art. They are not afraid to experiment, to take risks, and to challenge conventions. They are committed to artistic integrity, critical engagement, and the pursuit of personal vision.

In a world that often feels chaotic and uncertain, *Thank You in Advance: 2025 MFA Thesis Exhibition* offers a space for hope and inspiration. It is a reminder that art can be a powerful force for change, a catalyst for dialogue, and a source of profound meaning and connection. It is a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit to create, innovate, and imagine a better future.

—
Laurie Rojas, 2025

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laurie Rojas is an independent art critic, journalist, and lecturer whose writing delves into the historical complexities of contemporary art. A driving force behind her recent work is the exploration of ambivalence in artworks, particularly concerning art's commodity status and its instrumentalization in political propaganda. Rojas's research and writing also focus on the social history of art and the role of art criticism after its eclipse.

Rojas's writing has been featured in numerous publications, including Artbasel.com, Artsy, Artnet, The Art Newspaper, Sotheby's Magazine, and the Financial Times, among others. She is the founding editor of Caesura, a non-academic publication dedicated to rethinking art criticism, and previously served as the senior editor of Spike Art Magazine in Berlin. She has also moderated numerous roundtable discussions and public talks, fostering dialogue and critical engagement with contemporary art.

Rojas's international experience, having lived and worked in major art hubs such as Berlin,



photo: Moises Kierszenblat

London, New York, and Chicago, has shaped her understanding of the diverse conditions that shape artistic communities. Her recent move to Miami has been particularly influential, as she witnesses the city's rapidly evolving art ecosystem and its impact on local communities. In 2023, she was awarded the first Hyundai Artlab Editorial Fellowship, which supported her in-depth exploration of Miami's evolving art neighborhoods. She received an M.A. in New Arts Journalism from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago and she wrote her graduate thesis on Confronting the "Death" of Art Criticism (2012). Her essay "Gothic: the Return of the Repressed" was recently published in the Manchester University Press book, *Cases of Citations: On Literature in Art* (2024).



# JOCELYN CHASE

Jocelyn Chase's sculptural practice is an evocative meditation on the fragile state of civilization in an age defined by environmental decay and the post-human condition. In their MFA thesis exhibition, Chase transforms discarded industrial materials—Styrofoam, foam, resins—into large-scale, architectural forms that hover between the organic and the synthetic. These materials, designed for transient utility, are repurposed to endure far beyond their intended lifespans, serving as silent monuments to the impermanence of human consumption and the enduring legacy of waste.

At once both alien and familiar, Chase's sculptures evoke ancient ruins and dystopian landscapes. They emerge as spectral vestiges of a lost era—echoes of past civilizations crumbling under the weight of time—and as bold speculations on the future. In their work, the post-human condition is not merely a theme of anxious anticipation; it is an invitation to reimagine the boundaries of what is human and what might lie beyond. By elevating materials that outlast us, Chase confronts our disposability and offers a quiet yet defiant assertion of resilience.

There is a visceral, bodily quality to these installations. Often at a human scale or larger, Chase's works command the exhibition space with a presence that demands physical closeness and engagement. The viewer is invited to navigate the liminal spaces their architectural sculptures create. This immersive quality encourages a confrontation with our alienation—the unsettling, raw realities of our environmental impact—and, simultaneously, with the possibility of renewal amid decay.

Chase's material experimentation is deeply entwined with their personal narrative. Their journey from photography to sculpture reflects a willingness to experiment and a determination to find new modes of expression when traditional mediums proved insufficient. This restless, creative spirit infuses Chase's work with a poignant intimacy. The images they conjure—as metaphors for deep despair—reveal an artist unafraid to peer into the abyss. In doing so, Chase embodies a belief that confronting the darkest depths is the only route to discovering light—the only way is through.

Chase's practice is firmly situated within the discourse of the Anthropocene. As environmental concerns become increasingly urgent, Chase's repurposing of synthetic detritus resonates as a critical commentary on the unsustainable cycles of industrial consumption. Yet, their work is not solely a lament for what is lost; it is also a subtle exploration of post-apocalyptic resilience. In the ruins of our disposable culture, Chase's work suggests, new forms of life may yet emerge—unexpected, hybrid, and profoundly beautiful in their darkness.

Chase's sculptural oeuvre challenges us to reconsider our relationship with the world. It compels us to acknowledge the weight of our collective impact while simultaneously offering a glimmer of hope for transformation. Through their art, the delicate interplay between decay and rebirth, between the human and the post-human, is laid bare—a call to recognize that there is also the possibility of reinvention in the face of inevitable dissolution.

Jocelyn Chase, *Apocalypse,* 2023. ceramics, glaze, paint, resin; 12 x 10 x 8 inches.



Jocelyn Chase, *Fountain*, 2023. wood, paint, resin; 48 x 20 x 11 inches.

Jocelyn Chase, *The Bridge*, 2024. foam, resin, beeswax, paint, pigment; 48 x 38 x 30 inches.








photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jocelyn Chase (b. 1984, Springfield, MO) is a multidisciplinary artist whose work spans sculpture, ceramics, painting, zine-making, darkroom printing, and gallery installations. Their art explores the interplay between dynamic flows and situational forms through various material processes. Across all mediums, Chase addresses the inherent loss of meaning and representation found in technocratic systems. From 2008 to 2022, Jocelyn lived and worked in NYC as a media arts technician for exhibitions in art museums while continuing their darkroom and studio practice. Jocelyn earned a BFA in Photography from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (2006) and is about to complete an MFA in Studio Art at the University of South Florida (2025). Jocelyn's artwork has been exhibited across the United States and in Germany, Greece, and Taiwan.

Jocelyn Chase, *Net/Trap*, 2022. clothesline hardware, found broom, paint, clothesline, pulley, selenite; 60 x 50 x 4 inches.

# OLIN FRITZ

In a realm where carnival absurdity meets sacred ritual, Olin Fritz's helmets emerge as enchanted relics from an alternative cosmos—half ritualistic artifact, half bizarre showpiece for a ballroom dance-off. These sculptural creations, assembled from foam, resin, latex, toothpicks, household gloves, sports equipment, and an array of kitchen sink-found objects, defy easy categorization. They evoke images of samurai warriors clad in armor, Victorian women adorned with extravagant headdresses, and bouffant hairstyles that recall forgotten eras, all while exuding a playfully organic, almost "cancerous" growth-like quality that hints at nature's untamed power. Ugly is the new beautiful.

Fritz's helmets are imbued with an unmistakable tension: they are both meticulously crafted and chaotically assembled, reflecting his deep-rooted fascination with creating order from the detritus of modern life. Growing up in the stark desert landscapes of Arizona, Fritz developed an affinity for repurposing throwaway materials—objects cast aside yet possessing an intrinsic, if overlooked, beauty. This spirit of alchemical transformation animates his work, transmuting everyday refuse into symbols of ritual and ceremony.

At their core, these helmets are conceived as ceremonial objects—vehicles for an imagined, alternative civilization. They bring to mind the solemnity of ancient rites while flirting with camp and drama's theatricality. There is a palpable sense of performative potential in Fritz's pieces; some are designed to be wearable, inviting their wearers to inhabit the surreal personas the helmets suggest. The possibility of integrating video or animation further enlivens the work, hinting at narratives of mythical seafaring creatures, repressed sailors lost in hallucinations, or even whimsical, walking sculptures that animate the gallery space with kinetic energy. The influence of surrealism pulses through every element of Fritz's creations. Channeling the spirit of Max Ernst, his helmets conjure up dreamlike juxtapositions—mechanical/animal hybrids that seem to exist in a state of perpetual transformation.

These hybrid objects are at once both grotesque and enticing, evoking the paradoxical allure of forbidden fruit: objects that promise transformation while carrying the risk of entrapment. This interplay between comfort and repulsion, the sacred and the profane, is a recurring theme in Fritz's work. It challenges viewers to confront the inherent contradictions of our existence, where beauty often lurks in the shadows of decay and chaos.

Fritz's interdisciplinary approach—melding sculpture, performance, video, and photography—allows him to explore these themes from multiple angles. His willingness to embrace failure and experimentation is evident in how his work evolves, with each helmet piece revealing new layers of meaning and narrative potential. There is even a sense of character and narrative development at play, as though each helmet was imbued with a distinct personality, its backstory in an alternate reality where ritual and machine intertwine.

Fritz's helmet pieces stand as multifaceted testaments to the power of assemblage and the beauty found in playful juxtapositions. They invite us into a surreal, campy world where the grotesque meets the glamorous, urging us to reconsider our definitions of ritual, performance, and the very nature of art itself.

Olin Fritz, *Through Your Loving Eyes*, 2025. mixed media; 12 x 10 x 7 inches.




Olin Fritz, *Garfield Is a Pot of Hot Strong Love*, 2025. mixed media; 24 x 12 x 36 inches.



Olin Fritz, *Hairy and Simple*, 2023. mixed media; 48 x 12 x 10 inches.



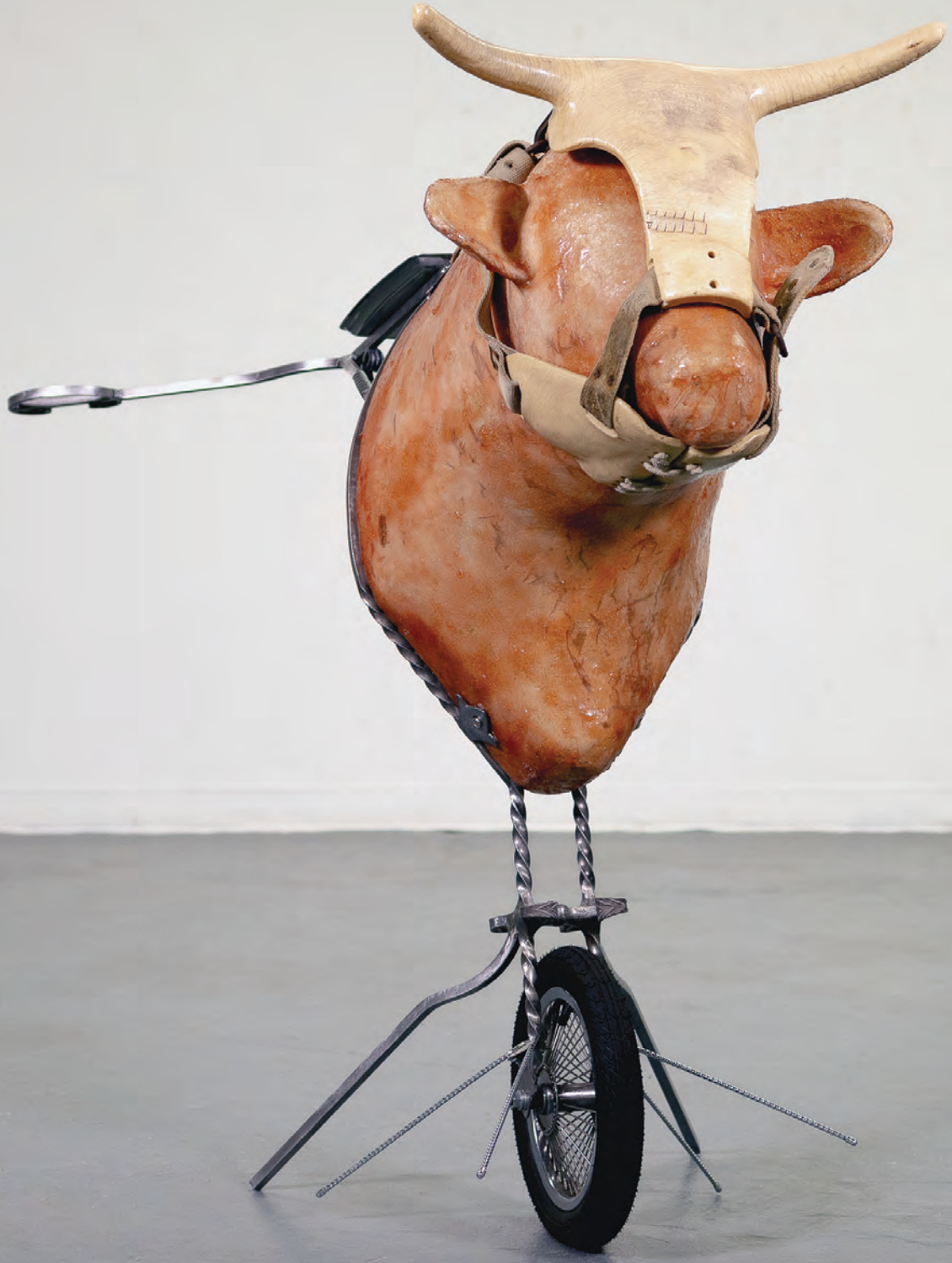


photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Olin Fritz (b. 1997, Phoenix, AZ) makes art with a capital “F.” One so supple it changes you on every level and your entire outlook on life. Exploring the interplay between humor and elegance, attraction, and discomfort his practice transforms the banal and discarded into animistic objects that are both glamorous and grotesque. By employing techniques that borrow from Surrealism and Camp, Fritz invites viewers to navigate spaces of tension and contradiction, where beauty emerges from unease, and the familiar becomes uncanny; a Frankenstein collage of everyday materials, collected over time in junkyards, yard sales, and nature. Having grown up in the Arizona desert breeds an awareness of cast-away things. Everything becomes useful, resonating, for example, with California Desert junk assemblages. These things amass to create a kind of relic. All seem to sprout from a form, like a growing tumor, they become bulbous and extravagant, sterilized from the implication of their original context.

Olin Fritz, *Arrangement in Porcelain and Teal (Attempt 1)*, 2024. mixed media; 18 x 12 x 3 inches.



# ADRIAN GOMEZ

Adrian Gomez's thesis installation, *Ni de aquí, ni de allá,* transforms the humble food cart into a potent site of cultural critique—a marketplace where the artifacts of history are simultaneously celebrated and commodified. By reimagining the familiar form of a food vendor with larger wheels referencing industrial tractors and the hot rod, Gomez interrogates the uneasy tension between cultural artifacts as relics of tradition and the artwork itself as a singular commodity in the modern market.

At the core of his practice lies the versatile medium of clay. For Gomez, clay is not merely a sculptural material; it is a repository of time, evoking pre-Columbian legacies that have been repurposed and recontextualized in a globalized economy. His handmade ceramic objects—ranging from a reinterpreted replica of Frida Kahlo's urn to fragmented depictions of the Virgin Mary—are steeped in historical significance. Yet, when placed within the structure of the food cart, these icons become items of exchange. They are imbued with dual value: as vessels of cultural memory and as marketable products, their significance is continually renegotiated by the forces of commerce, as well as cultural appropriation and transformation.

The food cart installation is a living metaphor for the commodification process. Designed to resemble a traditional street vendor, the cart subverts expectations by hosting an array of cast "products" that blur the line between art and merchandise. In this microcosm of economic exchange, the artwork challenges the notion of authenticity: it exists as a unique creation while simultaneously participating in the circulation of commodities. The very act of viewing becomes an act of market engagement, where historical artifacts are transformed into objects of desire and speculation.

Gomez further complicates this interplay by using found objects—tractor wheels, repurposed agricultural tools—that reference his family's heritage and the legacy of labor in a colonized world. These industrial remnants, incorporated alongside his delicate ceramics, underscore the collision between the raw, utilitarian aspects of everyday life and the curated, commodified images of cultural identity. The result is a work that resists easy categorization, one that forces the viewer to confront the pervasive influence of market forces on even the most sacred symbols. Enhancing this multifaceted dialogue, animated LED signs and audiovisual collages infuse the installation with kinetic energy. These digital elements serve as a modern counterpoint to the tactile, age-old medium of clay, reinforcing the notion that art and commerce are inextricably linked in our current era. The installation evolves into a vibrant, immersive marketplace—a space where the past is continually repackaged for a present hungry for novelty, yet indebted to its history.

Gomez's *Ni de aquí, ni de allá* is a compelling meditation on the commodification of cultural artifacts. It exposes the paradox at the heart of contemporary art: objects of deep historical and emotional resonance are often reduced to commodities while the artwork becomes a unique, coveted product. In this dynamic interplay, Gomez not only critiques the mechanisms of cultural appropriation and market exchange but also invites us to reimagine the value of memory and tradition in an age defined by capitalism's relentless logic.

Adrian Gomez, *Los Machos al Frente*, 2024. fiberglass, found object, metal, resin, scale model of my abuelos home; 52 x 32 x 46 inches.



Adrian Gomez, *Still Tippin'*, 2024. ceramic, glaze, luster, metal; 12 x 6 x 10 inches.

Adrian Gomez, *Que Vuelvas*, 2023. ceramic, glaze, metal; 24 x 20 x 18 inches.





Adrian Gomez, *Puro*, 2023. ceramic; 10 x 8 x 8 inches.






photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Adrian Gomez (b. 1994, Seattle, WA) is an interdisciplinary artist who examines the intricacies of being a first-generation American. Drawing inspiration from pre-Colombian motifs, religious icons, and culturally significant objects he makes works that take form as sculptures. Examining personal history, loss of traditions, and the cyclical nature of labor, his works emulate a snapshot of his lived experience. Adrian received his BFA in Ceramics at the University of Washington (2018). He continued his education at Tyler School of Art (2019) and participated in a two-year residency at Pottery Northwest (2022) in Seattle. Currently finishing his MFA at the University of South Florida, he is working towards expanding his practice through the use of new processes in metals, sound, and video.

Adrian Gomez, *Pisando Tierra de Oro*, 2023. ceramic, glaze, metal, luster, fabric; 48 x 24 x 42 inches.



# MICHAEL LONCHAR

Raw, unflinching meditations on memory, mortality, and the precarious human psyche define Michael Lonchar's sculptural installations. Born in Waterbury, CT, and having traversed a gamut of working-class jobs—from ski instructing in Connecticut to foam carving in Texas—Lonchar channels his diverse experiences and skills into large-scale works. Two-by-fours, tarps, and found objects—relegated to utility—become poignant symbols of memory, fragility, and loss.

Lonchar's work is deeply personal and marked by a deliberate refusal to rely on refined, traditional art materials. Instead, he embraces the industrial, the raw, and the repurposed. In one of his central pieces, he constructs twelve large, 6 ft x 6 ft frames from planed pine two-by-fours. These frames, suspended by robust wood-carved hooks, evoke the duality of home as sanctuary and tomb. The integration of a casket-like form within a house-like structure is a potent symbolic gesture that confronts the viewer with the inescapable truth: the domestic sphere, no matter how familiar, is inherently fragile in the face of mortality, just as is the human psyche. Though seemingly quiet at first, Lonchar's installations resonate with raw lived experience. As viewers, we are confronted with a contemplative aesthetic experience inviting us to project and/or reflect on our inner landscapes of despair, alienation, compassion, and joy.

Lonchar's multifaceted motivations begin with a fundamental drive to create, transcending clear articulation of purpose. Grappling with bipolar disorder, Lonchar channels his lived emotional turbulence into art where even the materials speak of survival and vulnerability. He views his practice as metacognitive therapy, processing experiences and emotions by giving them new forms. The solid two-by-fours and tarps, imbued with everyday labor, become a canvas for etching the ephemeral nature of memory and the search for meaning. He prioritizes provoking a lingering emotional response over immediate clarity. His enigmatic installations demand navigation; the viewer is not presented with easy answers but rather invited to grapple with the ambiguities and emotional complexities.

Lonchar's artistic DNA is woven from diverse threads. He cites Samara Golden's unflinching exploration of mental illness within the context of sprawling, immersive installations as a key inspiration. While Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, with its evocative fusion of music, video, installation, and performance, has also profoundly impacted his thinking about the interplay of different media and the creation of emotionally resonant environments. Jordan Wolfson's powerful personification of industrial objects resonates with Lonchar's interest in imbuing everyday materials with symbolic weight and emotional depth. Pepón Osorio's poignant juxtapositions of contrasting environments have influenced Lonchar's approach to creating installations that explore the social tensions between different states of being. These influences coalesce into a powerful and distinctive artistic voice, which possesses a strong enigmatic and contemplative aesthetic quality, creating a powerful experience.

Forged from everyday working-class materials, his work transforms the banal into a powerful commentary on human fragility, inviting us to ponder our constructed worlds against time's relentless march. The use of readily available materials underscores the universality of the experiences Lonchar explores. He offers a glimpse into his psyche, inviting us to explore our shadows and light. The emotional depth of his work, combined with its evocative visual language, leaves a lasting impression, prompting reflection on the precariousness of existence and the enduring power of human connection.

Michael Lonchar, *Supply and Demand*, 2023. filing cabinet, 3D printed PLA plastic, joint compound, fabric, plywood, paper, cardboard, acrylic, enamel, spray paint, coffee, beer, plastic bag, taxidermied bird; 60 x 15 x 28 inches.



Michael Lonchar, *Sunrise/Sunset*, 2022. MDF, pallet wood, cedar trim, TV, wall paint; 84 x 48 x 4 inches.



Michael Lonchar, *I can see your body spinning through the air*, 2024. pine, car bumper, chain, hardware; 48 x 48 x 96 inches.

Michael Lonchar, *the pressure inside of my head has made a home*, 2023. plywood, Styrofoam, automotive fillers,joint compound, threaded rod, hardware; 72 x 72 x 48 inches.

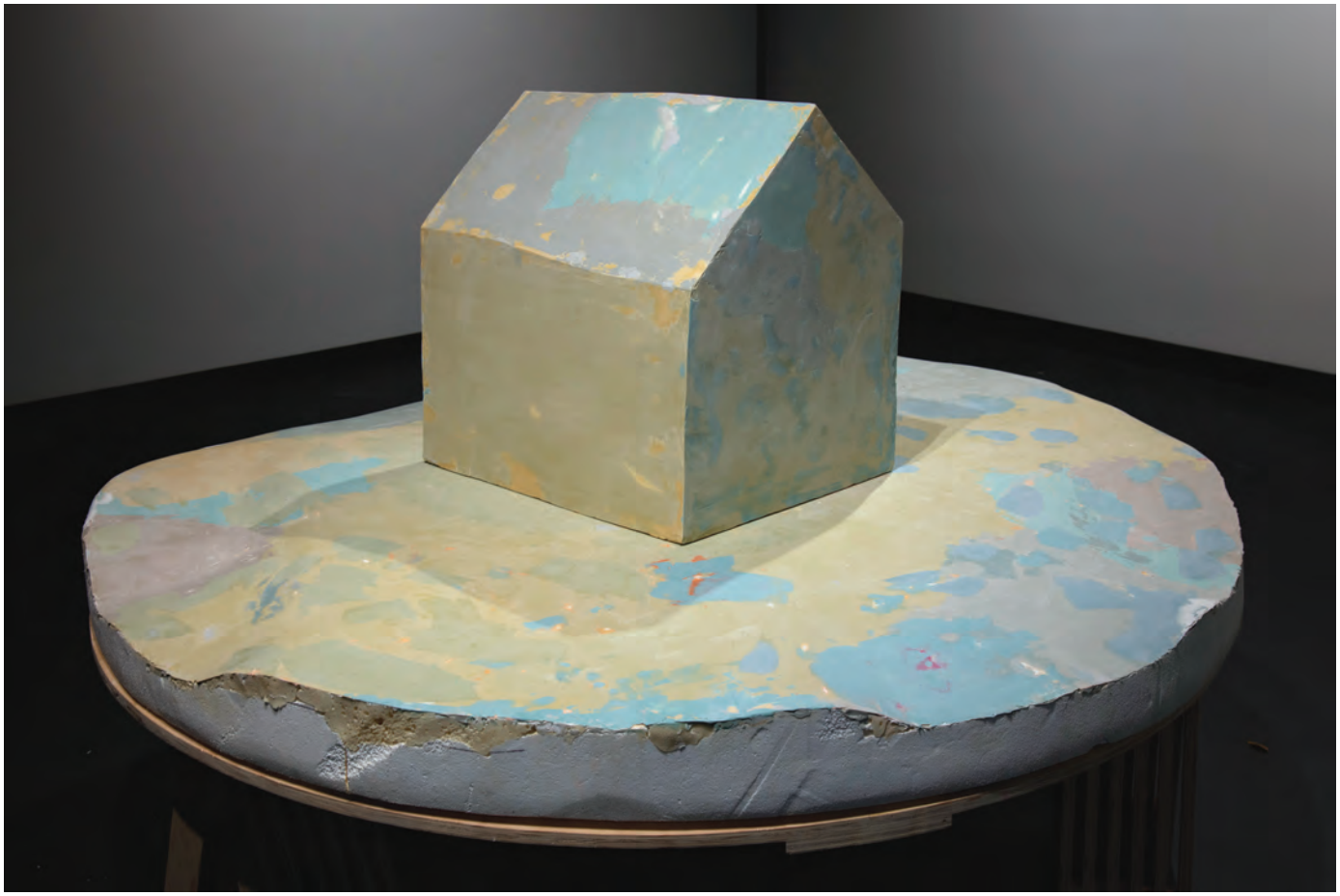






photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Michael Lonchar (b. 1997, Waterbury, CT) is a multidisciplinary artist working with sculpture and video to create large-scale installations about his experiences with mental health. Using primarily wood, Lonchar builds structures that contain symbols used to express euphoric and dysphoric emotions. Living with bipolar disorder, he tries to show the emotional extremes of his life in relation to memories of his personal history. Lonchar's style fluctuates between the minimalist and the maximalist. The structures are often barren and utilitarian, but after careful surface treatments and use of found objects, they convey deeply personal, even sentimental, ideas. Michael Lonchar earned his BFA at the Minneapolis College of Fine Art and Design in 2019. He has shown at several notable institutions, including Franconia Sculpture Park, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Portland, Maine, Currents New Media, and Heiress Gallery, among others. Lonchar had his first solo exhibition, *In the front door, out the back of the head*, at REVERB Gallery in 2024.

Michael Lonchar, *How to make a duct tape flower*, 2024. pine, plywood, dyed paper, Bondo, monitor; 42 x 36 x 84 inches.



# EMILY MARTINEZ

Emily Martinez's large-scale paintings invite viewers into a vivid dialogue between personal history and fantastical storytelling. In her immersive canvases, intimate memory collides with theatrical grandeur, emerging as portals into imagined universes that transcend the everyday. Martinez's massive paintings play with the boundaries of traditional narrative storytelling and contemporary aesthetic form to create a seductive and contemplative experience for the viewer.

At the heart of her work is a powerful interplay between family narratives and the conventions of history painting. In pieces like "Mother's Embrace," a vintage photograph of her grandmother on her wedding day becomes the seed for an expansive, allegorical composition. Martinez transforms this cherished image with surreal interventions—a crying baby's face, an unexpected third arm—that disturb the familiar and open space for dreams and alternate realities. This blending of the personal with the fantastical is a developing component of her practice, suggesting that even our most intimate memories can be reconfigured into grand, symbolic, and playful narratives.

The meticulous treatment of textiles and ornate details further enriches her visual language. Festooned with intricate patterns and lace-like embellishments, her canvases draw inspiration from high-fashion runway shows and the performative nature of modern costume design. These elements evoke traditional history paintings' opulence while subverting them, infusing the work with a contemporary, pop-cultural edge. In doing so, Martinez bridges the gap between classical art traditions and the dazzling spectacle of today's visual culture.

Compositionally, her paintings reference the grand history painting tradition, with figures arranged in dynamic, almost choreographed poses that recall the dramatic narratives of French and Italian masters. Yet, she disrupts these classical tropes by introducing unexpected, surreal elements—flattened planes of color fabrics, disjointed limbs, and distortions of space—that create a tension between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional. This tension is not merely formal; it is emblematic of the artist's broader inquiry into the nature of reality and memory. The work becomes a visual meditation on how personal histories, often fragmentary and elusive, can be reassembled into sweeping, emotionally charged vistas.

While her earlier work delved into family photographs and domestic imagery, Martinez is now venturing into a realm of imagined characters and invented narratives. The evolution of her practice suggests an ongoing experiment with media and form, with hints at future explorations into sculpture. This interdisciplinary fluidity underscores her commitment to not being bound by a single medium but rather to exploring contemporary art's full spectrum of possibilities.

Martinez's paintings resonate as both intimate memoirs and epic visual orchestrations. They challenge us to reconsider how personal history can be elevated to mythic proportions while simultaneously questioning the very nature of representation in a media-saturated age. Her work is a call to immerse ourselves in a world where the boundaries between the traditional and the contemporary blur, inviting us to rediscover the beauty and complexity of our shared human experience.

Emily Martinez, *Bally Girls*, 2024. acrylic on wood, photo; 30 x 18 x 3 inches.



Emily Martinez, *Circo Eterna*, 2023. acrylic on canvas; 72 x 264 inches.

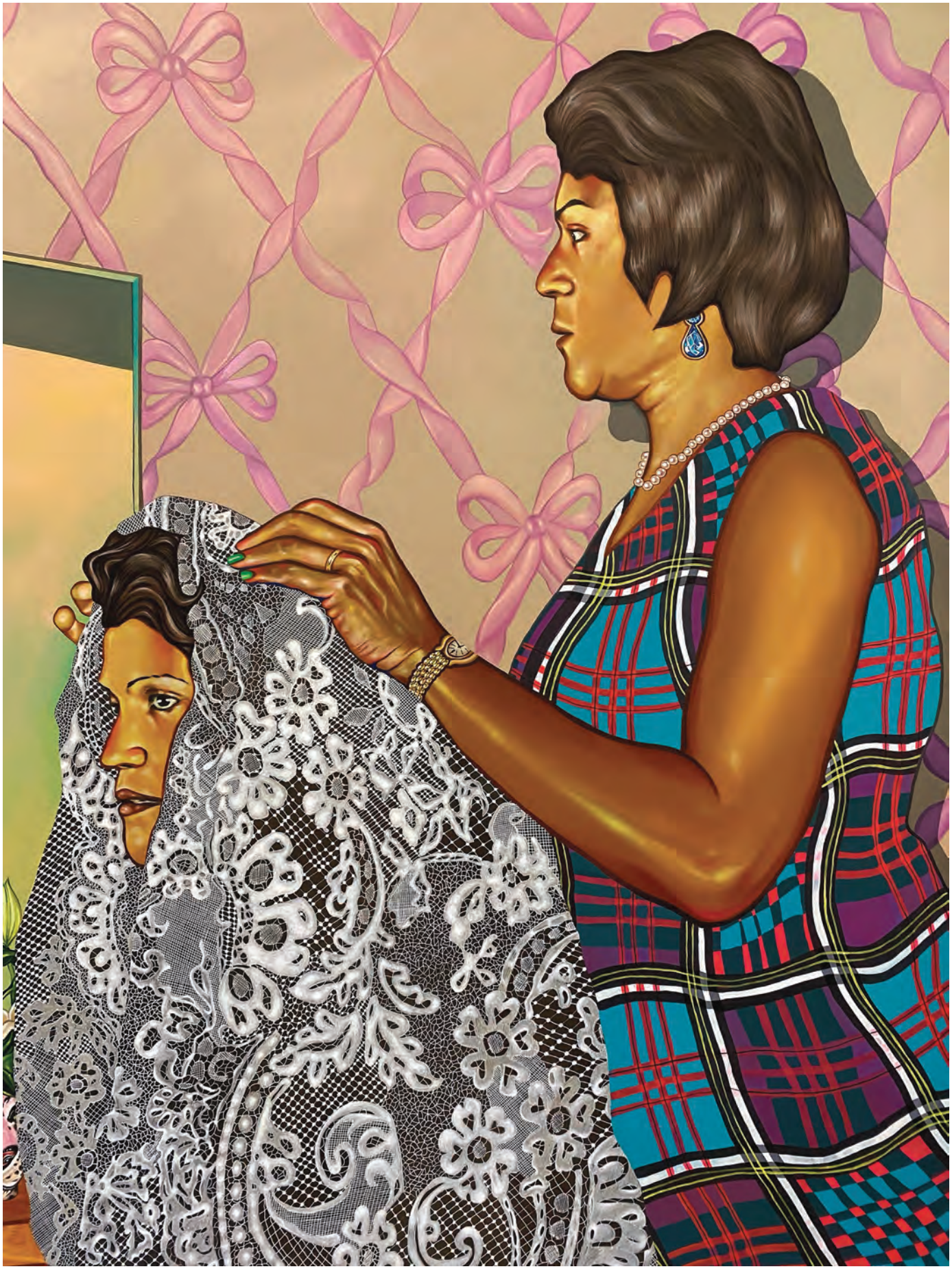
Emily Martinez, *In Ritual*, 2024. acrylic on canvas; 86 x 84 inches.






Emily Martinez, *House on Fire*, 2023. acrylic and fabric on canvas; 84 x 96 inches.





Emily Martinez, *27 DIC. 1974 (Mother's Embrace)*, 2024. acrylic on canvas and wood; 96 x 109 x 3-1/2 inches.




photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Emily Martinez's (b. 1999, Queens, NY) work investigates fantasy and myth in fashion, religion, and gender. She combines these elements to empower the figure and create a form of escapism through fictional landscapes and narratives that foster a theatrical and heightened sense of reality in which brown figures take center stage. She is focused on elevating brown bodies in the tradition of painting through scale and color. Often drawing from Renaissance paintings or Mexican murals that depict Christian beliefs and extravagance, Emily subverts the motifs of these periods by using those themes to develop new worlds around spectacle, sexuality, womanhood, and magic. She received her BFA from the University of Central Florida in 2022 with a minor in Latin American Studies. Emily lives and works in Tampa, FL, and is currently an MFA candidate at the University of South Florida.



# TOM ROSENOW

In a world awash in digital noise, Tom Rosenow's practice emerges as a tactile counterpoint—a deliberate excavation of our online ephemera transformed into physical art. His work interrogates how the ceaseless churn of internet culture, with its screenshots, memes, and fleeting comments, sediment into the material fabric of contemporary life, embodying the contradictions at the heart of aesthetic relations of production. These artworks are not mere reproductions of digital content; they are meditations on how the relentless flow of information shapes our perceptions and, ultimately, our human connections.

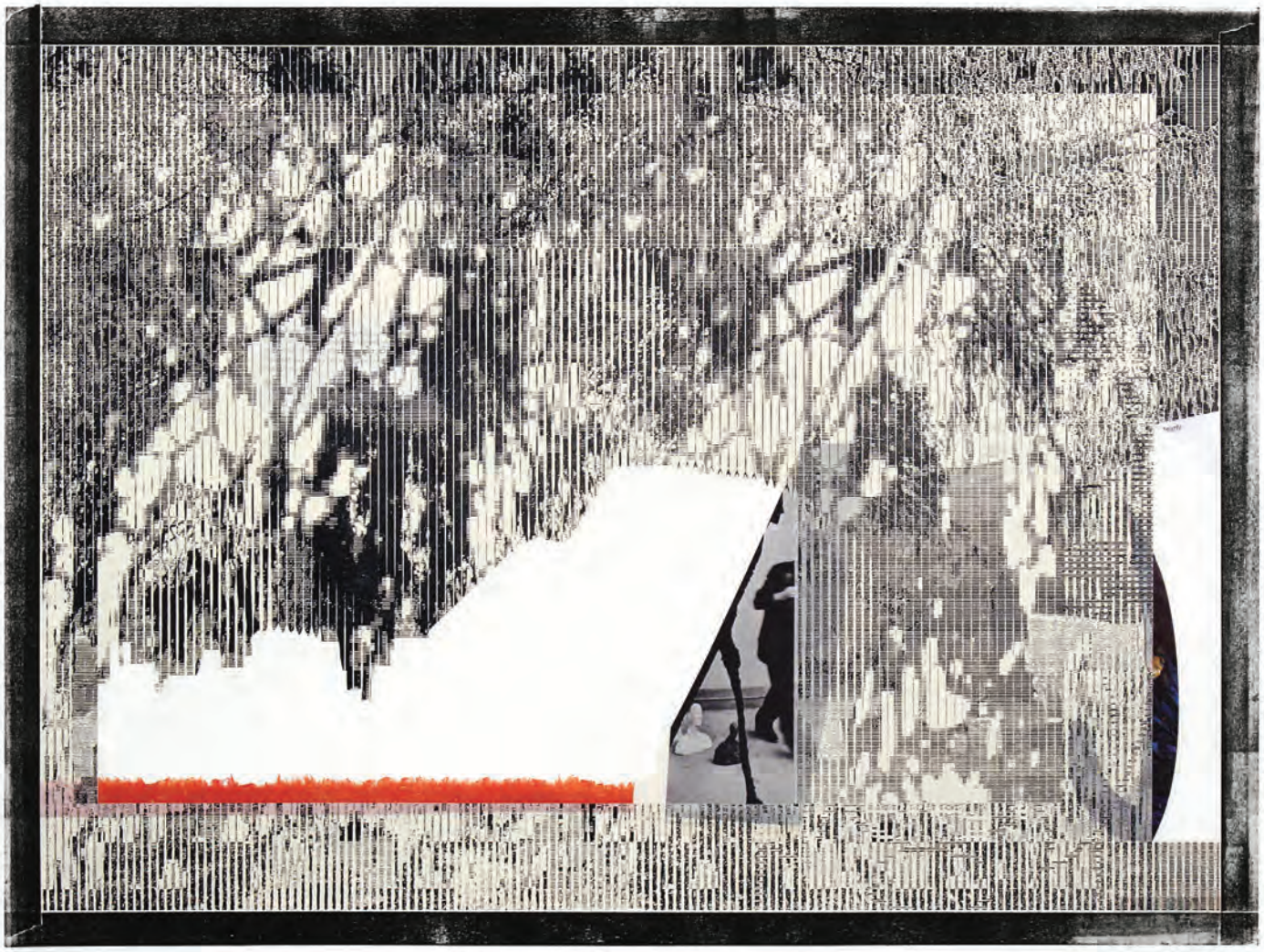
Rosenow begins by meticulously archiving the digital detritus that inundates our screens. Individually, these fragments seem insignificant yet, when aggregated, form a digital repository of our collective cultural memory. In this process, he captures online discourse's volatile, ever-shifting nature, where political controversies and viral phenomena intermingle with ordinary interactions. This archive, however, is only the starting point. What distinguishes Rosenow's work is his subsequent transformation of this digital material by combining traditional and experimental printmaking techniques such as cyanotype, laser-cut relief, and intaglio processes. In translating a pristine digital image into a physical form, the image is subjected to the inherent unpredictability and textural imprecision of analog processes, imbuing it with new dimensions of depth and meaning.

This material translation, for Rosenow, is not merely a technical exercise; it is an act of critical engagement with the social relations underlying our digital age. His process lays bare the self-contradictory nature of aesthetic production under capitalism, where the impermanence of digital content is fixed into a tangible object that both resists and reaffirms its own commodification. In other words, the artwork becomes a sedimentation—a lasting imprint of the social relations of production that govern our information-saturated society. This dialectic, echoing the insights of Arnold Hauser, reveals that the aesthetic value of a work is inseparable from the social, economic, and political forces that shape its creation and reception.

Rosenow's interdisciplinary approach further enriches his investigation. By incorporating digitally generated imagery with traditional printmaking processes, he creates a layered experience that invites viewers to contemplate the interplay between the digital and the analog. His work does not prescribe a specific ideological stance; rather, it cultivates an ambivalent space where the viewer is encouraged to question their own assumptions about information, value, and connection. In an era marked by the isolation inherent in our screen-dominated lives, Rosenow's art reminds us of the importance of genuine human engagement—a call to look beyond the ephemeral and seek the enduring textures of shared experience.

Rosenow's practice offers a profound meditation on the nature of post-internet art. His work transforms digital flotsam into objects of critical reflection, exposing the fractures and fissures in our collective digital consciousness. In doing so, he documents the shifting landscape of modern culture and challenges us to reimagine our relationship with technology, information, and each other. Through this process, Rosenow crafts a visual language that is as intellectually compelling as it is aesthetically resonant—a language that captures the paradoxes of our time and, in its ambivalence, points toward a renewed capacity for thoughtful connection.

Tom Rosenow, *JUSTIFIED*, 2023. lasercut relief with chine-collé; 39 x 30 inches. photo: Patrick Carew



Above: Tom Rosenow, *Death!*, 2024. lasercut relief and chine-collé collage; 31 x 39 inches.

Facing page: Tom Rosenow, *IS THIS? (collapsed)*, 2024. lasercut relief and chine-collé collage; 28 x 26 inches.



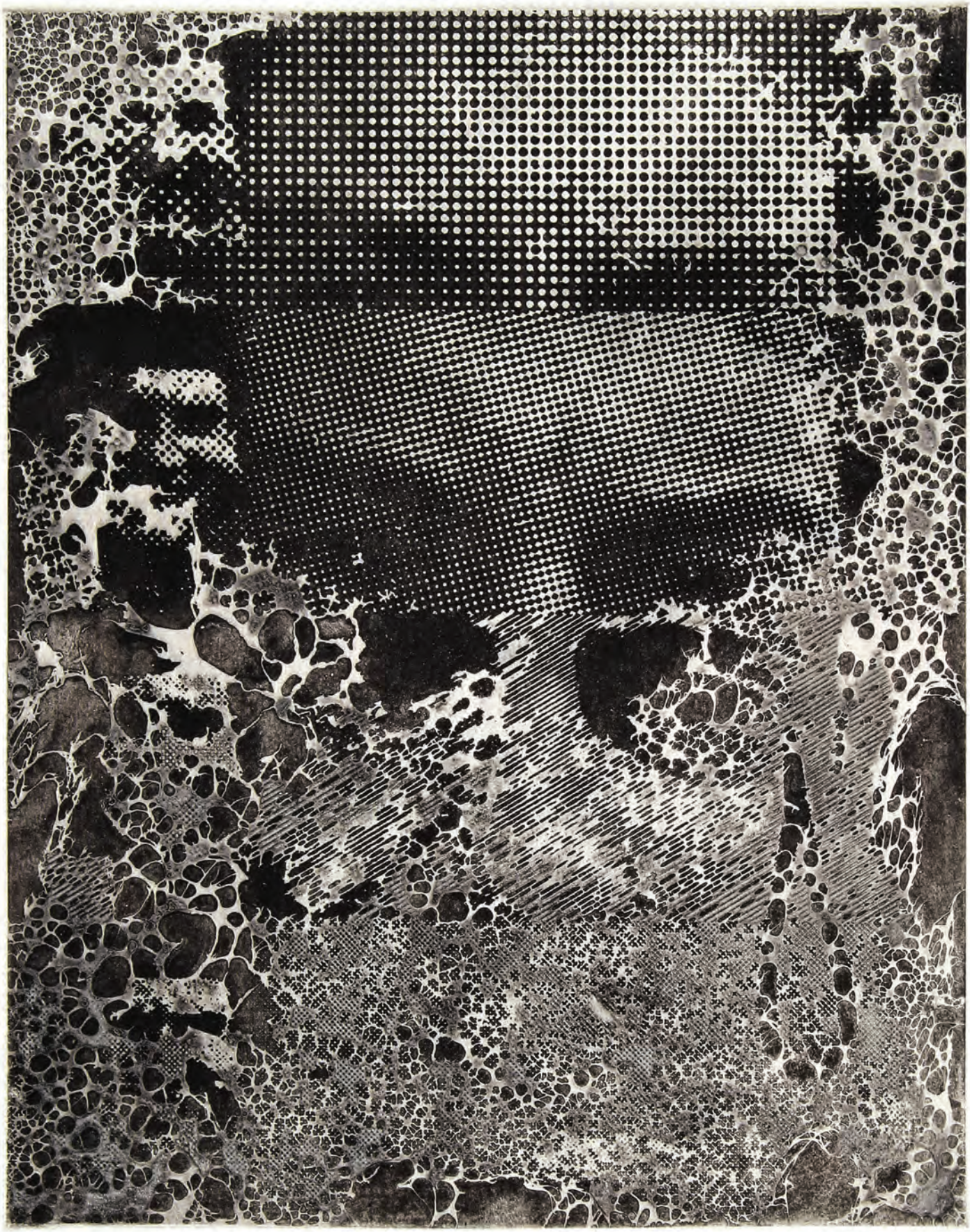


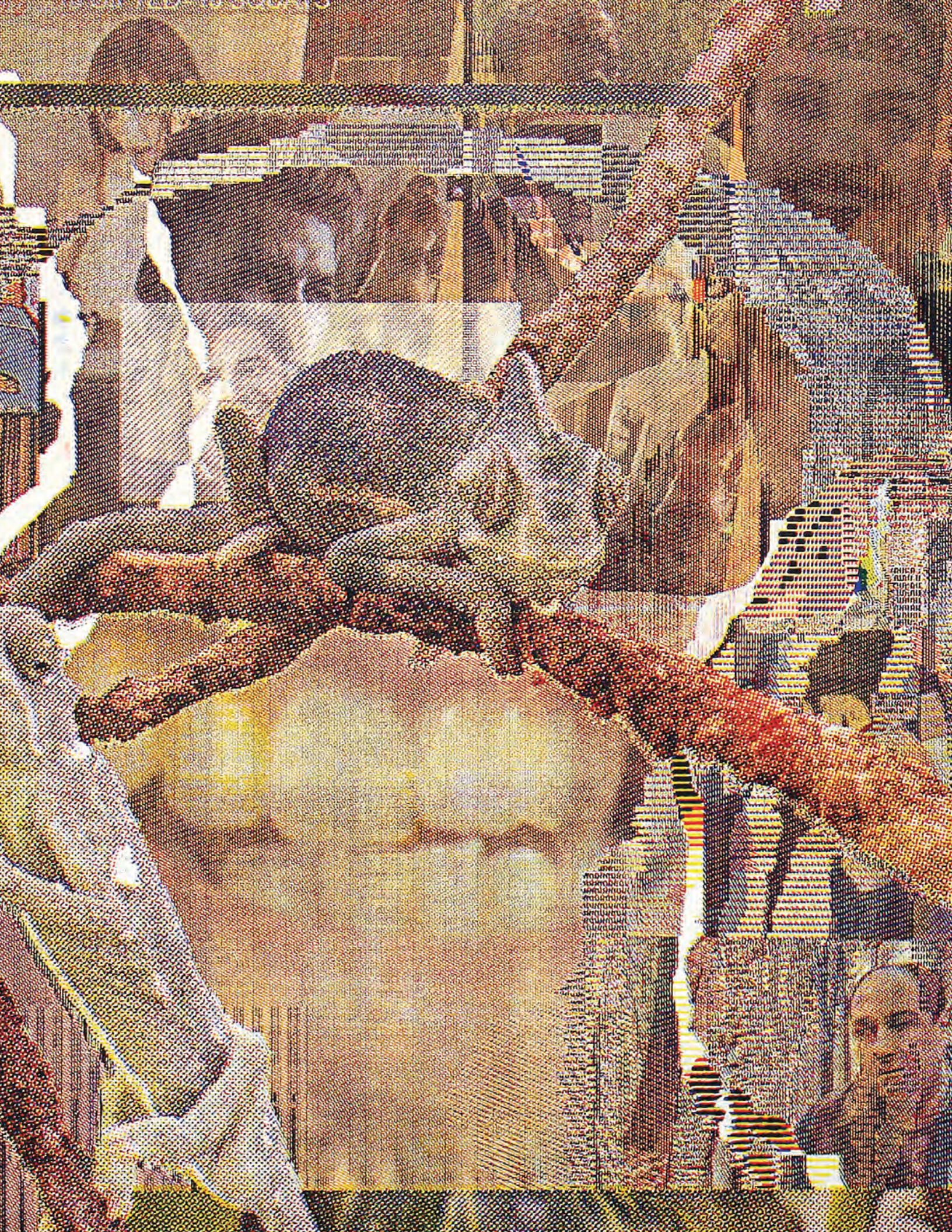


photo: Forrest MacDonald

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tom Rosenow (b. 1996, Lancaster, PA) is an experimental printmaker whose work investigates contemporary experiences within Internet Culture. Through varied techniques, he translates digital collages of personal photos, memes, video stills, and found imagery into analogue prints. Seeking to subvert the disposable nature of the online content he references, he creates “time capsules” by way of archival art objects. Through using bitmap patterns (converting a tonal image to black & white dots) there is a sense of both deterioration and flattening within his work. No matter the context of the source images, the visual hierarchy is often completely leveled. By placing politically charged imagery next to low-brow jokes, he simulates the experience of consuming online content via recommendation algorithms (ie. Browsing the “For You Page”). Tom Rosenow received his BFA from The Pennsylvania State University in 2020. In the Fall of 2023, he received the Graduate Student Research Collaboration Award which propelled the research of his current body of work. This grant culminated in his first solo exhibition in Florida, *Analogue Dreams of Electric Sheep*.

Tom Rosenow, *TOBEY :-(*, 2023. sugarlift aquatint; 14 x 11 inches.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Margaret Miller

The USF Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) is pleased to present *Thank You in Advance*, an exhibition of six students graduating with an MFA degree from the USF School of Art and Art History. I congratulate Jocelyn Chase, Olin Fritz, Adrian Gomez, Michael Lonchar, Emily Martinez, and Tom Rosenow. The MFA program requires intense and substantive creative research and three years of working and collaborating with an exceptional faculty. The annual MFA exhibition and accompanying catalogue also serves to introduce these emerging artists to a broader public.

The graduating students in the MFA exhibition are partnered with a professional museum staff that introduces best practices to loan, install and promote their artwork. This is a critical component of the MFA program and prepares students as they move forward with their careers.

CAM's mission and commitment is to contribute to the learning experiences of all students by bringing acclaimed and emerging world-class artists to the campus and the broader community. CAM presents lectures, symposia, artist talks, publications, and other related educational events. Students may access the USF art collection of over 5000 artworks to do research and learn about contemporary art. Graduate assistantships, internships and directed study opportunities in the museum enhance the student experience and prepare students for careers in the arts and cultural environment.

Curator of the Collection and Exhibitions Manager Shannon Annis, Exhibitions Designer Gary Schmitt, Chief Preparator Eric Jonas, and Preparators Alejandro Gómez and Madison Andrews all work closely with each student to develop optimum installation strategies while introducing the students to best museum practices. New Media Curator Don Fuller and Digital Media Specialist Kenzie Ferrell work with the students to design this catalogue and other materials. Many thanks to Program Coordinator Amy Allison, Chief of Security par excellence David Waterman, Event Coordinator Tammy Thomas, Deputy Director of Operations Randall West, Curator-at-Large Christian Viveros-Fauné, Research Administrator Mark Fredricks, and students Bressia Borja, Arya Mhatre, Anamary Encinales Montoya, Diego Nieves, Kyna Patel, and Mann Thukral.

This exhibition is presented with the support of the USF College of Design, Art & Performance, the USF School of Art & Art History, The Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation, the Dr. Allen W. and Janet G. Root CAM Endowment, the Kathleen Binnicker Swann Endowment, and the Sara Richter IRA Operating Fund. I thank the faculty and staff of the School of Art and Art History and acknowledge Noelle Mason, Associate Professor and MFA Graduate Coordinator; Marie O'Neil, Office Manager; Cassidy Santos, Academic Program Specialist; Ryne Heslin, Graduate Program Facilitator; and Andrew Scott Ross, Director. Above all, I wish to recognize the six graduating MFA students for an exhibition that reflects their artistic strengths.

—

Margaret Miller, Director
USF Contemporary Art Museum

Tom Rosenow, *THAT IS SOO MEEE*, 2024. 4-block lasercut relief with chine-collé; 23 x 23 inches.

UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA
College of Design, Art & Performance



$19.95
ISBN 978-0-9860768-4-8
51995>
9 780986 076848