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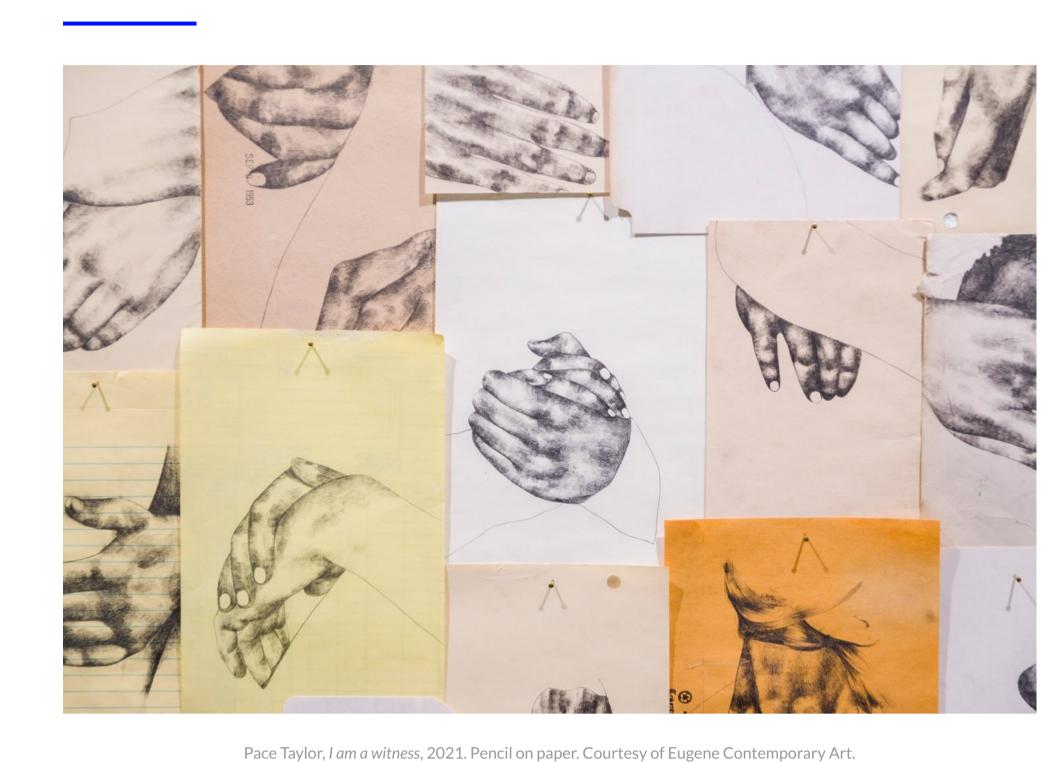
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WRITING

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BY CHELSEA COUCH | MAY 26, 2022

EVENTS



"Isn't this world a jackass?" asked Remy Malik in the film Meditation on Nowhere (2021).

It often feels that way as a nonbinary person. I watch as the LGBTQIA2+ community fights to

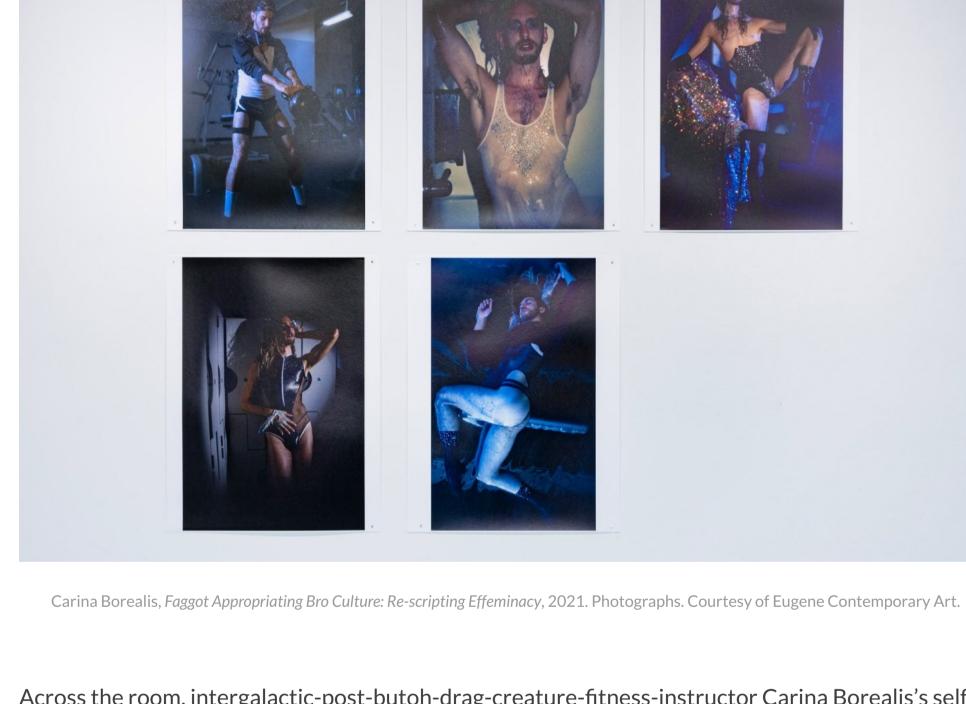
survive through transphobia, racism, xenophobia, classism, and ableism. But I have learned there is also a need for love to survive—love of self and community—in pursuit of support, opportunity, and liberation. In art, I see opportunity—to share our experience of transness, to inform our explorations of self, to

educate, and to be seen: in our joy, in our struggles, through our own eyes. Co-curated by Tannon Reckling and Sam Wrigglesworth, Month of Sundays exhibited the work of

ten artists selected to participate in Tropical Contemporary's 2020/2021 Transformation

Residency Program—an opportunity for transgender and gender-diverse artists in Oregon to create new work with financial support—and was on view at ANTI-AESTHETIC in January and February of 2022. As I walked through the door, Oliver Myhre's work was the first to greet me. In the corner, Self-Designated Exclusion (2021) used the imagery of a dunce cap, eliciting for me beauty and adornment

through the appliqué of glass rhinestones, while bringing to mind the punishment of non-normative bodies, either by ourselves or society.



Across the room, intergalactic-post-butoh-drag-creature-fitness-instructor Carina Borealis's selfportraits, in all their glitz and sweat, restructured the ways we might speak of strength. Faggot

performance, calisthenics, photography, and dance, all in one. This weaving together of processes

recalled the artist's practice of recapitulating and transforming derogatory words, finding ways to

Appropriating Bro Culture: Re-scripting Effeminacy (2021), for example, enmeshed costuming,

be and feel enough, and challenging cultural norms in pursuit of physical, mental, and social strength. In the corner, Princess Bouton of the Kiki House of Flora danced in vivid, saturated exuberance, in Princess Too Bad (2020). As I watched a Black Transfeminine human feeling joy in her body, there was a palpable sense of Bouton's Pleasure Activism: the belief and act that liberatory practices can be some of the most pleasurable experiences, rather than just work to be done.

sticks emerged as spikes from the paper skin or fur, while excess wax dripped to the floor from its arched back. Among the wax mounds on the floor, remnants of joss ash and carefully tended cordage drip in precise parallel lines from the form. Along both side walls, Julia O. presented a series of paintings. In UNREST (2021), the face of a nude trans woman, outlined in pink against a hunter green background, was turned away as she lay with her body splayed on the ground. The tentative marks and the compositional void reminded me of

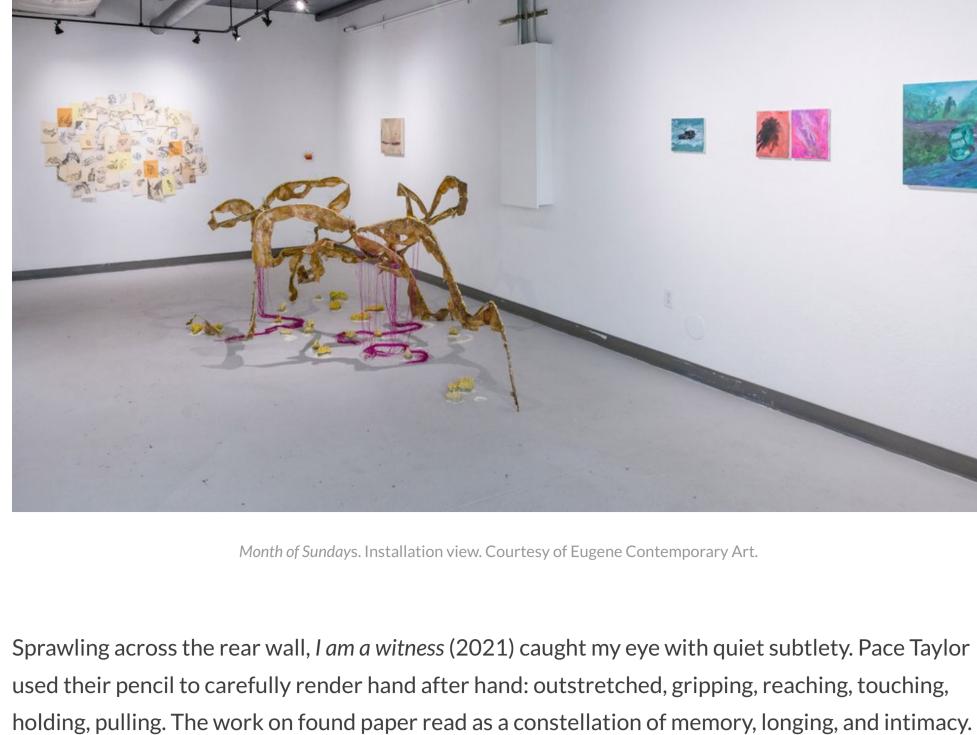
Rounding the corner, Irene June's Shrine-ing, reprise (2020–21) was perched on four outstretched

spindles. Among articulate joints, the metal structure was encased in joss paper with wax. Joss

hopeful laughter at the recollection of bodily fluids. Suspended in the back corner, Eel Probably presented love me, loves me not (2021), a dangling floral arrangement of gesso-formed loose canvas and used scalpel blades from the artist's studio, of which several had been plucked to the floor as if flower petals from a child's game. I think of the way this work mirrored the comfort and discomfort trans folks often feel in their own bodies, especially

my own experiences with dysphoria. Her abstract compositions also humorously brought to mind

installed beside the depiction of a post-double incision chest.



Finally, in the middle of the gallery, alone in its quiet darkness, I found the work of Black, nonbinary, mystic, and poet Remy Malik. The screen of this film Meditation on Nowhere (2021)

beckoned, pulling me in closer and closer. Like Toni Morrison said, "If there's a book you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you

must write it." If there is infrastructure we desire that does not exist, we must create it. If there is a

gap in access to artistic creation, we must build a bridge. If there is representation lacking, we must

document it. If the world cannot imagine, we must step in and show the world that liberation requires both trouble and quietude. Luckily, in *Month of Sundays*, both were on view. "Breathe in and feel the liberation of this moment, the moment that chose to be with you.

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Exhale and remember that you have chosen to be with this moment." —Remy Malik

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Author: Chelsea Couch

Chelsea Couch (they/them) is an artist, educator with Willamette University, and co-

explore a materials- and object-based practice and enjoy crafting work that aggregates

double entendre, innuendo, and non sequitur. They are searching for queer exuberance;

investigating notions of safety and security as related to late-stage capitalism and post-

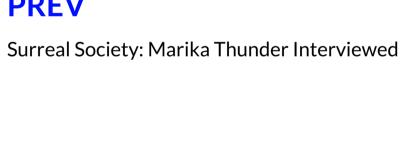
gender embodiment. They are currently based in Salem, OR, a transplant from Southern

Balancing Buoyancy and Desolation: Emily Kepulis

executive and artistic director of Ditch Projects. As a multidisciplinary artist, they

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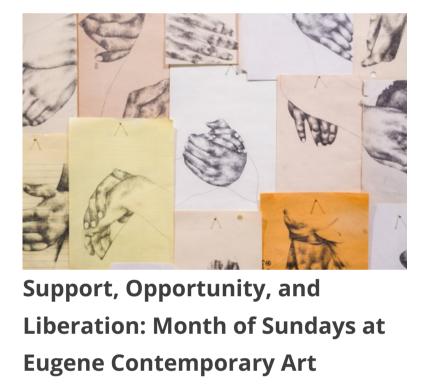


Desolation: Emily Kepulis at Lolo Pass by Jeff Alessandrelli

impending and preventable horror

A painter meditates on the

of environmental destruction.



by Chelsea Couch An ambitious group exhibition steps in to show the world that liberation

requires both trouble and quietude.



Marika Thunder's exhibition at de boer gallery in Los Angeles

Asian Futures, With Asians: Astria Suparak and Everything Everywhere All at Once

by May Maylisa Cat May Maylisa Cat considers how Asian people and cultures have been continuously erased from film and TV.

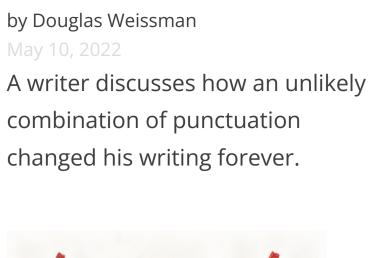


exhibits and junk food have in common?

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Sponsored Connection | Christine

Miller: Syrup on Watermelon at

Portland Art Museum Reviewed

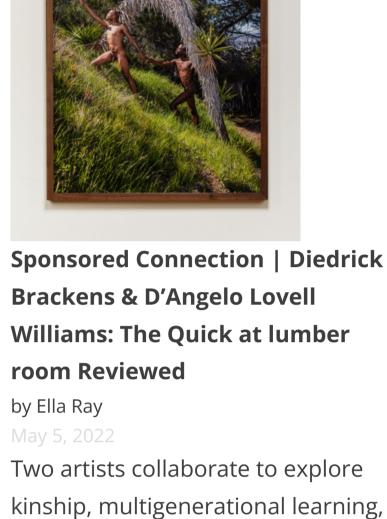
Portland artist Christine Miller turns

historical racist imagery into tools

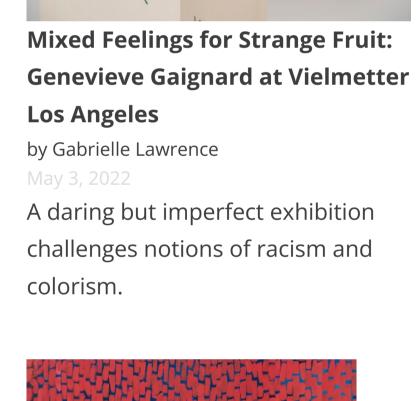
by Ruby Joy White

May 5, 2022

for Black liberation and love.



and community.



Chromophilia

Stelo + Variable West Art Writing

Resident Daniela Molnar examines

by Daniela Molnar



celebrate the Mexican-American

experience.

Theaters for Frankensteins:

Yuyang Zhang Interviewed

culture, and dark humor.

beauty in everything.

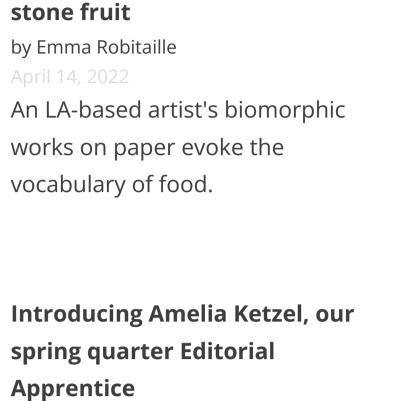
Yuyang Zhang's paintings and digital

collages offer cultural commentary

through memes, Chinese-American

by Laurel V. McLaughlin

Love Letter to Julie Green by Erin Bodfish An Oregon-based educator and artist inspires her students to find



Nasim Hantezadeh and summer

We are thrilled to announce that Amelia Ketzel is joining Variable West as the spring 2022 Editorial Apprentice.

Love Letter to Kenjiro Nomura

A Seattle-based painter captures

1930s Seattle, Japanese Internment,

grief, loss, and recovery—all with his

Day" at SE Cooper Contemporary

by Variable West

by Peter Tracy

by Hannah Krafcik

Interviewed

by May Maylisa Cat

Art of Glass: Emily Endo

Through scientific discovery and

Last Breath of Life Through

Sacramento Artists: Faith J.

gentrifying Ice Blocks district.

mysticism, Emily Endo explores the

brush. Srijon Chowdhury's "Groundhog

A Portland-based painter conjures the otherworldly to meditate on the shrouded interiority of his subjects.

possibility of glass. A Condemned Building Gets a

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