

Heather Brammeier

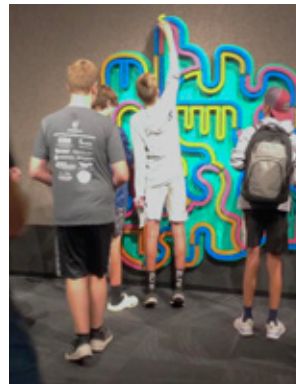
Infinity Maze, 2022

Painted aluminum, aluminum barbells

Photo at Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, PA

Currently at Pilsen Metropolis, Chicago, IL

Infinity Maze is an interactive wall sculpture with barbells that participants move around a continuous track. The barbells can be flipped across the track to follow different paths along the maze. *Infinity Maze* is designed to engage all ages. The barbells are moved most easily along the smooth lower tracks. More complex paths are in the middle area. The top tracks can be reached by adults reaching overhead or lifting up young ones. Participants will quickly discover that they can race the three barbells to various resting places on the tracks. Interactions will be both meditative and stimulating. Participants learn how the maze was designed by interacting with it directly.



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Fever Dream, 2024

Installation in *The Now: Fever Dreams*,
curated by Parker Daley Garcia, at Pen +
Brush Gallery, NYC, NY

Blue tent, tree branches, reclaimed
plywood, rope, lamps

The tent in *Fever Dream* is either unreachable or inescapable. The objects and places in my fever dreams have terrible beauty, luster, and glow. In and out of waking, the imagery repeats, while my body is too heavy to lift. This tent in the trees beckons as an escape, a territory of independence like that of The Baron in the Trees (Italo Calvino), but with a female protagonist. I am a baroness in the trees, where none question my authority. This body burns from the inside out, where blue flame is the hottest. Thrown into inaction, I am no Hamlet, as I welcome the dreams that come.

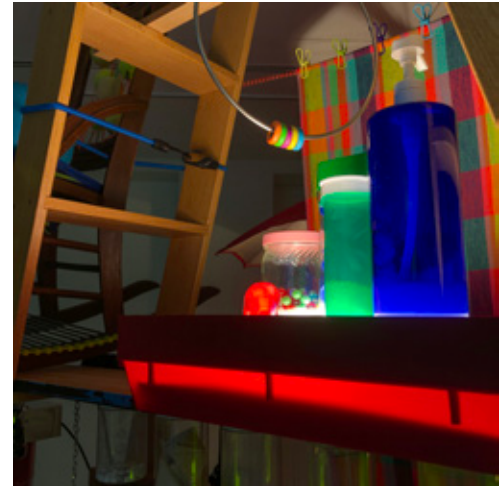
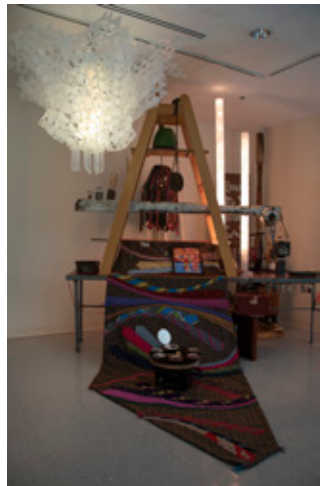


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Turn On Every Light, 2024

Installation in Visual Arts Gallery,
University of Illinois Springfield
Reclaimed and transformed objects, hand-
made chandeliers, lightboxes, textiles,
photos of Buenos Aires fleamarket

This exhibition serves as a celebration of the human instinct to collect and reinvent. The will to collect requires unique organizational systems—many of which are improvised and invented. Many objects in the installation are handcrafted by myself to look like the found objects in a fleamarket. I am channeling the creativity of savers, collectors, and craftspeople. *Turn On Every Light* is a place of safety and escape, where visual overload brings pleasure and peace.



I Found U Collective
La Tormenta, 2023–2024
Collaborative installation at Museo
Maeso, Villa Soriano, Uruguay

The concept of *La Tormenta* emerged from conversations reflecting on the similarities between effects of a tornado on the local community of Dolores, Uruguay, and the global impacts of the pandemic. Over time, the practice developed into a dialogue about the ever-present destabilization and reestablishment of social and political structures and the human imperative to continually adapt to changes in our societal landscapes.

I Found U Collective's nine members continually compare our experiences around the globe. Our collaborative practices create a strong sense of interconnectedness, cooperation, and care, all of which inform our artistic inquiries.



Marisa Bernotti, Heather Brammeier,
and Nina Gospodin

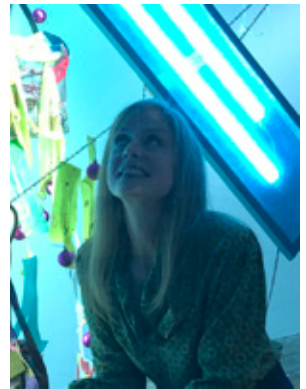
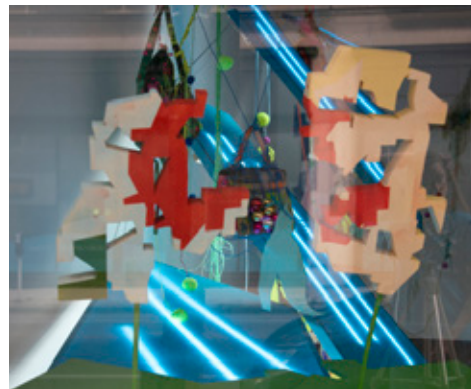
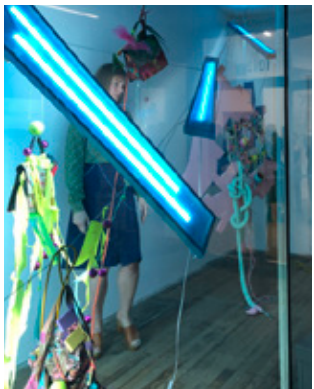
Light Conversation, 2022

Window installation at Real Tinsel Gallery,
Milwaukee, WI

Bespoke light panels, painted styrofoam,
altered handbags, found objects

Marisa Bernotti (Uruguay), Nina Gospodin (Austria), and I collaborated through online and in-person conversations to create an installation that plays off the storefront location of Real Tinsel Gallery. The three of us are founders of the international collective I Found U. We are artists who met during a residency with School of the Visual Arts in New York.

This exhibition, Ephemeral Existence, was in partnership with other alumni from the SVA residency program. Because *Light Conversation* is in a storefront window, it is more than an artwork in a gallery, it is public art. The angled lights and objects emphasize diminution in size as they move back in space. From inside the gallery, pulling a rope rang a bell that sounds like one a shop would have to announce entry.



Heather Brammeier

Schwarzkiefer, 2022

Installation with performance

Barac artist residency grounds,

Mannheim, Germany

Schwarzkiefer (Black Pine) branches,
found objects

A significant part of my installation practice is giving myself physical challenges that are nearly impossible. I lift, carry, place, and attach large objects without assistance. In *Schwarzkiefer*, I make this aspect of the process overt through performance. In Mannheim, I was compelled to build my own scaffolding with the trimmed branches from the ubiquitous Schwarzkiefer trees. My goal was to build a structure as tall as possible in the space of two weeks without the aid of ladders other than those in the work. The structure became more familiar to me than any staircase. I knew exactly where to place my weight and how to maneuver through and up the branches. At the close of the residency, I performed within the piece, attaching found objects as ornaments and sawing off branch ends. The structure swayed with me as I worked.



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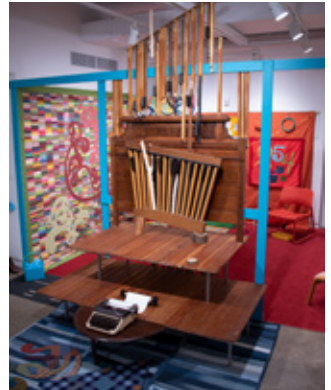
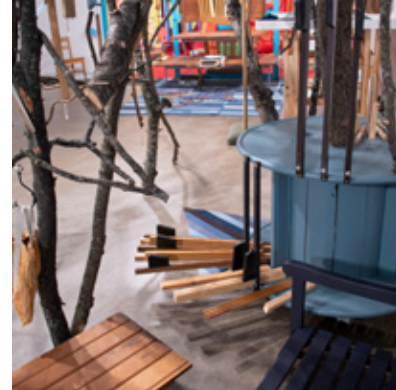
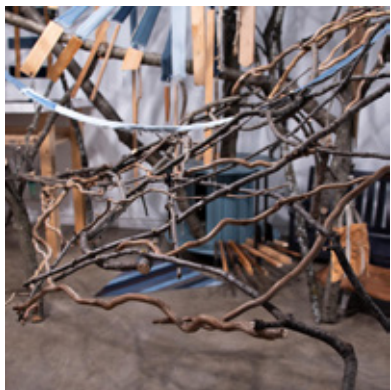
She Kept These Things, 2022

Installation with performance

Borzello Gallery, Knox College, Galesburg, IL
Willow branches, oak branches, denim,
handmade rugs, handmade quilts, play objects,
bespoke nightlight, wooden organ pedals,
Olympia typewriter

With *She Kept These Things*, I am reconsidering the past, present, and future. The environments in the gallery include some of what I experienced as a young person, but they also invent places I would have delighted in then, and that I delight in now. Adults do not lose the joy that comes from exploration and discovery; this is part of what I mean when I say that my work continues the function of childhood play.

The extension of childhood play also refers to pushing boundaries, testing the environment to see what is possible. Fully traversing the spaces in *She Kept These Things* requires an adult to duck and change posture in various ways. This creates a focused awareness of the structures, an attention to spaces that are compressed and spaces that are expansive.



Heather Brammeier

Maybe Never, 2021

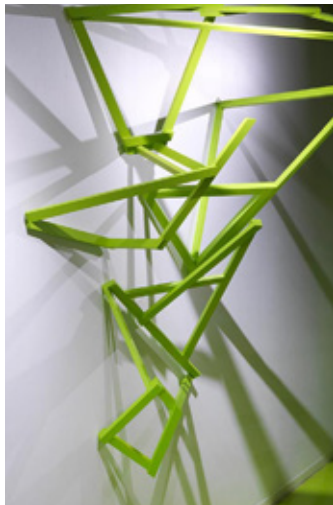
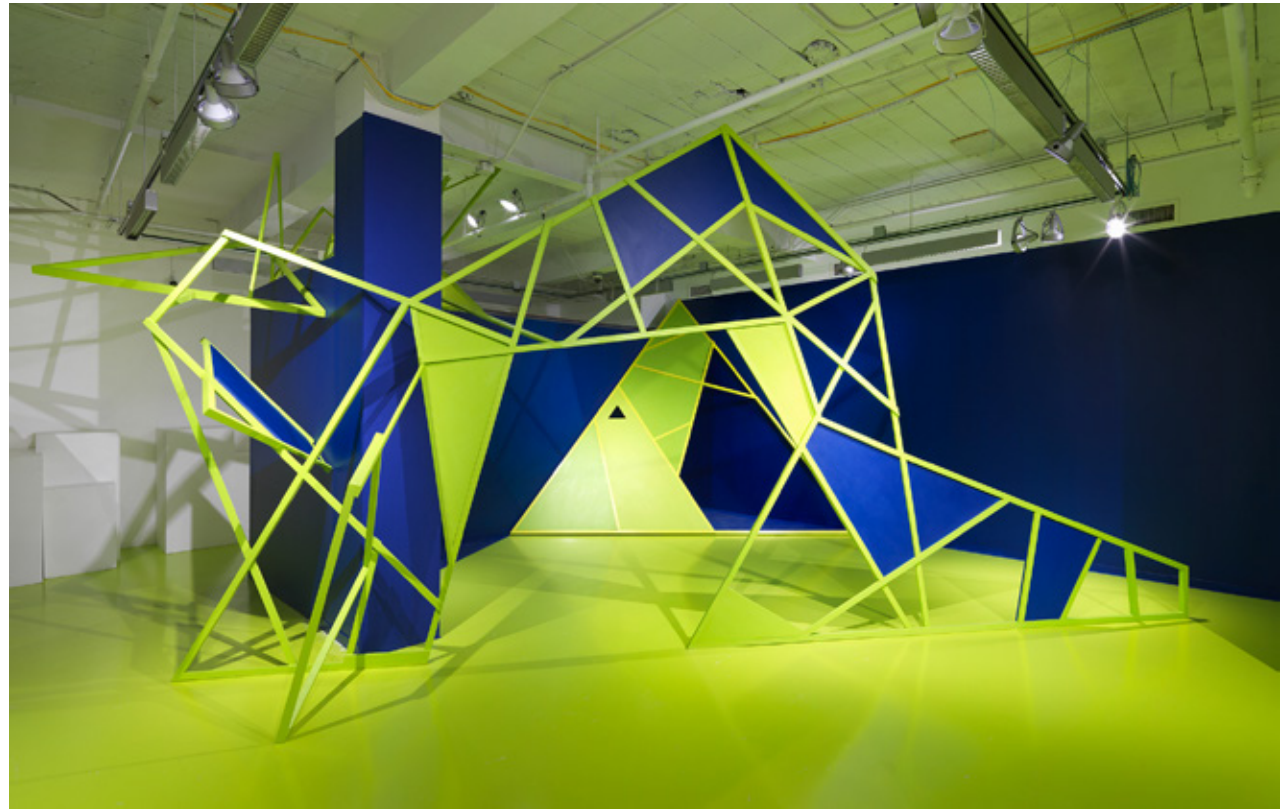
Installation in the Cleve Carney Gallery at
Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL

Painted pine, fabric, insulation foam, lights

Performance by Izah Ransahoff

From curator Gervais Marsh:

"Maybe Never is a meditation on the beautiful and complex tension that exists between possibility and hopes that remain unfulfilled... Like coded maps, the mind wanders into a contemplation on edges, asymmetrical planes, and the space in-between. Each form is dynamic, existing both independently and as part of the larger installation. What does it mean to view the world through a perspective of fragmentation? Does it disrupt the belief that anything can be whole? Or rather, is it a recognition that the whole is always made up of parts, whether visible or not? These are some of the recurring questions that animate her work."



Heather Brammeier

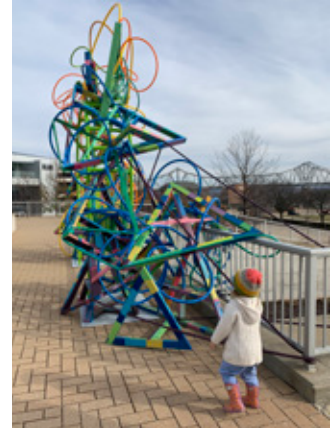
Easterseals Rainbow, 2020

Installation commissioned by Easterseals of Central Illinois, located on Peoria Riverfront Museum plaza

Painted wood, aluminum arch, plastic tubing, painted garden hose, tie-down straps

If you can take objects or materials that are readily available to you and make them function as something you need, you are removing barriers—you're adapting. Through play, young people solve problems creatively, but they also push boundaries and challenge their own limitations.

When the Easterseals team asked me to make a physical manifestation of a rainbow, it made perfect sense. In my world, there's no reason plastic tubing and painted garden hose can't function as beams of light. There's no reason I can't reorganize the colors of the rainbow, and add triangles to arcs. In the *Easterseals Rainbow*, I'm imagining prisms that refract light into color, and I'm suggesting that light and color are physical objects.



Heather Brammeier

A Treehouse for Anaya, 2020

Installation behind my home,
Peoria, IL

Ginkgo branches from Anaya's backyard,
sycamore, london plane, oak, magnolia, and
willow branches, furring strips, reclaimed
lumber, and various objects for play

2020 was a confusing time for expressing love and loss. I decided to focus on a very specific example of loss. My eight-year-old neighbor Anaya and her mom lived with family for part of every year. She and her mom moved away again sometime over the winter of 2020; when her entire family moved away the summer of 2020, a sense of finality set in. *A Treehouse for Anaya* is about missing my friend and wishing her well as she grows up.

The main supports in the structure are huge ginkgo branches that fell from the tree in Anaya's yard (seen behind the treehouse). The first time I met Anaya was when I went over to her yard to get these branches.



Heather Brammeier

Carry Weight, Hold Light, 2020

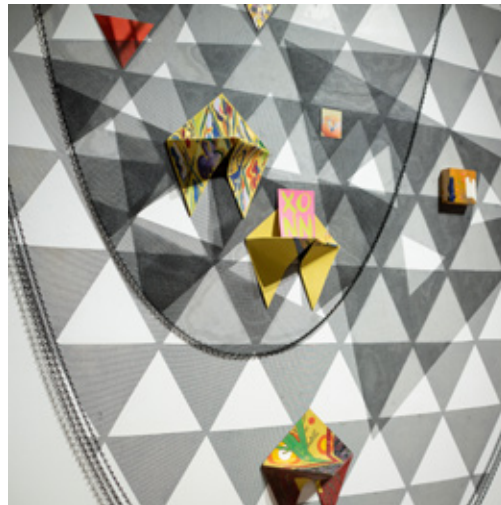
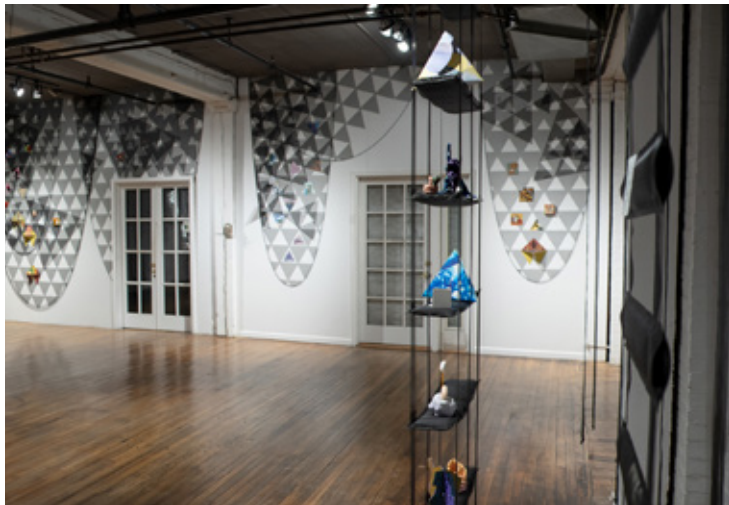
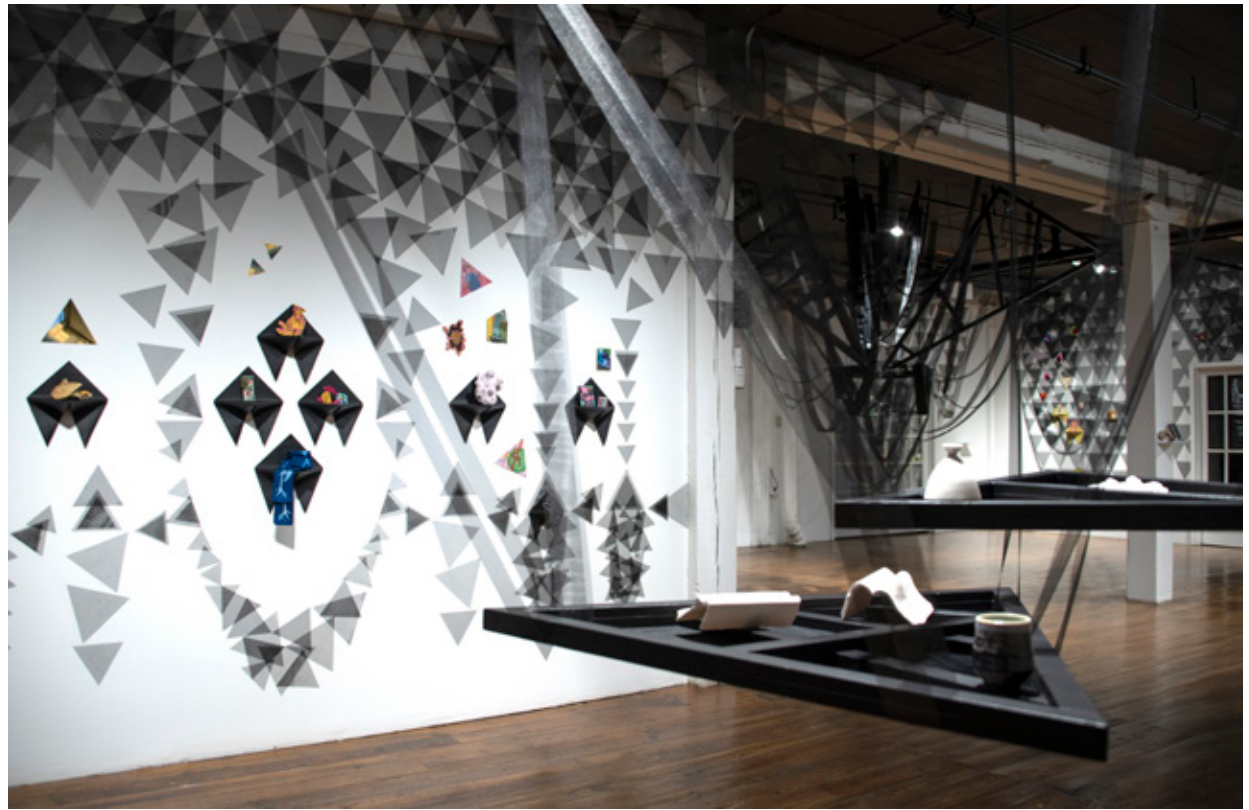
Installation including small artworks by artists from all over the world

Contemporary Art Center, Peoria, IL

Artist miniatures, painted wood, fiberglass screen, painted canvas, found glass

From artist John Heintzman:

“This exhibition is a maximal installation of permeable materiality and soaring structures... Brammeier’s process is intuitive and extremely physical. Her installations are never just about scale or the abstract form. Her deft touch with materials creates a worldless voice that runs through the gallery. She is undaunted by scale and the challenge to meld immense with the miniature—the overwhelming large to the powerful diminutive. Small works invest their presence in *Carry Weight, Hold Light* supported by geometric shelves, presenting a visual surprise that only reinforces Heather Brammeier’s attention to detail and diverse materials.”



Heather Brammeier

To Carry, To Hold, 2018

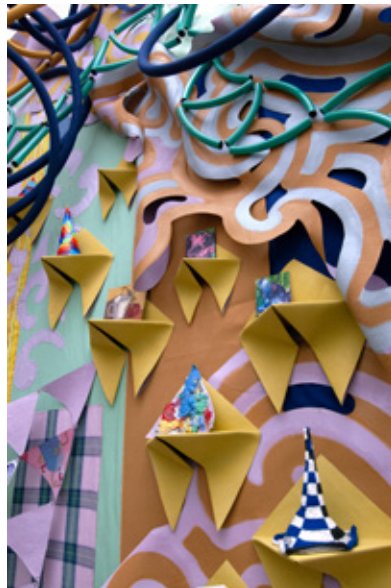
Installation in Studio #222

International Studio and Curatorial
Program, NY, NY

Garden hose, plastic tubing, painted
canvas, painted insulation foam,
artworks by US and international
artists

To Carry, To Hold was a collaborative exhibition in my studio while I was an artist in residence at International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn NY. In ISCP's Studio #222, I created a large, vertical installation that integrated miniature works by other artists. Inspired by the common practice that artists have of gifting or trading small versions of their work, I invited artists to contribute either a miniature work that could sit on a shelf (made from a folded piece of painted canvas), or a work made on or attached to a pink triangle (also made from painted canvas). An historical precedent for this work is Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau*. More recently, Sabina Ott created a large installation work that hosted many other artists' works at the Hyde Park Art Center, in the piece *Who Cares for the Sky?*

A second iteration of this installation in 2021 was titled *Carry Weight, Hold Light*. The intent is that the work will continue to be reinvented and exhibited, with artworks from more artists.



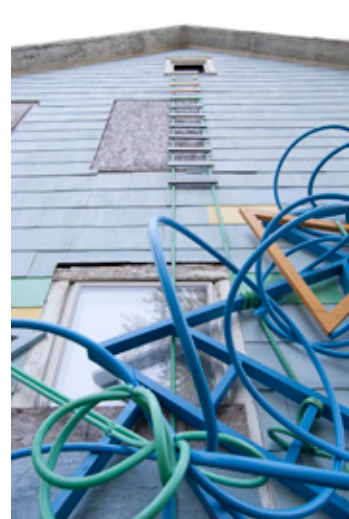
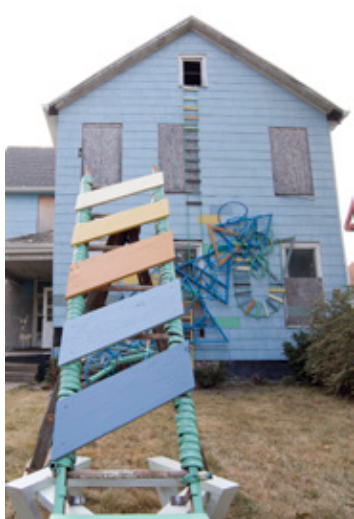
Heather Brammeier

Brighten the Corners, 2017

Installation for the Terrain Biennial, Springfield, IL
curated by Mark Rospenda

Painted wood, garden hose, PEX tubing, reclaimed ladders on vacant house

Terrain is an ongoing project started by Sabina Ott, with the mission to put art in front yards and porches, making it free and accessible 24/7 to a broad audience. A number of homeowners in the Enos Park neighborhood of Springfield, Illinois allowed artists to work in the front yard of their properties. The curator and I selected this particular house, as it was uninhabited and had been for some time. The realtor and owner allowed me to attached work directly to the front of the house, and to paint on it. The “escape ladder” descends from an attic window with no glass and a rotting frame. The title *Brighten the Corners* refers to the initial disappointment neighbors expressed that I was not renovating the house, which later turned to appreciation that I transformed the façade of the house, at least temporarily.



Heather Brammeier

I Changed, and then I Changed again, 2019

Installation in *Furies, Fairies, Visionaries*,
curated by Alice Gray Stites, Pen and Brush
Gallery, NY, NY

Reclaimed oak flooring, willow tree, chain

This work reinvented a larger installation, *Lose the Feeling*. I distilled elements from the tilted, fragmented floor, and created an elegant system that utilized just tension to lift it up. I created a hanging chain ladder to fit perfectly within a giant I-beam in the gallery space.

The tree trunk of a willow tree stripped bare aggressively cut through space. Its bonelike surface invited touch. The oak floor panels had the duality of the smooth finished surface and a rough, splintery underside. The exposed underside signifies the raw emotions arising from grief that are taboo in American culture.



Heather Brammeier

Nothing to Fix, 2019

Installation in *City and Empire*, exhibition with Lori Nix and Kathleen Gerber, Merwin Gallery, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL

Reclaimed wood, found objects, chain

Nothing to Fix is part of a series addressing love and loss. The over-arching content is the individual's struggle to achieve an ideal state while knowing that nothing is permanent. In recent works, I have been exploring the prolonged grieving that I experience for my mother and for my deceased ex-husband. *Nothing to Fix* adds to this my recent separation from my husband. While my mind continues to search out a way to repair the marriage, the damage is done, and it is time for acceptance. The strange mix of landscape and interior is an environment that invites introspection and discovery, a place to grieve and a place to repair.



Heather Brammeier

Trouble the Water, 2019–2021

Installation for Big Picture Initiative, Peoria, IL
Painted wood, garden hose, plastic tubing

Trouble the Water, like many of my installations, seems to invite play, yet denies the viewer access. The height of the flagpole and the triangle of the signpost drew me to this site in the Warehouse District of Peoria, Illinois. I saw the opportunity to exploit the height of structures that referenced masts and sails. Using the concrete bases and the surrounding iron fence as structural foundation, I first built a platform that can only be reached with a ten-foot ladder. At the same time, the platform seems to be a treehouse structure with iron poles in place of a tree. The references are playful, inviting climbing and escape; my work often seems to offer a safe place to retreat. Yet the work is also disruptive, challenging our expectations for how we experience architectural space.



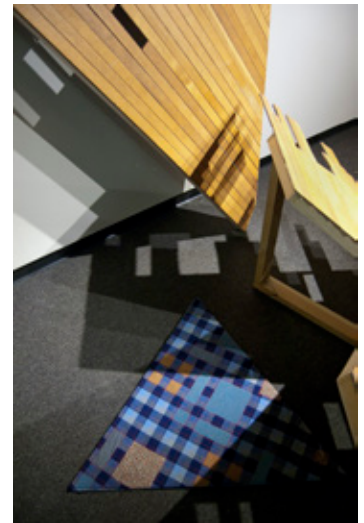
Heather Brammeier

Intervals, 2018

Installation at Sauk Valley Community College,
Dixon, IL

Reclaimed wood floor, reclaimed fabric, painted
insulation foam

Intervals mark the distance between things. Some distances are fixed and measurable, as in music—a major fifth, a minor third. Other intervals change with circumstances, as in the route driven between one place and another. The most complex intervals are those marking time, as the way we experience the passage of time can flux regardless of the empirical measurement. We mark time with anniversaries, some volubly, as in years of marriage, others quietly and privately, as in the instance of death or divorce. These intervals are not fixed; they grow ever larger and stretch out before us. Within each person's story of their lifetime, various measured intervals overlap, dividing experience into varied fragments of time.



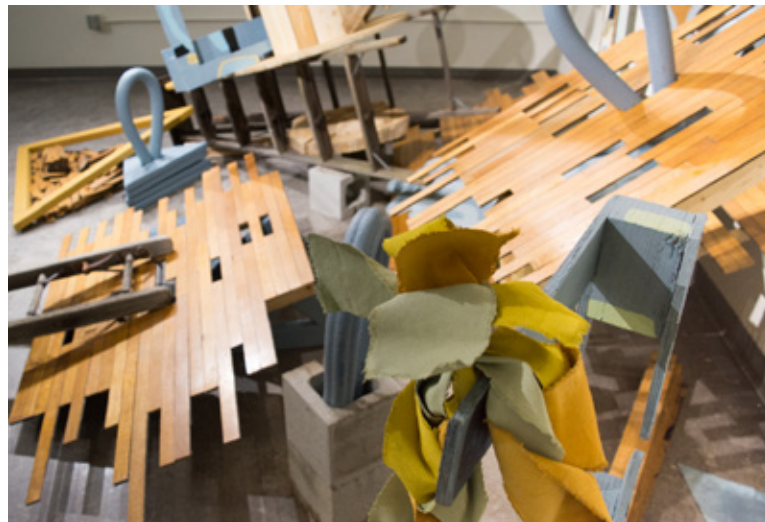
Jessica Bingham and Heather Brammeier

Remember This, 2018

Installation at Western Illinois University Annex
Gallery, Macomb, IL

Reclaimed lumber, furniture, and objects; painted
canvas, pool noodles, construction materials

Remember This is something I often thought to myself as I watched my mother dying, trying to burn her image into my brain. Jessica Bingham is an artist who also expresses ideas of love and loss through installation. This collaboration was a continuation of our previous exhibition *Burn Pile* in many ways. As artists who both use reclaimed materials, we respond easily to each other as we bring our materials together and move them in a space. Whereas *Burn Pile* was more fragmented, *Remember This* has more focused arrangement and a sense of hope. Jess was heavily pregnant at the time, and the promise of new life brought optimism to our collaboration.



Heather Brammeier

Lose the Feeling, 2017

Temporary Installation in Heuser Art Center Gallery,
Peoria, IL

Reclaimed wood, planed pine, cut carpet

In preparation for my solo exhibition at the McLean County Art Center, I installed *Lose the Feeling* in the Heuser Art Center Gallery at Bradley University. The installation was vastly different, as I was working with a space that was much narrower, but taller, with natural light. The gallery space led me to play up the cut carpet collage. I was at first thinking of the carpet as solidified shadows, but the fragmentation invited me to start drawing with them on the walls and playing off the eccentricities of the gallery space.

This was not a formal presentation of the work; the installation was in place for a week or so. In the McLean County Art Center installation, I reinvented the carpet collage to complement the different gallery.



Heather Brammeier

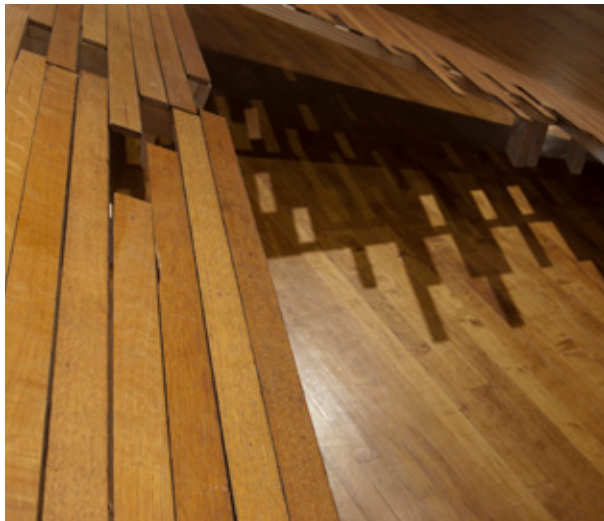
Lose the Feeling, 2017

Solo exhibition Installation at McLean County Art Center, Bloomington, IL

Reclaimed wood, planed pine, cut carpet

Lose the Feeling refers to encouragement to “get over” something, or “move on,” which can be difficult to do. The reclaimed oak floor recalls for me the way my mother refinished floors, upholstered furniture, and in every way imaginable re-designed our home until it felt full of her life. Building this floor on a compound angle begins to express the upheaval I felt with her loss. Usually you cannot see the underside of a floor, but here the raw, splintered underside is exposed like emotions we prefer to keep hidden.

Descriptions of sculpture usually refer to cast shadows. I prefer to focus on the shapes of light within the cast shadows, as you can see in detail images of *Lose the Feeling*.



Heather Brammeier

Fragments of the Unreachable (Things that are Lost to Us), 2017

Installation in the Peoria Riverfront Museum, Peoria, IL

Reclaimed wood, planed pine, ladder, willow tree

Like many artists, I use my artwork to reach toward the unreachable. *Fragments of the Unreachable* is an installation with floor panels that can't be walked on. A ladder supporting a tree suggests a way to climb both, but the surrounding structures deny access. My work evokes the internal struggle of trying to reconcile contradictory states of being. The struggle does not always result in frustration; most people find joy in imagining the climb, in spite of its physical impossibility.

Fragments of the Unreachable was designed specifically for the gallery in the Peoria Riverfront Museum. When I learned about the opportunity to exhibit in this space, I knew it was time for me to cut down my slender willow tree to make a work that would reach up toward the black ceiling. After cutting the tree, I peeled the bark from all the branches to reveal the bone-colored wood underneath. When lit, the tree glows against the darkness like a shot of lightning. The eyes are drawn upward, and viewers contemplate the beyond.



Heather Brammeier

Next Steps (Life Carries On), 2017

Painted wood, painted insulation foam, garden hose, reclaimed metal hoop

Next Steps (Life Carries On) resembles a giant toy, with purposeful reference to toy xylophones and hula hoops. Even the garden hose carries connotations of summer play in the sprinkler, or just with the hose itself. The pieces in the main structure are stacked vertiginously, but securely fastened. *Triangle Bench* (seen in the background) seats two adults comfortably, and young people enjoy crawling into the partitions under the seating. The South Bend Museum of Art purchased *Triangle Bench* for their permanent collection, and it is now on display in the Sculpture Corridor of the Century Center, where anyone visiting the Century Center can interact with it. Juror Miranda Lash awarded *Next Steps* Best in Show in the exhibition, South Bend Museum of Art Biennial 29.



Jessica Bingham and Heather Brammeier

Burn Pile, 2017

Installation in Jan Brandt Gallery's The Guest Room,
Bloomington, IL
Reclaimed materials

Burn Pile comes directly from the rural practice of piling up garbage to burn. Many materials in this two-person collaboration either came from a burn pile in central Illinois, or they are materials that would typically end up on a burn pile. The materials are stacked and assembled, weaving a path through the gallery's project space. The result is at once funereal and playful.



Heather Brammeier

This Mortal Coil, 2015

Terrace installation, UICA, Grand Rapids, MI
PEX tubing, zip ties, sign vinyl, tape, painted
wooden structures

This Mortal Coil was part of ArtPrize 7 exhibition SENSE at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art in Grand Rapids, MI, curated by Heather Duffy. This Mortal Coil exploits the optical vibration created by vivid red and blue. It also plays with our perception of depth; various viewpoints create layers of red and blue patterns that become difficult to interpret spatially. The installation continues my exploration of imagery that exists in between two and three dimensions. I embraced the color and qualities of the polyethylene tubing, which glows in the sun. The installation had two benches for visitors. From Instagram photos, I found that people chose to “hang out” throughout the installation, sitting on the vinyl grid or up against the walls; I had created a sense of place.

