

Method of Exchange

Libby Barbee
Matthew Best
Matthew Fishel
Lou Joseph
Hector Leiva
Stephanie Lohmann

Sarah McNeil
Erik Parra
Steven Pearson
Chris Rusak
Jonathan Stonely
Charlotte XC Sullivan

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Points  North

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Jason Irla & Chloe Watson, co-founders

Curator's Statement

Having recently moved to rural Maine, I am increasingly aware of the geographical distance between myself, my family and friends, and thriving contemporary art communities around the country. I refuse to allow the physical distances to cripple my already established social and artistic networks. These networks now exist in different formats—mainly in virtual space online—and I'm discovering alternative ways to keep in contact with those who are now hundreds of miles away.

This exhibition attempts to find a creative solution to overcoming great distances by establishing contact with a group of twelve artists scattered throughout the United States. I made a conscious decision to ask artists within my social network to which I have varying degrees of friendship. I wouldn't recognize several of the participating artists on the street, as our relationships exist solely through communication online. On the opposite end of the spectrum are artists I would consider myself having very close relationships with: a former professor and mentor; the officiant of my wedding; dear friends from graduate school. The remaining artists lie somewhere in between these poles—even if we don't socialize regularly, I follow their work and studio practice closely.

Due to rapidly evolving technology, the way in which we communicate and share information has become increasingly depersonalized. The days of sending handwritten letters and hardcopy mail appears to be disappearing. That decline is even more evident with the closures of post offices around our country. I asked each artist to send me an original postcard-sized work of art. While retaining his/her own visual language, the artist was to respond in some

way to what he/she already knew about my new current location/home. This interpretation could be as broad as the state of Maine or as specific as the features of the house that I live in. This information will vary for each artist depending on how well we know each other. As the title suggests, this is an exchange—the artists send me a postcard, I send each of them one in return. Each artist was asked to include key words describing their current location/home in the message on the back of their postcard to me. The message could be as vague or specific as the artist desired and aided in supplying the visuals for my response postcard sent back to each of them at the conclusion of the show.

In his book The Gift, author Lewis Hyde suggests that “gift exchange tends to be an economy of small groups, of extended families, small villages, close-knit communities, brotherhoods, and, of course, of tribes.” This show is a testament to that economy but goes beyond artists simply sending gifts to each other. Sharing details of home and place, each participant allows viewers and myself into their most comfortable space whether I’ve physically been there before or not. The show is likewise my way of inviting these individuals to my home without the expense and inconvenience of travel. The convenience of social media is easy and quick, sometimes even thoughtless. Utilizing the straightforward function of the United States Postal Service, this show is an appreciation of this simple service for helping to conquer great distances and connect individuals through works of art.

-Chloe Watson

Postcards

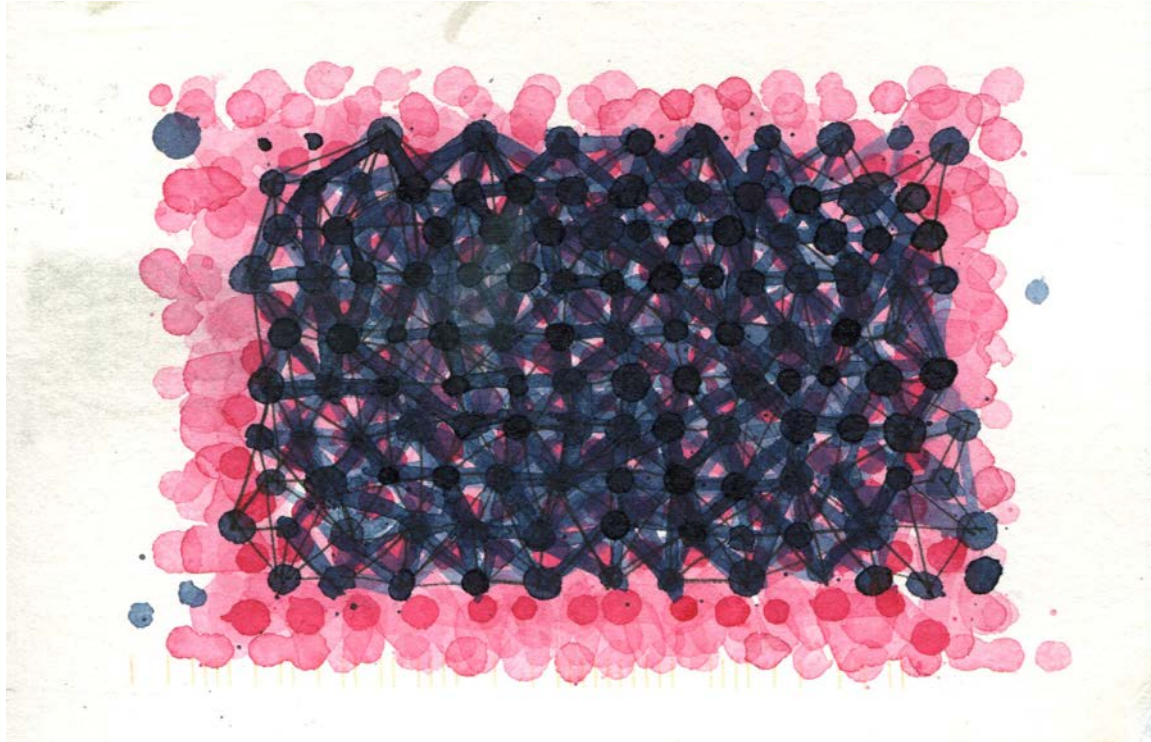
Libby Barbee





Moved down the mountain, living in town, friendly herd of deer that live in the yard,
beautiful view of the mountain which got its first snow two weeks ago

Matthew Best

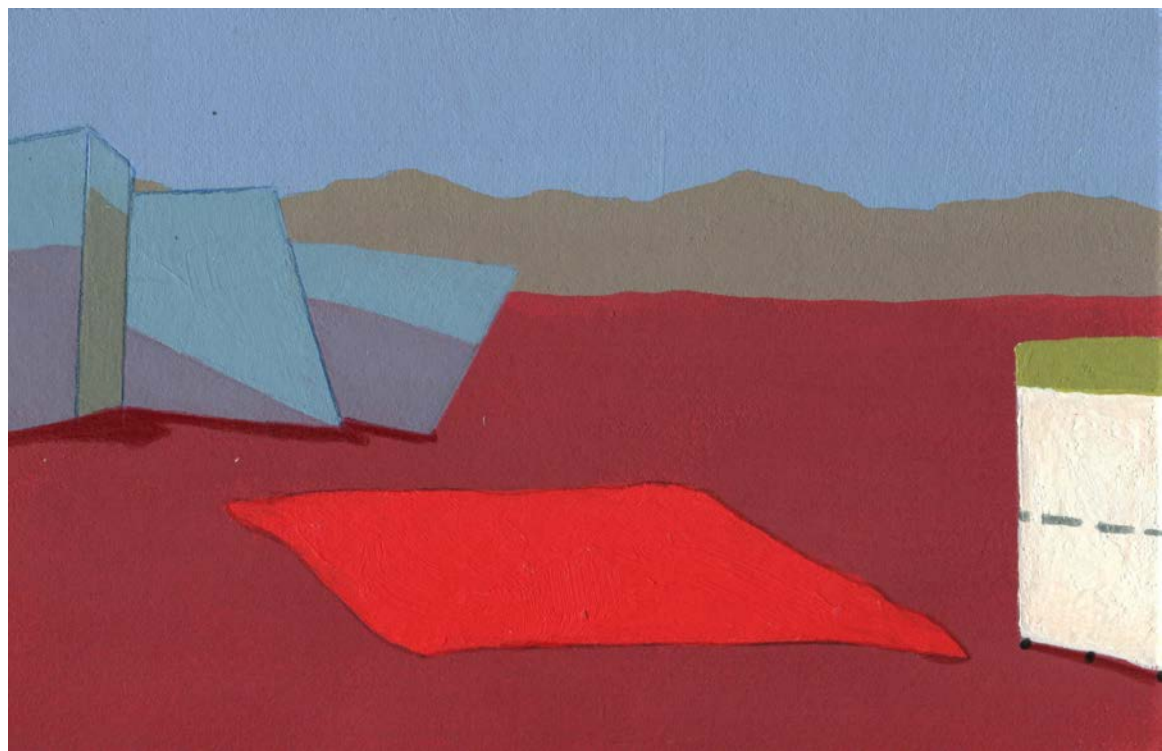




Suburban/urban, trees, ex-factories, fading, trees, crowded, train, contrasting, kind of boring but not if you look hard enough, bricks

Matthew Fishel





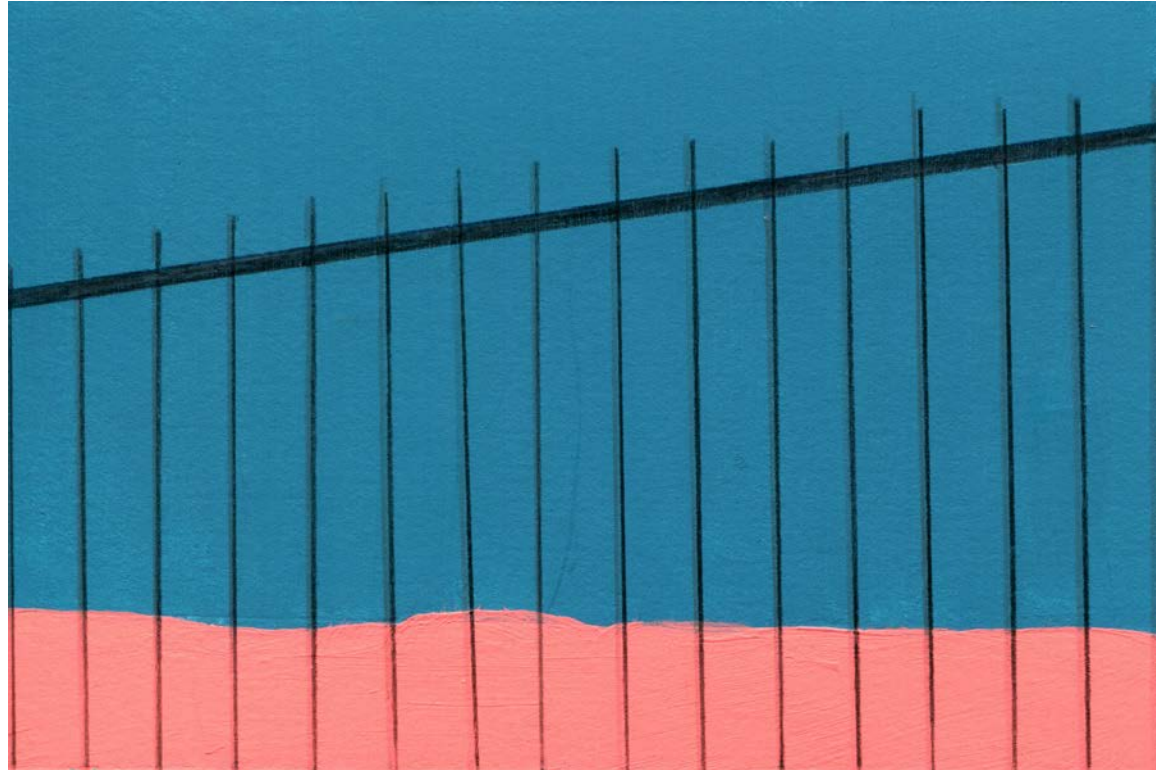
Lou Joseph





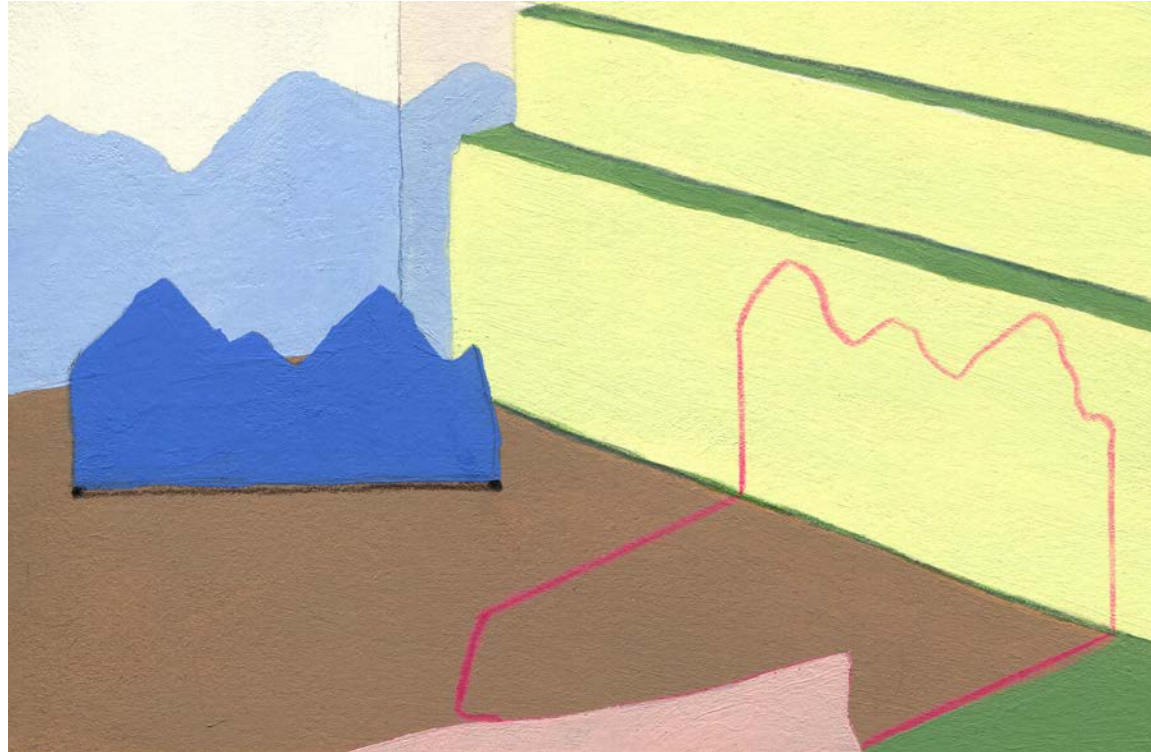
Acadia National Park, my mom's favorite place on earth.





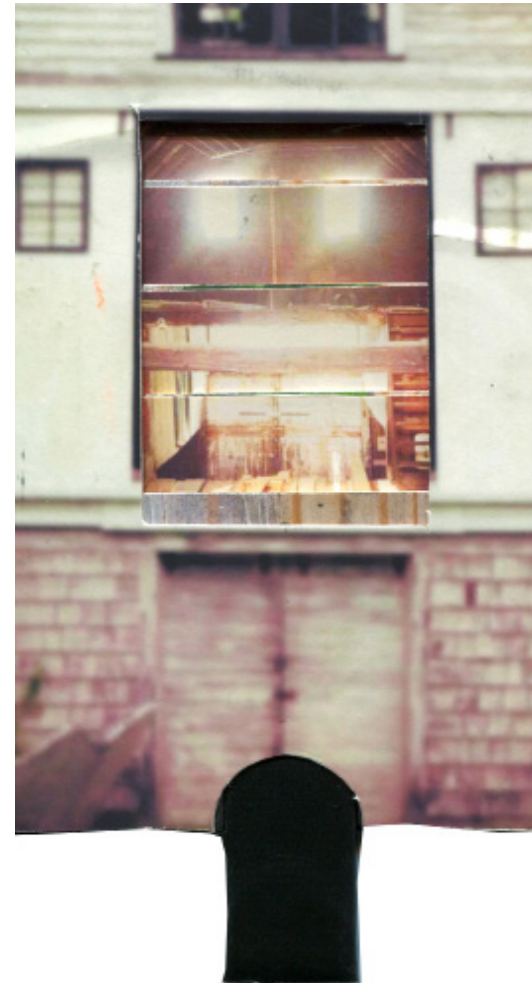
Stephanie Lohmann

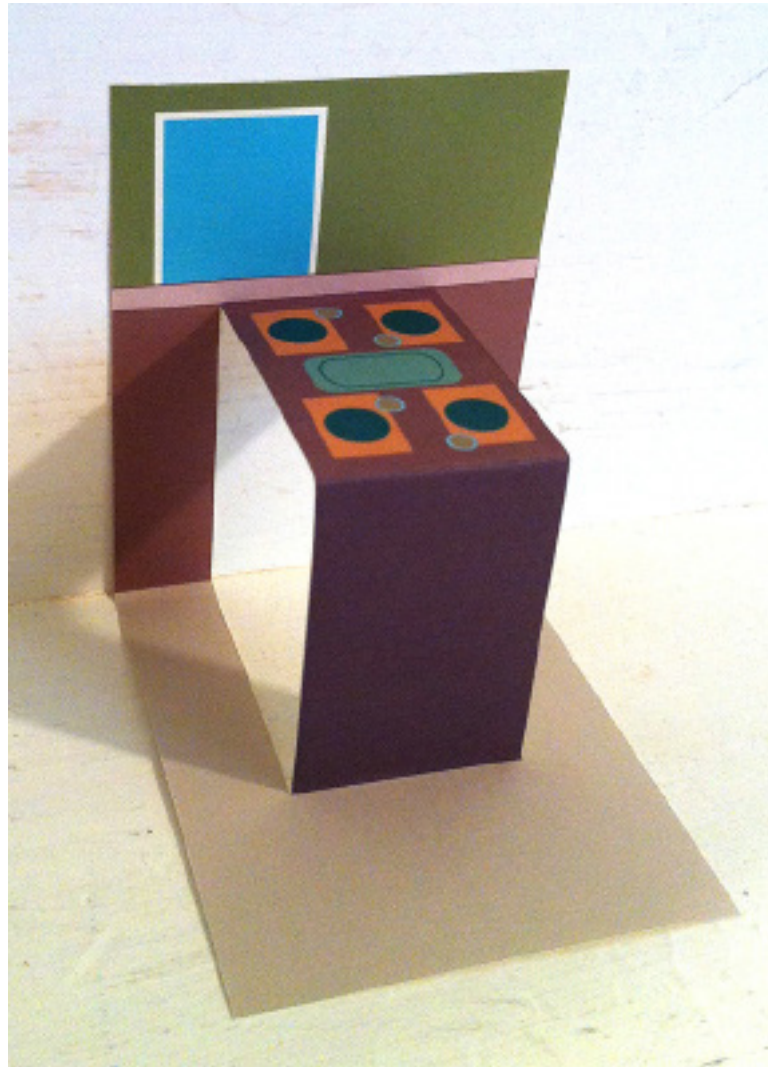




Virginia, I guess the Texan in me still hasn't gotten used to mountains. Or seasons.

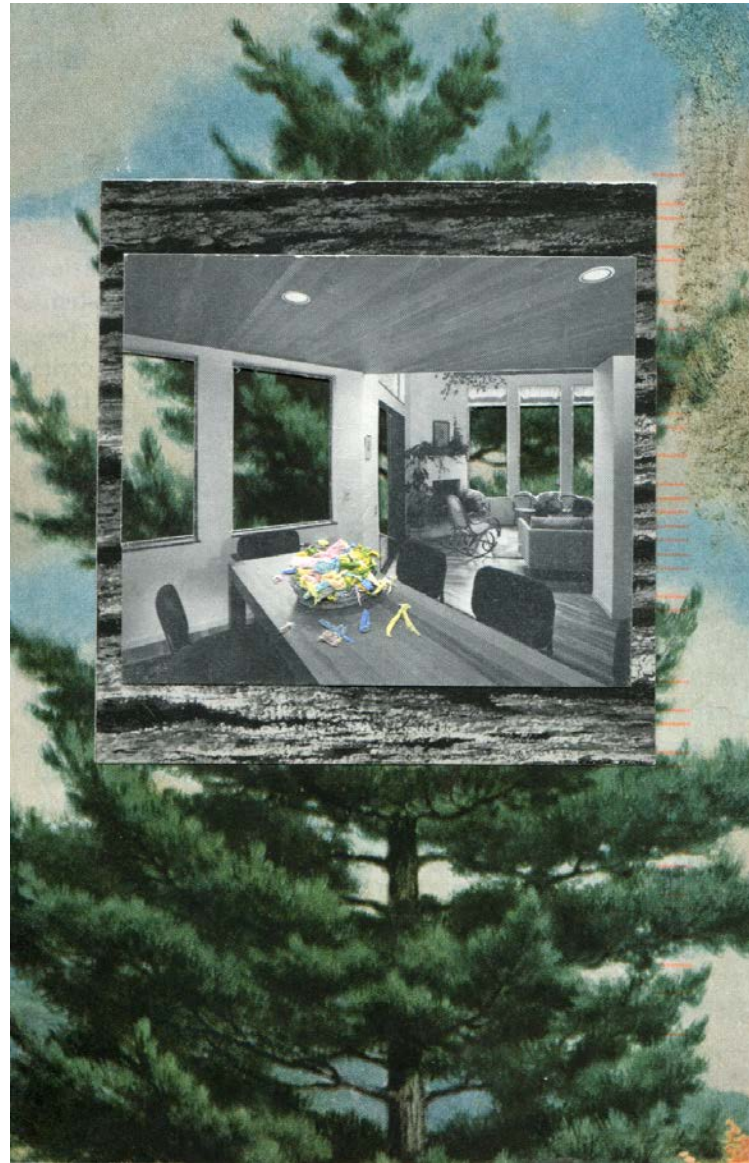
Sarah McNeil

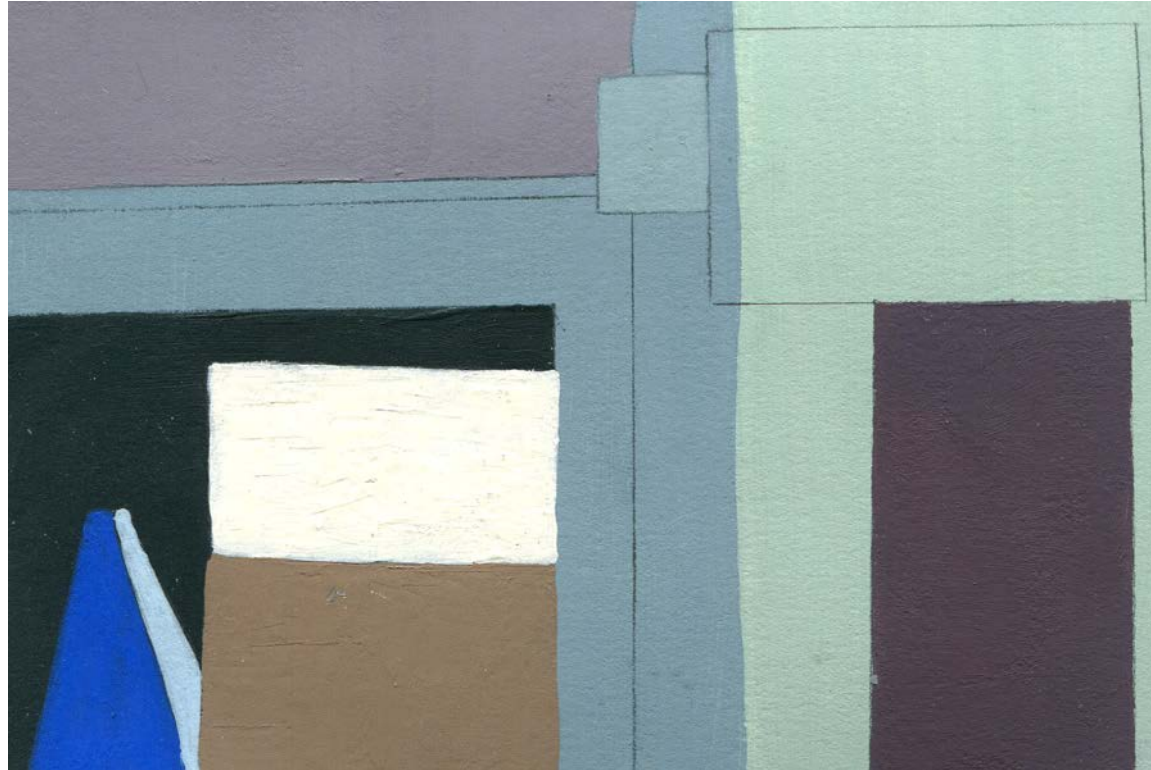




We are faced with the unusual situation of having lived longer in each other's current location. <3 broken when I left Maine. I am slowly learning to rebuild a home here in Baltimore.

Erik Parra

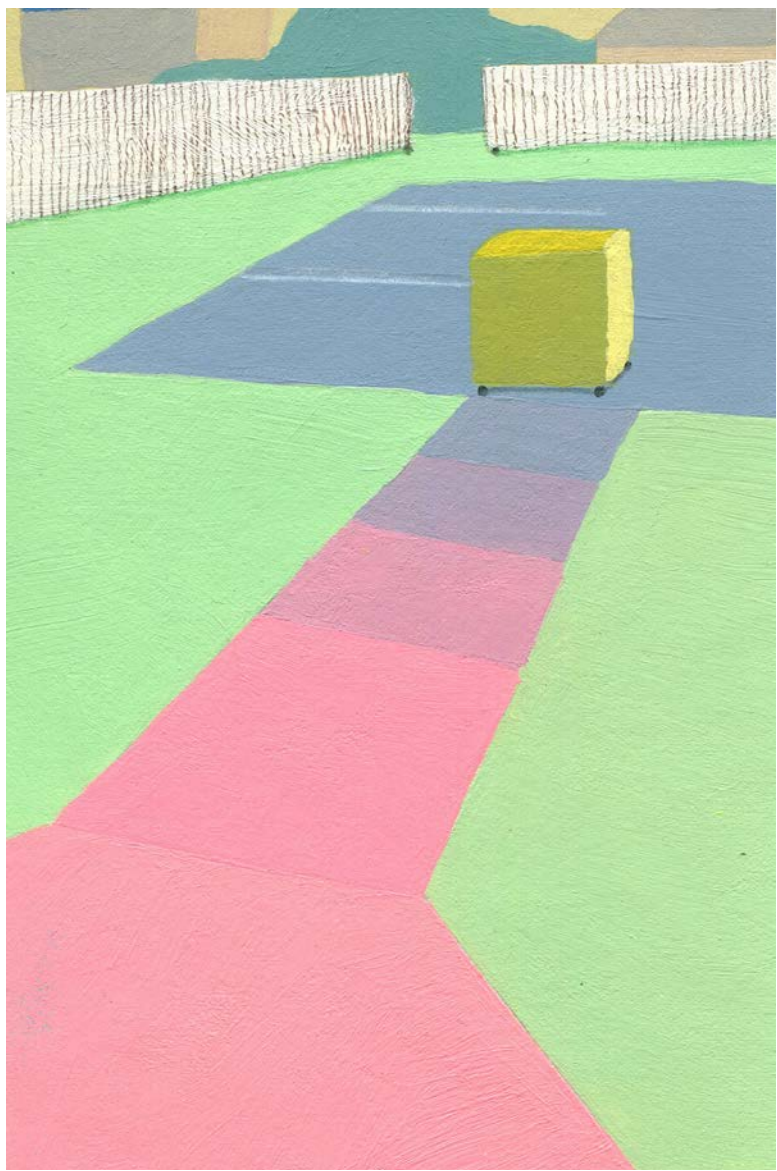




North Cal, dense, diverse, dirty, beautiful

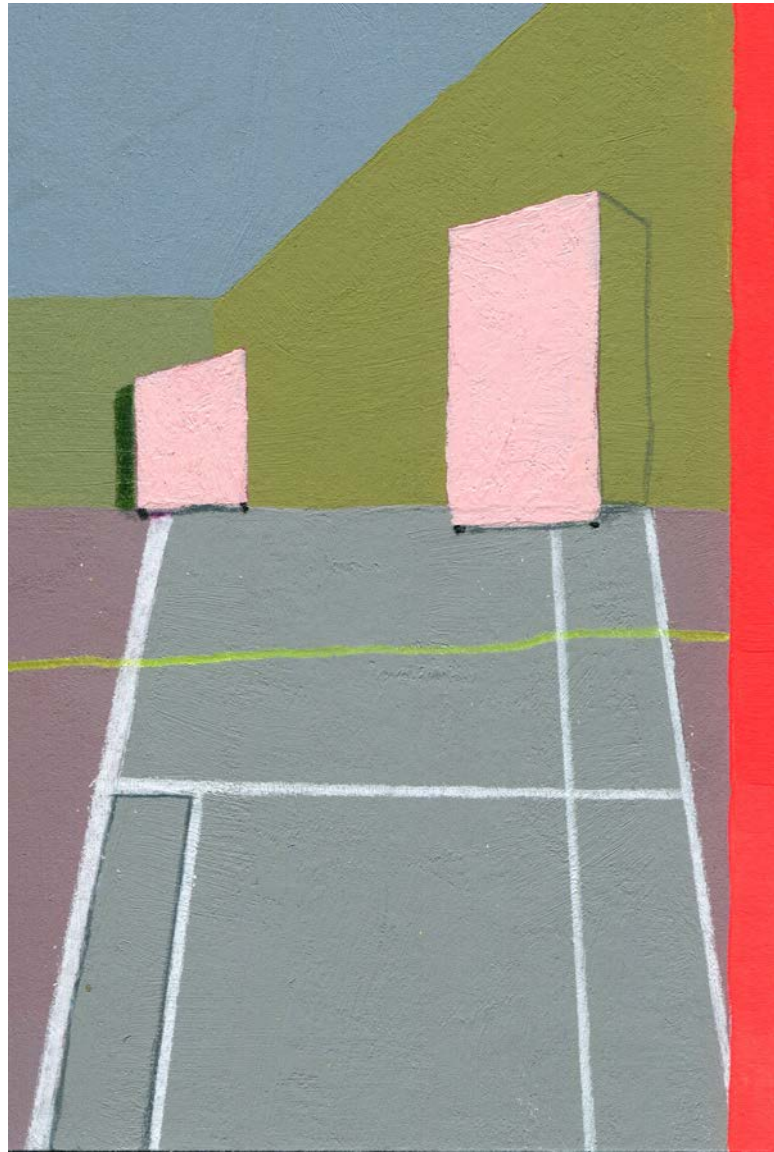
Steven Pearson





Chris Rusak

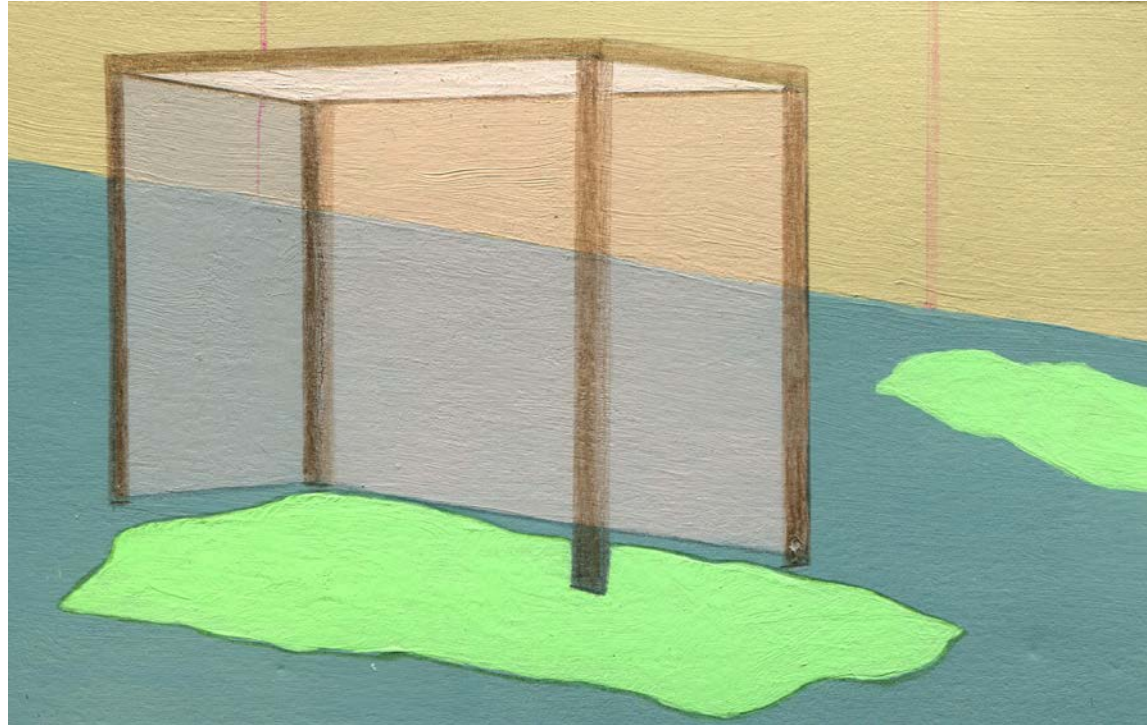




San Francisco, violent grey, diagonal living, transitory, absurd, home

Jonathan Stonely





I was sitting at the bus stop, Thinking Maine is really far away, Dreamed up a transportation device, There is a little shock when you first enter, It gets you where you want to go...really fast

Charlotte XC Sullivan





42°25'13.62 N
72°25'43.778 W

Artists' Biographies

Libby Barbee

Bio

Libby Barbee was born in 1981 and grew up in a small ranching town on the southeastern plains of Colorado. She completed her undergraduate studies at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO, receiving a BFA in painting, a BFA in Art History, and a BA in French Language. In 2011, she received her MFA from the Mount Royal School of Art at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland. After finishing her graduate studies, Barbee was awarded a full fellowship for a residency at Vermont Studio Center, which she completed in November 2011. In the spring of 2012, she completed a two-month residency at Platte Forum in Denver, CO, during which she worked with elementary students from Colfax Community Network, a non-profit that provides support and after-school programming for homeless children living in hotels on Denver's Colfax Avenue. Barbee currently lives and works in Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Statement

At the root of my art, lies a fascination with the emotional, psychological, and cultural implications of place. I am fascinated by the human ability both to manipulate and be manipulated by an environment; and I revel in the often confusing and multifarious mix-matches of meanings and associations that cling to particular places. From interactive sculptures to cut-paper pieces exploring the effect of human activity on population rates of indigenous species to images of western landscapes constructed from fragments of cultural debris, my work explores the dynamics that emerge from the interstices where people and place collide.

Recently, I have been interested in investigating the sometimes poetic, sometimes startling, but always-complicated relationship between nature and culture. My most recent work explores the historical relationship between Americans and their environment, and is specifically engaged in an examination of the American frontier myth and the mediating role it plays in the relationship between American identity and the American landscape. Through various media and forms, my artwork explores the contemporary political and social implications of the frontier myth, and imagines the western landscape as both a culture-defining myth and as a thoroughly domesticated and culturally constructed space.

Matthew Best

Bio

Based in Hartford, Connecticut, painter and printmaker Matthew Best received his BFA in Painting from the University Of Hartford Art School and his MFA in Painting from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Formerly a Resident Studio at the Arlington Arts Center and has been in numerous shows on the local and national level. Best teaches at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT.

Statement

I am a self-taught forager: I explore suburban public spaces in search of edible wild fruits and vegetables. A body of work slowly emerged from my interactions with nature. I began recording my trips in my sketchbook, sketching plants first as the means of recording unidentified plants for later identification and later as a way of collecting natural forms that I would later filter into my paintings. As my knowledge of wild foods and my immediate surroundings grew, the project took on a greater personal significance and the forms taken from these trips began to appear in my paintings.

The aim of this work examines the act of looking itself. The act of searching has altered my relationship with my surroundings, providing me with a very direct relationship to the land. These paintings are an attempt to translate the act of searching into the language of painting, reducing the broad spaces of suburban parks and streets to the much smaller scale of a painting. The changes and contrast in forms, colors and patterns mimic this search, the eye is moved around the composition by these variations and the image reveals itself.

Matthew Fishel

Bio

Matthew Fishel was born in Washington, D.C., and earned his MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2010. He lives and works in Baltimore, MD in the Remington neighborhood. Matthew has exhibited nationally, recently in Seattle and Massachusetts. His first solo show was in 2011, at the Fine Arts Work Center. Originally interested in painting, Matthew has expanded his practice to include animation, video, installation, and digital imaging. Raised by a television journalist in a home that celebrated Star Trek as philosophical way stone, his work is devoted to critically relating what is imagined to what is material. Matthew is a frequent contributor to RedStarKGB, an ongoing collaboration of filmmakers in Baltimore. He has contributed to projects as actor, composer, writer and director. His own film, "A Short Film Regarding Possibilities", was selected by the Maryland Film Festival in 2006.

Statement

I am a filmmaker with an artist's interest in objects exploring cinematic romanticism and science fiction allegory. My practice includes video, installation and digital imaging. I am interested in examining how collective imagination subjugates the immediate and real. Moving images are the common expression of that imagination, and they are both subject and medium in my work.

Through looped animations and sculptural installations, I am creating pieces that mimic moments from video games or sci-fi films. The invented scenarios are ambiguous, difficult to locate, and nothing much ultimately happens. There are hints, however, in the direction of apocalypse, industrial dystopia and modern warfare. Clouds and smoke drift by, trees wave in the wind, and rockets and bombs endlessly seek their targets. Potentially menacing, funny, or boring, the work aims to critically engage moving-picture representations in typically dark media-fantasy genres, disaster documentaries and sensationalized violence in the public discourse of current events.

In working with video, I am playing with imagined dislocations inherent to encounters with cinematic expressions of space. Essentially very short films with no clear beginning or end, my videos are installed with physical structures in order to emphasize artifice and facilitate intimate experiences with virtual spaces. Screens with moving pictures are treated as objects and the viewer is encouraged to approach from various angles. Illusion and linear time are subverted through rhythmic repetition, and the screen becomes an open field for the viewer to explore.

Lou Joseph

Bio

Lou Joseph is an artist working in Baltimore, Maryland since 2008. A 2004 MFA graduate of Indiana University in printmaking, Lou has been a resident artist in Venice, Rotterdam and Antwerp. He is a founding member and director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Baltimore, which is dedicated to emerging artist retrospectives of Mid-Atlantic and national artists.

Hector Leiva

Bio

Hector Leiva is a computer and network based artist who uses video, installation, and software applications to address themes of alienation, identity, and the construction of memories. He received his MFA in Photographic and Electronic Media from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2011.

Statement

The Matter of Memory is an ongoing work that investigates the relationship between memory and place. By requiring listeners to be within a certain radius of the origin of the recording, the art work imposes questions of how memories are created and affected by time and space. The complexity among the liminal spaces of the everyday, the spaces we inhabit, and the histories that exist within these spaces can be examined through the audio recordings made by the public. The smart-phone is a unique tool that expands this art work beyond the limiting space of an installation. The popularity of the smart-phone, combined with its computing speed, GPS navigation, and audio recording capabilities, enables any user with a cellphone signal to leave a trace of recorded audio history in a place of their choosing.

My research for this work has led me to question the notion of a time that is based on objective measurements. My interest is in the atemporality of the space where my memories exist, and the idea of a personal history that is outside “objective” history. In this work, I hope to give others the opportunity to record their own histories, and to create a state of reflection that leads to questioning how we perceive time as a linear concept, illuminating the contradiction in the idea that we constantly move “forward” towards the future while the past remains “behind.”

Stephanie Lohmann

Bio

Stephanie Lohmann is a Texas transplant living in the valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains. She writes poetry, bakes bread, and helps grown-ups learn to read. She is very tall.

Statement

My work examines the way things leave us--what it looks like to withdraw and what is left behind. I am very interested in the physical remnants of people, the way an object can become relic, the iconography of someone walking away. The trauma of losing something can turn missing into worship. In many ways we never let what leaves us really go away.

Sarah McNeil

Bio

Sarah McNeil grew up in Maine into a family of antique auctioneers and inherited a love of handcrafted objects, and historic artifacts. She received her BFA in printmaking from the Maine College of Art in 1998, and a MFA from the Mount Royal School of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2011. In her art practice, she re-examines historic scientific thinking, and outmoded technologies, in order provoke thinking about the world we live in now. Recently, Sarah has done a residency at the Vermont Studio center, was the MICA fellow at the Bromo Seltzer Art Tower, and a 2012 Sondheim prize semi-finalist. She was also the recipient of the Henry Walters Traveling Fellowship, and as a result, spent three months in Prague immersed in the studies of traditional Czech puppetry, and puppet animation.

Statement

Through my artwork I investigate, experiment, document and promote the invasion into the divergent landscapes of real everyday, and imaginary fabricated, worlds. More specifically the overlapping regions between these worlds, essentially the remaining areas not claimed by either. Inspired by the expeditions of early Explorers who wished to discover uncharted territory, my artistic quest is to enter into this gray area and to blur the boundaries of these two spaces, in order to increase the square footage of a new hybrid region. In this area the domination of either world is not apparent, yet evidence of both worlds exists. It is in this new landscape where my artwork to collectively resides, my pioneering spirit and escapist desires are satisfied, and I trespass to become the maker of philosophical toys and psychological machines.

Philosophical toys, originally popularized in the 19th century, were tabletop, optical toys, which demonstrated scientific and mathematical phenomena to both adults and children, while also providing amusement. They were intended to provoke thinking towards the world we live in and it is precisely this experimental examination, rather than the scientific explanation, of the world, that I seek to create. I also operate under the belief that machines are not unbiased instruments, but rather are devices created from our deepest fears and desires.

Evidence for this is overwhelming and can be found in even common, everyday household products. Moral panic and personal liberation/satisfaction are among the most powerful tools in the psychological machine Inventor's toolbox.

I am interested in the intense psychological forces of fear and desire, and have found humor to be the binding thread between the two. My machines and toys incorporate the absurd as they explore the strangeness of our own psyches.

Erik Parra

Bio

Erik Richard Parra is a San Francisco based artist, curator, educator and writer. He received his BFA from the University of Texas at Austin and his MFA from the University of Wisconsin—Madison, on fellowship. Erik has exhibited his work internationally, including Berlin, Brazil, Chicago, London and New York. In the Bay Area, Erik has exhibited at Southern Exposure, The Headlands Center for the Arts, Blankspace Gallery, Root Division, Johansson Projects WE Artspace and most recently at Kala Art Institute.

Erik's work questions the relevance in searching for American authenticity by examining the tensions that arise when combining the meticulous and the contingent, history and desire, black & white with color. A study in contrasts and a contrarian from day one, Erik is a mix-tape of jazz, hardcore and hip-hop and relishes nothing more than the beauty that can be found in things that are dark. Additionally, Erik teaches art, curates exhibitions and writes critical essays about the activities of Bay Area artists for local and national publications.

Statement

I repurpose discarded narratives to challenge established myths to a subliminal battle of wits through uplifting visual experiences couched in related critical discourse. Scouring local resale shops, thrift stores and the like, I mine vintage, popular books and magazines collecting pictures that depict the development of modern America. I cross reference compositionally appealing images with those pulled from the internet, to compose imaginative yet rigorous collages, drawings, paintings and sculptural objects. I am particularly interested in sourcing images fertile with possibilities for subtle narrative or contextual contradiction in order to create familiar feeling images of spaces in which scientists, beauty queens and professional athletes can engage in productive democratic experiments.

Viewing contemporary social concerns through the lens of history I take liberties with American cultural narratives as a departure point for larger conversations in which tropes associated with physical mobility operate as metaphors for social mobility. Working contrasts such as meticulous and random material applications, black and white with color, allows me to cultivate visually engaging experiences that draw on the tension between control and chaos while capitalizing on the energy created when they collide. Relationships of color, speed, time and weight, in addition to a host of other variables (some controllable and some contingent), all affect success, progress and ultimately our lives.

Steven Pearson

Bio

Steven Pearson is an abstract painter focusing on mid-sized to large paintings that investigate the complexities of color and space. He received his BS in Studio Art from the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY, and his MFA in Painting from the Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD. Steven has exhibited both nationally and regionally. He currently lives in Westminster, MD and is an Associate Professor of Art at McDaniel College.

Statement

We are all subject to a flood of information on a daily, if not hourly, basis via a variety of technological means: emails, text messages, Facebook, Twitter, online newspapers, countless websites, as well as television and radio. With such a wide array of information from so many sources, one is obligated to discern what is true, verifiable, and good; and what is false, speculative, inflammatory, and bad.

I've become interested in how our ability to receive and assimilate a myriad of information on a constant basis can be reflected in a 2-dimensional format. In my paintings, I employ complex compositions and an autobiographical visual language consisting of codes and symbols. Each painting possesses a layered history: As new statements are juxtaposed next to or on top of earlier ones, the paintings begin to suggest the manner in which we store memories or assimilate and make sense of information. Some shapes are strong and vivid, while others become broken and incoherent, only suggested by the pentimenti left as a visual reminder of their previous existence.

Chris Rusak

Bio

Chris Rusak is an artist who works, writes, and lives in San Francisco, California.

Statement

When considering unfamiliar, external space, we associate color to the structures we presume therein exist. This action occurs, too, as we form structures of language during processes of external communication: written correspondence, read prose. Consequently, in a visual discourse, chroma becomes expository.

Jonathan Stonely

Bio

I was born in Provo, Utah, a conservative college town where I would start to raise my own family. Moving to Baltimore Maryland in 2007, I graduated MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2010. Since being able to pull my own pants up, I have been busy making things. Never shy to try something new I have occupied my time in many endeavors from carpentry, photography, and welding to painting and drawing. Carving out a living with all these skills seems to occupy more time than a day allots but peace and new energy always finds its way back to me in simple art making. I currently work as a carpenter for historic building preservation in Baltimore, Maryland. My basement studio is an intimate space for imagination to dominate.

Statement

Art making to me a preponderance of imagination and simple abstraction. Familiarity with a material allows me to come to find a beauty in the nature of a substance and begin to tell a story. I seek to eschew traditional craft use of artist materials, not for the sake of rebellion but rather to seek a simpler nature of things. Like the safe place of a youthful imagination, a small ink drawing or a painting with only 3 colors tells a simple story and not much more. It provides an uncomplicated place to smile.

Charlotte XC Sullivan

Bio

Charlotte Sullivan (b. March 11, 1984) uses art to better understand her physical and imagined place in the world. Her work has been published in Candy Magazine based in Dublin, Ireland, and Uppercase Magazine based in Calgary, Canada. She regularly contributes to Best Made Company's blog, Best Made Projects. She is also a product tester for their design studio. She has completed creative fellowships with the Epicenter in Green River Utah, and the Sierra Nevada Research Institute in Yosemite National Park, California. Her latest project Epicenter's Antipode, a site-specific billboard on the frontier, received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her photography and sculpture work has been exhibited in Georgia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Utah, Vermont, California, and now Maine, USA. Born in Boston, Mass., she studied at Bennington College in Vermont.

Statement

I am currently working on sculptures that have the following titles: 1) Sleeping With My Idols, 2) Shelter From the Storm On a Sunny Day When You Are the Storm and Also the Sun, 3) I Erased the Mountains For You, At One Point There Was a Perfect Reflection, 4) What Kind of Tree Is This?

