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MFA Sculpture 2026
SUNY New Paltz

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In New York state, white-tailed deer exists in unsustainable abundance. Functioning as a respected component of a balanced forest ecosystem prior to Western colonization, they experienced a moment of near extinction that now perpetuates an exponentially growing population. From a human perspective, their presence contributes to an increasing number of deer-vehicle collisions (DVC), the spread of Lyme disease, and a pest to suburban landscaping and gardening. In non-human spaces, they continue to browse forest understory and directly stunt the next generation of mature trees that would become canopy. In addition, white-tailed deer hurt themselves in their abundance, as chronic-wasting disease (CWD) could decimate their population in weeks if there was a major, uncontained outbreak. Not of their own volition; white-tailed deer offer a plethora of connections to disease, forest regeneration, human infrastructure, and a source of food and craft material. In this dense, web-like moment, a starting point in researching this observation is almost paralyzing. However, living in a space rife with year-round roadkill and harvested deer during hunting season, the trajectory became less murky. What does it look like to process and use a deer? Who can teach me that? There are modern hunters that still honor deer as a food and craft material source, and they are building the foundation for *how* we meet white-tailed deer in the Anthropocene. I wanted to relish in that reverence with them and collaborate on the beginnings of a multi-year, socially engaged research project.

So, what would it look like to create artwork that began to unpack this sticky question? Prior to graduate study, "art-making" implied manipulating material into a form that reads as an *object* for the intents of display in a contextless or site-specific space. I felt the logic of sculpture was to perform through physical intervention or exhibition of form in a clinical gallery or museum space. My experience, physically and socially, as a blue-collar laborer, had to be injected into the work for visibility or awareness, or at least that was the meaning I assigned. As I began to operate under this presumption, I felt hollow. I was still constructing like a builder, but I was no longer in the context of a construction site. Those moments of gazing into the mud-caked tracks on an articulating excavator were gone. Then it clicked. What's most compelling to me is the nuances of processes that are irreplicable. I could never create a sculpture that mimicked the rust on leaf springs, or the way my coworker Josh meticulously greased our skid loader each morning. It dawned on me that *noticing* followed by *observing* was critical in my artistic research. This order was important, because while there are others that notice, I do not know if they invest in the time and introspection of observation as a follow-up procedure. Given that parameter, I began to see my work as being in conversation with Alex Pentek's concept of "Observationism." Pentek describes this methodology as "...simply a way of looking at things inspired by the artistic exploration of materials." (Pentek 1) Observationism concerns itself with *looking*, rather than trying to impose grandiose philosophical concepts to interpret the world around us. A group of white-tailed deer cascading into the woods is scenic, beautiful, and nearly ubiquitous with New York's forest-field ecosystems. However, they leave artifacts behind. Deer trails and beds depress the grass, tree saplings are mowed, and for New York's hunters, the deer represents raw material for craft and sustenance. Many of these outputs of the system white-

tailed deer permeate can be explained through paradigmatic knowledge, but I could not move on from the simplicity of predetermined answer. Observing something, like the particular area a bevy of doe bed, does not afford satisfaction through explanation.

Pentek's essay on Observationism describes a moment of "finding the fold." (Pentek 3) For me, white-tailed deer represented numerous folds in a blanket cast over North America. There is no academic repository that holds all that is white-tailed deer. Observation of white-tailed deer and their relationships within a larger system was the only means to identify how I could approach this work. That act of noticing "material" embedded in hunting, agriculture, and forest regeneration would require a certain dissective concentration to parse. In that momentary loss of reality, I felt myself drawn to the connective tissue that felt most ambiguous to me: hunting. That reverie was omnipresent in the years I was working in construction, now rekindled by hunted Cervidae. I had questions that felt impenetrable to me, and the only way I could get somewhere with my observations was to *ask.* There is humility, I believe, in noticing the minute and wanting to highlight it. That humility grew when I understood that this work could not exist solely through my understanding of white-tailed deer, but a community with more intimate kinship.

As somebody who knows firsthand how the working-class views academics, especially artists that "play" with construction material, I knew there would be sensitivity around engagement with hunters. What came to mind was Pablo Helguera's analogy of a socially engaged artist to a social worker. He wrote, "Particularly in situations where artists need to earn the trust of a community, it is important to understand the mutual respect, inclusivity, and collaborative involvement that are main tenets of social work." (Helguera 37) My immediate anxiety was that I would have to hunt myself, and that I would need to fast-track a friendship with a hunter who would let me tag along. That contradicts a major tenet of Helguera's collaborate participation in socially engaged art, which emphasizes that time and effort are integral to this work, but normally at odds with exhibition dates or biennales. In fact, he says that most successful SEA projects are a byproduct of artists that have been involved with a community for a long time and have an in-depth understanding of the participants. (Helguera 20) Investing in a community meant that I could not hunt that fall, and frankly fostering a superficial relationship with somebody to make "art" is a sin within my own ethos. Rather than building fleeting, "means-to-and-ends" relationships, I decided that I would have to share my observations with white-tailed deer with people who held a similar reverence for them. My hope was that there was somebody out there who experienced similar moments of emotional observation, and I wanted to listen.

My first obstacle was contending with the fact that most people don't understand what a conceptual artist does or consider social interaction to be part of the realm of art. (Helguera 33) I wanted to hear from hunters, who spend their entire summer, fall, and winter tracking and hunting these "creatures of disturbance." (Halls 308) Simultaneously, I had to hold space for conversation with and information gathering from scientists affiliated with renowned academic institutions or ecological conservation organizations. The conversations with scientists and

researchers were fruitful in the exhaustive research they shared, but there was hesitation in understanding *why* I was pursuing white-tailed deer. They had participated in master's or doctoral level study, and when I used the word "research," they couldn't quite see the earnestness in my transparency. In addition, most of the information they were sharing I could have found in their published papers, or through other academic databases. While momentarily frustrating, it did remind me that ultimately this work through observation was about sharing, and if I had collaborators, they had to be Observationists too. Observationism holds intrinsic care, and that care had to show up through inclusivity and consideration for the audience.

"We build *because* audiences exist. We build because we seek to reach out to others, and they will come initially because they recognize themselves in what we have built." (Helguera 22) Who cares about white-tailed deer in North America and would recognize themselves in that reverence more than hunters? *That* is my audience and had to be my collaborators. After some phone calls and text messages, and several meetings describing my noticing of white-tailed deer, I established trust with several local hunters and began to hang out with them regularly. As we spent more time together, I realized that they were earnest in their actions. They described seasons without taking a deer, because they were unable to follow their strict, self-imposed ethics for when you should take the animal's life. Not one of them mentioned being in it for the kill or trophy, which has become a negative association with hunters en masse. For them, hunting is about spending hours in the woods and folding themselves into the cacophony of activity, or the absence of. It was beautiful for me to hear them describe what seemed parallel to Donna Haraway's concept of sympoesis, thinking about interdependence rather than anthropocentrism. (Haraway 75) There is an emphasis on not exercising their humanity in the woods, whether removing limbs from trees, taking inconsiderate shots, or leaving their harvested quarry in the woods to decompose or be scavenged. They are Observationists, and I knew immediately that they must be collaborative participants. A hunter knows their material, and they shared in my reverie for observing white-tailed deer. They know its movements, its behaviors, and ultimately, what it can become should they be so lucky to harvest it. They *notice* like me. One of my mentors told me, "You don't need to kill anything to hunt." Withholding from killing an animal and allowing oneself to observe that animal resonated with me. I am in a constant state of searching, tracking, and calculating what "quarry" is worth being sought and harvested. That modality guided me to my audience and helped me understand that our relationship would be integral in the work's manifestation.

The hunters I have grown close to occupy a "framework" of significant influence. Hunting culture in contemporary North America is fascinating. Beginning with indigenous practice for sustenance, craft material, and tool use, white-tailed deer experienced a drastic change in population as colonizing forces laid claim to land in North America. Logging, agricultural infrastructure, and rampant overhunting began to decimate the deer population in the 19th century. From 1820 to 1850, white-tailed deer were extirpated from most of the northeastern United States' hardwood and spruce/fir forests (Halls 309). Hunting regulations were implemented to reestablish the population, and they have been so beneficial that white-tailed

deer populations now exceed carrying capacity. With no natural predators today, the only means to maintain ecological equilibrium is for humans to hunt. What does hunting look like in the modern United States? It exists as a symbol for "white trash" culture, perpetuated by the associations we have with real-tree camouflage clothing and those folks frequenting Walmart. Whether I was speaking with somebody on the phone or attending the NYDEC-sponsored Hunter Education course, I heard about the public's disapproval for hunting. We are sensitized to killing animals; we do not want to know how our shrink-wrapped beef chuck roast came to be. While most hunters, at least those I've spoken to, have a strong sense of ethics that guide their decision, those who have made unsavory decisions have created this negative image of hunters nationwide. Coming from a blue-collar background, I have often been able to suspend my progressive, academic sensibility when I want to engage with the people I work with or call family. It is a privilege, yes, but I also recognize the humanity and nuance of the people who receive this generalized label. Judgement is assigned too easily through the constantly growing polarization in American social culture.

The work that began to influence my thesis research is difficult to pin as "art-making," but feels aligned with what I now believe it to be. For several months last spring, I would record everything of interest to me on a camcorder, and write about it in a small notebook that fit in my pocket. The common thread was moments of intrigue that could be surgically parsed. I was obsessed with banal moments, areas that function as intermediaries, and observing human activity as if it was novel. I began to learn through my reflections on the video that I could pull the beauty of intricacy from nearly anything. Of course, this became damning as an artist to be overwhelmed with *everything*, so I tried to figure out precisely what it was that interested me.

What excites me about in-between spaces is how sticky they can get with potentially unanswerable questions. Something as commonplace as a chair left at the Cold Spring MRTA train stop compelled me. Why was the chair put there? Who uses it, and how often? Is it never used, and if so, why is nobody removing it? I told myself I could never know and instead had to accept this Robert Smithson musing that states, "A set of glances could be as solid as any thing or place, but the society continues to cheat the artist out of his "art of looking," by only valuing "art objects."" While there was resonance with this notion of "art-looking," I realized I could know, though. I could find out when the train stop was built. I could study who went on the train and when. I could spend an entire day at the train stop, every day or once a week, and begin to figure out *who* was using that chair. That moment was pivotal. It's a beautiful thing to have a chair to smoke a cigarette while you wait to get on a train. I wanted to figure out what my chair was, and who sat in it.

Returning to my studio practice, I began to study calcium sulfate dihydrate, commonly known as "gypsum." Building material had long been of interest as art material because of my prior occupation, but I began to look for more in drywall. As I began my research, I noticed that

blackboard chalk is composed of the same mineral. A sticky point. A fork in the road. How could a material that exists for disseminating scholastic knowledge also lend itself to becoming a plane to hide framing and be painted? Could one become the other? What is the process of making these forms, and at what point is it decided what they will become? Taking those videos and writing about them made me recognize that my practice is truly based in observation and experimentation, and the aesthetics were a result of that beauty in reverie. Art is a strange space in that it allows you to be a mad scientist, philosopher, and generally weird without anybody asking too many questions.

Drywall studies, 2025

I obtained sheets of drywall that I began to break down and try to reform. Initial tests with blackboard chalk proved fruitful, as it was easy to put in a blender, rehydrate with tap water, blend, and pour into a mold. Drywall is tricky, because it's sheathed in paper and goes through a different convection process of curing. The cast drywall ultimately just became a breeding ground for black mold, which was interesting but a hazard to myself and others. If I could not reform it, perhaps I could try to understand it by returning it to its raw state: strata. Gypsum layers are embedded in our Earth, which is in simple terms, many layers of different things stacked haphazardly on top of each other with water and magma breaching them at varying points. I used my remaining drywall to create a topographic map, which revealed the gypsum hidden between the layers of paper. When stacked, it replicated the volume it could have once

known prior to its extraction. Perhaps this project was a failure in its exhibition, but it taught me a lot about how I function as an artist. I want to *find* something and sit with it for a long time.

The last recent work that feels truly informative was a mock pitch for a public artwork on SUNY New Paltz' campus. As you enter Hawk Drive, there is a strange rock wall that hugs the treeline, and some instances, or remains, of others as you continue entering campus. As a stone mason, I was hooked immediately on who made these walls and when. They were likely agricultural, as there was no bond present and the stones were not organized in any way that suggested structural integrity. As I began my research, I learned more about the agricultural stone wall practice of northeastern North America, and was particularly interested in the building practice of the Catskill people. Their serpent effigies and cairns dot the Catskills and beyond, often corresponding with astrological phenomena or serving as markers for activity. I was stunned to learn about this stonework and wondered how it could have some presence on campus to combat the aesthetics of hand-cut bluestone work that is characteristic of Italian stonemasons in New York.

Both the farmers and the Catskill people were not concerned with form, but function. The farmers had to remove the stones that surfaced from the winter's freeze-thaw cycle, and the Catskill people had to mark spaces with the stones that were within a hundred yard radius. These were not forms made by trained masons, but by people with determination. I decided my pitch should be for a community stonework class, where people would be encouraged to come and build a stone wall regardless of experience or capability. There would be four walls, roughly following a serpentine path to pay respect to the Catskill people and their structures that persist today. I created a magnetized map with pea-sized rocks that could be placed where the walls should go by a jury. I painstakingly built a 1:4 scale model of a wall with gravel I collected on campus or made myself by bashing up larger shale into smaller shale. It was one of the most refined projects I made, and it was driven by passion. Creating this small stone wall, failing in my drywall experiments, and documenting the world guided me to where I am now. I am looking for something to become obsessively lost in, and share that experience in a manner that reflects the human connections and discoveries I made. In a way, the "sculpture" I produce is documentation of my disappearance into and emergence from a sticky, in-between space.

1:4 scale shale wall, 2025

My thesis work is an evolution from my previous work in that I have identified a concrete interest, white-tailed deer, and am being taught about their presence as prey and spirit by local hunters. This interest has sent me on a novel trajectory in my practice. My early research into white-tailed deer came from working at an arboretum, where I put up thousands of yards of deer fencing to protect a particular section of oak-hickory forest (with scatterings of other tree species.) The folks at the arboretum described their experience with white-tailed deer as a source of potential damage and loss. The deer, despite being a part of the NY forest, were not allowed in this area. Not knowing much about these ever-present beings, I spent the summer taking out books about white-tailed deer, from an ecological perspective and a human perspective. That human perspective led me to a pivotal moment: hunting. Since considering the importance of tracking and harvesting white-tailed deer, I have been welcomed into a community composed of local hunters and ecological makers. They have shared their experience in the woods, their kinship with deer, and one of them is acting as a mentor figure, teaching me how to scout, track, and use the deer once harvested. They have connected me to other people in the area with different skills based on deer material. I reached out to a local tannery, where I was able to shadow them for a day to review the parchment-making process. Outside of finding ways to use the gifts deer give, I've also tried to understand their ecological impact. I held space for an online

interview with a CWD expert at Cornell, who told me about a CWD webinar put on by NYDEC. It was amazing to observe a different perspective on the animal, but the presence of care was still there. The final connection I plan to make is at a nature reserve north of NYC, Teatown. They have managed to decrease their deer population by allowing local hunters to harvest deer, rather than cull them with USDA sharpshooters like some other organizations.
Consulting communities with experience and relation to my subject matter is becoming the most important part of my research and moving forward I see the social connection being just as important as material manipulation.

It is difficult to assign creative influence as I try to find art everywhere, and don't feel inclined to return to paradigmatic practice or make something that recalls the language of another artist. I am condensing, or grouping, artists because I borrow what I need from their practices, rather than celebrate their entire canon of work. If I am trying to invent a system that grows from Helguera's notion of social practice, why would I examine work that has long been celebrated as "contemporary art"? I am not critical of self-expression in art and certainly see its merit as a contemporary artist. Entering a graduate program, I was originally intrigued by the socially engaged approaches enlisted by Joseph Beuys and Mierle Laderman-Ukeles. They were novel at the time they operated, and were inspiring in the way they seemed to invent a new means to produce "art." Of course, both artists worked on projects that would ultimately be located in a gallery or museum space, which seems somewhat at odds with my own direction. What excited me about their practices was social interaction. I wanted to borrow that sentiment but build genuine connections rather than create a situation that could be labeled as performative.

Artists of interest that employ similar inventive methods include Robert Smithson, Richard Long, and Maya Lin. The major earthworks of Smithson and Lin are beautiful, thoughtful actions that engage with non-human beings. I know that wasn't the objective in producing those works, but that's what I pulled out. Richard Long operates in a similar way by engaging landscape as medium and letting the work simply *exist*. The work is the action, and its fleeting nature makes it critically sensitive to time and place. That is what united these three artists for me; this concept of letting things exist without excess imposition. All three had their own philosophical meaning assigned to their works, but for myself, the simplicity of their work allowed me space to get lost in. Their actions follow their own logic and aren't constrained by what art should be or look like. That gave me freedom in understanding that I can define my own system, and I don't have to try locating it within the lens of fine art.

My system involves observation and introspection, both of which can be paralyzing but immensely rewarding. The most influential makers to me, as of late, have been filmmakers. I am inclined towards the work of Chris Marker and Errol Morris. Both operate in different ways. Marker is a bit denser, but there is a loss of reality present in his work that seems in line with my own practice. *Sans Soleil* has been a film I've watched several times during my graduate research, and I have a different experience after each viewing. His films are visually pleasing,

but there is so much ambiguity in the scenes he documents. That ambiguity creates tangents, and I found myself constantly pausing the film to look up niche cultural references to better follow the film's arc. His work becomes increasingly layered as one pays attention to the narrative, which I began to have a strong emotional connection to. To this day, the opening line freezes me. It states, "The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland, in 1965. He said that for him it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images, but it never worked. He wrote me: one day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader; if they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black." The comparison of a romanticized scene of children against a Scandinavian backdrop to the obscurity of black leader at the head of a film was astounding. Marker identified something I needed, a rabbit hole. He also *noticed,* particularly evident in the scenes he stitches together in *Sans Soleil.* From my research, he was a journalist before he was a filmmaker. He knew how to seek out and unpack his observations.

Errol Morris showed me what I needed to *find* in the rabbit hole. Morris' work has been of equal value during my research, in fact I covet his film *Vernon, Florida.* I appreciated that he removed himself from the film, and all his films, and that apparent absence of authorship gives so much space for the people being documented. That was moving to me, allowing people space to be themselves. He gave them a platform to be seen and to talk about their interests. Isn't it amazing to listen to somebody describe their interest, collection, or habit? It may be just me, but Morris made me realize that I had to find a community that I could learn from and listen to. The hunters of Ulster County allowed me to have my Errol Morris moment. Those hunters offered something that can be parsed from Morris' work: vulnerability. There is scene where a turkey hunter describes soiling himself during a hunt. What would normally be felt as emasculating is allowed space, because there is an opportunity to describe turkey hunting. That vulnerability, those anecdotes and banal moments, are humanizing and beautiful, which in my opinion ultimately makes them *accessible.* Not everybody would share in my appreciation for Henry Snipes love of turkey hunting, but there's intrigue in his contradictions and transparency in his recollections.

When considering how a documentarist might approach a sculptural endeavor, the only logical form that occurred to me was a book. As I sat with this idea of a book, it began to make even more sense as I realized much of a book's components could be fabricated from processed white-tailed deer or related material, such as food sources. The book's dimensions were intended to be humble, like a book you take from the shelf at a library and can easily take with you in a backpack. Rather than produce some grandiose book that fell in line with the larger practice of "artist's books," mine just had to be a vessel for containing information that was given to me. The material encompasses the external and internal components of a deer, offering the participant a chance to "hold a deer". While it does not weigh 130 to 150 pounds (180 if it's a bigger buck), it does create space to interact with a material that is losing presence. Making buckskin, or "brain-tanning," was an indigenous practice that is almost exclusively practiced by

hunters or ecological makers. We are removed from what was once the primary mode of cloth, satchel, and general object making.

In addition to the buckskin, parchment is present as pages, recalling a historic medium for transferring imagery and language for accessibility. Parchment, like buckskin, is becoming an archaic medium and from what I was told by Jesse Myers of Pergamena, is becoming somewhat of a turbulent industry. Both processes were taught to me by mentor figures, sharing in my earnestness for continuing these labor-intensive acts of production. The spine bares a ribbon of buckskin, and the remainder of the cover is made from white-tailed deer parchment. Artificial sinew binds the pages. There is likely a question of why "real" sinew was not processed into cordage, and the simple answer is it was not taught to me by this community. I used artificial sinew in the final step of making buckskin, and it felt right to celebrate that final moment. The written sections are on white mulberry paper, which is a seasonal preference for the deer in early spring. It is not technically "Kozo paper" because it does not come from paper mulberry, but the bark behaves in a similar way when steamed and processed in the Eastern papermaking manner. In this way, the book embodies the physicality of the deer's exterior and interior. The content is about fleshing - chronicling the bulk of the knowledge that has been passed on to me in this experience. It is somewhat satirical for accessibility and palpability. The work was my research and integration into this community of incredible people. The book doesn't have to be serious because it's *for them.* It is another gift. The content of the book was also mass produced into smaller 4.5" x 5.5" booklets that contained exhibition information and could be taken home.

The Fleshing Enchiridion, white-tailed deer parchment, handmade white mulberry paper, artificial sinew, ribbon ink, monoprints, 2026

The most robust, sculptural form present was the fleshing beam, an artifact of the tanning process. The fleshing beam is an object that is located in a museum. It is an object of significance, with rich cultural and social history embedded in its form and function. My intention with my used fleshing beam is to create an artifact and encourage dialogue around its use, or its disappearance. Much of my field research in the fall and winter required a fleshing beam, though we utilized a modernized model built from PVC pipe and dimensional lumber. My design borrows from a traditional Shaker model, as hide work was a mode for Shaker communities to generate revenue in the 19th century. Its dimensions are directly based on a beam in the permanent collection of the Shaker Museum in New Lebanon, NY. Jerry Grant, the Director of Library & Collections, was kind enough to pull it out of storage and allow me to measure and document. The wood was sourced locally from the woods of Ulster County, and it is composed of varying species of oak based on the deer's seasonal preference for acorns. They begin by eating the mast of white oak before they transition to the red oak mast in late fall and early winter. The red oaks drop their acorns at a later date and sometimes need to sit for a moment due to the bitterness of the tannins. Deer don't like things that are too bitter either. This beam will live beyond its spotlight in a gallery setting and move with me to continue spreading the knowledge of what it takes to turn mammal hides into leather.

Fleshing Beam, red oak, white oak, white-tailed deer sinew, 2026

The gifts were the most important aspect of this entire exhibition. This work could not have been done if not for the connections I made from August until now. Rather than trying to chronicle the experience in a narrative, contained in the book, I created five individual gifts for people who had taught me about deer, whether as a material, spirit, or quarry. The forms are individualized, and the material and function reflect the person. Mike and Dustin, for example, are both hunters who make their own buckskin and make use of the entire deer. They also enjoy taking notes. Mike, however, is a brewer, and his notebook had to be more flexible and fit in his pocket, which is why it was made from parchment and has a four-hole Japanese stab binding. Dustin's notebook is held together by an applewood spoon, which came from the tree that we smoked the buckskin on before he had it taken down. Dustin leads spoon carving workshops, and I see this as a gesture to show appreciation for all he has given me. I see the spoon-bound book functioning as a vessel for recipes, whether culinary or material-centered. Randy is a hunter in the truest sense – gritty, sharp, and resourceful. Randy needed something that would exist in a shop or his basement while fletching arrows or offer utility while hunting. What came to mind was a bow wrist sling, to catch his bow if he ever lost his grip up in the tree (though I imagine that is unlikely.) His wrist strap was made entirely from buckskin with a brass grommet to secure it to his compound bow. For Michaela, whose home I was welcomed to for many fires and who rang the brain matter out of my buckskin with me, a drawstring, buckskin pouch made the most sense. Michaela sets an offering table whenever she participates in an act pertaining to her

kindship with deer, and my hope was that this pouch could exist on that table, or on Michaela's person as a mobile, offering pouch. Lastly, Dave, who spent a hundred hours putting up deer fencing with me in the heat of summer, deserved something for his camaraderie and conversation that made me interested in white-tailed deer. Dave is nomadic, farms, and loves food. I wanted to make him a sort of utility spoon that suggests the curve of a buck antler. It's carved from eastern hemlock, a tree native to the woods where he grew up and operates his growing orchard in the Catskills.

For Dave, hemlock, white-tailed deer bone, 2026

For Dustin, white-tailed deer buckskin, applewood, artificial sinew, stationary, 2026

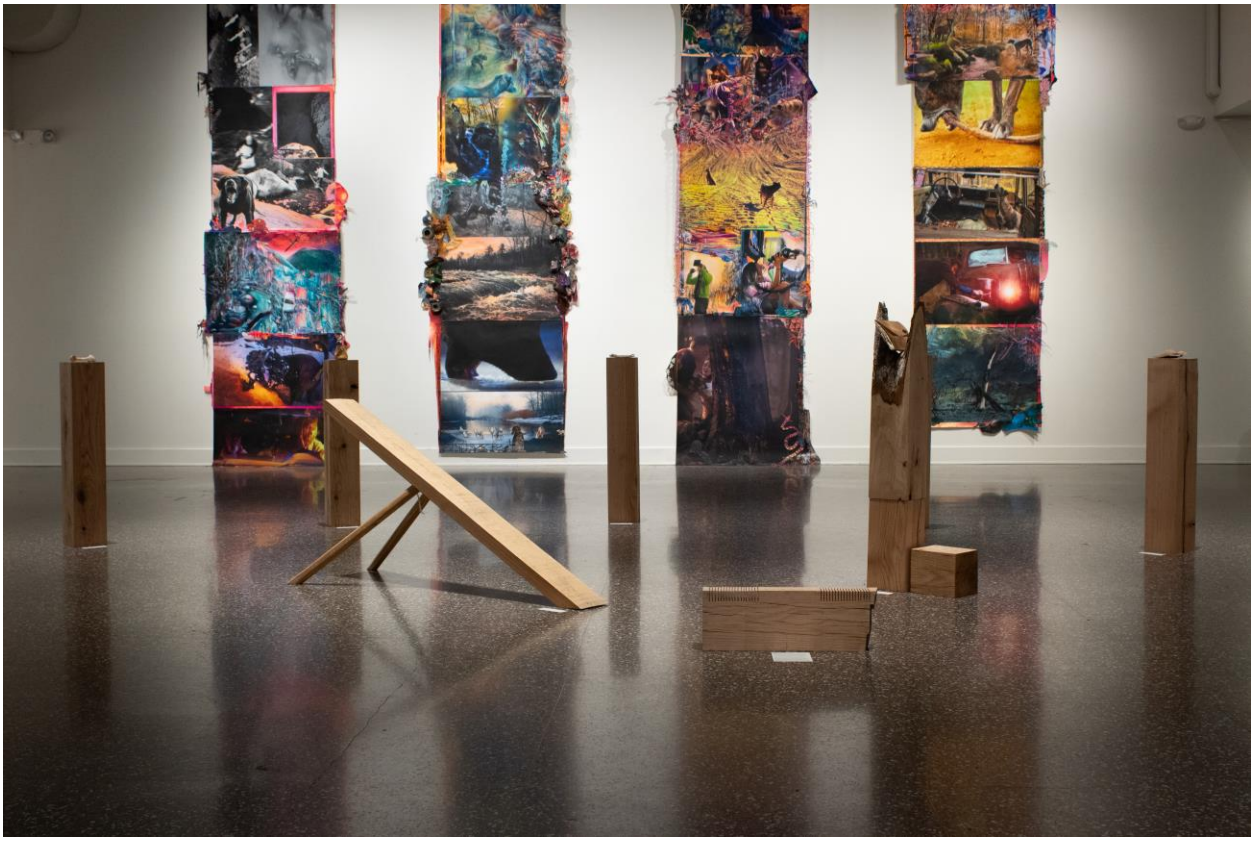
As for material, there is an immeasurable amount of labor that went into its production. I would estimate well over 100 hours went into the production of the buckskin and white-tailed deer parchment. I was present with my mentor, Dustin, in the removal of several hides from hunted deer, fleshing, graining, and all the other small parts that make up hide processing.

Hide work made me realize that, yes, I could make some abstract sculptural form or rebuild the deer via its skin mounted to an armature, but why would I do that? Instead, *learning* and *seeking* led me to the realization that I had to make a form consistent with those modalities: a book. A book is nomadic, it teaches, it unpacks, and it is humble. It is an embodied experience to hold a book, to turn pages, to anticipate the content of the following page. Rather than function as a traditional "artist's book," mine explains how to flesh a mammalian hide. The reader gets to understand the entire process and hopefully live it through my verbiage.

Process stills, 2025

The work *was* my research process, and what ultimately showed up in the gallery was a reciprocal action for those that shared interest in white-tailed deer and shared knowledge on deer's material potential. This work didn't just teach me about tracking, hunting, and processing deer, but how to listen and know my role as an artist when documenting that learning journey. Spending time within this community helped me realize that I could not follow the steps of other artists and had to invent my own framework. It is not work that falls in line with the larger art canon (though it does dip into social practice) but instead wants to find a new space to show up. My intention with the museum was not to showcase my artistry, but to highlight the experience I have gone through and acknowledge those who played such critical roles in its development.

Living in my own in-between space as academic and laborer, I see the opportunity to use these guarded spaces as a vessel for gratitude of those who are not labeled as “artist.” Contemporary art is a strange creature, and not necessarily something that can be so easily hunted and processed. That perspective should be telling enough as to where I see myself falling in line, but if it is not clear, my work exists outside the institution. This work will continue to grow as I hunt myself, and continue to learn more about white-tailed deer’s meaning to other beings, both human and non-human. That growth will also continue as I search for my place in the world as a blue-collar, reverie-fueled maker.



Installation of *Reverentia,* 2026

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Acknowledgements

My partner, Tziporah, for supporting my return to academia and pursuing this project. You are my rock and best friend. I love you.
My community of mentors and classmates at SUNY New Paltz in the Sculpture and Printmaking programs. I would especially like to acknowledge my good friend, Dustin Lamberta, whose mentorship and hide donations made this project possible. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge his neighbor, Tom Rinaldi, who also gave me several hides and legs for sinew to create this book.
Thank you Randy Oakes for giving me a compound bow, and for being so excited about my interest in deer, and sharing your own fascination with me.
Thank you Michaela Himelfarb and Michael Renganeschi for all your guidance around hide work and tracking, and for always making me feel welcome at your homes.
This project would also not have been realized without my summer fieldwork done at Hortus Arboretum with my coworker Dave Arguez. Putting up thousands of feet of deer fencing in the woods of Stone Ridge was significantly better with your stories and friendship.
Lastly, and most importantly, I am grateful for the deer and the gifts they have given and continue to give to me.

Other Acknowledgements:
Krysten Schuler (Cornell University)
Thom Almendinger (Teatown Preserve)
Erin Snyder (Teatown Preserve)
Eva Giorgi (Teatown Preserve)
Maddy Schroeder (Teatown Preserve)
Jesse Myers and Staff (Pergamena)