

Graduate Exhibition

Master of Arts | Master of Fine Arts



2021

CSUN.

Cover Image

Adrienne Kinsella
Hers, 2020
Colored pencil on frosted mylar
42" x 36"

Graduate Exhibition

Master of Arts | Master of Fine Arts

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CSUN | CALIFORNIA
STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHRIDGE

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Left
Lauren Maryam Moradi
firm grip, 2020
glove, wood, kitchen knife, fake flowers,
twine, thread, fabric, fiber fill, discontent
12" x 20" x 9"

Everything will be OK

I moved to Los Angeles in 2018, from a life in Atlanta, Georgia and the Southeast, having never visited the West Coast before. And, actually, Los Angeles and Atlanta are more similar than you'd think. Y'allwood is the next Hollywood, so they say. Traffic is bad, Marvel movies shut things down, and the city is sprawling and expensive. But, unlike LA, the arts community in Georgia is pretty small. Everyone mostly knows everyone, and everyone definitely knows *EVERYTHING WILL BE OK*, a slogan coined by local artist Jason Kofke and emblazoned on building walls, t-shirts, yard signs, and refrigerator magnets. It's that sort of feel-good affirmation that resonates with us, because, you know, that's what we *need* to get through life and all its messiness.

Lo and behold, SoCal life was even better than OK! The weather is warm, the sunsets like nothing I've ever seen, the students amazing, the art everywhere, and the wildfires and little earthquakes bearable. And at Hauser and Wirth one day, I see the installation, *EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT*, a gorgeous neon text piece by Martin Creed. The work seemed vaguely familiar... and it made me consider a few things.

***Whose work came first?
(Creed's...)
Is it appropriation, plagiarism,
or a coincidence?
(the latter, I think)
Does it matter?
(probably not)
... Should I try neon?
(YESSS!)
And, mostly, why are there signs like this
everywhere, in LA, in GA, as art, on Pinterest,
and italicized text on couch pillows?***

I've been reading a lot of Pema Chödrön's work, specifically *When Things Fall Apart*. It's the kind of book that takes a year. One of her mantras is "Abandon Hope" – a startling departure from *EVERYTHING WILL BE OK* and *EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT*. Think it through: everything will be OK clearly implies that it's "not OK" today but it will be... when, though?

* * * * *

That concept of hoping, that affirmation that "everything is going to be OK, alright," in fact, instead of promoting a future positive, denies a current positive, approves an infinite limbo of waiting, and "robs us from the present moment." Chödrön suggests we choose not to wait and instead exist to the fullest in the problematic present. She then writes, "You could even put *abandon hope* on your refrigerator door [or on couch pillows?] instead of more conventional aspirations" (see previous).

* * * * *

2020. What a year it was. Everything was no longer OK, nothing was alright, anywhere. We were put in a tenuous situation that has not yet resolved, and the impetus was/is to do nothing. Should we wait for it to get back to normal or get adjusted to the new normal? And somehow, this past year of waiting, doing nothing, flew by, "Zoomed" by, perhaps. Every day, something else happened that seems to be compounded by the day before, to layer onto each prior struggle. We thought 2021 would erase 2020, but it seems like it has only dug in deeper.

However, the world keeps moving and so do we, begrudgingly. Art practices, our own, our students', and the world's, have shifted. Studios are now at home, seminar lectures are in bed, artists talks given via Zoom, exhibitions held online. I see our students' work on Instagram instead of on campus.

* * * * *

It's now Spring 2021, and I am finishing up my third year of teaching at CSUN. Another similarity – many of the graduates this year also began their programs at the same time. This is the first group of graduate students whom I have had the pleasure of knowing for their entire degree programs.

These twelve students are definitively linked through their experiences, their perseverance, their willingness to evolve their artistic practices, and their conceptual threads, which are even more relevant in today's world.

Rory Nestor, Marc Potter, and Brian Ramirez push the limits of ceramics and sculpture to create obsessively detailed, interactive objects. Rory's ceramic Ouija boards, prescription bottles, and pills confront themes

of tragedy, irony, and symbolism. Marc's clowns and kites contradict the fragility of the medium. Brian's religious altars and icons tell a deeper story of his indigenous heritage.

Lauren Moradi and Adrienne Sacks both incorporate abject and found materials in their interdisciplinary practices. In Lauren's work, a discarded mattress becomes a canvas, and a fan motor, a drawing apparatus. Adrienne Sacks transforms stuffed animals and department store mannequins into uncanny and cartoon-like characters. Their manipulated objects reinforce and contradict their previous functions, a critique on consumerism and capitalism through a feminist lens.

The drawings and paintings of Hanna Miller, Adrienne Kinsella, and Christopher Taylor use representational imagery to their advantage. Christopher depicts the inevitable suffering of the human condition through isolated and lonely figures. Family history is rewritten, and gender disparities are exposed in Hanna's humorous but sharp work. Adrienne Kinsella's gelatinous mounds and elaborate interiors serve as a metaphor for nostalgia and containers of the "monstrous" in her intricate compositions.

Jake Martinez and Stephen Sariñana-Lampson photograph locations steeped in history and personal narratives. Jake's poetic landscapes and precisely photographed abandoned buildings document the changes and decline of Palmdale, CA, while Stephen's

color saturated images chronicle the gentrification of Lincoln Heights.

Abstraction becomes a fluid, immersive practice in the works of Matthew Nespor and Elizabeth Weber. Layering history, color, and memory, Matthew's videos reflect a painterly aesthetic that evokes sentiment and transcends the medium. Similarly, Elizabeth's process builds depth, on the surface of the paintings and psychologically, exploring nuance and architecture of line.

One of my favorite teaching references is *Draw it With Your Eyes Closed*, an instruction book of sorts, offering a plethora of artist writings and humorous examples. One writing relates to personas of teaching art that the instructor inhabits. I like to identify with the cheerleader – especially with this group.

And my awe at them – their ambition and dedication to their work, their craft, their process and practices. The audacity of these students to flourish and grow and make the work they are making during this time of fear and uncertainty. To being responsive to the present instead of drowning in the past or hoping for that "ok, alright" moment in the future. To instead of abandoning hope, ride with the punches. To make. To create. To do, not wait. I can't help but cheer them on.

Candice Greathouse

Assistant Professor, Department of Art



Elizabeth Weber
front hall 1, 2020
mix media on unprimed canvas
36" x 38"

Adrienne Kinsella

MFA Illustration

My work examines the relationship between interior and exterior, whether depicting physical spaces or implying internal landscapes. This tension between inside and outside alludes to alienation, while the use of representation beckons viewers to enter these spaces.

The recurring presence of jello serves as a metaphor for futile attempts to suspend time. A melting, monstrous concoction technically edible yet made of the unthinkable, jello is artificial yet natural, liquid yet solid, with interior and exterior simultaneously visible. This semi-transparent entity symbolizes the public and private elements of an individual's persona and what they choose to reveal to or conceal from others.

Upon inspection, the lighthearted veneer reveals deeper concerns about isolation, home, and the complicatedly delicate nature of relationships.



Top
It Runs In the Family, 2019
Oil on paper
60"x 40"

Both actual and idealized domestic spaces house incongruous and omitted elements that distort memory and loss. My considered employment of nostalgic imagery underscores a yearning for people and places that are no longer accessible, while a pervasive calm suggests things may not be as they seem.

Right
So Nice To See You, 2020
Oil on canvas
30"x 30"



Jake Martinez

MA Photography / Video



115th St E, 2020
Scanned B&W Negative, Archival Print

Growing up in the Antelope Valley, I watched homes and businesses change from inhabited and open to abandoned and closed. My photographs function as an archive to preserve the memory of these buildings and the histories they represent. Palmdale city officials declare, “The Antelope Valley is thriving with opportunities,” but limited job opportunities and lack of community support affirm otherwise. Scattered throughout the vast landscape are deserted homes and businesses, money pits and projects neglected by the community. Commercial buildings seem to change occupancy every few months and neighbors come and go from increasingly derelict homes. New buildings and city projects alter the landscape only to be rejected before their completion. Schools and recreational destinations have diminished.

I used to explore recreational lands – now closed to the public or under ceaseless renovations – and fish the waters – now dried to ponds, or playas, and dry lake beds. Campgrounds have closed, their decaying residue left on the roadside. I have lived among and within these buildings and landscapes most of my life, witnessing the changes firsthand and photographing them over time. I document these buildings using B&W film with both large and medium format cameras as well as sketching and writing in a sketch book. These processes allows me to put more time into my photographs and drawings into these places that were once someone’s home or business and to focus on the space in which these subjects are located, seeking to give each image the respect it deserves.

Top Right
Elizabeth Lake, 2021
Scanned Color Negative, Archival Print

Bottom Right
Lancaster Church, 2020
Scanned Color Negative, Archival Print



Hanna Miller

MA Painting

Pete Rose This, John McEnroe That (Divin' and Kickin'), 2020
Oil on Canvas, 9" x 12"



This body of artwork examines the overlap between my family's long-lasting adoration of sports and society's progressing views on the subject of the female perspective in athletics. Through my oil paintings, I create compositions that reveal the generational obstacles and triumphs of women athletes and where my lineage fits within this context. Intimately-sized surfaces, sometimes equal to that of a baseball card, are used as visual representations to highlight the continued idolization of male athleticism, while minimizing the achievements of female competitors. The discovery of vintage family photographs, many showing my great grandmother in gender neutral clothing posing assertively next to an old race car, have prompted me to generate pieces detailing the hidden histories of female athletes from the early twentieth century and beyond.

I emphasize influential figures in my compositions through the use of minimalist backgrounds and visual hierarchies. Growing up, I tried to emulate the talent and strength my grandmother and mother had in tennis, field hockey, and other sports. These tactics highlight the alternate side of the social constructs of the mid 1900s that sexualized the female athlete through items like LPGA pinup magazines, among other disappointing media publications.

The merging of sports and domestic life inevitably spans throughout my paintings and embroidered work, but this is not meant to favor nostalgic memories or the idea of contentment. Instead, I utilize my artwork and experiences to subtly shift away from the long-standing beliefs that girls and women are not supposed to show overt physicality or be knowledgeable sports fans.



Bouncy Little Girl, 2020
Oil on canvas
30" x 48"



Sleep with One Eye Open and a Bat Under Your Bed, 2020
Oil on canvas
30" x 48"

Lauren Maryam Moradi

MFA Sculpture / Drawing

Using traditional craft processes with found materials, my work investigates concepts of domestic failure and bodily shortcomings through the disruption of prescribed functionalities. By embroidering gestures originally created by disassembled appliance motors, I reinsert handmade error in a meditation on the human/machine relationship. This means of interpreting repetitive motions simultaneously celebrates the tedious labor process of a practice that has been historically contextualized as decorative women's work while seeking to place it within the realm of contemporary discourse. My use of discarded objects and materials aims to rethink and subvert notions of value, calling to ideas of sentimentality and worth by offering delicate reminders of corporeal fragilities.



weak reparations, 2020
thread, lawn chair, spray adhesive
22" x 32" x 22"



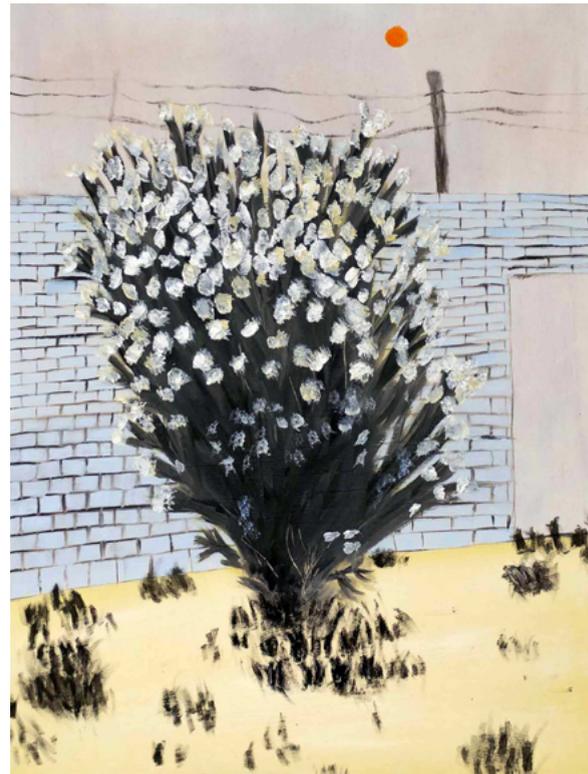
translated mechanized gesture 6 / a place to be held, 2020
crochet thread, thread, queen mattress
60" x 80" x 9"

Matthew Nesor

MA Photography / Video

Growing up close to Los Angeles, I had an inhabited sense of living beyond or elsewhere. The hypnotic openness of space and light that I have encountered and interact with guides my work, developing an intrinsic sense of place. These experiences and perceptions make contemplation and reflection tangible, just how sunlight generates images on the surface of water or glass.

Oscillating between video and film, my work proposes a dialogue between engagement and interiority. Depicting moments of transition and anticipation, I use the video camera to meditate on my surroundings, exploring themes such as desire, memory, and place. Through movement and manipulation, the visual recordings of everyday life offer insight into the rhythms inherent to my being. My work illuminates the act of image-making as a dynamic, search and sense-making process that liberates feelings about memory, a constant decaying and regenerating phenomenon. Working from personal photographs, my oil paintings focus on the act of remembering, specifically how reality and the interpretation of reality intersect.

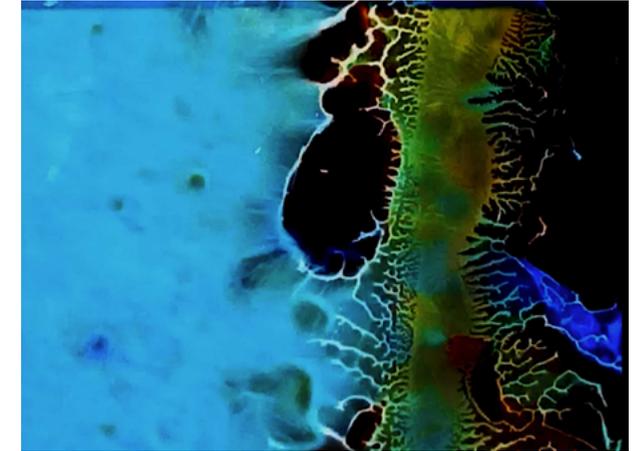


Free-Ways, 2020
Oil on Panel,
12"x16"

Top Left
Eyes Unclouded By Longing, 2021
Single Channel Video, 3 Minutes 23 Seconds



Top Right
Ocean of Existence, 2020
Single Channel Video, 2 Minutes 44 Seconds



Untitled (My Time Will Come), 2020
Single Channel Video, 3 Minutes 26 Seconds

Rory Nester

MA Ceramics

Life is dark and wicked. Environmental catastrophes, political fiascos, and social decay have all become business as usual. Desensitized to tragedy, we often have difficulties confronting looming global issues, and I'm left mystified by our ability to ignore what's right in front of us. Finding the humor in chaos, I am able to navigate the challenging times in which we live. I knowingly make objects that will become my legacy, employing wry wit as a form of resistance. My work begins by creating something that will last longer than our own ephemeral lives. This will be some evidence, for whatever version of human is on this earth in the years to come, that I used my finite period of time aware and amused under the weight of our actions.



Xanax & Pill Bottle, 2020
Ceramics
1.25" x 6.25" x 5"



Claycuffs, 2020
Ceramics
6.5" x 7" x 0.5"



Broken Awoken, 2020
Ceramics
3.5" x 2.5" x 0.5" & 10" x 14" x 0.5"

Marc Potter

MFA Sculpture

Utilizing the idea of the American carnival and its imagery, I investigate the symbolism and mystery that clowns convey. Cultural perceptions of clowns vary from happy to sad, tragic to comic. Their lighthearted absurdity intrigues me and informs the complex nature of humans and their relationship to the clown within. Hollywood, the media, and a few bad actors have redirected perceptions of clowns to evoke people's deepest fears. People are more concerned with the person beneath the façade.

Another aspect of my work explores the aspiration found in the simplicity of a kite. By rendering this familiar object in an unexpected material, clay, the object becomes stripped of its function. A kite is designed to fly; but when constructed from an impractical material like porcelain, the object is fragile and inadequate, while maintaining its aspirational intention. I am interested in this object's inherent contradictions and the possibility of transcending them by actually flying. My attempts to fly the ceramic kite lives as a performance documented in video and photographs.



Breakthrough, 2020
Painting/Sculpture, 24" x 58"

The kite functions as art as well as a prop for a performance about frustration and futility. My repeated attempts to fly the kite fulfill the kite's aspirational and visual reality, but its physical reality frustrates this possibility, and, in the end, I realize I have become the clown.



Clownscape, 2020
Photograph,
18" x 22"

Brian Ramirez

MA Ceramics

The story of the genocidal conquest of the Americas was not written by indigenous people. Through my work I offer a contemporary view by challenging one-sided perspectives. As a Chicano and Angeleno, I seek to reclaim my indigenous consciousness by using Aztec and Mayan mythologies and their symbols throughout my ceramic objects. This becomes the framework through which I clarify misrepresented historical events and highlight Mexican and Californian history in a narrative way. Referencing ritualistic offerings, I display much of my work in a similar way to create a deeper connection to my culture. In the end I draw symbolic and cultural connections between past and present to gain a profound understanding of my indigenous heritage and the legacy of colonialism.

The Two Virgins, Series 2, 2021
Stoneware, Glaze, Underglaze, Decal
6.5" x 3" x 3"



The Impregnation of Coatlicue, 2020
Stoneware, Glaze, Oxides, Gold Luster
12.5" x 7.5" x 7.5"



Adrienne Sacks

MFA Painting

My work investigates the ways in which all of us, the clowns of late capitalism, must perform in a manner that perpetuates the collective drama and trauma of contemporary American culture and late global capitalism. By emulating mannequins, comfort objects, cartoon characters, and audio-animatronics, we come to function as fools and entertainers.

I'm obsessed with the optimism and naivete of late twentieth century popular culture and its reinterpretation in this moment of inconvenient truths. Drawing on psychology in theory and in practice, my work embraces affect through an investigation of marginal aesthetics, navigating the cute, campy, gimmick-y, abject, uncanny, and haunted.

I harvest objects cast off of the belly of the beast: Los Angeles big-box stores, chain department and drug stores, dollar stores, and e-commerce giants to create absurdly tangible sculptural representations of the beasts themselves. As figures, they operate as uncanny abjections; as abjections, they disturb the conventional identity of their source material and



a happy new year, 2020
Found audio-animatronic, stuffed animals, plastic eyes, fake eyelashes, press-on acrylic nails, and jingle bell, 9" x 10" x 15"

embody representations of personal and collective trauma and the consequences of repressing and stuffing it under the saccharine- a sort of camp-existentialism. I use oil painting to position my practice historically and illustrate the abstract notion of my own complicity in consumption and production of contemporary visual motifs.



comfort object, 2019
Oil, plastic, and glitter on canvas, 84" x 48"



Above
Gestural Sentimentality, 2020
Oil and graphite on canvas, 84" x 48"



Right
Uglier, 2019
Stuffed animals, 14" x 10" x 7"

Stephen Sariñana-Lampson

MA Photography / Video

My photographs evoke a memory of place within the quilt of Los Angeles' urban fabric. They embody subliminal narratives informed by circumstance and site, fragments of architectural detail, and the vestiges of people perceived by their absence. I connect with the palpable presence of solitude that permeates built spaces at risk, particularly those slated for "development." Ultimately, my interest is in the residual memories left behind by the consequences of human experience within the fissures of the urban landscape.

As an artist and activist, I concentrate on the neighborhood in which four generations of my family have lived - Lincoln Heights - one of the city's oldest and most densely populated communities. Within its boundaries are the most diverse examples of residential and commercial architecture found in the city, along with a fading history and the unseen presence of people from her past.



Recent work initially tried to reconcile the consequences of gentrification and coercive displacement found among the relics of once inhabited sites. But in the midst of a global pandemic, my work has become more of an archival record of personal memories tied to places from my own back pages and a psychological reconciliation of the vulnerabilities inherent in aging.



Two Downspouts, 2021
Pigment Print, 18" x 24"



The Spontaneous Wings, 2020
Pigment Print, 18" x 24"

Top Left
26 or 28, 2021
Pigment Print, 18" x 24"

Bottom Left
The Window With The X, 2021
Pigment Print, 18" x 24"

Right
The Starland Has Fleas, 2020
Pigment Print, 18" x 24"



Christopher Taylor

MA Drawing / Painting

The subject of the human condition is the core element of my work. My intention as an artist is to evoke a feeling and response from the viewer that extends the creator's vision outside his understanding. The disposition of self-silent suffering intrigues me, the daily pain shared with others, although not voiced. To make that which is internalized, external on canvas, I acknowledge that suffering is an important aspect of life as it contributes toward enlightenment in the meandering path of one's life. This approach has not only been rewarding but surprising as well. I evolve with the work at hand. Although I am led by the process, I require structure from the beginning, building blocks to piece together in juxtaposition with or morphed in a fashion of coherence and conveyance. I gravitate to an order of placement. Pure unadulterated color when used is preferred, never mixed directly, as to singularly push the materials in a focused direction. My technique uses soft and hard washes of charcoal, pastel, and pencil, mediums I find



Corner blue, 2020
oil, charcoal on canvas, 38"x26"

to have infinite possibilities. I prefer a quiet approach to work and wish for the viewer to have a long moment with it, a careful study to emphasize the viewer's desire to see, to acquire the desired effect by simple means. Each piece has no result in sight until I feel it is finished. By allowing my work to lead me, I experience the process of its completion as a conversation between me and the work.



mirror, mirror, 2021
charcoal, oil, acrylic varnish on canvas, 24"x 24"

Elizabeth Weber

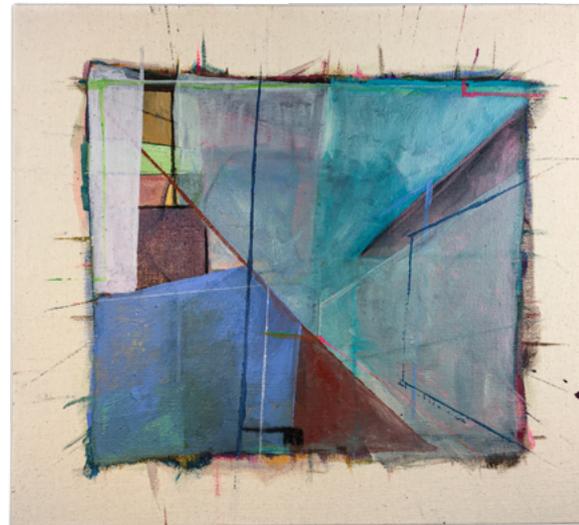
MFA Painting

My work distills formal elements gleaned from various sources including art history, historical archives, and print media. Responding intuitively to these elements, I reorganize and repeat them onto canvas and paper, manipulating the lines and forms to establish new visual relationships. Layering and repetition acknowledge in-between spaces that result in abstractions, the surfaces of which conceal the history of process beneath.

The work is not pre-visualized; the generative processes of drawing and painting influence the outcome. Sometimes I apply paint thinly as a wash of color and at other times I cover the surface with thick patches of paint. Both transparent and opaque layers build forms, and I fragment and obscure these in the process. My paintings create tension through the simultaneous illusion of depth and the assertion of the canvas's flatness, calling attention to the process of painting. The compositions conflate exterior and interior spaces; solid, wide, and narrow, as well as broken lines, suggest transitional spaces and objects within actual, imagined, and psychological interiors.



front hall 8, 2021
mix media on unprimed canvas, 18"x 20"



front hall 6, 2021
mix media on unprimed canvas, 24"x 28"



front hall 5, 2021
mix media on unprimed canvas, 36"x 38"

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2021

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