



This publication accompanies the 2021 Department of Visual Arts MFA Thesis Exhibition *The Long Day*, on view at the Logan Center, University of Chicago from May 21 – June 27, 2021.

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THE L

NG DAY



STORIES WITHOUT NAMES

Perhaps what measures the length of the day is the sense that we remain distant from closing the story. After a long day, when I am with myself once again, I have the urge to get cozy with the soft release of commemoration. Closure names the moments when I was bored in limbo, when I witnessed a celebration that brought on simmering terror, when I met my asymmetrical reflection, or when I engaged in rituals of self-examination. Naming is akin to letting go.

Instead of naming the passages of our waking hours, *The Long Day*, the exhibition from the University of Chicago's Department of Visual Arts class of 2021, remains focused on the drive to name; the process that releases the

dreams and their artificial receptacles and alienated by my own expectation for how this story ends.

I remained stubbornly tied to the flow of the body and its chimeric forms. One work condensed my body against a dark wall, spotlighting the kind of self-examination that doubles as institutional critique. Other works, nearly ephemeral, called out "Polo" without invitation and traced ditto into corners that would otherwise remain invisible. These mechanisms put my reception and my ingestion on display. These murmurs broke through my own boundaries—those quiet lines between myself and the world—pushed by all of my stories that want to mix with yours.

Elsewhere, paint and wax crushed into canvas depict the silhouette of a political swearing-in. Masks cut from designer bags and adorned with toss-offs, bottles, and cicada husks stand as altars. The edges of each figure, each instrument in the parade and the armature that mounts these humble findings reveal an internal ceremony that melds the lofty feeling of an impulse

with data. Corpses congest into a corpus. Institutions sublimate into neighboring spaces. Archives osmote with ephemera and photo albums and tax forms. Until the vestigial character of art dissolves into the liquid meaning of this life.

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Engaged in equal parts institutional critique and its worlding antidote, these works lead me through a wilderness before clear-cutting, subdividing, and extraction makes an environment into a forest of signs. They all played the host, hydralike and multi-voiced, field-guiding along the game trail, whispering the names of wild blooms, pausing to ink them, tear their stems and bulb and stamen, and with a visage full of pollen, disguised by the stuff of reproduction, swaps the petals for other skins, zip-tying, packaging, and renaming them. We wandered through ruins in the countryside, every burgeoning sign an epistolary writ in personal clues. I rummaged and came away with fragments from a dark mirror that stenciled my vision and silvered the world photographic. The host sang. I heard the trill of hand-cut chimes and lyrics

mechanisms laid out on the forest floor, traps set all around, sweetly baited and avoidable. We came upon a well, pre-scripted with my reflection, debts paid in full. And I either poured myself in as a wish or plugged that hole to end the dream.

These artworks squeeze and traffic in the conditions of embodiment. The artists of *The Long Day* cull the low resolution and unfinished quality of daily life and use those moments in their raw and unnamed forms as they are, without reducing every and all experience to comprehensible morsels. At stake in rendering these lively conditions extra vulnerable while resisting the foreclosure of interpretation is nothing short of surviving until tomorrow.

Shane Rothe
Summer 2021

contradictions of this world from our thoughts by encapsulating, sorting, and packaging one experience separately from another. Indeed, if a viewer was granted omnipotent access to the intentions and swarm of effects any artwork might possess, how much promiscuity, let alone clarity, would be available for understanding their own life? Before a name, before interpretation, these artworks recognize how foundational the raw data of experience is to representation.

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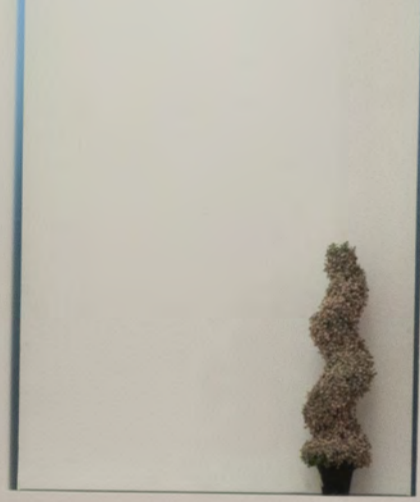
I am reminded during this day that when life passes through the openings in the fabric made by art, the multitude of persons whose subjectivities grab at and congeal with our own become recognizable. In one painted scene, the arms of a mother who is fastening a communion veil to her daughter reflect an unreal blue aura. In front of the painting an inverted wishing well, made of generically fabricated garden features, tabulates debts. Entranced and self-reflexive, I was deeply unsettled by the combination of vulnerable

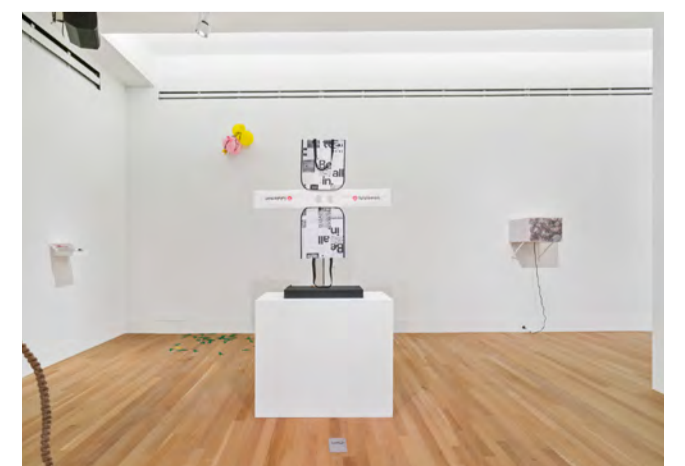
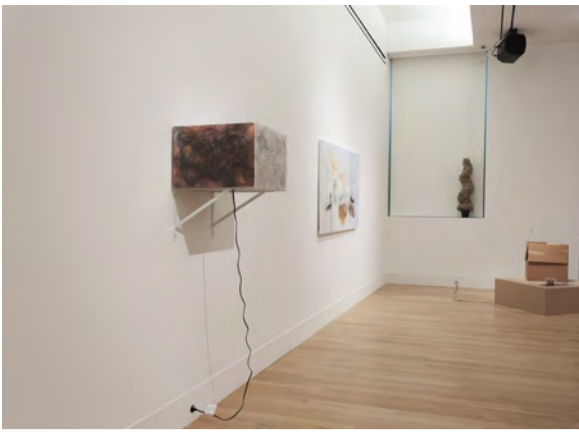
buy with the trickle-down effects of heads of state. Without the content of specific histories, we are left tracing the movement of superstructures that await the injection of individual events.

What might be left if an archive oozed into oblivion and ceased to mean? Narrating these works entails the messiest of jaunts because at every stage of movement between the audience, the object, the archive, and the institution, the possibility that any form will sublimate into any other remains vital and taut and kinetic.

One work modeled on a late minimalist box appears to be made from human materials—skin, hair, breath. The box is a double illusion—the human element is a printed image and in turn the art historical reference collides with its own tail. Nearby a painting made from collaged images and styles, magician style references that end in sleight of hand, beckons to be decoded. Either the story being told here is assembled from its own gravity, or the vacuum of an empty structure is pulling in narratives without filter. Objects ablute

that foreshadowed other ceremonies, where orators traded commandments as though before ahistorical processions. We hiked through rabble or trundled beneath crowded blends of felled wood dispersed in such a way as to obscure the game, and which revealed the backdoor to the woodland, where with bark inverted, and sky flowing through the riverbed, the host answered questions, interrogative and spurting replies, from unmasked proclamations. Not yet noon. We leapt between hollow boulders. We drank from the glitter spring. Sheltered from a fit of rain, the host told me of a life in between humble dreams, dreams that tumble kaleidoscopically, until the light of the day remains worthy of desire. I needed honest rest. The host tossed a sketchbook in my direction and in leafing through goth collage and aphorisms I saw a family tree without names and slogans formed in the wake of trauma from a smooth juridical system. We began a masked transition into other carapaces; clambering, slouching in the muck, grunting, coughing, necklaced and spending. More movement toward banal methods of survival that run under the radar. The scent under the mask was well designed. I suppose I felt then like I was more the wandering image than the rosined set around us that fulfilled the look and sap of the woods. And in being that image I saw the

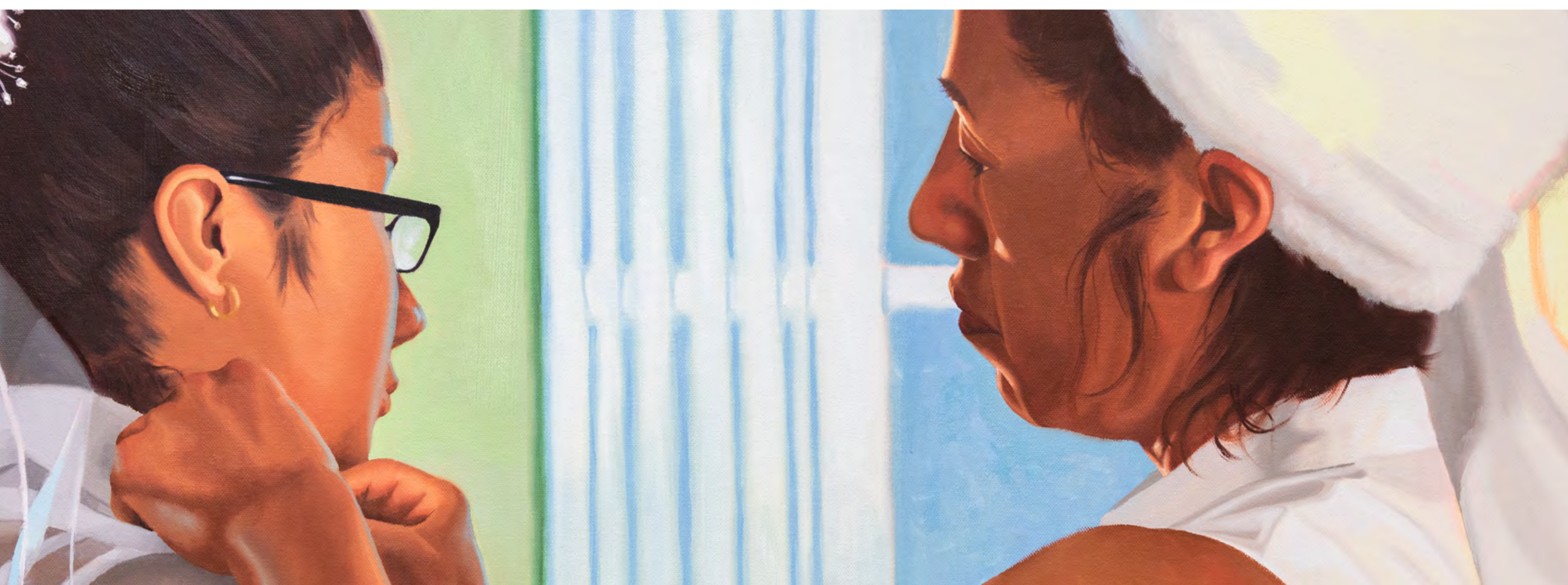




The Long Day, on view at the Logan Center, University of Chicago from May 21 – June 27, 2021.

ARTIST BIO

Mercedes Cardenas is a Chicago-based artist specializing in oil painting. She graduated from American Academy of Art in December 2017 with a BFA, and recently received her MFA from the University of Chicago in 2021.

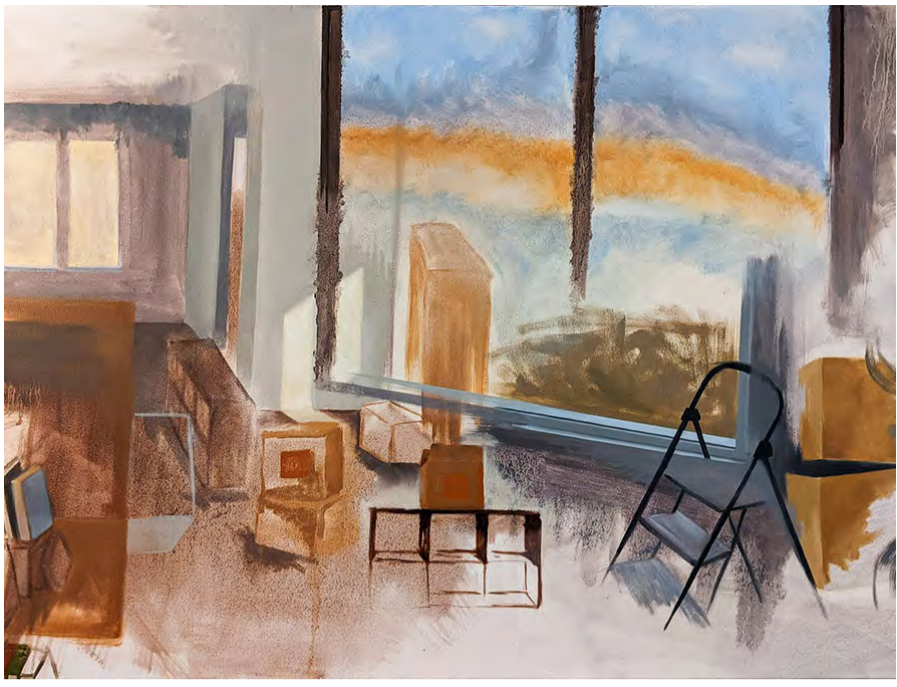


MERCE

DES CARDENAS

ARTIST STATEMENT

My main focus is the representation of Mexican-American diaspora through my personal memories and interpreting them with the use of oil paint on a surface. I document what I feel are important memories that symbolize the Mexican-American Diaspora. Playing with time and the ambiguous and fragmented quality of memories, I create paintings with moments of confusion. My work is an internal exploration of external experiences and I hope to expand the conversation of diaspora and accessibility of it in the art world.



Congratulations, you've got a piece of the American Dream!
2021

Oil paint on canvas
30 x 48 in.



Detail



Detail



The Three Pots, 2021

Oil paint on canvas
36 x 60 in.



Exhibition View

Birthday Party, 2021

Oil paint on canvas
60 x 84 in.



First Communion, 2021

Oil paint on canvas
30 x 40 in.

Detail

QUESTION FOR DREW

how would you put a lampshade on the head of an 18th century bust?

This is about the uncanny, death, life in collection

Like painting the face of s

Uncanny: Create new legs for old artworks

Greek statues were painted. Why? What did it do?

Frame it like this: if you want to do this, follow these instructions.
Here are the resources.

Thinking about this re: mike Kelley's "playing with dead things"

Putting clothes on a statue

Protocol For Playing With The Dead

Protocol For Playing With Dead Things



ANTO

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AUTH

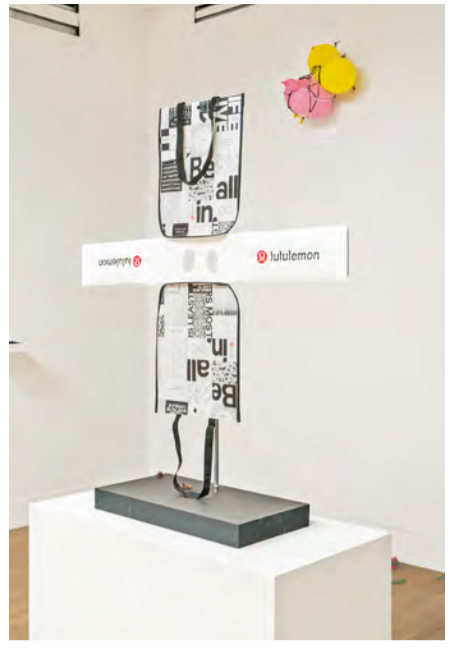
IDEA FOR SCULPTURE

Play dress up with artworks in a museum; busts made by the Greats, from marble. With the help of a conservator, taking measurements, ensuring chemical inertness, developing protocol for dressing up/personalizing the busts. Getting some ephemera for the artworks, thinking about personalization of the collection with the objects.



Eyes Without a Face, 2021

Shopping bag, painted steel, painted wood, cicadas, plinth
Dimensions variable



Detail



Airmask, 2021

Computer box, painted steel, glass bottle, string, cicadas, construction refuse, bucket
Dimensions variable



Detail



Detail



Care Package (Brisk and Flaming Hots), 2021

Painted wood, ester foam, soft spun Tyvek, found bottle
17 x 22 x 4.5 in.



Detail

Captive Flies, 2021

Flies, fishing line, thumbtacks
Dimensions variable



Detail



This (relatively) young daisy lost its petals. An irritated child had dumbly slapped its head while the wind laughed, overwhelming its meager expansion. It remained now, discontented as a bald stamen on a fuzzy stick. Reaching its neck out, it caught a tangle of hair that was rolling in the wind and flung it onto its pollinated core. Contentedly covered yet choking, it reached out again for a rogue plastic bag, which was torn through the middle. The bag hung around its soft post like a shirt as it flapped in the wind. Feeling an ugly mess, this daisy stuck out its neck to catch a soiled napkin with some color. It stood, finally fatigued from reaching and catching and bearing these poor quality petals. Self-consciousness set in, and it took up a serious stock still stance. Lost and invisible within a concise bundle of trash.



A LANA

FERGUSON

ARTIST STATEMENT

The materials that belong to someone I know and appear neglected have always been the most desirable to me. No one has given them up yet—so they have value—and they're free. No burden, no trade, just pure, whimsical accumulation.

Social ideals—of productivity, beauty, and social status to name a few—are conveyed through material objects in our day-to-day. Machine-made and assisted renderings of nature jumble, smash and blend the unique qualities of their source; artificial plants are kelly-green, shiny, and lush; hot dog meat is uniform, salty and red; stuffed animals are squishy, immobile and cute. The distillation provides clarity on what we value.

Though the form of the work changes, it is consistently bright, clumsy and engages with the mundane. Bold colors verge on aggressive, evidence of the hand is laid bare, and structural integrity becomes an open question as accumulated materials bulge and hang on their armatures. Like appliances, the works promise efficiency, pleasure and consistency they cannot deliver. A passive viewer is ensnared through play, yet a closer look disrupts a complete sense of ease and lightheartedness.



Traffic Drama, 2021

Vinyl tile, carpet pad, stair treads, lamp shade, foam, paint, mylar, string, plaster
90 x 60 x 14 in.

Optimized Office Planter, 2021

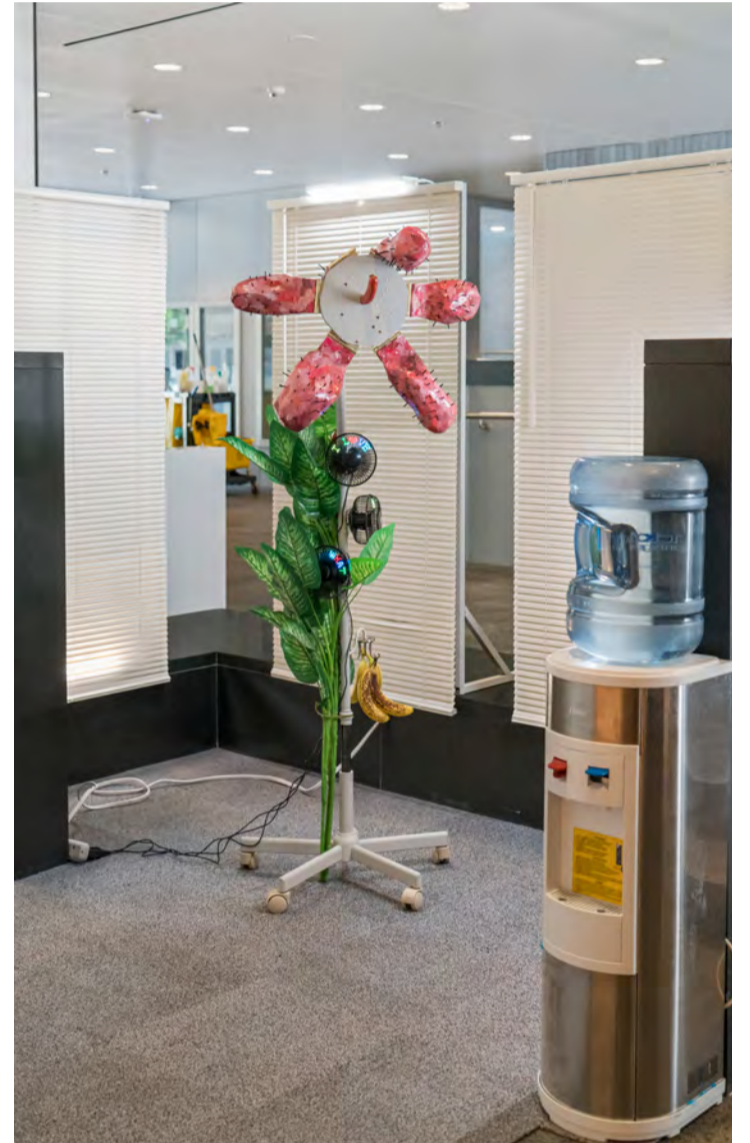
Printed images of pigeon feet, dildos and tongues, wheely chair parts, LED message fans, morning mist gel beads, artificial leaves, banana holder, bananas, fabric, steel string
80 x 16 x 30 in.



Detail



Detail



Some Reflections on ! and art, 2021

Chapbook
Dimensions variable



Detail



Detail

Breath Replacement, 2021

Printed images of skin, hair, MDF, frosted acrylic lens, fan, shelving brackets
18 x 18 x 13 in.



Camouflaged Spitter Works 50% of the Time, 2021

Wood laminate, MDF, hair blow dryer, fishing line, feathers, motion sensor
95 x 6 x 6 in.

"...I recognize a few potholes over the years: one looks like the side face of an old pirate whose mustache looks like the shadow of a fishtail, one looks like mom's shoulder, one looks like John's butt, and another looks like the shape of the pond in the County Prison, something like a turtle or a carelessly drawn star. The prison is about 5 miles southeast of our house. We drive by it all the time and I love looking at it from Google Maps. I like to look at the layout of the buildings to imagine where do people do what, where do they enter for the first time, where do they exist, where do they exercise, where do they eat, where do they live, where do they spend most of the time, where is the tower that over-watches, who are the prisoners, who did they used to be, what kind of a prisoner would I be, what crime would I prefer to commit..."

Ignite, Draft #4, 2021



MA

X

LI

ARTIST STATEMENT

Driven by his curiosity in the Paradoxical Point of View, Max Li deploys an interdisciplinary practice with calligraphy, object-arranging and cameras, to make portraiture of encounters that occur in both physical and psychological landscapes.

From his interaction with the others and himself, Max harvests language as raw material for an evolving framework that translates and produces metaphors of deep mental movements. By doing so, Max inquires the self-taming mechanism of contemplation, confession, prayer, spirituality and reflexivity; considering and reconsidering means of maneuvering oneself through the terrains of reality.

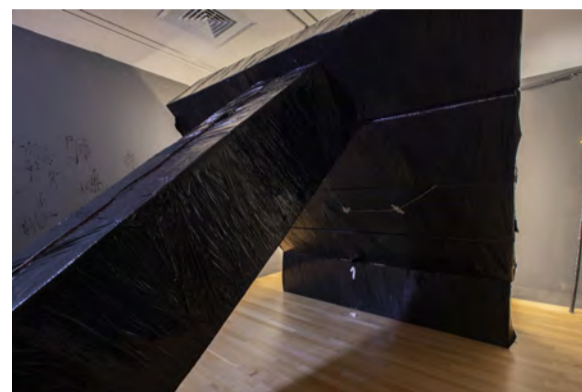
Bio:

Max Li arrived in the US from mainland China as a 10th grader. He received his BFA from the University of California, Irvine. In spring 2021, he received his Master of Fine Arts at the University of Chicago. He currently works in Chicago, IL.

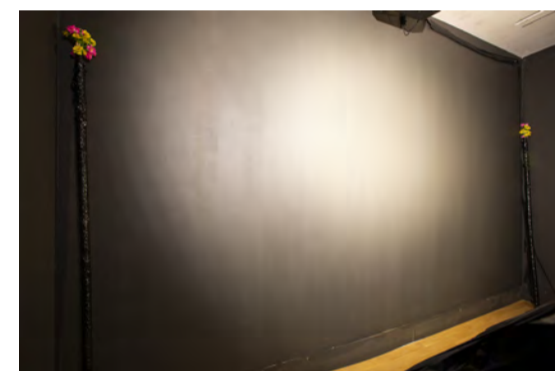


Site #1, Face the Wall, 2021

Opaque shipping wrap and moving boxes
Dimensions variable



Detail



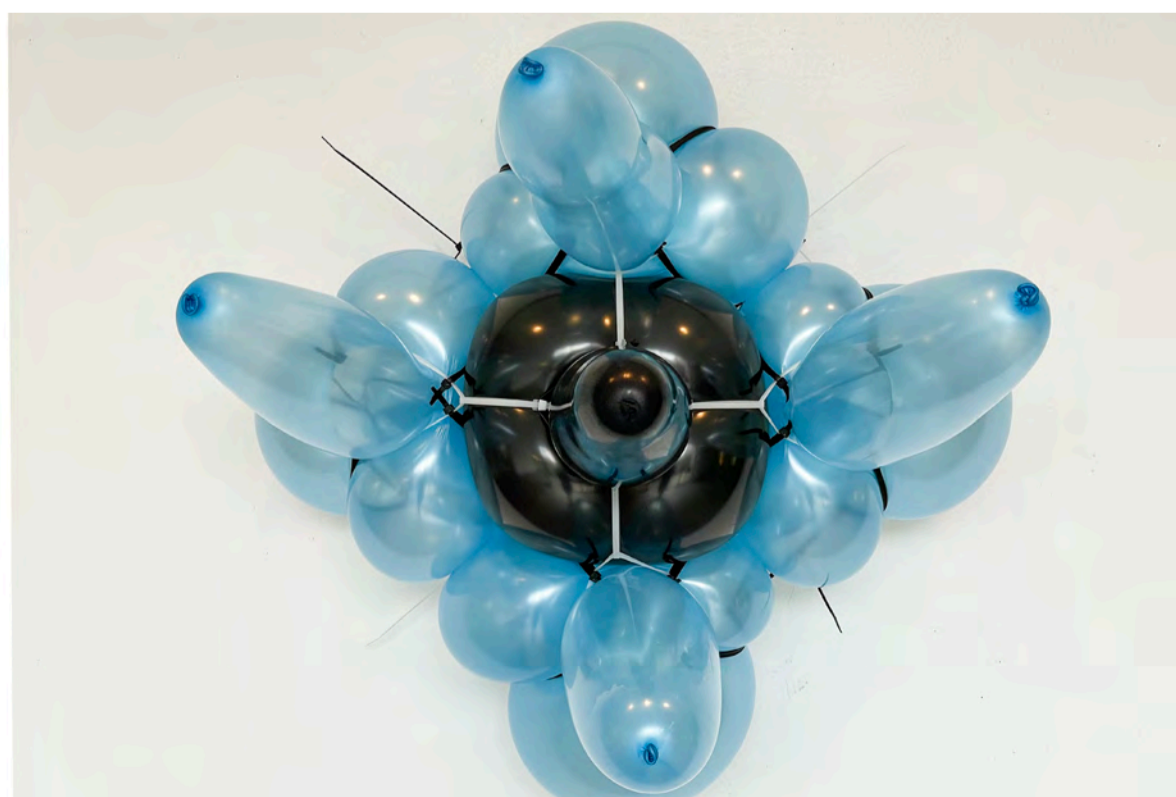
Detail

Flower #3, 2021

Zip Tie, party balloons
Dimensions variable



Time-Lapse



Flower #2, 2021

Zip Tie, party balloons
Dimensions variable



Details

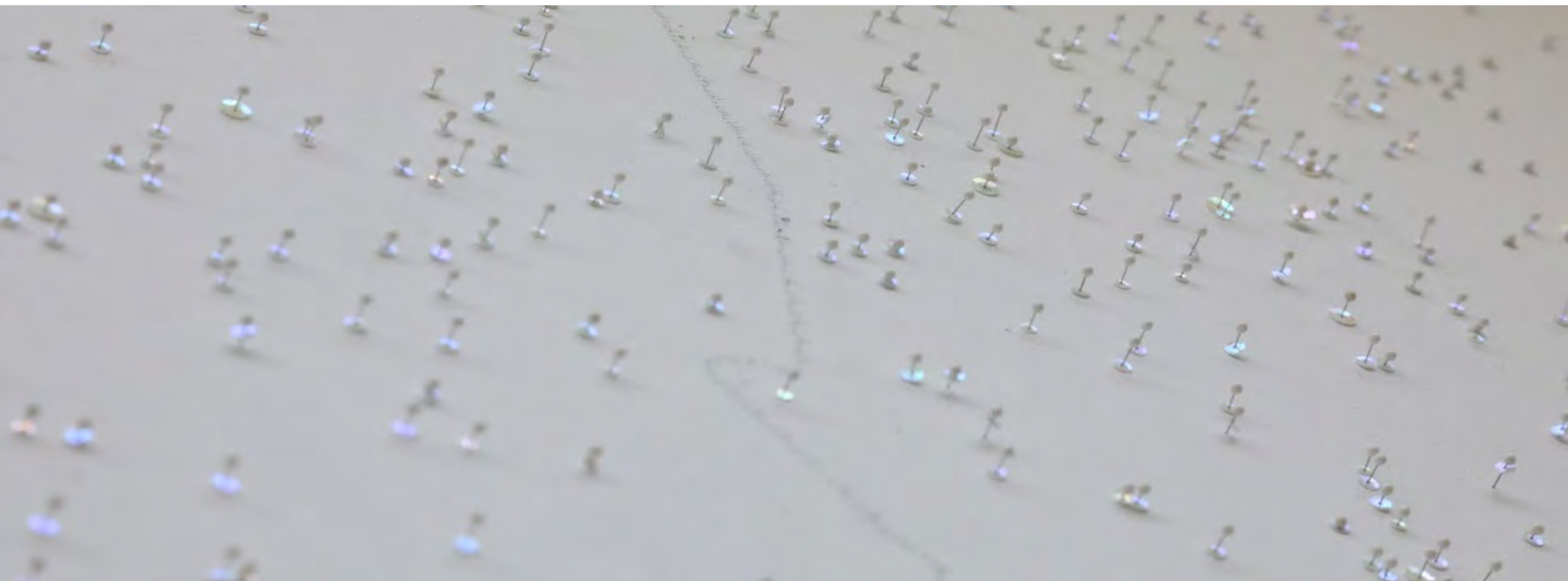
terrorized by the grind. ditto is unprofessional. ditto is unbothered. ditto gets high often. ditto gives up. ditto keeps keepin' on. ditto is powerful. ditto is fragile. ditto is reckless. ditto attends its own funeral. ditto is on trial for murdering themselves. ditto is beside themselves with grief. ditto is nowhere to be found.

ditto is exhausting. ditto is exhausted. ditto is tired. ditto is so, so very tired. ditto takes naps. ditto likes trap hi-hats.

ditto writes and writes and writes and erases.
ditto writes its life away.
ditto is and is not.
is ditto a question?
ditto is absurd.
ditto is applesauce (lol)
ditto is a question and a mark.
ditto doesn't miss.

ditto is a black hole.
ditto is a black whole.
ditto is black and whole.
ditto is black.
ditto is whole.
ditto is.

d.



DANIE

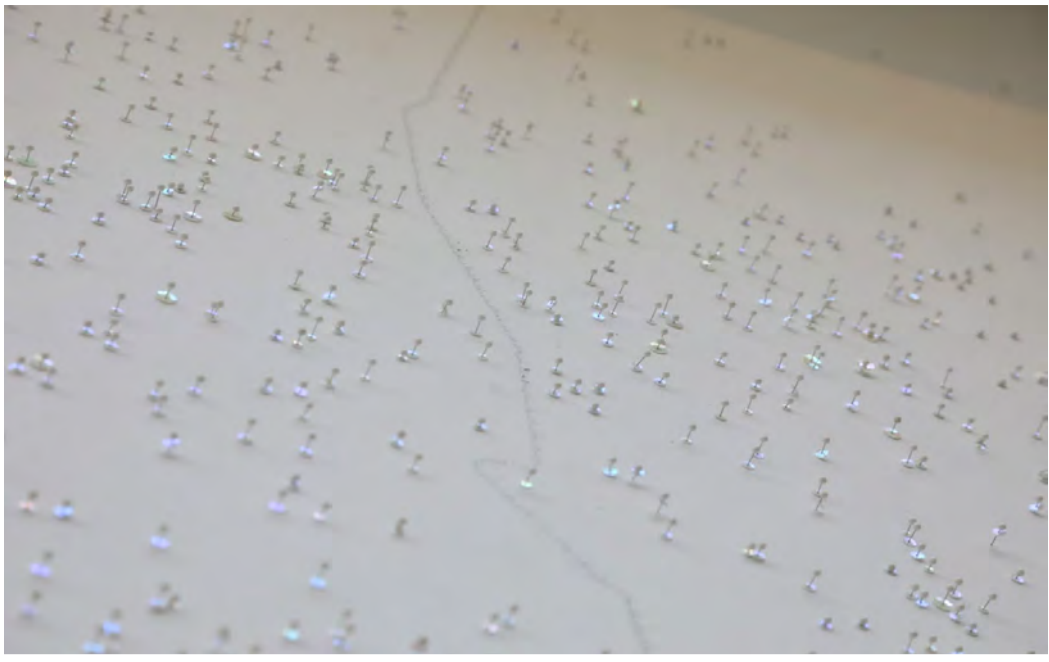
LLE

WRIGHT

ditto is an abstraction. ditto is repetition. ditto is flatness, is flattening, ditto is produced by being flattened. ditto is a stereotype. ditto exists in the margins and in the notion of a margin(s). To draw ditto is to enact some of what Trinh T. Minh-Ha means when she says, "the Commodity contemplates itself in a world it has created."

ditto is a term Christina Sharpe employs to think with and through some of the afterlives of slavery. For Sharpe, ditto references the persistence of the black death spectacle/s and the endless, egregious, quotidian violence visited upon black subjecthood, particularly black subjecthood which attempts to conceive of "itself" as subject rather than object. ditto is a trickster that plays with this. ditto wants to master the craft of flip-flopping between subject and objecthood to both call attention to the problems of that paradox and to gesture at the ludicrousness that necessitates such antics. ditto is performing black alterity knowing full well that it's a show. ditto knows, for example, that ditto doesn't really exist but plays along to buy time, partly to study its own nonexistence more carefully.

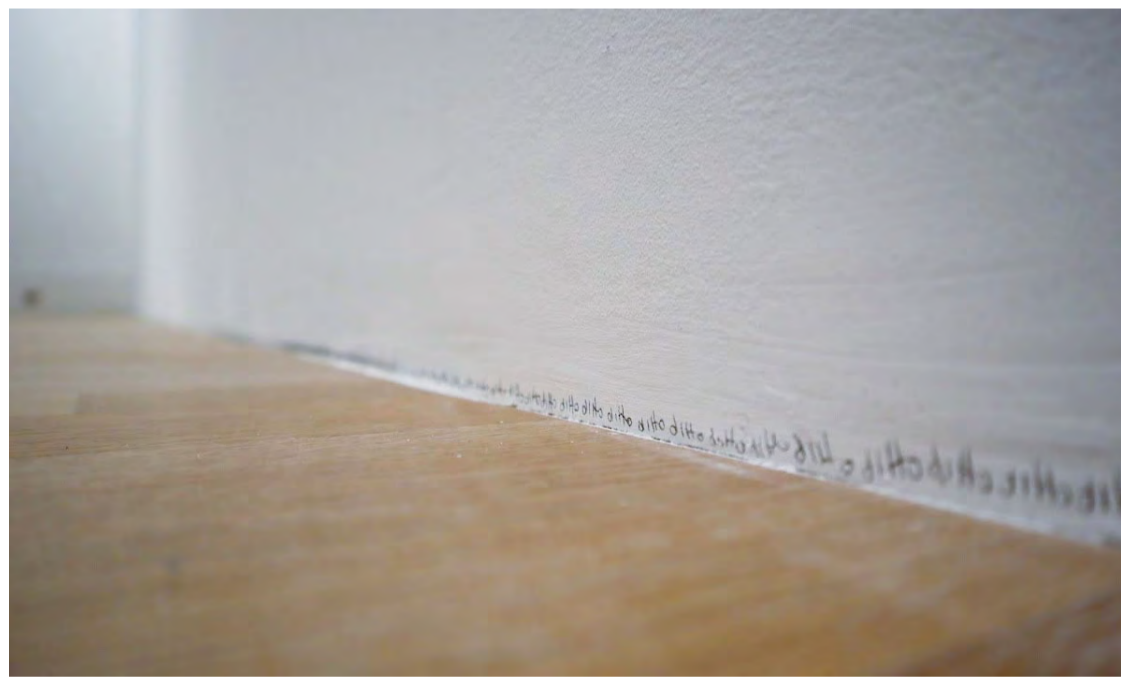
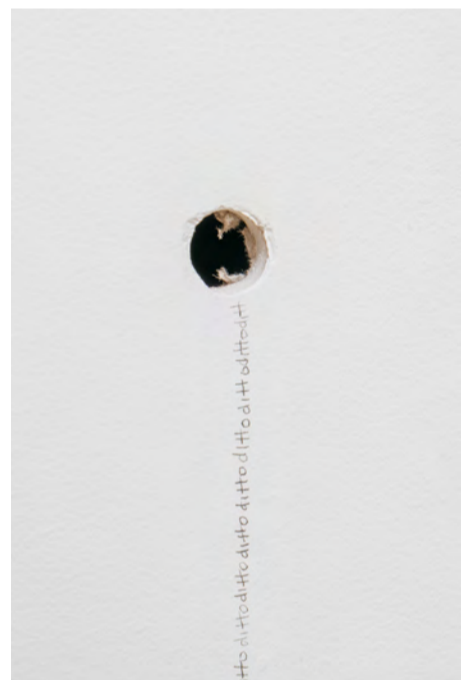
ditto is somebody. ditto is the sum of bodies. ditto is nobody in particular. ditto has lost their body. ditto escapes. ditto is a scapegoat. ditto is the GOAT. ditto is elegant. ditto is envied. ditto is hyper/invisible. ditto reflects others without a reflection of its own. ditto is disappointed. ditto is assertive. ditto is aggressive. ditto is concerned. ditto concerns. ditto is courageous. ditto is afraid. ditto is uglier than you could ever imagine. ditto is the most gorgeous thing you've never seen. ditto is an infinity loop within a circle within a square. ditto is bitter. ditto is spirited. ditto is depressive. ditto is intense. ditto could use a humor transplant (ditto needs to lighten the fuck up). ditto prefers tragicomedy to drama. ditto can be a real smart ass. ditto is clever. ditto is corny. ditto tries too hard. ditto is unintentional. ditto is an idiot savant. ditto is pitied. ditto is endlessly pathologized. ditto is a known unknown. ditto is an unknown unknown. ditto knows it is unknown. ditto uses this to ditto's advantage. ditto is exceptional. ditto is average. ditto is an average. ditto is lonely. ditto is lovely. ditto is exotic. ditto has a fat ass. ditto knows this and also uses this to ditto's advantage. ditto talks about ditto-ness too much. ditto doesn't talk about ditto-ness enough! ditto is



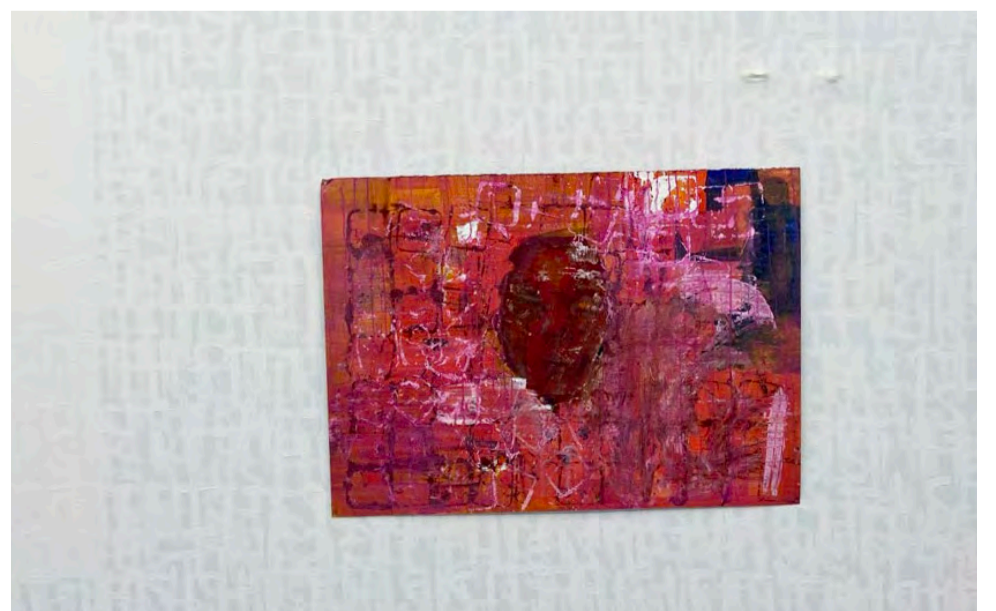
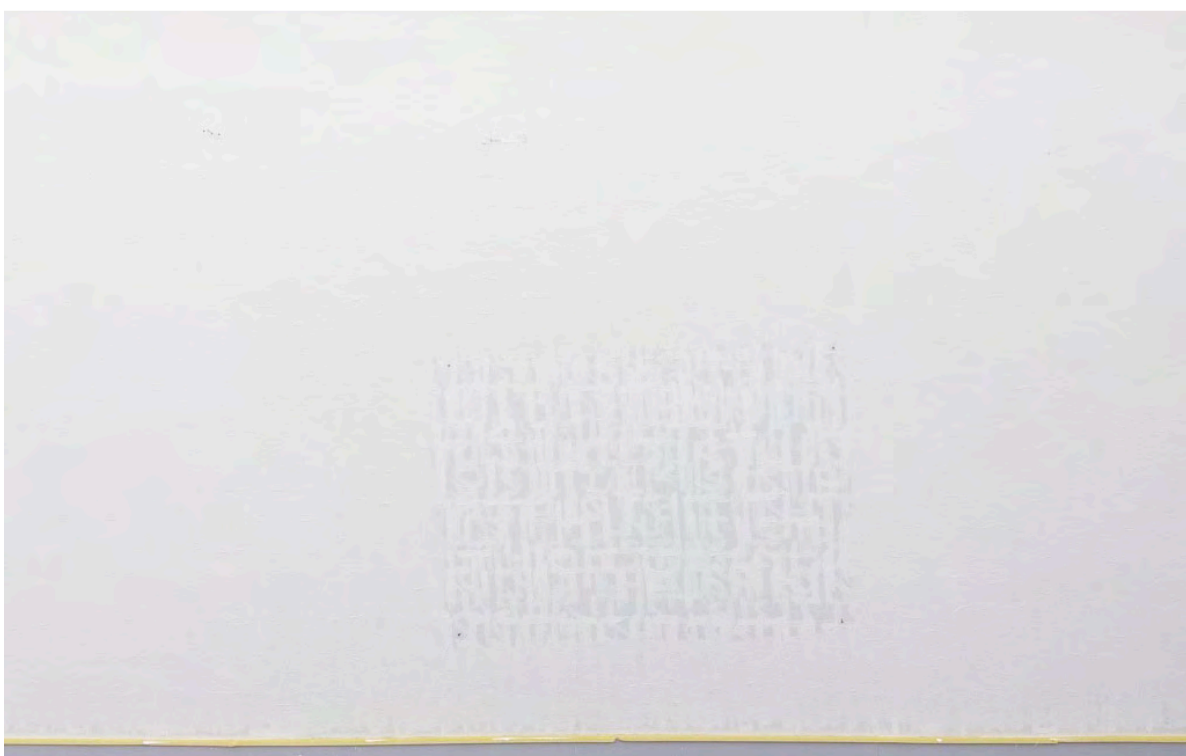
✦, 2021
Sequins, white map pins,
found holes, light
Dimensions variable



Black Noise Machine, 2021
9-channel audio installation
Dimensions variable



ditto, 2021
Graphite on walls
Dimensions variable



is this it, 2021
White paint, walls, workarounds
Dimensions variable

There are actual objects tucked away in the corners of this place, they rise from the dark water and materialize on my doorstep. At the wishing well, my coin is exchanged for a dream, a little longing fulfilled by some third party player. While my hand turns the crank, another works behind a vinyl boulder, unseen. I await eagerly, tongue out, bent to the will of wanting.

- \$8.88
- \$10.59
- \$38.44
- \$5.04
- \$30.67
yes



SA

RA

GROSE

TWO WELLS DRAWING FROM THE SAME SOURCE

I often lose track of time and sit still for too long, easily distracted from one thing by looking at another. Sometimes I come to and find myself peering over the edge of a wishing well, faced with that special mirrored surface reserved for when perfect flatness blankets depths
and
depths,

I catch a glimpse of my reflection.

It only lasts a moment, and I am gone again—erased by my own hand; an automatic response to jiggle the mouse when things go dark.

When my screen sleeps it looks back at me with my own eyes, a pool of total darkness into which I drop a coin to make a wish. When it's on, a maneuverable world unfolds before me, a slippage in the logic of physical space.

I am inside it,
wanting.



Two wells drawing from the same source, 2021

Steel, wood, roofing, steel drum, fake rocks, tongue, finger, plexiglas, LEDs
Dimensions variable



Detail



Detail



Detail



Slice of Life, 2019

Plexiglas and hardware
8.75 x 5.5 in.



Dusty topiary bushes, 2021

High-density polyethylene topiary bush, dust
36 x 9 x 9 in.



Detail

between Having and Wanting (condensed version), 2021

Cardboard, high-density polyethylene topiary bush, cake, clock, motorized turntable
Dimensions variable



Detail



NICO

LA

PLISKIN

ARTIST STATEMENT

I'm interested in the open-ended observations paintings can evoke. In my work I consider the accumulation of cultural artifacts that have come to represent a physical record of my life. They connect me to different versions of myself along a timeline stretching back thirty years and at the same time with historical contexts that predate me. This work is made with a few things in mind: the discrepancies between what a thing means to me versus what a thing means to another, what a thing is versus what a thing represents, and the endless combinations of meaning that can be made when contexts merge.



Untitled, 2021

Acrylic and flashe on canvas
40 x 45 x 1/2 in.

Detail



Detail

Residue and Vagary, 2021

Acrylic and cyanotype
on canvas
42 x 36 x 1/2 in.



Detail



Anarchist Magician, 2021

Acrylic and collage
on canvas
20 x 15 1/2 x 1/2 in.



Detail



What Was Pleading with What Isn't,
2021

Acrylic and oil on canvas
46 x 42 x 1/2 in.



Detail



VIN CENT

HAYNES

To perceive the motion of an image, on or behind a rigid surface, and enduring the paralyzed bodily inactivity, spellbound looking causes are experiences that accompanied me my whole life and led me to paint. Through painting, I'm able to discern how careful looking can give agency to the "looked at" world.

It is, among other things, a practice of restructuring visual hierarchies. I am interested in images of situations, that are by design destined to be rigid. Military parades, state receptions or inauguration ceremonies are only possible with the meticulously accurate arranged presence of flags, music, marble, holy books, constitutions, war machinery and insignia, and they are being used as semiotic indicators for the unmovable nature and the truthfulness of an empire, a state, a tribe, a crowd, et cetera.

The materials that these symbols are made of though, are very much alive and moving. They are carriers of energy and existed on this planet long before us humans were here.

I'm trying to think through their conditions, haptics, temperatures, sounds and surfaces and find out more about their relationship to the human dignitaries that live on these stages that they form.

They are seemingly replaceable to me, even though they are the participants, the main initiators of these spectacles, and upholders of these traditions.

I would say that everything we perceive can, similar to the paintings in the caves of Chauvet which move in the light of a glistening flame, change under the influence of a very careful looking...



Militärkapelle, 2021

Detail

Chalk, tempera, encaustic and oil on canvas
149.6 x 98.4 in.

Inauguration IV, 2021

Tempera, chalk, oil and encaustic
78.7 x 86.6 in.



Detail



young boys, 2021

Book, mixed media
Dimensions variable



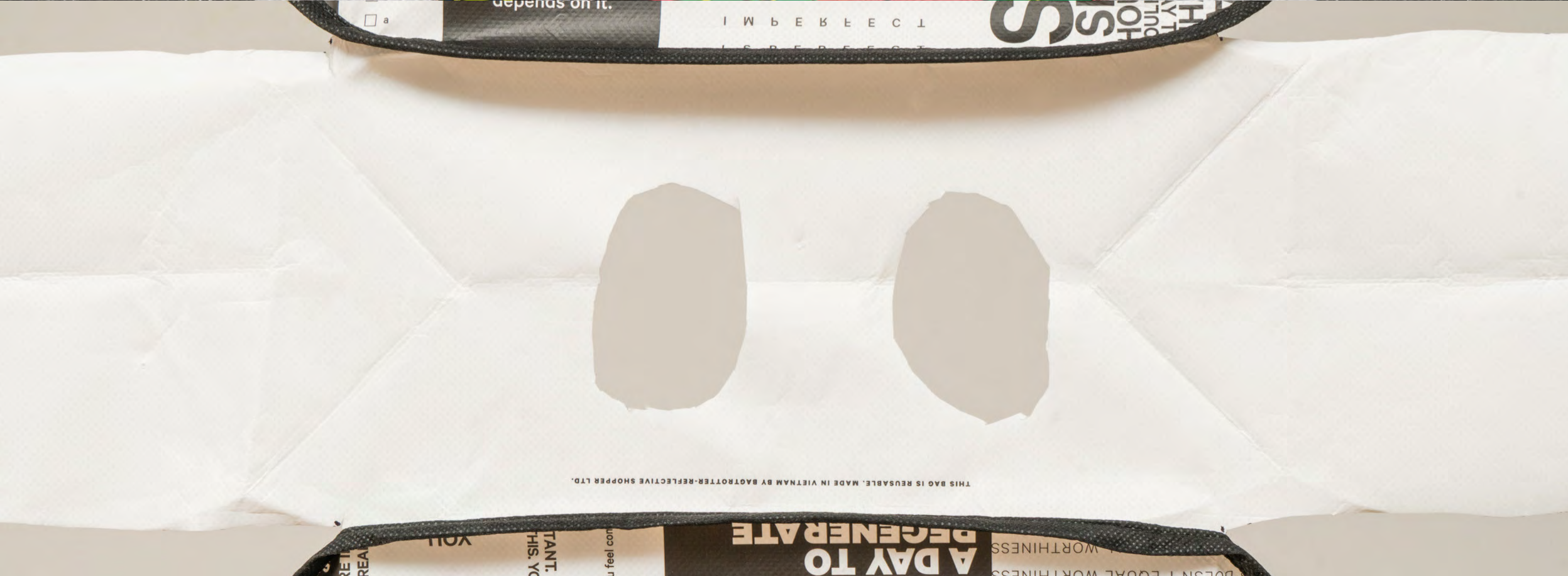
Das Unwetter, 2021

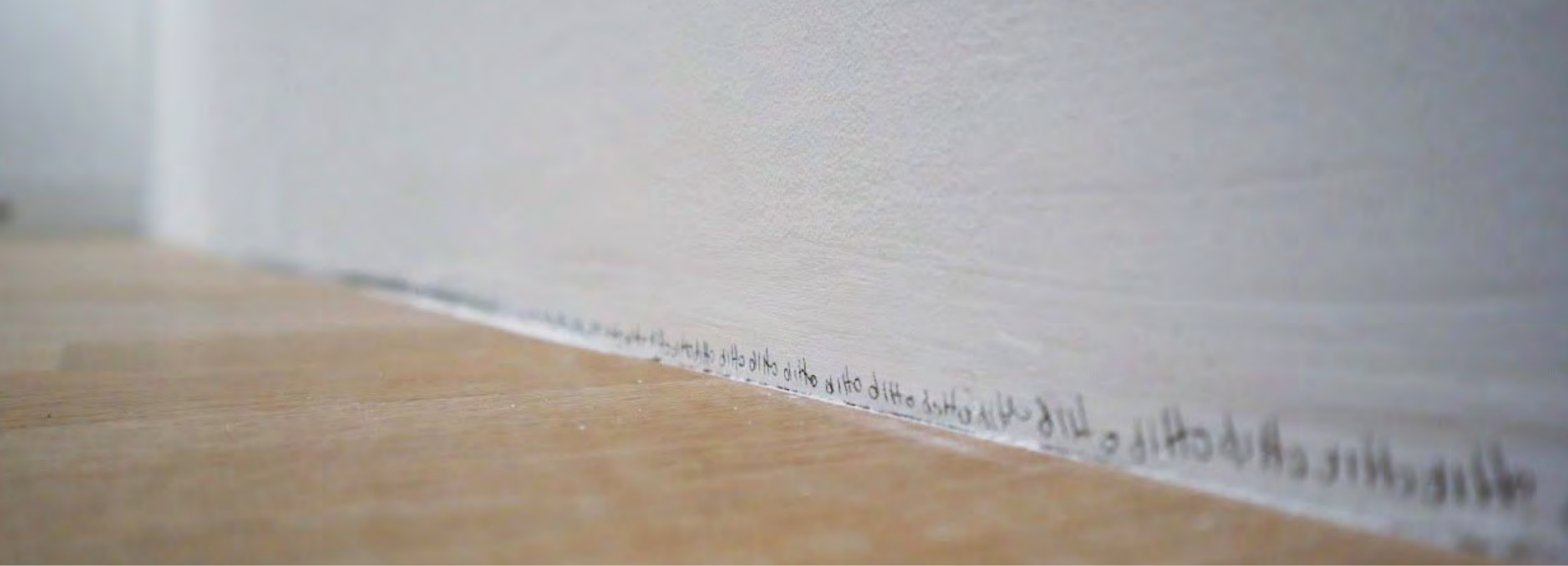
Acrylic and tempera on canvas
15.7 x 11.8 in.



Detail







d. wright
(American, b. ∞)

ditto, 2021
graphite on walls
dimensions variable



