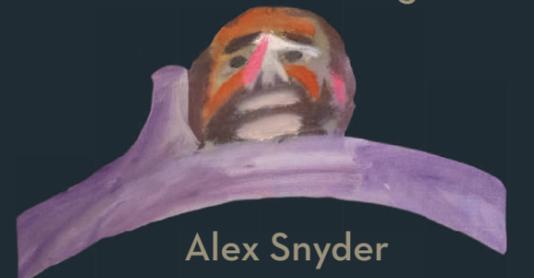

THE TROUT GALLERY
THE ART MUSEUM OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

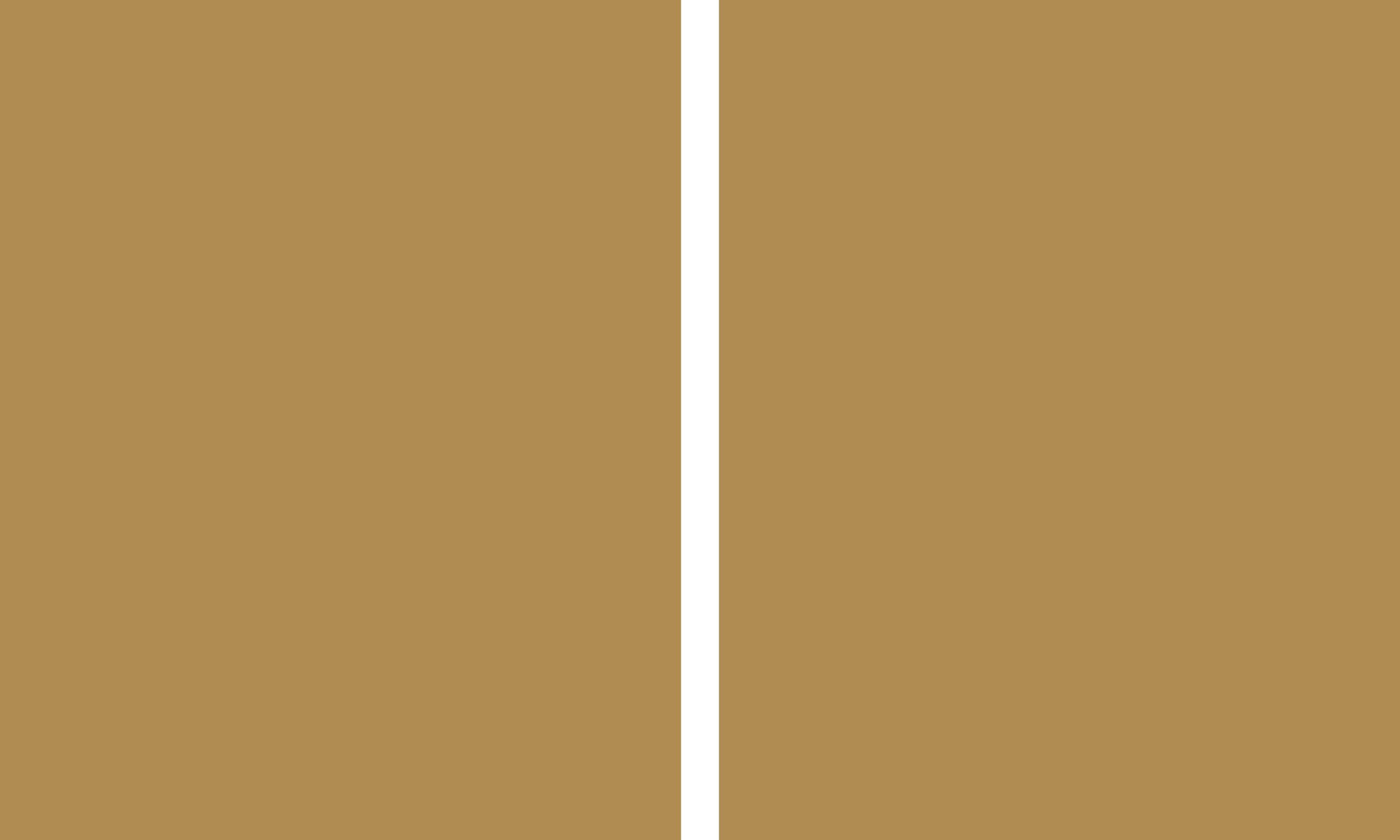


disparate items



SENIOR STUDIO MAJORS
THESIS EXHIBITION 2025





disparate *items*
SENIOR STUDIO MAJORS
THESIS EXHIBITION 2025

CAT ACOSTA

TRUDY CHUNG

MBHALI EDWARDS

LAILA GWATHMEY

SOPHIE HABECKER

GEOFFREY OGENRWOT

JOHN PARK

SOPHIE PHILLIPS

EMMA RIZZELLA-ROBERTS

ALEX SNYDER

dis·pa·rate i·tems

/'dispərət,də'sperət/ /'ɪdəms/

1. different sensory or cognitive responses arising from a single object or idea.
 2. the bases for thought and perception, which are integrated by the brain into wholes.
-

This cohort of senior studio art majors explores a range of materials and diverse subject matter, but when working together to come up with a title, they all found a connection to memory. Whether a memory of something abandoned, treasured, desired, missed, or uncertain, Cat Acosta, Trudy Chung, Mbhali Edwards, Laila Gwathmey, Sophie Habecker, Geoffrey Ogenrwot, John Park, Sophie Phillips, Emma Rizzella-Roberts, and Alex Snyder carefully considered their own processes and ideas connected to this theme during their yearlong senior seminar. As they created in their individual studios, the students would convene every week to critique with one another, collectively understanding that with their established trust they could provide crucial critical feedback to each other. 2025 has been a challenging year with disruptions and transitions that have brought instability to many in our communities, I am proud of the care and support these ten emerging artists have and continue to share with one another, from offering a helping hand, organizing trips, asking tough questions of each other's work, or just a friendly check in when they know someone is having a rough day. I have confidence that our ten graduates understand the value of building community and an artist's vital role working together and inspiring others to ask questions about our interconnected world.

Rachel Eng
Associate Professor of Art

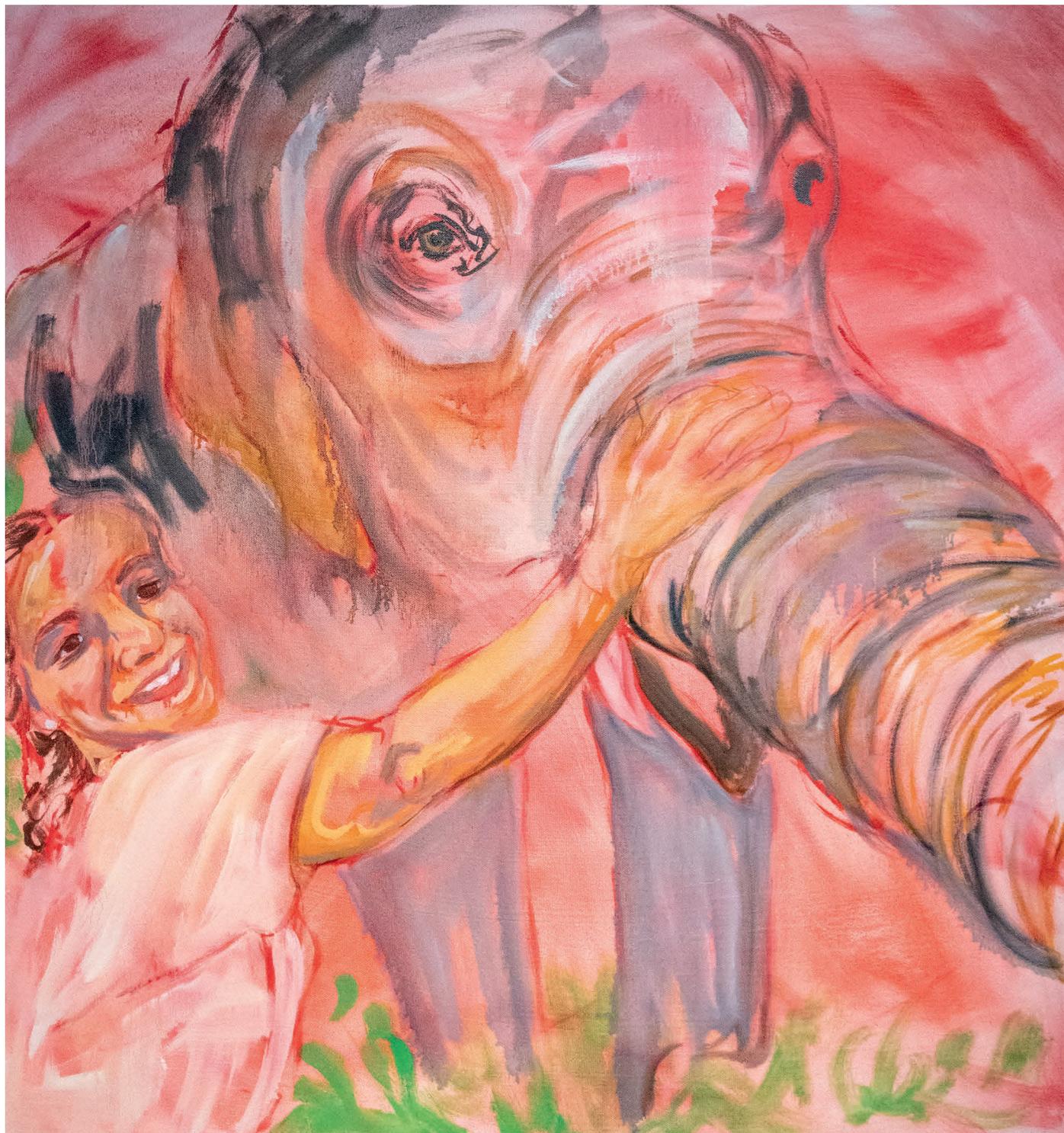


Cat Acosta

What are the different types of intimacy and how can they be explored through sentimental remembering? What new relationships are created when they are remembered and what meaning lies behind the elements that were not forgotten? These questions motivate my creating as I also draw inspiration from my personal connections and from sentimental memories of the past. The work I make consists of acrylic and oil paint on canvas, both exclusively from memory or with photographic references. These memories are not exclusively happy but represent the varied emotions that resonate with specific moments. I am inspired by a psychology theory called the priority-binding theory. According to this theory, when the brain recognizes an arousing stimulus an emotional reaction is experienced, which the brain will then prioritize the binding mechanisms between key information and background information. This means that in remembering emotional memories, the central/key emotional information forms a stronger bond with the outside details, allowing a more complete recall of the event due to the emotional attachment. In my work, I focus on emotionally driven memories which I work through remembering during the process of painting, but I also allow them to be freely adapted to show what elements are more or less important to my recall. Some interactions between forms and figures have clarity, while others are distorted through drips and faded colors.

I contrast the importance of portraying a specific moment versus a specific feeling through the cropping of the composition and viewpoint. In the paintings where I reference photographs, I become aware of how my relation to the imagery of my childhood is more representative of my nostalgia and current relationship with the figures rather than my real, remembered feelings. I reflect on how abstract representations function in situations where I know what happened in a memory, but don't remember experiencing it. In my paintings, I use thin layers of paint to build the foundation of the composition and the figures, but at times use thicker paint to add texture to details for emphasis.

My paintings aim to be fully involved with the emotionality and curiosity of the subject rather than how blended or realistic the figures look themselves. However, when I choose to only use oil paint, it allows the medium to freely flow and interact with itself across the canvas, in drips or unintentionally mixing colors, and provides a more blurred recollection of the memory being painted. I use bright colors as well as gestural lines and shapes within the figures to build the figure transparently, leaving some areas more rendered than others to allow the viewer to connect to their own interpretations. I am inspired by artists Jennifer Packer and Jordan Casteel because of Packer's use of color, figural emphasis and line work, as well as Casteel's approach with color and organic gestures to build the features of the figures.



Mama
2025
oil on canvas
30 x 30 in.

Not So Little Anymore

2024

oil on canvas

28 x 28 in.



Being A Princess

2024

oil and acrylic on canvas

30 x 28 in.

Cherry Popsicles

2025

oil on canvas

12 x 16 in.





Her First Beach Day

2025

oil on canvas

32 x 30 in.



Trudy Chung



I hand build small ceramic objects, typically in multiples which then take form in an installation. Clay is very malleable and can be easily manipulated into a wide array of animal-like forms and allows me to create imaginary creatures. One of the oldest ceramic sculptures, the *Venus of Dolní Věstonice*, is an abstracted figure of a body with little detail. Emphasis is only given to specific desired features of the body. My sculptures are not representative of existing animals, but they give suggestions of distinguishing features of organisms found in nature. Most of my forms are reminiscent of birds. I start with the desired form, and as I make more of them, they start to gain features that set them apart from the rest. They gain tails and become more fish like or form ears and become more like mice. Sometimes they are depicted in an in-between stage like they are in the middle of mutating. Playing with the way the objects are displayed has been important in distinguishing separate groups and questioning how we as humans categorize objects and living beings. At what point does a defined group with its own specific features start to transition into another? The variety of imaginary animal-like forms I create starts to fill the gaps between them with mutations.

I am inspired by artists M.C. Escher for his animal transformations and Clare Twomey's interactive ceramic sculptures. The interactive nature of my work is also important in allowing the viewer to pick up and examine these handheld pieces. I believe that this encourages people to take a closer look at the individual nuances and differences with each piece. People can see how from afar a group of animals might look similar but up close, they are their own individuals. My process of making each by hand versus using a mold speaks to the human touch being connected to each piece. I aim to show how as a collective, many things that look the same can be easily grouped together, but upon a closer look, individual objects reveal their own personalities.



Hearing

2025

stoneware clay with glaze

7 x 4 x 2 in.

Sheep

2025
stoneware clay
with glaze
5 x 2 x 4 in.

*Sleeping Bread*

2024
stoneware clay
with glaze
10 x 7 x 4 in.

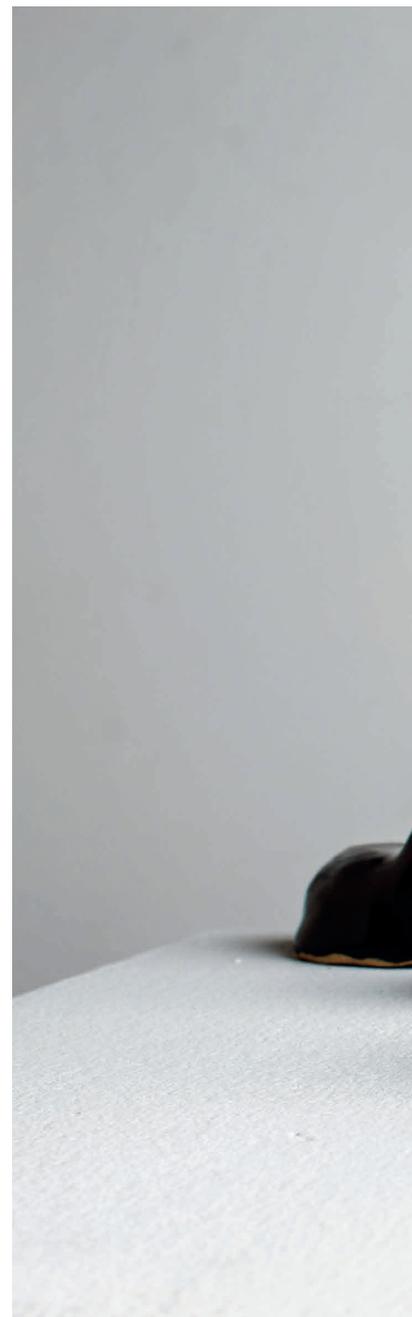


Pointing

2025

stoneware clay with glaze

5 x 2 x 2 in.





In line

2025

stoneware clay
with glaze

12 x 9 x 2 in.



Mbhali Edwards

As an Afro-Caribbean artist who lives in the United States, I grew up feeling frustrated and disconnected from the art world that predominantly celebrated Eurocentric ideals. I was taught to revere the mastery of white and Western artists, but I rarely saw any representation of artists of color, especially those from the Black and Caribbean communities. The Eurocentric beauty standards that have historically dominated art history left me questioning the narrative of what true beauty is, especially in relation to my own identity. I sought to create a space where Afrocentrism, Caribbean identity, and the Black body could be celebrated and illuminated.

My work aims to create an artistic universe that rejects these limiting standards and instead, honors the unfiltered beauty of Blackness. I focus on figures that are dauntless and commanding, calling viewers to stand face-to-face with their unyielding presence. Through my ceramic sculptures, I depict Afro-Caribbean mythological creatures, spirits, and deities, with an emphasis on celebrating traditional scarification, body modification, and the beauty of textured hair. I see these practices not as symbols of marginalization, but as acts of empowerment that reclaim the narrative of the Black and brown body.

Although I explore these themes in my paintings and illustrations, I am particularly drawn to ceramics and sculpture. When I feel the limitations of working in 2D on paper or canvas, sculpting gives me the freedom to bring my artistic ideas into a physical, tangible form. With my clay sculptures, I release the pressure of over-planning and embrace the creative process, trusting my ability to manifest my vision. While my paintings and drawings are more methodical and calculated, sculpture allows me to rely on my intuition, letting my hands guide me through each piece. There's something deeply liberating and exciting about bringing my figures to life with my own two hands, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have this gift.

In my art, I seek to decolonize beauty standards, desexualize the Black and brown body, and carve out space for my Afro-Caribbean identity in a world that is often dominated by whiteness. I am inspired by the exceptionalism of artists including Kara Walker, Zanele Muholi, Wangechi Mutu, Vladimir Tretchkoff, Murjoni Merriweather, and Otto Neals, who have paved the way for Black and African diasporic art to be seen and valued. Through my work, I continue to explore, challenge, and celebrate the beauty and complexity of Blackness, both in its traditional and contemporary forms.





The Enchantress

2025

ceramic, gold paint

24 x 11 x 11 in.



TOP

*Anansi's
Consequence*

2024
ceramic, gold
paint
8 x 16 in.



BOTTOM

Mama Dleau

2024
ceramic, gold
paint
8 x 10 x 8 in.





Nkuma Kese

2024

various fabrics, pompoms,
plastic gems, polyphil

45 x 20 x 6 in.



The Atmospheric

2025

oil on canvas

32 x 30 in.

Laila Gwathmey

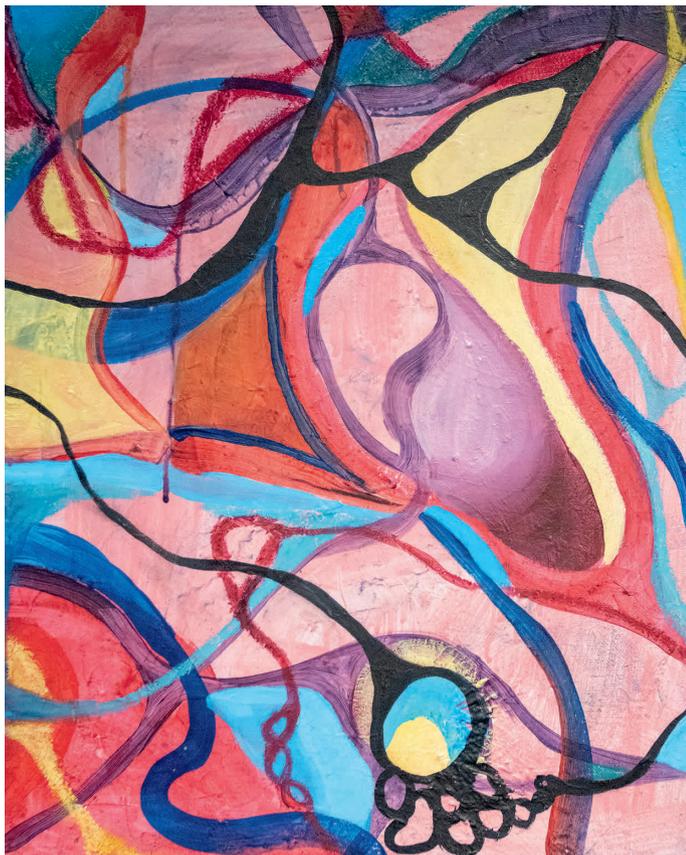
In my work I use oil and acrylic paint on paper or canvas to explore the connection between the natural world and humanity. I use an abstracted process of creating that is fluid and instinctive, where I allow my hands to respond intuitively to the color, shape, and lines as I am working.

My interest in nature comes from growing up on a farm. As a child I had the freedom to roam, giving me a unique sense of autonomy. It allowed me to have a less structured way of moving through the world compared to that of a city scape, and encouraged exploration and a direct relationship with nature. Nature became not just something that is outside, but something I feel a part of.

My art is deeply rooted in the repetitive patterns and rhythms that echo throughout the natural world. I am inspired by the way nature organizes itself into intricate systems that often mirror one another. For example, tree branches spreading outward resembles the blood vessels in our own bodies—both serving as systems of nourishment. Similarly, the neural pathways in our brains, which transmit information throughout our body, parallel the underground networks of mycelium roots, connecting ecosystems and facilitating growth. Beyond these examples, I am drawn to the broader patterns of fractals with seemingly endless examples in river networks, tree branching, lightning, and the branching of bronchi and bronchioles in the lungs. I believe these recurring patterns are invisible threads of connectivity, a physical form of humanities interconnectedness with nature which constantly inspires and informs my work. Yet, each piece takes on its own identity, evolving as a conversation between the decisions I make at each stage.

I am inspired by artist Joanne Greenbaum for her abstraction and bold use of color, whose approach to making resonates with mine. I am also drawn to painter Gustav Klimt because of his repetitive use of patterns and similar conceptual ideas. These artists' works encourage me to embrace spontaneity while thinking about the layers of meaning that can be hidden in a piece, and how to convey deeper concepts, such as growth, connection, and transformation from repetition in patterns. By exploring these themes I invite others to connect more deeply with the world around them and in return themselves.



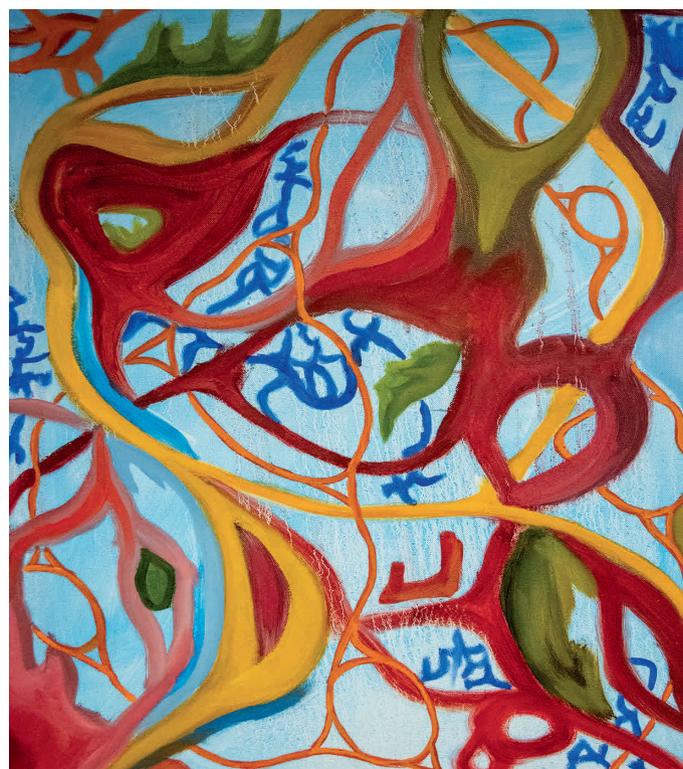


Papillion

2024
acrylic on canvas
10 x 14 in.

Metamorphosis

2024
oil on canvas
28 x 40 in.



Syncopated

2024
oil on canvas
17 x 20 in.







Wall Flower

2025
oil on canvas
24 x 35 in.

The Trees Have Eyes

2025
oil on canvas
26 x 30 in.



Sophie Habecker

For me, the act of creation is an all-consuming obsession. Mediums, objects, and ideas possess me for a time, driving my process forward. I am reactionary, responding intuitively to the material, my environment, current events, my relationships, and the work itself as it develops. This process allows me to explore themes of connection, communication, gravity, and the human form. I am inspired by the works of Alexander Calder for his precision in balance and form, by Bruce Nauman for his work with text and language, and by Senga Nengudi for her interactions with the body and inventive uses of material.

I am drawn to metals and other tactile materials that allow for physical engagement, substances I can bend, mold, carve, and manipulate with my hands. I work primarily in sculpture, using a range of mediums including bronze, steel, wood, plaster, wax, and found objects. The physicality of my process is integral to my practice. Working with metal, for instance, requires a balance of force and precision. Welding, grinding, and forging demand a deep understanding of the material's properties and limitations. Wax requires attention and dedication, drawing warmth from the hand to slowly soften and become workable. The wax sticks, embeds itself in the wrinkles of my hands, under my fingernails, in my clothes and hair. Another important part of my process is engagement with my peers. Collaboration and dialogue with my community fuel my creative process, helping me refine my concepts and push the boundaries of my practice. Working with a community of artists in Goodyear has been invaluable to my growth as an artist.

My sculptures take a range of forms, from the abstract to conceptual to figurative. I think about human connection and communication, what makes us hold onto one another, how emotions manifest in our interactions, and how external forces shape our personal and collective experiences. I am particularly interested in gravity, both as a physical force and as a metaphor for emotional and societal weight, how things are pulled down by it or find ways to defy it. I occasionally work with political themes, though more in the sense of the emotions that political actions draw from me rather than a direct commentary. Ultimately, my practice is about immersion, losing myself in the process, allowing the work to unfold organically, and embracing the unpredictability of creation. I do not always begin with a clear vision, rather, I follow where the materials and emotions lead me. The finished pieces are results of this journey, charged with the energy that shaped them.

Art, to me, is not just about the final product but about the experience of making, the conversation between artist and material, and the exploration of what it means to create.





Bust

2025

microcrystalline wax

13 x 17 x 6 in.



Bust (detail)

2025
microcrystalline wax
13 x 17 x 6 in.



tangles I and II

2025

welded steel chain

Dimensions variable

tangle I

2025
welded steel chain
28 x 18 x 40 in.



tangle II

2025
welded steel chain
26 x 22 x 40 in.

My work is a reflection of my world, shaped by my experiences of living between two completely different realities. I explore the contrast between my upbringing in Uganda and my present life in the United States, among people of different ethnicities, making sense of this duality. Over the years, I have developed my practice, initially working with acrylic paint before transitioning to oil paint. I love the flexibility oil paint provides—its ability to capture light and shadow, its richness in color, and the ease with which it allows for layering and expression.

My work draws inspiration from movies, TV shows, photographs, the history of painting, and imagination. Film and television offer powerful moments that linger—scenes of deep emotion, striking facial expressions, characters emerging from shadow into dramatic lighting, and unforgettable moments of love or sorrow. I believe everyone has a scene that has moved them, and my work revolves around capturing that emotional weight while connecting past and present. I explore the sociological and psychological changes within my own transition between cultures, traditions, values, and beliefs, creating a symbiotic relationship between them.

Expression to me is the most profound form of communication—the true essence of our being. Through body language, facial expressions, and the smallest nuances in eye movement, we can sense someone’s state of mind. My work is deeply rooted in figuration and gesture, aiming to evoke emotion through the use of dramatic lighting. I am especially inspired by the Romantic masters—Francisco Goya, Eugène Delacroix, J.M.W. Turner, and Henry Fuseli. Among them, Delacroix remains my greatest influence. His paintings radiate passion, with his dynamic figures and violent landscapes brought to life through energetic brushstrokes.

In my own paintings, I strive to capture that same raw emotion. Through intense and magnificent lighting, I aim to capture a visceral reaction, immersed in drama, tension, and the beauty of specific scenes or memories. My work is ultimately about bridging worlds, making sense of identity, and expressing the emotions that define our shared human experience.



Geoffrey Ogenrwot





The Last Drive

2025
oil on canvas
14 x 16 in.

Silent Witnesses

2025
oil on canvas
14 x 20 in.





Echoes of Her

2025

ceramic

5 x 4 x 15 in.



Shared Silence

2025

ceramic

18 x 9 x 14 in.



Worn Soul

2025

ceramic

9 x 9 x 14 in.

My work is an exploration of how color, material, and spatial engagement transform the way we see. I am fascinated by the transformative power of light and color, and oil paints' rich color and creamy texture allows me to examine the relationship between observer and subject. My work balances an analytical approach—where each brushstroke functions as a “data point”—with an intuitive, emotional response to the seen world.

I work in a variety of approaches from still life to abstraction. Artists Salman Toor, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Richard Diebenkorn inspire the way I push the expression of color to reveal representation to exist beyond its form. Rather than being fixed to surfaces, color moves, interacts, and transforms through a course of events. I am driven by questions such as: how does a hyper-saturated orange differ from a muted ochre? And, how does an unusual juxtaposition of hues disrupt the generalized perception of color?

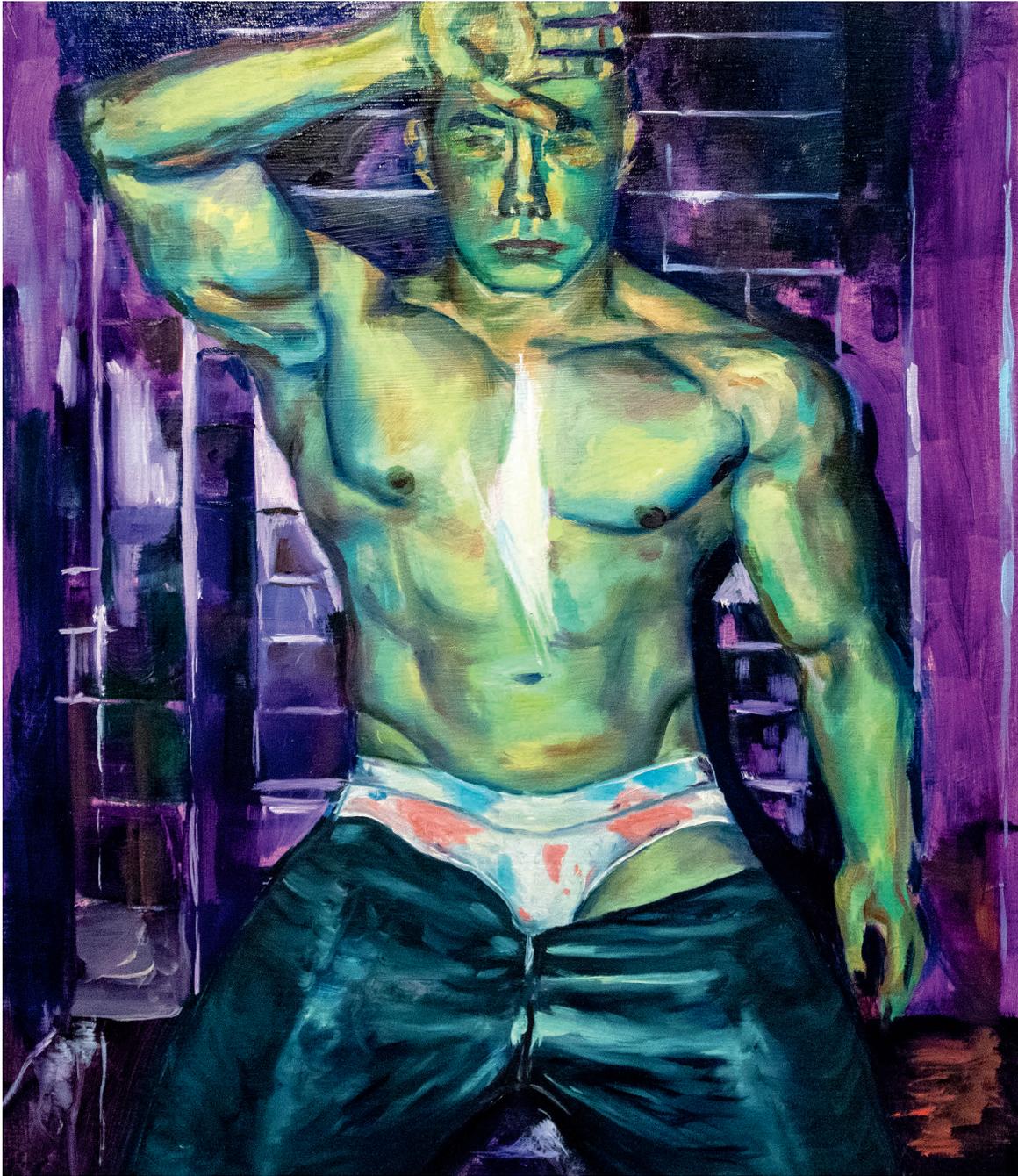
My work investigates the effects of light on objects and spaces, particularly in dimly lit environments that invite introspection and flow. I begin each piece with a geometric structure, dividing space through color. As light interacts with surfaces, I explore relationships between depth, temperature, and energy, allowing my subconscious intuition to shape the composition. I apply layers of color and wonder about the relationship with a new layer of paint to discover a new expression of color.

Over time, the dynamic role of light renders unseen colors and thus alters my perception of form and space. By looking beyond the functional and representational aspects of observation, I use my color palette to create a meaningful conversation with the subject matter of objects, figures, or landscapes, reacting to light.

John Park







Still Life #4

2025

oil on canvas

26 x 30 in.



Energy #2

2024
oil on canvas
20 x 28 in.



Still Life #1 (Sweet)

2025

oil on canvas

14 x 14 in.

Still Life #5

2025

oil on canvas

20 x 18 in.



Still Life #3

2025

oil on canvas

32 x 14 in.





Sophie Phillips

I am a ceramic artist working with a combination of wheel thrown and sculptural pieces. I draw inspiration for my work from the ceramic vases of the Arts and Crafts movement, which sought to combine functionality with decoration in the late nineteenth century. I am also inspired by artists Beatrice Wood, Keiyona Stumpf, Toru Kurokawa, and Barbro Aberg. My work is informed by the global tradition of functional ceramic vessels, which appear in nearly every culture. In my ceramic practice, I draw upon this tradition by working with wheel thrown vessels, which I disrupt through naturally inspired sculptural additions that impede or complicate the vessel's traditional form or function. Through these pieces, I aim to explore the interaction between ceramics and organic matter and, more broadly, humanity and the natural world.

I am inspired by ceramic vessels that have been uncovered from shipwrecks, discovered abandoned in woods, or been otherwise lost and altered by natural forces. Though these vessels are initially functional, nature's influence often transforms them until they appear sculptural. Through this process of natural reclamation, these lost pieces of human creation and community gain new life. In my work, the contrast between the symmetrical wheel thrown vessels and the organic forms interrupting and deteriorating them heightens the visual tension inherent in this process. Additionally, my pieces' muted yet variegated glazes reference the colors of the natural world, implying nature's influence over the vessels.



Weathering

2025

ceramic

6 x 6.5 x 9.75 in.

Fathom

2025

ceramic

9 x 6 x 11.5 in.





Adorned

2025

ceramic

9 x 7 x 8 in.



Rootbound

2025

ceramic

6.5 x 6.5 x 13 in.



Grounded

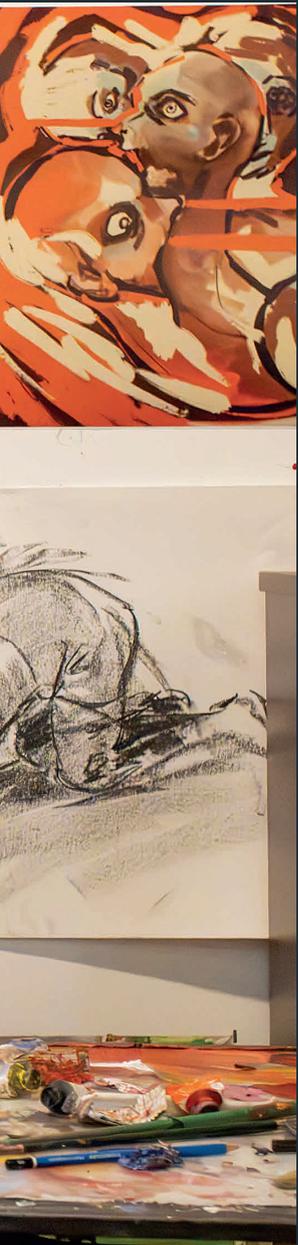
2025

ceramic

7.5 x 9.5 x 14.5 in.



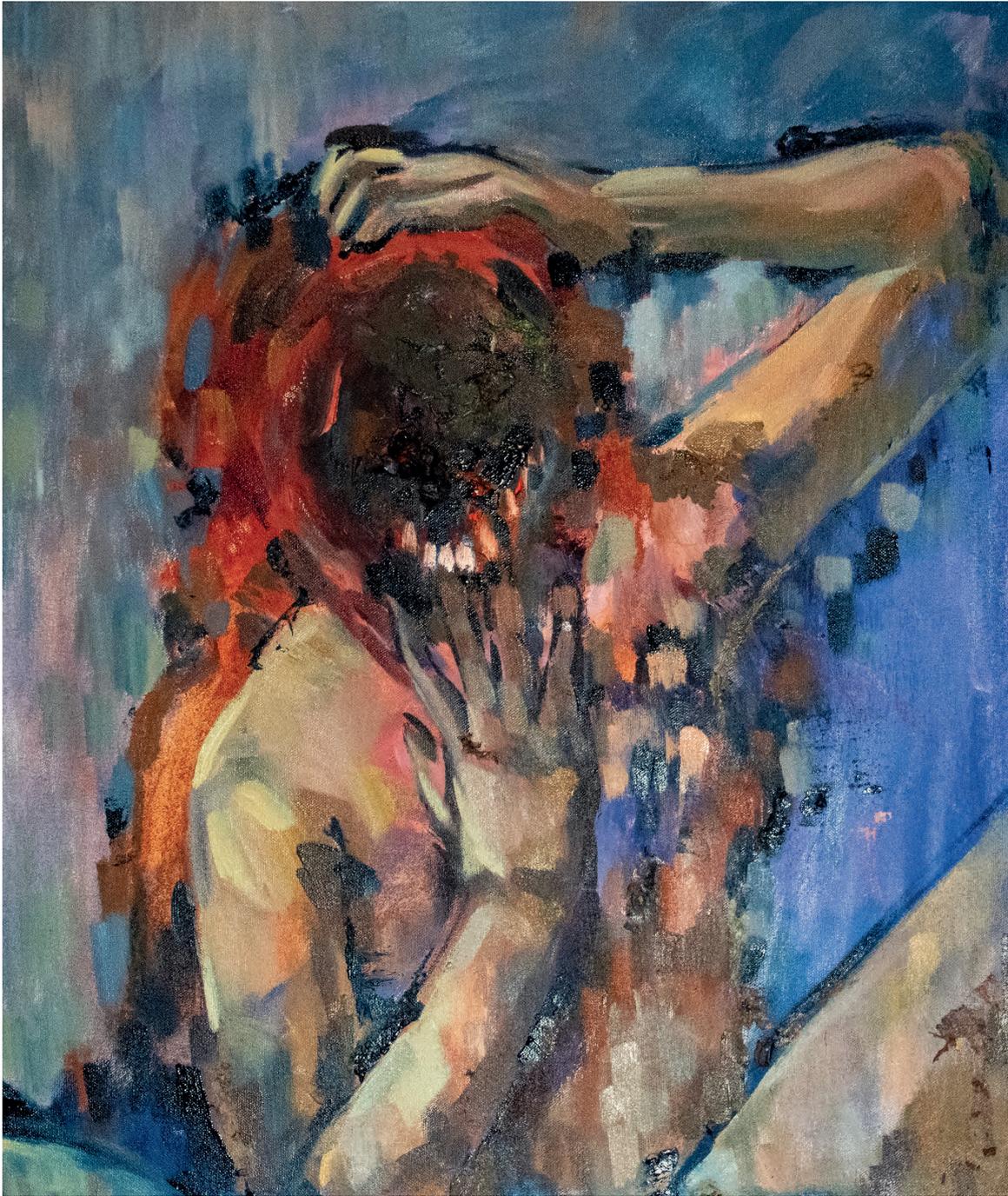
Emma Rizzella-Roberts



Each painting examines ways people are affected by purity culture. I want my work to discuss the mistreatment of feminine and queer individuals through visually grotesque and active figures. The bodily characteristics put focus on a state of vulnerability and the objectification of the body, regardless of if that objectification comes from an observer or is self-made. The current political climate of the United States has narrated a supposed vulgarity of womanhood and homosexuality that pushes fearmongering in American culture. In a time where one can feel angry and powerless, these paintings have become its own mode of protest.

The time I spent working on these paintings felt almost like undergoing an endless series of experiments, where I try to find the best way to answer the following questions. *How does this piece show vulnerability? Is there a better way of conveying the messages I want to illustrate? And how might these pieces affect the audience?* These issues are constantly on my mind when I approach vulnerability. My art process involves making collages to sketch out how I want the piece to look. The translation from collage to painting is interesting to observe as the final version loses the character of the initial collage. The medium I use is oil paint, which is slow to dry. It gives me more time to mold a form on the canvas. Additionally, I've used bodily works from artists, such as Peter Paul Rubens, Jenny Saville, Cindy Sherman and Marilyn Minter, as references for my work.

Moreover, I wish to discuss vulnerability through a dissection of mainstream purity culture. Purity culture has justified harm towards women but also has provided a means to justify femininity as a superior morality. Moreover, with the conclusion of the ruling *Dobbs v. Jackson Woman's Health* case in 2022, the dominant pro-life concerns do not improve the quality of life for the infant. If those leaning towards "pro-life" sentiments truly believed the fetus is a human being, then support for medical care, healthy food habits, safe housing, and paid maternity leave would best benefit infants and children. Finally, I want to also draw from queer experiences through the lens of horror. The horror genre has encouraged both negative and positive connotations around queerness, acting as both a means for catharsis and encouraging negative and violent responses from a heteronormative audience. Femininity and queer culture have a large overlap in terms of their contrasting relationships to mainstream western culture.



Silence is a Virtue

2025

oil on canvas

20 x 18 in.



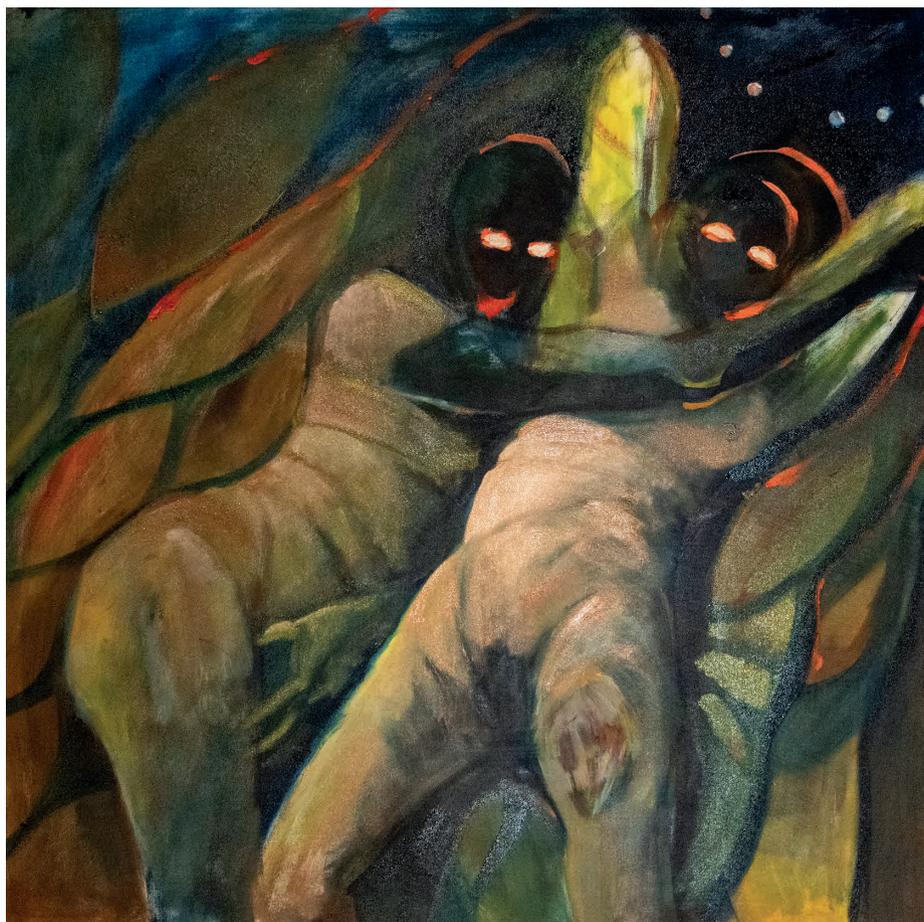
Nude Lipstick

2024

oil paint

18 x 18 in.





I Surrender

2024
oil paint
34 x 34 in.

Pervert!

2024
oil paint
20 x 18 in.

*Loved and
Tarnished*

2025
oil paint
24 x 24 in.





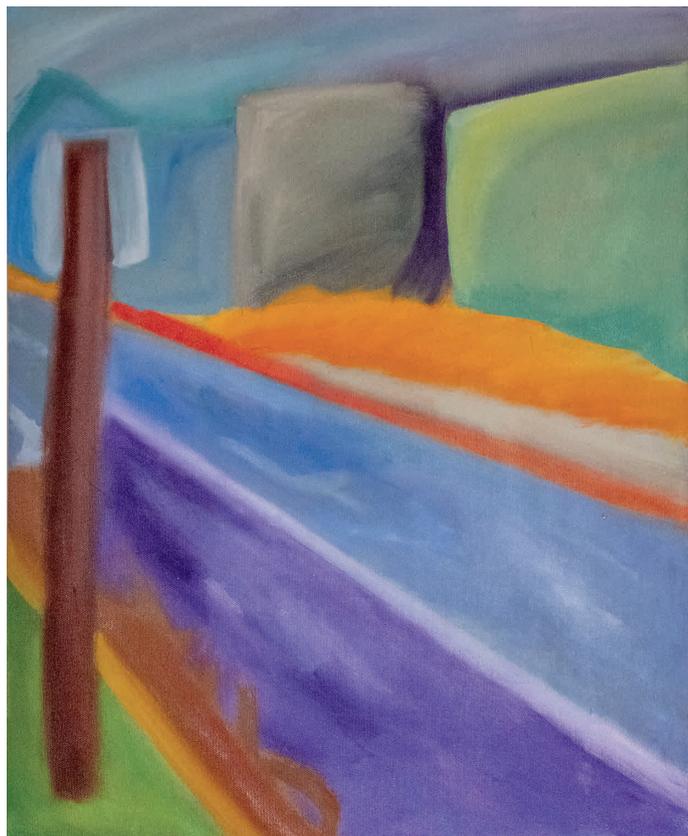
Alex Snyder

Oil painting is definitely my favorite medium. Although I have spent many years drawing, painting is something I don't think I ever want to stop doing in my future. The versatility of the medium and how unrestrictive it feels are the main reasons I am drawn to using it. I've found color is something I also absolutely adore, and I find myself perceiving very subtle bits of color all throughout the world.

My paintings tend to be of landscapes I see either in the moment or have captured through a photo. Landscapes contain essentially all color perceivable to the human eye, even if subtly, so I never find myself getting bored of painting them. I also paint abstractions, as I find it to be the opposite of landscapes in many ways; my landscapes are painted entirely from observation, and my abstractions are created entirely from the mind. I feel abstract paintings can allow one to express themselves in a way nothing else can.

Whenever I start a new piece, I usually sketch it out in a different color than I usually do to ensure variability, or I apply a ground to a painting, and then start right there. Either way, the sketching is always either the shortest, or sometimes the longest part of the creating process

I prefer works with a good variety of bright, vivid colors. For example, I am drawn to Claude Monet's paintings and Impressionist landscapes with colors that both blend together and yet still stand out from one another. I too enjoy the works of Giorgio Morandi and Paul Cézanne. Morandi uses much more subtle colors generally, but they still emerge in innovative ways in his uniquely abstracted still life compositions.

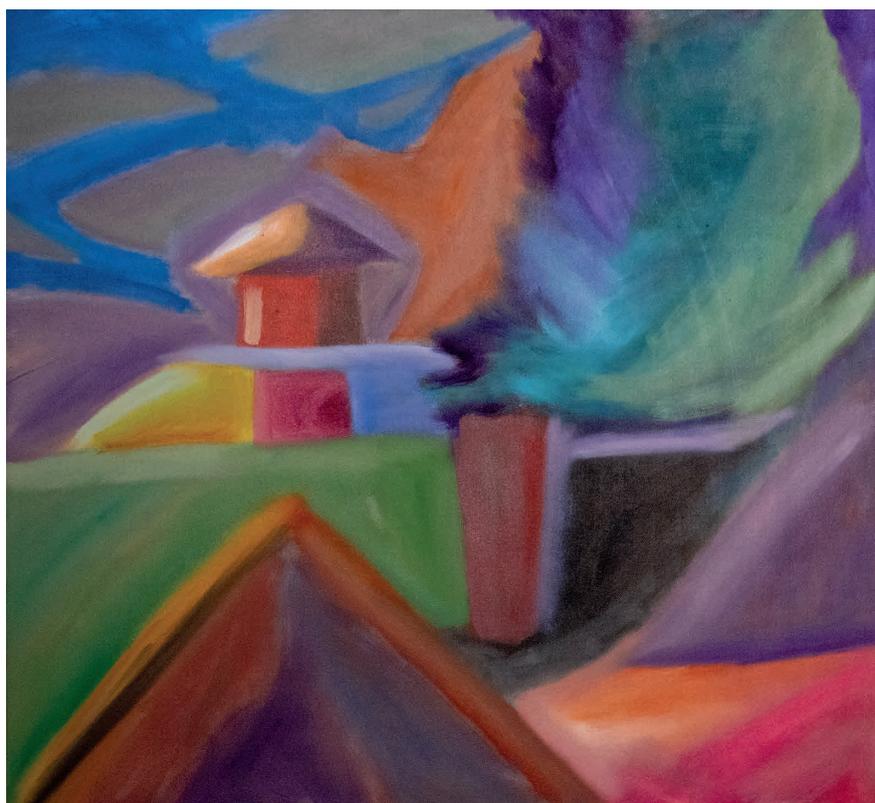


Fading Mind

2025

oil on canvas

16 x 20 in.



Carlisle Sky

2025

oil on canvas

26 x 24 in.

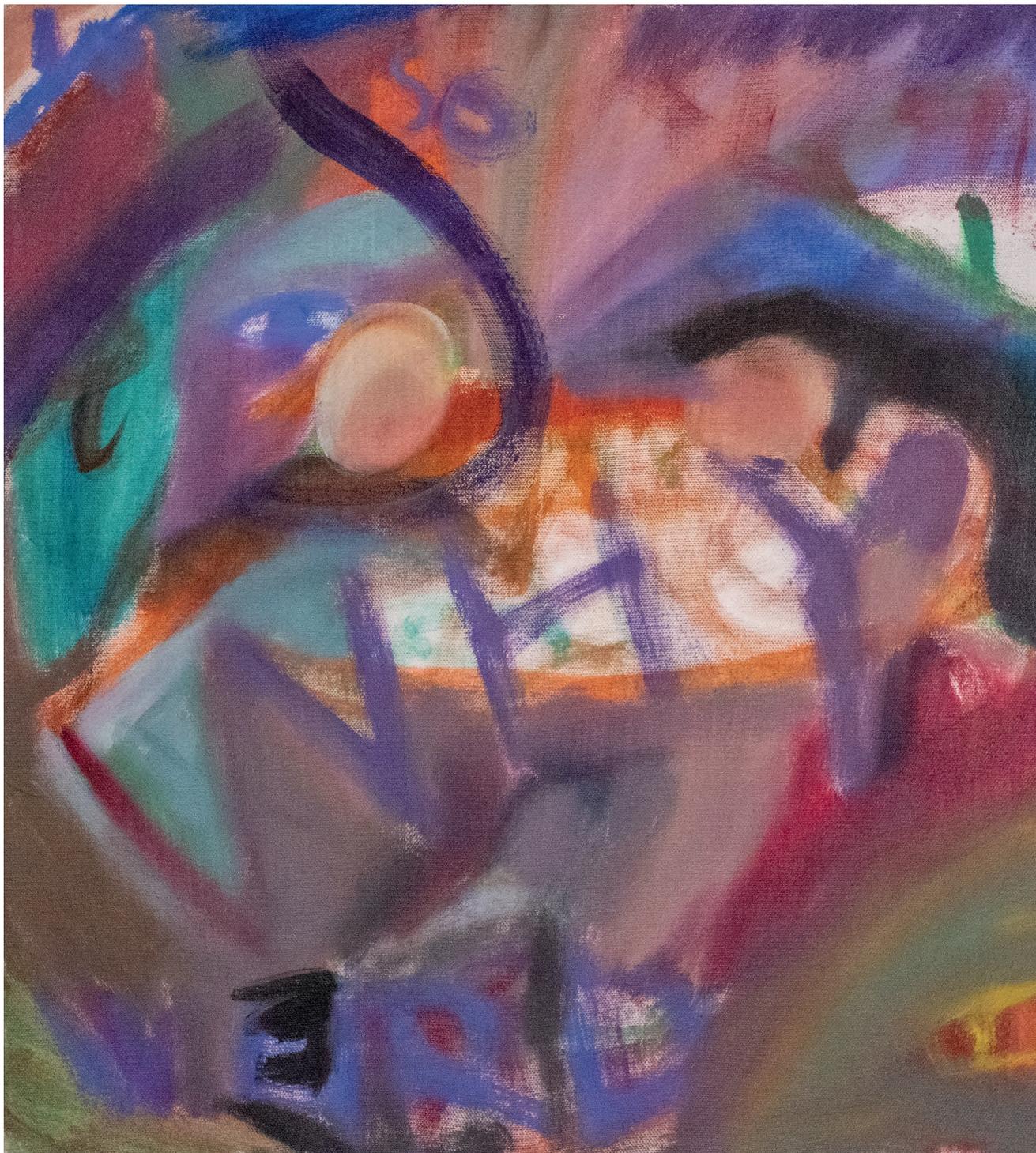


Rising

2025

oil on canvas

20 x 18 in.

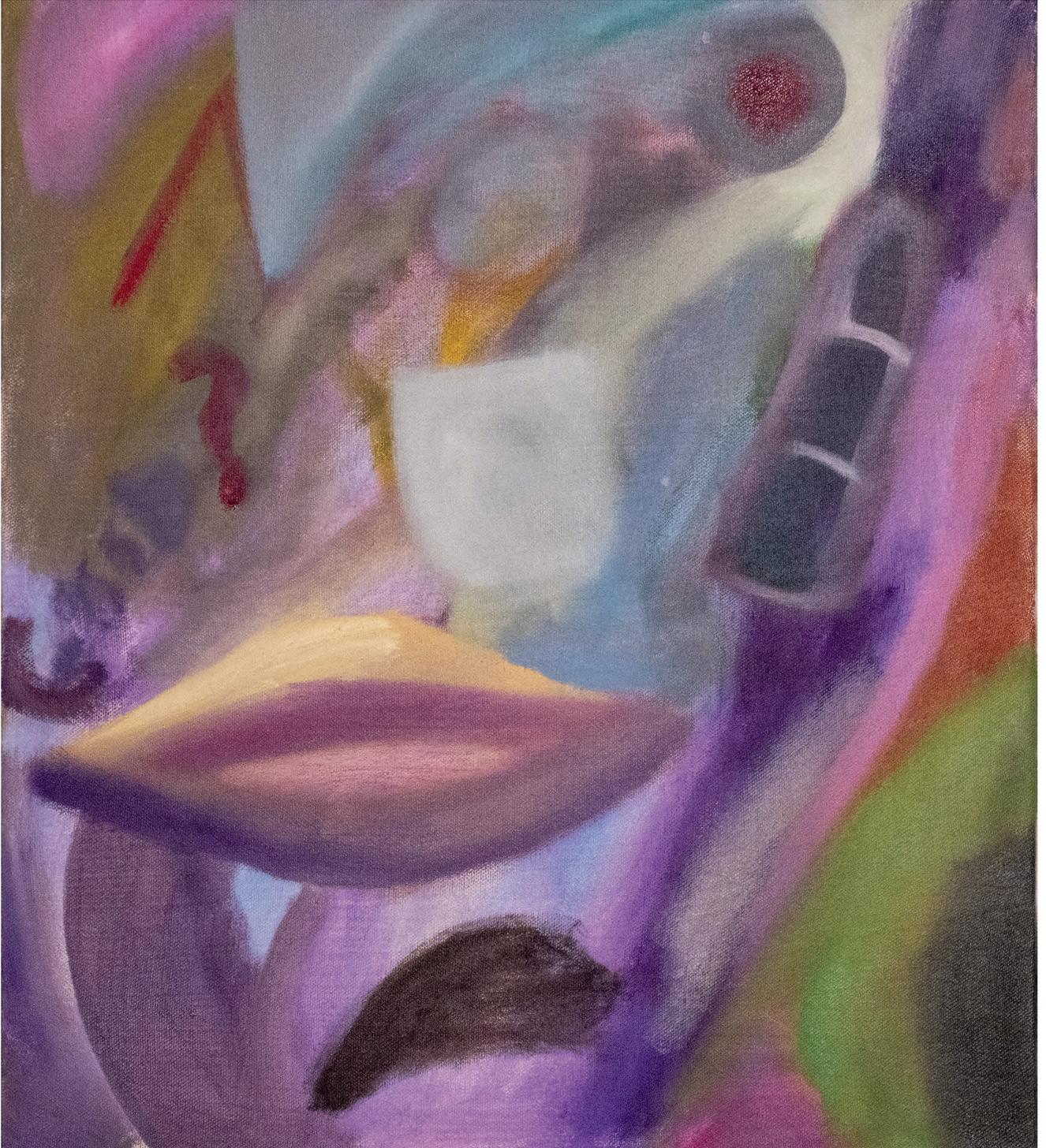


Present Day

2025

oil on canvas

16 x 18 in.



Thought/Vision

2025
oil on canvas
16 x 18 in.





disparate items: Senior Studio Art Majors 2025 Thesis Exhibition

April 18 – May 18, 2025

The Trout Gallery, The Art Museum of Dickinson College

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