



Melissa Joseph, *Kadankavil Family*, 1954, 2022
12 x 18 inches, inlaid stoneware, needle felted wool on industrial felt.
Courtesy of the artist.

Conflicting Truths
Works by Melissa Joseph

March 8 — April 8, 2023

Thursday, March 16

Artist's talk: 4:30 — 5:30 PM
Lang Performing Arts Center Cinema

List Gallery reception: 5:30 — 7:00 PM

Gallery hours

Tues. — Sun., 12:00 — 5:00 PM

Contact

listgallery@swarthmore.edu
phone: 610.328.7811

The List Gallery is pleased to present *Conflicting Truths: Works by Melissa Joseph*, March 8 — April 8, 2023. A lecture with the artist will be held on Thursday, March 16, 4:30 — 5:30 PM in the Lang Performing Arts Center Cinema. A reception will follow in the List Gallery from 5:30 — 7:00 PM. Gallery hours are Tuesday — Sunday, Noon — 5:00 PM. Melissa Joseph is the 2023 Marjorie Heilman Visiting Artist.

Melissa Joseph's textile-based practice synthesizes diverse processes and inspirations with her intuitive responses to archival images and found materials. Curated by Tess Wei, *Conflicting Truths* features wall-mounted, shallow relief, and sculptural artworks that highlight Joseph's exploration of varied media, including both wet- and needle-felted wool, raw dupioni silk, stoneware, and linen pulp. Her practice also incorporates strategies adapted from painting, sari draping, weaving, and even her parents' way of furnishing her childhood home.

Raised in rural Pennsylvania by her father, a surgeon who emigrated from Kerala, India, and her American mother, the artist's multicultural background is an integral theme throughout her practice. The subjects and settings represented in her work are often based on family photographs, particularly ones featuring her late father or relatives still living in India. As she considers such archival materials, Joseph engages with intersections of memory, identity, and space, carefully interrogating the complex relationships formed by diaspora.

Joseph's images and felted substrates coalesce in expressive and suggestive ways that generate important parallels between her conceptual and formal concerns. For example, the wet felting process can make her portraits appear distorted, elusive, or incomplete — an effect that implies commensurate changes in memory or identity. Embracing flux, her visual language often harmonizes seemingly opposed qualities, such as soft and firm, natural and industrial, expressionistic and realistic. Joseph's dynamic representations of her family encourage viewers to more broadly consider changing notions of relationships, space, and belonging.



Melissa Joseph in her studio.
Photograph by Alex Nuñez

Melissa Joseph was born in 1980 and grew up in St. Mary's, PA. She received a BA in Individualized Study from New York University in 2003, an associate's degree in Textile Surface Design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2006, and a Master's in Art Education from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2008. She was an art teacher to K–12 students for nearly a decade before pursuing an MFA at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 2018. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibition spaces, such as the New Art Dealer's Alliance, Miami, FL; the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City; Dieu Donn , NYC; Jeffrey Deitch, NYC; REGULARNORMAL, NYC; Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia; Bradley Ertaskiran Gallery, Montreal; Bravin Lee, NYC; Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ; The Delaware Contemporary, Wilmington, DE; Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ. Her forthcoming exhibitions include a group show at Bloom Gallery in Geneva Switzerland. Joseph was the winner of the Fleisher Art Memorial 42nd Annual Wind Challenge and a finalist for the Hopper Prize. She has been

awarded residencies by numerous organizations, including the Museum of Arts and Design, Greenwich House Pottery, the Archie Bray Foundation, Fountainhead Arts, Dieu Donn , Textile Arts Center Artist, and Chautauqua School of Art. Joseph's work has been written about and featured in *Hyperallergic*, *Architectural Digest*, CNN, *New American Paintings*, and *Maake Magazine*. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

Conflicting Truths: Works by Melissa Joseph, an accompanying exhibition catalog, and public events were made possible by the Marjorie Heilman Visiting Artist Fund and the Program of Art at Swarthmore College.