

Swarthmore Artists

2020

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List Gallery, Swarthmore College

This publication, *Swarthmore Artists: 2020*, celebrates the accomplishment of a remarkable cohort of ten graduating students who completed their thesis work while also confronting the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Usually, each April and May, senior art majors present solo thesis exhibitions in one of the List Gallery's two rooms. These exhibitions, consisting of twenty to thirty works produced during their senior year and a 20-page paper, represent their comprehensive examination in art. Mindful of this capstone experience, students spend their junior and senior years discovering and developing their personal aesthetic. The College provides senior majors with an individual studio space as well as a common area for critiques and informal dialogue. Students not only complete coursework in studio art and art history, but also take advantage of a variety of other learning opportunities, such as List Gallery exhibitions, lectures, critiques, and workshops; grants for summer study or research; and resources such as Swarthmore's MakerSpace. In addition to their independent studio work, many of the students profiled in this publication pursued concentrations or double majors in other disciplines, including computer science, biology, math, and environmental studies. As a result, many of them developed interdisciplinary practices and explored the role of art in changing social, historical, and environmental contexts.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Swarthmore's art majors have been adapting their creative practices to dramatically different circumstances. Completing their theses during a global crisis required an entirely new order of tenacity, outside-the-box thinking, and resourcefulness. Although the following pages offer just a sampling of their larger bodies of work, this publication honors the artists' extraordinary accomplishment. In addition, the Department of Art and Art History made the decision to postpone rather than cancel their culminating exhibitions, inviting these graduates of 2020 to return to campus when it reopens and exhibit in List Gallery belatedly, as alumni artists.

Swarthmore is celebrated for many things, but its greatest resource is its students. This year's graduating majors grew up in places as different as Nepal, Vancouver, Southern California, Maryland, Hawaii, and New York City. They have not only shared ideas and learned from each other, but also inspired us through their creative trajectories. They have cultivated qualities that we especially need now, such as empathy, analytical rigor, inventiveness, and resilience. As many of us experience the constraints of quarantine, they make our world larger.

With appreciation,

Department of Art and Art History faculty and staff
May 2020

Aayushi Dangol

Central to my artistic practice is a commitment to understanding the histories of women in my community. I explore what it means to grow up female when your identity has already been imagined by societal and patriarchal interpretations. Through painting, I aim to create a space for play, self-reflection, empowerment, and healing. My paintings combine natural, synthetic, and imagined spaces. By piecing together layers of plywood, paper, and oil paint, my goal is to depict a vast inner world of thoughts and emotions and to evoke a sense of freedom and expansiveness.

My process also involves negotiation between what looks interesting and what feels right. I find myself asking various questions. Are the individual pieces communicating or isolated from one another? What is the relationship between the positive and negative spaces, and how are the colors contributing to such spaces? I rely heavily on my instincts and listen to my body. I try to be aware of sensations, such as muscular tension, and a desire to move further away from or closer to a particular shape or color. Picking up on these cues has contributed a lot to my process. I have learned to trust my gut and realize that my body knows what my mind has not processed yet.



Talamh, oil on panel, 48 x 24 inches, 2020



Unreel, oil on panel, 48 x 24 inches, 2020

Isabella Fiorante

I have been drawn to photography for nearly a decade. My current practice focuses on capturing images that appear both particular and universal.

During my early years at Swarthmore, I focused primarily on street photography and created a series of images of Philadelphia-area street scenes. I was most drawn to candid images of other people. However, I hesitated to invade others’ privacy and created a series of self-portraits before shifting my focus more towards the spaces people inhabit.

Since the pandemic required me to return home, my compositions have become even more attuned to ephemeral phenomena that often escape notice. I have become preoccupied by the way the antique window panes in my house cast warbled shadows that reveal the unique texture of the glass. I have become invested in how close-up images of bed sheets, couches, and flooring can capture the fleeting effects of light to suggest something other than everyday furniture: a rushing water stream, or an aerial view of a landscape.

When I was focusing primarily on street photography, I thought frequently of Henri Cartier-Bresson’s “decisive moment,” which highlighted the need for constant attentiveness as one searches for compelling, but ephemeral, imagery. During this period of isolation, I have become even more attuned to the fleeting effects of light that must be captured before they vanish.



Untitled, digital photograph, 2020



Untitled, digital photograph, 2020

Abigail Goodman

My recent work has centered around an evolution of shape and shadow. I use different textures to enhance form and create the illusion of clay imitating the airiness of other materials. While the eye may see a cloth, our mind knows it is hardened clay, and I enjoy playing with this dissonance and confusion. I have always subconsciously been attracted to making ceramic pieces that are sensual and inviting, and I like viewers to feel the need to touch the art. As a major in art and minor in biology and art history, my pieces often incorporate a combination of ideas, such as the balance between a piece appearing solid yet simultaneously living. Parts of my work are often influenced by the movement of organisms. My glazes are only used to compliment the form of a piece. These pieces remain unglazed to showcase the details that would be erased with a glaze.



Pre-shrunk, ceramic slab, 12 x 11 ½ x 2 ¾ inches, 2019



Silk, ceramic slab, 7 ½ x 7 ½ x 3 inches, 2019

Libby Hoffenberg

My studio work focuses primarily on depicting the figure, and the space near/around the figure. This interest carries into my special honors major on the history and philosophy of the body, which has culminated in an honors thesis on the abstraction from the body in healthcare. In representing and thinking the body, I use abstraction and collage to center the relationship between the figure and its environment. While this figure is most often the human body itself, I also regard my non-figurative work as related to the body. We use our bodies to know the world, as they become metaphors for understanding what is outside us. In my painting, as well as my writing, I seek to call attention to the space where inner and outer worlds meet.



Tesnota, mixed media, 28 x 28 inches, 2020



Birthday Roses, mixed media, 12 x 17 inches, 2020

Kennedy Kings

My observational oil paintings explore the dissonance between our observed surroundings and our constructed thoughts about the environment. My imagery emerges from the views and objects that I encounter in my day-to-day life. When I engage with these subjects, I try to lead viewers to consider the ways that observation is informed by memories, associations, and experiences. The compositions invite a viewpoint that is evocative of how we might move through the world rather than frame a vista.

I am conscious of the fact that representations of the natural environment often force a dichotomy between the natural world and human activity. Instead of distinguishing between spoiled and unspoiled places, my work accepts this entanglement. I juxtapose human-made objects with natural ones within a rhythmically harmonious composition to elicit a sense that these seemingly disparate subjects can be congruent.

My interest in refuting a romantic notion of the environment and being receptive to the complexities of an observed and lived experience stems from my upbringing in Southern California, a place not known for its seasonality. There, I found that seasons were determined by a personal experience rather than a culturally- or socially-constructed one. For example, leaves changing color to indicate the start of fall wasn't something that I encountered. Instead, the incessant caws of a flock of escaped, non-native parrots migrating back to a neighbor's walnut tree signaled this seasonal change. This awareness fundamentally informs my inclination towards including elements like outlets, fixtures, and construction equipment that might otherwise be deemed too quotidian or inappropriate for beautiful landscapes. The authentic infrastructure of our lives gives us a place to relate our personal narratives back to. My hope is to prompt viewers to reconcile their internalized narratives with the empirical measures of the built environment.



Exit Sign, oil on canvas, 30 x 36 inches, 2020



Roots, oil on canvas, 18 x 24 inches, 2020

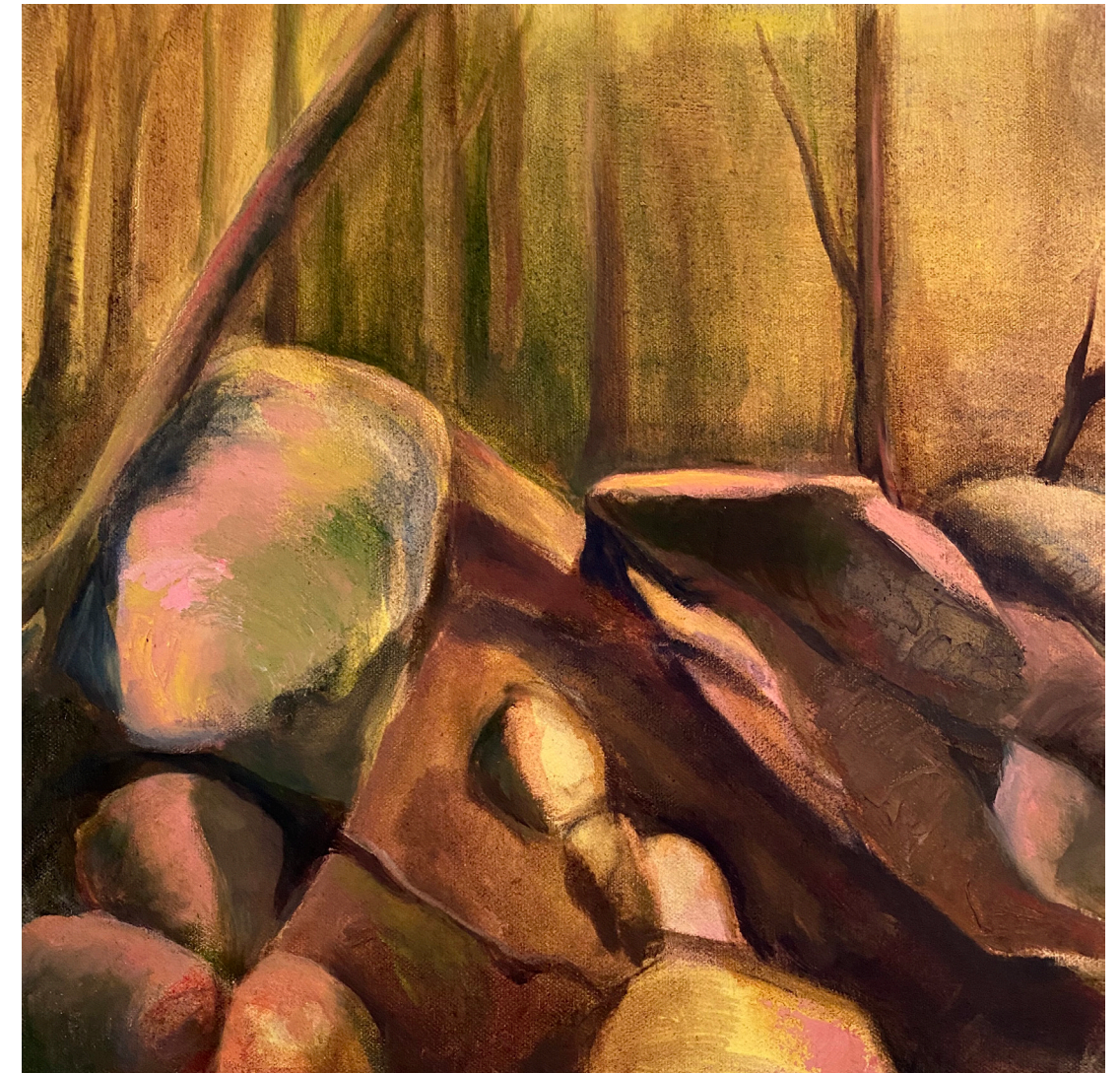
Isabel Llosa

I seek to interpret the landscape I am in, not to describe it. For me, returning to a place day after day at the same time of day, absorbing a place, and distilling the feeling of being in that place into my canvases, is a kind of meditation. I am drawn to Alligator Rock in Swarthmore's Crum Woods because it inspires in me a sense of both timelessness and transiency. I am fascinated by the way rocks and trees occupy time and space and the interplay between descriptive textured marks and soft, elusive atmosphere. Such images and relationships evoke a vast internal experience as well as the beauty of the outer landscape.

I use color and tone to emphasize the sculptural qualities of rocks and trees and soften or harden their edges to indicate a sense of solid nearness or distant obscurity. Color and saturation evoke the scene's temporality, shown through the sun-drenched surfaces of the rocks or the glowing golden atmosphere of the backgrounds. Trees emerge from this light, like shadowy phantoms of the subconscious.



Alligator Rock After Rain, oil on paper, 6 ½ x 6 ½ inches, 2020



Alligator Rock in Afternoon Light, oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches, 2020

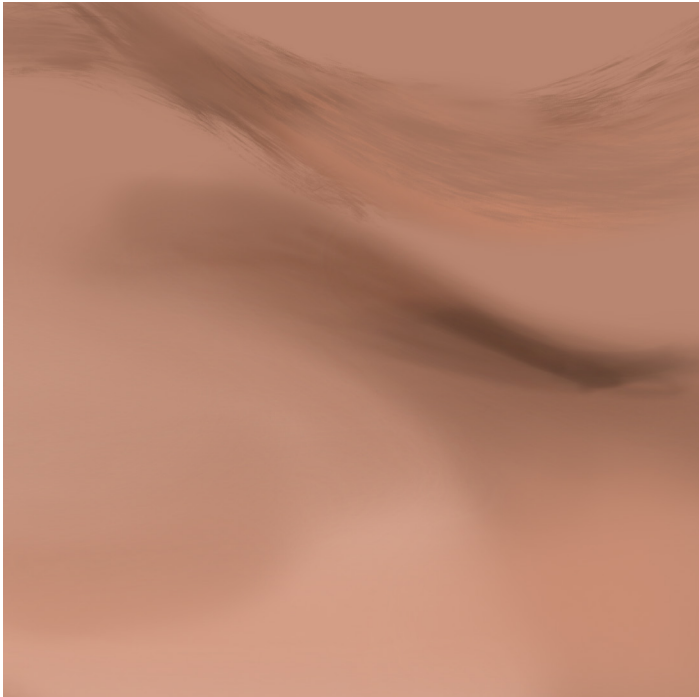
Nicholas Mayo

I wonder what inner lives clouds could have. I wonder what the quiet soul of a wave holds. There is likely nothing there, likely just winds and water, atoms and gravitation, quarks and dark matter. I am fascinated by forces like these—the moon on ocean, fire on earth.

I try to hold the world in my eye like this: preciously and hopefully, remembering the sea breeze carries physics, and skin bends in the sun. Forms and possibility moving in and out of view, these images are imagined slices of cosmic collisions. These are tiny and tender explorations of elemental transformations.



Untitled, digital image, 2020



Untitled, digital image, 2020
Untitled, digital image, 2020

Oliver Steinglass

In what began with a series of interlocking geometric shapes, my work over the past year has become an ongoing exploration of space. I work in iterations. A simple idea is manifested in multiple forms, and each becomes a new path to be pursued along with its own series of questions. These questions are answered in groupings of sculptures. Each grouping shares a similar process, material, and form. Over the course of this exploration, I have created spatial distinctions with planes cutting through space at angles, thin lines exploring different three-dimensional forms in wire, and two-dimensional pieces that use color, shadow, and line. While the process, materials, and aesthetic of each grouping may differ, they all share the underlying logic of exploring space. This exploration has also been informed by the resources around me; I have used the laser-cutter and the woodshop, I have learned how to solder and weld. The materials I have had access to have also led my exploration. Wood, acrylic, wire, mesh, and steel have all played a role in influencing the physical solutions to various questions about space. Each piece that comes out of this process contains moments. Each moment leads to new ideas that create their own series of questions and challenges. As a result, this process is never-ending. I continue down one path until another one presents itself, sometimes returning to or drawing inspiration from an old path.



Levity, wood, acrylic, sekishu paper, 8 x 8 x ½ inches, 2019



Balance, steel, 9 x 8 x 6 inches, 2020
Wire works, wire, acrylic, 2 x 2 inches, 2019



Michael Thut

I am artistically inspired by a love of mathematics and a fascination with space. Studying studio art and mathematics at Swarthmore emboldened me to pursue each topic individually, while also encouraging the development of unique connections between the two. From these two obsessions, I have found architecture, woodworking, and geometry. These disciplines teach me to interpret the world and allow me to shape reality.

I believe that space holds power, and I find joy in reaching an understanding of the dynamic between people and space. When I begin to accurately understand this dynamic, I can mold the feeling a space emanates. My most recent work focuses on the human experience of time and space. I explore the intersection between art and architecture, encouraging people to interact with my work, not only by viewing it, but also physically—experiencing circulation through space, by way of artistic intervention.



Model I, mixed media, 10 x 12 x 28 inches, 2019



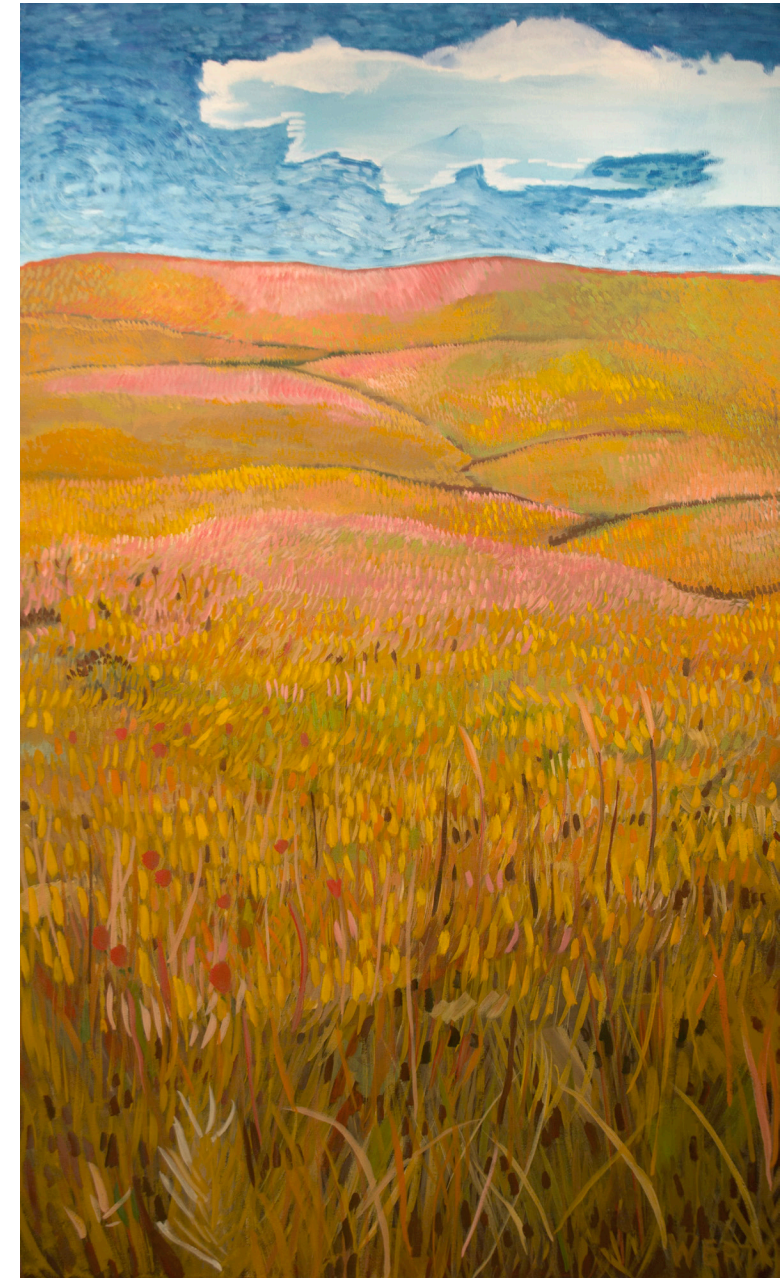
Model II (detail), entire work envisioned: 65 x 84 x 41 inches, aluminum, 2019

Brendan Werth

Painting allows me to explore and synthesize many areas of interest, from mythology, religion, and politics to robotics. As a double major in art and computer science, I have looked for ways to challenge false oppositions and explore the interconnections between animate and inanimate worlds. I paint a wide range of subjects, from hybrid figure/animal groups to imagined pre-historic scenes, as a way of emphasizing the fluidity between past, present, and future. Diverse musicians, from classical jazz composers to the Beatles, inform my interest in paintings that challenge conventions. I also take inspiration from artists such as Claude Monet, who responded to the tragedy of World War I by painting his *Weeping Willow* series. Such allegories help us understand individual experience in a much broader context.



The Swamp, oil on canvas, 32 x 38 inches, 2020



The West, oil on canvas, 68 x 42 inches, 2019

Swarthmore Artists: 2020 was published by the List Gallery, Swarthmore College.
Funding was made possible by the Ann Trimble Warren '38 Endowment
and the Department of Art and Art History, Swarthmore College.
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Editor: Andrea Packard

Design: Tess Wei
Printing: Brilliant, Exton PA

ISBN: 978-0-9993904-4-3

