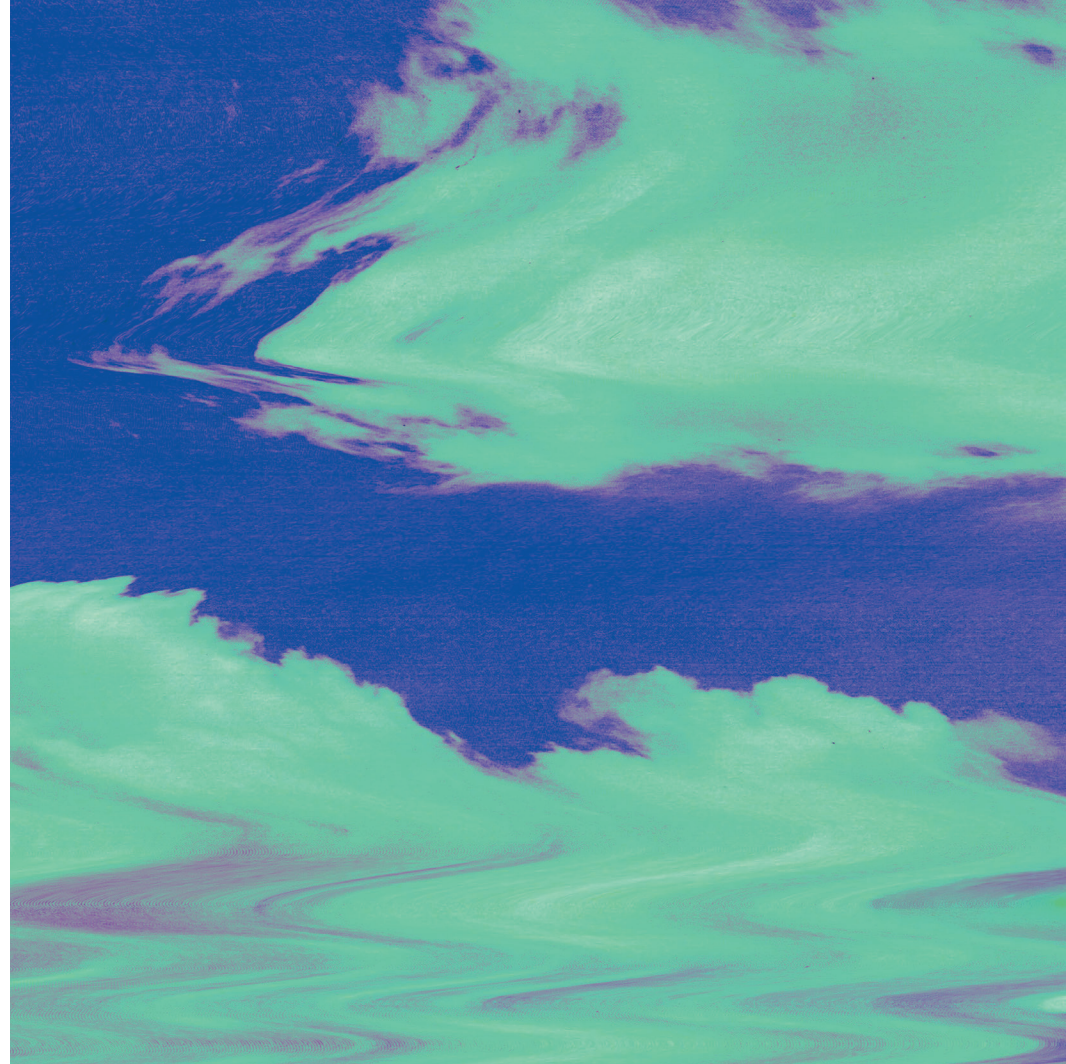
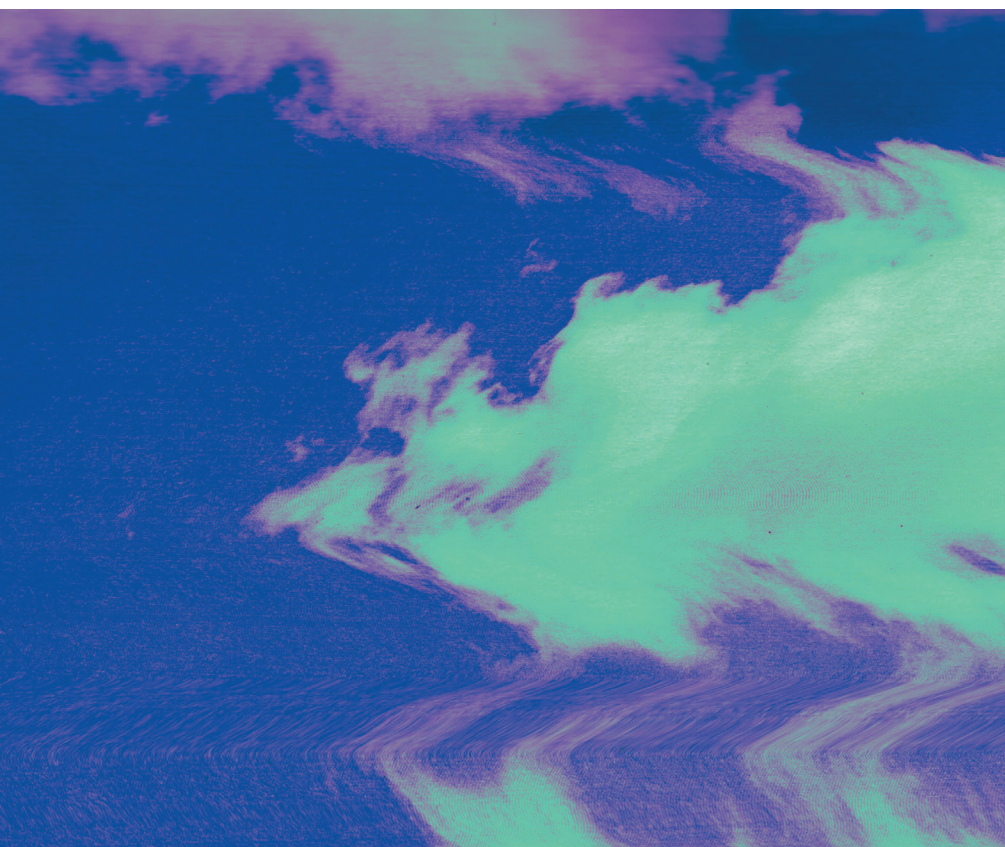


Elgin Street Studios

1/23 – 1/30/2025



NOTHING STABLE UNDER HEAVEN

First Year MFA Exhibition

University of Houston

***NOTHING STABLE
UNDER HEAVEN***

First Year MFA Exhibition

Taking inspiration from James Baldwin's seminal 1962 essay, *The Creative Process*, the exhibition interrogates the dynamic tension between the artist's internal nature and the external forces that shape the world. Baldwin's assertion of the artist's societal role to confront and challenge existential norms resonates throughout the show, anchoring the collective inquiry of its participants. Featuring the work of 16 international MFA students—once strangers, now cohort members—this exhibition reflects on the complexities of shared creative processes. Through their diverse practices, the artists explore the sociality of place and existence, investigating what it means to create in proximity to and in response to the same city. Their works engage spatial and relational dynamics: asking what it means to be side by side, layered, overlapping, and entwined.

While employing a broad spectrum of mediums and disciplines, recurring themes emerge as sites of convergence. Some artists reflect on cultural identities across geographies, while others critique hegemonic systems such as land extraction, capitalism and patriarchy. These investigations, grounded in experimentation and intellectual collaboration, reveal the evolving intersections of their creative practices and perspectives, underscoring the power of dialogue within shared spaces. *Nothing Stable Under Heaven* offers a compelling exploration of interconnectedness, inviting viewers to witness the fluid boundaries between individual and collective, internal and external, art and life.

Graphic Design

Fiona Fay Coakley
Lana Boulos
Tareq Odeh

Interdisciplinary Practices and Emerging Forms

Billion Tekleab
Theresa Escobedo

Painting

Cooper West Walker
Esther Santee
Makenna Hatter-Paxton
Tyler Evin
Zhoreh Bakhshi

Photography

Anis Nasir
Hyerim (Lim) Hwang
Joseph Bui
William Bossen

Sculpture

Hallie Raybourn
Sunday Scott



Shove / 2024 / Digital print / 108in x 17in

Recently I have been inspired by the efforts of musical artists during the third wave of feminism. This composition pulls lyrics from 'Shove', by L7. Through the manipulation of type, the work becomes a song stuck in your head all afternoon becomes the song stuck in your head all afternoon. An unconscious stream of thought, a mantra for the feminist ego.



Tableus 2, 4, 7, 8 / 2024 / Ink and digital prints on paper / 46in x 11in

A daily practice experimenting with analog materials and abstraction unraveled a series of tableus tied together with themes found in patriarchal social systems.

Fiona Fay Coakley

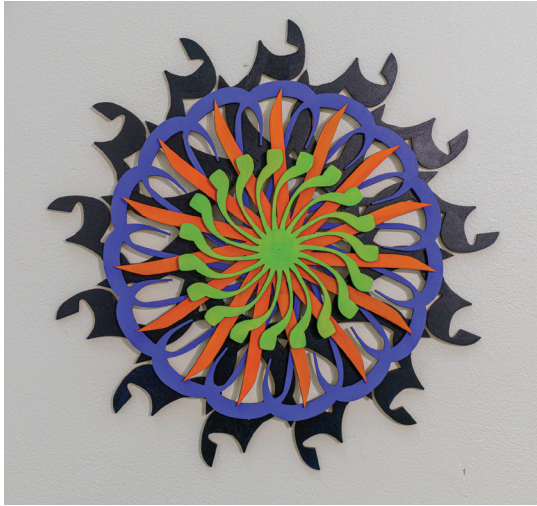


Lana Boulos

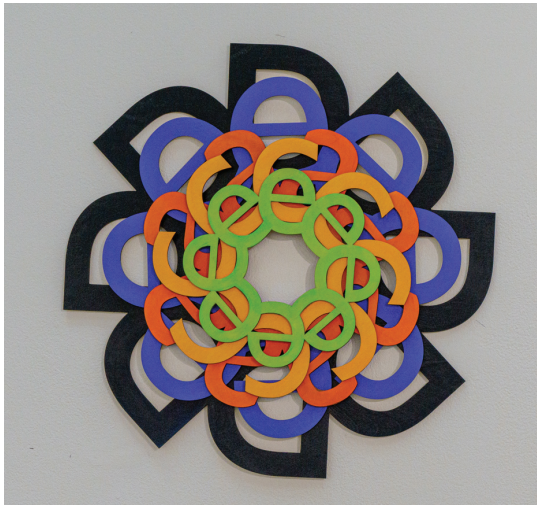
In my pieces, I use letters as building blocks to create intricate, radial mandala patterns. For this series, I chose the word “Salam”- “peace” as the foundation, using rhythmic repetition of the letters to reflect

the universal need for peace—within ourselves, with others, and with the world. Each layer symbolizes how peace is built, step by step, connection by connection. The vibrant, harmonious forms evoke

balance and acceptance, reminding us of the beauty in embracing diversity. Through these designs, I invite viewers to reflect on what peace means to them and how they can contribute to a more peaceful world.

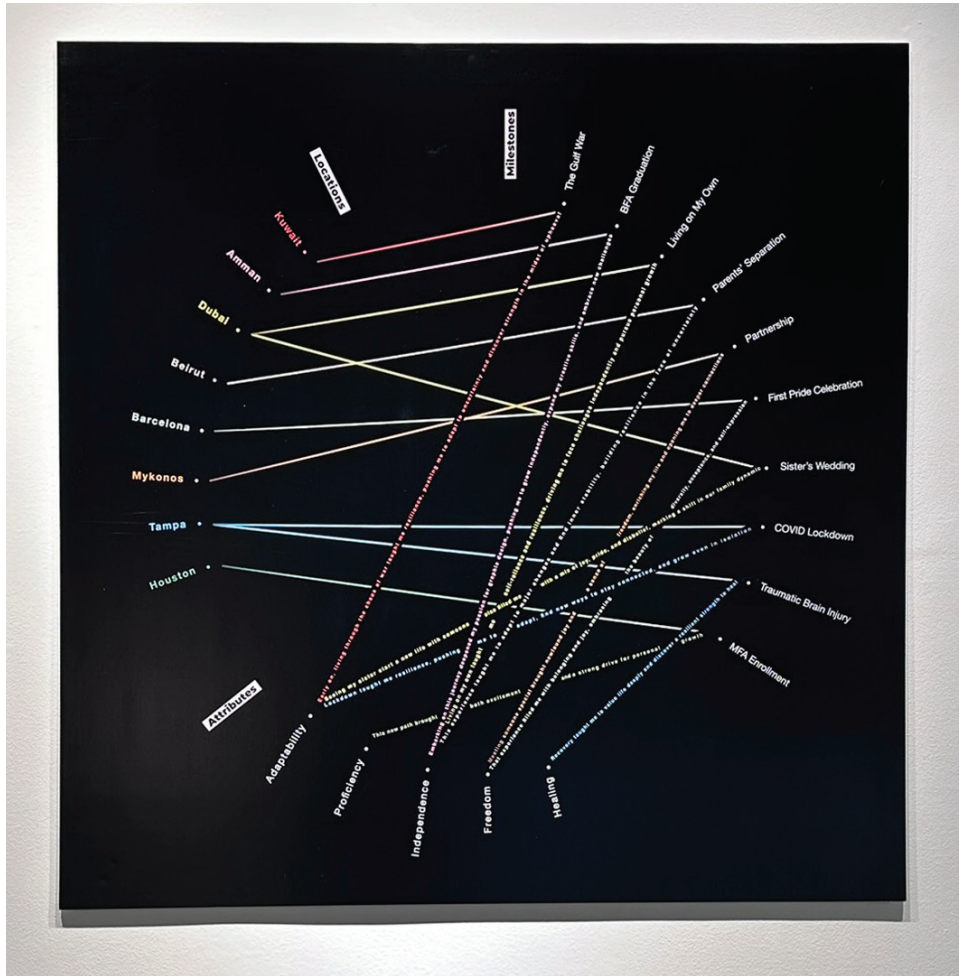


Peace/ 2024/ Acrylic paint on laser-cut wood/ 17in x 17in



Salam/ 2024/ Acrylic paint on laser-cut wood/ 16.5in x 16.5in





Threads of Growth / 2024 / Digital print on rigid board / 40in x 40in

Tareq Odeh

With a background in brand and visual identity, I approach graphic design as a tool for creating identity-driven visuals. Recently, I've been exploring diverse methods and mediums, using storytelling to bridge design and narrative. This piece visualizes a personal journey, mapping connections between locations and learnings through a color-coded system.

Each thread represents a chapter of growth, shaped by experiences in diverse cultural environments that deepened my understanding of place and identity. Through this work, I aim to reflect how environments and experience shape us, inviting viewers to explore the connections between place, memory, and identity.



My artistic practice is rooted in my understanding of the Global South—where the Gulf South of Houston is geopolitically connected to the Horn of Africa by sedimentary rock. Ever responsive to the social and political conditions faced by Global Southerners,

my work is an ongoing attempt to imagine possibilities for liberation. Through sculpture and performance, I explore themes of coloniality, borderlessness, Afrofuturism, Black female subjectivity, personhood, and the politics of rebellion.

Billion Tekleab



Presence / 2024 / Muslim, henna, black tea leaf, indigo dye, iron, love, and rage/ 292in x 43in

In performance, my voice and body act as a host site for captivity and release, making sounds and shapes about power, love, and a visceral, thrashing rage. At times, I incorporate tools and invite audience participation. In sculpture, I subvert the rigid forms of steel, making compositions out of space and forcing the hard material into precarity. I use ceramics to examine the dispossession of self experienced by African Diasporic people and its associated gendered implications.



Memoria (series) / 2010 - 2024
Dye diffusion print (Impossible instant film),
cast polyester resin / 4.5in x 4.5in x .5in each

As an artist, Theresa's work intersects ancestry, history, and spiritualism, and most recently merges ideas on land, nature, and the act of pilgrimaging. This effort combines expressions of the artist's cultural heritage with intellectual, emotional, and spiritual considerations to demonstrate and

ultimately represent ancestral, sometimes indigenous, influences and cosmopolitan spiritual perspectives. My approach to making merges indigenous spiritual practices with contemporary influences and affirms the universality of spiritual pursuit as a generator of creative expression.

Though the mediums employed to make these investigations may vary, each work I create attempts to visualize the hybrid cultural heritage borne from the blending of my indigenous and introduced Texan, Mexican, Canarian, Spanish, and Portuguese lineages.

Theresa Escobedo

Memoria, a photographic sculpture series in progress, is a multidisciplinary practice in image-making and in craft. This body of work, initiated as a purely photographic endeavor, highlights and ultimately embraces the unpredictable and experimental results of instant film technology as it evolves and investigates the artist's own relationship to photography as a personal pursuit. Memoria at once treats the photograph as an object, documents the artist's personal experiences, and explores ideas of time and memory as related to imagery and the act of photographing.





Chair on Branard 2 / 2024
Acrylic photo transfer, gesso, shellac on panel / 9in x 6in

Honesty in all aspects is the driving force of my work. Reference material for my paintings is from my personal experience, a direct translation of my interactions with my environment. Specific textures, moments, objects and spaces are placed on a pedestal by the choice to

replicate them in paint, questioning what deserves close observation, and whether beauty is something ideal or realistic. The honesty in choice of subject is parallel with how I present them in paint. The human features of painting; fault lines from a painting session paused,

layers of color slowly narrowing to the final palette, all laid bare for the sake of transparency in my ideas. The lives of these paintings is congruent with the lives of what they portray, they are worn, decayed, and a product of human time and effort.



Chair on Branard
2024 / Acrylic on panel, with frame made from the chair / 15in x 15in



Cooper West Walker

Esther Santee

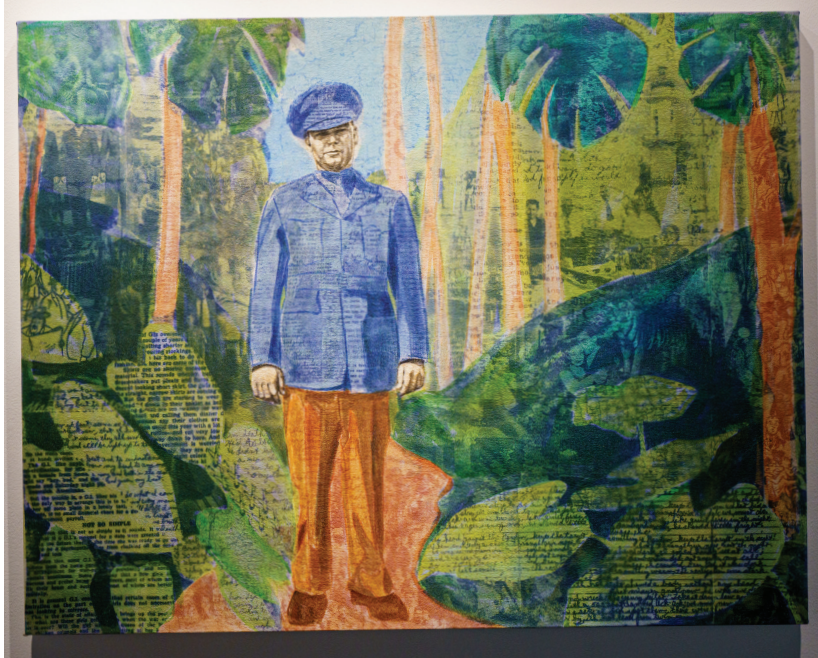
Living Room #7
2024 / Oil on Canvas / 72in x 48in



To be is to be perceived.

In this body of work, I am looking inward to find what I feel constitutes my being, and projecting that onto the spaces that surround me. For me this display is a summary of my being and is proof that I am still alive, that I have been alive. I create large, collaged compositions using paintings, pieces of my art from the past, materials I have sourced, and fabrics from my childhood. This forms new combinations of materials and memories that exist only within the work.

Makenna Hatter-Paxton



Not Where One is Expected to Be
2025/ Sun prints, acrylic, and charcoal on canvas
32in x 41in x 1.5in

The rainforest floor composition in *Not Where One is Expected to Be* is a reference to her grandfather's time in the Asian Pacific war theater. One of his most profound experiences occurred in the rainforests of Myanmar, when his survival hinged on the immeasurable compassion of a complete stranger, a man with whom he did not share language, nationality, or privilege. The sun prints are a cultural timestamp of the geopolitical conflict of the 1940s, as well as women's reduced societal status.

A Texas-based, multi-disciplinary artist. Hatter-Paxton's latest work, *Not Where One is Expected to Be*, is the first work in a new series about humans' propensity for violence, familial relationship,

relationship with the self, and gender inequality. Imagery in this work was mined from the writings and artifacts left behind by Hatter-Paxton's grandfather, a poet and WWII veteran whose existence was defined

by contradiction and conflict. Having never met her grandfather, this work also serves as an attempt to understand who he was, and ultimately, learn about herself.



In addition to her painting and drawing practice, Hatter-Paxton utilizes various types of image transfers, non-paper drawing surfaces like silk, 3D printing, slip casting, tufting, and animated collage.



Residue, no. 2
2024 / Oil on metal / 15in x 16in



Suspended in the Golden Hour
2024 / 24in x 27in, Oil on metal



In Flux / 2024 / 16in x 32in / Oil on metal



Tyler Evin

My work examines the tension between industrial growth, environmental degradation, and the human condition. Using rusted metal surfaces as both canvas and metaphor, I aim to capture the exploitation and erosion of natural resources and the psychological weight of accumulating time. Through this material, I explore themes of power, greed, and the decisions driving economic ventures—often at the expense of the land and its people. Inspired by the stark and shifting landscapes

of western North Dakota, I blend traditional painted elements with raw material experimentation. The color palettes and overall aesthetic evoke a somber, nostalgic atmosphere, reflecting the unease of long-term consequences disregarded for momentary gain. With these pieces, I seek to spark a dialogue about the cautionary tale of the rising growth of the manufacturing sector in the state and its effects on communities bound to these lands.

Zhoreh Bakhshi



Distance / 2024 / Acrylic on Canvas / 1 at 33in x 33in 4 at 11.8in x 15.7in

As an artist who is enduring the challenges of being away from her home country for the first time, my emotions and experiences greatly influence my art.

As a result, I dig into the complexities of my personal journey as an artist navigating a new environment far from home. Through a series of five canvases, I am exploring themes of identity, pressure, nostalgia and freedom. One of the reasons why

I left my home and family is to have more freedom, which I did not use to have enough back in my country and sadly, the government is to blame. I especially tried to highlight the rug as a symbol of Iranian art.

The yellow color highlights the pressure that I am under as a foreigner, and the girl riding her bike resembles the freedom that Iranian women do not actually have.



Anis Naser

Anis Naser's photographic works extends deeply rooted in her Iranian heritage and concerns for societal issues. Specifically, she is intrigued by the challenges of Western cultural dominance, the erosion of European,

and Eastern Iranian identity, and the cultural integration struggle. She reflects on the tenuous connection between our cultural roots, the impact of external influences, and the possibilities for cultural

unity. Additionally, she is fascinated by the prevalence of consumerism in the Western world and the evolving attitudes towards wealth and material possessions which has been led by capitalism.



East Meets West / 2020 – 2024 / Digital Prints / 40in x 60in

The first time I became aware of my nationality was when I was in the fourth grade and transferred to a Korean school in Tokyo. I could not even write my name in Korean because I went to a Japanese Public School, and my parents told me, "We made you move to this school because we want you to learn our native language." I have experienced a sense of in-betweenness and struggled to reconcile my

multiple identities and find my belonging. This feeling has become even stronger since I immigrated to the United States at the age of 16. Mother Tongue is a body of work about my experience of growing up as Korean in Japan and as an immigrant in the U.S. I capture the mixed emotions that I have felt through living within multiple cultures in a poetic manner using the medium of photography.

Mother Tongue / 2024/ / Digital print / 18in x 24in each



Hyreim (Lim) Hwang



Love you, Mom :)
2024 / Photographic collage with
handwritten notes and archival prints / 75in x 45in

“Love you, Mom :)” is an experimental photographic collage of letters from my mother. In the morning as my mother prepares for work, she uses the backside of colorful calendar sheets to write notes about what she has prepared for lunch and reminders for the day. This body of work serves as an ongoing study and archive of my relationship with my mother, exploring themes of care, labor, and intimacy through the lens of everyday gestures.

The handwritten notes, often mundane yet deeply personal, become a window into our shared routine and her way of nurturing from a distance. By collaging these letters with photographs and other visual elements, I reflect on the layered complexities of love and communication within a parent-child bond. “Love you, Mom :)” is both a personal tribute and a broader meditation on the ways we preserve and interpret familial connections.

Joseph Bui

Joseph Bui (he/him) is a Houston-based editorial, documentary, and portrait photographer. Identifying as Vietnamese-American, he developed an interest in storytelling on topics of relationships between people, community, identity, culture, and the theme of “home.” As an active listener and observer, he explores

the strengths and vulnerabilities of the topics he works with, as well as their relationship to the environment they exist in. His portraiture work is informed by discovering people’s personalities and perspectives, both on an individual level and through themes that connect them.





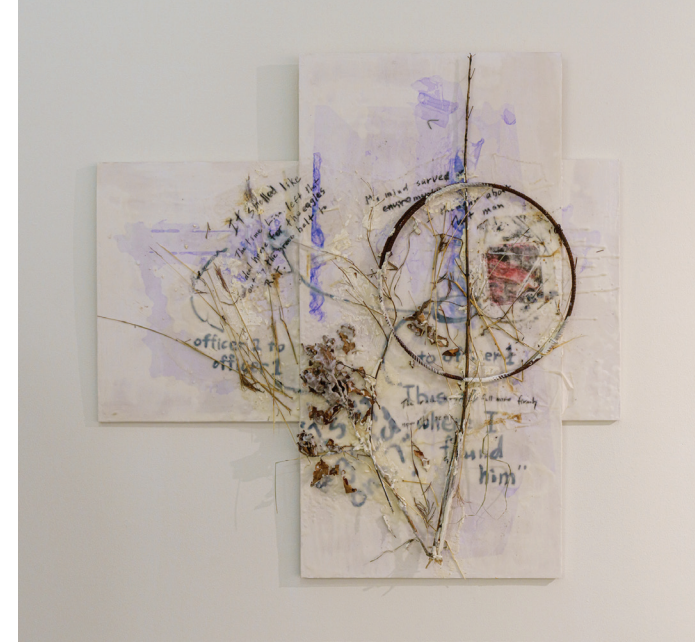
The Bayou of Commerce's Demise / 2025 / Pigment Prints / 5in x7in

Nothing is more Houston to me than commerce. Consumerism is King. The Retail and Grocery Giants, the makers of economic mass destruction. The ubiquitous shopping cart, the stalwart and greatest vehicle of service to the corporations of financial and ecological defilement. Subject as it

as to the same pressures of market evolution and planned obsolescent. Quotidian to the point of total social disregard. Haunting skeletons of commercial battles consigned by humankind for eternity to lay in state within the murky waters of Bayou.



William Bossen



Overview of the Scene / 2024 / Plywood, Encaustic Wax, Photogram-metric Blue Prints on paper, Mono-prints, Oil Paint, and Charcoal on Tissue Paper, Site Specific Found Materials / 48in x 48in

This piece is both a deeply personal exploration of trauma and a broader allegory for the city of Houston. It reflects on the complexity of human emotion and the ways we process conflict, tragedy, and empathy. The materials carry profound symbolic weight. The components bearing an indexical connection to the environment and the tragedy which unfolded before me that this work represents. By integrating sculptural elements, wax, branches, rebar, with my prints and memories, I transform the experience into a narrative that blurs the line between personal catharsis and collective reflection.



Boundless / 2024 / Ceramic and Glaze / 16in x 10in x 8in

Hallie Raybourn

Hailing from Houston, I am a multidisciplinary conceptual artist whose explorations span fabrics, clay, wood, and painting. My creative endeavor revolves around shedding light on overlooked realms of positivity within a world fraught with contradictions. Through a lens of humor, I tackle weighty social, political, and environmental issues, engaging viewers in a playful

dialogue. By reframing blame and highlighting our shared flaws, I seek to bridge divides and foster connection, emphasizing our similarities rather than differences. My work is a gateway to a whimsical realm where laughter and contemplation intersect, enabling us to confront the harsh truths of our contemporary reality with ease.





The title of Scott's latest work, *Where the Sidewalk Splits*, is her wordplay on the book *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. *Where the Sidewalk Splits*, is Sunday's resolution that our

beginnings do not determine our fate; if flowers can bloom in the slithers of earth between the sidewalk, with no tender hand to shade, or rain to soothe her thirst, than we too can blossom.



Where the Sidewalk Splits / 2024 / 11.5in x 5.5in / Ceramic, glaze / 11.5in x 5.5in

Sunday Scott

