

2020 UIC MFA Thesis Exhibition

Sabrina Huchthausen

Spencer Hutchinson

Larsen Husby

Maggie Hubbard

Eileen Mueller

Ej Mussbaum

Paige Taul

This World Should Be More Wonderful

April 30–May 22, 2021

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Sabrina Huchthausen

**MFA Thesis Talk
May 21, 2021
6-7:30pm**

Spencer Hutchinson

Larsen Husby

Maggie Hubbard

Eileen Mueller

Ej Nussbaum

Paige Taul

She is as bright and exuberant as the sun shining down on at the park as she swings higher and higher. We can tell the weather is beautiful even though the 16mm film is grainy and black and white. She is almost shouting in excitement, and becomes slightly less audible as she goes back and forth. She is reciting Antonio Gramsci's 1916 work "I Hate New Year's Day" from memory, "You end up seriously thinking that between one year and the next there is a break, that a new history is beginning; you make resolutions, and you regret your irresolution, and so on, and so forth." This is the beginning of **Ej Nussbaum's** "Avanti!". This work was intended to be shown in the spring of 2020 at her thesis exhibition which was to run March 20-April 16, 2020 at Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Four days before the exhibition was to open, Chicago went into lockdown. The show was postponed. What followed was a year in which a dumpster fire became the official unofficial mascot. Toilet paper was a more precious commodity than gold. In this country we lost more people to the CoronaVirus than WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War combined. The deep legacies of racism in this country fomented in the streets first in response to unending acts of police brutality on Black people, followed later in the year by violent and sometimes deadly attacks on Asian bodies spurred on by Donald Trump's inexcusable and tireless references to the "kung flu" as a way to divert from his failures as a leader in controlling the devastating impacts of the virus. It was a year that many people wanted to leave behind, anxious for January 1, 2021, as though the calendar cycle would carry us out of a year of grief, loss, despair, racism, violence and reckoning. Gramsci knew better, "this is generally what's wrong with dates." he lamented.

As I write this we are approaching the anniversary of the CoronaVirus pandemic, and a full year after the originally scheduled MFA thesis exhibitions for the class of 2020. This group show of the work of the entire graduating class of 2020 fittingly serves as a kind of time capsule. The pieces in the exhibition reckon with complex histories, call our memories into question, teeter on the verge of nostalgia, navigate literal and figurative landscapes, and examine how time and distance can be a proposal for healing.

During the pandemic the idea of public transportation is high risk. Even before the CoronaVirus a sense of peace and calm was not usually something one associated with riding Chicago's L train. It has been almost a year since I have been on public transportation, my usual daily commute. I almost forgot I would engage in what I call train meditation until I encountered **Larsen Husby's** "Map of Chicago (the 'L')". The draping swags of black cotton ropes knotted at uneven intervals produces a sense of calm. I imagine the way the knots would feel in my hand. I think of the way my mother used to rosary beads, as she recited her dutiful performance of religion from memory. This rope is a kind of map of the Chicago train system, each knot representing one of the 146 stations on eight lines that span 224.1 miles. I think of Thich Nhat Hahn and his walking practice where one can feel peace in every step, and imagine the sense of peace correlating with every pause, every stop, each knot. While this piece reinterprets a map through the repetitive physical action of tying the knots, "Missing Intersection" makes possible an intersection that does not exist.

With many of us confined to our homes imagining geographies, and foreign streets is one of the safest ways to travel. In the center of the gallery space we see a street sign, the intersection of Armitage Ave and Austin Blvd. The Chicago street grid system exists on the level of the street, but also as a conceptual overlay. This piece indicates an imagined intersection where these two layers come together. The layering of existing markers with imagined structures that is present in this piece by Husby feels aligned with processes that **Sabrina Huchthausen** utilizes in her painting. Her obsessive research of her family tree, culling through family records, and tracing important life events is the base on which she then layers her imagined stories of their lives, creating her own impression of them from what she has gathered. These fragmented reconstructions feel echoed in her abstract paintings with cracks that allow layers to reveal themselves, thin veils of paint that obstruct familiar seeming forms, and patterns that feel familiar yet distant.

Histories are shaped by memories, facts, and perspective. The works of **Paige Taul** explore family histories, legacies, and identities. We all leave imprints on one another, and in families those imprints are at the very core of who we are, and identical twins share that core. In "10:28,30" the connection between the identical siblings and their mother is complicated in multilayered archival footage interspersed with footage of the artist and her twin sister. The piece toggles between their mother's story, and how their identities are all linked together. In "Too Small to be a Bear," archival footage is deployed once again with family narrative, her grandfather playing in a minor league baseball team.

Narratives of her mother and grandmother outline a story tinged with shame and failure that impacted him greatly and changed his life forever. These recollections trace an interior emotional landscape that might not have been readily seen or understood in him, obscured by time, tracing memory and the transmutation of a family myth.

Distant histories are also an underpinning in the work of **Eileen Mueller**. Eileen Mueller mines secret histories and imagines the unrecorded gaps between what we know of queer communities of the past. In her words,

“A big factor in my work is looking at dyke histories and with my own collaborators and friends finding ways to invoke or re-perform some of the essence of these histories and intimacies formed in the dyke spaces that these women and folx created.”

The beauty and tenderness in these acts of collective imagining and re-invoking permeate the often silent films. There is a texture to the past that is felt in the present through these works exploring contemporary friendships and communities.

Not all memories that appear with tenderness are what they seem to be. In the paintings of **Maggie Hubbard** included in this exhibition there is a series of a couple captured in a moment of embrace that emanates with love and intimacy. The images have the feeling of black and white film stills. “After the Trial” is a series of paintings created from archival footage taken moments after Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were acquitted of the 1955 murder of Emmett Till. The romance and nostalgia of the first encounter of the images become tainted with the violence and injustice of that moment of American history. The couple become complicit in the work of white supremacy. The look of love becomes tainted with a smugness that cannot be unseen, and the clear reverberations of the moment of racialized trauma these images represent are still felt today.

One of my favorite genres of meme during the pandemic has been “the earth is healing,” one of my favorites being a picture of a group of bright colorful lorikeets with a caption that reads: Pigeons in London are returning to their natural colours now that pollution levels are lower. The Earth is healing <3.” In the gallery we see a large canvas that calls to mind legacies of Abstract Expressionism, and with it the notoriously toxic lifestyle, behavior, and misogyny that are tied up in that history. Unlike these predecessors, these paintings incorporate literally crutches onto the surface of the

work. “Everything Counts” and “In a Landscape” are paintings by **Spencer Hutchinson** that while not created at a time that could have been influenced by these pandemic memes I read the crutches in the same way I do the “Earth is healing” punch line. That through art we can address histories and legacies of pain, exclusion, and injustice, that we can move forward from them with grace. This World Should Be More Wonderful is a much needed reminder in the era of Covid, deep facism, and global uprisings for a more just and loving world that healing, growth, and change is possible. I can hear Ej’s voice calling in the words of Antonio Gramsci filling me with a hope that can rethink our old ways and systems, that can free us of constraints that harm us, that have us re-examine ourselves continually, not out of shame or guilt, but because of a deep obligation to be a better version of ourselves, so we can make a better, more wonderful version of this world, “I want every morning to be a new year’s for me. Every day I want to reckon with myself, and every day I want to renew myself.”

[Click to listen](#) 🎵

UIC MFA Class of 2020 Playlist

Sabrina Huchthausen

- Shintaro Sakamoto, “This World Should Be More Wonderful”
- Amanaz, “Khala My Friend”
- Bikini Kill, “Alien She”

Spencer Hutchinson

- Aphex Twin, “Alberto Balsalm”

Larsen Husby

- Angel Olsen, ”Endless Road”

Maggie Hubbard

- Tsegue-Maryam Guebrou, “Homesickness, Pt. 2”

Eileen Mueller

- Patti Smith, “Redondo Beach”

Ej Nussbaum

- The Magnetic Fields, 69 Love Songs:
 - “Let’s Pretend We’re Bunny Rabbits”
 - “Papa Was a Rodeo”
 - “When My Boy Walks Down the Street”

Paige Taul

- Santigold, “L.E.S Artistes”



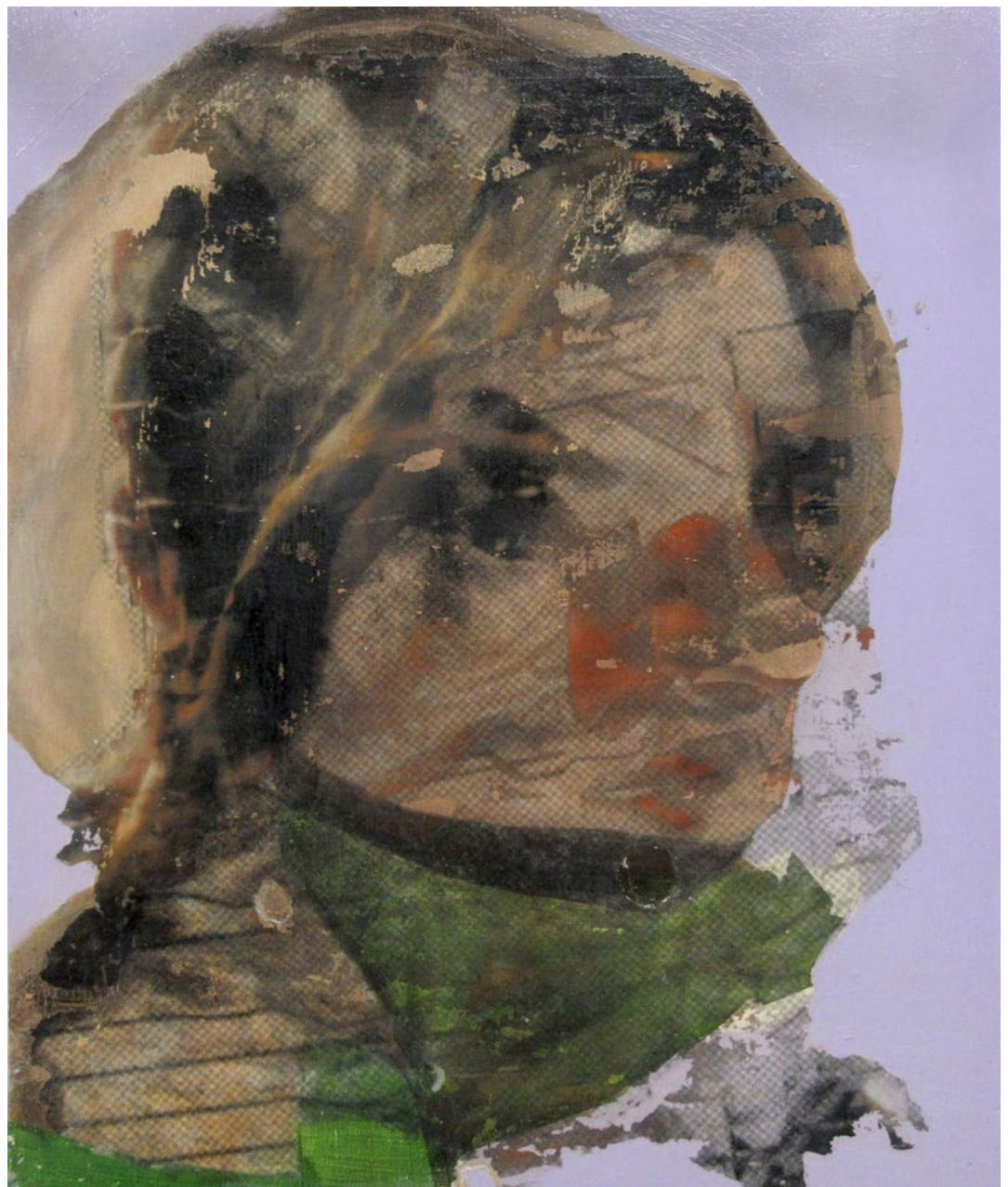
Sabrina Huchthausen

THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL

What is one thing that you do that is not art that has a major impact on the work that you make?

I have an obsessive relationship with family tree stuff. My grandma and her mother tracked my paternal line back to Germany, and I have recently connected with my mother's birth family so I have spent a lot of time going through old documents and following peoples life events.

In hindsight this process and my practice are similar with the act of gathering what is left behind and piecing them together to create or disrupt the imprint of that person.



B



C



D



E

Describe your ideal art making experience (when, where, what, how).

When: The Hour of the Night Owl

Where: A space where I can be a mess and also lay on the ground.

How: I do observational drawings of the subject, build a 3D rendering of the likeness, use different source files to abstract the model, and use this as a starting point.

This functions as a surrogate for the sensation of presence.

I then work mostly intuitively, sometimes playing with the fragility of the materials. I use both additive and reductive methods.

What: I want the work to function not as a cosmetic re-representation of the person, but something that carries its own sensation.

A work that feels like a moment, an equal mix of falling apart and coming together.



F





G

Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

♪ [“Khala My Friend” - Amanaz](#)

Sabrina Huchthausen (b.1993) is an artist based in Chicago. She studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, participating in the Early College Program from 2010–2012, before receiving her BFA in 2016. Her work circulates themes of portraiture, proximity, human essence, matter, and how it relates to sensation in painting and human connection. During her time at The University of Illinois at Chicago, Huchthausen used painting as a vehicle to explore portraiture through filters of distance. She collected and employed the digital residues of subjects outside of her physical proximity, creating a proxy of the intended subject through abstraction. Huchthausen also works with the Stockyard Institute, where she extends the concerns of her portraiture practice outside of the studio, inviting unique social exchanges between the artist, the subjects, and the site.

A — *Self Portrait*

**Observational Drawing, Raw DNA data, Inkjet Transfer, Oil on Wood Panel
27.5”x 33.5”
2020**

E — *Johnna in Hospital*

**Observational Drawing, WAV File, Inkjet Photo Transfer, Oil, on Wood Panel
24”x24”
2020**

B — *Resurgence*

**WAV File, Inkjet Photo Transfer, Oil, on Wood Panel
20”x25”
2019**

F — *Inez in Cuba*

**Observational Drawing, Found Silver Gelatin Print (1950), Inkjet Transfer, Oil on Wood Panel Diptych, 16”x 24”
2020**

C — *Ashley (20 year Span)*

**20 JPEG Files (Raw Data), Inkjet Photo Transfer, Oil, on Wood Panel
24”x24”
2019**

G — *A Portrait Contrary to Myth 2019*

**JPEG, Conversation Transcription, Inkjet Photo Transfer, Oil, on Wood Panel
36”x36”
2019**

D — *Ashley (May 2019)*

**JPEG, WAV File, Inkjet Photo Transfer, Oil, Rabbit Skin Glue on Wood Panel
24”x25”
2019**

Spencer Hutchinson



THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL

What is the one skill that you feel every artist needs to learn that isn't taught in art school?

How to be true to your vision.





What was the most unexpected thing you learned from your MFA experience?

How much I still didn't know about things I spend a lot of time doing.





Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

It's hard to say, I don't think I have one specific song, but if I did, it would be drawn from the body of work of Terry Riley, La Monte Young, Philip Glass, or Brian Eno. Repetition and a sense of atmosphere are very important in my paintings, and these composers explore that masterfully.

Spencer Hutchinson is a 2009 BFA Graduate of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago where he studied Painting, Sound and New Media, and a 2020 MFA Graduate from The University of Illinois at Chicago where he studied Painting, Sound and New Media. Hutchinson's paintings lean heavily towards a minimalist aesthetic, some utilizing found objects as a way to explore not only what lies within the dimensions of the painting, but what lies on the outside as well. His paintings strive to address the painting as an object in and of itself with mass and dimensionality through the use of color placement and alternative presentation.

<https://spencerhutchinsonart-blog.tumblr.com/>





Larsen Husby

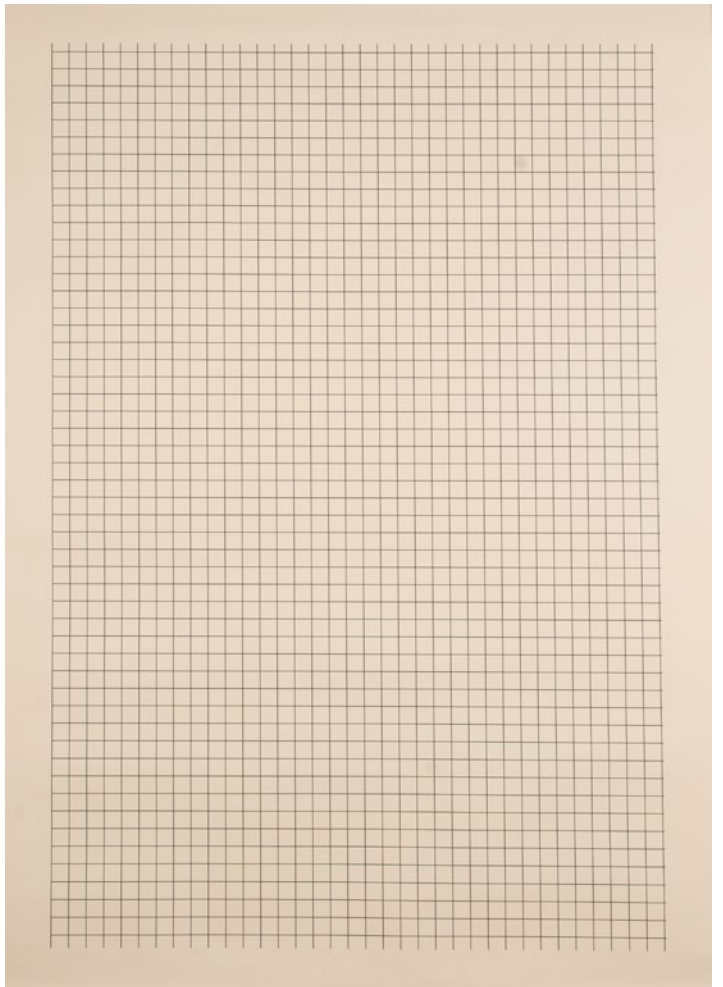
THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL



B



C



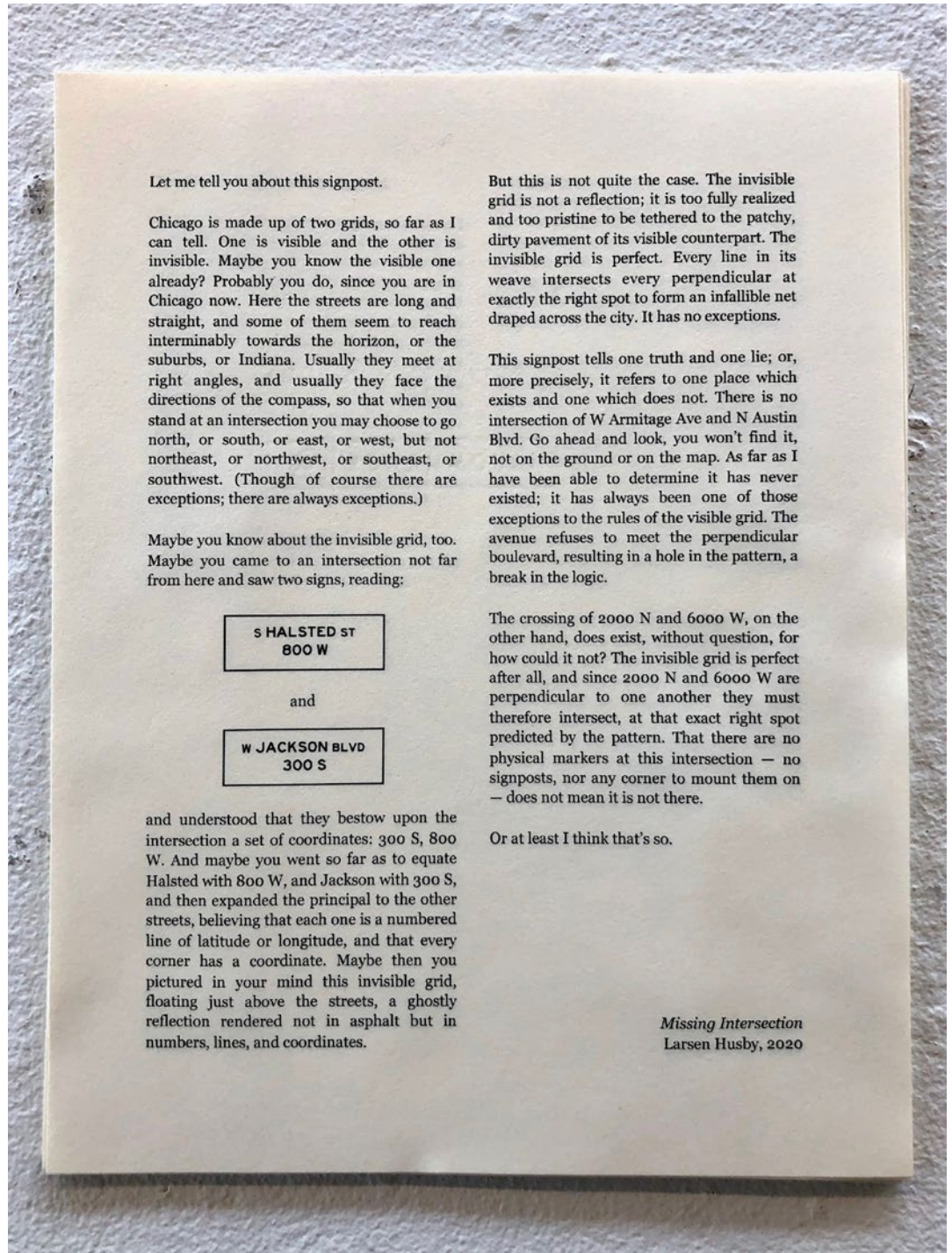
D



E

What is the one skill that you feel every artist needs to learn that isn't taught in art school?

I don't feel there's any skill every artist needs to learn, taught in art school or otherwise, because I don't think there's any common denominator between all artists. This thought frustrates me, but I think it might be true.



Let me tell you about this signpost.

Chicago is made up of two grids, so far as I can tell. One is visible and the other is invisible. Maybe you know the visible one already? Probably you do, since you are in Chicago now. Here the streets are long and straight, and some of them seem to reach interminably towards the horizon, or the suburbs, or Indiana. Usually they meet at right angles, and usually they face the directions of the compass, so that when you stand at an intersection you may choose to go north, or south, or east, or west, but not northeast, or northwest, or southeast, or southwest. (Though of course there are exceptions; there are always exceptions.)

Maybe you know about the invisible grid, too. Maybe you came to an intersection not far from here and saw two signs, reading:

S HALSTED ST
800 W

and

W JACKSON BLVD
300 S

and understood that they bestow upon the intersection a set of coordinates: 300 S, 800 W. And maybe you went so far as to equate Halsted with 800 W, and Jackson with 300 S, and then expanded the principal to the other streets, believing that each one is a numbered line of latitude or longitude, and that every corner has a coordinate. Maybe then you pictured in your mind this invisible grid, floating just above the streets, a ghostly reflection rendered not in asphalt but in numbers, lines, and coordinates.

But this is not quite the case. The invisible grid is not a reflection; it is too fully realized and too pristine to be tethered to the patchy, dirty pavement of its visible counterpart. The invisible grid is perfect. Every line in its weave intersects every perpendicular at exactly the right spot to form an infallible net draped across the city. It has no exceptions.

This signpost tells one truth and one lie; or, more precisely, it refers to one place which exists and one which does not. There is no intersection of W Armitage Ave and N Austin Blvd. Go ahead and look, you won't find it, not on the ground or on the map. As far as I have been able to determine it has never existed; it has always been one of those exceptions to the rules of the visible grid. The avenue refuses to meet the perpendicular boulevard, resulting in a hole in the pattern, a break in the logic.

The crossing of 2000 N and 6000 W, on the other hand, does exist, without question, for how could it not? The invisible grid is perfect after all, and since 2000 N and 6000 W are perpendicular to one another they must therefore intersect, at that exact right spot predicted by the pattern. That there are no physical markers at this intersection — no signposts, nor any corner to mount them on — does not mean it is not there.

Or at least I think that's so.

Missing Intersection
Larsen Husby, 2020

F



G



H

What is an unrealized project that you have you would love to see actualized?

Someday I'd love to make a map on a large floor—something you can walk across, like the street map of Chicago at the Chicago History Museum, or the incredible topographical map of the Mississippi River in Memphis's Mud River Park.

Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

- ♪ Endless Road was originally written and performed by country singer Hoyt Axton, though I came to through Angel Olsen's 2017 cover. At first listen it is an ode to wanderlust, but it is the song's emphasis on positionality which most intrigued me. The opening line—"Well, every road I see leads away from me"—is a reminder that we understand space primarily through the lens of our own intentions. A road doesn't lead anywhere, we use it to lead ourselves, and the end of one is nothing more than a pause as we recalibrate, turn, and continue onward. The impossibility of arrival is embedded in my maps, which always fail to comprehensively depict the place I now live, leaving space always for another map to come. "The road keeps saying 'Friend, come see what's 'round the bend,' / So is it any wonder that I roam?"

Larsen Husby (b. 1990, Boston) is an interdisciplinary artist working in a range of media from sculpture to the written word. Through unconventional forms of mapping, his practice examines themes of place, belonging, and movement. In 2013, he co-founded the Minneapolis Art Lending Library, a non-profit which shares original works of art with the public, free of charge. He received his MFA from the University of Illinois in 2020, and his BA from Macalester College in 2012.

A — *Touching Not Touching*, 2020

240' x 127'

Mowed grass labyrinth

B — *Map of Chicago (Superblocks)*, 2021

33" x "95" x 95"

Digital image transfers on plywood

C — *Map of Chicago (Cracks)*

60" x 42"

Digital print on paper

D — *Map of Chicago (Grid)*

60" x 42"

Digital print on paper

E — *Missing Intersection*, 2020

96" x 24" x 24" (pole)

Steel pole, aluminum signs

F — *Missing Intersection*, 2020

11" x 8.5" (text)

Printed text

G — *Map of Chicago (Interstates)*, 2020

9' x 6'

Cotton rope

H — *Map of Chicago (the 'L')*, 2019

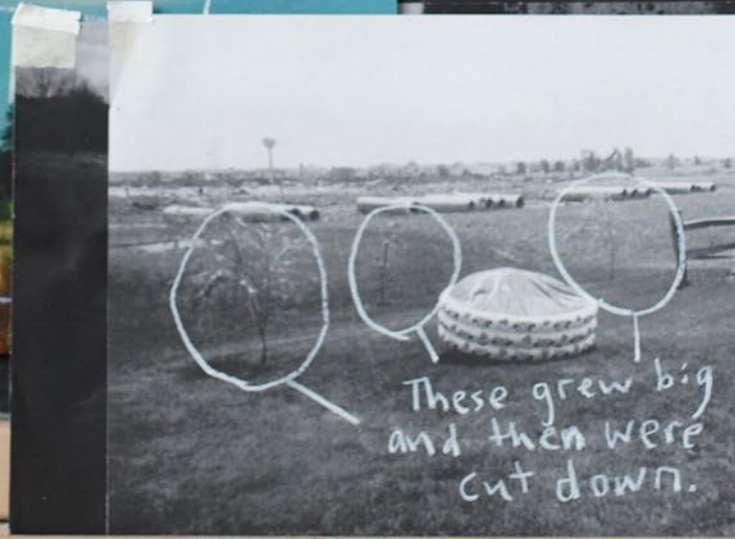
9' x 8'

Cotton rope

1930s

Maggie Hubbard

80s





B



C

Is there a formative experience that has shaped your work and practice?

My practice is grounded in the passing of my father. He died quite unexpectedly after I finished undergrad and painting quickly became my avenue for grief. He was also a painter/art educator so after his death, my grief was closely tied to the act of painting. Now that many years have passed, I do not consciously grieve my father's absence every time I work yet I cannot deny the inheritance and memory I embody as a painter.

Describe your ideal art making experience (when, where, what, how).

When: a day or evening when I have an unlimited amount of hours set before me

Where: a secluded space that I don't have to worry about ruining

What: a family photograph, an inherited object from an ancestor, a familiar room, a constructed landscape, a video still, a shrubbery.

How: Raw canvas stapled to the wall, buckets of water, ink, old stubby paint brushes taped to the end of long sticks, lots of walking back and forth, lots of looking, lots of playing guitar in between brushstrokes.

What was the most unexpected thing you learned from your MFA experience?

Art can seem so entirely important and absolutely frivolous all at the same time.

What is one thing that you do that is not art that has a major impact on the work that you make?

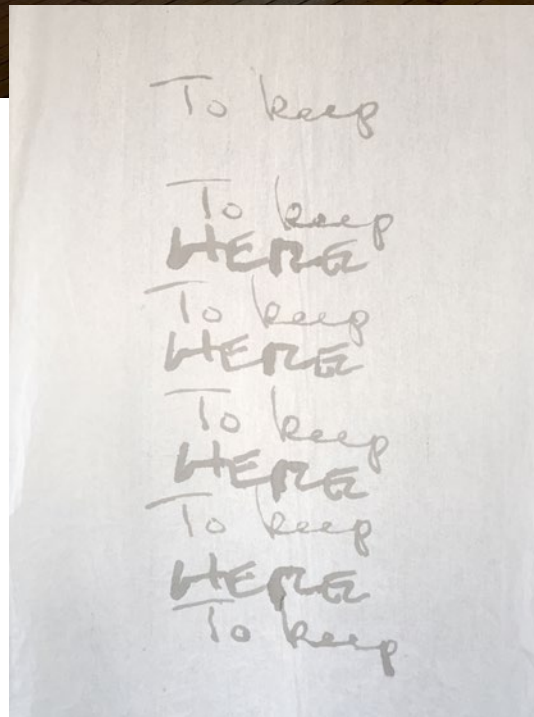
I grew up in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago and during my time at UIC I drove out to the suburbs every other week to visit my mother. Suburbia, whiteness, family inheritance--these things are at the heart of my paintings and leaving the city, driving through suburban neighborhoods, shifting my surroundings, that had/has a major impact on my work.



D



E



F

Maggie Hubbard (b. 1991, NW Suburbs of Chicago, IL) explores the political, familial, and racial structures of her identity. From navigating ancestry to locating a culture of whiteness, Hubbard's illustrative paintings traverse within personal narrative and collective memory. She received her MFA in Studio Art from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2020 and her BS in Illustration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2013.

www.maggiehubbard.net

A — *Water Tower*

Acrylic, chalk and grease pencil on wood,
photocopy, and chalkboard
30" x 50"
2020

B — *Ancestors II*

Ink and Acrylic on Raw Canvas
28" x 40"
2019

C — *View from the deck*

Ink on Raw Canvas
60" x 108"
2019

D — *Behind the Cul-de-Sac*

Acrylic on Panel
24" x 36"
2020

E — *HERE TO KEEP | TO KEEP HERE*

Ink on dropcloth
100" x 115"
2020

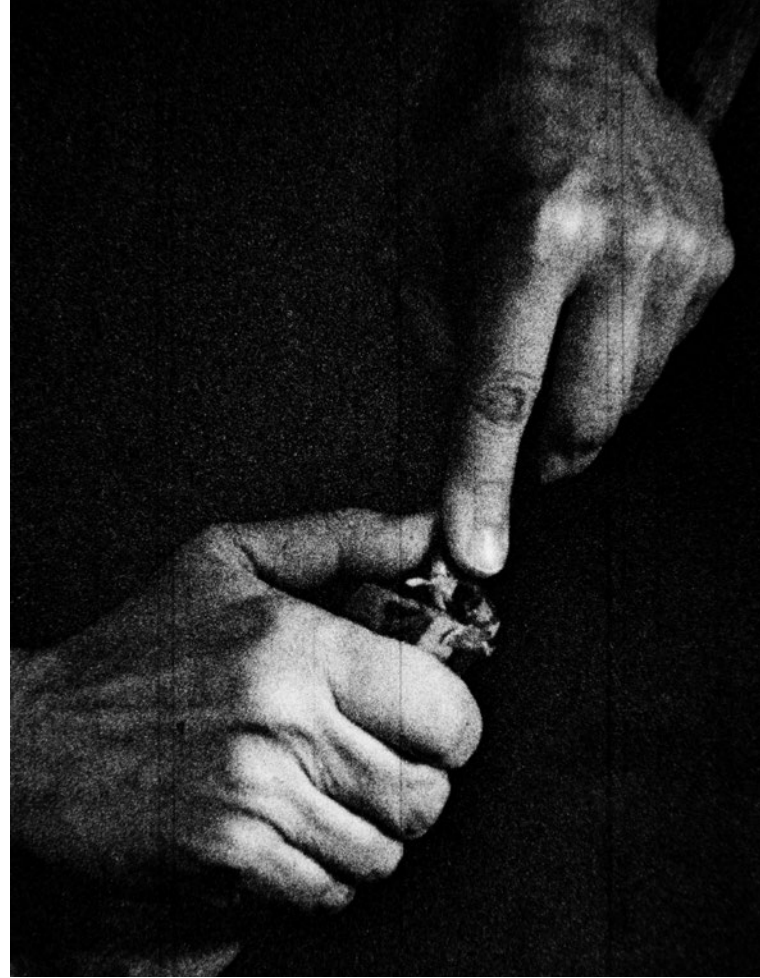
F — *Detail (HERE TO KEEP | TO KEEP HERE)*

Ink on dropcloth
2020

Eileen Mueller



THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL



B

Is there a formative experience that has shaped your work and practice?

I dropped out of college. When I was 20 I left school after two years in Baltimore. It took me 3 or 4 years to make it back to school in Chicago. In between that I spent a small amount of time traveling and a lot of time working in St. Louis at a coffee shop. I worked at this great place that had a motley crew of dedicated regulars. I had found a tightly knit community in a neighborhood that was cheap to live in. I was able to do a lot of living outside of the academic world. I saw so many new modes of work and practice. I helped run a small business. My own vision for an ideal practice radically shifted- and just in time, I was fleeing some major feelings of inadequacy after spending two years in the vast universe of art academia. I fell in love and I had time to nurture and experience that. I had a shit ton of leisure time and was actually able to pay my own way and then some. I just lived for a while and settled into myself finally after years spent riding the hormonal tidal wave of youth. I had time to waste on back porches and cigarettes while discovering and describing the world through a thousand conversations. I skinny dipped and got high and dove dumpsters and made so many questionable choices. I had the freedom to get bored. I didn't need momentum to push me back to school. This time I wanted it. Not only did this give me the confidence and competence I needed to get the most from my time at SAIC—I had come away with a newly defined need to make work in the context of a community, about community both real and desired.



c

Describe your ideal art making experience (when, where, what, how).

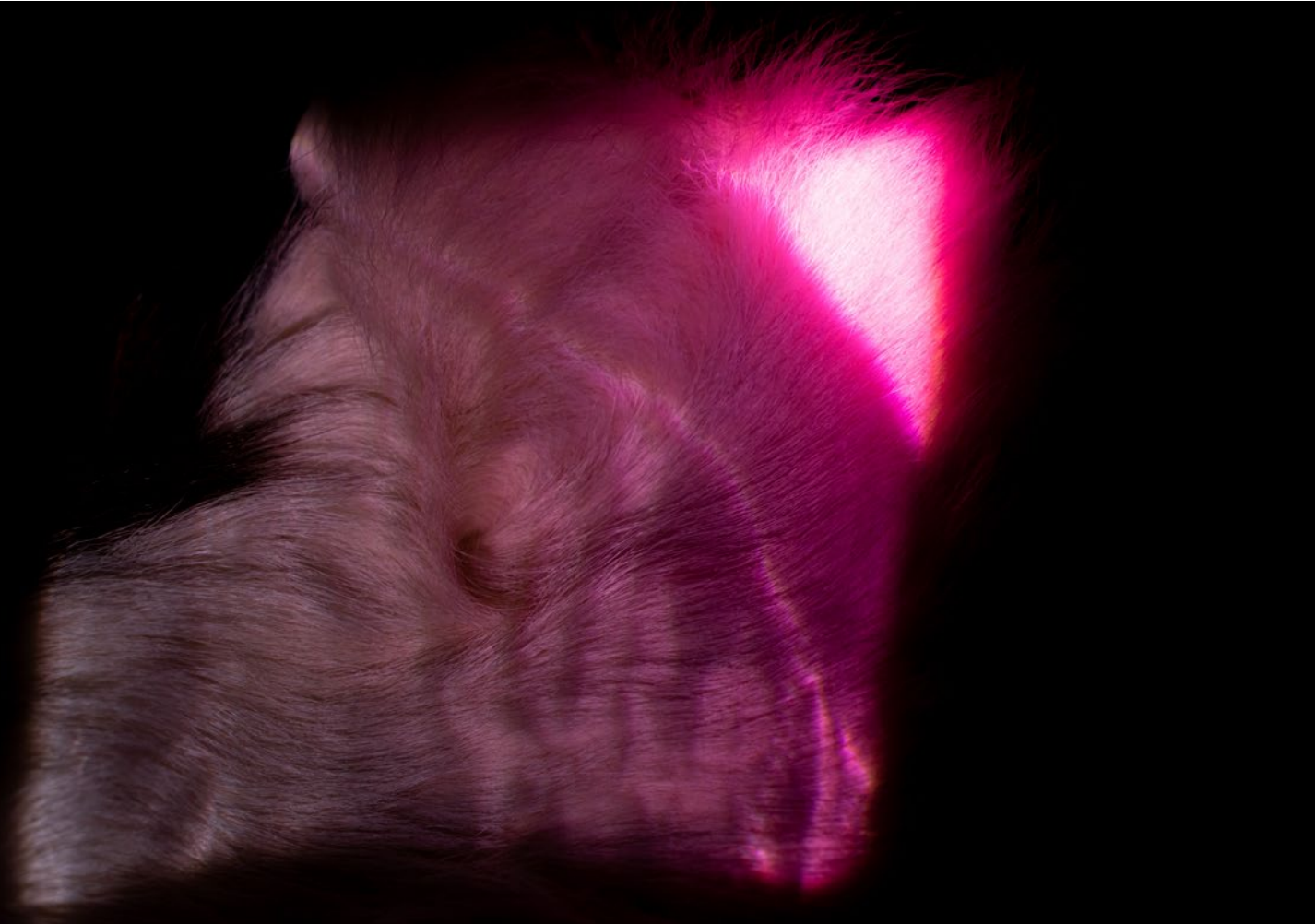
Travel and cohabitation. I always seem to make my most important work when I'm embedded in a community. That might be small: camping with a group of friends is how I gathered the footage for Pigeon Creek. It could be large and charged: over the past ten years some of my most important photographs have been made while spending time at Ox-Bow, ACRE, or in collaboration at the Wassaic Project. Collaboration is huge for me. If I am filming or photographing I like to let my subjects feel empowered to control their own image or what they want to be documented doing. That's not to say they always take me up on that but the door that's been opened for ethical representation leads to a level of comfort or abandon in my subjects that leads to the good stuff.

Who is your audience?

So much of my work mines secret histories or imagines the unrecorded gaps between what we know of queer communities of the past. There is something alluring to the idea that I could make work meant only for a dyke audience or queer audience- that what I am revealing is sacred knowledge. I certainly have a much different discourse around my work with dykes than with other audiences. In the end I have always been okay with viewers not understanding the full vision of what I am making. Oftentimes the secret sauce and the hidden details in work I make exist just for me. I love knowing the secrets of a print of mine hanging on the wall. Things I usually only reveal to an audience of students because I really believe in the value of an artist educator opening up their studio practice for students as a way to both demystify practice but maybe also as a way to share and encourage the magic one can make of their practice.

Precision of craft and an intimacy with material has been a constant important component of the work I make. The idea that labor and dedication to one's practice- whatever it may be- evokes mystical or spiritual energies. I think about the term "beruf" a lot- that to master one's own vocation is to be ultimately spiritual. That to work is holy as opposed to other ideologies that mark devotion and prayer as the most important spiritual practices. In the end I really love making an impactful or beautiful work that is most grounded when teetering (skillfully) at the edge of knowability (is this the sublime?).

D





E

Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

♪ [Patti Smith, Redondo Beach](#)

Eileen Mueller (b. 1985, Milwaukee) makes work that honors the skill-sharing networks of early dyke organizers by using independent production modes like hand processed 16mm film, performance, and photography to conjure the unseen and wholly unknowable Dyke Mysticism that binds queered histories through spacetime. Eileen has shown at IM ERSTEN in Vienna, Austria; Higher Pictures in New York, NY; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Elmhurst Art Museum, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Iceberg Projects, and Roots and Culture in Chicago, IL. She studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art and later received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

A — *Woman of the Wolf*,
2019
16mm film
5 minutes, 12 seconds

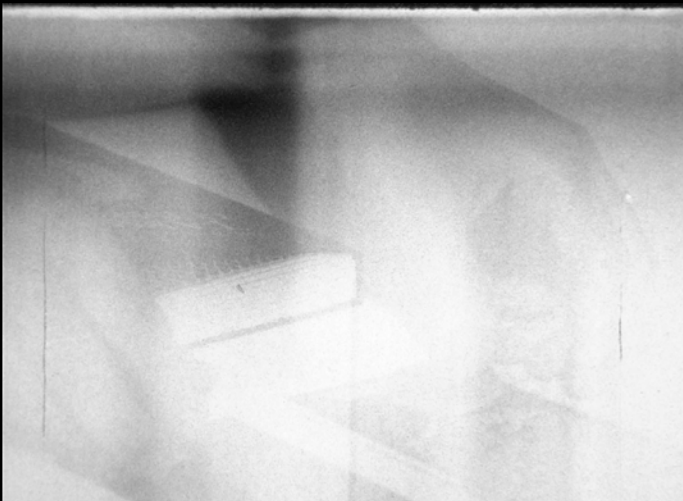
B — *Pussy Rock*
2019
Latex on PVC mesh
156 x 72 inches

C — *Betsy carving a handkerchief*.
2019
Looped 16mm projection, river rock, fog
<https://vimeo.com/370979216>

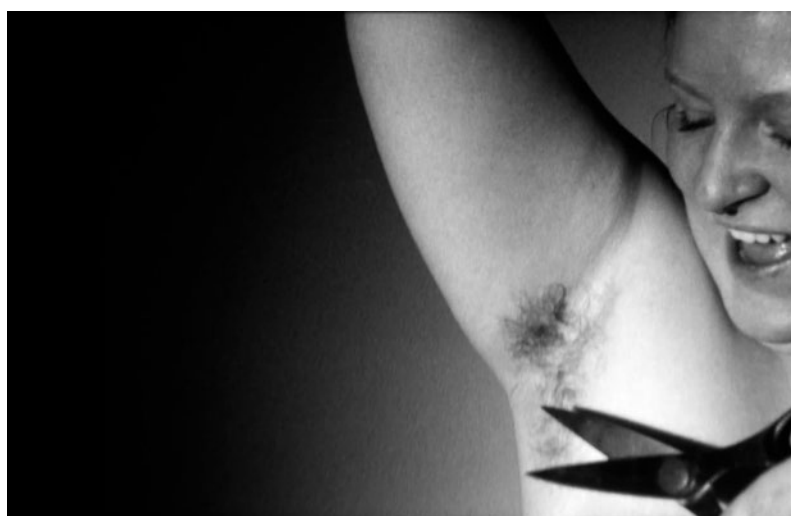
D — *Leather jacket*.
2019
Looped 16mm projection, cow hide
<https://vimeo.com/370979500>

E — *Wayfinding*
2019-2020
Pigment print on adhesive backed fabric
72 x 108 inches

Ej Nussbaum



THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL



A

Is there a formative experience that has shaped your work and practice?

I was working in the communications department of a labor union, and I was going bonkers sitting in a cubicle every day. I knew there was a DSLR rumbling around in one of the drawers at work, so I proposed a local-wide documentary interview project to my bosses. Once I had the go-ahead to leave the office and start filming people, I needed to make good on my claim that I knew how to use a camera, so I started taking the camera and tripod home, where I practiced filming my partner and then slowly everything else.

Not long after I started this interview project, I attended a Nazlı Dinçel screening at The Nightingale. I had never been to anything like a micro-cinema, and I showed up to the screening to meet up with friends. So when the projector started, I was swallowed whole in amazement. I remember this one shot of a hand – maybe in bed, super close up. The shot must have been by a window because light was beaming on the hand. The hand was so filled with color that I felt heat emanate from it, and the light was making the hand glisten like it was wet, but it appeared dry. This hand was not a representation of something, it was being realized through the film.

Later on that night, one of the films had a pop song that I knew. The song was so loud and garbled that it made me tense up. But then I realized “ah! This isn’t a soundtrack! This is a completely singular experience!” The line between image and experience became permeable, enlarging the sensory possibilities of my world. It was the mosh pit of my dreams. Seeing Nazlı Dinçel present her work in this space, I knew this way of working was exactly what I wanted to do; this way of using a camera to be so present with reality that looking and listening become a force that can act upon reality, not just take it in.

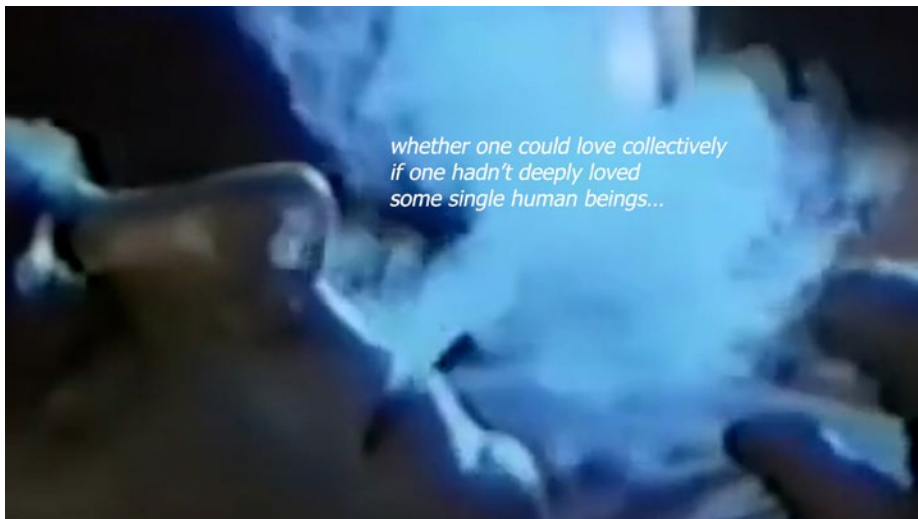


B

Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

130 is indirectly inspired by The Magnetic Fields's album 69 Love Songs. 69 Love Songs was the first "cool" album I listened to growing up. My older sister came back from college and was playing "Let's Pretend We're Bunny Rabbits," in the car. I felt so rebellious sneaking the CD from the car, playing the album in my room, and being like "THIS IS ABOUT SEX". But then I listened to the rest of the album, and I found it really challenging.

There are multiple singers, and different genres, and a lot of the songs are pretty abrasive in their clownish chaos. The singers sounded like my family and friends, and toys were being used as instruments. Songs like "When my Boy Walks Down the Street" gave me space to experience queerness as jubilation, while "Papa was a Rodeo" promised the possibility of love despite attempts of self-sabotage. It was an album that taught me how to disagree with art I like, but also brought art closer to me. Of course, most of the songs aren't about being in love. They are an attempt to live at the edges of two dueling cliffs: the ecstasy of infatuation and the decadence of heartache. 130 is also an insistent declaration, another set of dueling cliffs that for me point towards the future.



c

What is the one skill that you feel every artist needs to learn that isn't taught in art school?

Friendship. Have friends and listen to them.

What was the most unexpected thing you learned from your MFA experience?

To seek the impossible, and get started within the next 48 hours (maybe 72 if you need extra sleep). You don't have to contain your desires to what feels possible.

Ej Nussbaum (b.1992) earned her MFA at University of Illinois at Chicago and her BA from Hampshire College. Her filmmaking practice traverses both analogue and digital time machines. She uses humor and sentimentality to question how larger power systems are embodied and contested in the intimate realms of desire and memory. Whether engaging in speculative conversations with family members or historical revolutionaries, she finds value in imagining the presumed impossible and re-shaping the static presentations of histories and self-narratives we too readily give to others.

A — 130, 2020

16mm, Black and White, Silent

B — *Chicago Pawnors and Jewelers 2405 W Madison*

St Chicago, IL 60612, 2020

Video, Color, Sound

C — *Avanti!*, 2020

16mm, Video, Found Footage, Black and White,

Color, Sound

A black and white photograph of a baseball player in a batting stance. The player is wearing a light-colored jersey and pants with dark stripes on the lower legs. The name 'Paige Taul' is overlaid in white text in the center of the image.

Paige Taul

THIS WORLD SHOULD BE MORE WONDERFUL

B



Describe your ideal art making experience (when, where, what, how).

My ideal art making experience is unlimited supplies of film, cooperative and on time performers, and a right hand to help out with the set up.

Who is your audience?

Who do I make work for?
I make work for Black people. It is important to me that the people I'm thinking about and those present in the film, are able to feel something in the work.



c

What is the one skill that you feel every artist needs to learn that isn't taught in art school?

Being a careful listener is incredibly important regardless of whether what's being said is about your work or someone else's. Good listening skills are the foundation for great questions; questions for yourself and other people. I think listening is underrated in critique settings.



D

Is there a song that sums up or feels aligned to the body of work you created for your MFA thesis?

♪ [L.E.S Artistes](#) by Santigold

What is one thing that you do that is not art that has a major impact on the work that you make?

I read and watch interviews of filmmakers and moving image artists that I admire. There is something comforting in reading about someone else's process and pathways in thinking, that can change the way I understand a concept or plan a shoot. It makes the distance between myself and greater artists seem much smaller.

Paige Taul (b.1996) is an Oakland, CA native who received her BA in Studio Art with a concentration in Cinematography from the University of Virginia and her MFA in Moving Image from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her work engages with and challenges assumptions of black cultural expression and notions of belonging through experimental cinematography. As a part of her filmmaking practice she tests the boundaries of identity and self-identification through autoethnography to approach notions of racial authenticity in veins such as religion, style, language, and other black community based experiences.

Paige's work has been exhibited at venues including UnionDocs, CROSSROADS at SFMoMA, BlackStar Film Festival, and the Virginia Film Festival.

- A — *Too Small to be a Bear* (2020)**
05:09 min, b&w archival footage

- B — *10:28,30* (2019),**
b&w 16mm, digital transfer

- C — *In the face of god* (2018),**
found footage

- D — *The Promise* (2019),**
8mm b&w transfer



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