Editorial:

“Art must be easier when it’s created on a computer.” Since the emergence of the computer as a creative tool, the notion that digitally rendered artwork is easier to produce and lacks the legitimacy of traditional art forms has plagued contemporary artists. We must realize that digital means (computers, camera phones, 3-D Printers, etc.) are, in fact, just a tool. The wide availability of digital tools and mobile applications has brought about the tangibility of digital art and has bridged the gap, thus creating more personable and relatable experiences. But, where do we go from here? When a tween has access to Photoshop, video editing tools, and YouTube, how do contemporary artists legitimize their creative process to those who see the computer and other means as recreational creative tools?

In reality, technology has made things easier for all of us. Web platforms such as WordPress and Squarespace have streamlined web design, allowing any artist to promote themselves and to connect with creatives across the globe. Screen printers utilize photo emulsion techniques that, when combined with computer rendered designs, yield high quality and photo-realistic art prints. Sculptors utilize 3-D printing techniques in their practice to make mini models or to create temporary molds. In today’s digital age, artists utilizing digital means have come to the forefront and are no longer seen as the original black sheep that they once were.

Moving forward into the future, the computer itself is no longer the new kid on the block. From virtual reality to augmented reality, the digital frontier grows quicker and stronger with every new release of software and tools. In this issue, artists discuss how they navigate the new frontier of “the digital” and how that affects both their artmaking and daily interactions. Our aim is to spotlight how the gap between technology and art draws closer each day and to open a conversation that sparks future ideas and evolution of digital processes.

The continuing digitalization of life-as-we-know-it, necessitates a revision of the as-we-know-it part. Why? Well, because I’m fairly certain that the “know” portion of that characterization is more than a tad bit arrogant. Of course, it could be describing the exact opposite; maybe it means humanity’s sense of knowing is only as complete as humans are capable. Leaving the obvious contingencies and variables of knowledge acquisition behind, what I am proud to say we’ve captured in this issue is how perception is no longer directly mediated by digitalization but how digital technologies have entered our bodies, become parasitically bound to our senses and conceptions of real. This issue, The Digital, went through a massive evolutionary process, each contribution deeply thought through and expertly executed. So what does this collection of texts indicate: that agency, production, perception, relationships, and presence has been cyborg-ized.

Mike Calway-Fagen is co-Editor of Number and Curator of Exhibitions at Stove Works, a soon to open, non-profit art center in Chattanooga, TN. Mike is also an artist, writer, and educator.

Natalie Tyree, Co-Editor of Number, is an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design and Digital Artist based in Bowling Green, KY.
Regional Update: Memphis

Autumn means applications in Memphis. ArtsMemphis will award five $5,000 grants to individual artists through the “Arts Accelerator Grant” after the first of the year. Local artists should watch for grant writing workshops around town — these are helpful for this application as well as for learning to fill out other applications. ArtSpace’s “South Main Artspace Lofts” is another important opportunity to consider and to spread the word about. They will be providing lower income housing for artists in their recently refurbished building on St. Paul Street near the Civil Rights Museum in downtown Memphis. Qualified artists will be chosen on a first-come, first-served basis so turning in the application early will be important for this opportunity; application will be live in December. The long awaited Crosstown Arts Residency Program will begin taking applications this fall, as well, for a variety of residency opportunities for the summer and fall 2018. LIFT Community launched the “Soulsville USA Social Practice Artist Residency Program” this past summer, awarding several local artists $10,000 along with three months of working studio space. All of these important opportunities are helping to boost the Memphis Arts Scene on a truly fundamental level.

Brooks Museum is also shaking things up a bit. In September, they announce that their board opened the possibility of moving the museum to another location in the city. This is likely to be more cost effective than a much-needed retro fit or the tearing down and rebuilding of the existing structure in Overton Park, considerations that are necessary to house a growing collection and to keep the artwork in a safe, controlled environment.

Orange Mound Gallery (OMG) will feature new work by Memphis artist Kenny Wayne Alexander this fall. Alexander tends to push the envelope and blur the line between music and visual arts. Jay Etkin Gallery, a long-time staple in Memphis, currently in the Cooper Young District, will show John Torina, featuring new, unexpected work that is outside of his usual genre of landscapes. Pam Cobb will be featured here in November and Works on Paper will round out the holidays. Jason Miller’s gallery Circuitous Succession moved from downtown to a new location out east, just outside the suburb of Germantown. This fall they will feature artist Annette E. Fournet’s work in the Animal Persono Series. Back in Midtown, curator Niki Berry will feature photography this fall with work by Donald Earl Bailey, Co-founder of Sister Supply, and paintings by Jamin Carter after the first of the year at the Overton Park Gallery. Berry will also curate a show at Crosstown Arts in early 2018 with work by Allison Furr-Lawyer, Jennifer Balink and Lewis Feidelman. Crosstown Arts will move into its new space in the Crosstown Concourse Building this fall with an inaugural show of collaborative partners on the topic of Race and Violence, curated by Richard Lou and Dr. Earnestine Jenkins.

Amazing things are happening in the Memphis area with greater and more opportunities for artists and viewers cropping up at every turn.

Mary Jo Karimnia is an artist, curator, arts administrator and arts advocate in Memphis, TN.

Regional Update: Knoxville

Through October 10th, Dual Current: Inseparable Elements in Painting and Architecture rehashes relationships between form, color and line. The exhibition is on view at the Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture and the UT Downtown Gallery. Spread across two spaces, this installation was birthed from an ambitious vision. With forklifts utilized to heft components and a gallery built inside one of the galleries, Dual Current’s intention is to challenge the landscape of the Knoxville art scene. A rhythm established by geometric forms, high chroma surfaces and formal relationships, finds its footing across venues. In viewing both installations, a remembering occurs, blending forms and generating reverberation. With heavy-hitters like Josef Albers, Manfred Mohr and Michelle Grabner, the exhibition makes meaningful steps for Knoxville in fostering an in-person atmosphere for viewing important work.

On the last day of August, the Knoxville Botanical Gardens hosted one of the most exciting creative endeavors in recent months. Free Tangerine, a fashion show and exhibition, featured clothing and sculptures by Lauren Sanders, paintings by Eric Cagley, and sound and runway direction by Dylan Dawkins. This is the third fashion event organized by Sanders, and her sophistication echoed in every detail. Each garment, utilizing elements such as grid like patterns and boxy silhouettes, was designed and constructed by Sanders. Cagley’s paintings were measured and geometric at first glance. They then exposed themselves in cut sections and extensions beyond the architecture of the space. These moments acting in unison with the steel sculptures and concrete block forms by Sanders called attention to framing and the forms used as support. When bodies entered wearing gridded garments, rendered small by massive paintings, walking to structured sounds amongst architectural elements, grabbing blocks and methodically transporting them, they were at once powerful and small. All this creates a reminder of the fragility and labor of the framework of systems, where bodies are the gears or perhaps wedges.

Mark your calendars for a solo exhibition of recent work by Morehshin Allahyari. The show will open at the UT Downtown Gallery on October 20th and run until November 22nd with a First Friday reception on November 3rd from 6-9PM. In her work, Allahyari addresses political and cultural contradictions surrounding objects and technology, and how by undermining factors of their creation and destruction alters how they contribute to history and the narrative of power. A recent project, the 3D Additivist Cookbook was made in collaboration with Daniel Rourke. It lives as a PDF that includes an extensive array of critical texts, designs and recipes. It serves as an additive critique of the landscape of the Knoxville art scene. A footing across venues. In viewing both installations, a remembering occurs, blending forms and generating reverberation. With heavy-hitters like Josef Albers, Manfred Mohr and Michelle Grabner, the exhibition makes meaningful steps for Knoxville in fostering an in-person atmosphere for viewing important work. Allahyari will give a public lecture on October 19th at 7:30PM in the University of Tennessee’s Art and Architecture Building, Room 109.

Corinna Ray is an artist and writer based in Brooklyn, NY.
Regional Update: Mississippi

The eighth Sculpture Biennial at the Hazel and Jimmy Sanders Sculpture Garden, located on the grounds of Delta State University, opened in early August. The work in the biennial was selected from a nationally advertised competition. One of the pieces on display will join the Sculpture Garden’s permanent collection at the end of the exhibition’s run. The permanent collection has grown to such an extent that part of the biennial work is now displayed at the Grammy Mississippi Museum, just down the road from the Sculpture Garden. The popular success of the biennial has encouraged the city of Cleveland to partner with the Sculpture Garden this year to select five additional sculptures from the submissions to be displayed in downtown Cleveland along Sharpe Avenue.

The 2017 Sculpture Biennial featured artists from the Sculpture Garden are Mark Dickson, Rick Herzog, Rollin Karg, Ray Katz, Ben Pierce, and Durant Thompson, on view at the Grammy Museum are James Davis, Rollin Karg, and Wayne Vaughn, and installed in downtown Cleveland is work by Hanna Jubran, Lawson King, Matt Miller, Wayne Vaughn, and Glenn Zweygardt.

Delta State University’s Fielding Wright Art Center showcased the work of Ron Koehler, a long-time resident of Mississippi and Chair Emeritus of DSU’s art department, in a retrospective that spanned 45 years of his career. The retrospective offered a rare opportunity to glimpse the astonishing breadth of Koehler’s artistic pursuits, the subject matter that has occupied him, and the variety of media he has employed. The artist acknowledged that a casual visitor might get the impression that the work in this exhibition was created by more than one artist. According to the artist what connects all of his work is his interest in exploration: “Exploration of shape, form, media, color, texture, concept and genre. Exploration of technique, movement, scale, iconography, purpose and activism. Exploration of personal goals. Exploration of time and place. Exploration of fear, and exploration of the absurd.” His explorations of a subject matter or the possibilities of a medium often lead him to work in series. This retrospective includes a number of these series such as the humorous Balanced Diet series, various sets of tools, and examples from his famous Brush series which numbers in the thousands.

Another connecting element is the artist’s wonderful sense of humor. It is the structuring element in the Balanced Diet series that consists of an assortment of cholesterol-heavy food items. It manifests itself in a more subtle way in his use of materials as in a recycled column that becomes the base of a figure or a piece of drift wood that is transformed into a brush. It also manifests itself in the delight Koehler takes in visual puns as when a piece of wood is manipulated in excess to fool the eye into thinking it is a Styrofoam cup, wood shavings come to simulate the bread crumbs on a fried chicken leg, and a perspective drawing is enscased in a frame rendered in perspective.

The Museum of the Mississippi Delta in Greenville, MS presented a selection of Kim Rushing’s photographic series Parchman. The photographs were taken over a four-year period in the early 1990s at the infamous Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. Rushing was the first outside photographer permitted to work inside the penitentiary. After gaining the trust of inmates, Rushing found eighteen volunteers who allowed him to photograph them, their cells and their daily routines. The photographs present in black-and-white the bleak reality of life at Parchman. The images were juxtaposed with handwritten letters by the inmates in which they speak of the lives they dreamed of having. The contrast between their dreams and the stark reality shown in the images is heart-wrenching. The choice of black-and-white film endows these images with a timeless quality that reflects how slowly time passes for these men, while the crisp quality of the photographs and their stark geometry reinforce the entrapment of the men presented here.

Studio 230 in Cleveland, MS currently hosts Get Sm’ ART, a group exhibition including work by Sammy Britt, Floyd Shamian, Gerald Deloach, Brandon Moon, Tommy Goodman, Ky Johnson, Pat Gavis, KS Wells, Katherine Pearson, Thad Brewer, John Campbell, Lawson King and Cetin “Chet” Oguz. The work ranges from figurative to abstract, from ceramics and painting, to large-scale outdoor sculpture. The title of the exhibition, Get Sm’ ART, is a pun in the popular TV show as well as on the gallery’s objective to introduce local audiences to artists who stem from the area or live and work in the area.

Michaela Merryday is an Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History at Delta State University and Director of the Fielding Wright Art Center.

Installation View Ron Koehler Retrospective, 2017. Photo by the author.

Regional Update: Asheville

Warren Wilson College recently announced a Masters program in Critical and Historical Craft Studies, the first of its kind in the field. Namita Gupta Wiggers, Director and Co-founder of Critical Craft Forum, has been named the founding Director of the exciting new program, set to begin in the summer of 2018. You can’t apply yet, but to find out more, visit: https://www.warren-wilson.edu/request-information/.

In the spirit of celebrating our differences, Asheville Area Arts Council hosts an exhibition featuring artists from across the region who are of diverse cultural backgrounds. Latitude & Longitude : 35°35’15.1” N – 82°33’16.6” W will focus on this diversity in the hopes to engage with the greater Asheville community, providing a safe space for discussion. The exhibition opens in October in the Refinery Creator Space downtown.

Black Mountain College Museum and Art Center (BMMAC) introduces Active Archive this fall. This exhibition features artwork from their permanent collection, activated through contemporary performances and installations. Performing artist and exhibition curator, Martha McDonald, and composer and performer Laura Baird team up on September 29th to perform in McDonald’s installation Music for Modernist Shapes: Reimagining Spectodrama, inspired by Xanti Schawinsky’s 1936-37 experimental theater piece, Spectodrama. Exhibition runs through December 2017.

If you find yourself in downtown Asheville, don’t miss Crafted Strangers, an exhibition opening this month at The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design (CCCD) that focuses on the native peoples and immigrant experience through traditional media in a contemporary context. The group exhibition, curated by duo Matters Unsettled, examines the contemporary reclamation of indigenous arts and crafts. Tinny and unapologetic, this exhibition forces the viewer to consider the social structures that work to create a misleading narrative of the nation’s minority groups. “The curators would like to acknowledge that we are guests in the unseeded territory of the Tsalaquits Detsadaniku people of what is presently called Asheville, North Carolina.” Visit craftcreativitydesign.org/crafted-strangers/ to read the full exhibition introduction. The exhibition runs through January 2018.

Travel down I-26 to Asheville’s neighboring town, Marshall, and visit The Old Marshall Jailhouse. A project started by local potter Josh Copus beginning with the acquisition of the jailhouse property, Copus aims to honor the history of the jail and town of Marshall, while showcasing the town’s contemporaries. Amanda Hollomon Cook (@hollomoncookceramics) of East Fork Pottery is the first to make the space her own, with her ceramic forms staged inside a jail cell. The space is now aptly called The Old Marshall Jailhouse Project, and it’s offering more than a unique gallery experience. It currently houses Copus’s traveling Building Community Brick Project, previously manifested in Baltimore, Maryland and across South Carolina. Get your hands dirty, make a brick, and contribute to an ongoing building project at the jail site. The brick factory operation hours are posted on the jailhouse doors, but you can also find the schedule here: https://communitybrick.org. Follow the progress of The Old Marshall Jailhouse Project on Instagram @oldmarshalljal, or read more about their ongoing efforts to document the building’s history at https://www.oldmarshalljal.com.

Lauren Gray Roquemore is a working artist living in the mountains of Western NC.
Art in the greater Atlanta area is questioning the relationship between age and value. *Whitespace* featured *Ancient Art Objects*, which addressed the similarities between the ancient and the contemporary through works that reference everything from classic architecture to modes of excavation. Closing the exhibition was a conversation moderated by Art Paper’s Editor and Artistic Director Victoria Camlin, and included curator Katie Geha, and artists Jaime Bull, Kaleena Stasiak, and Max Wash. *Whitespace* follows this group show with a solo exhibition by Birmingham, Alabama, artist Amy Pleasant. Pleasant’s *Writing Pictures* employs painting, works on paper, and ceramic sculpture to consider writing with images, particularly in relation to the body.

The *Atlanta Contemporary Art Center* held their annual fundraiser Art Party, and revealed a new exhibition space in the lower level of its building. At Art Party, five new shows opened. Highlights included *Venus*, a collection of works by Anna Berbeeze, as well as *Dark Powder Part 1*, an exhibition of 3-D printed clay reproductions of African artifacts created by artist Matthew Angelo Harrison. The Contemporary On-Site series hosted *Good Weather*, a gallery from North Little Rock, Arkansas, which takes inspiration from its home location, a suburban garage. The clever exhibition curated by founder, director, and curator of Good Weather, Haynes Riley, includes works by Aaron Blendowski, Ian Jones, Irini Miga, Willie Wayne Smith, and Katie Wynne.

Fast Forward/Rewind currently on view at *The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia* (MOCA) shows the breadth of contemporary photography. The artists included in the show were culled from Atlanta Celebrates Photography: *Ches to Watch*. On September 14, a panel convened, which included curator Mary Stanley, artists Adam Forrester, Sarah Small, and Carl Martin, and was moderated by co-founder of ArtsATL Catherine Fox. MOCA GA will open *WAP: Paul Stephen Benjamin* on September 23. Benjamin is a recent recipient of the MOCA GA Working Artist Project.

Fantasy, which opened at *Day & Night Projects*, included works by Ashton Bird, Sierra Kramer, Matthew Lawrence, Chelsea Raflo and Lucia Riffel. Using painting, installation, sculpture and video each artist combined material in a visceral way to find the familiar in the unknown, the old in the new. In nearby Athens, curator Rebecca Brantley brought solo exhibition *Leticia Bojorquez: Event Horizon* to Athens Institute for Contemporary Art. Bojorquez created a large-scale installation comprised of repurposed CDs forming concave and convex shapes with the abundant material, the space became interactive with sound.

Up next, *Murmur* will host the Atlanta Zine Fest (AZF) on September 23-24. This year, AZF will address the theme of Reality Schism. Vendors and artists will explore the zine as a way of forming alternative realities and communities.

Courtney McClellan is an artist and writer from Greensboro, N.C.

---

As we wrap up the Summer months and transition into Fall/Winter, events and exhibitions abound throughout the bluegrass state.

Art Through the Lens kicks off in Mid-October at the *Yeiser Art Center* in Paducah and runs through the end of November. The Art Center’s youth art exhibition *Teen Spirit* features works by high school students and runs from December 10 – 23. In previous years, the exhibition has had over 400 entry submissions and showcases the strongest work throughout the region by aspiring artists. *A Curated Life: Mediations Between Art, Objects and Ideas* was recently on view at the *Clemens Fine Art Gallery* on the campus of Western Kentucky Community and Technical College. The show featured curators throughout the region and explored the duality of being both a curator and producer.

The galleries within the *Murray State University Department of Art and Design* have been packed with exhibitions that highlight student endeavors, graduating seniors, and a variety of visual artists. *Wyatt Dagle: Severe: Recent Works* (October 15 – November 10) in the *Mary Ed Mecoy Hall Gallery* featured wood-working and sculpture works. The *Clara M. Eagle Main Gallery* hosts *Works by Ariel Lavery and Danielle Muzina* (November 15 – December 6) featuring an array of works from Lavery’s 4-D experimental pieces to Muzina’s rich paintings and drawings. Closing out the season will be Senior Exhibitions in both the *Clara M. Eagle Upper Gallery* and the *Currys Gallery*.

*Ellis Walker Gallery* in Bowling Green featured Through the Looking Glass from October 12 through November 10 which included artists Kristina Arnold and Michael Nichols. This exhibition highlighted new works by both artists showcasing Arnold’s glass-blown sculptures and cyanotypes as well as Nichols’ silverpoint and pastel drawings.

Recently on view at the main gallery of the *Ivan Wilson Fine Arts Center* on the campus of Western Kentucky University was this year’s *Junior Student Exhibition* which was curated by Dr. Sarah Kate Gillespie, curator of American Art at the Georgia Museum of Art. Concurrently, the WKU Art Department hosted *Nieves Ull and Brad Vetter: Sawtooth Printing* for a series of lectures, workshops, and exhibition of letterpress posters and printed works which were featured in the corridor gallery. Completing the fall gallery season is the *Fall Senior Exhibition* running from November 17 through December 9.

*Kentucky Museum* features *A Culture Connect: Bosnians in Bowling Green* through June 30, 2018. Sponsored by the museum and the Kentucky Folklife Program, the show creates a visual narrative that tells the stories of Bowling Green immigrants. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum will host several events related to Bosnian heritage and culture.

*Speed Art Museum* features a variety of exhibitions that run through the Spring, with selected shows focusing on women in the Arts. *Bruce Conner Forever and Forever* displays films and prints by Bruce Conner (1933–2008), an artist known for his innovations in film, assemblage, drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, and collage. Exhibition is currently on view and runs through March 2.

Upcoming shows focusing on female creatives include *Thoroughly Modern: Women in 20th Century Art and Design* (December 17 – June 10) and *Women Artists in the Age of Impressionism* (February 17 – May 13).

*Hite Art Institute* on the campus of The University of Louisville continues to buzz with events and guest lecturers. *New Recruits* (June 9 – September 9) highlighted U of L’s new faculty and featured works by Kyungmee Kate Byun, Tiffany Calvert, Meena Khalili, Margaret Leininger, and Rachel Singel. Following the new faculty exhibition, selections from Type Hike, a collaborative non-profit design project that celebrates and supports the outdoors through typography, were on view August 18 through September 22 and featured a discussion with Type Hike co-founder, James Walker, and participating designers Meena Khalili, U of L Design Faculty, and Jenny Lee, Nashville-based designer and letterer. Other featured exhibitions included *Overshadowed* (September 22 – October 28) a collaborative slow-scan photography project by Mary Carothers and Brian McClave; *photography exhibition Adhar/Sky/Ciel* (September 28 – November 3) featuring Ulst based photographers Ruairadh Macdonald, Iain A Monk, and *Jean-François Martin* dedicated photographers of the Hebridean sky; *Overshadowed* (September 22 – October 28) a collaborative slow-scan photography project by Mary Carothers and Brian McClave; *photography exhibition Adhar/Sky/Ciel* (September 28 – November 3) featuring Ulst based photographers Ruairadh Macdonald, Iain A Monk, and *Jean-François Martin* dedicated photographers of the Hebridean sky; *Seeing/Unseen: Perspectives on Perception* (September 28 – November 3) featuring photographs selected from the University of Louisville Photographic Archives, many of which have never before been publicly displayed, and include works by Cal Kowal, Charles Rumpf, Ryan Boatwright, and Eva Rubenstein.

*Natalie Tyree* is an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design and Digital Artist/Maker based in Bowling Green, KY.
Interview: Jessye McDowell

Jessye McDowell and I both have practices centered around interrogating tech narratives and cultural products that result from interactions with devices. Neither of us identify as technologists, but rather embrace the human side of computing. We spoke today about narratives of technological mastery and learning, and creative practices responding to technology.

MacDowell’s recent 3D rendered landscapes are part of a series called “Make it Real” referring to the 1988 song “Make it Real” by The Jets. She is interested in the consequences of the eternally false promise that technology will somehow enable a “more real” way of living, addressing themes of desire and longing between the natural and digital.

I recall my own relationship to the song. “Make it Real” was a staple of Detroit’s WNIC show, “Pillowtalk.” The broadcaster had the deepest voice, and spoke so intimately the microphone seemed to be inside his mouth. Though I was too young to understand it then, his setup for this song made you inhabit its sentimentality as though you were an audience of one.

Loneliness is a timeless theme, exacerbated by the illusion of connectivity.

MacDowell’s work grapples with the conceptions, implications, and consequences of the tools she utilizes. She invites viewers to investigate interfaces and aesthetics that define so much of our current media, and her projects are richly critical of all that emerging technologies both demand from and promise us.

Connection isn’t communication, but he goes into depth about maintaining criticality at the interface level; to consider how UX designers exploit possibilities for connection and community.

I think a lot about the tension between technology’s design and ease of access. I think about the surface a smartphone, and the infinitely-deep portal of the data at our fingertips, how we move between the real and rendered so quickly. If we’re aware of the pitfalls within connected culture, but we’re also promoting dexterity with the tools of its consumerist ideology, what is our role? There’s a flipside to that, though it doesn’t dispel the danger. There’s a possibility to give people more control. This is comparable to a Marxist perspective. If people learn to make things, maybe they will become more responsible users, too. I realize the obstacles we are naming will also get in the way.

Agency is precious. Media consumption colors ideation. What about the tendency to recycle tropes and reject challenging cultural discourse? I’m constantly banging my head against the wall on this one.

It’s a conundrum. If you distill it, this is an uncanny way of asking “why try?” if most people are so resistant to critical technology. At some point, something made you ask these questions for yourself. What was it?

In the late 90’s I was into culture jamming. Mass media was such a critical juncture. I guess my thinking was, if you go where the tools are, you can make great change. Despite its complications, I still believe digital practice helps me achieve that goal.

Getting people to call into question their assumptions about technology is an integral part of what we do. Sometimes it seems impossible. It happened to us, to you and I. For me it happened over a long period, and I started becoming interested in technology because I was critical of it, because I was a total luddite. I think when I boil it down, I’m also a luddite, hanging out in deep conversations just so I can be the first to resist. My real interests are rhetorical — the way the digital persuades, how art communicates discourse, how tools unite an audience of users, who is listening, how we are understanding.

I’m at this place where I think everything must have impact, but I’m also learning how to appreciate a well-rendered 3D still life.

I was thinking about this today, about 3D modeling and its relationship to photography, art history, and painting. This practice has made me so much more aware of the things painters are thinking about and helps me see the world through a photographer’s eyes. Investigating divisions between the real and the fake, brings together these concerns for me. I’m forced to learn a lot about the world, and composition and scale. I’m returning to the fundamentals a lot.

Lesley Duffield is an interdisciplinary artist and educator at Virginia Tech working at the periphery of documentary, installation, and creative technologies.
An informal conversation on topics including the hand/digital/thought materialization/idea visualization/chance/risk/failure/cyborgism! Also, maybe discussing institutional support, the multiple, mass production, the language of industry, perfection, precision, work, artwork as work, and capitalism.

**Greg Pond** is a Professor of Art at the University of the South in Sewanee, TN. He works in sculpture, video, and other digital media. Greg has a background in more traditional sculptural methods including foundry, steel fabrication, and wood working but over the last ten years has incorporated digital fabrication techniques in the production of studio, collaborative, and public works.

**Bethany Springer** is Associate Professor of Sculpture at the University of Arkansas, Fayetville. Bethany’s background is based in both traditional sculptural processes and also non-traditional including performance and label-defying idea-based strategies. These approaches include but are not limited to video, installation, performance, whatever her idea necessitates.

**Mike Calway-Fagen** is Curator of Exhibitions at Stove Works in Chattanooga, TN and is also co-Editor of Number magazine. Mike’s practice vacillates across a spectrum of productive modes including writing, curating, organizing, thinking, teaching, and making.

M: I’m really excited that we three have come together to have this conversation, which is somewhat formal but more actively improvisational. I say this, in part, because of our similar histories with material and process and our creative evolutions as we’ve branched out in divergent directions. We are cut from similar cloths.

Before we really bite into things I think it would be useful to clarify what digital processes mean and what they are. I’m thinking particularly of techniques and machinery deployed at the service of a sculptural practice.

B: I think what immediately comes to mind is cnc routing, cnc plasma cutting, rapid prototyping, laser cutting; these are the tools we regularly use in the shops at the University of Arkansas which are maintained and experted by our technician, Vincent Edwards, a master furniture maker that utilizes the above processes in his own work. But a more fundamental scale, one that is now the norm, I use Photoshop on a regular basis to perfect and manipulate documentation. This transition from the physical world to the digital realm where further engagement takes place is ultimately what we’re talking about and includes a pretty expanded field: video, sound, projection, Arduino computer technology.

G: I would add 3D scanning to the list. I also regularly use plotters, a cnc vinyl cutter, and 3D printers. It’s an entirely different set of tools as well as CAD design software itself where one can model three-dimensionally interior and exterior spaces, objects, and structures in virtual space in order to visualize and as preparation for their construction. Another technique is the writing of computer code itself, algorithms, to generate new types of images, forms, and output.

M: So aside from being a different toolbox that’s being utilized and developed it also sounds like a different realm of intrigue and a different way of visualizing, inhabiting, and conceptualizing space, occupancy, and volume.

G: Yeah, and so navigating between virtual three-dimensional space and actual three-dimensional space is tricky and the brain must relearn its relationship to those things and its primary receptor, the body. This is something I’m always exploring from both directions. I’ll design something in virtual space and bring it into the physical world and then develop it further in the computer. It amounts to a kind of exchange with both sides, the digital and the physical, exchanging information and a more complete understanding.

M: The resulting piece from your ongoing collaboration with the dance group, New Dialect, examines a great many of those perceptual thresholds we’ve grown accustomed to and taken for granted.

G: Yes, it’s a combination of lots of different techniques: 3-D scanning, utilizing different algorithms to reinterpret points on the bodies of the moving dancers, processing the data and converting it via the CNC machine into a physical form. I then go back over the object, hand-finishing the entirety of its surfaces. I am interested in embracing that distinction. There is a personality that each type of mark produces, you can tell if it’s been made by hand or by a machine, in most cases. And those different languages embedded in those processes really impact the way work is understood. I think about people like Donald Judd or Robert Irwin who went to significant efforts to make certain no impression of their own hand was left in the work. Or maybe we’re getting a little ahead of ourselves here as there’s a lot to unpack there in terms of where those different types of gestures take the work, what it is saying as a direct product of how much material trace of the maker is left.

M: That’s interesting because I think the question you raise about meaning-making is most often characterized as a traditionalist’s caveat. But the fact is that things mean what they mean because they were made the way they were made and present their identities through this negotiation of process and presence. Judd and Irwin’s work hangs in the balance of this negotiation which in many ways is even more active as technologies branch out, new skills are acquired, and others fall by the wayside. So the maker is always present and always never present. Maybe y’all could talk about the relationship of the body to digital processes, where on a spectrum of a particular digital process does the body exist, how much authorship does the body maintain? I’m wondering what your thoughts are on when a tool mediates, which obviously tools have been mediating for millennia, but when it is a digital fabrication process how that affects the relationship?

B: Yes, there is a lot to say but so it’s not completely scattered I’ll pick one point and start talking about it. Going back to what Greg was talking about, as far as the artist’s touch, the hand, the impression of the body, the fingerprint, is not an important component of my practice especially as its postmodern underpinnings celebrate appropriation. You know, I think recently the artist is not important. I get into a lot of trouble with statements like that because I live in the middle of the Ozark mountains where artistry, the hand, and
craftsmanship is widely revered and respected. As far as being a contemporary maker, these ideas find a good deal of traction in Roland Barthes’s The Death of the Author and specifically the article Why are there no Great Masters. There is a reason social practice, collaboration, digital processes, and other decentralized practices is popular right now. Modernism’s heroic artist has been outpaced and by extension, mastery of processes is not revered now as it used to be.

M: I would say that social practices seem potentially like a problematic point of comparison, in that authorship is defused through other bodies and not given over to automation. That seems...Am I wrong?

G: Those shifts in education and some of the subsequent gaps created have been filled by institutions like Penland and the Tennessee School for Craft which maintain those more traditional processes. They tend toward those practices that are most often considered to be craft. Although, I would also say that having gone to a number of like conferences on programming, it’s about the same as going to a ceramics conference. There isn’t a whole lot of discussion about the conceptual energies. It’s “how do you make this thing happen?” The discussions are remarkably similar.

M: So y’all both sound very much invested in what these things mean. I guess in terms of pedagogy, in terms of your own practices? Maybe also on a more fundamental level? I’m constantly thinking about what it means to make, at the ontological scale.

G: I think there’s not much difference. There is difference in approach and in some of the ways you have to think, to know your ideas and execute them. But ultimately, I don’t think from what Bethany is saying, and I agree with her, is that you’re looking for a tool that will help execute the idea and so the outcome obviously doesn’t leave any room for practice?

B: Love that book.

G: Yes, the book is great. This is important because that meant that everyone was coming up through the apprentice system prior to this. And in 1995, right before you and I were in grad school that number ballooned to 10,000 MFA’s. So, we see a dramatic shift in the way people are educated in the arts. I only know one person who is roughly my age who came up as an apprentice and is a currently practicing artist. So, I think that has a lot to do with it and I think the other attitude here, quoting Paul Kos, is that “craft is now the exquisite execution of the idea not the practice through which you are trained.”

B: I agree and something that digital fabrication does is open itself up by being less esoteric than many traditional sculptural processes. Think of all the open-source codes, this information is readily available to the public in a way that traditional and lengthy processes are not. Where you want to apprentice, you essentially learn technique but you could argue that you could also go to YouTube and learn some of those techniques.

G: Right, one thing that is a corollary here — this dance project that I am working on, we are using architectural theory to generate dances, right, and 2D scanning. These different components inform one another but a lot of times the rules that we come up with and the reason why its such an easy collaboration is because of the same rules-based activities devised by Fisher Brown, Morris Cunningham, and John Cage. It’s similar to writing computer code, scripted behaviors. But what we are doing with these dancers is very much like taking commands, orders. They weren’t meant for the human body but sometimes they can perform the command. Then the dancer’s body is commanded to move two parts of the body in two different ways that are nearly anatomically impossible.

B: What does that look like?

G: It looks very interesting. I mean, they are excellent dancers so it’s sort of hard to tell but that’s what we are pushing this project to explore, the limits of physicality. And then it becomes sculpture again, or video, or something like that. We are trying, in one case we are imposing structures on another and vice versa.
for new media art which is now thrives through its interactivity, networked-ness, and computational aspects. We shouldn’t be looking at painting or sculpture or any of these things as a foundation or bridge between modes.

M: I recently had my students read sections from *Rhythm Analysis* by Henri Lefebvre, the that describes the of ebbs and flows of capitalism’s after-effects and byproducts, even down to how streets designed and navigated, or the pace of one’s footsteps, all being dictated by the larger scaffold of production and capital. All of that to say, I feel like there is a centrifugal, central relationship there. It also seems to bind together a more poetic and performative sense of sound production, or music writing or...because I mean, I just can’t imagine a world where those two are distinct because we have a formative relationship to sound or an utterance, or anything sonic or oral. Again, I guess I’m trying to tie these things back to the body and the body becomes a locus for conception or conduit for those things.

G: Well, no work of art is relevant unless it somehow resonates with experience. That Russian term, you are “making strange”, you are making strange not you are making it strange. It is intentional alienation. Years ago, I wrote an article which included in it a bit about the South’s history with social organizations and aesthetics which mirror, in many ways, the missions of open source technology and art. The history of art and sculpture making is very much rooted in the privacy of the object.

M: The object is the gateway for experience. I think of Sissel Tolaas’ work, smellscapes in little vials. The visuals, the physicalities, are provided through that and not through some pictorial or imagistic representation. Everything is provided through the viewer’s own individual experience with those vials. It’s not unlike a work by Lawrence Weiner. Where there is text and the viewer fills in the gaps of the visual and narrativizes their perceptions. It is a different way to involve the body.

M: I mean I think that’s a really great point to bring up, the notion of the object as a gateway to experience. I think that also calls into question what we have not really talked about directly; our presences and the fragmentation of presences and perception. I am thinking about the virtual’s impact on notions and experiences of presence or what constitutes a thing, a body.

B: It is a really exciting time. You know Christine Lucas was here not too long ago and her projected virtual objects in space are extremely interesting. I think of all the people that risked death recently through Pokémon Go which to me relates strangely to her work and your point, Mike. If it is perceived experience it is experience, you know? More so these days it doesn’t seem to matter what the truth is, whether something is real or not, it doesn’t matter because the perception of what’s happening makes it real. If you can perceive it, it is real. We are in the midst of bad news, fake news, altered realities and I think it is a really curious time to think about objects in the same light. So even if an object doesn’t exist in time and space, if it just exists virtually like in Christine Lucas’s work, it still exists.

M: But there is an intentionality to it that differentiates. I mean, there is the illusion, right. There’s all these things that may or may not be real but are real because of the possibility — but there is an intentionality to making that I think differentiates it from being a bystander or operating as a witness to the world.

G: I think it can be traced back to the hand of the artist. I mean, I agree with you. There is something very powerful about the intentionality that is conveyed through a work of art. There are two parts, I want to make a couple of broader philosophical points. One, you know the thing that makes us human is the ability to believe in things that are beyond our immediate selves. That is at least something that’s argued that differentiates us as a species from all other sixteen different types of homo whatever that were on the planet at the same time. Neanderthals were the last ones to go but there were about fifteen others that were there alongside us. It was our ability to believe in myth that essentially, something that is beyond our immediate selves, allowed us to band into larger groups, and develop national boarders, gods, any idea that drives us, that allows us to be in different places and not see each other but share similar ideas and extend our conceptual reach. Shared experiences. That alone sets us up
Mike Calway-Fagen is co-Editor of Number and Curator of Exhibitions at Stove Works, a soon to open, non-profit art center in Chattanooga, TN. Mike is also an artist, writer, and educator.
Interview: McLean Fahnestock

Fascinated with all things exploration land, sea, and sky, McLean Fahnestock employs a variety of digital modes to make art that evokes wonder and mystery. The artist juxtaposes found and made imagery from these vast realms to create 2D digital images, multi-media sculpture, and video installations. Taking on subjects such as “truth” in history, madness, perfection, and maritime disasters her art balances content with technique to communicate perspectives from her life experiences, interests, and research.

Your grandfather, Captain John Sheridan Fahnestock, was an explorer of the South Pacific, and you recently traveled to Queensland, Australia to research his journey. What about him inspired you? I am inspired by the myth of the explorer. This epic character who was also a real person in my family. I am also drawn to experiencing new things, discovery, and I have some serious wanderlust. I channel that into learning new things, reading, archive diving, and traveling.

The semester is underway at Austin Peay State University (ASPU) where you are now an Assistant professor. What has excited you about being on campus? I just finished a project for the eclipse that happened in August of 2017. Austin Peay had a program with an astronaut the evening before the eclipse. We, my collaborator and APSU gallery director Michael Dickins and I, made a new version of an older project I did a few years ago for the Black Mountain College (Re) Happening. It’s called Launch and is an inspirational work about the importance of the space program. I did the video and he did the sound. We built a platform with rumble plate so there’s also a kinetic component. The audience can stand on this platform and feel the rumble from the base of the rocket launching in the video projected onto the side of the gym. At Black Mountain I was projecting rockets and shooting them up trees. There’s no forest here, and I had a big flat canvas to work with. I like doing architectural stuff. It’s not something I get to do often because it’s big, and it takes a lot of resources. Here at the university we have some of those resources.

What are some of your other architectural projects? It’s been quite a while but I did a project called Indeterminate Forms. Those are works that are about struggle for perfection. They are all really short loops of Olympic Athletes. I projected one of those on the side of a building in San Francisco, in a storefront in Ireland, and a storefront in Phoenix. I’ve shown those around quite a bit because they are silent, really short, and are easy for an audience. It’s quick; there’s not a long narrative that needs to take up time for a viewer moving quickly on a sidewalk.

What else are you working on now? It’s been a year since we last read about your work in Number. At the time of my interview with Anthony J. Morris, I had just gotten back from Australia. I was making the Stratagems. Since then I have been working on new collages with islands and space. I started working with space again, and I was thinking about the islands as being a liminal space and being portals as well. I was making these collages of islands where the island was erased and the galaxies were kind of poking out of the ocean. Like I did with the Stratagems, flipping a little bit the perception of the sea and sky and pushing it a little further.

Over the summer I was building fiberglass forms of the islands. To make these as reproductions of the ones in the collages. I’m working to make these sculptural videos. I’ve been wanting to bring more shape and sculptural elements back to my video work. In the past year I’ve made so much projection and monitor work that I wanted to have some things that have sculptural elements in them.

I’m also working on a series of black and white videos. I’m diving into some of the psychological aspects of personalities that are innovators, explorers, creators, and people in the arts. Black and white is new for me. I haven’t been pushing myself into that direction. Removing color from the equation and developing soundscapes for those videos has been a lot of fun.
Your degrees are in sculpture. What attracted you to digital art?

It started when I was living with a photographer while in grad school. I was thinking I wanted to take a fun class. I needed a break. I was in a down time that happens to a lot of artists in grad school between their advancement and their final show. You’ve made it into the program, you have the ok to start working on your thesis, and you kind of explode a little inside. She suggested a video class, and I found out that video can do a lot of things that I wasn’t able to get my sculptures to do. I wasn’t coming at it from photography so I wasn’t as worried about how the image worked. I was interested in what it was doing. I got a lot more clarity in my work once I started working with video. It got rid of the struggle I was having with objects. What about the digital process frees you to communicate more than you could in other ways?

In my sculptures I always wanted to engage an element of time. Now I’m using technology to do that and that’s what it is really good at. It’s especially good at reproducing, capturing, and manipulating time. How do you approach composing visually, spatially, and with sound?

It all depends on the work. If I’m trying to do a more personal experience, like the work that I did at the Browsing Room last year, it was an installation of shells with sound inside them. Only one person could listen to them at a time. I thought about designing an experience and then making that into the work. If I’m working with a piece and the image is looping, do I keep the sound moving in that same way or does the sound subvert that? It’s really piece by piece because I am relying on relationships between time and our experience of time, between sound and object. I’m putting these things together to create a story. To give a sense of something I’m trying to get across, I begin with what it is I want to communicate. I’m not worried about it looking like it all looks like my work. It all comes from my body; it is my work.

Do you think of your work as representing places, people, or objects?

I don’t think of my work as representational. It is evocative of something. I am dealing with images because I am taking from a lens based medium, but I’m not as hung up on the image...as I could be. It’s more about the effect or the feeling. Am I getting that underlying theme or mood. It’s about finding out if by putting these two things together create enough tension to lead someone to the point I want to make. Shifting a bit, I’d like to talk about the digital art market. From where you started and where you are now, how has the market for collecting digital art changed?

Most of my sales are to institutions and cities — for public works. The market for the video work here in Nashville is not very strong, but I think it is also true of many cities as well. It’s difficult as a collector to think about how is it going to live in my home. Here it is on a monitor, on my television. How is this going to be in my life? That’s a valid question, though. It’s not until you look at photographs of homes of famous collectors of video works like the Kramlich’s, you can see the possibilities. There are great images of their collection in their home. That helps some — seeing that there are collectors who take the risk and have a video in the dining room for people to enjoy.

We began this interview talking about your grandfather as he explorer. Your artwork shows your curiosity of many things, ideas, materials, modes of art making... Are you an explorer? Is being an artist an adventure?

I think it is easy to say yes but that would be a half-truth. Being an artist can be a great adventure but it is also a routine, a slog, something that I am constantly working at. I like to try on the eyes of an explorer but I recognize that I am not discovering. Perhaps uncovering is a better way to describe it.

See McLean Fahnestock’s work in Therein at Belmont University’s Leu Art Gallery through December 8. www.mcleanfahnestock.com
The Democratization of the Photographic Image
or How I learned to Stop Worrying & Love the Camera Phone

Due to the proliferation of digital photography in the 21st century, over 1.8 billion images were uploaded to the Internet daily in 2014 via various social media platforms. Instagram alone is responsible for a total of thirty billion uploaded images since its inception, with an anticipated 111.6 million users by 2019. The accessibility and instantaneous nature of the photographic image afforded by the camera phone era has induced a paradigm shift that has fostered a transformation in the way we consider photographic imagery. While professional photographers and members of the academy have scrambled to maintain their place in the photographic hierarchy, photography and photographic language have become apparatus of the people, creating a complex and perpetually evolving mosaic that exhaustively reflects contemporary culture. This broad discourse regarding the digital evolution of photography is multifarious and it narrows the dialogue to acknowledge the following points when considering the proliferation of digital imagery and its impact upon art making, the viewer, and the mass public.

Since its inception, photography has struggled to establish itself as an art rather than representational images afforded via an instrument of technological advancement and significant movements in photography have largely been reactions to the assertion that photography is an inferior art form due to the delivery of the image via mechanism. With the rise of the digital era in the 2000’s, photography again found itself amid an internal struggle regarding the digital process and the democratization of the visual image. While professional grade DLSR cameras were still economically out of reach for most, the emergence of the camera phone gave photography to the masses in an unprecedented manner that dwarfed prior user-friendly methods of production. This move towards accessibility and subsequent backlash is certainly not new. Photography pried portraiture from the wealthy, the Kodak Brownie brought the camera into the home (“You press the button, We’ll do the rest”), and the advent of the Polaroid gave consumers a nearly instant image (and print) with little to no skill required. Not only has accessible digital photography threatened the commercial photography industry, it also threw into question the very self-worth of many photographers whose identities were mired in the exclusivity of the analog process. Amidst this great wailing and gnashing of teeth regarding the transformation of the medium, there has been a renewed interest in the alternative historical process. While wet plate prints, cyanotypes, tintypes, etc. never truly disappeared from the vernacular, art process work now seems to be re-emerging in fine art explicitly as a response to the digital process, countering digital speed, ease and excess with deliberation, tactility and a renewed exclusivity nearly eradicated by the digital manifestation of the medium. Though it may be the case that new interest in alternative processes has undoubtedly produced authentic, arresting beautiful work that stands on its own merit, do consider that the panic over the transition to accessible digital photography should not intimidate nor dishearten those who can transcend the artifice of process. On new technological shifts in photography, Jeff Wall comments,

“I cling to the notion of photography as a medium insofar as it is an authentic way to achieve what we can call “the picture”. The physical nature of any medium has never been free from the conventional – and therefore historical – manners in which the physical elements have been handled. So, I don’t feel there is anything particularly new happening in photography in that regard”.

As digital/mobile photography has become an essential linchpin in the photographic discourse, Susan Sontag’s assertion that photography maintains a western middle-class perspective that insists upon a sustained look downward is still substantiated by a systemic narrative framed by media outlets that dominate the photographic discourse. Though the yoke of media framing has not yet loosened documentary photography, the nature of the photographic rhetoric has certainly begun to sidestep the formerly narrow vernacular. Addressing the documentary form, John Berger’s and Martha Rosler’s late 20th century approximations of viewer impotency invoked by documentary photography should be reevaluated in the context of the era of digital proliferation. Berger arrives at the conclusion that documentary “photographs of agony” will illicit viewers to adopt a humanitarian cause pertaining to the imagery, or simply refocus the viewer upon their own moral inadequacy due to a lack of legitimate recourse when confronted with the pain and suffering of others. Rolser furthers Berger’s theory, similarly alleging that viewers will adopt a cynical distance from any images of suffering. She then asserts that what then becomes very unlikely is “that those who view images of oppressive or exploitative social realities will mobilize politically in hopes of transforming them.” Mobile photography has reimagined the role of the documentary photograph in that the accessibility
of the medium no longer necessarily dictates the photographer as “other”. While the interpretation of the photograph still largely remains with the socio-political positioning of the viewer, the role of the photographer has become more egalitarian in nature. In The Anxiety of Imagery, Yasmine El Rashidi determines that,

“The photographs that emerged from the eighteen days of the Egyptian revolution captured what Egyptians could not have imagined until January 25 [2011], the first of those days. In the images that came out of the utopian city within a city, Tahrir (or Liberation) was not only diversity and a sense of the individual, but also immediacy, intimacy, an infinite series of fleeting moments, encounters, emotions, gestures, of humanity. In that square, where the process of image-making was democratized though technology and every Egyptian had not only a voice, but a platform – a democratically moderated one - the real essence of the Egyptian people was given space. This revolution – influenced, propagated, experienced, shared, memorialized, through the tools of image-making and technology – offered the world, for the first time ever, an unedited photographic portrait of the most populous country in the Middle East”.

In Tahrir square, “the camera became a nonviolent weapon aimed directly at the state, denouncing it” and the significance of the response to this imagery lies demonstrably in the hands of camera phone wielding citizen journalists. The photograph is no longer looking downward because of the new egalitarian nature of the medium. Rosler and Berger’s assertions are perhaps still salient depending on the perspective of the viewer, but there has never in the history of photography been a moment where photography has been so duly representative of a mass public. This phenomenon now manifests itself during every instance of social movement mobilization and armed conflict involving civilians; every mass political action is now significantly framed by its participants. While media framing is still spectacularly present, it has become a veneer of suggestion rather than an absolute immutable reality. The emergence of the mobile image both negates and reinforces Berger and Rosler’s assertions of complacency. Considering the photographer is no longer necessarily occupying the role of the other, and due to the immediacy of the dissemination of the image, photography now no longer necessarily has to circumvent mobilization. While this should be considered a victory for commonality, a nefarious counter to this positive materializes when one considers that the sheer number of images, and what equates to assault via photographic imagery, can lead to an overwhelmed consumer who is immobilized into a position of inaction.

At this point, we now lay under siege from a ceaseless assault of imagery that perpetrates infinite redunancies. Dutch artist Erik Kessels exhibited 350,000 photographs from Flickr (the number shared in one day) in a gallery setting in order to “visualize the feeling of drowning in representations of other people’s experiences.” Similarly, Penelope Umbrico compiles nearly identical photographs uploaded to Flikr, exhibiting them in a rhythmic grid of repetitive imagery. While this barrage of imagery is in these cases aesthetically significant, it also illustrates the concept of imagery overload, which “is marked at times by general frustration, low-grade anxiety and flat-out fatigue”. Of larger concern, there is a common misconception that photographing an image with ones phone galvanizes memory and preserves the experience, but current research shows quite the opposite. Research conducted in 2014 by Fairfield University professor Linda Henkel determined that there is a photo taking impairment effect, which indicated that taking a photo in order to preserve memory actually diminished retention of the memory regarding the subject of the photograph. Henkel suggests that we have simply outsourced our memory to digital storage with little retention of the actual event. Consider this in conjunction with Sontag’s decades old assertion that, “viewers placed themselves behind the photographic camera in order to feel more empowerment and more willing to inhabit unfamiliar spaces. The viewfinder mediates situation by allowing the user to address a subject behind the known entity of the frame, protecting against the uncertainties of physical interaction”. The conjunctive conclusion is the existential implication that we are now viscerally experiencing our lives through screens with little retention of our reality. Our perception of our reality then is manifested via a compilation of manipulated/curated images that ultimately are a manufactured fabrication of our own experience. Though perhaps without intention, we are certainly allowing the lens to consummately remove us from our life experiences and buffer not only the unfamiliar space, but also the familiar. Without caution, the very technology that enabled revolution may make cowards of us all.
Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. -- Arthur C. Clarke

This summer, before arriving at my artist residency at Elsewhere Museum, I was traveling to my childhood home in the mountains of western North Carolina when my dad swerved off the road to show me the cloud. It was the Apple iCloud, and yep, it is Apple’s largest data storage facility yet. Shortly thereafter, the story about GenX, a toxic chemical leaking from the Chemours/Dupont corporation into the Cape Fear River Basin, spread across the state accompanied by a low grade panic. From the moon-running stories of my own family history, I understand the function of unseen systems. I seek them out. I want to get to know them. That night in the Appalachian foothills I was giddy to see the physical manifestation of the cloud, and this experience would stay with me when I got to Elsewhere.

Like a slaughterhouse, the Apple facility stands concealed 2,645 miles away from the glamorous showrooms of Silicon Valley. The massive structure cuts into the subtropical green land, anonymous, impenetrable, militarized. It is the bowels or maybe the actual excrement of the Internet, but it is also a repository for the dreaming collective, an imprint of the “consensual hallucination”. It contains histories, memories, surplus and labor. In my mind, the word “cloud” shrouds the facility, coolly, as if it is an immaterial thing. However, I must consider the bodies that live and work there — like my aunt and uncle — as well as the land, the air, digital labor, and, eventually, digital decay.

Upon arrival at Elsewhere in Greensboro, it is not an understatement the weight one feels of being surrounded by its objects. Elsewhere is a museum set within a former thrift store that reinvents old things to build collaborative futures by supporting creative projects, learning initiatives, and public works. The museum is built on Sylvia Gray’s objects and materials she obtained during the 58 years she operated a thrift store (1939-1997). Elsewhere is a thing tank and a laboratory. It is, I quickly learned, too many things to list here, and that’s part of it’s grandeur.

At Elsewhere, I was part of the Southern Constellations cohort, one of six artists from the southeastern United States. Together we lived, cooked and learned alongside interns, staff and objects. We were asked to create a project using the museum collection that would remain behind after our departure. Initially, we talked about objects containing trauma and the desire to let these objects outside to experience sunlight again.

Elsewhere is a closed ecosystem; anything deemed “collection” does not leave the building — dust, hair, fabric, toys, nothing, no way. However, the digital slips out. This inspired conversation among the Southern Constellations cohort about the objects being held captive as collection and their correlation to digital photographs held forever in the cloud. “Forever” is a slippery concept: things age, corrupt, rot and disintegrate, even the digital. Which would outlast which: the 1960s toy dog or its digital image? Will they both outlast humans? Both non-digital and digital objects sit tamed — for now — in different spaces, one at Elsewhere and one in the cloud.

To think about this more, we created twitter bots that served as digital avatars of some of the objects inside Elsewhere. A digital toy soldier now tweets, “You’re one piece of many. We’re all in this together” whenever someone asks, “How did I get stuck here?” These newly assigned digital objects create object-bot-poetry in a kind of endless labor loop. Brought together in a new relationship, there is the materiality of the wood, organic polymers in the plastic and the natural world embedded within—then there is the AI-ness of the bot — conjured towards techno-animism.

In our hyper-ized quest for connection, information and knowing, most of us incorporate dating algorithms, fitbits, and smart devices into our daily lives. As an intervention to the rationalism of science and the over-quantified self, I often return to my Southern Gothic Appalachian roots of storytelling, conjuring, dark humor and “witchy methodologies”. I search back through the healing methods of my grandma and


AE Smith, 11½ Spells for the Future, 2017, 3D Printed Dowsing Rod
the use of dowsing rods to locate water. I think about all of the other kinds of ancient technologies that have been passed on to me through people who have had a deep relationship with nature, animals and the spiritual world. Simultaneously, I find the ability for transcendence within the realm of the digital. I find myself in ecstatic moments of communion, something ritual, spiritual and deeply profound with digital technology — and that is exactly what happened while 3D printing during my residency.

Appalachian folk magic and the 3D printer are both forms of technology that ask us to believe in what we can’t yet see in order to make something physically manifest. At The Forge next to Elsewhere, I created a dowsing rod, an orgone pyramid and parts of a drone using a 3D printer. This process for me was an extreme form of digital intimacy. I sensed the printer as it transformed my digital object into a physical object, and I used a kind of printing methodology that can only be described as witchy. I held performance rituals in the makerspace where I would meticulously embed pieces from the Elsewhere collection — dust, paint chips, doll parts, words from books — into the 3D prints, while printing. I learned that you don’t bring glitter in the makerspace, but that’s for another article.

This technique of embedding is a pas de deux between human and machine, a quick, deliberate placement of objects inside the print before the arm of the robot-printer comes back around. If something isn’t placed properly, the printer and the print could be sent into havoc. I got to know the printer mutually; when to put my fingers in, when to quickly pull them out. This was a careful operation of focused energy. I turned off the lights, meditated, sang, and danced. These 3D prints are not simply speculative art objects, but sigils embedded with intentions. They are tools. In the right hands, the dowsing rod might be able to find GenX-less water — a stretch perhaps — but one quick search online reveals people are already doing similar things.

The digital points us to other kinds of sensing systems: the psychic, the biochemical and inside the closed ecosystem of Elsewhere. I considered the bacterial and fungal systems within. I took swab samples from a toy, a ghost room wall, a shoe, a book, a swing and a keypad and placed them on Agar plates. Over the next several weeks these samples continued to grow and to emerge. Each plate contained its own uniquely patterned world. New entanglements between species decenter the human and welcome assemblages akin to Donna Haraway’s notion of “becoming with” asking who “we” will become when species meet. Similarly, recent research around our gut microbiome asks, “who’s in control: the human host or the microbiome?” The extra-human may be able to teach us valuable lessons about “becoming” with other species and contemplating these in-between worlds that could destabilize data-driven systems of knowledge and information.

During the residency, through inspiring conversations and research around unseen systems and local issues specific to North Carolina and Elsewhere — the cloud, GenX in the water, local bacteria and fungal ecologies — ideas were able to incubate and to expand notions of technology, spirituality and Southern futures.

On the last day of my residency — driving through Appalachia in my friend Sheryl’s Audi with smart-internet-of-things-sensors — we hit a very large coyote. The Audi is still in disrepair and the coyote shows up in my dreams. Even though my dog Sandro was not present for the collision, he senses what happened and is still giving me a hard time about it.

*Thanks to the Southern Constellations Elsewhere cohort for the conversations and endless inspiration: Saba Taj, Joshua Moton, Rontherin Ratliff, William Cordova, Yatta Zoker, Emily Ensminger, Guido Villalba Portel, Phalyxia Orians, Sophia Schultz, Ava Zelkowitz, Yansa Crosby, Jordan Delzell, Adam Matonic, Koy Smith, George Scheer
Perception in the Digital Age:
The Hybrid Paintings of Tiffany Calvert

As a Foundations Instructor in art I spend a lot of time thinking about perception, especially as it pertains to the digital media my students have experienced their entire lives. Our gaze has been greatly affected by digital formats. We are accustomed to looking for the length of time it takes to scroll across an item on our Facebook feeds. Mere seconds. There are moments when observation seems to have reached the status of a lost art. My favorite example from my teaching experience is when one of my students, headphones in, was watching the Great British Baking Show on her iPad during a figure drawing session. To combat shallow and distracted looking, I now ask students to power down and line their devices up on the white board tray as they walk in the room. Nearly two hours without text messages, Snapchat, Facebook, or Messenger. I also instituted a ritual of looking which I refer to as Moment of Zen, loosely based on the comedic segment of the same name from the Daily Show. At the end of my studio classes I project an image of one artwork — a different one each time — and ask my students to sit and look at it for a full minute. It’s difficult in the beginning. Students fidget, look away and then back again. I ask them to look until they think they have seen the image in its entirety (this doesn’t take long), and when they think they have seen it, to look again, and look deeper. My hope is that this ritual will become a respite. A contrast to the harried existences we all lead, due to the sheer volume of information we are processing on a daily basis, and that it will help them to do what artists do best — see things that others do not notice. Keen perception is one of our greatest assets.

This is probably a good time to explain that I am not technophobic. Technological advances are incredibly exciting. I ask my Design I students to create a Public Service Announcement in the form of an Animated Gif, and when they study Color Theory they use the Interaction of Color App for iPad, which is a digital version of Joseph Albers’ seminal book. This digital format is coupled with video content of curators and artists demonstrating how the original plates of his color experiments work. It’s a beautiful thing to see his hand-assembled pages slowly unfold on the screen of an iPad. It brings the museum to my students. The drag and drop features also allow students to create their own color interactions and share them on social media. This is abundant content coupled with clarity and context; and its fun. My Drawing I students, with the use of their iPads and iPhones are fulfilling perspective exercises that were formerly executed on drawing paper. This medium is also a great tool for exploring the language of line in observational drawing, and a nice contrast to the studies we still do with Charcoal on paper.

We are walking a line; trying to create fluidity in the classroom. As an artist and an instructor, I’m interested in the ways in which other artists perform this walk in their work. Carrie Moyer’s abstractions are playful and richly satisfying. They combine flatness and the illusion of space on the same picture plane — the drop shadow of digital design applied to painting. This is the language of desktop space; of folder and window shapes that can be layered or stacked, that exist on a shallow field. This is something that only makes sense because of the advent of the personal computer.

In the work of Tiffany Calvert, who will exhibit at Arkansas State University this October, digital as well age-old process, materials and imagery collide to create works that feel utterly hybridized. In Untitled
Cara Sullivan is an artist living and working in the Mid-South.

Tiffany Calvert’s Exhibition Rainbow Chaos runs from October 2 –November 2, 2017 at the Fine Arts Center Gallery in the Department of Art & Design at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.
ReCovering Memphis: ReContexting Bodies: Video Art to Interpret Past and Present

During the tumultuous presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, L. Ross Gallery exhibited The Man Show. Curated by Carl E. Moore and Melissa Farris, the exhibition opened June 3, 2016, and featured fourteen male, Mid-Southern visual artists from diverse backgrounds with the goal of reflecting the “evolving nature of masculinity in America.” Within the context of the election and the Trump campaign rhetoric of (white) male supremacy, masculinity in America appeared to be, as the exhibition suggested, evolving. The Man Show included artwork from a variety of media, scale, and meaning.

As viewers passed through the narrow space and rounded a corner, a nondescript flat screen television sat on a table to the right. The monitor was rotated to portrait style serving as a large photo frame. The black-and-white photo of a man in mid-nineteenth century clothing was not static; it blinked and breathed — a video piece. Changing from black and white to full color, the man began speaking to the viewer reciting historical words with an adapted southern drawl. The piece, titled “ReCovering Memphis: ReContexting Bodies,” is by Richard Lou, an artist who is known for his installation, photography, performance, and video art. He uses his art practice to explore race, power, and his family history that includes his Chinese and Mexican lineage. For “ReContexting Bodies,” Lou combined the performance and video into a poignant commentary on contemporary masculinity. The artist became Jefferson Davis and Nathan Bedford Forrest by performing their words in period clothing, exploring the connections between the past and present.

In becoming these two pillars of rural Southern masculinity, Lou is weaving together historical and contemporary politics in America. As Guisella LaTorre writes, “Lou wanted to establish a genealogy between current events and longer histories of racism and white supremacy.” While there are a plethora of interpretations through deeper analysis of “ReContexting Bodies,” this essay and issue of Number are primarily concerned with the significance of the role of digital media. Video art allowed the artist to make these connections through the transitions in the piece: ‘photograph’ to video, greyscale to color, silent to sound, white to brown skin. Each reveal explores layers of meaning.

Davis and Forrest achieved their status as masculine archetypes as regional biographers and historians began to interpret the Southern states in the years following the Civil War. The men were deemed figureheads of opposing demeanor, satiating the South’s need for a genteel, calculated, pseudo-nobleman (Davis) and an independent, self-made, fierce serviceman (Forrest). Monuments to the men saturate public and civic places in the Southern landscape. They are contemporary sites of controversy by an outspoken public whose minority members were historically silenced by discriminating legislation and who now demand politicians remove the monuments as a gesture of correction and preservation of American democratic ideals.

Richard Lou has questioned the exaltation of the leaders of the Confederacy as a part of his art practice in 2009 with a performance called “ReCovering Memphis: Listening to Untold Stories” and in 2013 with a photography piece titled “ReCovering Memphis: Courageous Love.” Both took place at the Forrest monument in what is now known as Health Sciences Park. For the 2016 The Man Show piece, “ReCovering Memphis: ReContexting Bodies,” Lou personified iconic photographs of Confederate Commander-in-Chief Davis and General Forrest through dress, pose, and expression in a thirty-three minute digital video. The artist stands with three-quarters of his body facing the camera for five minutes with the same cold stare as Forrest in his famous photograph. His hair frizzes out from the sides of his head to replicate Forrest’s wild mane. After five minutes, Lou turns his torso to face the camera. The double-breasted jacket turns to a deeper blue-grey, the brass buttons sparkle, and the artist begins to speak. First, it is “Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest’s Farewell Address To His Troops May 9, 1865” as identified by sans-serif subtitles. At the conclusion of the reading, the artist turns his torso to the starting three-quarter position. One minute passes as we watch the artist blink and breathe in black and white. Then, with a slight smile, he turns; the image moves back to color and subtitles appear, “Nathan Bedford Forrest’s advertisements for his business as a slave dealer.” The artist reads them with the jolly timbre of an enthusiastic salesman emphasizing (but not mocking) an affected southern drawl. After two of these ‘commercials,’ the artist turns back to the iconic portrait pose.

The video transitions; the artist is in new attire (a shawl lapel vest and mandarin collar) and wearing a wig styled with a part in the center. His brow is furrowed in a distant gaze, hands folded in front of him to emulate a photograph of Jefferson Davis shot by Mathew Brady. Lou sways slightly, blinking occasionally. The video plays for five minutes. The artist licks his lips, opening and closing his mouth preparing for speech as the film becomes saturated. The artist remains in the three-quarter stance — more than that — he is elite compared to the viewer. He cannot bother with looking our way (at the camera). Subtitles appear, “Excerpt from former Confederate
President Jefferson Davis’ memoirs published 1881. The accent seems sweeter this time. It’s more of a rolling drawl than Forrest’s heavy, rural drawl. There is a twinge of a Chicano pronunciation to the words Davis uses to express the benefits of slavery and the unfortunate “tempter” that is “freedom” that encouraged enslaved people to rise against their “benefactors” as he reacts to President Abraham Lincoln’s integration of African American troops into the U.S. Army — a lament of the good old days.

The rise of the alt-right era of Trumpian politics exposes the visceral, ruffian underbelly of the patriarchal foundations of American culture. Though their ideologies are touted, contemporary interactions with the historical figures of Davis and Forrest are primarily static. We see the towering statues, the scouring photographs, or read about them. Occasionally, (white-male) re-enactors personify Civil War participants, but the most rare interaction with these men is a person of color embodying their words and stature. Race is so embedded within our culture that the juxtaposition of melanin and historical Confederate commentary jolts the viewer. If this performance had been in-person rather than digital video, viewers may have perceived it as more of a satire or joke, something to awkwardly laugh off rather than to pause, watch, and consider. Using video as media, the viewers are challenged to question what they are seeing and hearing.

I interviewed Richard Lou by phone asking him to comment on the significance of video media for this work. His response is as follows.

I’m looking at these iconic photographs going from analog to digital to bring the idea that the trajectory of history continues to have a great hold on our present and still dictates terms on how we behave toward each other. Analog to video would be a great metaphor for that: how we’re still prisoners of our own history and to literally animate these historical figures in contemporary life. The figures may be static, but their ideas are very dynamic and elastic in regards to others appropriating them and bringing them to life.

Connecting from Charlottesville backwards, the South is a social laboratory for racism and discrimination of all forms. (In the time of Davis and Forrest,) the elites were experimenting with legislature and underhanded terroristic behaviors to make sure that they protect their power. Moving from analog to video, greyscale to color is literally commenting on issues of color and how they are assigned value and power.

The fiction of the piece is me performing whiteness, but the words and actions of the historical figures, what they said and what they did is not a fiction. The metafictional device of performing whiteness in this video piece is to restate the non-fiction of Davis and Forrest.

In the case “ReContexting Bodies”, the digital art medium of video provides a platform to analyze and interpret the words and masculine personas of Jefferson Davis and Nathan Bedford Forrest within the context of contemporary American politics and culture. Richard Lou uses his art to accentuate how the historical philosophies of these men permeate modern culture. Their viewpoints continue to affect how minority groups are perceived and treated, especially in the South. Art is one way to share these truths, ignite conversations, and better understand the systems in which we live. The “ReCovering Memphis” series by Richard Lou provides us with an inroad to interpreting our past and present.
cloud puff thunder heart fire water flow electricity oceans puddles connect heartbeat chest tug body buzz lost breath chemical reaction eyes eyes eyes movement open a hand a palm a chest night to morning a sunrise a hug a goodbye that lingers to become a hello a beginning a pull a tug beauty and blooms and messages in bottles or phones or carrier pigeons a plane that won’t take off soon enough and:

How is it that I’ve come to feel these things
The world in my belly in my chest
How is it that you are inside me
This is digital intimacy

What? Staring into a pixelated black void and convincing yourself you’re lying next to another human, looking into their eyes?
Yes, it works sometimes.

For ten days she and I shared physical space and passing awkward conversations and an interconnectedness flowing underneath in the cracks of a group dynamic. Then we had one night. I opened my palm to her, and with that a chest, wide and gooey. Then we left the shared physical location, 737 miles apart.

For five days, we texted. Then finally we called. Nervous, shaky voices. Then FaceTime. We stay up all night talking, to fall asleep, to her slowing breath on the other end of the line.

The talk that leads to touching, a natural flow. She’s breathing on the other end. Not the slow breath of sleeping, but it’s quickening, shortening. Losing it.

I couldn’t sleep last night, so I laid in bed scrolling through her Facebook photos.

How is it that a backlit arrangement of pixels can burn me so deeply in my chest and stomach? How does this image, no larger than 2” by 4”, have the ability to break me so?

Where were we? I was alone in my bed in Tennessee, and she’s alone in hers many states away. It’d take me ten days to walk to her.

And what are we looking at? I’m looking at a glowing iPhone screen, larger than my palm but not by much, and she her phone. Both of us plugged into a wall, distracted by our own smaller thumbnail hiding in the corner.

Sometimes you’re fully there, sometimes you wander. I guess that’s like IRL (in real life).

Digitally, some electric impulse translates to her voice, her breath, her moans on this end of the line. It journeys to the sky and back (in my childlike understanding of how this whole electronic communication thing works), the kind of magic suited for two queers falling into Big Feelings. Some invisible phone line connects us, just as I swear there is some string tied inside my chest that she tugs on, and I the same to her. Somehow, while 99 percent of our communication has been technologically mediated, I can feel her feelings, through the screens, the lines, the space that separates us physically.

We talk and text and dream about the ways we want to touch and fuck and cum and kiss. Our texts become a call and response poem, what I am doing to you/what I want you to do to me/what I will do when I see you/what I am feeling right now/etc.

We imagine our bodies and how they touch each other, how they move. I may interact with a pixelated representation of her, which seems like more of a boundary, a constraint, but then there is the freedom of creating our bodies. My queer body touches her queer body in some other space we create. Here, the digital facilitates a queer potential: our bodies can be

Perception in the Digital Age:
Very Analog Experience of this Digital Intimacy
all possibility in what they are, what they do, and how we communicate that to each other in this digital utopian hallucination of our relation to another.

I’m falling in love, but the words hang in my chest, pushing up my throat into my mouth, when we hover on the phone, breathing into each other’s ears at such a distance. I hold the words, because I want to share them IRL. I want to keep them in my chest until the right moment. (This essay seems a risky endeavor.) I’m falling in love, but part of me needs confirmation from the IRL reunion. After all, after this month of digital interaction and exploration, what will it feel like in person? How will we be when we share physical space? When we finally touch? When we drop the screens?

I’m waiting with Big Words and Big Feelings boiling up in me.

“I’m all wrapped up in my chargers,” she said. I never felt such deep transcendent feelings mediated through technology. I’m supposedly a digital artist. How is it that digitally mediated art rarely entrances me the way this human has? Why is it so hard for me to fall in love with art on a screen? Maybe this dance with our perceptions as some hallucination of touching another body through digital sight and sound is the tension for digital art to embrace. The digital woos us into its utopia of possibility and potentiality, where we waver between falling completely into it, while resisting, holding out for some real aesthetic experience. A reality check pulls us out, only for the glow to entrance us once again. It is real and it is not real: like falling in love, with its strange and wonderful ability to radically shift perception.

After all, it is my Very Analog Experience of this Digital Intimacy that leads to these Very Big Feelings.  

**Sept. 6, 2017**

Last night we talked around words. We talked around the words we aren’t saying, the word that she accidentally let slip, retreated, found other words. I’ve been holding them in my chest, feeling them in my mouth, saying them in my head, over and over, and feeling them feeling them feeling them, but holding onto them. I told her a few nights ago that I had words and feelings in my chest and mouth that I wanted to give her when I saw her.

And that’s just it. We sit with these words and feelings in our bodies and minds and hearts, and we’re holding onto them, because the phone just won’t do these words justice. Will it? Because for these words, I want to be facing her, looking into her eyes, not some pixelated, delayed backlit representation of her eyes. I want to be able to touch her hand and skin and face and hair, and I want to feel them push out of me with all the force and tension that’s been building up as I work to contain them, hugging myself in fetal position on the phone at night, feeling her throughout me.

The imagination, everything is possible, and everything is communication. But what will it be to hold a body that I’ve been falling in love with from afar?  

**Sept. 10, 2017**

She sighs. We’ve been staring at each other. On our little backlit screens. “We gotta do something about these screens!” she says, frustrated. We return to our staring, oscillating between laughing, smiling, and serious expressions that I think mean “love.” Sometimes we linger in one of these states. Then one of us breaks it and the other follows suit. I am feeling her feelings inside my body all over, and vice versa. I feel her through this small screen, and we’ve learned to place them in just the right position and distance, so sometimes we can convince ourselves we are lying in bed facing each other.

I laugh. “What?” she says. I say — “Imagine someone being from space looking at us. Here I am thinking I am looking at you, feeling you, seeing you. I believe that I could kiss you right now, but then am pulled back to realizing if I did, the disappointment in my lips on cold hard glass, and not your warm soft flesh. But if someone saw us, how ridiculous do we look staring so longingly into our little boxes? I never thought I could feel this way for a phone.”

Sometimes the medium dissolves. I do feel her. But we remember what it was like to touch and kiss IRL [in real life], and we hold on and pass the time until we do that again.

It’s liminal. We do it in anticipation for “the real thing.” We are waiting. This is tiding us over.

---

Liz Clayton Scofield is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, thinker, all-around adventurer, and nomad. They hold an MFA from Indiana University, Bloomington.
Interview: Morgan Higby-Flowers

Morgan Higby-Flowers is an artist, techno wizard, educator, and father. His hypnotic digital videos create a sense of ritzy, glitzed-out vertigo that leave you both mesmerized and nauseated. I recently sat down with him to talk about his practice. The conversation begins mid stream which is appropriate for someone as busy and energetic as Higby-Flowers.

Morgan Higby-Flowers: I’m not great with color schemes. A lot of my work is generative. The colors come out of a system I’m not making decisions on.

Matt Christy: The software or the coding in the background is producing an image and you don’t have control over the visual outcome?

MHF It’s not completely generative. The piece at the Frist is actually a drone video (Pattern Recognition: Art and Music Videos in Middle Tennessee). I did a few things to the file. I encoded it as Sorenson (a video codec). There are a lot of techniques to get this kind of work. I take the video into Photoshop or a text editor and I can draw on the raw file and I just crop the bottom off making the file inherently broken. Then I’ll go into Quicktime 7 and take out image frames. You can scrub the timeline and make a live video. So, what I do is screen capture in Quicktime.

Do you usually start with video that you capture or you find?

Usually.

MC Do you use 3d rendering?

Yes, sometimes. It’s a convoluted process.

The software decides some things for you?

Yeah, some of the bright colors for instance come from the broken codec.

Are you looking for those moments where the software kinda…

Yeah, I definitely set things up and then let them roll out. Are you making anything right now?

Yeah. Since starting a job and having a baby it’s been hard to make my own work. But before that it was really about being in the studio and recording what happens. I’d be really excited if I came out of the studio with a great screen recording of something unfolding or where I’m using some interface live. Sometimes I use analog equipment to record to tape. I’m rendering right now. The idea of setting a situation up and then seeing what happens, it’s editing, it’s a longer-term process that allows me to work in the background of my other work. Recently I’ve been into facilitating exhibitions with Coop. It’s really easy to get international work these days and a little harder to get regional involvement.

I wanted to ask if the medium itself is inherently trancelike and hypnotic or do you pull that out of the medium?

I think it’s something that I look to do. I’ve had my work described as ‘cyber psychedlia’, I feel like they’re shared moments in the studio. I like work like that, so I like things that pull me into the screen. When I can discover things like that I want to share them. That’s why I like the real-time aspect of what I’m doing. If it’s a screen recording or a performance in the space, there is an aspect there where it takes the same amount of time to make as to watch.

It seems more intense or exciting when it’s a thing that happens in front of you only once?

Yeah. I have a tendency to show everything. I have

another project titled *Screen Dump Shots*. The project consists of innumerable screenshots of my life that I upload every 3 months, all of my screenshots, maybe hide a bank statement, but for the most part I share everything. I have all of the screenshots I’ve ever taken. I take them all the time. Everyday screen-shots. Something for research or a website or looking at tests.

**Do you show them as prints?**
I like them as zip files. I would have to edit if I showed them as prints. I want to treat the exciting things and the other things the same.

**Is the sound derived the same way?**
The sound is from the small loops.

**What did you do before this?**
I was painting. My father and my grandfather were both painters. I made video in high school. But my sophomore year in college I got in a grad class through a loophole and at the same time took a Prehistories of New Media class with Professor, Jon Cates, who has been a big influence on my work.

**An art historian?**
Yeah, also an artist. He writes a lot about glitch. Had a big influence on the Chicago glitch scene. In the 2000’s we called it dirty new media. It was about showing the wires and mistakes that happen in real-time. Making the signal really dirty or mixing two video signals together in the wire so that it drifts and fights. It comes out of a noise scene too. And that was really aligned with hacking culture, not hacking the way it’s talked about now; then it was more subversive people. There were classes on lock-picking and learning to squat and gain rights to the place you were squatting. Life skills for subversives. I did these performances with Brendan Pete. This was 2006. I would have these performances using images banned from TV, Iraq images. I feel like that’s a little different now. These underground death videos are something else now; the whole war has been co-opted on video sharing platforms. But it was really more about a broken signal and being really loud and abrasive. It does make video that is normally so seductive, abrasive. Have you read much about trancelike states?

No. I’ve read about dream machines. Brion Gysin.

**Chapel of Extreme Experience.**
Oh right yeah.
There’s some similarity to the idea of the cut-ups being generative. You have a source material which you can choose, but then it is put through a system where you don’t necessarily pick the outcome.

**Video is so ubiquitous. When I see work where an already seductive screen is made more seductive it can feel like too much of an acceptance.** But I see there is also a making it unacceptable in a way. Where it’s like, jeez, you’ve gotta look away. It’s like the Ark of the Covenant or something.

Yeah, it can be that way. Some of the videos that go back and forward it feels like, why am I feeling this way, and it’s not gonna stop.
There are multiple regional juried exhibits in the Southeast, but The Huntsville Museum of Art’s Red Clay Survey is one of the most notable. In existence since 1988, the exhibit covers an eleven state region. Since the survey isn’t a strict biennial, it occurs in a more random pattern. The considerable size of the museum ensures artist submissions and subsequent jury selections aren’t restricted by a lack of space.

The latest iteration of the exhibit was juried by Gerry Bergstein, a Boston-based artist and professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. He selected work by artists from nine states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Red Clay Survey not only abounds with a variety of masterfully used mediums, but also includes fine jewelry and cabinetry presented as sculpture. Alabama artist, Chris Taylor has enlarged dining furniture design to the scale of playground jungle gyms. “Dinner’s Up” is a three level dining room table with chairs of appropriate heights. Only the two bottom chairs can be moved — the ones at higher levels have stunted front legs that merge with the table itself, creating a network of horizontal and vertical plains that is more desirable for cats than humans. Another Alabama artist, Dale Lewis, has crafted an elegant chair using the stylized design-language of electric guitars for the back support. “Likes to Play: No Strings Attached” uses a variety of sculpturally carved, varnished and painted woods.

The latest iteration of the exhibit was juried by Gerry Bergstein, a Boston-based artist and professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. He selected work by artists from nine states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Red Clay Survey not only abounds with a variety of masterfully used mediums, but also includes fine jewelry and cabinetry presented as sculpture. Alabama artist, Chris Taylor has enlarged dining furniture design to the scale of playground jungle gyms. “Dinner’s Up” is a three level dining room table with chairs of appropriate heights. Only the two bottom chairs can be moved — the ones at higher levels have stunted front legs that merge with the table itself, creating a network of horizontal and vertical plains that is more desirable for cats than humans. Another Alabama artist, Dale Lewis, has crafted an elegant chair using the stylized design-language of electric guitars for the back support. “Likes to Play: No Strings Attached” uses a variety of sculpturally carved, varnished and painted woods.

Donald Keefe, Lightwell (Au Sable Forks Papermill), oil, charcoal and graphite on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.

There is a rather familiar arts community, but the massive variety of work that its artists produce, when shaken and reconfigured by another outside juror, presents something new and revelatory.

Randy Gachet, Star Seed, reclaimed wood, tire rubber, plexiglas, iron paint, spray paint, and mirror. Courtesy of the artist.
Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art

Speed Museum
Louisville, KY
April 30 – October 14, 2017

The “South” is an abstract concept, defined in mythological impressions that vary based on the positonality and the identity of the beholder. The South is an ever changing and unknowable entity. The variations that exist geographically and demographically across the South as a region make it somewhat impossible to know what it is to be Southern. The task of considering Southern identity in contemporary American art is herculean, but curators Miranda Lash and Trevor Schoonmaker have attempted to at least begin to sift through these muddy waters in their exhibition Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art, currently on view at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville.

Given that the concept of Southerness is distinct based on one’s relationship to the region, Lash and Schoonmaker’s pairing works well in trying to combat the biases both insiders and outsiders have when discussing Southern art and culture. Lash hails from Los Angeles, but moved to New Orleans in 2008, serving as curator at the New Orleans Museum of Art until 2014, when she took a position at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville. Schoonmaker, in contrast, is a born and raised North Carolinian, who spent over a decade living in Michigan and New York City, before returning home to become the curator at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. The differences in their experiences, both within the South and outside it, allow the pair to consider how the very idea of Southern identity is variable depending on the perspective of the observer and the object of observation. As such, the two largely succeed at constructing a kaleidoscopic view of the South in their creation of Southern Accent.

In many ways, the works that make up Southern Accent articulate a particular Southern sensibility that exists only amongst insiders. In several cases, the use of photography—a medium that hinges upon verisimilitude—coffers distinct glimpses into a very candid South, one in which a fully made-up teenaged girl dressed in camouflage and holding a hunting rifle, as in Jeff Whetstone’s New Wilderness series, or a young woman in white dresses running barefoot to catch tadpoles, as in Deborah Luster’s The Lost Roads Project, appear strikingly at home.

In contrast, other works, like Carrie Mae Weems’ Louisiana Project—a photographic series that centers on a spectral slave presence in a preserved plantation home—convey a South that is largely a construct. As a non-Southerner, Weems imbues her work with a sense of perspective that reveals the romanticized South as a fiction, calling attention to the way in which the mythology of the antebellum period largely constructs the understanding of the South to those beyond its borders.

Lash and Schoonmaker’s multifaceted approach to Southern Accent also portrays a racial diversity of the region that is often overlooked. While the Black/White dichotomy is a central tenet of Southern race relations—and one that is thoroughly attended to in the exhibition in works like Ebony G. Patterson’s “Strange Fruitz” (2013), Kara Walker’s “Cottonhead, a Mouthful of Teeth Spitting Seeds” (1994), Hank Willis Thomas’ “Black Righteous Space, Southern Edition” (2012), Sam Durant’s “Southern Comfort” (2010), and Michael Galinsky’s “The Day the KKK Came to Town” (1987), just to name a few—the exhibition also highlights the experience of Asian Americans as in Jina Kim’s film Departing, and the Latino community in Diego Camposeco’s photographs.

At the same time, Jim Roche and Jeffrey Gibson’s work reminds us that the South was originally Native land. In “I Put A Spell on You”, Gibson—a member of both the Choctaw and Cherokee communities, both of which were forcibly removed from the South during the early 19th century—makes a visual pun about the treatment of Native Americans as a punching bag for white settlers. Roche’s series in Return to Florida, All in My Background: Piece (1973–4) considers the artist’s own Native lineage and its relation to his Floridian heritage, exploring the land that his Creek ancestors have always called home.

Southern queer identity is also given prominent attention in works like Catherine Opie’s photographs of LGBTQ+ families at home in the South from her series Domestic (1998) and in Roger Brown’s queer genealogical fantasy in which he maps out the familial relations between him and Southern sex-symbol Elvis Presley, concluding that per Southern tradition, they are, as the title suggests “Kissin’ Cousins.”

The show makes room for diversity of Southern expression, which is one of its many strengths. Lash and Schoonmaker clearly set out to deconstruct the notion that the South is in anyway monolithic and they have succeeded. At the same time, the exhibition does, in one way, reinforce the idea of a homogenous South: its inability to consider how geographic diversity informs Southern identity. While the exhibition does include work from a variety of Southern outposts (including those beyond the traditional regional borders), the exhibition depends largely on images of particular cultural epicenters, like New Orleans or the North Carolina “Research Triangle,” leading to a slightly disproportionate emphasis on coastal and Gulf notions of Southern identity at the expense of Appalachian and other micro-regional cultures.

That said, for a show with a truly epic task before it, Southern Accent succeeds at presenting various and multifaceted views on the very idea of Southerness. The perspectives of the curators and the manifold artists they have brought together work to construct a diverse and complicated picture of the South, one that challenges the dominance of any one mythology about the region.
Weeds are survivors. They are persistent and rebellious. They defy the rule and order we seek to apply to our cultivated spaces. Rarely do we stop to appreciate the drive to survive of the weed; despite not being planted, despite the gardener’s desire to destroy them, despite the odds against them, there they are each week as we visit our gardens: common, invasive, scraggly, driven to succeed despite the cards stacked against them, and even beautiful.

Cara Sullivan’s Wild Things, on view now through September 29th at the Bradbury Art Museum in Jonesboro Arkansas, invites the viewer to honor the common lowly weed for its determination. A nod to traditional naturalist botanical paintings, Sullivan’s lovingly rendered mixed media paintings seek to highlight these overlooked wild plants in our midst, not merely for their beauty and their wildness. Sullivan’s juxtaposition of naturalist realism and a counter culture aesthetic creates an edginess that takes her depiction of the weed to a new place.

Painted on energized, dynamic, spray-painted backgrounds, the plants themselves seem animate, like protagonists rather than specimens. The paper backgrounds have been meticulously hand cut to reference the noble high art gilded frame, hanging heavy on the wall, signaling the importance of the work inside. But here the effect is in reverse; the shaped paper floats in a simple smooth white frame creating an airy ghost like shadow on the white mat. The precision of the hand cut paper is itself an elevation of its subject. Unlike traditional naturalist botanical paintings where the background is non-existent, meant to recede, Sullivan’s layered and intensely vibrant backgrounds compete with the subject for the lime light.

The artist describes these spray-painted backgrounds as being inspired by album covers of the more rebellious musical icons she appreciated in her youth. She writes: “I so closely associate the concept of defiance with music that I began to see weeds as the punks in the garden bed. I chose fonts from some of my favorite album covers, and created stencils from them. Solidago is in the hand lettered style of Patti Smith’s album Gloria, while Asclepias Virdis is in the typeface of the Descendants’ albums.”

The plant as rock star icon is heightened by Sullivan’s decision to title each image with its common name, as if it were a glimpse into their existence outside the spotlight – before fame robbed them of their ability to blend in. The naming of each specimen, an integral part of the naturalist’s work, has taken on a transcendental quality here. The precision and coldness of Latin names is made atmospheric and indistinct, a presence in the background. A conscious choice has been made not to eradicate the hand of the artist entirely, but instead to provide a distinct but not separate contrast between the subject and its environment. The touch of the artist’s hand that is so very present in Sullivan’s rendering of the plants themselves is two steps away in the creation of their background, but not absent. Sullivan chooses to use hand cut stencils and layered shadows of spray paint is complex; the colorful layers of each picture plane bears the phantom presence of the artist, and a depth that suggests a memory. This choice is an anchor to human experience, to the artists own subtle autobiographical handling of the subject matter. Sullivan writes: “I was inspired by an overgrown patch in my father’s garden in Maine. I photographed it, and thought about it for many years. Though it was not manicured, it was beautiful. These works pay homage to the overgrowth: … these paintings are for me a meditation on the irreverent, persistent nature and joy of rebellion.”

Sullivan’s wild plants are characters in their own drama. They are rock stars that through her careful observation and rendering have transcended their nuisance status to become icons of pluck and determination, or in Sullivan’s own words rebellion. Yet these are the most lowly and common of plants. The status Sullivan gives her wild plants would celebrate their uniqueness if these plants weren’t so incredibly common place. It’s not their uniqueness that is celebrated here but rather their ubiquity; the weed metaphor is almost as invasive as the plants themselves.

“The weed is a metaphor for many things — a yeeming to be wild: to live in a state of nature; for ideas popping into consciousness, unwilling to be censored; for a revolt against the false notion of beauty that would have someone spray paint a lawn green in the Winter, or for someone to heavily manicure her own body: to pluck and green with such import that a woman rather resembles a girl.”

And what about the weeds in all our gardens, both real and metaphorical? Are they the obvious result of laziness and inaction? Or is the overgrown lawn a conscious choice? Do we need to distinguish between the garden plot gone fallow and an intentional wild aesthetic? Is the mere act of survival its own rebellion? Is rebellion a choice or does it only rise out of necessity?

Sullivan’s work does more to highlight these questions than it does to espouse a particular view. The arrangement of the plants is haunting, juxtaposed by their surreal colored backgrounds. These “punks of the garden” are removed from their context of dirt and landscape and their constituent parts are suspended: floating leaves, naked exposed roots, decapitated blooms. Though lovingly immortalized, the depiction is also a moment of loss. The fate of these individual plants seems sealed, and makes the viewer question: what does one give up in the act of rebellion?
In 1948, a farm boy from Clinton, Mississippi stood on the Gulf Coast with his parents, stared out at the expanse of ocean and asked, “what is a ‘gulf’ and what is ‘Mexico’?”

“I couldn’t comprehend it,” artist Randy Hayes recalls. “Why were they pointing at this water? Then they told me that there was a country over there.” Roughly 70 years later, Hayes still has that same innate curiosity in the world around him as shown in his latest exhibit, Unwritten Memoir, a collection of paintings, photographs, books and other items collected from or inspired by his adventures abroad and experiences in Mississippi. The exhibition is on display through December 9, 2017, at the University of Mississippi Museum in Oxford.

Hayes is not only consumed by wanderlust; he has an eye for uncovering and capturing enchanting details everywhere he goes utilizing a unique technique of painting on top of photographs. This process results in art that is both multifaceted and powerful. “The photographs become my memory, rather than where I ate or what bus I was on,” Hayes says. “It’s more about the people I was coming in contact with and the visual things I was seeing.”

Over the years, Hayes has maintained an archive of all his photographs, often allowing them to sit for a while before using them to construct either a primary image serving as the main focus of a work or what Hayes calls the “subtext,” a gridded arrangement of images placed underneath the primary work. “Some things I can’t get out of my mind, they stay with me and I’ll know I’ll probably deal with them someday, I’m just waiting for the right moment,” Hayes says. “Turkish Eclipse” is an example of this style. Ten years ago, Hayes photographed a solar eclipse in a little Turkish town on the west coast, but only this year did he feel the need to turn that memory into a painted work. Underneath the painting of café-goers peering up at the sky through their phones, black-and-white photographs of Turkish shops, beaches, columns and statues are push-pinned together side-by-side to create a realistic multidimensionality that shines light on human connectivity in moments of wonder.

Hayes’s initial inspiration for his trademark paint-over-photo method came from looking at contact sheets that contain smaller images of all the photograph from a roll of film. “Just from the film, I began to see a narrative, a story” Hayes said. "Then I would paint on top of that story.”

As a young child, long before Hayes developed his artistic style, his father would bring souvenirs home from the second World War that only further intensified Hayes’s yearning for the exotic. A little Ngulu figurine from Micronesia that particularly enthralled Hayes was incorporated into Unwritten Memoir. “To me — to a little four year old kid — I was like ‘what is this?’,” Hayes said, pointing to his photograph of the nude golden brown male Ngulu figurine standing confidently, arms on hips, framed by black-and-white photographs of Micronesian villagers on the beach with Navy soldiers.

The first time Hayes saw the Ngulu figurine as a child, he was confused and intrigued at the same time. “It made me realize there’s a whole world out there and I really need to see it,” Hayes said. After graduating from Tupelo High School, that is exactly what Hayes did. He hopped on a freighter heading across the Atlantic to spend a year hitchhiking through Europe. “It hadn’t been invented yet — but I knew I needed a gap year.”

Before he left, however, Hayes’s mother told him he had to say goodbye to his concerned grandmother. “I went to tell my grandmother goodbye and she said, ‘Randy, no Hayes have been back to Europe since we came over, there’s no need to go - you’re where you need to be’ but I said, ‘No, I got to go’,” Hayes recalls. Since then, Hayes has been to approximately 25 countries including Kenya, Mongolia, India and Japan. During his travels, instead of buying the trinkets on sale, Hayes often surprises vendors by asking to buy an object that they are wearing or using, a few of which are included in Unwritten Memoir. “There is a woman in the desert in India who had some needlework she was trying to sell me but I asked if I could buy the tunic she had on,” Hayes says, gesturing to an image titled “Tunic/Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, India,” included in an in-progress book of photographs, Recollection Workbook. “I wanted something worn — when it got torn she would mend it and I liked all of that — rather than a new piece of cloth.’

Hayes is able to capture such visual richness because he “travels to look.” He refers to his compact 50mm Lumix camera as his ‘eye’ because “that’s how we see,” he said. “We don’t see with a wide angle or a long lens.” This approach to photography speaks to Hayes’s strong interest in “active looking”. “Often, the act of looking can become circular,” Hayes says, as shown in his 2011 painting “Kyoto Views,” which portrays a man in a light blue-striped shirt taking a photo of a woman dressed in a kimono during a festival. In the corner of the piece, there is a 100-year-old photograph of a woman holding an umbrella that Hayes found at a flea market.

“In Japan, artists often use a flashback print within another print,” Hayes says, “and I started picking up on that.”

In fact, Hayes enjoyed Japan so much — specifically the Gion district of Kyoto — that he dedicated an entire room of the Unwritten Memoir exhibit to Japanese-inspired works. “There’s a big festival in June in Kyoto and it’s just like Mississippi - it’s 100 degrees, there’s thunderstorms and the people are quite courteous like most Mississippians,” Hayes said. “So I thought, ‘Oh, I’m very comfortable here’.

Even though Hayes is drawn to Mississippi and recently moved into a cozy farmhouse studio in Holly Springs, he is far from finished exploring and plans to travel to Morocco in the next year or so.
Tie Up, Draw Down
Center for Craft Creativity & Design
Asheville, NC
June 2 – September 2, 2017

You’re compelled to draft a recipe, to grid what’s random, redundant. Shitbits into blueprints. Your own wrist, a means to maneuver truth from scattered pixels. Fabric from wisps. Chaos salvaged.

You write rules of the salvage: alternate over, under. Your recipe arranges data, sorts blue and green pixels for easy compression. Nothing redundant except your maneuvers. Fatigue of the wrist only strengthens the wrist.

What insight! What handsome salvage ordered from the muck of the world you maneuver! You’re compelled to disobey the recipe. Ignore the rules, their bland redundancy. Insert a shoe. Invert green and blue pixels.

Better yet, blow up the pixels—palm-sized. The bits embody you. There, in your wrists, thighs, knuckles, hips. Perfectly redundant, your flawed body repeats itself, ages according to a recipe you did not author, cannot out-maneuver.

You’re compelled to maneuver regardless. You assemble paper pixels into a kaleidoscopic screen, stretch the recipe across the room: a niche for the body that’s risked. Add a rug to cushion it. You tug at the selvages of outgrown garments, the threads’ redundant ends loosening their redundancy with every fussy maneuver.

You’re compelled to alchemy, toward a savage disregard for rules, physics. Pixels become elastic. Language, absorbent. Your wrist muscles: gigabytes. Your body is a recipe that mixes what’s random, redundant. Your recipe calls for infinite maneuvers. Wrists to salvage value, pleasure from what’s pixelated.

This poem was written in response to Tie Up, Draw Down, an exhibition at the Center for Craft, Creativity & Design’s Benchspace Gallery, Asheville, NC. Tie Up, Draw Down was curated by Natalie Campbell and Carissa Carman.
BFA CONCENTRATIONS IN:
• ART EDUCATION
• ART HISTORY
• CRAFTS
• DIGITAL MEDIA
• GRAPHIC DESIGN
• PAINTING
• PHOTOGRAPHY
• SCULPTURE

MS IN:
• ART EDUCATION

$3,369.50* PER SEMESTER
NO OUT OF STATE TUITION
SMALL CLASS SIZES

CONTACT:
Diane McCall-
dmcall@deltastate.edu
662.846.4720

http://www.deltastate.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/art

Please help support contemporary visual arts in the mid-southern region by joining **Number:** today. All members will receive one year of **Number:** mailed to them and will be acknowledged in each issue. All contributions will count towards matching grant funds and are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.

Sponsorship level:
- $50 Friend
- $100 Numerati
- $250 Patron
- $1000 Deity

Barlow’s Planetarium
This year’s keepsake ornament celebrates the Museum’s Millington-Barnard Collection of Scientific Instruments. The ornament is a recreation of an orrey—a mechanical model of the solar system that demonstrates the relative positions and motions of the planets and moons.

ON SALE NOW FOR $25 PLUS TAX AT THE MUSEUM STORE!

The University of Mississippi Museum and Historic Houses

The restaurant where **SUBTLE** isn’t on the menu.