



2021 SENIOR THESIS EXHIBITION

The Department of Art and Art History
Rhodes College

**NATHALIE
TAMEZ
GUERRERO**

**BEC
HEYMAN**

**KRISTA
LEBOVITZ**

**RUBIE
LOMAN**

**GUNNER
SMITH**

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The Department of Art and Art History is proud to present the 2021 Senior Thesis Exhibition. Representing the culmination of four years of creative activity for each of our five art majors, the show exhibits original artworks that range from painting and sculpture, to animation and installation.

Bec Heyman's decorative installation pays homage to her interests in art history and science. By dissecting and reconstructing references as varied as microscopic views of tissue and gynecological models, Bec arranges anatomical components with interest in scale, detail, color and shape, seeking the kind of balance one might find in a floral arrangement. These bodily ornaments celebrate biological illustrations and scientific diagrams, recontextualizing them into a fine art lineage with bold, graphic color and a distinctively hand-made surface. Bec's composed images act as ornate architectural details in their scales, thus becoming both object and environment for the viewer.

A signature of Krista Lebovitz's sculptures is her discovery of organic, even futuristic forms to generate objects that imply function, however limited or absurd. The sculptures are adjacent to everyday domestic items like a chair, or a candle holder but each has a life of its own, thanks to Krista's ironic use of materials and playful exploration of color and touch. The sculptures invite interaction from the viewer, luring us to investigate the process by which they have been hand-made and provoking imagined interaction with them. Krista's sculptures pose as animate-objects and self-contained characters which carry their own personal histories, desires and attachments.

Rubie Loman's largescale watercolors explore the perception of self via inventive portraits which utilize her own body - or a version of it. Using distortion, strange perspective and dramatized scale, Rubie reinvents and reinterprets her self-portrait

to reflect her own changing observations of self. In this way, the work presents the conflicting feelings women can have about femininity while also evoking representations of fertility goddesses. Although Rubie's use of watercolor lends a softness and airiness to the work, the figures themselves have agency, perhaps even appearing confrontational either through gesture, the gaze of the figure, or the scale of the work in relation to the viewer. These works demand close looking and as the humanity of the figure is emphasized, so is the beauty.

Gunner Smith's creative practice encompasses animation, video, and painting. His work in this exhibition includes paintings which cohere a combination of processes including painting en plein air, painting from original and appropriated photographs, and painting from digital collage. His work evokes the history of painting while preserving an exploratory, narrative process that is strongly dependent on color and pattern. The paintings are flamboyant and celebratory in their use of material and color although the figures in the paintings often appear isolated or melancholy. Through this work, Gunner expresses the joy of everyday fantasies contrasted by contemporary anxieties about finding, or missing, intimate connections with lovers and friends.

With her hand-drawn pop-up book Nathalie Tamez-Guerrero gives viewers an intimate peek into her multiplicity of private selves. Using abstraction as a method to describe elements of her personality that at times feel disconnected from the outside world, and each other, Nathalie offers us a glimpse into a strange interior landscape where she can approach, cuddle, converse with, and attempt to integrate representations of herself. The book in the exhibition is both a series of 2dimensional drawings and a three-dimensional sculpture which unfolds to many sides, front and back. Although the style of the drawing within the work may evoke comic books, it is original and one-of-a kind, so precious. Made to the scale of the artist's body, (the length of the work unfolded is Nathalie's actual height and the height is equivalent to the length of her hand) Nathalie intends viewers to interact with the piece like they would any book. The work is meant to be viewed intimately: held in the hands of one person at a time, and like any book, each viewer decides on the duration of their engagement with the work. Just as their hands touch and interact with the book, viewers will be reminded of Nathalie's hands making it. In this way the piece serves as a surrogate hug between the artist and viewer.

Erin Harmon, Associate Professor
James F. Ruffin Chair, Art



NATHALIE TAMEZ GUERRERO

I am a collection of abstractions, disconnected with one another. These abstract parts of me feel out of reach, confusing, and overwhelming. A small part of me thinks I should crave the warmth that comes from other people. Another bigger part of me finds that idea so repulsive I can't stand it. I know that I shouldn't become embarrassed when thinking about intimacy, but I do and it feels like the only honest reaction I have.

But I have a plan in order to reconcile these parts of me so we can make some progress on being a concrete person. My inner group therapy regime is to get these abstractions to talk to each other in the spaces they inhabit within my mind. I want to be able to understand them and the environment that shapes who they are, if that even matters. Their sharp and jagged edges or impermeable lumpy bodies need to be coaxed out of their nooks and crannies so I can cup them in my hands all together. I then want to be able to offer them to others to put into their hands, because it's the only time I'll ever be held.



A Trip, Gouache, watercolor, ink, alcohol and paint markers on paper, 60" (height of artist) x 6 ½" (height of artist's hand), 2021



Hold You, Alcohol and acrylic paint markers on paper, 17" x 5", 2021



On Two Different Days, Acrylic gouache, ink, alcohol and paint markers on paper, 60" (height of artist) x 6 ½" (height of artist's hand), 2021



BEC HEYMAN

Muscles, organs, bones, cells.

The human body is full of shapes and patterns both inside and out.

Tasking myself with dissecting out these forms and carefully arranging them into highly decorative painted collages.

I fancy myself a bit of a florist when it comes to my corporeal corsages and body bouquets, arranging organs into perfect little puffs of color.

Taking celebration of inner beauty to a whole new level.

These compositions are carefully balanced in regard to composition, but a psychedelic, Frankensteinian rave when it comes to hues, tones, and values.

Reminiscent of the feeling you get and the colors you see flashing through your field of vision after accidentally looking into the sun.

I get lost in the moments where these colored marks come together to reflect the forms within us.

Where cross sections of ventricles can resemble paisley.

Where intestines cascade like fabric.

Where the cells you see under a microscope become a wallpaper pattern.



Corporeal Corsage, Gouache on illustration board and mixed media paper, 18 x 24 inches, April 2021



Body Bouquet, Tempera paint on illustration board, 32 x 40 inches, March 2021



"Body-ody-ody-ody-ody", Gouache on illustration board, 18 x 24 inches, February 2021



KRISTA LEBOVITZ

I believe, or perhaps want to believe, that chairs can fall in love and that lamps can feel pangs of sorrow when outfitted with new light bulbs. Could it be an overwrought imagination fueled by too many recent hours spent with lamps and chairs and tables and stairs? Nonetheless, I think within the realm of objecthood lies the possibility for a painting to come down from the gallery walls and to come live inside our bedrooms. Herein lies the chance for one to sit, flip on, flip off, hang, or hold the gestures of a paint stroke. Within this wonky and weird framework, is where I find myself caught mid-act (one hand holding a ruler and another reaching for something garishly orange and fluffy). My work, then, is an attempt to bring objects out from their relegated, stationary corners of our rooms and into center stage—all hues of pink and shades of textures. By reimagining everyday objects through this lens, I'm able to create space where the anomaly of an object can live—can be both lamp and friend—so, I can ultimately stir our hardened ideas of what objects are, what they do, what they mean to us, and what they can be.



Lover Chair, Fabric, felt, found objects, 36 x 22 x 25 inches, 2021



Woolen Sconce, Felt, mirror, candle holder, a candle snuffer, and a lighter embedded in the frame. 18 x 12 x 2.5 inches, 2021



RUBIE LOMAN

My brain is at odds with my body and my femininity. It seems only fitting that the girl who never wanted to grow into a woman got a massive set of boobs.

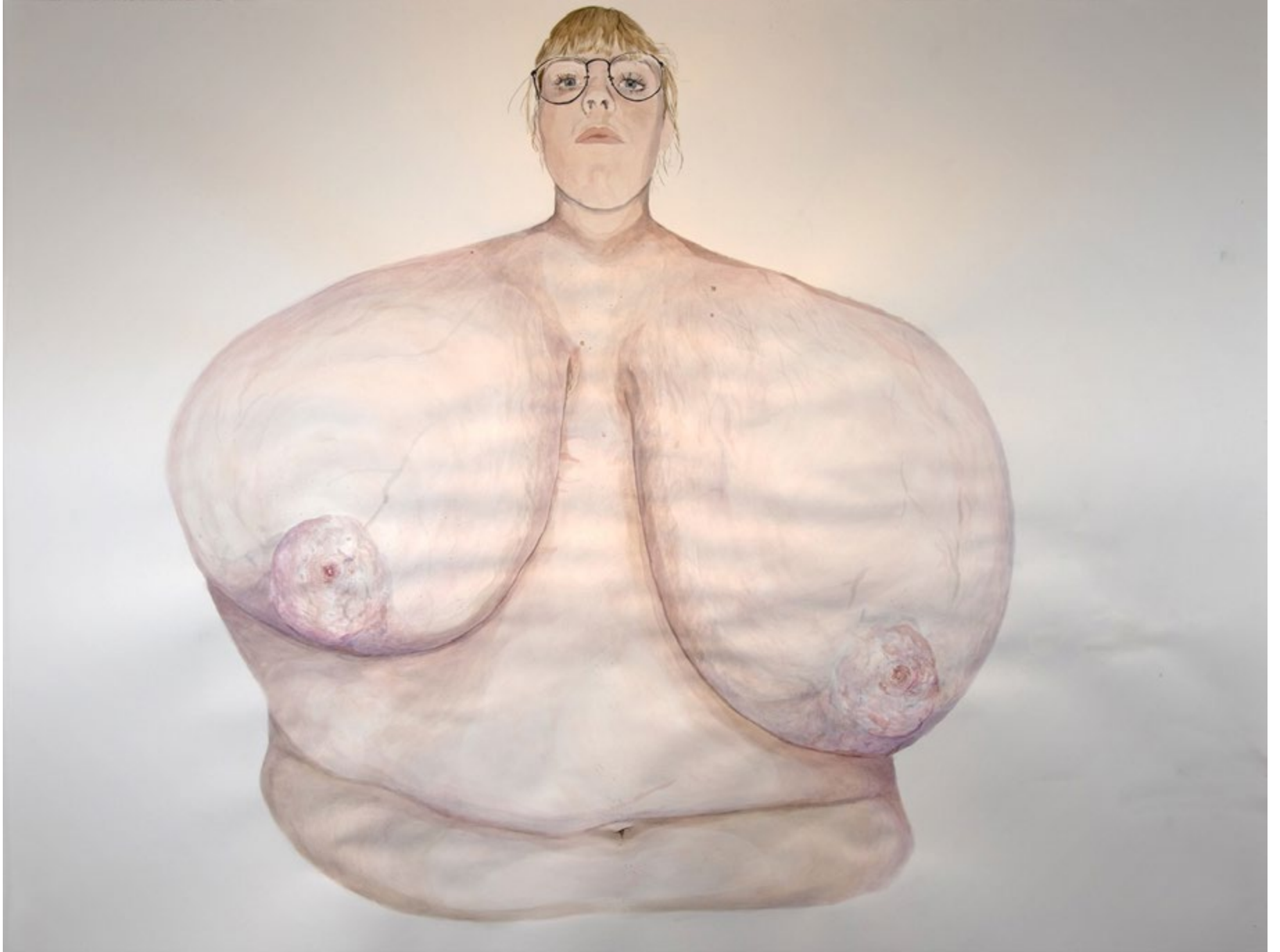
My art is an appreciation but also a light mockery of the methods I use to rationalize my own body. I tell myself things like:

Love your body because it is used to feed your babies!

Oddly enough, this sentiment doesn't work super well when you're not a mother.

My pieces are physical representations of my justifications and coping mechanisms that are far past their expiration date. They display my naked body to show its dysmorphic, bulbous, asymmetrical qualities.

The figures I create embrace their identities that are distorted from reality and end up being graceful and beautiful in their imperfections when translated onto paper. These identities become powerful creatures as their gaze, scale, and position on the paper tower over the viewer and demand to be exalted.



Mother Identity, Watercolor on mixed media paper, 50 x 36 inches, 2021



Melon Baller, Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 36 inches, 2021



Mother Identity, Watercolor on mixed media paper, 50 x 36 inches, 2021



GUNNER SMITH

I took off my clothes,
started skinny dipping in the kitchen sink.

It was fun at first, but a couple years later, I am drowning in
soaked rags, and white bubbles. You happened to be dipping
your toes in the water. You frolic. Because it is still fun and games.
Crawling out like nothing can ever hold you back. Walking towards
the towel on the drying rack. You wrap your waist and just laugh.

My hands cup water
Or try
And splash
Or try
To tell
Or ask
How you could feel so clean
After leaving me
And your water
In the kitchen sink.

Sometimes, I still want you to come play with me. But you have
already walked away in your clean towel. I will paint us as pirates or
on the ideal date. Or maybe I will only paint my life without you. It's
a sacrifice I am willing to make, disgusted by the materiality of the
paint. I am patient. I want you to feel my love.

Or to know that it will be used for something else.

Don't be angry with me. I just want you to see that I won't have to
spend my life under the dirty dishes of the kitchen sink.



My Top and My Bottom, Dates I Expected Post Coming Out Series #3, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 inches, 2021



Allergic to Cats! (Rose and Evie), Queer Love Stories Series #1, Acrylic on Canvas, 51 x 63 inches, 2021



"Body-ody-ody-ody-ody", Gouache on illustration board, 18 x 24 inches, February 2021



Brunch! (en plein air), Dates I Expected Post Coming Out Series #1, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches, 2021



Suspension Frolic, Painted animation, 02:34, 2020

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