

STRETCH

MARY B. HOWARD INVITATIONAL



December 15, 2018–February 9, 2019

James Huckenpahler

Monroe Isenberg

Katie Kehoe

Melanie Kehoss

Harry Mayer



Harry Mayer, *Smile 'n Nodd Shake n' Wavve* (detail), 2018

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE) is to enrich community life by promoting involvement and excellence in contemporary visual arts. In service to that mission, our exhibitions aim to support and promote local artists alongside and in conversation with national and international artists. Five years ago, the late Mary B. Howard—long-time Restonian, artist, and GRACE board member—bestowed upon GRACE an unprecedented bequest to support the work of artists in this community. At that time, GRACE committed a biennial exhibition for Artist Members to our already robust exhibition schedule.

This year, we reimagined what was previously a juried exhibition into an invitational to promote the creation of new work by the artist in our community. They were asked to submit proposals in response to the prompt, “If you could do anything, what would that be?” They were asked to *stretch* their imaginations, their resources, their use of materials, and their art practice. In defining the terms of her bequest, Howard recognized not the just the importance of diversity in artists’ voices but also in that of curators’. Thus, each Member exhibition is organized with the help of a guest curator. For *STRETCH*, GRACE invited Don Russell, university curator and director of the Provisions Research Center for Art & Social Change at George Mason University, to help select artists and work with them as they prepared for exhibition.

Posing an open-ended question to artists solicited an exciting range of responses. Winnowing down over fifty proposals to select just five for exhibition was challenging, to say the least. Working together with Don we are pleased to present an exhibition that explores themes of endurance, humor, and intellectual curiosity with work by artists at all stages in their careers from pursuing a BFA to having committed gallery representation. Artists James Huckenpahler, Monroe Isenberg, Katie Kehoe, Melanie Kehoss, and Harry

Mayer have all participated in laborious processes devised through their own motivation to stretch the boundaries of their practices. The resulting work has been nurtured and honed for display but the themes the artists are continuing to explore are limitless.

We are especially thankful to Mary B. and Bob Howard for their vision and sustaining support, Don Russell for his generous and insightful involvement, and the participating artists for sharing their unique perspectives and ambitions with us. As always, we gratefully acknowledge the leadership of our Board of Directors and the valued support of our sponsors, members, and patrons. Thank you to Sofia Blom, Sarah Berenz, Katana Lippart, and Sarah Sadler for your invaluable contributions.

Erica Harrison, Associate Curator and Festival Director
Lily Siegel, Executive Director and Curator



Melanie Kehoss, *Sweet Drug of Venice*, 2017

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

The act of *stretching* is compellingly evident in this selection of area artists and it is key to understanding the nature of their artworks.

Spanning geography, history, labor, technology, and human consciousness, the artworks are driven by various forms of creative research integral to the artists' intentions and questions. The nature of their media is expansive and fluid, incorporating performance, installation, and non-traditional materials in order to craft their unique visions.

There is room here for us to stretch as well, to question what we see, what we understand, and what we take with us back into the world. In this sense, these works encourage us to be open—and perhaps even collaborate.

Katie Kehoe's project documents a summer-long performance enacted along flood-prone areas of the Mid- and North-Atlantic coastline. Donning a wetsuit and carrying a makeshift floatation device, Kehoe attracts the curiosity of strangers in order to interact with them about the impacts of rising water in their community. Hers is both a spiritual and objective act aimed at witnessing nature's response to human activity at the water's edge. Her practice is based on the power of questioning and wondering, rather than answers and solutions.

James Huckenpahler's striking artworks conceal in order to reveal. Made by undermining computer-imaging software, they hint at, but forever encrypt, their original photographic sources. While his images appear to be three-dimensional, they remain irrevocably flat and opaque. The works can be read as a lexicon of surrealist dream images from which to form your own narrative.

Melanie Kehoss's colorful light-boxes illuminate a hidden history of sugar, a food

ingredient we take for granted. Sugar was a principal crop transported in the slave trade, along with cotton, tobacco, rum, indigo, and rice. Once a rare treat for royalty, it is now ubiquitous in the food we consume. Kehoss's installation is a call to greater consciousness and responsibility for the sources and social consequences of sugar.

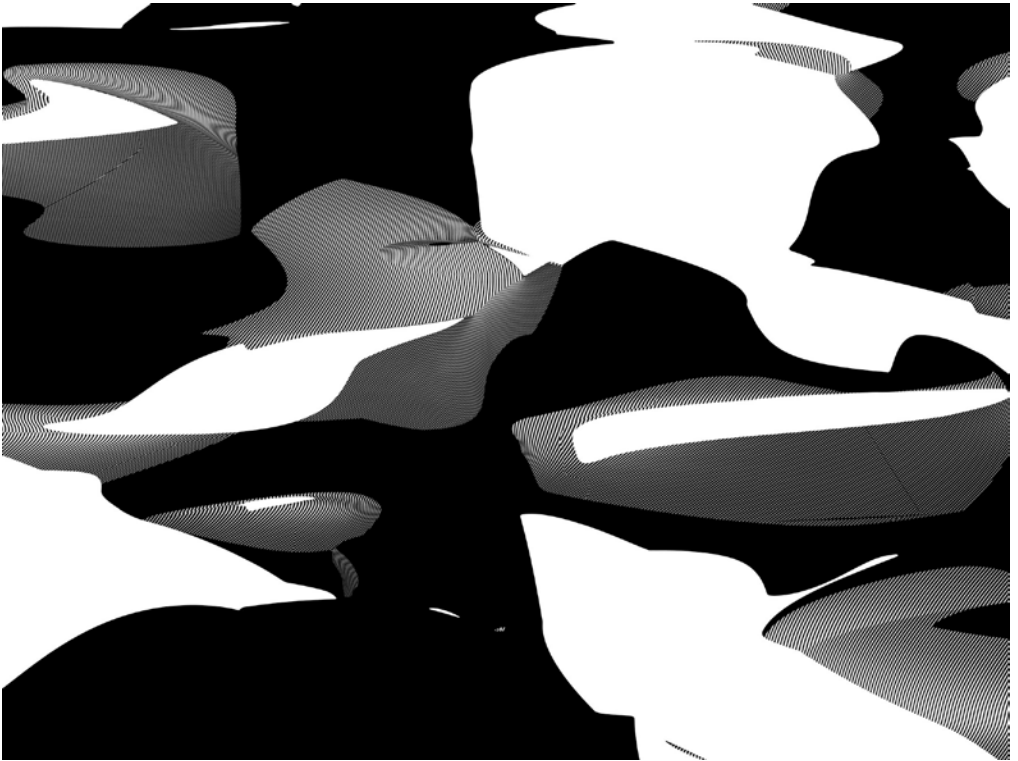
Harry Mayer uses humble building materials and techniques to create sculptures that reflect on acts of routine of labor. Using his own body as an enduring instrument of repetitive manual labor, he reveals the unintended usefulness and pleasures of objects as extensions of the human mind and body.

Monroe Isenberg's installations capture silent phenomena using light and sculptural objects. Seeking to capture and evoke exquisite moments, indefinable feelings of place and time, he brings them into temporary harmony and remembrance.

This exhibition has been engineered as a space to imagine possibility through the aspirations of artists working in a contemporary global context. Pushing at the borders of objects, these artists reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary.

It has been a joy and a privilege to help organize this exhibition and I wish to acknowledge the creativity, intelligence, professionalism, and hard work of the artists and GRACE's staff, who made it all possible.

Donald Russell
University Curator, George Mason University



James Huckenpahler

I was an Atari kid, and even before that I consumed a steady diet of after-school Star Trek, Ultraman, and Speed Racer. Computers, like Kabbalism or Alchemy, offered the supernatural promise of wholes greater-than-the-sum-of-their-parts. Before they were a part of my daily, waking life, they were a part of my mythology, alongside Wagnerian heroes, Japanese monsters, and animated mice. To invoke computers is to bind one's work to unique aspects of our time; on one hand, management systems and statistical analyses which homogenize and dehumanize, and on the other, simulations that can locate hidden opportunities, new vistas.

James Huckenpahler (b. 1969, Washington, D.C.; lives and works in Washington, D.C.) is a member of FURTHERMORE, a research and development lab for visual culture and sustainable art communities, is a fellow of Provisions Research Library, and currently serves on the advisory board of the D.C.-based artist-centered organization Transformer. He is on the faculty of Corcoran School of the Arts and Design at George Washington University and is represented by Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.



Monroe Isenberg

Stillness becomes awareness,
Silence amplifies connection.
Struggle to understand becomes
Energy
To create.
Words disappear,
Making encounters mystery.
Is there a space between the animate and inanimate?

I understand every material to have history and an essence. I let these material qualities guide my ideas and sculpture making. My practice involves repetition, large-scale constructions, performance, and technology to create minimal and abstract forms, installations, and relationships that reframe space and invite investigation, contemplation, questioning, and if only for an instant, a state of immersion.

Monroe Isenberg (b. 1991, Minneapolis; lives and works in Washington, D.C.) is currently pursuing a MFA at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland, and is the recipient of multiple awards, grants, and residencies including the International Outstanding Student Achievement Award from the International Sculpture Center; Outstanding Student Award, Mid-South Sculpture Alliance; Ann Bartsch Dunne Scholarship first place award in sculpture; Dean's Fellowship at the University of Maryland; and the Tom Rooney Prize awarded by the Washington Sculpture Group. His work can currently be seen publicly at Franconia Sculpture Park in Minnesota; he has exhibited locally at the Hillyer Art Space and the Washington Project for the Arts, among others.



Katie Kehoe, still from *91 Miles: Provisions for Buoyancy, Performance Actions on the East Coast*, 2018

Katie Kehoe

In the spring of 2018, I produced 18 performance actions over a period of three weeks that involved me walking a total of 91 miles through areas that would be flooded if the sea level were to rise by six feet, while wearing a wetsuit and carrying a bodyboard. I made the bodyboard previously out of salvaged materials.

Starting in Washington, D.C., and concluding in Nova Scotia, Canada, I performed actions in the following ten states and two provinces: Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Wilmington, Delaware; Atlantic City and Jersey City, New Jersey; New York; New Haven, Connecticut; Providence; Boston; Hampton, New Hampshire; Rockland, Maine; Saint John, New Brunswick, and Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

For *STRETCH* I am presenting new work that consists of the documentation from this series of performance actions. The performances were supported by The Ontario Arts Council's Visual Artist (Emerging) Project Grant and VisArt's F.E.A.S.T Grant.

Katie Kehoe (b. 1979, Peterborough, Ontario; lives and works in Fairfax and Richmond, Virginia) holds a MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and is Adjunct Faculty in the Sculpture and Extended Media Department at the School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, and Adjunct Faculty, Photography Department, The School of Art, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. She was awarded runner-up for the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship and has held residencies at VisArts in Rockville, Maryland, and Vermont Studio Center.



Melanie Kehoss, *Sundae Best*, 2017

Melanie Kehoss

Bitter Sweetener

We have been extracting the juice from sugarcane for thousands of years, but table sugar was once a luxury reserved for royalty. *Bitter Sweetener* presents key eras in sugar's history, illuminating its global significance, problematic production, and changing uses.

The tableaux illustrate sugar's spread westward from India, to the Mediterranean, to England and its colonies, to the USA. Silhouettes of laborers are pictured together with consumers, but often upside-down, suggesting fraught dynamics. Patterns inspired by the cultures of the laborers adorn each box, and appear as fine clothing prints and doilies.

The forms and uses of sugar have evolved (or perhaps devolved) over the centuries, becoming whiter, cheaper, and more abundant. Dimming lights allow the sugar silhouettes to appear whiter, once a sign of purity, while suggesting the passage of time.

Melanie Kehoss (b. 1979, Milwaukee; lives and works in Arlington, Virginia) received a MFA in Studio Art-Graphics from University of Wisconsin-Madison and currently teaches at Arlington Arts Center. She has held residencies at Georgetown University, Haystack Mountain School of Craft, and Vermont Studio Center. Locally, she has had solo exhibitions at Hillyer Art Space and Arlington Arts Center.



Harry Mayer, *HeeHaww SeeSaww*, 2018

Harry Mayer

Stoicism has resonated with me for my entire life, I see myself as someone who bears pain and hardship without a display of feelings and without complaint. The main tenets of stoicism revolve around endurance, fortitude, acceptance, and tolerance. In many of my pieces I portray these ideas through sculpture. Through the making process, I choose specific materials that take a physical toll on my body, I have found cinder blocks, steel and plywood to fulfill this requirement and be used as a symbol for manual labor. The labor involved never seems to come to the surface in the final work. The formal aspects of my sculpture are dictated by the space around me, the shape and form are specific its intended home. The pieces serve as silent markers of problem solving and struggle.

Harry Mayer (b. 1995, Lorton, Virginia; lives and works in Fairfax, Virginia) is currently pursuing a BFA at George Mason University with a concentration in sculpture. Mayer has been recognized on the School of Arts Dean's list every semester and is one of six students in the School of Art to receive a Backspace Fellowship. He has exhibited locally in group exhibitions at McLean Project for the Arts; Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale; Torpedo Factory Arts Center; and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

ABOUT GUEST CURATOR DON RUSSELL

Don Russell has been an active contemporary art curator and arts administrator since 1979. His research focuses on the exploration and development of new social contexts for art. He is currently George Mason University's University Curator, responsible for programming exhibitions and public art on the Fairfax, Manassas, and Arlington campuses. Additionally, he directs Provisions Research Center for Art & Social Change, providing creative resources for community-engaged public art projects. He is co-founder with Edgar Endress of Floating Lab Collective.

Russell has extensive experience managing and directing contemporary arts, philanthropic, and publishing ventures. He is President of Art Resources International and previously served as Executive Director of Washington Project for the Arts and had various leadership roles at Visual Studies Workshop.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

James Huckenpahler

kustomkirbyklinekreation, 2018

Digital print on Dibond

45 x 60 inches

open letter, 2018

Digital print on Dibond

45 x 60 inches

value proposition, 2018

Digital print on Dibond

45 x 60 inches

All courtesy of the artist

Monroe Isenberg

Stone, 2018

Stone, light, and wood

60 x 96 x 96 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Katie Kehoe

91 Miles: Provisions for Buoyancy,

Performance Actions on the East Coast, 2018

Multimedia installation; documentation

shot by Susanna Lee; post production

composition and editing by Katie Kehoe

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Melanie Kehoss

A Refined Display, 2017

Cut paper, gouache, wood, Plexiglas, and

LEDs

14 x 14 x 3 inches

Corn in Every Aisle, 2017

Cut paper, gouache, wood, Plexiglas, and

LEDs

14 x 14 x 3 inches

Sundae Best, 2017

Cut paper, gouache, wood, Plexiglas, and LEDs

14 x 14 x 3 inches

Sweet Drug of Venice, 2017

Cut paper, gouache, wood, Plexiglas, and LEDs

14 x 14 x 3 inches

Confectionery, 2018

Various sugars, cut Unryu paper, and found glassware

Dimensions Variable

Dawn of Candy, 2018

Cut paper, gouache, wood, Plexiglas, and LEDs

14 x 14 x 3 inches

All courtesy of the artist

Harry Mayer

HeeHaww SeeSaww, 2018

Steel, wood, and C-clamps

36 x 36 x 144 inches

Smile 'n Nodd Shake n' Wavve, 2018

Concrete, pvc pipe, and tiny hands

96 x 17 x 7.5 inches each

All courtesy of the artist

The mission of the Greater Reston Arts Center is to enrich community life by promoting involvement and excellence in contemporary visual arts.

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