

# CATALYST FOR EXCHANGE

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14th International Combined Caucus Exhibition  
Juried by Kelli Connell

# Catalyst for Exchange

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Savannah College of Art and Design  
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## JUROR

Kelli Connell's work investigates sexuality, gender, identity and photographer / sitter relationships. Her work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the J Paul Getty Museum among others. Recent publications include Kelli Connell: Pictures for Charis (Aperture & Center for Creative Photography), PhotoWork: Forty Photographers on Process and Practice (Aperture) and the monograph Kelli Connell: Double Life (DECODE Books). Connell has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, MacDowell, and The Center for Creative Photography.

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## Catalyst for Exchange

The Society for Photographic Education has chosen this year's conference theme: *CATALYST FOR EXCHANGE*, citing that "By capturing and sharing stories through images, we create opportunities to engage with others, foster understanding, and address the most pressing issues of our time." Using this quote from the conference catalog as a guide, I set to the task as this year's juror for the SPE Combined Caucus Exhibition. Poring over hundreds of entries, I was struck by the breadth and depth of the submissions as well as the fact that each entry was a mirror into the world in which we live: a complicated and difficult time where art is desperately needed.

A friend of mine and I were recently talking about how *the act of giving attention is an act of devotion*. And, as we were chatting, I was reminded by a similar phrase that my former mentor Susan kae Grant used to tell us: *put your attention on your intention*. As artists, we are living in a time when our attention is being pulled by social media, news outlets and endless information loops. We find ourselves bombarded by images and scrolling mindlessly through feeds, almost as if we are sifting through a wave to find that one spark of inspiration that will offer us something – a respite, a call to action, a thrill or a hope that will feed our spirits.

Being a member of the Society for Photographic Education offers community, life-long friendships and opportunities to be inspired by and learn from the work of others. Serving as the juror for this year's Combined Caucus Exhibition was a rewarding experience and it is my hope that the selection offered will give you that lift of inspiration, that respite, that call to action, that we desire, and that the exhibition itself offers a space to talk about and exchange ideas.

-Kelli Connell



## Abbey Hepner

*Dairy for the Downwinders Collection*

## Abbey Hepner

*Dairy for the Downwinders, Liquid Light (darkroom process) on Milk Jars, 2025. Between 1951 and 1992, over one thousand nuclear tests were detonated in the desert in Nevada. "Downwinders" are loosely defined as those individuals who lived "downwind" from nuclear test sites. In Dairy for the Downwinders, I explore my ancestors' experience living downwind of the Nevada Test Site in the 1950s. They lived and worked on a dairy farm and consumed milk from the cows that grazed on the land contaminated by nuclear fallout. Two of my great-uncles died of myeloid leukemia, a cancer with known ties to nuclear testing. My grandmother died when she was 24, leaving behind three children. The impacts of nuclear harm echo for generations, provoking detriments to our health, socioeconomic displacement, environmental contamination, and cultural and psychological trauma. This series explores where the land meets the body and the challenge of truth-telling in a community of secret-keepers. Many areas around the Nevada Test Site were inhabited by Mormons, including my family. They were part of a community that was very secretive and proved to be perfect for its complicity in nuclear testing.*

*Milk authors a sense of familial unity. It is the essential life-sustaining liquid critical to a baby's survival—something linked to maternal nurturance. But in the 1950s and 1960s, thousands of children across the country were exposed to radionuclides through milk because of nuclear testing. To complicate matters, the U.S. dairy industry is deeply entrenched with the government, a relationship built over decades through policies, subsidies, and lobbying. The portraits refer to campaigns from the 1980s that printed images of missing people on milk cartons. Although it was largely unsuccessful, it made a mark on our collective memory. Using family photographs, I created portraits on milk jars with a darkroom process called liquid light. This series combines personal, social, and political issues to examine an ongoing nuclear legacy. With new expansions to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act passing through Congress, more people are recognizing just how devastating and widespread nuclear issues continue to be.*



Alexander Diaz  
*Untitled*

## Alexander Diaz

*The existence of God has yet to be proven; nevertheless, humans continue to construct things that support the notion of a higher power. Christian shrines, in particular, perpetuate miraculous narratives and/or memorialize individuals with supernatural characteristics. Shrines such as these, help to validate one's faith by objectifying the intangible. They function as a kind of physical proof, and they embody the notion of God's existence.*

*I fabricated these shrines to draw attention to the need for humans to have their faith confirmed and validated by representations. Philosophers since Plato have advised against relying solely on images to acquire knowledge. Despite the warnings, this reliance has not weakened over time; instead, it has strengthened with the proliferation of images that has occurred since the invention of photography. We have evolved to depend on our sense of sight to collect vital information; as a result, we are more likely to believe in something that can be seen. For instance, my photographs may appear to be straightforward depictions, leading viewers to assume these shrines actually exist. These photographs may even comfort some because they reinforce their religious beliefs. However, this series is not a documentary; it does not disclose factual information about specific sacred sites or shrines. On the contrary, it is a work of fiction that examines the role of images in Christianity as well as in contemporary society.*



**Ally Christmas**  
*Latent Labor*

## Ally Christmas

*/bodycrumbs began as a meandering, labyrinthine exploration of internal selfhood – questioning what it means to be, and tracing how all the intersecting, overlapping, conflicting parts of myself coexist together. More recently, the imagery and motivation behind the work have morphed towards a more uncomfortable exploration of external (m)otherhood – questioning who I am through the eyes of others and how I extend or project myself outwards now that I am a mother. This project has been a multi-year labor of love, and ‘labor’ is a key term I hope to unpack in this work; how can traditional forms of domestic labor (like sewing, weaving, mending, quilting) become vehicles for conveying meaning about embodiment and selfhood? While creating the work shared in this space, the ritualistic processes of image and object construction have invoked both a productive form of spiritual contemplation and a (perhaps) counter-productive remove from reality (read: repression, avoidance, \*anxiously laughing emoji goes here\*).*



Amanda Dahlgren  
*Tryhard*

## Amanda Dahlgren

*The year I turned 50 was bookended by two significant, contrasting events. It started with an ambulance ride and overnight stay in the ER after passing out and having a massive anxiety attack. And ended with finally landing the dream job I had been working towards for 15 years. My 50s so far have been full of contradictions.*

*My hair is gray but it's never looked better. I'm more physically active than any time in my life, playing pickleball and doing pilates. I'm a bass-player, who goes to the chiropractor regularly for neck and back issues. I'm tech savvy, even though I don't understand the difference between a reel, post, and story. Alcohol, a vice that used to make me feel like the life of the party, just brings panic attacks. My metabolism suddenly sucks, but my doctor says I'm quite healthy thanks to pharmaceuticals and supplements. And I'm starting to fear that my tattoo and face piercings look less badass and more tryhard.*

*I'm lucky to be alive and thriving. Feeling accomplished. And creative. And capable. And? Just fucking old.*



Amanda Musick  
*Untitled 1, from Becoming With*

## Amanda Musick

*This project explores the meeting point between the human body and the natural world, using my own form to consider how the body inhabits, echos, and responds to the landscape. I am interested in how the body fits into these in-between spaces, where elements narrow and the land is broken or folds in on itself. Being inside these spaces makes me think about embodiment in a fuller way, the landscape as a body, and my body having its own topography.*

*Instead of approaching nature as something to stand over, conquer, or frame at a distance, I'm choosing to be with it, held by it, scraped against it, shaped by it. The photographs come from a place of reciprocity and care, a sense of becoming through my contact with the land rather than acting upon it. I am thinking about exposure in more than one sense, the exposure of my skin, of topography, of how we relate to the environments we move through. It is about letting my body be part of the terrain, even briefly, and noticing what happens in that moment of shared space.*



**Amy Davis**  
*What We Signed Up For*

## Amy Davis

*This work looks at the quiet negotiations inside my intercultural family. My husband emigrated from Kosovo, and our lives together sit between two histories, two languages, and two ways of belonging. These photographs move between the symbolic and the intimate to show how identity is carried, questioned, and rebuilt across generations. The images reflect the ongoing exchange that shapes our home, where culture becomes something we hold, inherit, and slowly piece together.*



## Ashley Moog Bowsbey

*Clinging To The Light, When Night Falls And Despair Creeps In*

## Ashley Moog Bowsbey

*“How Do You Say Goodbye” is a work-in-progress series navigating life after loss. Grief is often put on a timeline, seven stages one is supposed to get through. Being expected to move through them quickly and get back to work and the routines of one’s daily life. Though there is no official road map for how to work through the aftermath of unexpected loss. How does one navigate the deep-seated pain, emptiness, exhaustion, mental fog, and forgetfulness that go along with grief? How does life go back to normal when things are no longer the same?*

*Creating these images is my way of trying to find the road map to healing after loss. The images represent the experience of trying to feel like oneself again while continuing to navigate cumulative grief. A way to pull myself out of the darkness while reflecting on the memories they would have had. Tracing the footsteps of loved ones and documenting the places they once loved but will never see, hear, or feel again. From the wind rushing through the forest, as my father sat in his tree stand patiently waiting for deer to grace his presence. The sun setting through the trees, the chill of the night seeping in, and heading back to the warmth of his camper before getting up at the crack of dawn to do it all over again. Each image, searching for signs of his presence with each snap of a branch, gust of wind, and changes in light, echoes the despair, longing, and gratitude that come with the hardest goodbye.*

*So, what do you do when it feels as if the world around you is crumbling? How do you say goodbye to someone when they are ripped away from your life too soon? I make photographs, and hope that maybe one day it won’t hurt so much.*



## Benjamin Davis

*Records*

## Benjamin Davis

*After moving away, I began to view my family home as a museum of my parents and the lives I was missing while gone. I consider my family's physical archive to consist of both precious keepsakes and the contemporary ephemera that my family members surround themselves with. The home collapses multiple generations into one space, holding mementos belonging to relatives long passed next to the detritus of my parents' daily routines.*

*My still life images in this project, Heirlooms, range from constructed photographs to scenes naturally found in the space. Creating portraits of the objects is also an attempt at a connection with relatives who have long passed or those living whom I struggle to communicate with. My family leaves issues of mental health undiscussed, and I use these images as abstract clues to better understand them, the things they want to preserve, and what has been passed down.*

*In my broader artistic practice, I explore themes of inherited conditions, addiction, and materiality through photography, video, and handmade artist books. I engage different representations of time to reflect on family history and the weight of unspoken struggles, whether that takes the form of a self-paced book or the flashing flicker of a 16mm film. The family archive is a frequent collaborator, a tool for both inspiration and connection to dead relatives. I work intuitively, creating poetic, visual fragments in a combination of digital and analog processes. Occasionally, I incorporate figures from popular culture and found ephemera, such as silk flowers, into my work to comment on larger cycles of addiction and grief.*



## Christopher Schneberger

*This new series of tableaus looks at the presence of railroads in the town of Vincennes, Indiana, and the close proximity of the freight lines to the homes and lives of the residents. These images envision moments of hope, curiosity, whimsy, and isolation, which occur on or near these structures. The tracks serve as both conduits and barriers. They simultaneously connect and divide the town and the people who live within it.*

Christopher Schneberger  
*Train Town #1 (Mailman)*



**Cintia Segovia Figueroa**  
*MX Chief*

## Cintia Segovia Figueroa

*Cintia Segovia Figueroa was born and raised in Mexico City, where she worked in the entertainment industry. Learning English in the U.S. as an adult gave her a unique perspective on the nuances of the language. Her photography and socially engaged approach explore themes of immigration, displacement, and bilingualism.*



## Deborah Orloff

*42 Acre Forced Labor Gravel Pit, Treblinka Extermination Camp*

## Deborah Orloff

*Researching my family's roots has led to myriad dead ends; I've found random facts related to a handful of ancestors, but nothing close to a complete narrative. Details of individuals have been lost as people die, and their memories disappear. This is complicated by the fact that I come from a diasporic culture where official records from Russia and Eastern Europe largely cease to exist, and histories depend on oral traditions.*

*My current body of work, Elusive Memory, encompasses four related series. The first, Elusive Memory, consists of high-resolution photographs of damaged family photos that emphasize the unique details of their deterioration. These large-scale prints serve as metaphors for the unreliability of memory and the experience of trying to access it. Conversely, the photographs in Elusive Memory: Lost Histories are small still-life images that deny the viewer most of the visual information photographs are expected to reveal. With only selected areas in focus, they allude to lost stories and identities - especially in situations of forced migration (the case for my ancestors who fled Ukraine during the Russian pogroms in the late 19th century).*

*Elusive Memory: Constructed Histories is a physical collage project. In these intimate assemblages, I juxtapose physically altered family photos with images I made in European locations relevant to my ancestry and Jewish history including the Holocaust. Conflating time, people, and places, these pieces start to suggest stories and relationships that could have transpired but, like my family history, can never be fully known. While photographing concentration camps and other sites related to my Jewish heritage, I was particularly struck by spaces that had traumatic histories but little to no visual evidence of what took place at the sites. My photographs of such areas initially seem like innocuous landscapes but upon closer inspection, and in conjunction with their titles, they divulge a very different reality. These images reveal the erasure of history and make up a parallel body of work, Elusive Memory: What Remains.*



**Dena Eber**  
*The Land of My Ancestors*

## Dena Eber

*“This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land”*

*In the winter of 2023, I sold my house in Toledo, Ohio and moved to a new property in the woods. Monclova, Ohio is filled with native histories, the Shawnee and Wyandot tribes were the last wave of pre-colonial peoples, among many before them who are known to have lived on this land—this land where I now live. The spiritual beliefs of these cultures connected the people to their lands and sacred sites in ways that defined a relationship without ownership. As it was in the natural world around them, the land was rooted to their identity. It was here, in my new home, that I encountered an ancient and unfamiliar energy. The only other time I had experienced this was in Israel, the land of my heritage.*

*I started by taking my camera out to connect with the histories on the land where I lived, the photographs began to reveal some of what I was feeling, hearing, and seeing. Like many who have come before me, it was a simple question that led me to pilgrimage. I asked myself, whose land is this? I hold the deed, but I know in my heart of hearts that I don't really own it. I began to question my place in time. I searched for parallels and found myself pulled to other sacred sites in Ohio, and in New Mexico—the land of my country, as an American—and in Israel, as a Jew. I realized I was on a pilgrimage to better understand human energy, behaviors, and spiritual connection, which for me, was with god.*

*“This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land” is about uncovering the very human condition of wanting a place to call home, and the conflict of how we perceive and understand land ownership. I pursue a history of spiritual belief, and what it means to be human, from the land where I live, the land of my country, and the land of my ancestors.*

*As in prayer, I give thanks and ask forgiveness at once.*



## Editha Mesina

*When I Look at You* explores the life of my mother, Eleanor, during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II. Eleanor was a guerrilla with the East Luzon Guerrilla Army, a faction of the Philippine Resistance Forces. She was 23 years old and a graduate of the Centro Escolar University in Manila when Japan invaded the Philippines hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Her home region of Bataan was a key battlefield during the war in the Pacific, the site of the infamous Bataan Death March; a location that resonates in American history and popular culture with the Hollywood film *Back to Bataan*.

*I have been sifting through family photographs of my mother that I have inherited since her death. By layering these images and stories of my mother from family archives upon photographs from the U.S. National Archives, I place into the existing Western narrative previously untold stories of a Filipino young woman and her family's experience during the unimaginably violent Japanese occupation. Using text, I mine her imagination as she expresses her fears of loss of home, flesh, family, and language. The work is about the role of memory in constructing the past and its contribution to defining one's identity. With this work, I am narrating my mother's story of resistance as a reclamation of the importance of the role of everyday women during violent world conflicts.*

**Editha Mesina**  
*Mom, Rifle, Purse, 2023.*



## Elan Schwartz

*I wouldn't be as good with less anxiety*

## Elan Schwartz

*I am an interdisciplinary artist from the Midwest who explores the embodiment and practice of active love.*

*My practice is often split between reflective, individual studio work and communal invitations of connection. These modes fuel and build off each other, as my “art practice” and my existence are not separate; they are one. The studio work functions as a critical space for me to process and work through the vicissitudes of my life, mostly with regard to intimacy, vulnerability, honesty, patience, and care. The studio work also allows me to come to what I want to share and learn with others. This gets explored more in the community-driven work where I focus on listening and providing invitations to share, connect, reflect, reprioritize, and center through creating and reparative processes. The work is in the making, the reflecting, the interactions, the understanding, the questioning, the setting of intentions. The objects – the pieces – are residue; marks left from the work. They act as reminders, checkpoints, maps, prompts, catalysts, mirrors, portals, and more.*

*My drive is to highlight and provide opportunities for considering these questions: what am I keeping from myself?, what can we/I do?, what can we do that we didn't think we could do?, what power do we hold in ourselves individually as well as communally? Sometimes these questions need to be pondered for some time, and sometimes they can be answered right away. Creating is another language we use to understand and practice.*

*I often use it as a way to practice seeing, communicating, and listening. Practicing those skills doesn't just stay in the studio. Those skills permeate through every area of our lives. We see what is happening in front of us, we consider what is not right in front of us, we observe our feelings, we communicate them with others, we listen to others share what they see and what they feel in their own way. I try to figure out how to take that practice of seeing, communicating, and listening and create an invitation to people engaging with my work.*



**Gina Dabrowski**  
*Char in her Kitchen*

## Gina Dabrowski

*There are no men allowed at the women's music festivals where I have photographed over a period of twelve years, where I documented my subjects surrounded by the collections of things that create their personal spaces within a shared environment. The photographs give the viewer an opportunity to experience an environment that is devoid of male presence, authority and gaze.*

*In my new project, I turn my lens on Intentional Communities, land trusts that have been developed by and for women exclusively, and focus on the interaction and shared goals of community, safety, ecological awareness, and sustainability. Using a medium format film camera and strobe lights, I document the ways women reflect their individuality in the homes they build and create community with their chosen families in this relatively unknown corner of feminist culture.*

*Both women's music festivals and intentional communities have their roots in the radical feminist/separatist movement of the 1970s and are safe places in secluded areas, made up of diverse communities of straight, lesbian, and bisexual women, totally exclusive of men. Both projects illuminate women creating personal places within a larger communal space. As a visual artist who is also a lesbian, I am uniquely positioned to provide insight into these communities.*

*As an artist, I use photography to explore issues around gender, class, and community. My artwork is informed by my experiences growing up working class, in a family of strong, hardworking matriarchs. I am passionate in my journey to explore and photograph communities built by and for women.*



**Ginger Gore Russell**  
*My Mother's Name was Snake*

## Ginger Gore Russell

*My work explores the aging female body as a personal landscape, creating an intimate connection between portraiture, memory, and place. Through photography and thoughtful manipulation of imagery, I use my own body as a canvas to examine the delicate balance between youth and age, desire and loss, as well as the everyday and the extraordinary.*

*I draw on familiar motifs, such as hair that acts as a shield, bare trees, berry-like forms, and fresh blooms to illustrate the cycles of fertility, grief, and renewal shaped by my own experiences. These experiences include a partial hysterectomy, the loss of my mother, and the time spent on the land she passed down to me.*

*I strive to cultivate a gaze that is honest and layered, defiant yet tender, wounded but hopeful. I draw you into the physical and emotional landscapes of my body. By playing with scale and cropping, I shift images from the intimate to the confrontational, sometimes inviting you to lean in closely and at other times presenting them in a way that demands your attention. My work exists at the crossroads of personal storytelling and broader cultural themes, navigating aging, embodiment, legacy, and our complex relationship with place and climate. It aims to open up a space for empathy, provoke thought, and create visibility for bodies that are often overlooked or deemed irrelevant.*



Grettel Cortes  
*Casita*

## Grettel Cortes

*My practice uses abstraction to investigate erasure, transformation, and the evolving processes of identity. I explore how memory forms and transforms through abstract expression, working with photography and video as layered surfaces where gesture, material, and chance intersect. Layering guides my process and thinking, serving as both a visual language and a metaphor for how identity, memory, and place build upon one another.*



Haohao Huang  
*Hand in Hand*

## Haohao Huang

*Lost in Translation* investigates the shifting dynamics of intimacy and self-identity over time and examines how photography simultaneously documents and conceals these transformations. The project begins with a personal archive of Polaroid photographs produced within a past intimate relationship—images that once signified mutual presence but, following the relationship's dissolution, now operate as traces of experiences that can no longer be directly accessed. While photography can preserve discrete moments, its inherent stillness limits its ability to convey the continuity, instability, and affective complexity of lived emotional experience.

To address this limitation, the project extends photographic practice into material and spatial forms. Through techniques such as Polaroid emulsion transfers, textile printing, and installation-based display, the photograph is approached as a photo-object—a material entity that can be handled, altered, and recontextualized—rather than solely as an optical representation. Through the fragmentation and reconfiguration of these images, intimacy is no longer understood as a fixed or preservable state, but as a residual process that continues to exert influence after its conclusion through memory, affective resonance, and ongoing self-reconstruction. *Lost in Translation* proposes that intimacy, memory, and identity do not vanish with change, but are rearticulated within the very conditions of transformation.



**Jamie Ho**  
*Posing with "Oriental Lilies"*

## *Jamie Ho*

*Through formal and material interventions, I create images that draw from my mother's imprecise knowledge of our ancestral Chinese traditions and rituals. My work generates a world that prioritizes queer modes of joy, humor and play as an act of resistance against assimilation into the hegemony of American culture by constructing images that trouble the long history of public spectacle of Chinese American femmes and women. By staging drag performances, I question patriarchal notions of gender by presenting beauty rituals that embrace failure and reference historical and current Chinese diasporic objects to reimagine new connections to my ancestral roots.*

*The commercial language of product photography is utilized to catalog historical Chinese and Chinatown objects as a method to challenge the ways Euro-America conflates objects to East Asiatic femininity, and generalizes Asian culture. The offerings, borrowing from the history of tableau and still life, use flowers and objects from the domestic sphere to push against the impossible societal constructs of beauty and sexuality. The hovering hands in pantyhose, fake nails on the back of heels and the cheap objects referencing wealth expose the monstrosity of Eurocentric control. Yet in fragmented spaces where queer rituals and inherited memories regenerate, the gestures and rituals become interventions that reject the pressure to fit into heteronormative ideas of gender. Instead, my work invites you into an alternate world that glimmers, sweats, and seeps as offerings are consumed and refilled.*



Joshua Mokry  
*A Dark Box No. 1*

## Joshua Mokry

*Tangled wire, bat guano, skin and sediment, wavelength, sweat and hair, frequency, a white fungal disease, rock, and time. A composite of our involvement and the Earth, human and nonhuman. At the heart of Underearth lies a question: is our control necessary? Remnants of our visitation can reverberate into the future. In a cave, one choice is a moment for us but an eternity for it.*

*Human influence on our environment has seeped below our awareness. In my work, I highlight that which we project onto the world within the confines of a cave, and I struggle to comprehend the way that our presence and projections are intrusive, even violent, both below and across the surface of the Earth. I discover a breakdown of the human hierarchy, bringing us below to hear, feel, and think of an environment where darkness can rest.*

*Through darkroom techniques and images taken within a cave and my studio, I uncover and re-cover a cycle of restoration and destruction and shine a spotlight on our involvement in spaces that should remain hidden. In the solarization process, I reverse back our decisions, our endeavors, our exploration, and turn off the light we bring into these dark spaces. I am at the mercy of the rocks, the objects, and the shadows. I am no different than these. I challenge our hierarchy and put us below the horizon line.*



Katharine Norton  
*Sleepwalking*

## Katharine Norton

*In March of 2023, my friend, Mason, tested positive for Huntington's disease. Through this collaborative body of work, we are reflecting on the feelings of impending loss while attempting to preserve some part of him as he is now. I am photographing him, not in an attempt to make a latent disease visible, but to explore his identity and expression through the lens of my friendship with him.*

*Most people grapple with mortality at some time in their life, but he now thinks of it constantly. In addition to collaborating on ideas for the images, he sews on some of the prints, leaving a physical mark of his presence on the photographs. The process of sewing on the prints is mirrored in his clothing. He views the way he presents himself through ornamentation as simultaneously making his life more beautiful and worth living while consuming time that he knows is limited.*

*The process of making this project fulfills, for both Mason and myself, the very human desire and instinct to leave some proof of a life lived. The photographs point to moments of me seeing him, while the sewn prints show evidence of an object that passed through his hands. The materiality of the altered prints serve as proof and artifact of his physical body and ability — something that will outlast him a moment more.*



**Mariette Pathy Allen**  
*In Loving Memory, Seabrook, Texas*

## Mariette Pathy Allen

*As a New Yorker who has always lived on the East Coast, I wasn't at ease when I visited my late husband's family in Seabrook, Texas, a suburb between Houston and Galveston. Part of a large, close-knit family, my husband was the only one to leave Texas for a life on his own, first in the Foreign Service, then in an artistic and intellectual community in New York City.*

*It took me a long time to grow beyond boredom during visits to Ken's family. The photographs I took then were snapshots of the family, often group photographs taken during holidays and other gatherings. After many visits to Seabrook, I had an epiphany. I realized that when I became personally involved with individual family members, I felt inspired to photograph in a way that would bring out the resilience and strength of homesteaders, qualities that persist across generations and are ingrained in their character.*

*As I spent more time with the Allen family, I came to know an outlier, a young woman who was naturally ambitious despite the hard life she had lived. Anna, a single mother of two, grew up in Palestine, Texas. As a young child, she had the highest scores in math and spelling among all the children in the county, but despite her intelligence, her life was difficult from the beginning. I have, and plan to continue to be in it. During the time I've known her, she earned a degree in medical massage, married three different men, and had a third child.*

*As the daughter of immigrants, I still look with fascination at people like the Allens, who have lived in the United States since they were homesteaders. People who have lived in this country for generations may consider the Allens too typically American to be of interest. My intention is to go beyond that easy assumption. Through this work, I tell a story that begins with my husband, evolves into the story of Anna, and expands into a broader view of Texas.*



Mark Almanza  
*Strangers At My Door*

## Mark Almanza

*Currently pursuing my MFA in Studio Art, my work and research revolves around the question I am constantly confronted with, "What does it mean for me to be a first-generation Mexican American". I soon realized that I resided in this in-between state of belonging, not feeling "Mexican" or "American" enough. This void of connection combined with the historical lack of Latine representation in the countless forms of media we consume, forces me to feel like an "observer" rather than an active participant in the culture. I use photography, specifically self-portraiture, close introspection of memories, and referential analysis of media culture like films, TV, and music as tools that allow me to take back control of the narrative.*



## Maryam (Nilu) Ghasempour Siahgaldeh

*In this new ongoing series “Memory’s Edge”, I explore memory, presence, and absence through layered black-and-white photographs captured with Large and Medium Format cameras. Using in-camera manipulation and double exposure, the top or bottom portion of each frame remains dark, creating a visual “veil” that both conceals and frames the subject. This technique evokes the tension between what is seen and unseen, reflecting the hidden histories and resilience of women navigating displacement and memory.*

*Through subtle photomontage and long exposures, I trace connections between past and present, self and family, and the spaces where absence is felt as strongly as presence. The series is a meditation on migration, the bonds that survive distance, and the quiet power of women to hold memory, love, and hope even when worlds fracture around them.*

Maryam (Nilu) Ghasempour Siahgaldeh  
*Luminous Remains*



**Nick Simko**  
*Hand with Leaf*

## Nick Simko

*My recent body of work, "Slippage," employs ambiguity and paradox as a strategy to photographically frame queer experiences of body and mind.*



## Noelle McCleaf

*Purple Porpoise Pub, Florida Keys, Florida*

## Noelle McCleaf

*Orange Crush (2012-Present)*

*To reside in Florida is to live in a land of contradictions, oscillating from light to dark, pleasure to horror, and from wonder to repulsion. Orange Crush seeks a sense of solace in a landscape of national disdain and dark politics, searching for wild, weird, and wonderful portals.*

*Orange Crush archives curious locations in Florida such as the historical U.S. Route 19, the Overseas Highway from the Florida Keys to Key West, the Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp in Cassadaga, Florida, and my home in Venice, Florida. These images reaffirm my reverence for this delicate, enigmatic, and complex state.*

*"The population on this continent will become grounded, will find their place, by a slight change of mind that says, "I'm here". –Gary Snyder*



**Olivia Bull**  
*Kennedy, My Girlfriend*

## Olivia Bull

*I make photographs of my girlfriend to normalize our lesbian relationship, foster resilience, and create community through shared intimate experiences. Originally developed as a homage to our love, this series examines the lack of artistic works that reflect our experiences within a long-term lesbian relationship and expands the visual language available to other lesbians.*

*Historically, in both broader and queer culture, lesbian stories have long been erased, eroticized, or trivialized. Lesbians who “pass” as straight often feel not queer enough in LGBTQ spaces where sexuality can sometimes feel performative and competitive. In broader society, experiences of homophobia and heteronormativity are coupled with misogyny and internalized sexism, leaving little space for lesbians to exist.*

*Even as the percentages of women in the United States identifying as queer or bisexual rise, it is very difficult to make connections with other lesbian couples. The connections between lesbians who understand each other’s lived experiences of minority stress are few and far between. The daily fear of publicly walking hand in hand with another woman or the trepidation of signing a one-bedroom lease with your girlfriend, under contract with a prejudiced landlord, form an anthology of experiences rarely discussed, let alone documented. Because of this, I had long avoided centering my sexuality or relationship in my work. My identity isn’t a performance; yet it complicates and endangers the reality of my daily life. The safety bubble my girlfriend and I have created within our relationship, our home, and our close friendships is unmeasurably important to us. Protecting it felt necessary, especially when living in conservative towns and states. But the lack of images that resemble my relationship, and the absence of an archive that speaks to it, pulled me back to my artistic practice.*

*Photography has a deep, gendered history of men photographing their wives and the women they love and desire. That visual tradition, shaped by supremacy, and the male gaze, has defined much of how intimacy is pictured and how women define themselves within visual power systems. Historically, men command, pose, and control the women in their images. By photographing my girlfriend, I enter that lineage intentionally, but I also disrupt it and refuse its terms.*

*This refusal takes form through collaboration. Instead of reproducing the gaze that oppresses, objectifies, and idealizes women, I create a photographic practice grounded in reciprocity, mutual recognition, and shared vulnerability. My girlfriend and I work together to decide how she is presented; she gets a say in the final images. Together we reject the inherent power dynamic in portraiture and create space for displays of genuine lesbian desire and connection.*

*My broader series, *Is Anyone a Lesbian Anymore?* engages directly with the historical misrepresentation of lesbians. Often framed as threats or fantasies, queer women shy away from using this label, myself included. Therefore, the title operates as both a question and an accusation, asserting my girlfriend and I as lesbians while acknowledging the cultural forces that continually blur, dilute, or fetishize the label. By pairing this pointed title with soft, intimate images, I challenge the expectations embedded in the gaze itself. The tenderness of our everyday life pushes against the heaviness of the label’s history, insisting that lesbian identity is neither spectacle nor stereotype. Lastly, the joy of sharing these images with my girlfriend, and the intimacy of working together in this way, in close, quiet moments, feels like a continued celebration of our relationship and our lives together. Not only is this work important for broader representation, but it is also joyous, and sweet to honor our happiness and our safety in each other’s presence.*



## Peter Hiatt

*Trimmed Branches in Trash Can, Summer Afternoon*

## Peter Hiatt

*A photograph can create the illusion of a moment frozen in time. The “momentness” of a photograph gives it value, but it also emphasizes the loss of that moment. When looking at old pictures, I feel both pleasure from the stimulated recollection and sadness from the irreconcilable distance of that captured moment. This feeling heightens when the photograph’s subject connects to a specific time. A child at a certain age signifies a particular point in time that has passed. Even more fleeting is the color of light throughout the day. The light produced when the sun is close to the horizon is visually potent because of its connection to the passage of time. This light, the golden hour, is inescapably connected to a fleeting moment. It is simultaneously beautiful and ephemeral.*

*In my day-to-day life, I sometimes experience moments that feel like magic. I feel a deep, sublime sense of awe and appreciation of life in these moments. I feel this in the late afternoon in the summer, playing with my daughters in the backyard under the warm golden hour light. I feel it in the evening when things have quieted enough for our neighborhood black bunny to hop out of his hiding place and join me in the front yard.*

*These images reveal a magical world in the quiet moments of everyday life. The power of the photos is in the tension between familiarity and mystery. These are scenes of everyday life, but the specificity of the gaze and the ambiguity of the iconography give them a meaning beyond the literal moment they depict.*



Rachel Jump  
*Becca, With Ink*

## Rachel Jump

*My practice explores and dissects the malleable nature of my family's personal history. The photographs I create represent both an examination and reimagination of how individual family members react to hardship, and how trauma transforms their perceptions of our collective history.*

*This body of work focuses on the aftermath of my father's genetic test results, which unveiled a hereditary disorder that heightens his, and potentially his children's, susceptibility to cancer. This revelation offered a possible glimpse into our future— a rare, yet ambivalent gift.*

*This project is an exploration of my family and our efforts to provide comfort and resilience for one another during times of hardship. Through this collaboration, we guide each other through the weight of newfound clarity, supporting one another as we confront how our lineage and shared experiences shape our sense of identity.*

*What aspects of ourselves do we choose to inherit, and what parts lie beyond our control? My photographs reveal not only the physical and psychological traits we inherit but also how we decide to reconcile with those truths. Through this narrative, I hope to uncover the balance between acceptance and agency, highlighting my family's recognition and defiance toward the path that has been carved out for us.*



**Sammie Correa**  
*Spot Healing (after Samantha Box)*

## Sammie Correa

*My work conceptually and materially embodies collage and liminal spaces. I fabricate scenes, activate family archives, and incorporate performance to layer memory with myth. The photographs become vessels for reassembling fragmented familial narratives and sites for meditative reflection.*

*Drawing from Catholic mysticism, palmistry, familial curses, and embodied ritual, I photograph maternal lineage using a 4x5 camera, staging scenes suspended between documentary, memory, and collage. These images dwell in what Ingrid Rojas Contreras calls “border, grace”—spaces between knowing and not knowing, suffering and understanding. Like her memoir *The Man Who Could Move Clouds*, my work traces fragmented histories that survive through myth, ritual, and silence.*

*Growing up, I was taught to clean rather than cry, to be useful instead of seen. Abundance, in my work, doesn't come from comfort or affection but from the emotional residue of ritual and endurance. The women in my family reserve their full narratives; they pass fragments, glances, gestures. The abundance here is not clarity, but accumulation: secrets, silences, and rituals remembered only by the body.*

*To photograph is to pause within these states of narrative accumulation. A kind of bardos. A space of transformation between life, death, and rebirth. Bardos can also exist in daily life: between waking and remembering, between a strained phone call with a mother who can't express vulnerability, between being held and realizing emotional absence. These are the states I stage and document.*

*“To think one is cursed is to think oneself above suffering. No one is above suffering.” That contradiction is central to my work. I don't claim to break the “curse” or to seek resolution. To do so would be to place myself above my ancestors. This work instead asks: What does it mean to name the curse? To carry it differently? To exist in its truth?*



Seder Burns  
*Easter Dinner 2025*

## *Savannah Calhoun*

*Matrilineal is an ongoing photographic project that expands upon my artistic engagement with nostalgia while integrating the personal into my artistic practice. This project is about myself, my mother, and the women who came before me. It is an exploration of matrilineality, inheritance, and the ways in which family history is carried, concealed, and revealed across generations. With investigations into my own genealogy, a photographer/sitter relationship with my mother, and the discovery of deep family secrets, I am making a body of work surrounding a complex relationship between my mother and me.*

*This work exists at the intersection of autobiography and broader cultural resonance. While it is deeply personal, it engages with a few broader questions: What do we inherit beyond blood? How does generational trauma shape identity? How can trauma be addressed with empathy through art?*

*Ultimately, I seek a visual space where grief, tenderness, and discovery coexist. I am honoring the resilience and hardship my mother, her mother, her mother's mother, and so on, have experienced. This project aims to heal and make sense of the obstacles we have each faced in our lives individually and together, as well as express the empathy that I have for my mother.*



## Seder Burns

*I interpreted the call as spaces and activities that serve as a catalyst for conversations and exchanges.*

**Seder Burns**  
*Easter Dinner 2025*



Toni Pitts  
*Unmarked 1*

## Toni Pitts

*This body of work documents African American cemeteries—many of them unmarked, undocumented, and at risk of erasure—through a sustained practice of landscape photography. Located in Montgomery County and surrounding regions of southwestern Virginia, these burial sites contain the remains of enslaved individuals and their descendants. While often left out of formal maps and municipal records, these landscapes tell their own stories through the terrain.*



Tryst Red  
*Daydreamer #2*

## Tryst Red

*I am interested in the tension between what we want to remember and what actually occurred, and how these concepts alter our understanding of ourselves and our environments. My practice explores the intersection of episodic memory, fiction, and place. Through a combination of digital media and traditional techniques, I question the reliability of our recollection, how we perceive, distort, or romanticize the past in contrast to the reality we inhabit. This process allows us to mentally time-travel; with each visit to the past, we are vulnerable to forgetting.*

*Photography is my foundation, but I saw the medium's limitations in conveying the interactive qualities I desired. I have since incorporated video, audio, sculpture, and installation as a means of world-building. Using abstracted photographic self-portraits and immersive projection installations, my recent work blurs the line between idyllic environments and imagined scenarios.*

*The use of mirrors, motion, and fabric both reflects and conceals. This fragmentation of a space and body explores memory's ability to shape our identity and distort our perception. These works are not just representations of self, but suggestions of how we carry intimate experiences into public spaces, moments believed to be solitary, yet are communally resonant. Drawing from personal events, those marked by yearning, connection, disconnection, and quiet presence, I invite the viewer into a space of emotional recognition and encourage them to sit with feelings of familiarity.*



Vahid Valikhani  
*The Othered Eye*

## Vahid Valikhani

*The Othered Eye is a visual record of my experience seeing America from a marginalized position, offering an alternative view of American society and its landscapes shaped by my perspective. After migrating to the United States, my work was often dismissed for not conforming to dominant cultural norms. From that rejection emerged a paradoxical freedom: the feeling that my work was exempt from scrutiny and validation. Freed from the demand to be affirmed, I was able to work without concern for reception and expectation. Through landscapes and portraits made around North Texas, the project explores the tension I experienced between visibility and invisibility, as well as the challenges of displacement, estrangement, and the uneasy act of looking at a place while belonging both outside and inside it.*

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# CATALYST FOR EXCHANGE

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For over two decades, the SPE International Combined Caucus Exhibition has been a cornerstone of inclusivity, showcasing the diverse perspectives of artists from the Women's, Pride, Contingent Faculty, Multicultural, and High School Educator's Caucuses.

What began in 2003 as a small but powerful display has evolved into a dynamic exhibition aligned with the annual Society for Photographic Education (SPE) Conference, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of photography and visual storytelling. Each year, this juried exhibition embraces the conference theme, highlighting works that challenge, inspire, and reimagine the human experience.

By amplifying the voices of both emerging and established artists, the SPE International Combined Caucus Exhibition continues to foster a vibrant space for critical dialogue, representation, and creative exploration.



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