

EMBRACING CHANCE IN A WORLD SEEKING PERFECTION Curated by Peg Shaw







Curated by Peg Shaw

NOVEMBER 18, 2024 - FEBRUARY 8, 2025

MARK ARMBRUSTER • SUSAN CALZA MICHAEL MAPES • HOLLY ROBERTS **CONSTANCE EDWARDS SCOPELITIS • HELEN SEAR**

CURATORIAL ESSAY

Embracing chance is being open to unclear destinations and unexpected outcomes. It's breaking down and rebuilding to delve into complexity. It's mixing video and sound until the true emotion is tapped. It's layering images and letting the stories be revealed. But it can also be having a clear plan, creating a map, and being open to a new perspective. Spinning data into colored marks. Tracing lines of new growth. Letting pixels dance.

When one is open to chance, the bridges and boundaries of the photographic medium can be investigated, stretched, and redefined. At its inception photography was linked to truth, to reproduce reality as perfectly as possible. Correct exposure, full range of tones, clear focus, no dust, no scratches. This was where the magic lived. Now we live in a world where images can be created with text prompts. Want perfect white fluffy clouds? Type: perfect white fluffy clouds. If we want perfection, it's within reach.

Invented processes, experimental practice, and innovative concepts lead to the unexpected, the unpredictable, uncontrolled, glitches, remixes, and even flaws. A big mistake or a small hiccup, these can be unwelcome obstacles or embraced opportunities to face a challenge, rethink, or let go of an idea - or best of all, stick with it and discover what it can teach. Physical, or conceptual, flaw can also become subject matter rooted in time and history. Many cultures embrace the idea of the 'deliberate imperfection', believing that only God is perfect and that we cannot achieve the same level of perfection, so they leave an imperfection in whatever they create. These concepts also reinforce the idea that there is beauty in imperfections.

The extraordinary artists in this exhibition embrace conceptual and process-oriented artwork that expands and redefines photographic media. In our new hyperreality environment of Al and other advanced technology, this artwork involves unique techniques, direct touch, and viewer participation-breaking the rules of representation. Photographers have always had to integrate creativity, technology,

and process - responding to light, adjusting lens, counting pixels, ink to paper. Now lens-based artists can also add sound, light, movement, touch, and time. Video projection, lenticular images, interactive touch screen, mixed media, painted patterns, drawn lines, spoken words - they employ a variety of photographic approaches in new ways to express ideas and engage the viewer.

Many obvious elements tie the diverse and unconventional work in this exhibition together, the most important one being a sense of genuine voice. But each artist stands alone: Mark Armbruster applies driven repetitive painted colors and textures representing dire data on climate change. Susan Calza weaves video and sound flickering diaristic thoughts addressing a broad range of emotions, exploring what it means to be human. Michael Mapes pins a delicate tapestry from an array of materials revealing the complex nature of human identity that shifts with changing vantage points. Holly Roberts layers paint and gestures hiding and revealing imagery that speak of personal stories and universal experience. Helen Sear documents and traces colorful deeply patterned twigs of lace, the entanglement emphasizing what is hard to see, blending body and environment. Constance Skopelitis creates multifaceted perspectives from lenticular images and touch screens that explore difficult issues, yet invite participation and play.

From flickering candlelight to touch screens, from layered paint to pins casting shadows - the work moves from deeply personal to addressing global issues as these artists react to climate change, immigration, racism, our relationship to animals and our natural environment, and the stories that come from direct experience. New intersections, multiple layers, shifting viewpoints - the work is bold, decisive, and engaging. It is my sincere hope that viewers will walk away with valuable insights on the ways we are human, how we can care about each other, and our responsibility to our natural environment through truth, imagination, perfection, and flaw.

CURATOR'S BIO: PEG SHAW

Peg Shaw is an interdisciplinary artist incorporating video, sound, photography, and mixed media, often within layered site-specific installations. Profoundly personal and politically aware, her work addresses how we can connect across time and space, be so moved by an experience that isn't ours, and truly care for people we will never know – "floating on a membrane of what we have been given, hovering just below what we have to give." Her work translates, re-imagines, weaves, and layers concepts from family history, the memory of place, storytelling, and the filtered experience of living in a chaotic political time.

Born in Oak Park, IL, Shaw received an MFA in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she received the Brown Fellowship Award, and a BFA in Painting from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her work has been shown nationally, including solo exhibitions in Chicago and New York, and has won numerous awards in photography and video, most recently the Illinois Arts Council Agency 2021 Artist Fellowship Award in Media, and the 40 North Champaign Arts Council 2018 Artist Ace Award. She has curated multiple photography exhibitions of alternative photographic and lens-based work exploring both historical processes and new technology.

Shaw is a Professor in Photography/Video at Parkland College in Champaign, IL where she received the Illinois Community College Trustees Outstanding Full-Time Faculty Award and serves on the Giertz Gallery Advisory Board. She lives in the woods in a timber-frame home built by hand, where she works in her studio, writes stories, drums, and plants trees.





The Noisest Years of Silence, Video, sound, and mixed media installation, dimensions variable, 2023



Mark Armbruster (born 1970, lives and works in Baltimore, MD. USA) is a lens based multi-media artist who creates art in reaction to climate change and human's effects on the landscape. Mark received his B.F.A. in photography from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1992, and an MS in Instructional Design and Technology from the University of Maryland in 2019. He has exhibited his photography in numerous group shows and publications including: Klompching Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; Artscape, Baltimore MD: TouchStone Gallery, Washington D.C.: Silvermine Gallery, New Canaan, CT; Perspective Photo Gallery, Evanston, IL; The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA; Circle Gallery, Annapolis, MD; Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center, Solomons, MD; Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, MD; Torpedo Factory, Alexandria, VA; The Delaplaine, Frederick, MD; Tamar Hendel Gallery, Silver Spring, MD; Overlea Arts Festival, Overlea, MD; The Contemporary, Baltimore, MD; F-Stop Magazine Issue #86 & #6; Jpeg Magazine, Issue #4.



"...we need to have carbon dioxide as part of the fundamental life cycle of Earth." archival pigment print with applied acrylic paint, 30 x 19 inches, 2023

My previous landscape photography work doesn't effectively communicate my concerns about climate change and the effects it is having on the beautiful and almost pristine scenes I captured. I needed to do something different to bring my concerns to life in a way that better illustrated the changes I was seeing in nature and reading about.

This series of 2D and 3D multimedia artworks is titled *Gain-of-Function*. The title refers to the scientific research method that genetically alters an organism in a way that may enhance the biological functions of gene products. This exact research method was used to create our current line of vaccines for Covid-19. Similar to the biohazards inherent in this type of research, over the past 150 years of modern industrialization, we humans have altered our planet in ways that enhance certain biological functions, that unfortunately have had adverse affects to all species that inhabit it.

I am using non-traditional landscape imagery as a backdrop for painted graphs and charts that are representations of data from studies on climate change and its numerous effects on our environments.

The pictured landscapes are recognizable, but also taken from a vantage point that shows larger structures of globalized commerce, energy resources and industrialization at play in our own backyards. The photographic imagery shows scenes of wild grasslands, seascapes, burnt desert forests, receding reservoirs, communities on the edge of the Chesapeake Bay and the dense urban infrastructure of Baltimore city. Visual data depicted by dots, lines and patterns allow this imagery to show through and blend with the painted colors and textures. The graphs illustrate data from climate studies that are relevant to those environments and speak to phenomenon like global sea level rise, greenhouse gas emissions, temperature extremes, drought, wildfires, ground water loss, and much more.

The artwork titles are derived from quotes of climate change denials by politicians and leaders from the past decade. In an attempt to shed additional light on their inability to help care for our environment and alter its current course. They refer to the specific studies or climate issue represented in the images, while also selected for their satirical tone and sometimes tragic and idiotic brutality.



"... climate change is one of the greatest hoaxes perpetrated out of the scientific community. It is a hoax." archival pigment print with applied acrylic paint, 30 x 19 inches, 2023

SUSAN CALZA susancalza.com

I am a multimedia, interdisciplinary artist residing in central Vermont. I hold a BA in Art History and an MFA in Sculpture from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. My intermedia approach to art making is conceptual. I work in sculpture, video, 2D, and performance. Concept and medium are the interchangeable textures throughout my work. I've studied independently with performance artists Rachel Rosenthal, Erika Batdorf, Ruth Zapora, and Meredith Monk.

As a full-time professor at Indiana University and Vermont State University, I taught multiple disciplines, including sculpture, performance art, video, and contemporary art issues. I also traveled nationally and internationally with both graduate and undergraduate students. I co-created and co-directed the MFA Program at Johnson State College/Vermont Studio Center, where I was responsible for designing the sculpture facility and a black box gallery at the Vermont State University-Johnson campus. In 2014, it was named The Susan Calza Black Box Gallery/Performance Space.

In 2018, I opened The Susan Calza Gallery to showcase socially engaged art. I proudly run the smallest gallery in the smallest state capital in the smallest state in the US. The gallery has exhibited artwork on mass shootings, immigration, race relations, COVID-19, democratic upheaval, and climate change.

I've exhibited in the US and abroad and attended artist residencies worldwide. My work has received international recognition, including the documentary "Let's Not Pretend," screened in nine countries across five continents. Additionally, my image "Enough Said: Counting Mass Shootings" was featured on the cover of Art New England in the September/October 2023 issue.



OurHour 13-minute video, 2020

"Our Hour"

The earth is 4.6 billion years old. Humans have been here for only 150,000 of those years.

In that short time, our voices have been heard. Our voices are the texture of our lives. They are fleeting notes of resounding desire.

In our joy or discontent, in our creation and our destruction, We can't help but find, We are not alone.

I use my left hand when I draw, to court the vulnerability that frightens me, the awkwardness that embarrasses me and the tenderness that saves me. These 71 votive candles pose questions. These are offerings. They are a road map to what makes us human.

We will never know the whole of it.

It is such a deep dive.

There is nothing wrong. There is nothing to be frightened of.

There is only the beauty of our lives.

Susan Calza



About Face 71 hand drawn ink on onionskin paper votive candles, 12 x 2 inches each, 2024



Micheal Mapes was born in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and graduated from the University of Illinois with a BFA in 1984 and an MFA in 1992. He spent the next fifteen years producing and designing creative products for his own product development company before returning to art full-time in 2005. Today, he lives and works in New York. Since returning to art, Mapes has held numerous solo exhibitions throughout the United States, London, and the Netherlands, with his most recent solo exhibition at the Yellowstone Art Museum in the United States.

For most of his works, Mapes deconstructs the source image literally and figuratively and reconstructs the representation of an original painting as a collection of hundreds of individual parts. Beyond prints of the actual painting, Mapes incorporates factual and fictionalized content utilizing entomological and forensic approaches. This content includes genealogy info, costume jewelry, clothing fragments, fabric samples, dental X-rays, fingerprints, hair samples, paint samples, and additional photos of human subjects. Incorporating what Mapes terms "biographical DNA" becomes a unique reinterpretation of the original painted subject. When examined individually, these parts inspire speculation. Collectively, they form a representation of the original painted subject.



Jochem mixed media collage, 34 x 28 x 3.5 inches, 2014

I am captivated by the intricate tapestry of human identity and the myriad of elements that shape our individuality. My work is an exploration of the self, manifested through unconventional portraits that challenge traditional notions of representation.

Deconstruction is at the core of my artistic process. I begin by breaking down my subjects-both literally and figuratively-into their constituent parts. This fragmentation allows me to examine the layers of personality, experience, and emotion that constitute uniqueness. Through this process, I aspire to a gestalt-like perception of my subjects.

For me, collage is an approach that perfectly embodies the complex nature of human identity. I incorporate a diverse array of materials, including photographs, found objects, and collected specimens. Each element serves as a metaphor for the experiences, memories, and influences that shape us.

As I reassemble these disparate elements, I create a new whole-a portrait that is both familiar and novel. This process mirrors the way we constantly rebuild and redefine ourselves throughout life, integrating new experiences alongside historical aspects of our identity.

My works are not mere likenesses, but rather visual biographies comprised of "biographical DNA". I invite my audience to look beyond the surface and consider the multifaceted nature of the human experience. Through layers of meaning and unexpected juxtapositions, lencourage contemplation of how our past, present, and future selves coexist within us.

Ultimately, my work is a celebration of human complexity. I hope to challenge preconceptions and inspire dialogue that facilitates a deeper appreciation for the beautiful intricacy of each individual's story.



Dutch Specimen MT1639 mixed media collage, 34 x 28 x 3.5 inches, 2013

HOLLY ROBERTS hollyrobertsstudio.com

Holly Roberts' first national exposure came in 1989 with the publication of the monoaraph, Holly Roberts, from the Untitled Series published by the friends of Photography. Although her work has always been based on the photograph the inclusion of paint made it a distinct entity. As David Featherstone wrote in his introduction to the monograph, "Roberts is a painter, yet it is the photograph underlying the paint, even when it can scarcely be seen, that gives the work its intriguing, mysterious power. Drawing from the iconography of primitive art, particularly that of the Native American, Mexican and Hispanic cultures of the Southwest, where she lives, she creates paintings that address a broad range of human emotions. While it is Roberts' evolving interaction with the photograph that takes her to her finished work, it is the existence of the underlying photographic image-even when it is obscured by paint-that gives the work its powerful qualities and sets up the emotional challenge for the viewer."

Her work has continued to evolve, but she has reversed her original process of heavily overpainting the black and white silver print. She now works on top of a painted surface, developing a narrative scene with her lexicon of collaged photographic elements. Where earlier pieces reflected psychological or emotional undercurrents, newer works make use of familiar or iconic stories, still with a strong psychological undercurrent, but, as well, addressing tougher questions about Man's effect on the land and the animals that inhabit it, a dark sense of humor running throughout.

Awarded two NEA individual artist's grants, as well as the Ferguson Grant from the friends of Photography, Roberts work has been shown extensively both internationally and nationally. Nazraeli Press published Holly Roberts: Works 1989-1999, and in 2009 Holly Roberts: Works 2000-2009. The Griffin Museum of Photography in Winchester, Massachusetts published an extensive catalog of her work in 2018 to accompany her retrospective exhibit at the Museum.

She has been published in numerous articles years including Photography and Art: Interactions Since 1946, Kathleen Gauss and Andrew Grundberg, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; six books about the photographic process by Robert Hirsch; The Book of Alternative Photographic Process, Christopher James, Delmar Cengage Learning, Second Editon; Beauty and the Best: The Animal in Photography, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, Ca; New Dimensions in Photo Processes: A Step-by-Step Manual for Alternative Techniques, Laura Blacklow, revised and expanded 5th edition, 2018, Focal Press, an imprint of Taylor & Francis/Routledge Publishing; Defining Eye: Women Photographers of the 20th Century, Olivia Lahs-Gonzales and Lucy Lippard, The Saint Louis Art Museum; and Photography: New Mexico, curated by Tom Barrow, Fresco Fine Art Publications.

A dedicated teacher as well as a prolific artist, she has had a profound effect on a community of artists around the country. She continues to live and work in the Southwest. In 2024. Roberts will have a retrospective at The Museum of Photographic Art in San Diego(MOPA), and is planning a monograph of her work to accompany the exhibit.



Deer with Blue mixed media, 11 x 14 inches, 2022

I start all my work by painting abstractly, paintings which will then become the foundation of each finished image. When I started using photographs 40 years ago, I painted directly on their surfaces with oil paints, obscuring the photograph below, then wiping away the wet paint to reveal bits and pieces of the photo underneath. In 2004, I changed that approach and reversed the process, still using the paint abstractly to begin, but now adhering photographs or other materials directly onto the painted surface.

Once I start forming the images, I select from my (bottomless) collection of photographs and assorted material to tell a story. The story unfolds as I work, and is only revealed to me bit by bit. This process is much like following a trail of bread crumbs with no idea of a destination until, at long last, I arrive. What has resulted is a wide variety of images, each with their own story. Because the photographs I use are all my own, there is a deep personal connection to each image as it emerges. Animals, people, and people as animals become the vehicles that portray complicated relationships along with the daily fears, joys, and anxieties of being alive in the world today.

My blending of subjective and objective reality generates a wide-ranging and complex interpretation of my subject matter. Functioning almost as a visual psychoanalyst, I create images that evoke an interior state of consciousness and grapple with a subject beyond its external structure. It is a process that probes other ways of knowing our world based on lived experiences. In searching for deeper meanings through my images, those images become metaphors for that which we cannot know but still sense as truths.



Dog at the Door mixed media, 23 x 24 inches, 2019

CONSTANCE EDWARDS SCOPELITIS

constancescopelitis.com

Constance Edwards Scopelitis graduated with a fine arts degree from Indiana University. She continued her studies with legendary American figurative painter Isabel Bishop. Further studies at the Art Students League in NYC set Constance on a career path of executing large-scale narrative figure paintings and realistic formal oil portraits. Her portraits are in the collections of major American corporations, universities, and private individuals.

Scopelitis has been awarded national and international fellowships including the Vermont Studio School, Schildersweek in Holland, the Creative Renewal Fellowship through the Eli Lilly Foundation, and the DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award in 2020. She is also regularly exhibited in national and international art fairs including Art Miami during Basel Week.

Scopelitis was selected as a time-based finalist for ArtPrize8 and her work is in the permanent collections of several midwestern museums. While her master works are considered her graphite drawings, she is also known for her tech oriented lenticular prints, animated videos, and interactive touch screen programs.



Alexa Can't Deliver This #3/7 lenticular photographic print, 36 x 24 x 2 inches, 2021

RACING CHANCE IN A WORLD SEEKING PERFECTION

I work consistently to maintain my formal training while pushing the boundaries of mixed media and 21c technologies. I do not limit myself to specific materials or mediums of any kind. My artistic concepts and the impact I wish to make dictate the mediums I utilize. My practice as a 2D art maker has been transformed by the exceedingly short human attention span. The passivity of traditional 2D art is a challenge for the 21c art viewer. My art practice has now expanded into Video animation with soundtracks and Interactive Digital Media. Even though I work to capture the viewer for longer periods of time, I still attempt to stay within a 2-3 minute duration. A college art professor said to me in the 70's, "If you want people to notice your sculpture, paint it red." Post Covid, humanity is starved for inclusion and interaction so present day artists feel pressure to create work that is shiny, or moves, or invites participation. As long as my work includes poignant content, I am willing to participate in this trend.



Flower Boom the Lenticular #4/24 lenticular photographic print, 35 x 26 x 3 inches, 2019

HELEN SEAR helensear.com

Born in 1955 in Banbury, Sear studied Fine Art at Reading University and University College London, Slade School, where she worked with mixed-media installation, performance and video. Her photographic works became widely known in the 1991 British Council touring exhibition, De-Composition: Constructed Photography in Britain.

Recent solo exhibitions include Natural Fantastic at Martin Asbaek Gallery, Copenhagen, 2024, and Within Sight at Fotografia Europea, Reggio Emilia, 2024. Group exhibitions include: Unearthed: Photography's Roots at Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2020, Chalk, Wood and Water, Pallant House, 2022, and Dialektik der Präsenz at DZ bank, Frankfurt, 2023. Sear represented Wales with the solo exhibition *...the rest is smoke* at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015.

Her work in public collections include Arts Council England, The British Council, Museum of Fine Art Houston (Manfred Heiting Collection), The National Museum of Wales, and the Government Art Collection.

Sear has taught at many UK institutions and was Reader in Photography and Fine Art at University of Wales, Newport, between 2007 and 2015. She was a visiting professor at the RA Schools between 2014 and 2019.

Dewi Lewis published her most recent book Era of Solitude in 2021.

Helen Sear is represented by Martin Asbæk Gallery Copenhagen, Denmark.



Becoming Forest 2. Ed 2/5 giclée print, 20 x 20 inches, 2018

Helen Sear is a British visual artist whose practice focuses on the co-existence of human, animal and natural environments. Rooted in an interest in Magic Realism, Surrealism and Conceptual art, photography remains a central subject and medium in her practice and often challenges a fixed-point perspective associated with the single camera lens and landscape traditions. Working in rural contexts and through processes of printing, layering and mark making, she draws attention to the skin of the image and the extraordinary in the overlooked. At the site where image meets substrate and the view merges with the surface of the eye, internal desire and external reality become porous and exchangeable.



Becoming Forest 5. Ed 2/5 giclée print, 20 x 20 inches, 2018

RACING CHANCE IN A WORLD SEEKING PERFECTION

Acknowledgements

Giertz Gallery is pleased to provide an exhibition catalog for *Flaw: Embracing Chance in a World Seeking* Perfection to accompany this exhibition, curated by Professor Peg Shaw.

Giertz Gallery serves as a platform to exhibit contemporary art. We are a learning laboratory for our students, and it is vital that we show and host programming that features professional artists where faculty can use the gallery as an instructional resource, and our students and the community can experience the artwork in person and hear artists speak about their process, their career, and their artistic journey.

The current exhibition accomplishes these goals. Giertz Gallery focuses on contemporary artists, and Shaw brings a unique perspective to our campus and community, reflecting upon the visual arts from a fresh yet experienced angle. Shaw's premise is to include a cross-section of lens-based work by artists who use innovative approaches and embrace flaws in their processes to address current issues explored in their work.

Shaw has done a superb job in selecting this group of artists who incorporate traditional yet unconventional modes of process. As an audience, your role is crucial in experiencing the artists' interpretation of our surroundings through the unexpected ways they capture the recorded and altered images. Your engagement is not just appreciated, but it is critical to the success of the exhibition.

Giertz Gallery extends its heartfelt thanks to all the artists who have produced such thought-provoking artwork and shared it with us in this exhibition. We also want to express our deep gratitude to visiting curator Peg Shaw for her insight and commitment to executing the show. Her background as a photographer and video artist and her knowledge of contemporary photography were integral in selecting the artwork. We are truly grateful for her contributions to this exhibition.

Giertz Gallery recognizes Madison Wilcoxin, a graphic designer in Parkland College's Marketing and Public Relations department, for catalog design and promotional material. Jo Urban, our exhibitions coordinator, deserves special mention for her organizational skills and attention to detail. Last but certainly not least, the gallery thanks Donna Giertz and her husband, Fred, for their continued support, our community members, and the Parkland students, faculty, staff, and administration who have supported gallery exhibitions and programming. This energetic appreciation of the arts enables us to fulfill our mission of having people visit our space, become engaged in learning, and recognize the importance of art.

-Lisa Costello, director, Giertz Gallery at Parkland College

In Memory of Martha Seif

Giertz Gallery would like to dedicate this catalog in memory of Martha Seif, a talented painter, a lifelong learner, art enthusiast, and supporter of Giertz Gallery at Parkland College.

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Open to the public and free of charge, the Giertz Gallery is a teaching gallery, striving to serve the educational and cultural needs of our diverse community. Your gifts support our education and outreach efforts, public lectures, high school arts seminars, and offer local, state, and national artists needed exposure of their work. Together we are keeping our community culturally vibrant, with receptions that feature live music and discussions from featured artists. If you have had the opportunity to attend one of our many receptions, you have been able to have an enjoyable and enriching experience without cost.

All contributions to the Giertz Gallery are completely tax-deductible. Your gift in any amount will help the gallery defray expenses and ensure that these exhibitions, programs, special events, and cultural services continue to enrich all of our lives. We thank you so very much.

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Front Cover: Helen Sear, Becoming Forest 10 (detail).

Back Cover: Mark Armbruster, "... climate change is one of the greatest hoaxes perpetrated out of the scientific community. It is a hoax." (detail). Susan Calza, About Face installation (detail). Michael Mapes, Jochem (detail). Holly Roberts, Dog at the Door (detail). Constance Edwards Scopelitis, Flower Boom the Lenticular #4/24 (detail). Helen Sear, Becoming Forest 2. Ed 2/5 (detail).













giertz gallery AT PARKLAND COLLEGE

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GALLERY HOURS: Mon–Wed, 10am–5pm Thu, 10am–7pm; Sat, Noon–2pm; Closed November 28–30; December 9–January 11; January 20



Giertz Gallery acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.