

Under Construction represents a summer of vision, labor, and grit. The four inaugural Studio Art Graduate Residents, Grace Best-Devereux, Carly Brock, Rachel Kalman, and Gaby Yoque, maintained steady, rich studio practices in a construction site. Thin plastic sheeting stood between their studio space and jackhammers, electric saws, and other tools used by the hard working construction crew installing a much-anticipated elevator in Kittredge Hall. There are striking parallels between this literally ground-breaking construction, which improves accessibility for all members of our campus community and the figuratively ground-breaking summer residency, initiated to enhance the residents' access to opportunities in the field of art.

This exhibit marks the culmination of the summer residency. Grace, Carly, Rachel, and Gaby's work demonstrates their strong foundations in craftsmanship and how each possesses the tools to realize her distinctive and compelling vision. Over the summer these residents deepened and expanded upon ideas, themes, and processes central to their senior thesis exhibition. They engaged in a critical transition from making work in the context of classes to working as independent artists. Additionally, at the start of the residency the residents traveled cities across the nation to experience specific collections that have and will continue to inform their practices. Collectively, the residents visited Chicago, New York, Washington, DC, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia.

Each artist contends not only with complex, worthy concepts but also with what it means to construct meaning through their artistic practices. Under Construction explores the construction of personally significant portfolios, i.e., thematically related art that exhibits commitment and originality. This active, creative endeavor involves taking risks, being vulnerable, honing critical thinking skills, and entering culturally significant conversations with fresh perspectives that are grounded in historical awareness.

Grace, Carly, Rachel, and Gaby also created a sense of community as they developed their independent projects. Mutual respect, a sense of investment in one another, and spirit of generosity are key to providing constructive criticism and fostering a vital community. The ethos that they brought to their own work and to working with one another exemplifies our department's commitment to cultivating individual excellence and constructing, if you will, an ever-growing community of creative, critical thinkers.

Grace Best-Devereux

Hair grows slowly, about 6 inches in the span of a year, holding within it information on our health, age, and environment. It is a unique living record of the function of our bodies, recording our personal history as it grows, carried on our shoulders with us during our daily rituals. Hair is integral to the understanding of our selves. Our psyche focuses on hair's malleable, visual nature and we shape behaviors around the way we display it. It gives visual cues, reflecting our attitudes, affiliations, and current state.

Each day we face the mirror and then the world, using our hair to present ourselves to society. Hair is unique in its ability to convey nuanced symbolic meanings and emotions -- my work has been a journey to elicit emotional responses to the strands we all possess. As a source of beauty, I transform the hair fibers to cultivate a deeper understanding of the power it holds. Controlling our hair helps us control our lives, by sculpting the fiber I am able to craft objects that reflect its inherent value.

My art is a reflection of my fascination with symbolic beauty and the meaning behind symbolic representations; from the imagery I grew up with, the pressures imposed by my family and society, and my own fascination with physical appearance. My hair is a crucial measure of my self-esteem, and a ritual that lives with me. My hair is my ultimate work of art: an achievement of beauty, my personal record, my illustration of self, and my visual appearance. I work to transcend my personal experience using the very fiber that is so precious to me.

Carly Brock

"What makes for great art is the courage to speak and write and paint what you know and care about."

- Audrey Flack

I paint the landscapes of Skagit Valley, WA, my home during the first 18 years of my life. Memories of running through cornfields, taking the scenic route up Chuckanut Drive, and chasing sunsets to the waterfront fuel my attachment and appreciation for the Valley. Connection to this particular place led me to begin thinking about how the human experience is impacted and vitalized by landscape.

The spaces I choose to paint capture moments that elicit personal memories and embody the location that I call home. The road signs, on the other hand, provide a universally recognizable object within the specific landscape. The generic symbols for left-turns, crossroads, roundabouts, etc. take on metaphorical roles, touching on the experience of finding direction from where one started. Including a road or path in the composition further emphasizes the idea of journey and experience within the space. Different natural elements, such as clouded skies, rocky hillsides, or expansive fields, have provided opportunities for me to expand my mark making and color exploration. I plan to take this series with me to new locations that I find significant to carry on the autobiographical nature of my paintings.

Rachel Kalman

These paintings draw upon my fascination with reflective surfaces and the still life object. The genre of still life painting was debatably born in 16th century Europe as people became increasingly interested in the natural, observable world. Objects became infused with religious code and symbolism as artists strove to communicate moralizing messages through the opulent material of their mercantile culture. But today, much of the conceptual, formal weight of *vanitas* painting is lost on a modern audience.

I work to combat the idea that observational painting is an elitist, antique tradition. There is unpredictability and visual chaos I find in the reflective surface. Metallics at once mirror and distort reality. In the face of these abstract surfaces I gravitate towards reflected forms grounded in the familiar. The voidal, disturbed spaces are contained within teapots, coffee makers, and that vase that used to stand on your grandmother's piano. I work to capture what is alien and disorienting in comfortable, recognizable subject matter.

While my reflective objects are a staple in my portfolio, the contexts they inhabit are in flux. I play with illusion and absurdity, compose fictive relationships and narratives between inanimate objects, and work to both illuminate and challenge the bourgeois, decorative history with which the still life genre is inexorably associated.

Gabriela Yoque

During a recent trip to Chicago, Illinois, as part of my summer residency, I stayed in the Pilsen neighborhood, a predominantly Mexican neighborhood thirty minutes away from downtown Chicago. On my walk to the train station, I passed by the *paleteros* selling fruit, shaved ice, *rueditas* (a wheat puff) and other snacks. On a particularly humid day, I decided to buy some shaved ice, a *raspado*, to cool off from the heat. But I hesitated. Is *raspado* the Mexican way of saying shaved ice? Or is it *granisada*? Or is *granisada* the Guatemalan word? I panicked as I got closer, tongue tied, racking my brain for the correct Spanish word. By some stroke of luck, this *paletero* had a sign on his cart that read, *RASPADOS*.

Growing up in Los Angeles, where Spanish languages from around the globe mix together, it was easy to forget that the Spanish I speak is not universal. The Pilsen neighborhood reminded me of how distinct the different dialects of Spanish are.

This small panic-stricken moment led to a list of the many Guatemalan words I have used that prompted confusion: *patoja*, *puchica*, *pashtuda*, *pashte*, *chupar*, *sholco*, *tanate*, *fregar*, *chunche*, *huevo*, *chivear*, *chulo*, *chucho*, *chumpa*, *chulear*, *canche*, *creido*, *seco*, *bolo*, *muchá*, *shuco*, *mosh*, and of course, *Chapín*, a term Guatemalans call themselves.

My prints began with the idea of using flashcards to learn a language. But one object can have three names, and a flashcard only has two sides. This series is about the Spanish I grew up speaking, but more importantly, the languages and dialects I have had to learn alongside it. I define the images by using its Guatemalan term, and attach its English term and more commonly known Spanish cousin in the form of Wikipedia definitions. By screenprinting the objects, I emphasize how it is visually recognizable no matter what name is attached to it. And with each screenprinted layer, I repeated the object's Guatemalan name, a reminder that the language I speak exists and is understood beyond my immediate world.