

'22

# INVERSO

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA | MFA



INVERSO





# 2022 MFA GRADUATION EXHIBITION

With essays by SK West,  
USF MA Art History Alumna 2019  
School of Art and Art History

Published on the occasion of  
*INVERSO: 2022 MFA Graduation Exhibition*  
April 1 - May 7, 2022  
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UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**  
College of The Arts  
School of Art & Art History

# FOREWORD

This compendium features the studio artworks by the graduating Master of Fine Arts students at the University of South Florida's School of Art and Art History accompanied by writings from recent USF MA Art History alumna, SK West.

The MFA at USF is acknowledged as a premiere program among its peers nationally. Students create artworks that embrace a vast range of materials and diverse, innovative conceptual strategies.

Our eminent faculty are internationally distinguished for their scholarly and creative research achievements and as outstanding, inspiring teachers.

Sincere appreciation is extended to publication designers Don Fuller and Martha De la Cruz, and to the generous donors who made the endeavor possible, including the Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation and USF College of the Arts Dean Chris Garvin.

Congratulations to our incredibly dedicated and talented graduate students for the entire production—from the original catalogue's inception to this dynamic record that you hold in your hands!

**WALLACE WILSON**  
**DIRECTOR + PROFESSOR**  
**USF SCHOOL OF ART AND ART HISTORY**

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# INVERSO

The tradition of an artist signing their work began in the Renaissance when the production of art shifted from cooperative guild systems to individual creativity. Signing their name served as a validation that the work was theirs or of their studio, stymied copycat grifters, and facilitated gaining a greater audience associated with their name. Over time, an artist might choose to sign their name on the front or *inverso*—the back.

Originating from the Latin word *invertere*, meaning “turn inside out”, to invert something is to reverse it, put something in the opposite position or arrangement, or create some contrary movement. The inversion—the result—has the possibility to lead to new interpretations, revise our expectations, or forge a new pathway to some predetermined goal. This exhibition, *Inverso*, demonstrates all of the above and more.

The artists of *Inverso* have delved into personal histories, magnified shared experiences, and deconstructed social presumptions. It is my honor to represent a facet or two of their practice, their ideas, and their background in these essays and I am thankful for this opportunity. My hope is that you, dear reader, consider the other, the alternative, the inverse.

**SK WEST**  
**USF MA ART HISTORY ALUMNA 2019**

## ABOUT SK WEST

SK West received both her B.A. and M.A. in Art History from the University of South Florida. Her academic research interests centered on contemporary art and criticism, and its intersections with philosophy. She is infinitely thankful for her time in the program, the faculty and their guidance, and for the friendship of her incredibly talented colleagues.

SK is a lifelong champion of the arts and firmly believes there is never too much art in the world. When not arranging words into sentences, she enjoys boxing, thrifting, singing karaoke at dive bars, and fawning over her beagle, Pinto Bean. She hopes you have a good day and get to tell someone you love that you love them.

You may contact her at [sarakay.west@gmail.com](mailto:sarakay.west@gmail.com) or find her on Instagram @thewildskwest.

# KIM DARLING

*Run fast; bite hard.* —Donna J. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*

*I'm more interested in having a place to work out my voice and my body than I am in having furniture.* —Wendy O. Williams, *Plasmatics*

These exchanges inform Kim Darling's multidisciplinary practice. Her work often features bold, jagged contour lines and an extensive color palette as well as her personal iconography—a visual lexicon of Darling and of life's detritus. This ritual of selecting images that connect back to the artist comes from formative years spent in libraries where nearly every subject in the world has the opportunity to make an appearance or impression. Files full of paper, archived images, nature center storage drawers holding bird skins, stories spilled at bar tops, family gatherings, and with strangers are liable to take shape within her work.

Darling's work emerges in endless ways, borne from intuitive forms and free from patriarchal expectations. Her art uses cardboard, crumpled paper, overlooked ephemera, and more; often, her practice is in conversation with its setting and her collaborators, both of which vary from process to process, project to project. She aligns punk, queer, and feminist aesthetics with scrapped materials, activated spaces, and provocative connections.

To factor humans into any equation is to factor in risk and unpredictability; in a creative setting, those variables result in spectacular work and new perspectives. Darling's work prioritizes collaboration and the action of creating is itself art. There are layers of narratives in her art—you're invited to add your own.

— SK WEST

## ABOUT KIM DARLING

Kim Darling is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and independent curator exploring the intersection of social practice and studio work. She holds a BFA from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Kim has received support from foundations such as Sherwood, Kiewit, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Darling's work has been in national and international solo and group exhibitions at the Joslyn Art Museum and other notable institutions. She is the recipient of several Artist-In-Residency awards. Kim adores her three children, Zoe, Ian, and Ollie, and lives in Tampa, Florida with her beloved dachshund, Lady.

Website: [ratsneststudio.com](http://ratsneststudio.com)

Instagram: @Kimdahling

Photo: Rachel Treide







*Free Guarantee*, 2022 | 40" x 60" | Mixed media



*City of the Future*, 2021 | 36" x 24" | Mixed media



Texas is the reason, 2021 | 55" x 72" | Mixed media



*Ain't Enough Sand in the Sea*, 2020 | 72" x 48" | Photograph





# AIMEE JONES

In the historical tradition of photography, there is a genre known as “Invisible Mothers”—in the early decades of photography, infants and small children were photographed in studios while being held by their mother or nanny who was covered by a cloth to conceal their presence. These pictures are eerie and a fascinating demonstration of the duality of presence and absence, visible and hidden.

Inspired by this genre, Aimee Jones paints portraits of invisible subjects; her figures can be found in domestic spaces yet covered like ghosts aside from cut outs for the breasts. The figure is rendered shapeless with an ambiguous silhouette that cloaks every part of their body except for the breasts which turn into a kind of pictorial eyes that return the viewer’s gaze. In a staring contest, these breasts are inexhaustible. Outside the setting of a domestic space, she paints her figures within imaginary botanical landscapes composed of invasive plant species found in Florida; whether engulfed in these intrusive flora or contained within kitchen tiles, Jones questions notions of invisibility and hyper-visibility within her work.

For example, the bathroom is at once a space of invisibility but also hyper-visibility; dynamic and non-binary, the bathroom is a ubiquitous space where ideas of privacy, hygiene, and beauty ideals collide. Invisibility comes with a sense of privacy in the bathroom as you attend to whatever washing routine you might have—the door is closed and the lock is latched, the shower curtain shields your body from the mirror’s reflection, and the window has a blurry film applied to it so outsiders can’t see in.

On the other hand, the bathroom is where you prepare your appearance for the world: brows are plucked in a magnified mirror, the lighting is just so that lipstick is steadily applied, wrinkles and gray hair are scorned. In this sense, the bathroom is a world of hyper-visibility that enables you to scrutinize and shift your appearance.

Jones explores the power of invisibility, female subjectivity, and identity in her paintings. Her compositions of shiny domestic spaces or the menacing invasive species complicate what is familiar by shirking rules of perspective and adding patterns to give volume to the pictorial environment. From afar, these patterns look uniform and straightforward but upon closer look, the frills and geometric shapes reveal a quiet chaos. Her work leans into this duplicity and explores the dialogue between hidden yet revealed, invisible yet present.

— SK WEST

## ABOUT AIMEE JONES

Aimee Jones is a visual artist and current MFA candidate and current candidate for a graduate certification in Women and Gender Studies at the University of South Florida. She has exhibited in Spain, Texas, Florida, and was a participant in the HANNAC Can Borni Residency in Barcelona. She specializes in painting the human figure that is transformed in both domestic and botanical landscapes. After studying advertising in Texas, she moved to Italy to study under a ceramic artist specializing in Italian tile painting. From there, she moved to Madrid for 3 years to be an educator and has been creating work as a response to her life experiences and research since.

Website: [aimeejonesart.com](http://aimeejonesart.com)

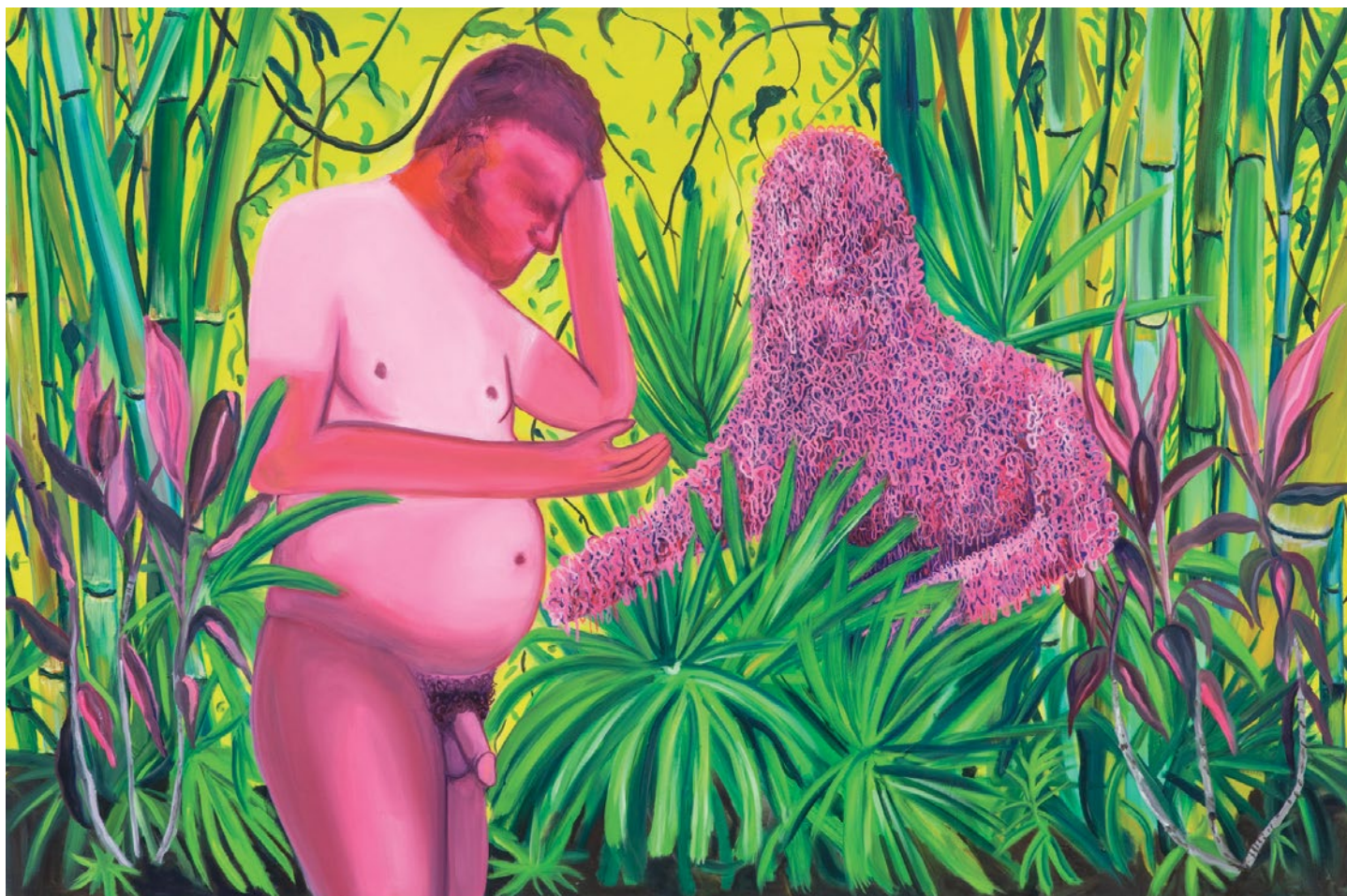
Instagram: [@aimeejonespaint](https://www.instagram.com/aimeejonespaint)

Photo: Forrest MacDonald





*Vacation Mode*, 2022 | 48" x 72" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*Con Los Ojos Tristes*, 2022 | 48" x 84" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*Cherry*, 2021 | 30" x 30" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*First Burn*, 2022 | 52" x 42" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*Emergency*, 2022 | 40" x 30" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez





*Bathsheba and Sheba*, 2020 | 40" x 36" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez

# NATALIA KRAVIEC

Natalia Kraviec makes sculptural objects by sticking things to other things. Their panels are amalgamations of found objects that they use to explore new potential relationships between the materials; for example, finding spools of thread that happen to fit perfectly on an acrylic peg coat hanger. Such interactions wouldn't otherwise happen and Kraviec aims to find the limits of these spontaneous relationships of glitter, secondhand flannel shirts, printed images of possums, and a thousand other kinds of haphazard materials. By deconstructing the object, whether literally or its presumed use case, Kraviec reveals the boundaries of these materials and discovers where they dovetail or where they diverge.

Over the course of Kraviec's artistic process, their panels are first used as tabletops; they work with the panels on the floor before placing them vertically on the wall. As their work acquires a dense and dimensional quality, it presents an optical feast for the eyes. Kraviec's art is composed with rich textures and familiar forms that enable the viewer to determine their own connections within the work—*hey, I've got that same flannel shirt*. Gathering these materials is a core component of Kraviec's practice. The thrill of the hunt and the unpredictability of what might be found that day, whether on the ground or in a thrift store bin, informs the work that ensues.

Recognizable and unknown objects situated in unexpected contexts reveal formal relationships at the forefront of Kraviec's work. This tendency to stick things to other things stems from their family's tradition of quilt making, which is a labor of love and time-consuming detail that lodged itself in Kraviec's brain early in their life. Quiltmaking is a tradition that grounds itself in assemblage and the process of cutting and placing disparate fabrics together into a new form, typically the grid. In their practice, Kraviec toys with the rigidity of the grid and leans into the irregularity of forms and textures to skew a square support.

With their undergraduate degree grounded in sculpture and design, Kraviec has become a perfectionist letting go of perfection. Their practice explores new possibilities, reinvented perspectives, and chance relationships between objects and materials. Kraviec's work is made by their eye for the unusual and the knack for playing matchmaker to the unexpected; results may vary, but are always an abundance of form and texture.

— SK WEST

## ABOUT NATALIA KRAVIEC

Natalia Kraviec is a multidisciplinary artist whose work is rooted in assemblage and collage. They make densely packed abstractions in the form of tapestries, paintings, and sculptures by amassing found objects and images, personal ephemera, textiles, and paint. They integrate craft techniques like tie-dye, quilting, and macrame to investigate shifting aesthetic values through the free interplay of form. By weaving these disparate objects together to challenge hierarchical systems of vision and to hypothesize new material relationships, Kraviec upends formal expectations and deconstructs their inherent bias towards the perfection of the grid. Natalia Kraviec earned their BFA in 2014 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and is from Beatrice, Nebraska.

Website: [nataliakraviec.com](http://nataliakraviec.com)

Instagram: [@nataliakraviec](https://www.instagram.com/nataliakraviec)

Photo: Rachel Treide

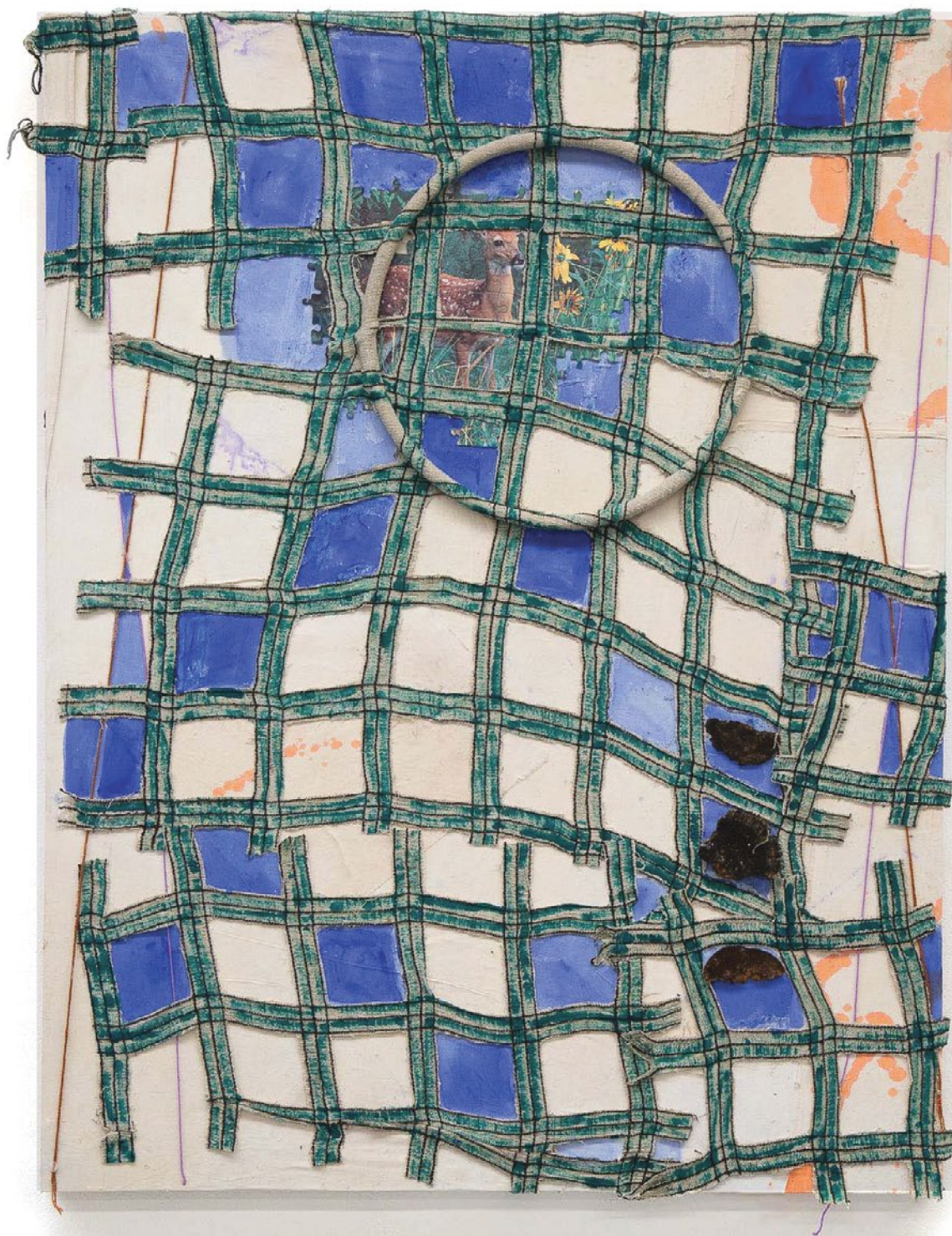




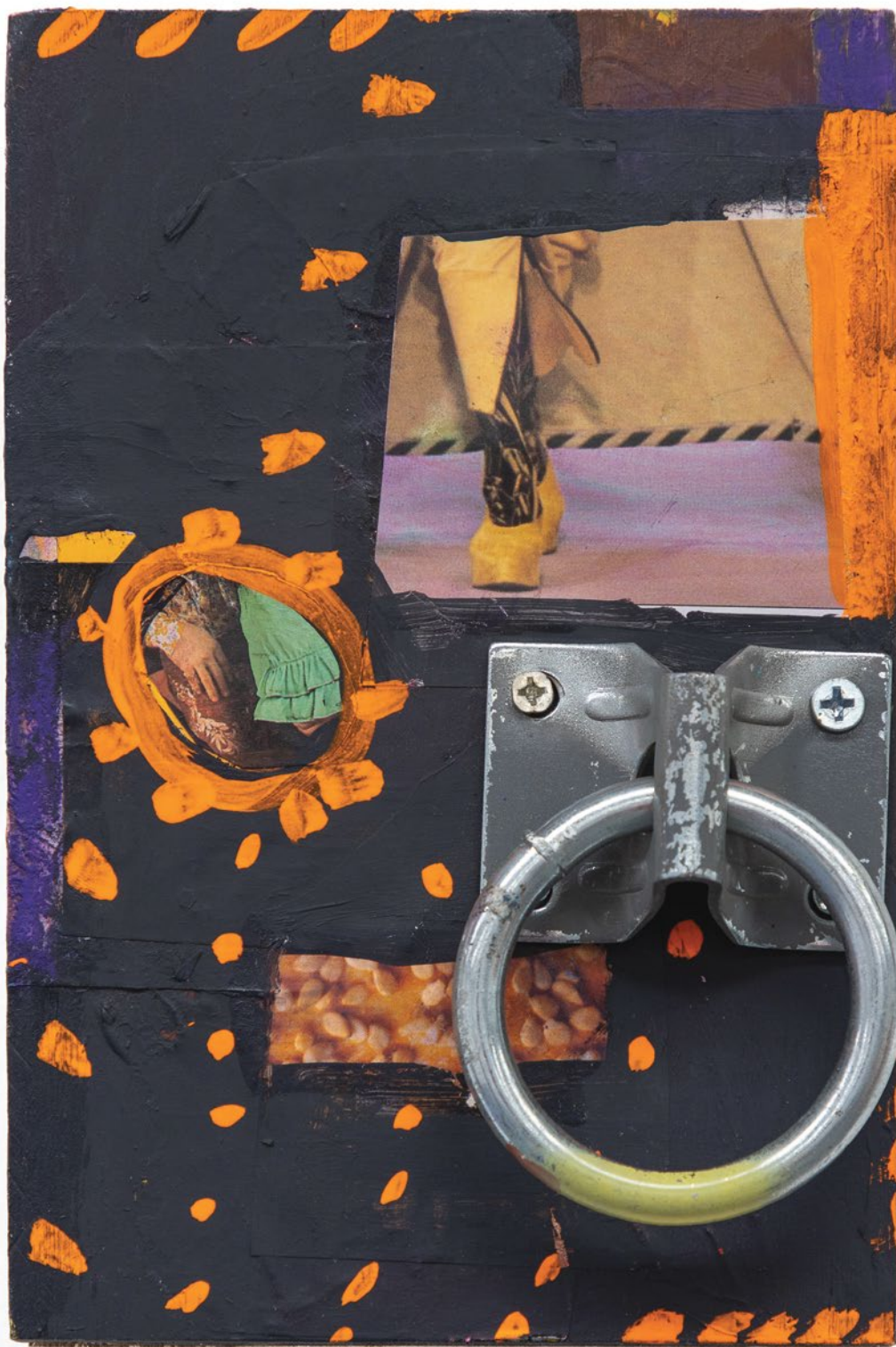
**Waves 2 Me, 2022** | 60" x 48" x 1.5" | Acrylic, tie dye handkerchiefs, salvaged fabric, construction paper, wild mushrooms, ribbon, rope, found image, polished rock, matte medium, circle mirror, wood panel



*That Sweet Sweet, Tender Tender*, 2021 | 31.25" x 31.25" x 1.5" | Acrylic, latex, matte medium, sand, salvaged fabric, found image, canvas  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*Screened in Porch*, 2022 | 48" x 36" x 1.5" | Acrylic, fabric, fabric dye, yarn, puzzle, wooden ring, wild mushrooms, wood panel



*Egg in my Crocs*, 2021 | 7" x 5" x 1" | Acrylic gouache, found images, metal O-ring, plywood  
Photo: Andrés Ramírez



*A Love Letter to the Deer*, 2021 | 36" x 25" x 0.25" | Acrylic, fabric dye, glitter, matte medium, found images, thread, embroidered butterfly patches, plastic ball, salvaged fabric, canvas | Photo: Andrés Ramírez





*Honey Pie*, 2021 | 30" x 24" x 1.75" | Sand, acrylic, latex, glitter, marbles, sponges, polished rock, matte medium, wooden peg, hair tie, found image of bee | Photo: Andrés Ramírez

# KRYSTLE LEMONIAS

*“Wa de goat du, de kid falla”*

*Children absorb behavioral cues from their parents and other significant adults in their lives. We should set good examples for our children.*

This patois idiom illustrates the practice of passing along knowledge in Jamaican households which, in kind, informs domestic labor and thus informs Krystle Lemonias’s practice. The artist immigrated to America from Jamaica with her family when she was 10 years old, carrying the hopes of achieving the “American Dream” and, over time, has come to realize how that Dream conceals a stark contrast to reality.

Growing up, Lemonias watched her mother work as a paid care worker to provide for her family—a labor that the artist herself would later take on. In her artistic practice, she reuses materials sourced from or inspired by her own or her mother’s time as domestic care workers and grounds itself in notions of resiliency—who must embody it for survival or mobility, and at what costs. In particular, her sculptures and installations describe the experience of immigrants of color and its intersections with the purported “American Dream.”

Due to the nature of working as a nanny, there’s a constant stream of used clothes as children grow and outgrow them; clothes, of course, serve as utility objects but are also reflections of class status—designer logos are icons associated with wealth and quality, etc. In the hands of Lemonias, who learned to sew at the age of 5, these physical displays of social mobility passed down to her via her mother’s work are transmuted with an agency of their own. This agency also exists in the stuffed animals of her practice: whole, colorful creatures of childhood are amputated and stitched together with different limbs, heads, and phalanges into new creations that have a life of their own. Their jarring, piecemeal appearance parallels the immigrant’s experience as boundaries, expectations, and ideas of identity are stitched together in calculated or unexpected manners.

While much of Lemonias’s practice consists of reused and recycled materials, she also utilizes one of the most widely disposed items: diapers. Just between her own and her mother’s years of paid care work, they’ve changed thousands of diapers. Including this item that marks the passing of time in the work of domestic care—eventually children don’t need to be in diapers anymore and thus, eventually,

in-home nannying is no longer needed—creates a visual and conceptual tension in her work.

For this exhibition, Lemonias draws inspiration from her mom’s transition out of paid care work and how her family’s expectations of the “American Dream” fall short of the American reality. The video projection shows a care worker learning to ride a bike; while a bicycle is certainly a purposeful mode of transportation, it’s also an icon of leisure and symbolizes entry into America’s middle class. However, what has been romanticized, minimized, or jeopardized along the journey achieving this mobility, both physically and metaphorically?

— SK WEST

## ABOUT KRYSTLE LEMONIAS

Krystle Lemonias (Jamaican, b. 1989) is an interdisciplinary visual artist, labor activist, and art educator. Her work has been shown in the *Hindsight 2020: A Year Later* exhibition at the Polk Museum of Art and in the *Make America What America Must Become* exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans. Lemonias creates work with numerous skill sets. She is primarily influenced by her research on social class privilege, citizenship, labor rights, and how economic inequality affects black communities. Found materials, fabric, and iconography are used to communicate these themes. She sees her work as a tool to encourage the education of cultural identity to this population and its connection to the broader diaspora. Her dedication to the visual artist is an important contribution to the record of contemporary black art and history. Before entering the MFA program at University of South Florida, she acquired a BFA in printmaking from New Jersey City University in 2018.

Website: [krystlelemonias.com](http://krystlelemonias.com)  
Instagram: @empress1989kl

Photo: Guru Nunoo





*My man can eat eeh*, 2021 | 44" x 39" | Baby clothes, upholstery fabric, Pampers diaper, Larabar packaging, relief print on upholstery fabric  
Photo courtesy of Andrew Rafacz Gallery



*Hole on man, it coming*, 2020 | 65" x 54" | Baby clothes, upholstery fabric, relief print on upholstery fabric  
Photo courtesy of Andrew Rafacz Gallery



*Hole up yuh foot!*, 2021 | 25.5" x 37" | Baby clothes, upholstery fabric, diapers, relief print on upholstery fabric  
Photo courtesy of Andrew Rafacz Gallery





*Yuh can lay down but dis not for yuh*, 2021 | 36" x 24" x 18" | Stuffed animals, relief print on baby blanket  
Photo courtesy of Andrew Rafacz Gallery





*Come, open yuh mouth*, 2022 | 36" x 30" | Baby clothes, sweet potato packaging, Pampers diaper, relief print on upholstery fabric

# TATIANA MESA PAJÁN

Everything is a reflection, whether literally or metaphorically; Tatiana Mesa Paján makes art from reflections and these reflections are embedded with poetic gestures. Her work explores ideas of identity and memory through objects or performances by asking questions like how is the past kept? What do each of us truly own? How does the individual experience survive within the collective? This framework seeks to elucidate the fragments of personal identity and experience that exist within the universal awareness of society, geography, and memory. Yet, at the same time, these fragments of ourselves are not fixed or static; even our most cornerstone narratives can shift in tone or structure, waver in emotional certainty, and eventually fade over time.

Such is the nature of reflections; in the instance of a physical mirror, the object itself is objective in its purpose of reflecting yet our interpretation or vision of it is entirely subjective, ever-changing, and influenced by our purpose of seeing a reflection. In one of Paján's lifelong projects of poetic gestures, titled *Island* (2021-present), the artist applies small fragments of images to the center of secondhand mirrors, resulting in a kind of iconographic island. This echoes Paján's homeland of Cuba, an island that she says feels like a tiny infinity. Considering water was the first mirror, as told to us in the myth of Narcissus, this work has sincere and seismic refractions when viewers engage with it.

In another series of poetic gestures, Paján's project titled *Silver Lining* (2005-present) involves repairing personal items split in two with silver in an effort to restore the object's original function. This work presents the dichotomy of fragments in relation to the whole, the negotiation of past and present, and reveals which efforts are fruitful or simply hollow. As humans, we tend to imbue so much of ourselves, our identity, our memories, and more into an object yet that object is liable to get damaged or lost. How does our identification with the object change as the object itself does?

Paján's practice ruminates on how we move through the world and, in turn, move through versions of ourselves. Objects, geographies, and memories trace a pattern of who we are as people and who we were as histories. In recognizing the exchanges between what is tangible and nebulous, physical and ephemeral, we can deepen our shared solitude and embrace all of life's dimensions.

— SK WEST

## ABOUT TATIANA MESA PAJÁN

Tatiana Mesa Paján (1981) is an artist born in Havana, Cuba, who lives and works in the United States. The body of her production alters media constantly, while the sensibility remains close to questions related to language, documentation, and memory. Mesa Paján is a process-based artist fascinated by relationships. She is a Founding member of The Department of Public Intervention in Havana (DIP), and a Co-Curator of *Experiencia de Acción: 30 días*, 8<sup>th</sup> Havana Biennial, Havana, (2003). Mesa Paján's art has been displayed in Cuba, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Lithuania, and the United States. She graduated from San Alejandro Academy, ISA in Havana.

An artist of loneliness sharing silence with Art—Life's poetry.

Website: [tatianamesapajanartevida.com](http://tatianamesapajanartevida.com)

Instagram: @madurezutopia

Photo: Tatum



1 de febrero del 2000  
San Lorenzo #20 y N. Toledo  
6:00 PM

1 de febrero del 2000  
San Lorenzo #20 y N. Toledo  
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San Lorenzo #20 y N. Toledo  
6:00 PM

Bobit



**SKIN, Collection No. 2\_ Found Objects identical to my family's**, 2020–present | Dimensions variable | Collection of found objects, real flowers' petals and leaves/items collected: 64 | Photo: Tatum





*SKIN, Collection No. 2\_ Found Objects identical to my family's*, 2020–present | Dimensions variable | Collection of found objects, real flowers' petals and leaves/items collected: 64 | Photo: Tatum



**ISLAND**, 2021-2022 | Dimensions variable | Collection of found mirrors, found pictures (photos, painting, prints, etc.)  
Photo: Tatum



**A CLOUD PRETENDING TO BE SKY/Una Nube que Pretende Ser Cielo**, 2013–present | Dimensions variable | Collection of found objects in USA, plastic bags | Photo: Amber Bernard





**THE WRITING OF THE INSTANT**, 2004–present | Dimensions variable | Collection of broken found text  
Photo: Amber Bernard

# MARLON TOBIAS

Marlon Tobias is an artist, historian, and storyteller who approaches his work with the eye of an archivist and the heart of an empath. He amplifies the human experience through the lens of his community in a manner that is sensitive and striking. His work dives into American history and the historical relationship between African Americans and their pursuit for land ownership.

Inspired by his own family's archives, particularly, his great-great-grandfather's (William "Cubby" Wordlaw) profound legacy of passing down hundreds of acres of land from generation to generation, Tobias's work delves into the precious, intimate nuances between people and their spaces. To know that the places and people in pictures or names on documents once played a critical role in one's family's life—yet to not personally know them—is a universal relationship we all have with the past, but in Tobias's case, it's incredibly special. In contrast to didactic articulation, Tobias uses these personal moments most significant to him to make room for engagement; his figures embody humanity.

As part of this exhibition, Tobias presents a triptych of acrylic paintings that depict the moments following church service, known as the let out. The Black church has been a pillar institution to the African American community serving as a space of spiritual uplift, a fort of refuge for those in pursuit of freedom, a political haven to organize, and a cradle for cultural cultivation and preservation. Tobias captures this interim time as the community transitions out of a sacred holy space and re-enters the secular world. It is a time when the community gathers to catch up, make dinner plans, discuss the service, and more.

Tobias's composition is set at the oldest Black church in Callahan, Florida, one that his family helped establish; this scene is of a specific let out—one that was held the summer before he was born—and is presented in handmade oak frames. The use of lumber references other works by Tobias, such as a modified historic church pew and a family kitchen table. His figures' likenesses are derived from family photographs and include enough detail to evoke specific personages yet enough space for the viewer to access them. Cast in the glow of Florida's light, Tobias captures the essence of his figures in a manner that facilitates empathy between them and the viewer.

Like the call and response of the service, the artist beckons and hopes you'll respond.

— SK WEST

## ABOUT MARLON TOBIAS

Marlon Tobias (b. 1988) is a visual artist, lover of history, and art educator. As a New York native born from a mother of southern roots and a father of Jamaican descent, Marlon is influenced by history and the multifaceted spirit of the African diaspora. Using the history of drawing and painting as an anchor, he chronicles the rich stories framed within the context of his subject's daily lives.

His work has been shown in *Black Art Matters* at the Carrollwood Cultural Center in 2021, *Visions in Black* 2022 exhibition in Sarasota, FL, and was selected as one of the inaugural artists to show his work in the Office of Multicultural Affairs at the University of South Florida.

Marlon Tobias received his bachelor's degree in Communication and Design from the Florida A&M University and is currently completing his Masters in Fine Arts at the University of South Florida.

Website: [marlontobiasart.com](http://marlontobiasart.com)

Instagram: @marlontobiasart

Photo: Guru Nunoo



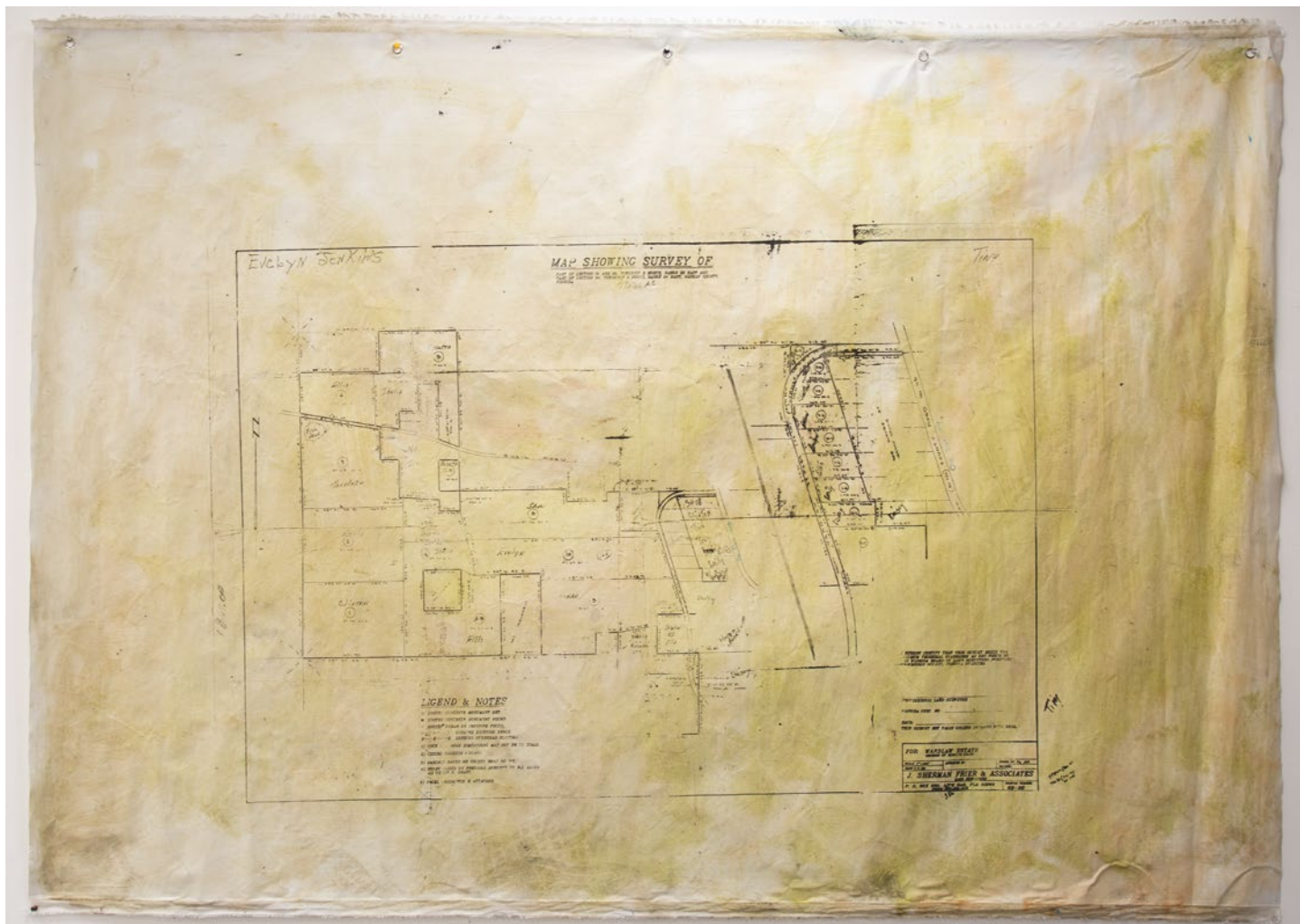


*Jenkins-Wilson, 2020 | 4' x 5' | Oil and oil pastel on canvas  
Photo: edited with Forrest MacDonald*





*YES! There is a Callahan, Florida*, 2020 | 30" x 24" | Oil on canvas  
Photo: edited with Forrest MacDonald



Alright y'all, What we g'on do here? (Wardlaw-Madison Estate), 2020 | 5' x 7' | Screenprint on canvas  
Photo: edited with Forrest MacDonald



*The House the Crane's Built*, 2020 | 11" x 14" | Gouache on watercolor paper  
*That usta be da Juke Joint*, 2020 | 11" x 17" | Gouache on watercolor paper  
*Untitled*, 2020 | 11" x 14" | Gouache on watercolor paper





*That usta be da Juke Joint*, 2020 | 11" x 17" | Gouache on watercolor paper  
Photo: edited with Forrest MacDonald



UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**

**College of The Arts**  
School of Art & Art History

4202 East Fowler Ave. FAH 110  
Tampa, FL 33620-7350

*(813) 974-2360*  
ART.USF.EDU

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