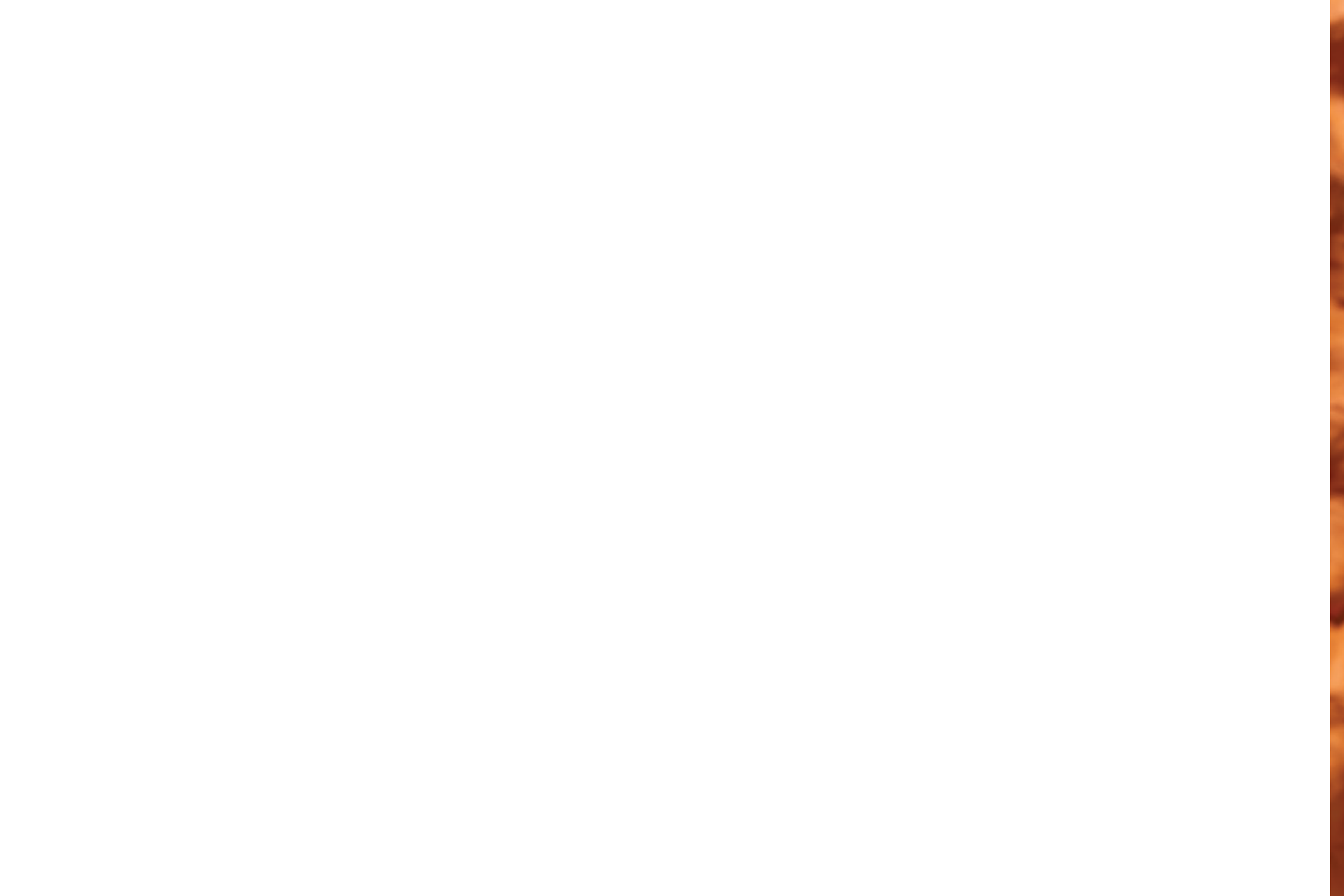


# Other World/s

THE SCHNEIDER MUSEUM OF ART  
JANUARY 16 THROUGH MARCH 15, 2025







# Other World/s

HEATHER LEE BIRDSONG

BEN BUSWELL

ALEX ITO

STACY JO SCOTT

JANUARY 16 THROUGH MARCH 15, 2025

CURATED BY SCOTT MALBAURN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SCHNEIDER MUSEUM OF ART

THE SCHNEIDER MUSEUM OF ART

SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY, ASHLAND

Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: Medicamine*, 2024 (detail)  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
20 x 22 x 7 inches



Heather Lee Birdsong  
*National Sacrifice Area, 2024*  
Gouache on hot  
pressed paper  
12 x 16 inches

# Foreword

Scott Malbaurn  
Executive Director  
Schneider Museum of Art

We are pleased to present “Other World/s,” a group exhibition curated by me highlighting the work of Heather Lee Birdsong, Ben Buswell, Alex Ito, and Stacy Jo Scott. “Other World/s” is an attempt to capture the essence of an alternate or parallel universe. This is often explored through science fiction writing as Patrick Collier, our exhibition essayist, shares in his following essay.

In our current times, many individuals have shared that they feel like the world has been turned upside down, shifted or rearranged in various ways.

Contemporary art reflects the world and its complex issues. It challenges viewers and promotes critical thinking. The artists in this exhibition have been chosen because their artworks yields a doubletake and promotes contemplation. The work makes us more aware of our histories, current surroundings, and asks us to question our possible futures. The work is both poetic and dynamic. The exhibition illustrates an alternate universe but is grounded in this one.

I have often shared that artists are like science fiction writers. They can invent and create without restrictions. Unlike a designer, an artist’s creation does not have to be about ergonomics or functionality. Artists are not bound by rules. They are free to create and explore. Long before we held cell phones in our hands, science fiction writers have written about them. This ‘outside of the box’ thinking and creativity is vital to who we are. Artists create and influence others in various ways. I hope this exhibition gives our viewers an affirmation that our world has indeed changed.

I would like to thank the artists in this exhibition for making their artworks available, Patrick Collier for contributing a wonderful essay contextualizing the exhibition, Maureen Williams, our Preparator and Gallery Manager, Emily McPeck, our Associate Director of Administration and Communication, our student staff and our Museum Council; Cindy Barnard, Roberta Bhasin, Sandy Friend, Michele Fulkerson, Mary Gardiner, Vivian Stubblefield, School of Art & Communication Dean, Andrew Gay, catalog design by David Ruppe and printing by Brown Printing in Portland, OR. Additional thanks to Chelsea Rose and Katie Johnson at the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology for the items loaned in Alex Ito’s piece “Western Verbiage III” (belated gratitude, for Ashland and Jacksonville, Oregon).



Ben Buswell  
*No Measure*, 2024  
Embellished emulsion prints and kiln glass  
12 x 60 inches (diptych)





Alex Ito  
*Farewell*, 2022  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin,  
fiberglass, foam, and oxidized iron  
powder in painted wood frame  
15 x 18.75 inches

Alex Ito  
*Farewell V (rising)*, 2024  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin, fiberglass, foam, and  
oxidized iron powder in painted wood frame  
24 x 18 inches  
Supported by The Jenni Crain Foundation, an initiative  
dedicated to preserving the legacy of the esteemed  
artist and curator.



# “Of This Earth”

Patrick Collier

When I asked Scott Malbaurn, the Executive Director of the Schneider Museum of Art what he had in mind when he titled this exhibition “Other World/s,” he responded with an association to the Star Trek television franchise, referencing the distant planets that the various ships and crews encounter. While those worlds resemble our own, they also contain elements that are unfamiliar—alien—in some respect. Being somewhat of a Trekkie myself, I understood Scott’s analogy, and it immediately brought back a memory of the “Skin of Evil” episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation. If you followed the series, you will no doubt remember when Lieutenant Tasha Yar is killed. The Enterprise is en route to rendezvous with a shuttle carrying the ship’s counselor and empath, Deana Troy, when the shuttle pilot reports that he has lost control: the vessel is being dragged into the gravitational field of a planet, Vagra II. When the Enterprise rescue team beams down to the uninhabited, barren planet, they encounter a black, tarry pool in front of the wrecked shuttle. As they advance toward the shuttle, the pool moves along the ground and blocks them. The team is then astonished as it morphs into a humanoid form and speaks. Negotiations to retrieve their fellow crew members fail, and when Yar attempts to rush the shuttle, the being strikes her dead.



Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: I Have Arrows*, 2024  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
38 x 21 x 16 inches

Over the course of the episode, we learn that the lifeform, named Armus, was created by a race of Titans who discovered a way to expel their evil impulses into a separate creature that they then exiled on Vagra II. Armus is a psychopath in the extreme, manipulative and full of rage. It emits a lethal energy field that prevents those in the shuttle from beaming up to the ship. At one point Commander Reicher exclaims, “We believe everything in the universe has a right to exist.” Armus scoffs. Troy confronts Armus: “You have a great need,” to which it retorts, “I need nothing!” She calls it a liar and exclaims that she pities the creature, which clearly strikes a nerve. Meanwhile, on the Enterprise, the crew notice that fluctuations in Armus’ energy field coincide with Troy’s intervention. Eventually, Troy and the shuttle pilot prevail by making Armus feel its own pain and grief, thereby lowering its forcefield (defenses), and while it screams in distress, they abandon it, again alone, to stew in its anger and misery. In the face of such malevolence, the episode becomes a primer on compassion—as well as its limits. The story also contains a less obvious lesson. Armus represents our own suppressed emotions, or our denial in dealing with our needs and urges; splitting them off, as it turns out, makes those tendencies even more insistent than they need be, which certainly can interfere with developing compassion.

Artists may be more known for their passion, that is, their dedication to making art; yet, for the artists in “Other World/s,” it may be argued that compassion emerges as an equally strong motivation. This active compassion compels a form of social critique, whether about human rights or environmental concerns, or about personal identity and one’s place in the world. And I don’t think it is out of line to suggest that through their work these artists wish to open our eyes, hearts, and minds to new considerations of such issues. Their critiques play out through aesthetics instead of didactics, engaging metaphor and allegory, which are more open-ended than mere polemics and therefore possess more potential for hope.

For this exhibition, Stacy Jo Scott has mined the realm of classical mythology to reprise a tale that has relevance today. Like “Skin of Evil,” it involves a conflict, in this case between a lascivious satyr and a hermaphrodite, with the antagonist a symbolic projection of base human instinct. Scott has chosen as her visual referent a first-century Roman sculpture, found at Pompeii, depicting the hermaphrodite repelling the aggressor’s assault. In Scott’s deconstruction of the scene—a group of four separate clay sculptures (all 2024) composed of jumbled limbs, torsos, a classical head—the dynamic musculature of the original marble is reorganized yet still conveys the same, if not more, energy and savagery. Scott has inserted bits of imitation stone, or scagliola, into the unglazed terracotta forms. As such, the work carries a special interest apart from its historical reference and becomes less an object of art than evidence of a destructive cataclysm. Recognizability is overwhelmed by materiality, as if we are looking at ruins—that is, the tumbledown remains of a disturbing subject too often treated in art history as divertingly erotic or worse, heroic.

As a ceramicist, Scott has a relationship with clay that is so familiar, their muscle (sense) memory so ingrained, that they can take a step away from the process and it still works. Using computer code, a surface router, and 3-D printer, the artist creates sculptural form as if it were manifested out of digitized thin air. However, imperfections in the process return the work to the human realm. Glitches are expected and embraced. Mutability from that which is coded to the final result must be accepted as part of the creative arc. Scott has found inspiration for this “hands on/hands off” approach from the inevitable transformation through time of the remnants of ancient statues, artifacts that have spent much of their existence buried under an advancing civilization. They have as much in common with the geology of the mineral earth from which they were originally made as they do with culture, with the hands and tools of the artist. In Scott’s renditions of such ruins, one can examine the fractures and hollows that expose the forms’ interiors, as one might examine the idiosyncrasies of human psychology.



Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: Medicamine*, 2024 (detail)  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
20 x 22 x 7 inches



Alex Ito  
*Half Life*, 2020 (still)  
Video run time 00:12:23

In his video *Half Life* (2020), Alex Ito treats multiple, more recent histories as well as burials both actual and metaphorical. To create this poetic visual meditation on familial, societal, and environmental catastrophe, Ito filmed at four locations in the American Southwest: in New Mexico, at the White Sands Missile Range—which includes the Trinity test site of the first atomic explosion in 1945—and at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad; in Arizona, at the former site of the Gila River Japanese internment camp, where Ito’s relatives were confined during World War II; and in California, in his grandmother’s house in Pacoima. Ito began this work in 2017, the seventy-fifth anniversary of Executive Order 9066, issued by President Franklin Roosevelt after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Under the order, all persons of Japanese descent living in Alaska, Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington, including American-born citizens, were forcibly removed from their homes and imprisoned in ten concentration camps in remote regions of the West. Over a hundred thousand people were so detained for the duration of the war, many losing their property and businesses and other material resources that would have passed to subsequent generations.

Ito layers the wartime invention of nuclear weapons and the generation of radioactive waste, currently isolated by the U.S. Department of Energy below ground in Arizona (presumably for the next 10,000 years), onto the trauma suffered by his incarcerated family, who lived out the war in barracks surrounded by barbed wire in nearby Gila River. There is an urge to forget about such issues, perhaps because we cannot see radiation contamination with our eyes or understand how past injustices can continue to affect the everyday lives of afflicted families. For his video, poignant and haunting, Ito has found a way to make visible both the threat of nuclear contamination and the psychological trauma of generations: suppressed or forgotten histories live on in *Half Life* in incongruous armored and ominous metallic forms that hover in desert landscapes or domestic interiors. Looming large, they concretize fear, danger, persistent nightmares. They will never go away, whether they be memorials to the past or reminders of sequestered but still toxic waste.



Is it a hammer and ink that spells a name?

Assembly Center: Tulare  
 Home Address: Los Angeles, California  
 Birthplace: California  
 US Arrival Year: American born, Never in Japan  
 Sex & Marital: Female Single  
 Languages: English speak, read (& write) only  
 Religion: No religion, undecided, none, athiest, agnostic  
 Race: Japanese, No spouse  
 Highest Grade: High school 4 in US  
 School Degree:  
 Military Service: No Military/Naval Service, No Physical Defects, No Public Assist  
 Alien Registration Social Security #: Did not attend Japanese Lang. School: Has SS # but not AR #  
 TIME IN JAPAN  
 Length of Time: None  
 Age in Japan: Never in Japan  
 SCHOOLING IN JAPAN  
 Number of Years: None  
 School Grade: None

Is it a hammer and ink that spells a name?



a border?



a frame?

Alex Ito  
Half Life, 2020 (archive sequence)  
Video run time 00:12:23

Heather Lee Birdsong also takes the cycling of history head-on, remembering family members who came before, albeit from different circumstances than Ito's ancestors, to provide lessons on what past actions bode for the future. And while Birdsong's small landscape paintings present beautiful and somewhat idyllic scenes, the eccentric palette and certain surreal details suggest something may be amiss. The eerie desert vista in *National Sacrifice Area* (2024), with its little roadrunner as eyewitness observer, is the most obvious case in point. Birdsong's late grandfather participated in atomic testing at the Nevada Test Site northwest of Las Vegas. While 928 underground tests were conducted there from 1951 through 1992, a hundred more tests above ground sent cancer rates soaring in the area where Birdsong grew up. Again, none of this is readily evident from the surface of the actual test site area as it now exists, which gives us a false sense that all is well. In *National Sacrifice Area*, however, Birdsong offers direct and symbolic bits of that portentous history, inviting us to ponder. Are those civil defense sirens mounted atop the lonely utility poles? And what should we make of the odd triangular-shaped "planter" with its single deciduous tree in the picture's foreground? To suggest this object is out of place would be an understatement. Birdsong uses similarly mysterious polygonal motifs in much of her work, stating that they are stand-ins, sometimes for places and sometimes for people, or maybe inducements for viewers to impose their own interpretations. The ambiguity is purposeful.

Yet the house-shaped structure that sits atop the rocky outcropping in *National Sacrifice Area* leaves us no room to speculate, framing as it does the image of a fiery mushroom cloud. The





Heather Lee Birdsong  
*It Has Always Been This Way*, 2020  
Gouache on hot pressed paper  
24 x 18.125 inches

structure's unusually long shadow can readily symbolize the epically long half-life of nuclear waste. Birdsong has explained that atomic testing has in fact contaminated the giant aquifer underneath the Nevada site. The persistent danger affects an even larger area: neighboring aquifers are also off-limits because if they were drained for either irrigation or development, irradiated water under the Test Site might flow in to refill the aquifers' lowered levels. Containment is ever precarious. There is no undoing these wrongs. The effects infect and infest, and it may well be that the natural environment itself has been nationally sacrificed. In fact, there is nothing left in our world that can be considered truly pristine. And yet we still use terms like "majestic" and "idyllic" to describe natural phenomena. It would seem that we still aspire to an Edenic view of the world.

**PREVIOUS PAGE:**

Heather Lee Birdsong  
*The Need for Kindness No. 1*, 2023  
Acryla-gouache and gouache on hot pressed paper  
9 x 6 inches



Ben Buswell  
*Sorcerer*, 2023  
Embellished emulsion prints  
36 x 24 inches

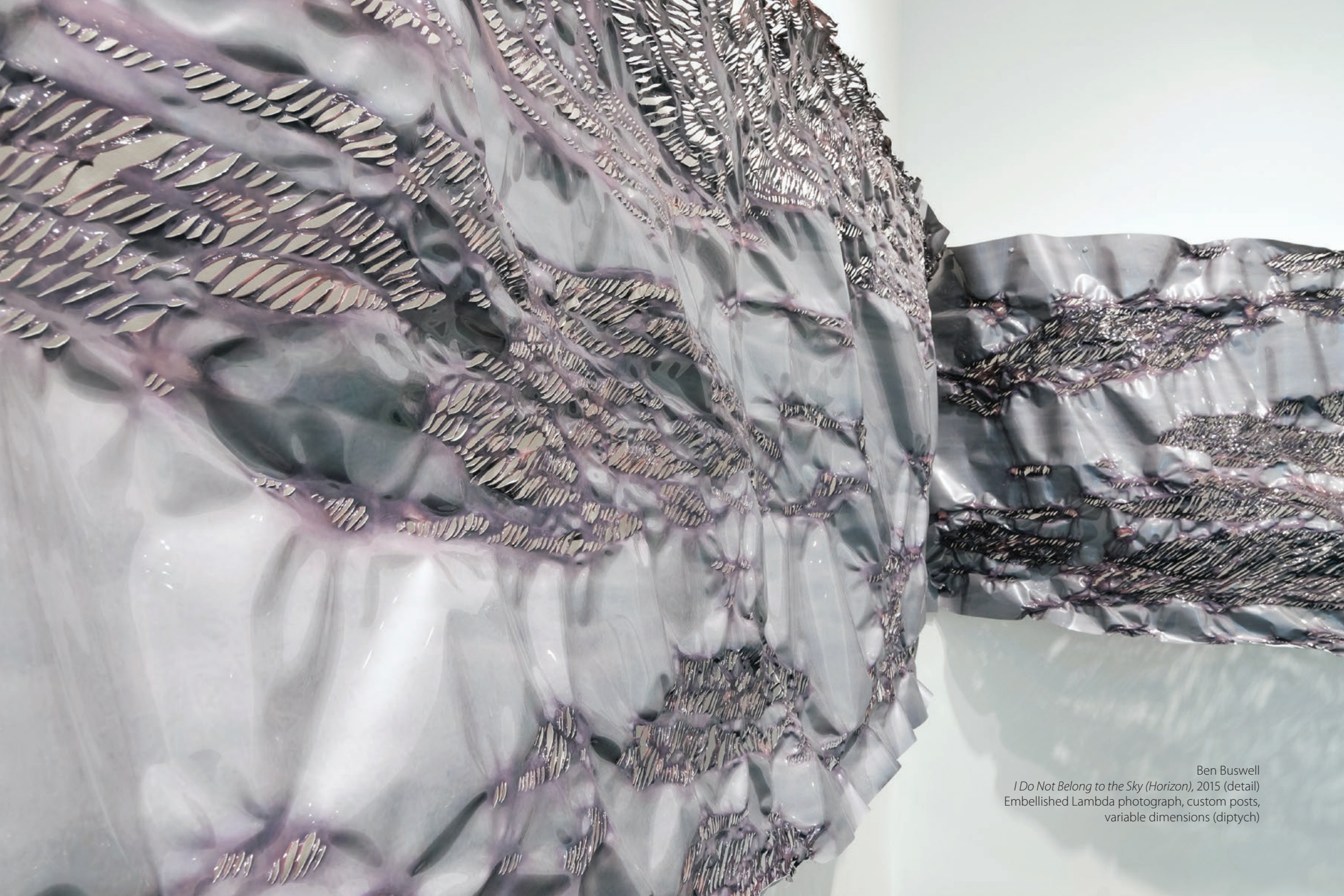
Certain kinds of landscape photography may exemplify this yearning. Artists working in the genre, moreover, have no doubt been acutely aware of how often the image pales against the reality confronted by the camera. But in Ben Buswell’s mesmerizing photographs of rivers or oceans, we are nonetheless urged towards a greater appreciation for the world around us as it is. His highly original technique extends beyond the camera and sometimes into something akin to sculpture. In the *Sorcerer* (2023), he has manipulated a digital image and then hand-embellished the Lamda-printed photograph with tiny, endlessly repeating scratches. These artful interventions, which add nuance, texture, and visual interest, compel us to look more closely at Buswell’s subject matter: water’s scintillating surface. *Sorcerer* is absent a horizon line, and we look down at what must be a horizontal plane, but the rhythmic disturbances in the water—the wake of a small boat? the result of a few stones thrown simultaneously into a lake?—create four quivering elliptical shapes that stack vertically up the height of the composition. Further, we marvel at the biaxial symmetry of this shimmering apparition: left and right halves exactly mirror each other, as do top and bottom. . . or do they? Poring over the surface, we discover that the minute hatch marks Buswell inscribes on the print make each quadrant unique. Where all four quadrants abut, at the very center of the image, there emerges the shape of a staring eye—as if the water itself were returning our gaze.

An inveterate surfer, Buswell has actively engaged with his subject, and his own embodied experience of the liquid element enriches his art. There are aspects of water, such as the surface, that we can see, and the depths that we can’t. There are watery motions that we can apprehend, such as ripples and currents, caused by wind and geography, and those that are largely imperceptible, like evaporation. Yet we know that the invisible phenomena exist. The ancient *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* says of water that “it flows on uninterruptedly and reaches its goal,” suggesting dependability and





Ben Buswell  
*I Do Not Belong to the Sky (Horizon)*, 2015  
Embellished Lambda photograph, custom posts,  
variable dimensions (diptych)



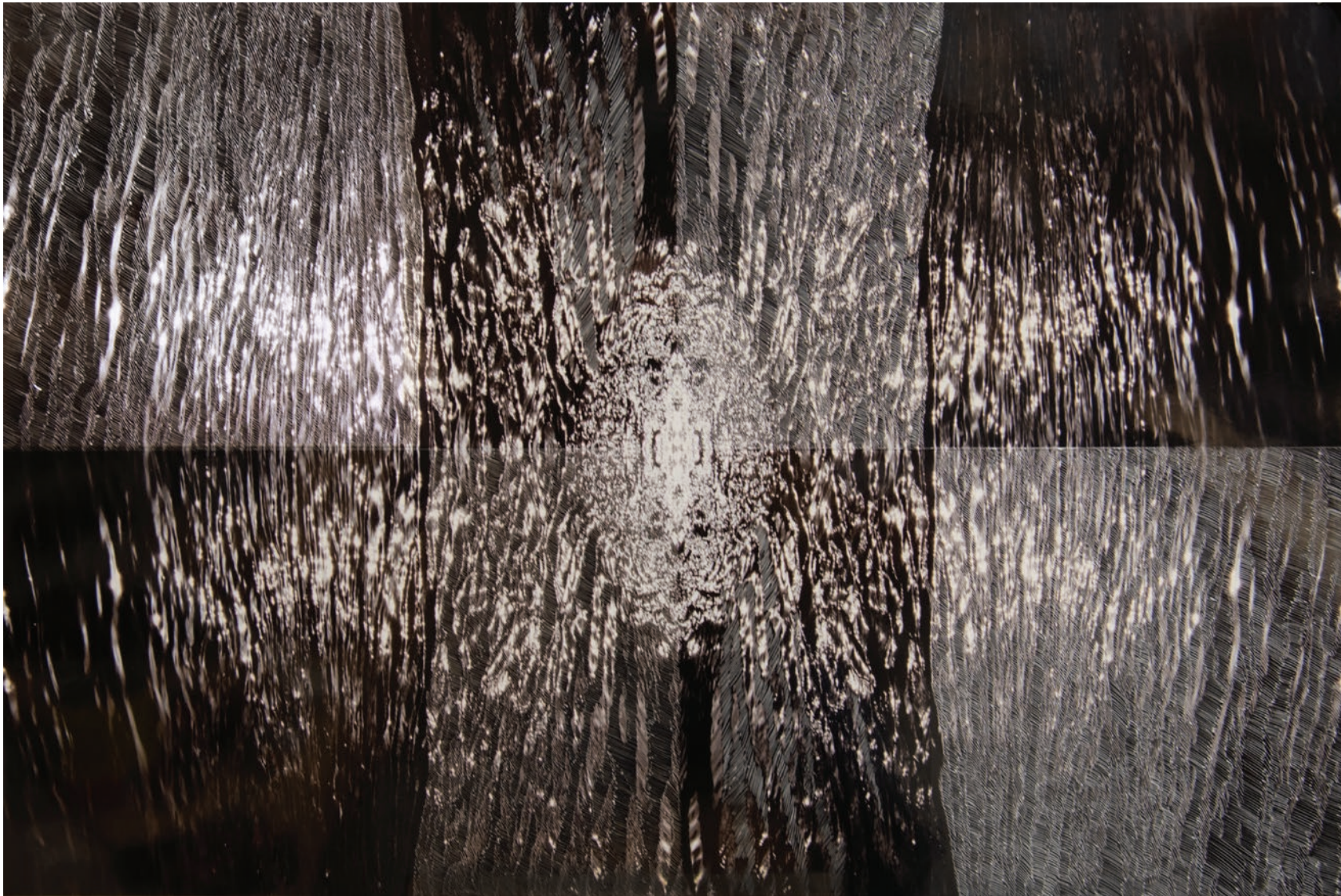
Ben Buswell  
*I Do Not Belong to the Sky (Horizon)*, 2015 (detail)  
Embellished Lambda photograph, custom posts,  
variable dimensions (diptych)

unpredictability as well as persistence. Is this not a suitable metaphor for the ever inquisitive activity of an artist? This is the realm in which Buswell operates or, more accurately, what he wants us to stop and consider through his art. In contemplating *Sorcerer*, we come to a better appreciation of water's movement and its "optics." Light plays on its surface in a myriad of ways: little ridges create dancing shadows, and we recall too that if you're standing in the right place, the reflection of the sun on a body of water can be blinding. Buswell makes us hyper aware of these factors.

As we venture back out into the real world after viewing "Other World/s," we may be more cognizant of what surrounds and confronts us. Our planet is on its way to becoming like the desolate Vagra II, with the only signs of life being those of a past humanoid race that brought about its own demise. In Judeo-Christian theology, we are said to have dominion over nature, by means of which we satisfy our fundamental needs. Yet we may forget that we are in fact part of nature. We have forgotten that with our supposed superiority comes the responsibility of stewardship, a convenient oversight or, worse, a form of denial. The artists in this exhibition, whether directly or indirectly, warn us of these potentialities. It may be—just as we seem doomed to repeat the past—that this battle will be with us for the rest of our existence on the planet. Even several centuries into an imaginary future, the various Star Trek crews become enmeshed in an apparently eternal battle of good versus evil, even among their own alliances. Granted, their television adventures are created for entertainment, even if some episodes offer moral instruction. Art can also be a form of entertainment. Nevertheless, this is what I have come to understand about art: it arises not only from the desire to introduce new beauty into the world or to call attention to the beauty that exists or to beauty imperiled. It can also be initiated by a perceived injustice toward a community or culture for which one feels genuine empathy and compassion. Art is not magic, yet it might as well be, capable of eliciting astonishment, a flash that may even shake us out of a state of complacency or mistaken beliefs.



Ben Buswell  
*The Light Thief*, 2023  
Embellished emulsion prints  
36 x 24 inches



Ben Buswell  
*Gate*, 2023  
Embellished emulsion prints  
24 x 36 inches



Heather Lee Birdsong  
*The Need for Kindness No. 2*, 2020  
Acryla-gouache and gouache on hot pressed paper  
9 x 6 inches



Heather Lee Birdsong  
*Early, Late and No Longer*, 2024  
Gouache and watercolor on hot pressed paper  
10.125 x 7 inches



Stacy Jo Scott  
*What Moves Behind the Mask 1*, 2021  
Ceramic  
14 x 16 x 1 inches



Stacy Jo Scott  
*What Moves Behind the Mask 4*, 2021  
Ceramic  
12 x 15 x 1 inches



Stacy Jo Scott  
*What Moves Behind the Mask 2*, 2021  
Ceramic  
11 x 16 x 1 inches



Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: Earth-Born*, 2024  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
31 x 21 x 12 inches





Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: Medicamine*, 2024  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
20 x 22 x 17 inches

Stacy Jo Scott  
*Satyr and Hermaphrodite: By the Waters Touch*, 2024  
Ceramic, plaster scagliola, ink, cotton  
26 x 17 x 15 inches



Alex Ito  
*Farewell VI (hidden in the leaves)*, 2024  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin, fiberglass, foam, and oxidized iron powder  
in painted wood frame  
24 x 18 inches  
Supported by The Jenni Crain Foundation, an initiative dedicated to  
preserving the legacy of the esteemed artist and curator.

Alex Ito  
*Farewell VII (Tsuneko)*, 2023  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin, fiberglass, foam, and oxidized iron  
powder in painted wood frame  
68 x 50 inches  
Supported by The Jenni Crain Foundation, an initiative dedicated  
to preserving the legacy of the esteemed artist and curator.



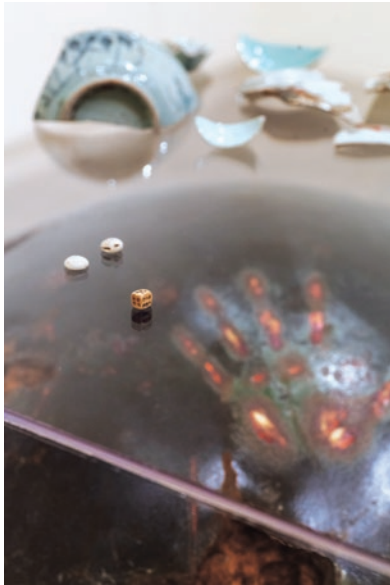
Alex Ito  
*Farewell VII*, 2024  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin, fiberglass, foam, and  
oxidized iron powder in painted wood frame  
64 x 49 inches

Alex Ito  
*Bloom (adverse harmony)*, 2020  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin,  
foam, and oxidized iron  
12 x 47 x 5 inches





Alex Ito  
*Western Verbiage IV (89'-92')*, 2024  
Silver nitrate chrome on resin, foam, oxidized iron powder, wood, moss, found plastic, acrylic paint, acrylic vitrine, archived print media, plates, and wood frame.  
42 x 35½ x 35½ inches  
Supported by The Jenni Crain Foundation, an initiative dedicated to preserving the legacy of the esteemed artist and curator.



Alex Ito  
*Western Verbiage III (belated gratitude, for Ashland and Jacksonville, Oregon)*, 2024  
Enamel paint on resin, foam, oxidized iron powder, wood, moss, artificial plants, historical items from a Chinese American home in Jacksonville, Oregon that burned on September 11, 1888: Chinese porcelain Winter Green shallow dish (2013.09-0576) and alcohol cup (2013.09-0577), Chinese porcelain spoons with a Four Season Flowers design (2013.09-0579 and 2013.09-0635), Chinese porcelain bowl with a Four Season Flowers design (2013.09-0908), Chinese porcelain bowl with a Bamboo motif (2013.09-2816), White opaque glass gaming pieces used for playing fantan (2013.09-0709)  
Historical items are from the Jacksonville Chinese Quarter Site 35JA737  
Courtesy of and curated at the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA)  
42 x 35% x 35% inches  
Supported by The Jenni Crain Foundation, an initiative dedicated to preserving the legacy of the esteemed artist and curator.

To learn more about the collection and these types of artifacts, visit the Southern Oregon Digital Archives Chinese Material Culture Collection (<https://soda.sou.edu/chinese/index.html>)





Alex Ito  
*Half Life*, 2020 (archive sequence)  
Video run time 00:12:23





Heather Lee Birdsong  
*Cenotaph*, 2016  
Gouache and watercolor on hot pressed paper  
9.625 x 14.125 inches

**ON THE COVER:**

Alex Ito  
*Western Verbiage III (belated gratitude, for Ashland and Jacksonville, Oregon)*, 2024  
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Historical items are from the Jacksonville Chinese Quarter Site 35JA737

Courtesy of and curated at the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology (SOULA)

42 x 35% x 35% inches

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