

ALL AT ONCE: PLAYING PRETEND, MAKING SENSE

by

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B.F.A., Massachusetts College of Art and Design, 2016

A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts  
Department of Art and Art History  
2022

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*All At Once:*  
*Playing Pretend, Making Sense*

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## Part I — Setting the Scene

### *All at Once: Playing Pretend, Making Sense*

*All At Once: Playing Pretend, Making Sense* is a visual record of my constant effort to understand. This trial yields a world separate from our known reality brought to fruition through various methods of exploration and play. *All At Once* refers to the experience of viewing a dollhouse or miniature.

The objects scattered throughout the exhibition represent mundane items often found in the home. Some objects retain familiarity, recalling toys children use to make sense of the world, while others are abstract or unknown, plucked from distorted memories. Through their humorous and sweet forms and by their handheld scales, many of the objects invite the viewer in for a close look but their impressions of fragility or danger warn that they desire to remain untouched. Repeated symbols take on many identities like the roles that may be swapped in the chaos of a toy chest with too many or missing parts. By contextualizing the work between abstraction and familiarity, I use the *almost* to encourage the viewer to create their own understanding of the relationships situated within the work.

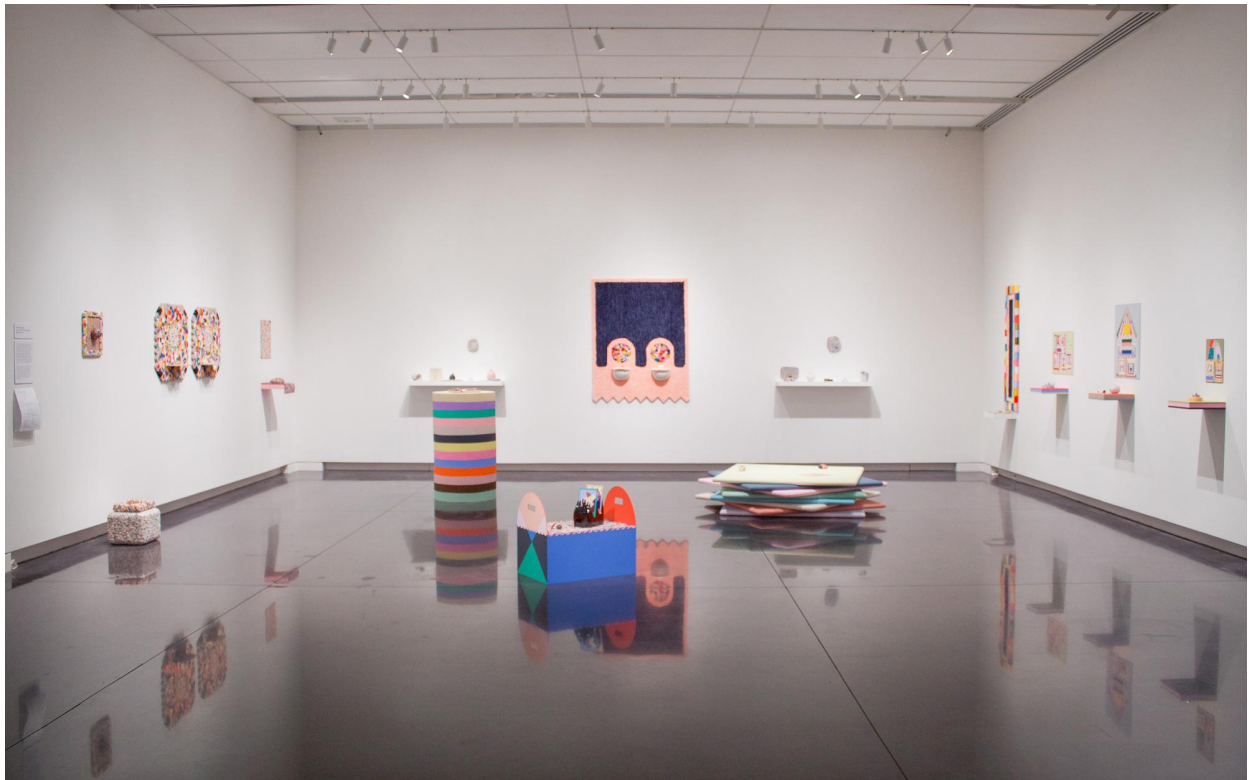
Objects sit atop display furniture that evoke a sense that they are waiting to produce or consume something. A stack of construction paper has the potential to draw ideas out from the imagination like a snake charmed from its basket, while a waterbed may extinguish the flame which it cradles so gently if its tide creeps in just a bit.

My installation considers the bombardment and piling up of problems that face us each day ranging in consequence. The accumulation and proximity of objects in this installation make

meaning, *all at once*. I'm curious about the tension in the moments just before everything perfect dissolves, or crumbles, or gets swept away. I employ many methods to tack things down, to hold onto moments, and to also release my grip.

### ***Exhibition Description***

I'm going to walk you through the exhibition as if you were reading it from left to right along the wall. Then I'll back out of the space and describe the floor works. This way of looking pops the viewer in and out of the world I've created. For ease of reading the exhibition, I describe the works in chronological order yet the viewer is vulnerable to their own distractions disrupting them from this course.



*(Installation view of All at Once: Playing Pretend, Making Sense)*

*In It* is a wall work composed of a concrete-covered found frame, painted with gouache in a pattern using overlaid scrap shapes. Centered in the frame on top of a stretched paint rag hangs a ceramic pet rock covered in carefully arranged paint scraps. At the foot of this work resides, *On It*, which is a porcelain scrap tiled foam cooler shaped like a soft cube reminiscent of an AirPods case. Resting on top of the tiled surface is a needle felted yarn scrap bed holding another ceramic pet rock covered in gouache scraps.



(Top: *In It*, Bottom: *On It*)

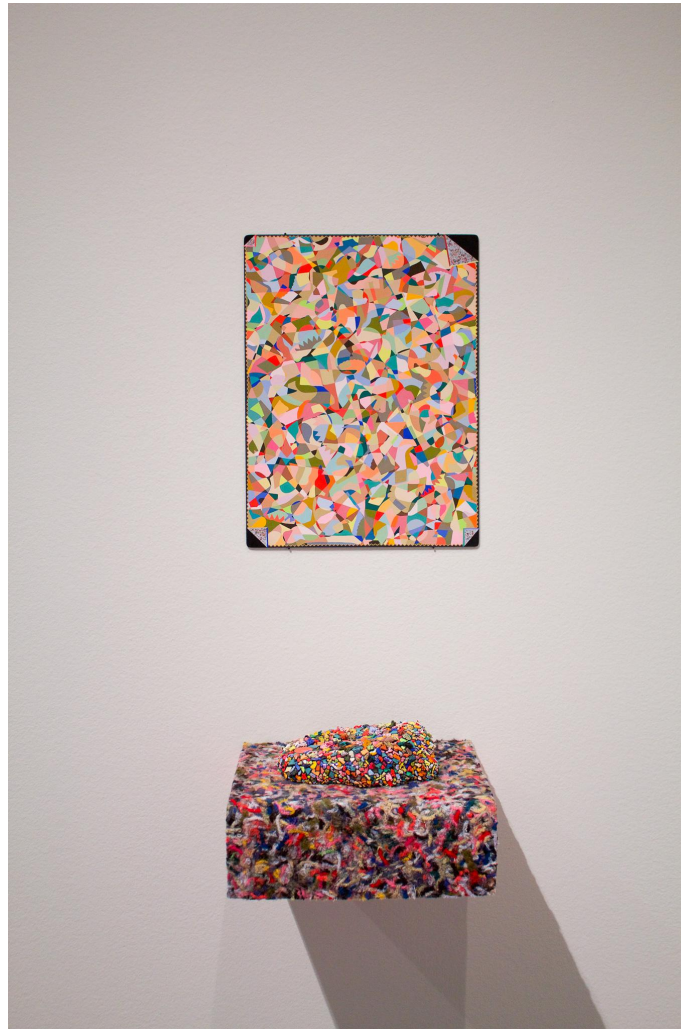
Hanging on the wall to the right is *Little Bit of Everything*. This diptych is made from two mirrored compositions, each including a rug, a painting, a shelf, and a ceramic sculpture. The rugs are zig-zag edged and square. The shape of the rugs resemble a stamp with its corners folded over. Centered in the rug is a copy of the same design rendered in gouache on masonite. The mixture of these two materials create a zoom in/out effect as the crispness of the paint contrasts the fuzziness of the rug. Hung below the painting within the frame of the rug is a three-tier floating shelf cut in a shape resembling a mass of my scraps visually gathering. Atop the shelf sits a ceramic sculpture which looks like scrapbooking pieces taking on a three-dimensional form. Moments of luster glisten between the ceramic pieces like lighthouses in love.



*(Little Bit of Everything)*

Then, on the wall next to this is *Minced Memory*. This work quite closely mimics the patterning and framing devices of *Little Bit of Everything*. Its corners are folded over featuring paint crumbs on the other side as if it became unstuck to its substrate and stuck to debris. The word *minced* refers to finely chopping something past the point of definition. Below this painting

is a pink shelf with a draped needle felted scrap sheet. Resting on top of the dense felt sheet is *Buddy*. The gouache covered pet rock imagines what it would be like to find a rock shaped like a sleeping guinea pig. The form under the scraps is glazed blackish-blue porcelain acting as grout contrasting the matteness of the gouache scraps.

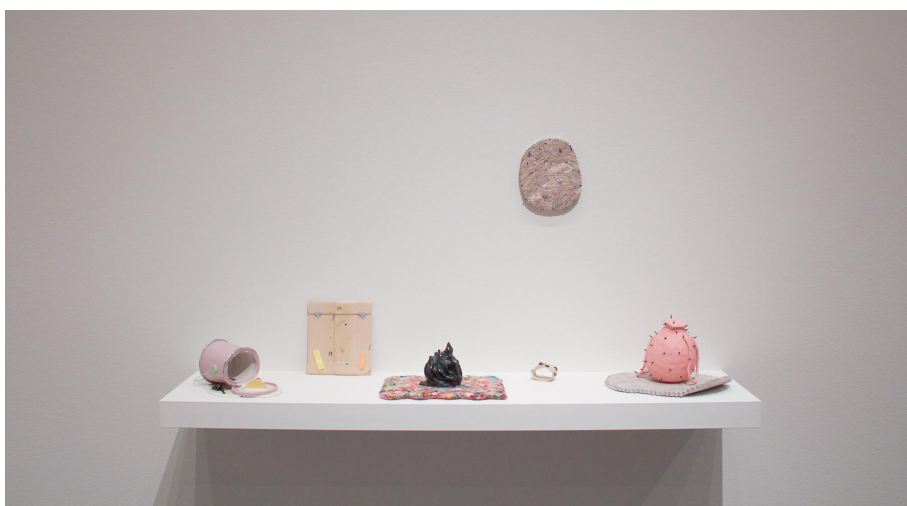


(Top: *Minced Memory*, Bottom: *Buddy*)

The first of the longer white shelves hosts a collection of five objects. *Oops* is a stained porcelain paint can stuck in a position tipped on its side, spilling its contents. Secured in the spill is a blue line resembling a worm or big thread; a half-risen yellow blade; a truncated red cone



laying safe on its more stable side; and a limp black knot. This object captures moments in between—maybe just before or after a catastrophe. *Invitation* leans against the wall just to the right. The stained porcelain envelope is physically sealed by it being a fired ceramic object, but it also includes multiple visual methods of fixture. Porcelain tape and stickers hold the bottom and top flaps. A clear glaze applied in the shape of packing tape stretches from top to bottom with detritus and confetti stuck to it. Gold luster highlights the cracks and tears of the beige parcel. Sitting next to *Invitation* is *Creep*. This is a small black porcelain flame with part of its form trailing behind like a snail. Hints of gold luster are applied as if they are sparks. The porcelain form sits on a wiggly-edged magic carpet made of needle felted rug scraps. It feels like comforting a threat enough to keep it at bay. An even smaller stained porcelain form, *Still Finding Your Hairs* sits just to the side. A rolled slab of sandy porcelain takes on the shape of tape before it's employed to stick two things together. The nuisance of hairs stuck to its surface takes away its implied function. Bookending this shelf sits *Don't Touch Me*. This is a bubblegum-pink sealed porcelain vessel arrayed with tiny black thorns. It sits on top of a slab of carpet marble created by compressing and scraping clay scraps. Its form and color begs interaction from the viewer, but its armor repels touch.



(Left to Right on the Shelf: *Oops*, *Invitation*, *Creep*, *Still Finding Your Hairs*, *Don't Touch Me*)



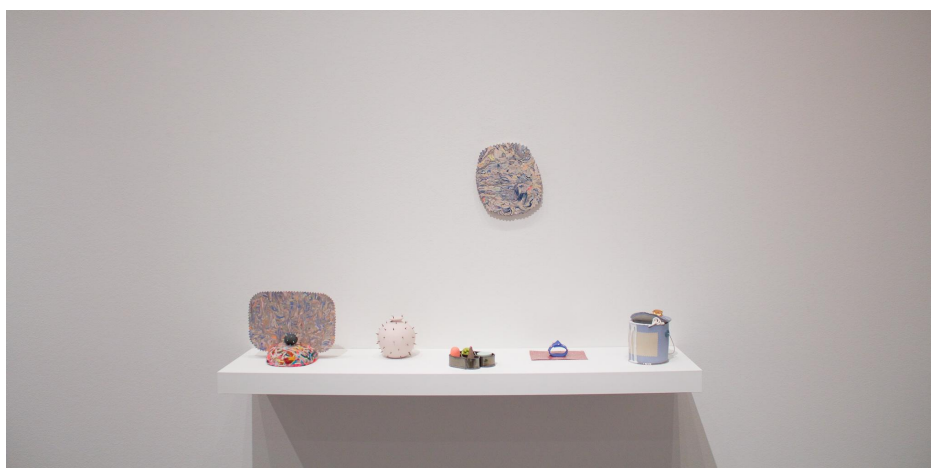
Sandwiched between the larger white shelves in the exhibition is a large centerpiece which acts as a focal anchor for the rest of the works. A 4' x 5' rug hangs on the wall with two protruding toilet bowl shelves. Atop these shelves are small sculptures referencing the sun and moon. *Looking at You, Looking at Me* surrounds and presents these ceramic objects as a pair. The composition of the rug is inspired by moments of reflection and intimacy. A baby-sherbert border frames a double-arched blue shape like two toilet rugs becoming one. Within the inlets of the two arches are two circles made of jumbled shapes for reflection. The ceramic components are caught between rising and dissolving. The arrangement presents separateness and togetherness in parallel.



*(Looking at You, Looking at Me)*

On the other side of the rug is the second of the larger white shelf arrangements. Sitting first, *Sheep's Clothing* is a paper-thin slab of carpet marble held up by a solid needle felted chair form. Resting on the bottom hump of the felted form is a black porcelain ovoid with aqua spikes.

The slab is a screen or a void which the thorny object has either just jumped out of or is pondering its entrance into. *Don't Touch Me II* is a repeated character here. A sealed barely-pink porcelain vessel is covered in brown thorns. Its form is evocative of a plump apple tempting the viewer for a bite. Then there is *Memory Lasso*. A thin ribbon of clay is glazed metallic as it wraps its contents. Tightly held in its grasp is a chocolate-brown bugle raked through skittle-spit, a pig without its blanket, a slime-green reaching hand; and a polished turquoise bowl. The form explores ribbon candy as a way of containing. It imagines the undulating form as having compartments. Another repeated symbol makes an appearance next to *Memory Lasso*. *Still Finding Your Hairs Too* is a blue and pink iteration of *Still Finding Your Hairs*. It rests on top of a nail polish sheet using nail stickers as a patterning method to reference bed sheets. The last object on this shelf is *Sunken Treasure*. In this first version of exploring the paint can as a vessel, I was focused on the viscosity of the material it carries and its ability to swallow or conceal things. *Sunken Treasure* is a grayish-blue stained porcelain can with its lid fixed between open and shut. This fused position asks the viewer to look a little deeper to see all of its contents. The surface has outlines of labels whose information has seemed to fade away or was never given in the first place. The application of luster ties in the use of real wire as its handle.



(Left to Right on Shelf: *Sheep's Clothing*, *Don't Touch Me II*, *Memory Lasso*, *Still Finding Your Hairs Too*, *Sunken Treasure*)

Hung above each white shelf on the back wall are *Carpet Marble I* and *Carpet Marble II*. These are each made from the scraps of my porcelain process. Each encapsulates bits from the other porcelain works in the exhibition. The slab hung on the left is fully intact with a polished surface. The one on the right is imprinted with my collected lines with feelings yielding an artifact-like surface. This one is also fractured so I use butterfly nail stickers to act as wooden butterfly joints, preventing any further cracking.



(Left: *Carpet Marble I*, Right: *Carpet Marble II*)

In the corner of the right wall next to this shelf is an arrangement called *Shuffle*. It is composed of a runner hung vertically with a shelf at its base. I view the runner as a transitory space; a conduit; a way through. The rug resembles a game board in all its divided spaces along the border. On the shelf below is a paint rag held down by a flat painting of peeling squares and a small porcelain stack of squares. I think of these squares as tiles or construction paper. The composition speaks to expanding a surface and gathering it back up. It's like world making.



Shuffling through paint swatches and porcelain test tiles generates new ideas about color which is informative in my world making.



*(Shuffle)*

The next three stations of work are influenced by the dollhouse. As the viewer notices the candy colored images and objects residing on their shelves painted like delectable cakes, they are called closer, but not too close. The lack of figures in the work begs questions like: Who was just here? What just happened? What is going to happen? Am I supposed to be here? There is a tension in creating a space which one wants to enter but its flatness prevents admittance.



*(Right Gallery Wall)*

*First Floor* is an abstracted aerial view of the first floor layout of my home. It imagines compartments of comfort through representing each room by a specific type of textile. A blanket and pillows denotes a bedroom; a tumbling circle of scraps acknowledges the laundry room; and a rug tailored around a circle references a bathroom. The boundaries of the layout visually double as an extra layer of protection and as points of perspective evoking a feeling of looking down into something. The object sitting on the striped shelf just below is *Guts*. It is a baby-blue

porcelain bar of soap with a bite taken out of it. On top is a wind-blown carpet marble slab held down by a soggy piece of paper; a glistening turd; and a bandage wrapped birthday candle.



(Top: First Floor, Bottom: Guts)

The next painting is called *Just So*. This composition was formed by arranging found stickers. Many of the stickers were Christmas themed which challenged me to expand meaning with minimal parts. The painting strongly resembles a fun house too. Its circus-like top is both whimsical and off-putting. Sitting on the shelf below this painting is *Figment*. This stained porcelain ovoid is covered in cobalt-blue spikes. It's wrapped in a thin piece of beige porcelain tape which acts as the thing that anchors it down, yet there is a sense it could roll away if not for



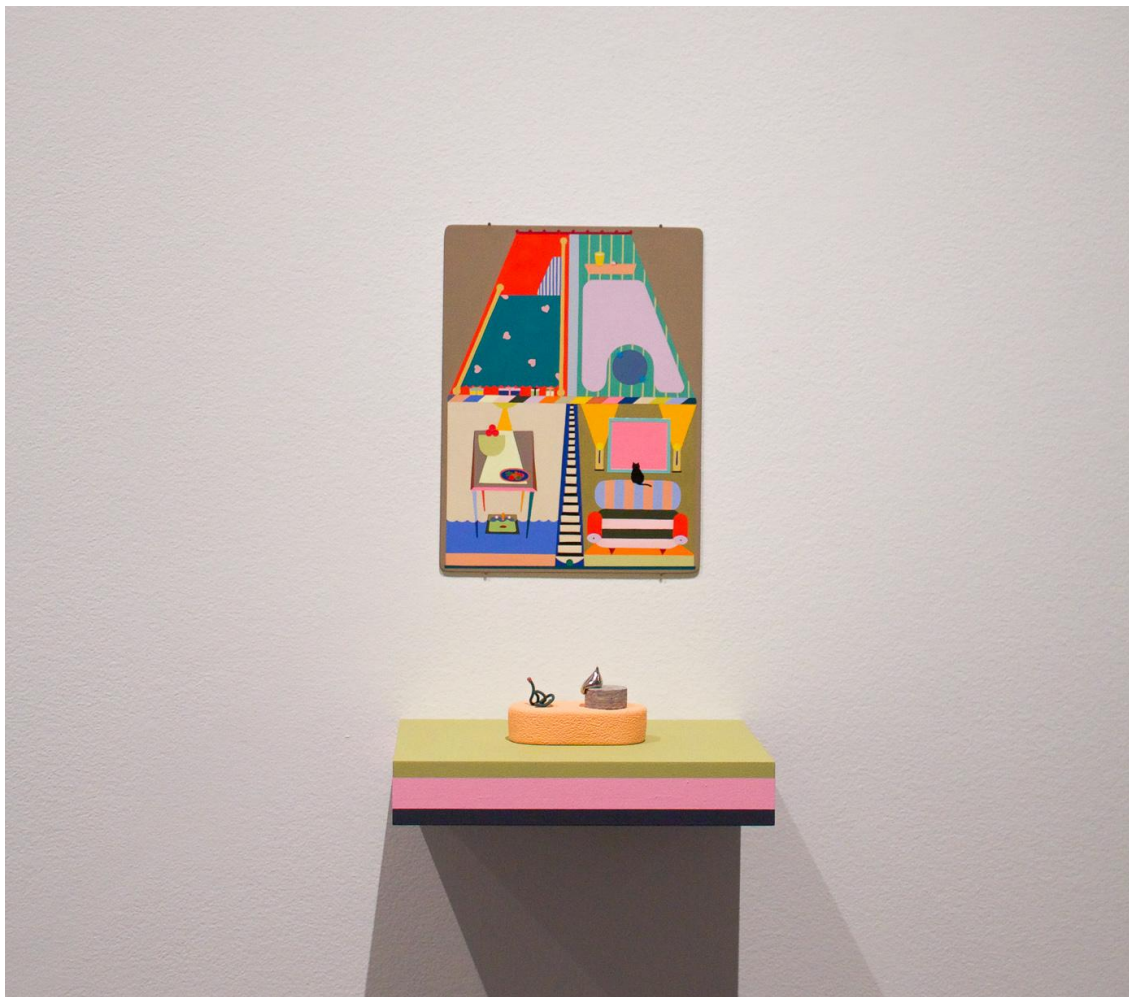
the road bump in its path. The tiny red weight works to prevent this memory from unfurling any more than it already has.



*(Top: Just So, Bottom: Figment)*

The last of the dollhouse paintings is *And So On*. Compositionally separated in quadrants, a fullness is represented in each space. The top spaces squeeze objects in with very little extra

room, pointing to the filling action that is occurring from the flood in the bottom left quadrant. A cat ponders and waits. Below this painting is *Plop*. This orange porcelain sponge presents the remnants of a clean up as something precious and curated. Resting on its top surface is a porcelain crepe cake with a silver drop-squirt on its edge next to a loose green tangle adorned with ceramic skittle-spit. The green form is made with the help of an extruder. The extruder is a metaphor for life in that we are shaped by that which we move through.



(Top: *And So On*, Bottom: *Plop*)

The wall ends here and either calls you out of the space or ushers you back in from a different point of entry. I'll take you to the floor works now. Toward the back left corner of the

exhibition, a striped column resembling a stack of necco wafers holds up *Hot Springs Water Park for the Moon*. This work consists of a digitally-rendered form cut from MDF. It was then painted in order to exaggerate its divots and peaks. Three porcelain balls roll within and between the pools. Depending on their location, they are able to hide or stand out. This is a space of relaxation to be used by the moon if she were to have a break.



*(Hot Springs Water Park for the Moon)*

Backing out a bit again, a smaller display resembling a toy chest or water bed cradles two smaller works on top of a felted mattress. *Hiding Moon* is a piece made from two components. A loose ball and a sheet in which it can take shelter or roll away from. Directly next to this, titled after an old Taylor Swift song, *Picture to Burn* further cradles its contents. A ceramic flame sculpture functions to hold two paintings of polaroid pictures. Depicted in each polaroid are folded scraps of paper—what's written on them is concealed in the crease. I think about the corner of a piece of paper as a peripheral area demarcated by its margin. This is where peripheral



thoughts and doodles are recorded. The paintings are carefully rendered in gouache and flame nail stickers are applied to its surface. These stickers are iridescent, constantly shifting how the piece is viewed from different perspectives. They mimic the way the reflection of the color bits in the felted mattress dance on the metallic flame base when shifting the vantage point.



(Left: *Hiding Moon*, Right: *Picture to Burn*)

Pivoting toward the back right corner, a large skewed stack sits low and wide on the floor. It looks like enlarged porcelain tiles or construction paper. Three objects sit on its top surface seeming like they could have been constructed from what is just below them. *Under Wraps*, *Hold Tight*, and *Blossom* are each versions of the same package shape. Their curved edges fold up and over what's inside. *Under Wraps* is a tightly closed stained porcelain package, though if you look through its cracks, you'll see a small black ball in there. *Hold Tight* is a gouache painting on

masonite, which flattens its contents and form into one surface. *Blossom* is another iteration of *Under Wraps* using different colors in porcelain. It was constructed the same way the first was, but after a night of slow drying, the form opened up, blossoming like a flower. Unlike its first iteration, this form is stuck in a revealing position rather than in a concealed state. Lastly, *Paperwait* hides just under these three works on the fifth tier of the stack. This small porcelain sculpture was the impetus for building the larger stack as a home for others. In enlarging it, the spaces between the sheets become crevices for refuge, but in its small form, it functions as just a weight. Its title uses a play on words emphasizing that this is the moment it has been waiting for.



*(Large stack with Under Wraps, Hold Tight, Blossom, and Paperwait)*

## Part II — Shaped by Shaping

### *The Thinking Table*

In this exhibition, I expand a practice I perform privately in my studio space which I refer to as the *Thinking Table*. This is where I organize disparate parts and objects both found and made; old and new. My desire to organize compels me to create new compositions which yield a more robust understanding of not only the relationships situated in front of me, but of the world I observe and participate in. My goal for my thesis exhibition is to project this way of thinking into a space which one can enter into. In my studio, my work tables are in the center of the room which enable me to surround the work, offering different viewpoints for understanding. In their arrangements on the table, items are never locked into their place permanently as they need to be returned to their shelves so I can use my work space to create again. Because of this, everything is in limbo; constantly in motion; meeting one another and forging temporal relationships. Installed in the exhibition, the work surrounds the viewer rather than being surrounded. This creates a world which one can enter in and out of and view from a multitude of perspectives offering new associations. Installing them formally in space locks them into their role, making the *Thinking Table* the long practiced dress rehearsal.

### *Being a Bouncy Ball — Materiality + Process*

I use touch as a way to encounter the world and I feel most grounded when I have my hands around a material. Making is where I generate, store, and draw energy. It's an affliction



which I nurture affectionately. I am interested in accessing or touching the intangible through making.

I had my first opportunity to formally explore material when I was 12. At this time, I decided that sport summer camps were no longer suiting my being. Since my parents had to work during the summers while us kids were free from our academic routine, we needed to attend day camps. My parents registered me for an art camp which focused on observational drawing, dark room photography, and pottery. At the conclusion of the camp session, my parents presented me with the choice of continuing with one of the subjects in an afterschool program for the next year. I chose pottery.

For the next 12 years, I continued to study ceramics and I really learned how to use clay through making pottery. Now my works take that tactile knowledge and produce sculptures harnessing the aesthetic qualities of the weird little things I made as a kid. Using stained porcelain is a call back to using polymer or oil clay. These stained sticks of color presented themselves as a way to read the world through manipulating a material between my hands. In having these roots in employing inherent color through clay I inspect my use of it still. I've always entered meditative states when working with clay because it is so grounding. The hammered texture on many of my porcelain works feels like the action of felting which feels like the action of chewing which is the action of processing. As clay squishes and smears between my hands, I am reminded of just how limitless the action of molding earth can be.

Although I loved working with clay, I started dabbling in fibers during undergrad and always intended to integrate all of my material interests into one practice. Upon coming to graduate school, this remained one of my major goals. I wanted to incorporate textiles because they are objects that promote comfort and safety. A towel keeps you dry; a blanket keeps you

warm; and a rug hugs your feet as you step onto its pile. It's similar to the comfort derived from holding a hot beverage or fingering through old photos and letters. My integration of materials is my way of homemaking. The collisions of domestic material are able to tell our stories with many interpretations.

It wasn't until March of 2020 when we lost studio access due to the start of a global pandemic that I became independent from clay as my core material. Once my dependence on ceramics shifted, my material decisions became much more clear to me. I started making gouache paintings due to their portable nature which opened up an entirely new world for me to explore and contribute to. It inspired my exploration of flatness in contrast to the volume of my ceramic forms. Painting took hold of me. I appreciated the immediacy of painting and that it provided me with an alternative way to render my thoughts, as it's a medium that didn't adhere to conditions of time and climate like clay. Painting allowed me to parse through my ideas more thoroughly while making in comparison to the quickness needed to work with clay.

In contrast to the precision rendered by my paintings and porcelain forms, rug tufting yields an inherent lack of articulation. In attempting to replicate a design from a painting into a rug, the material becomes a metaphor for the ways memories sharpen and diffuse. My rugs are not only physically fuzzy but are visually fuzzy, too. In contrast to my crisp ceramic forms and precise paintings, they appear blurry. The rug is a dense, floor-bound fantasy; a site of play or loss; a center of grounding. In a brief text alongside his colorful paintings in *Feelings: Soft Art*, Rob Pruitt writes about softness, "I like soft in front of the word *landing*. You know what I mean? It just seems as though when something is soft, everything is going to be OK."<sup>1</sup> Softness is reassuring. It's nice to know there's a safe resting place for that lost earring or wayward grape.

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<sup>1</sup> Loren Olson, Andrew Berardini, and Rob Pruitt, "Emotional Gradients," in *Feelings: Soft Art* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2015), p. 49.

I relate the process of rug making to the retelling of a story or recalling a degraded memory which only holds so much information due to its inarticulate nature. In creating different levels of legibility in the work, the products often feel like an unfolding memory to me.

Now, painting and rug making are as integral to my practice as ceramics is. Instead of being dependent on one material, I rely on the ability to pivot my practice swiftly and seamlessly to suit my material needs. It's strange to consider that my practice was ever confined to just one material, even if ceramics is ultimately where my heart is and will always be kept.

### ***Every Part of the Pig — Recycling as Process***

Much of my artistic growth can be attributed to the disjointed nature of time and space during the initial quarantine portion of the pandemic. We had a window of notification which allowed me to strategically pack up parts of my studio that I'd be able to work with in the small space I had at home. I gathered all of the porcelain scraps I had saved for so long and I reconstituted them into a slab from which I cut hundreds of tiny rectangle tiles so I could still work in ceramics outside of the studio.

It is important to me, most of the time, that I keep the clay scraps as they are made in all their various off-cut shapes, forms, and undulating shards. This history becomes embedded into the material and is sometimes visually evident in the resulting work. During this process, I learned of end of day baskets which were glass pieces made by an artisan who combined the scraps from the working day to create something new. These were one-off, highly unique pieces that the artisan would often hold onto for themselves. By compressing my scraps and reimagining them as new material to build with, I construct my *End of Day Tiles*. This practice has forked

into another direction in which I subtract the tile cutting step and preserve the slab intact. This results in what I call *Carpet Marble* for its likeness to both carpet padding and marble.

Around this same time, I had started making tufted rugs, but I had to leave my tufting tools in the building I had lost access to. I wouldn't be able to create new rugs for the foreseeable future, but I had bits to work with. Bits that were similar to the porcelain scraps I saved in my studio. Luckily, I had all the time in the world to reconcile with the waste produced by my processes. I started dealing with these bits as parts to new wholes.

I pondered how I might reproduce my ceramics process in another material. I thought back to when I worked with needle felting in undergrad. Could my rug scraps be reconstituted into a slab like my porcelain with this process? Of course they could. Felting needles have small barbs that tangle the loose fibers together as they stab in and out, yielding compression and density from a previous mountain of fluff.



*(Acrylic yarn scraps from rug tufting process)*

After wrangling new forms from my rug waste I remembered a growing mound of paint scraps I was saving from my painting process. When I started using gouache it had been described to me as similar to both acrylic and watercolor in opacity and solubility. This is apparently only true for one type of gouache—not the kind I was using. I was working with Acryla Gouache which hardened in my paint tins like plastic, unable to be rehydrated for further use. I felt guilty to let these paints go to waste—similar to the conflict I had with my rug and porcelain waste. I sorted my paint scraps by size through a screen to be kept and employed at a later date, but with no premeditation.

When I got back to my studio in the summer of 2020, I started my investigation on how to repurpose my paint scraps. I thought about how paint is used; pushed around in its liquid form to spread across a surface; to bring an image to life through illusion. I could still do these things even if it was dried up, right?

My *Pet Rocks* came to be through this train of thought. I'd use the larger scraps to fill in the mass of the shape and smaller bits toward the edge to emphasize its perceived dimensionality. First, flat on paper. Then, onto three-dimensional ceramic lump forms. Pivoting to ceramic forms gave me the opportunity to use the glazed and stained clay body to act as grout against the matte gouache shards glued to its surface.

My painting process also yields these beautiful technicolor rags from each wipe of my brush. These hold a physically layered history of the process. Once the rags are covered and aren't porous anymore, their purpose is retired, freeing them to now become something else, whatever else. This feels like a ceramics process to me, pushing an object to a glass-fused water-tightness. In this, they are "finished".

Ron Nagle's works are carefully constructed. I find a kinship in the visual qualities of his

work as they compare to my own. The pieces are worked and reworked to achieve a certain level of precision. Each surface is specifically chosen and nothing is settled for. Nagle describes craftsmanship in a way that is sympathetic to my way of thinking about my own craft. He says, “Craftsmanship is a word I have problems with, because people think it means shiny, polished and finished, but craftsmanship is getting the fucking thing to look like you want it to look. And if you have to put it in the meat grinder to get there, then that's craftsmanship.”<sup>2</sup> Although my work never gets put through the meat grinder, they are often brought to life through a series of absurd steps.

The results of my recycling processes make works visually reminiscent of these scrap fields of color bits. I re-create them into new compositions using my paper scraps from stencils I cut during various processes. New shapes are invented through layering the stencils over one another in tracing them on a surface. The layering creates a density I'm after. I use the same shapes to cut out pieces of paper thin porcelain to build three-dimensionally, rather than flattening into the compressed surfaces displayed in my paintings and rugs. These shapes are able to activate my materials in different ways yielding works ranging in definition and blurriness.

The collection process for each of these materials has become ritualistic to my practice. Each process becomes a moment of transition in the work. A painting is finished; the paint dries; it's scraped from its tin; scraps are sorted by size; they are reincorporated into various works; the tins are empty; a new painting may begin. A rug is finished; its clippings mound is felted into new sheets and forms; the process for a new rug may begin. A ceramic form is made from many different colors of stained porcelain; the offcuts are saved and sealed; the jar fills up; the scraps

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<sup>2</sup> Ron Nagle and Vincent Fecteau, “Ron Nagle: Getting to No,” in *Ron Nagle: Getting to No* (New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2019), p. 8.



are rolled into a slab to remain that way or be cut; the jar is empty; more scraps may fill it upon starting a new ceramic piece.

### ***BAM! — Color***

When I decided to pursue my graduate degree, I took inventory of my strengths and weaknesses. I felt I should have a better concept of color since I attended a four year art school and two years of a post baccalaureate program in art. Prior to graduate school, my work begged to be dressed up in color, yet I was timid in my approach to using it.

I figured out the solution. I bought a copy of Josef Albers' *Interaction of Color* which would teach me exactly what I needed to know about color. I cracked open the first page past the introduction and the real answer was revealed to me. I wouldn't need this text anymore. Albers writes, "If one says 'Red' (the name of a color)/ and there are 50 people listening,/ it can be expected that there will be 50 reds in their minds./ And one can be sure that all these reds are very different."<sup>3</sup> I wanted a roadmap that didn't exist. This first line hooked me into the way I think about color now. I have since started to view color as experiential versus operating within a specific set of rules. However, one rule has really shaped my sustained approach to color—to give up my use of white in the bulk of building my forms. When I was a kid, I would make all of these miniatures using polymer clay which came in a vast array of colors. This material provides a way to think in color and form at once. Similar to polymer clay, I now use porcelain stained to various degrees, to create forms which have inherent color rather than applied color.

My work's palette ranges in hues from sun-soaked to sun-bleached. Color deeply saturates some areas where others seem to have been washed out by time. Some surfaces are

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<sup>3</sup> Josef Albers, "Color Recollection—Visual Memory," in *Interaction of Color* (Yale University, 1963), p. 3.

homogenous in hue where others are made up of bits which do not mix in color but integrate in form—like my felted bits of color or carpet marble slabs. My color palette references brightly flushed Polly Pocket toy compacts and the glowing, flat illustrations depicted in the children’s book *Goodnight Moon*. Alongside these saturated colors, a parallel palette seen in the stained porcelain, is naturally more washed out, like a forgotten plastic toy left out in the sun, slowly bleached of its color. The combinations of saturated and softened colors evoke the feeling of just waking up; becoming conscious of what is real; that twinkly-hazy feeling. A representation of some things coming into focus while others fade just past a point of graspable clarity.

In observing the colors of my memory; the hues brought to mind in experiencing different emotions; and the new relationships I create with pieces of it; I’ve developed my own experiential relationship to using color. Now, my practice exudes a confidence in the incorporation of color, if not a deep reliance.

### **Part III — Taxonomy of Thoughts**

#### ***Show and Tell — Collecting, Arranging, + Containing***

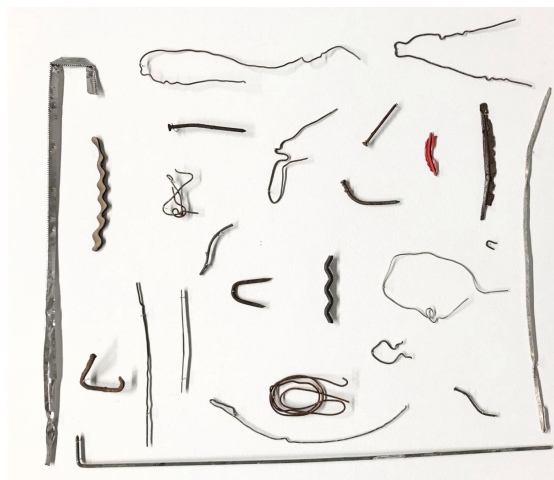
Collecting is very important to my practice and has seeped down to the foundation of both my personal and creative life. It is an encompassing aspect of my studio practice. Collecting involves looking (not seeking), finding, keeping, storing, pondering, and placing. In placing or arranging, I aim to achieve a certain scatteredness in order to approximate an organized mess. Perfect chaos.

I make and accumulate my objects over time, but through their evolving proximity to

one another, I find new understandings of them. There is a connectivity and kinship between these colliding elements that have never formally met before. It is in this act of arranging that I'm really able to think.

In "Introduction: The Things That Matter," from Sherry Turkle's *Evocative Objects*, she says, "The notion of evocative objects brings together these two less familiar ideas, underscoring the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things. We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with".<sup>4</sup> This is often the same reason people visit museum collections of artifacts, returning to works that compel so much thought time after time. I use my own collection as a tool for thinking. Objects with history and secrets draw me in the most.

The studio is where I keep most of my found objects collection. The bulk of the collection, and the most materially and visually cohesive, are my *Lines with Feelings*. Lines which are usually metal, display a material history, and are manipulated in a type of way I'm not privy to. I'm attracted to these bits because through their manipulation they are discharged of their expected function and free to be whatever they may be. I have respect for these loose marks made in mystery.



(Personal collection of *Lines with Feelings*)

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<sup>4</sup> Sherry Turkle, "Evocative Objects," in *Evocative Objects* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 3-10, 5.

Another homogenous collection is that of other people's postcards which I have gathered from various antique stores, mostly in New England. These have become an ultra-portable thinking set. In the prologue of Lawrence Sutin's *A Postcard Memoir*, he writes,

“Some years ago I learned, by accident, that postcards offered a way to shatter the mirror of the everyday and to enter into whatever I was writing. I would look through a goodly sized pile and, by the time I was done, my brain had chased its tail and I was ready to say what I needed. It came about that certain memories of mine began to seep into certain postcards, there to remain like bugs in amber”.<sup>5</sup>

I first experienced the “shattering” Sutin speaks of when I sat down to look through the hundreds—maybe thousands of postcards at Parker-French West Antique Center in Northwood, New Hampshire. It was here that I began wondering about the postcard and its ability to draw more questions out of me than hold answers.

I am intrigued by vintage postcards for a myriad of reasons. I ponder questions like, where do things go when the people who loved them leave? Do they end up being cherished again? What can be interpreted from these fragments of conversation? What do parts indicate about the whole? The postcard represents a bridge in communication across time. Its intimacy comes from the handheld nature of its objecthood. Though intimate, the postcard is not a precious object—we drop it into the abyss of the mail system to *likely* find its way to its receiver and maybe a few other eyes in between. It passes through and pauses within the hands. Postcards hold loose fragments of correspondence between friends, lovers, or acquaintances—and sometimes it's not so easy to determine the nature of the exchange. Privacy contends with the

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Sutin, “Postcard Memoir,” in *Postcard Memoir* (Saint Paul , MN: Graywolf, 2000), p. 3.

public within the postcard as an object, too—there's something thrilling about your words circling out in the open sans sheath.

I hold tight to the things that help me move on, and move through. Postcards, lines with feelings, and studio scraps do this for me. By collecting and caring for objects with personal history, I am able to peer into small windows of the past—helping the objects hold onto their secrets.

My collecting sensibilities have been shaped by the collectors close to me. My grandmother collects miniatures to be displayed and treasured, while my grandfather collects golf pencils and receipts to be stowed away. Both of them take care of their collection in different ways. Items on view to visitors, like the miniatures, need to be dusted for their best presentation. The pencils and receipts need to stay in their various plastic bags hidden in drawers to not prompt any judgment from guests. It intrigues me to understand a person based upon what they materially value, keep, display, and hide. Though I wasn't a museum goer as a kid, I always had a collection to parse through, to stimulate my imagination. I still prefer to pick through other people's stuff at antique stores rather than view a formally presented collection in a museum. It replicates the same sensation I had when digging through boxes of stuff in my grandparents basement, never knowing what I was going to discover.

There are moments when the collection must be contained. To free up working space, to preserve, to protect. I first started exploring the idea of containment through crafting vessels that held metaphorical meaning. I used the vessel as a conduit to reveal or conceal something. In approaching new forms and materials, I still have these same inclinations. Containers help us hold on and let go. They are homes for things needing storage, time away, darkness. Containers compartmentalize. They separate one thing from another—isolation. In their enclosures,

treasures sit out of sight, out of mind, lost for a time. In forgetting and then remembering the location of a thing, the container presents itself as a site of discovery. A vehicle stalled holding onto the secrets of its cargo, waiting.

I see containing as a natural counterpart to the collection because it creates a portability of parts. It is a method used to gather and sort. This is inevitably linked to the act of arranging. In taking objects from their containers and putting them in play with others, there is a notion of freeing them. I view containing as a way to give something rest while arranging promotes the action of the object.

In my work, flatness and stuckness operate alongside hollow forms employed as containers. Objects stuck between emerging and disappearing; open and closed—but the objects don't budge in their pause.

### *Comfy-Cozy — Care + Comfort*

I see care as a constant intervention in the process. Always checking in, always tucking in. Care is consideration; it's playing; it's having a gentle precise touch, but a lot of that touch. It means that my objects pass through my hands a lot. It also means making an object feel more comfortable in whatever way it calls to, be it by a companion or in a resting place.

There are many acts of care I bring to the work. In some, the works are presented on softer forms which separate them from the ground on which they are placed. Every piece is handled and processed with technical precision. I often add ornamental details such as the luster applied to the ceramic works as finishing touches—like putting on my jewelry before leaving the house or like pageant moms forcing their toddlers to wear dentures to competition. My works are sponged and



groomed like a mother cat who bathes her young with her rough tongue.

My presentation of care is influenced by my understanding of the relationship between a paper weight to paper. This relationship is symbiotic in that the weight is comforted by the substrate that separates it from a hard surface, preventing it from having a cold bottom, while the substrate feels security in the work of the weight holding it down, helping it stay put and grounded.

Often the works are nestled, fitting perfectly in their place, communicating that if one component were missing, it'd be quite noticeable and disturbing. It's like the chocolate missing from the box in the film *Matilda*. My sense of care in relationship to my work is greatly shaped by my observations of the ways my Mom demonstrates care for her objects and spaces. When I was a kid, I observed that she would get down on her hands and knees to comb the end tassels out on the rugs in our house just like she would prepare my hair each day. Now, she gives her plants warm water baths in the winter because she thinks they get cold. She takes great care of all of these little supporting actors in the backdrop of our lives. She indirectly taught me that what frames us should be cared for.

When thinking about how I provide comfort to my objects, I think back to meaningful moments of comfort I've felt. I think about hugs from my parents in times of sadness or celebration. I think about sitting with my childhood guinea pig in my lap, munching carrots from my hand while we watch a movie together. I think of these moments of comfort as moments of deep understanding. I'm most comfortable when the most things make sense. A comfortable space is soft, well-maintained, the right size. Comfort is when the stars align. Comfort is a certain peace.

***LOL** — Ambiguity + Absurdity*

My works live between a variety of spectrums and balances by virtue of my curiosity about the tension created when working between or against things. The scales my work oscillates within offer ambiguous readings of the presentation. The word multivalent is defined to describe something as having or susceptible of many applications, interpretations, meanings, or values.<sup>6</sup> I feel this is something integral to my work from my conceptual input to the experience and interpretations the viewer has with it. I like to leave room for the work to be and become many things, either ors. By leaving out certain information, like the last layer left off a print or the first layer to be worn down on a surface from wear, I create ambiguous moments which invite many associations.

There is a contrast between my chosen materials and processes which are either self-abstracting or self-clarifying. I like to play with the balance of the unknown versus the known in my work; the familiar and the mysterious. Processes are also viewed through this lens. In the balance of working by plan and intuitively is where I make my most discoveries. By executing the work with different levels of legibility, I ask the viewer to look for something.

In titling my works and thinking of their interpretations, I use word play as another entrance into the work. Titles often allude to the work having many functions or interpretations. Simple shapes like circles and squares offer themselves up as bait to draw the viewer into the complex context they are situated within, further complicating their meanings. I think about the ambiguity of night shapes. Darkness morphs vision leaving the viewer on a search. A search to

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<sup>6</sup> “Multivalent Definition & Meaning,” Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/multivalent>.

see. At night, shapes are clowns playing tricks on us.

Contrasting textures create a confusion between desire and repulsion. Surfaces sponged smooth beg for a graze from the viewer's hand while applied textures that could cut ward off any interaction through touch. Sweet moments crystalized in syrup are contrasted by edges like blades. The collision of the whimsical, disturbing, sweet, morose, and cute creates a tense vibration in the works. It sometimes pulls a giggle out of the viewer whether it be uncomfortable or humorous. Forms present themselves as absurd and surreal in their what ifs. The discomfort in these moments of tension between works are offset by their amusing forms. Finding moments of humor in the work offers the viewer a one-on-one experience, like they may have just swapped secrets. The works are alluring and disinviting at once, yielding a frustrated desire in the viewer's experience. The oddities remain uncovered and vulnerable, emphasizing the urge to interact, which births this unfulfilled desire.

### ***Teensie Tinies — The Miniature***

I first started thinking in miniature when I was creating intricate popsicle stick houses resembling combinations of the homes I would see while going to work with my Dad at Boston College. I then moved on to study specific animals (my pets at first) from which I'd make tiny versions of them inside plastic jewelry containers from 25¢ vending machines.

My work has adapted to take on the traits of the miniature that stray from their expectation of scale. The conditions in which my work operates are structured in the framework of the miniature. In *Fewer Better Things*, Glenn Adamson hones in on the life of miniatures. He reframes the traditional Japanese tea ceremony within that of the miniature approach relating the

two by deeming the tea ceremony as “tightly controlled” and “carefully prescribed”. In this categorization, the “microcosm” element of a Japanese tea house is identified and thus examined alongside the sensations of desire people feel when peering into a dollhouse. Adamson states just before this comparison, “For today’s viewer, the most compelling aspect of a historical dollhouse is precisely the same as the appeal it has when newly made: It invites us to fantasize about living in that place”.<sup>7</sup> Much of my practice is in dialogue with this comparison. While there are many miniature components that I play with in my work, not all of it adheres to the size expectation of the miniature. However, the work is typically under tight control and adheres to the prescribed rules that Adamson discusses.

The scale shifts in my work often create a tension between the implicated desire to be within the work, altering one’s own scale to better maneuver the work, and the uncomfortable aspects upon closer inspection. I’m interested in something the miniature performs. In Lia Purpura’s essay *On Miniatures*, she names this interest of mine, “Miniatures are the familiar, reduced to unfamiliarity.”<sup>8</sup> This sentiment deeply aligns with the desires I have of what the work will do. She then goes on to expand, “Miniatures are improbable, unlikely. Causes to marvel. Surprises. Feats of engineering. Products of an obsessive detailer.”<sup>9</sup> I am so drawn in by the tension between reality and fantasy in the miniature. They are so real—since it is often more likely within our capacity to own the miniature or souvenir version than the real thing. Purpura starts a separate section with “*The miniature is unto itself*, not a mere part of a whole, like a fetish or an excerpt.”<sup>10</sup> This wholeness she’s speaking of is what lets the miniature stand-in or pass for the real thing. The portability of the miniature enables it to be appreciated anywhere.

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<sup>7</sup> Glenn Adamson, *Fewer, Better Things* (BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING PLC, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Lia Purpura, “On Miniatures,” *Brevity*, June 20, 2007, <https://brevitymag.com/craft-essays/on-miniatures/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

“*Miniatures are practical* – like mementos they can be carried out of a burning house or by immigrants to the new world; they can be held under the tongue like contraband and smuggled past border guards. Miniatures are made to travel. They are portable and light, dense and compressed as diamonds.”<sup>11</sup> In this, Purpura further indicates the importance of the miniature and validates its efficiency as an object. In some instances, my work quietly calls the viewer in as a miniature does. Purpura explains that “*Miniatures encourage attention...* They suggest there is much to miss if we don't look hard at spaces, crevices, crannies.”<sup>12</sup> This reward for paying attention creates a bond between the viewer and the work. Susan Stewart, author of *On Longing*, set the framework for both Adamson and Purpura to respond in regard to the miniature and they both cite her as influential. Stewart claims, “miniature time transcends the duration of everyday life in such a way as to create an interior temporality of the subject”.<sup>13</sup> Because scale is miniaturized, time must follow suit. The compression that ensues is the tension captured within my work.

Within my title, *All At Once: Playing Pretend, Making Sense*, I embrace the functions of the miniature and the dollhouse in that they are made to be taken in at once, to be digested in their totality. I think about the doll house and its ability to compartmentalize yet display on full view all of its contents at once like a curio cabinet. Yet if the viewer investigates the installation further, they'll find hidden components which cannot be seen from initial view. One must enter into the space and look closer. I use the idea of creating a model that simplifies form through scale. I reduce things down to a miniature scale forcing them into the territory of the charm or the souvenir. Into a portable territory demanding to live in my pockets. This magical transformational space is like a magician's hat producing a rabbit where there wasn't one before.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Stewart, “The Miniature: Miniature Time,” in *On Longing* (Duke University Press, 2012), p. 66.

I wonder about the new shapes these objects take as they bounce around in my pocket. I think about that magic. Smallness is to be kept close. Small objects that fit in my pocket are for me. For my eyes only. Not to be shared. Like a secret or a whisper.

I also appreciate the shrinkage rate in porcelain as a miniaturization process. It's slight but it's quite unlike any other process or medium. It creates a gap between the formation and the final form. The variety of scale in the works create a tension between feeling big and small simultaneously. Some items sit neatly in the realm of souvenir or charm in a miniaturized version of a real thing. Other items are equalized in scale but have no reference to an expected size. The miniature prompts the viewer to imagine becoming small enough to explore it to scale. In blowing up the tiny porcelain stack into the larger stack, I bring that imagined experience to life. Its new scale allows it to become a caretaker for other smaller objects.

### ***Memory***

I believe memory lives in an unending roll of tape. When a memory is remembered, it's torn from the memory stock. A serrated metal blade separates it into a fragment leaving the tool's mark as proof of its action. Once the memory is separated, its edges are vulnerable to fraying. Pinking shears, which are zig-zag sewing scissors, are used to prevent a woven fabric from unraveling at the edge, though some material must be sacrificed to preserve the rest. A memory becomes a fragment in the action of remembering.

Scrap fields represented in the recycled pieces are reminiscent of the closed-eye-chaos which takes place on the inside of my eyelids when I shut them. They also quite closely mimic the way memories stack, overlap and fracture into one another yielding a muddy jumble. From

this blur, moments of clarity or crispness are illuminated. Memories break through one another in order to be free. Memories are collectively cared for in order to be kept. Memories need to be caught—quick, jot it down. I think about how through distance, memories get sweeter or ripen in bitterness.

The corner or edge of a memory will start to peel away before the center. Caring for memories is maintaining the border of the memory, holding it secure. Memory looks like dog-earring a page in a book to keep returning to. Memory is taken out and put back, and it shows.

I think about flatness and dimensionality as they relate to the functions of memory, where parts of the same memory can feel both distant and close; crisp and blurred; certain and questionable. The mystery compels me to return, to circle back again and again.

### ***Toys + Play***

Play time is when problems of different levels of consequence can be thought of in the same vein. I think about how children are given toys—models of things, to make sense of larger, less comprehensible things. I think about the ways these things are presented and believed in. A simple shape or form can be animated by applying informational stickers to the facets of the object, completely transforming the way it is perceived. And what happens when there are missing parts or multiple iterations of the same thing? What happens when these are separated and combined into different works? If a doll is missing, can a wooden spoon stand in and do the job? Is this believable or good enough? If there are too many spheres, who gets the job of moon and who gets the job of toilet bowl reflection? Can these be swapped as stand-ins for one

another? Some shapes have to work overtime and be both lamp and window or a pool and an ashtray and a guinea pig bed. Toys make changes from this to that all the time. If you forget where baby Jesus from the manger was hidden until Christmas morning, a small potato will do just fine.

My forms offer multiple considerations at once. I think about the journey of a mini golf ball through its fantastical course. In the same train of thought, I wonder what it would feel like to be the moon or the sun. These constants that must do their job; these reliable objects of extreme power. I wonder about where the moon goes when she's not working for me. I wonder if she ever wants to take a break. I wonder if she is hiding, or stuck, or waiting. And sometimes I feel like the moon. Do you?

Play is always at *play* in my studio practice. Whether it be accidentally, purposefully, formal, or informal, I am usually playing. I strive to create a studio practice reflective of the ways I used to make as a kid. I connect play to happening between the hands which leads to an inherent scale. This is the scale of toys. Toys are digestible because nothing is too large to swallow. Sometimes play produces an immediate result ready to incorporate while sometimes I find I try things that require rest before there's a certainty about them.

As a kid, there was always tension in the desire to want everything set up perfectly, to achieve a certain feeling but also the need to bring the characters and spaces to life which inevitably would disturb the perfection. I had the same issues with art materials. I'd spend hours sharpening colored pencils to perfection, but then I'd be too afraid to damage them by using them.

When things are in groups with other like things, it reminds me of the object list that comes with a new toy. A visual inventory, a sort of before or clean slate. As a kid, I'd unpack the



toys and lay them out to match the accompanying printed sheet. A lot of the time, when I was “playing”, I would heavily center the set up as the ideal activity. So much so that I wouldn’t actually have time to “play” with what I had taken so much time constructing to be just so.

### *Domestic Residues — Messes + Stickiness*

I have a deep interest in messes and the mundane. *Domestic Residues* are specifically what peak my curiosity; these ambiguous dregs of life scattered among our intimate spaces. I’ve felt much like lots of people have recently expressed, overwhelmed—like everything is too much to hold. My work taps into the feelings derived from collective pause, uncertainty, and hesitation. There is a stuckness in this extended pause of anticipation. I ponder ideas of stickiness and stuckness through flatness and permanence. I interrogate my use of flatness in relation to memories flattening over time; the potential found in a blank piece of paper; and the conflation of multiple perspectives.

In my abstract objects, I think about what it would be like to accidentally throw my hand away with the crumbs swept into from the countertop. I think about becoming the thing you don’t know you’re touching. Presenting moments that happen behind the scenes is like offering a peek behind the curtain. Revealing the messes of a domestic space is a way of storytelling. Sheets tossed around on a bed are like an emotional fingerprint. An unmade bed can be examined to understand the mood of the waking person. My works are interventions in times where I lack full control over a situation. Spills, floods, and fires create a sense of urgency. By freezing them as an object, that sense of urgency dissolves and one can marvel at it slowly,

disconnecting them from their automatic reaction. I see this as examining a moment through its residue.

I am also interested in objects that aid and are found in the home like tape or bandages. These materials temporarily fix and affix. In rendering them in porcelain or painted on a surface, they are denied of their intended physical stickiness and become visually sticky instead. They are stuck. Works are mired open and shut; ironed flat; staying put in the inbetween.

*Then*

And while I think, I make—figuring out what goes on between my ears by shaping whatever is between my hands.

## Part IV

### ~ *To Do* ~

I intend to make art for as long as my body allows me to.

I will do anything that facilitates a continuous art practice.

Making is where I generate and store energy.

The success of a work is indescribable.

An unsuccessful work comes with a long description detailing its failure.

Success in the studio is entering a flow state; producing something that will last (a physical thing or an idea); leaving at the end of the day, tired and fulfilled.

Failure in the studio is falling into a social media hole. It is also a failure to do nothing.

Doing nothing is a necessity in the cycle.

Nothing is objectively good or bad except the bad stuff.

In the studio, I do not care about what is real or not; true or not; right or wrong. I want to keep wondering and know less.

Discovery is made between, under, and above things.

Individual works end, but the network does not.

The rule is to stay in the cycle.

Problems sustain the cycle.

The cycle maintains itself.

There won't be any problems to solve if I don't create them.

I am my own fucked up little game pawn.

The most concrete thing in my practice is concrete.

Untethered thoughts will blow away. Everything must be held onto.

I think in lists and globs.

I live by the list. It is meant to be added to and subtracted from. It is ever-changing. My life adheres to those circumstances. Lists are transitory and are meant to be carried to and from.

This list is neither comprehensive nor definitive.

*List*

My studio practice consists of swerving around and tumbling through chapters of making, puttering, listing, reading, waiting, writing, collecting, organizing, feeling, flailing, failing, arranging, questioning, pacing, noticing, wondering, remembering, and other *things*.

I transform the intangible into something tactile and visual, yet I acknowledge that an object will only ever go so far as to nudge sharp memories back up into fleeting feelings, which are always quick to soften.

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