

University of Houston **School of Art**



# 40TH MASTER OF FINE ARTS THESIS EXHIBITION

April 6–21, 2018  
BLAFFER ART MUSEUM

Charis Ammon

Heather Bisesti

Alton Dulaney

Isaac Farley

Gao Hang

Jesus Gonzalez

Jordan McGroary

Suzette Mouchaty

Hibah Osman

Jonathan Read

Donald Villemez

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# 40



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The 40th School of Art Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition  
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UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**  
KATHRINE G. McGOVERN  
COLLEGE OF THE ARTS  
School of Art

**BLAFFER**  
ART MUSEUM  
UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Three years is a long time and it is not a long time

The one certainty of graduate school is uncertainty. It is a risk. Why chose to spend three years questioning one's work? The answer, to address the restlessness that comes from acknowledging limits and wanting to know more. Purpose quells restlessness and dissipates fear. Now we see the culmination of these three years as work achieved through seeking, discovery and resolution.

Year one is the longest and the most uncertain. Time stretches and slows. Confidence seems elusive. Expectations of success are fleeting. The artist, once sure of his or her direction, searches for clarity.

Articulation begins in year two. Process, material, and subject emerge. Unstable ground solidifies. From a new foundation, the student pulls work upward and cautiously measures outcomes.

By year three, working has become a discipline. Time speeds. Questioning and making are intertwined. This way of being is comfortable.

The student has become a professional, but risk taking has not stopped. Experimentation continues and the challenges of making work are met with the knowledge gained from embracing risk.

### **Beckham Dossett**

Director, School of Art



Charis  
Ammon

*Change in the rhythm  
means new information!  
the rhythm made you  
forget, remember?*

the rhythm of life: everyday  
bop bop bop  
bop bop bop  
bop bop bo—

!  
?

Huh?  
the rhythm plays, we forget  
interruption  
dissonance wakes us  
bop drops, we trip  
Why?  
curiosity ushers in  
when sign and setting don't match, we go “?”  
the rhythm gave us one word, the dissonance gave us 3  
when do you let the ‘bop bop bop’ back in?  
will you listen differently now?  
the rhythm made you forget things about yourself  
bop bop bo—  
bop bop bo—  
bop bo—  
change in the rhythm means new information!  
the rhythm made you forget, remember?  
bop bop bop  
you've done good  
almost done—

?

they trip, you trip  
bop bop bop

in the car  
to the store  
for the dinner  
basket with carrots, potatoes, broth  
no workers at the meat market  
I wanted a roast  
no workers at the meat market  
to give me a rump  
to have a roast  
no potatoes, no carrots  
!  
bop bop bop  
when you ask, “Why?”  
I think... “Cause that crack you tripped on made you remember.”



Plate  
2018  
Oil on Canvas  
12 x 16 inches



Heather  
Bisesti

*My discrete objects and large scale installations do not create a realistic portrayal, but instead seek to evoke feelings in the viewer related to the desire for, and memory of, tangible.*

The materials I use serve as tactile memory markers and become the point of entry in my work. Poignant connections to seemingly mundane physical objects, either driven by memories from our past or from unattainable desires are central to my work. Among common everyday artifacts such as furniture, clothing, and household items there are traditional materials used to further unify the corporal experience with the psychological. My studio process pivots on repetitive compulsion. I aggressively transform raw materials by twisting, distorting, cutting, and shaping to construct highly textural pieces. My discrete objects and large scale installations do not create a realistic portrayal, but instead seek to evoke feelings in the viewer related to the desire for, and memory of, tangible. By creating a disorienting and new experience within a given space I aim to expose the intimate and perplexing relationships we have with objects.



Capacity  
2017  
Laser-cut Leather Briefcase  
4 x 18 x 14 inches

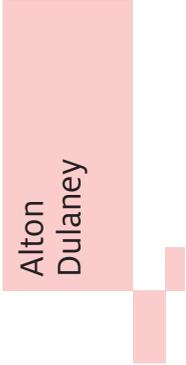


ART Arrow Sign

2017

Ready-made Flashing Arrow Sign with Acrylic Letters

63 x 113 x 36 inches



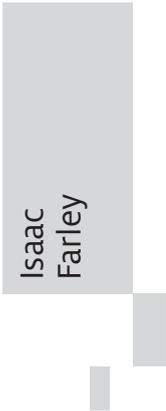
Alton  
Dulaney

*Using precious materials, I scrutinize the values placed on art, critiquing the institution and the market; art as currency.*

I am an Artist. I make ART. Through self-promotional self-expression, I research art's ability to transform the perception of objects, images, and actions. I produce interdisciplinary art focusing on the concepts of power, pride, and patriotism as communicated through artistic expression and the identity of the artist.

Using precious materials, I scrutinize the values placed on art, critiquing the institution and the market; art as currency. Symbols and sites are appropriated and then recontextualized. Politics, spatial and actual, are examined. Signs, inanimate yet capable of communicating instruction, are prevalent, as is text. The word ART always appears as subject, theme, and title, tautologically expressed through a variety of mark-making techniques. Sidestepping the conundrum of "What is art?" my ART brands itself, painting a succinct definition, a highway sign allowing the work to expand and validate its own purpose, while always pointing back to the artist.

Additionally, I explore the public and performative realms. I was recently elected to the Splendora City Council, and I appear on national TV as the World's Most Famous Gift Wrap Artist.



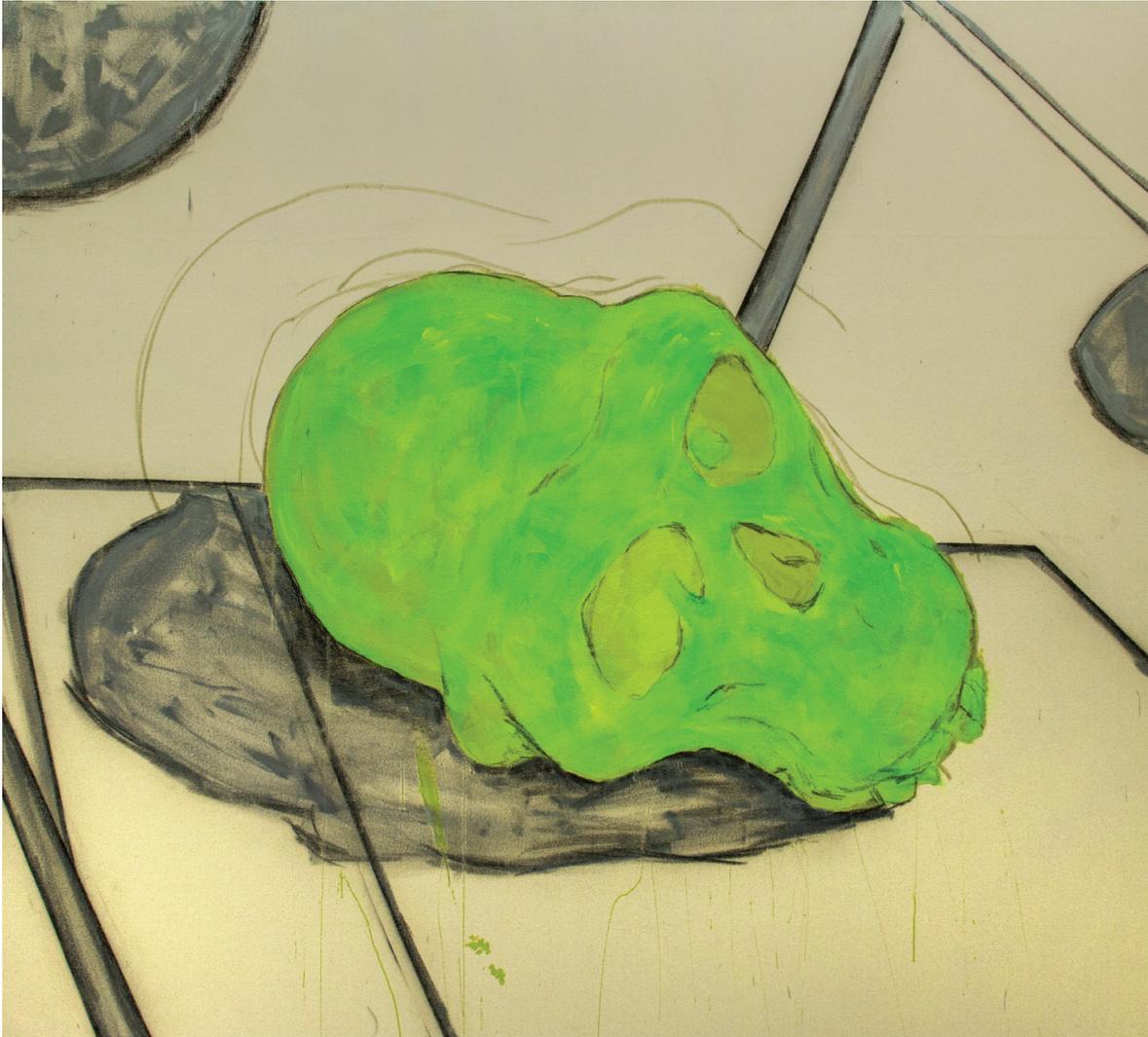
Isaac  
Farley

*Much of my work focuses on  
the story of America, especially  
the ideal and myth of America.*

I tell stories with two dimensional images that are strongly influenced by history, conflict, and the dual nature of people. Acrylic paint on un-stretched canvas, about the size of a person, and printmaking techniques are my preferred mediums. I typically use a limited or even monochromatic palette for both visual and financial economy; the more cost effective I can be, the more work I can make. Much of my work focuses on the story of America, especially the ideal and myth of America. America has been a land of conflict over territory, class, politics, skin color, and everything in between since its founding, without any signs of ending any time soon. I tell my conservative East-Texan perspective of that story through imagery of solitary male figures, generally of a working class disposition, that is field or factory workers, soldiers, and immigrants, who become archetypes. The archetype is important, as it is not an individual, but is instead representative of an ideal, and can therefore become more than the sum of itself.



The Great War  
2017  
Acrylic on Canvas  
48 x 48 inches



**The Skull XI**  
2017  
Acrylic, Oil and Charcoal on Raw Canvas  
69 x 72 inches



Gao  
Hang

*The painting process is full of making decisions and solving problems: it reflects how I understand what's around me, and how I participate in the increasing visibility of global culture.*

Being “Fluorescent” is my term for my relationship with visual culture, and by making fluorescent paintings I react to its ubiquity while drawing attention to its unnaturalness. I am fascinated with the idea of being surrounded by electronic display in terms of electronic devices, exploding social medias, and the Internet: As someone born in the 1990s, the role of media has been growing with my generation, from rare to rampant, through our formative years. The painting process is full of making decisions and solving problems: it reflects how I understand what's around me, and how I participate in the increasing visibility of global culture.

In contrast to the access of digital media, I purposely withhold information from the viewers to slow down the visual digestive process. By continually reducing the information, I play with the boundary of what is recognizable. I replace the natural color of objects with shocking orange, fluorescent green, matte black, hot pink, etc and render them with painterly brushwork and acceptance of accidents to convey my desire for humor, playfulness, and the absurd in my paintings.



Jesus  
Gonzalez

*The denim topographical patches and fabric serve as a living map with carefully stitched landmarks representing my family roots.*

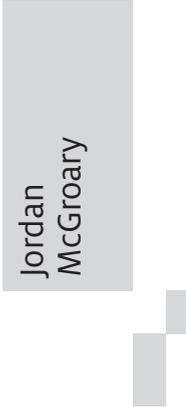
I investigate the conceptual intersections of border crossings through images, sculpture, and performance. Issues of migration are addressed with site specific works that become embedded observations of past and current global movement. The Denim Shelters are influenced by my family's northern migration from Mexico and Texas. They are rooted in the desert landscape and ongoing engagement with the complex border issues. Soon after getting married, my parents moved to Idaho where I was born. The journey north is significant in my family's history.

I cross the border to install the Denim Shelters in the Mexican desert—carefully navigating an unnatural boundary where conflicting worlds merge. They function as backpacks and mount into the ground as shelters. The denim topographical patches and fabric serve as a living map with carefully stitched landmarks representing my family roots. During the evening, they function as a star guide that aligns with the North Star. Through this journey, the Denim Shelters take on living forms, as they emerge becoming part of my essence and spirit.



Rama Coahuilense  
2017

Denim and Linen Woven on a Mesquite Branch  
56 x 40 x 60 inches



Jordan  
McGroary

*My body of work is a representational diary serving as a symbolic and psychological interpretation of my day-to-day life.*

My work revolves around the use of painting and photography to capture the subtle moments that are usually seen as ordinary or mundane. These moments involve anything from a stranger passing by on the street to the intimate moments I share with those in my personal life. Creating work based on these moments allows me the opportunity to ruminate on the meaning underlying each recorded instance. My body of work is a representational diary serving as a symbolic and psychological interpretation of my day-to-day life. I'm interested in the power of juxtaposition and so tend to focus on differences between subjects in my work: the shift in societal tone during the day versus the night, or observing the outside world against my personal space and home life. This theme of difference is represented in the way I choose to convey the shifts through my position, which I consider to be the outsider's perspective.



4am #6  
2016  
Screen Print on Paper  
23 x 14 inches



Suzette  
Mouchaty



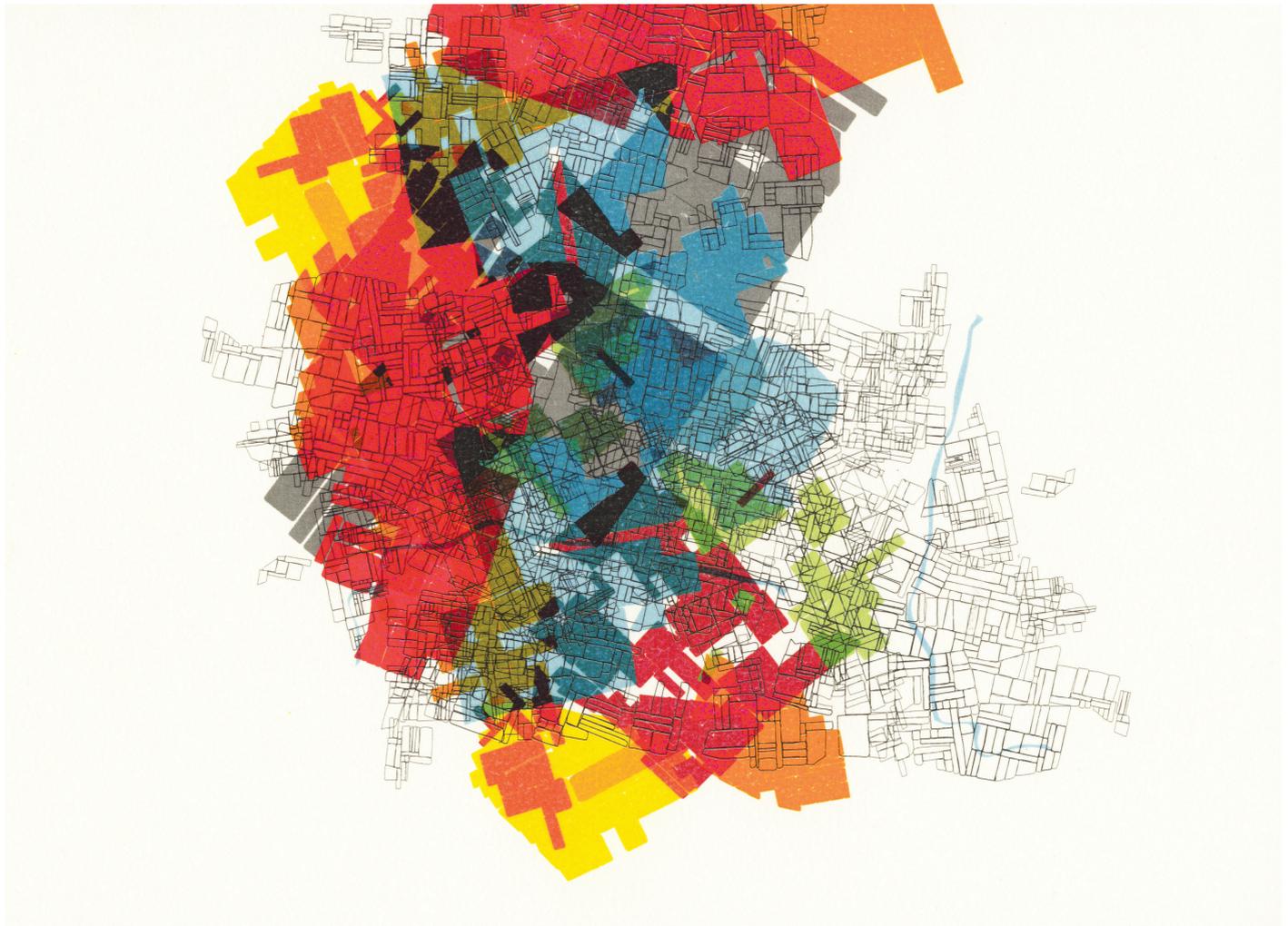
*My work takes on a wry and internally contradictory nature that is at times provocatively subversive.*

My works are incursions into false logic of restrictive social and political structures. By conflating scientific rationalism with the irrational and imaginary common to art, my work takes on a wry and internally contradictory nature that is at times provocatively subversive. After a career in science, this perverse intellectual transgression is an exhilarating artistic driver. I work primarily in assemblage sculpture, collecting fragments of mechanical objects, implements and industrial materials to create dreamlike amalgamations that allow for overlapping mental frameworks while hijacking expectation. Many of my assemblages are quirky imaginary devices whose function, though unknown, is certainly not benign. Since most of my artworks are constructed around a fragment from the real world, I view my ongoing artistic practice as a constant hunt for that scrap of reality which resonates as a psychological trigger for my creative impulses.



Utility Cart  
2017

Mixed Media Assemblage Containing  
9 Sculptures and 6 Found Objects  
66 x 18½ x 40 inches



**In Translation, Lost in Beirut**

2018

Digital Print

8 × 11 inches

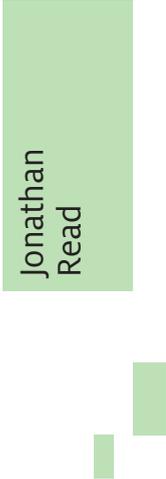


Hibah  
Osman

*As a young person and aspiring designer I was confounded and shaped by the quasi-absurd socio-cultural goings-on of the city*

Beirut is a city of paradoxes and absurdities. It is the most joyful and exuberant place I have ever lived, but also one of the most war-ravaged and traumatized. When my family moved to Beirut in 2006 I was fifteen, and the city was still dealing with the aftermath of its fifteen-year-long civil war. As a young person and aspiring designer I was confounded and shaped by the quasi-absurd socio-cultural goings-on of the city: taxi drivers used Google Maps but almost none of Beirut was mapped out digitally; Beirut's population of nineteen religious sects intermingled and engaged in cafes and dance halls throughout the city but lived in neighborhoods defined—nearly color-coded—by religious affiliation. Everywhere there were signs of moving forward and scars of the past.

*In Translation, Lost in Beirut* is my attempt to grapple with my own experiences and Lebanon's short but troubled history. Using map-making, typography, video essays, books, and other forms of design, my work explores the religious, linguistic, technological, and geopolitical facets of one of the friendliest, most politically tense places in the world.



Jonathan  
Read

*The work has a colorful humorist cartoon aesthetic, to both disarm the viewer and deal with the darker content.*

My artwork deals with mythology, dreams and fantasy using a tableaux style to present quasi-historical and quasi-autobiographical narratives. I approach these topics as a way of addressing forces that are out of my control.

I use a diorama approach in my paintings, referencing both altars and shrines as well as toy displays found in department store catalogs. The figures, objects and settings are all movable and invade the viewer's space. The work has a colorful humorist cartoon aesthetic, to both disarm the viewer and deal with the darker content.

I am a world building artist, creating serial narratives using a cast of invented characters comprised of apocalyptic warriors, angels, demons, monsters and superheroes, and I create the realms or environments they occupy. The escapism of toys and religious cosmology both rely on a suspension of reality, constant reinvention and rampant consumerism.

My influences range from visionary artists Henry Darger and Hieronymus Bosch, to comic book artists such as the troubled Wallace Wood, and on to modern Jehovah's Witness illustrations.



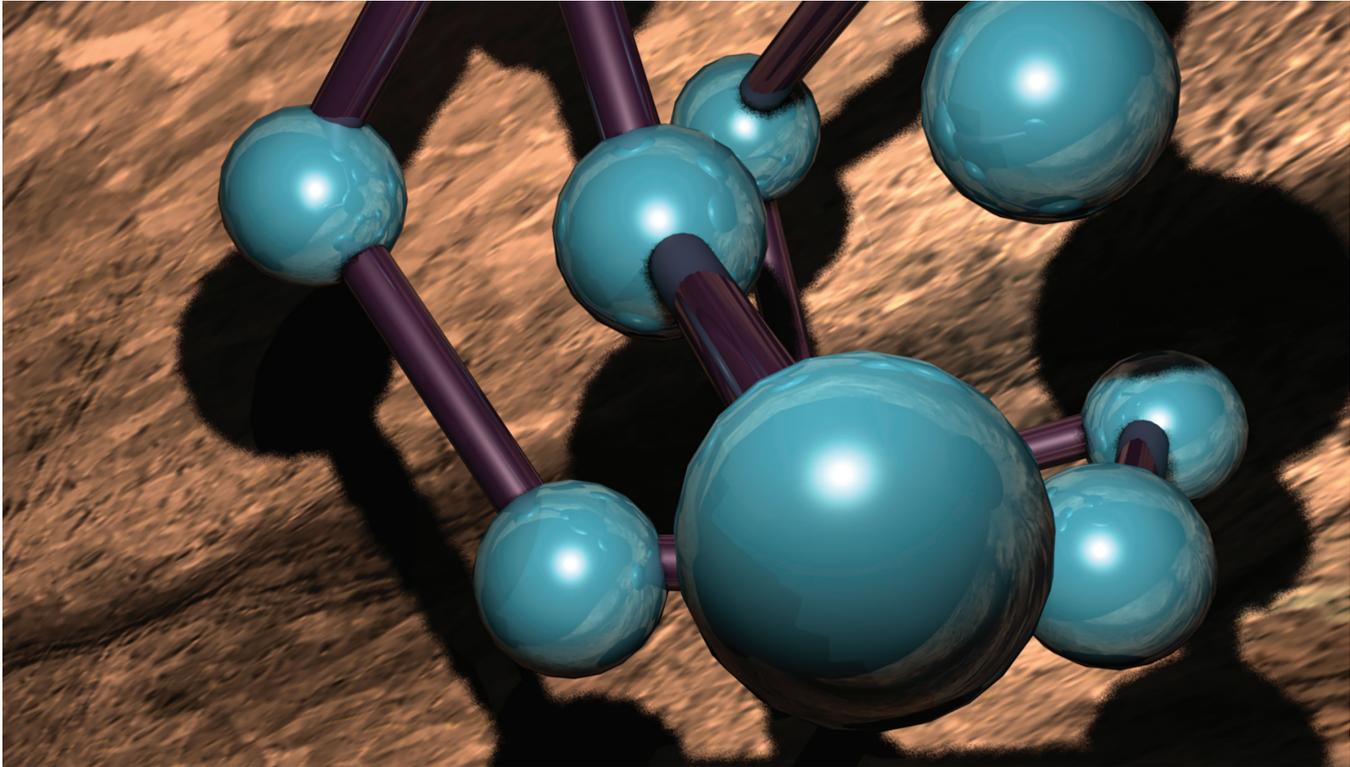
Land of Giant #3  
2016  
Acrylic and Glitter on Board  
36 x 24 x 11 inches



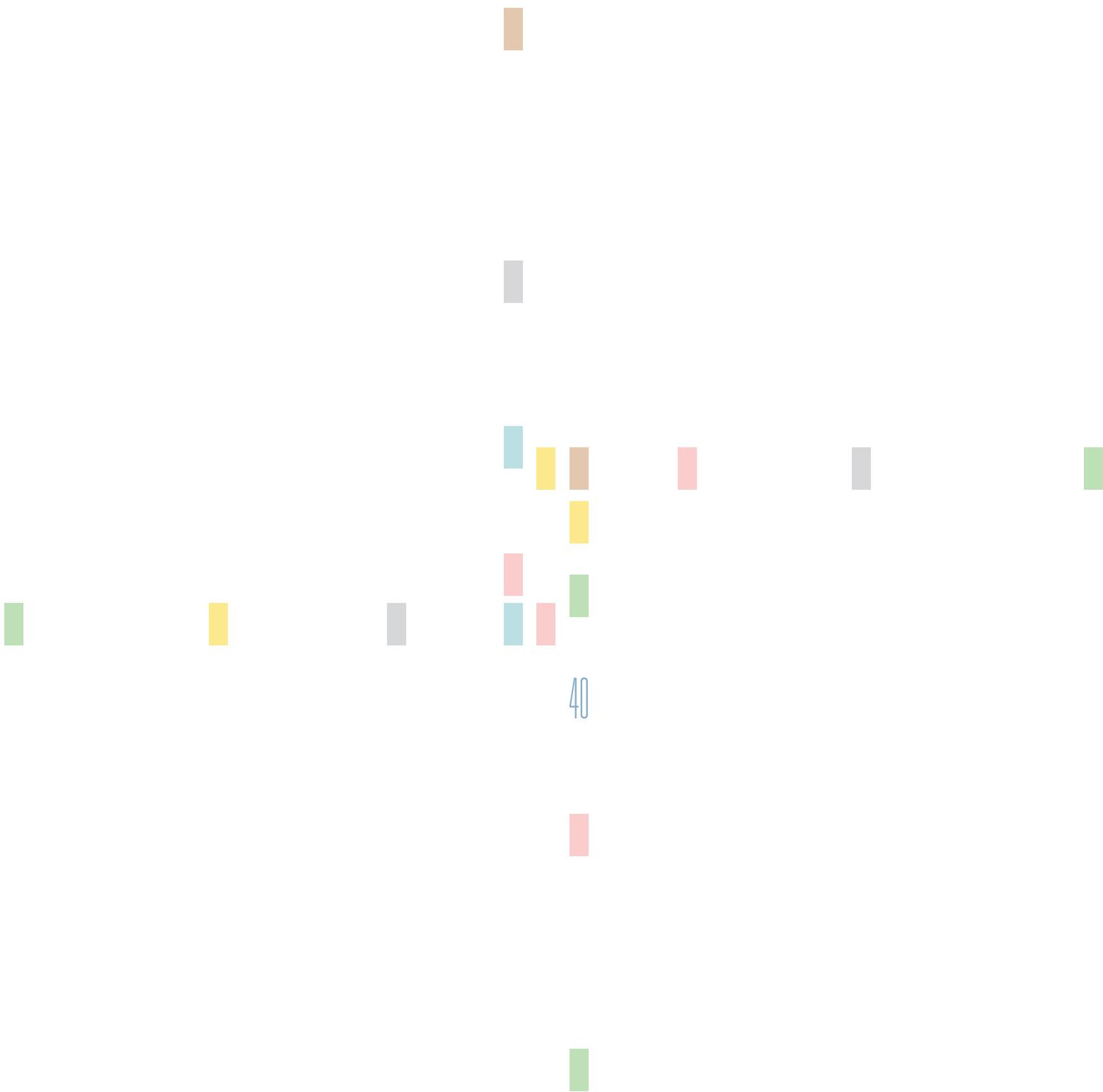
Donald  
Villemez

*My video installation is an autobiographical representation of my struggles coping with the unique traits and characteristics.*

My video installation is an autobiographical representation of my struggles coping with the unique traits and characteristics inherent to my case of Asperger's Syndrome. My work is informed and inspired by my own life experiences with loneliness, detachment, and social isolation. Other themes I explore are a variation of the Allegory of Plato's Cave, and the relationship between the passage of time and the turn of events. My observations of Neurotypicals often makes my own perspective and experiences seem skewed and delayed by comparison. One of my biggest challenges is finding a person who can understand and relate enough to my experiences to "get" me. It's basically the goal of my quest: to make a true connection with someone. For this animation I am making stylistic visual metaphors for the most pervasive of my Aspergian traits, while striving to make the work relatable and accessible to everyone.



**Journey**  
2018  
Digital Video  
1920 × 1080 pixels





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