

Sioux City Art Center SELECTS

Jody Boyer

Lyn Corelle

Nate Ditzler

Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez & Charley Friedman

Ann Marie McTaggart

Laura Nugent

Bart Vargas

Joan Webster-Vore

Introduction

Sioux City Art Center SELECTS is a regional juried/curated exhibition with accompanying programming designed to create a meaningful experience for both the selected artists and the Art Center's audiences. The call for entries is open to all artists living within the state of Iowa as well as artists living within 300 miles of Sioux City, ensuring the exhibition taps the pulse of contemporary visual expression in the upper Midwest. From 121 entries, nine outstanding artists, including one collaborative duo, were selected by the Art Center's director, Todd Behrens, and curator, Mary Anne Redding, based on digital images of submitted artwork and exemplary artists' statements. Redding chose specific selections for the exhibition during follow-up studio visits in extended conversation with the individual artists, ensuring that the exhibition presented a cohesive body of work best representing the artists' current thinking and creative goals.

Equally as important, all the artists chosen address current events in powerful ways, speaking, directly or indirectly, to creativity in a time of crisis and touching on a host of important topics:

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- the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the search for meaning in the face of grave illness;
- climate change;
- species extinction;
- panic buying;
- the wildly divergent meanings of home in a time of forced sequestering;
- domesticity and self-care, as well as care-giving for others; at the risk of staggering economic loss;
- violence and weapons as power structures;
- the effects of technology on the human psyche—not to mention the planet; and,
- issues of global surveillance on a personal level as well as invasive community monitoring.

Each of the presenting artists in the 2021 *SELECTS* installation makes a unique contribution to the conversations swirling around issues of ongoing importance in our contentious times. All the arts have power to change the way we think about the world. The artwork in this exhibition does



just that, asking for our attention and introspection as we carry these indelible images from the gallery into our dreams, into our lives, and into the streets.

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The Sioux City Art Center organized the inaugural *Sioux City Art Center SELECTS* exhibition in 2016, hosting a second installation in 2019. We are pleased to be presenting the third installation of *Sioux City Art Center SELECTS* in 2021.

Sioux City Art Center SELECTS 2021 is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.



Chamomile Still Life, 2021, Sculpture for Photograph (Ice, Foraged Chamomile, Blue Stemware), Courtesy of the artist

Jody Boyer

Council Bluffs, IA

Jody Boyer wanted to remain active as an artist while engaging her family in her creative process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaborative activities that led to her exquisite images created a familiar sense of purpose during a difficult time. As an educator, Boyer understands the importance of developing resilience and community through creativity. Boyer's singular focus on sustaining an enriching domestic life during months of uncertainty led her to a new project. Her images reflect her focus on bringing beauty into crisis while understanding fully that all things are fleeting. Her flowers are frozen—literally—in ice, but ice melts, clearly a reference to climate change and the all-too-quickly melting ice sheets at the far ends of the planet, which will affect coastlines across the globe. Life is ephemeral, but even in times of uncertainty it is possible to take action. Boyer's images make the visual connection between the beauty of fading, frozen flowers to what could happen on a global scale if we, collectively, are not similarly inspired to creative action addressing critical issues. Boyer's work belongs to a strong tradition of activist artists making the personal political.

Jody Boyer received her K-12 Certification in Art from the University of Nebraska, Omaha; her Master of Art degree in Intermediate and Video Art from the University of Iowa, Iowa



Frozen Floral Waste #1, 2021, Sculpture for Photograph (Ice, Flowers, Blue Stemware), Courtesy of the artist

City; and her Bachelor of Art degree in Studio Arts from Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

Artist's Statement

This body of work began in April of 2020. While I sheltered in place with my family, I found myself reflecting not only on self-care but also on the roles and responsibilities of how we tend to each other, our shared communities, and humanity. In my kitchen while I prepared food for my family, I began to explore creating ephemeral sculptural objects. As artists, we can problem solve and remain creative even in times of crisis, with little to nothing on hand. The science of ice, food coloring, and my freezer became my artistic tools and my kitchen a photo studio. I used decaying leftovers from flower bouquets bought to brighten our domestic space. My children and I also began foraging in our neighborhood as a way of thinking about place and sustainability. This is new work for me, but tied to my identity as artist-researcher-mother-teacher. The work investigates domesticity and physical change on a metaphoric and visceral level: decorative glassware designed for celebration, a world frozen, loss, the fleeting existence of cut flowers, grief, and the passing of time are all embedded in the eye-candy of these sculptural still-life photographs.



Untitled, *Single Family Homes in the Year 3030?*, 2021, Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Lyn Corelle

Minneapolis, MN

Home, household, homeland, home-grown, homemade, all these and the long, long list of words associated with a sense of home conjure different meanings depending on who is contemplating, writing, or envisioning their individual notion of home. Lyn Corelle's deliberately, or as they say, "confidently" flawed images make the viewer slightly uneasy. They are not out of focus, but they are hyper-grainy. The soft color is a lullaby devastated by a horror-story plot twist at the end of the song. What's going on? Stand back, and each image glows with a Hopperesque sense of loneliness—night scenes captured by the solitary artist longingly searching for connection—or is the artist's gaze more sinisterly voyeuristic? The ambiguity of the early 21st century peers out of the trashcans; what is hidden in the refuse? What is being rejected, discarded, thrown away? What don't we want to acknowledge? The questions Corelle asks in their statement are questions we all need to ask ourselves. Am I actively assisting or impeding the "efforts of people of color, queers, and other marginalized groups to carve out pockets of freedom?"

Lyn Corelle received their Bachelor of Arts degree, *Magnum cum Laude*, in Cinema and Media Studies from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.



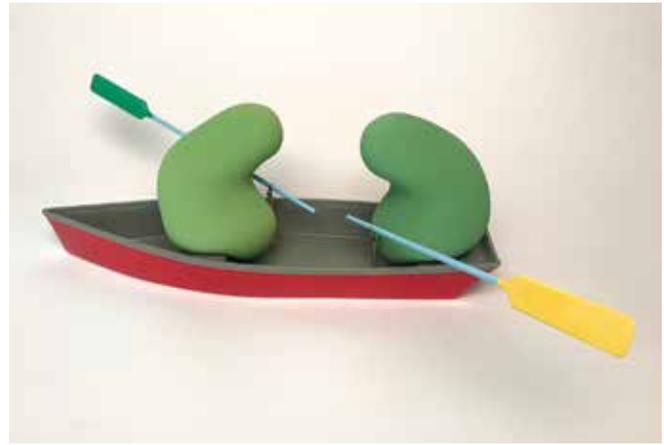
Untitled, *Single Family Homes in the Year 3030?*, 2021, Archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

Artist's Statement

The past year will be remembered, among other superlatives, as the year we spent more time at home than ever before. I took these photographs (lacking contrast, lushly colored, swimming in grain, confidently flawed) in South Minneapolis in early winter 2020. As I walked the streets and alleys, I reflected upon the myriad ways that "home" both comforts and constricts. For those who have one, home provides stability and consistency, but home can also bind us to toxic roles, relationships, and forms of life. From this vantage, the inescapable solidity of the countless houses, apartments, and garages of the world becomes oppressive. Seemingly neutral design and policy choices obscure and stabilize the theft this country was founded on and impede the efforts of people of color, queers, and other marginalized groups to carve out pockets of freedom. However, as this year has shown repeatedly, "stability" is never truly stable; therefore, a transformed world is never far off, whether for better or for worse. It is with this ambiguity in mind that I share these portraits of "the tenuousness of the present moment," to borrow a favorite phrase from science-fiction author Gail Madonia.



Purchase Power, 2019, Ceramic, underglaze, glaze, electronic revolving display module, acquired modified object, MDF, Courtesy of the artist



Teamwork, 2020, Ceramic, underglaze, glaze, brass tube, wood, enamel paint
Courtesy of the artist

Nate Ditzler

Dubuque, IA

Nate Ditzler's playful *Everyman* pretty much sums up how many of us feel these days—slightly off-color, quivering amorphous blobs of clay shaped by forces outside our control; the artist sees the “individual as being perpetually unresolved and in a fluid state of growth and change.” And yet, we must retain our sense of humor as we look for comfort. Humor—sacred laughter—is what is what saves us; it is what allows us to sleep at night. Humor is what brings color into our lives, it is that elusive essence that allows personal and collective growth. Ditzler's two little green figures rowing against the current in a bright red rowboat cannot help but make us smile, even if ruefully. How familiar are we with the potential threats of “normal,” mundane activities such as grocery shopping? And yet, Ditzler's solitary figure struggling with an over-loaded shopping cart is comic. Admit it, how often did you overload your cart with toilet paper during the last 15 months? How well do we sleep at night? Are we snuggled peaceful into our pillows like the little mustard yellow figure in *Sneaking a Quick One*, or do we toss and turn until the morning light?

Nate Ditzler received his Master of Fine Arts degree from West Virginia University; his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Hawaii, Manoa; a degree from the Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute, Ceramics in China, Jiangxi, China; and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Hawaii, Manoa.

Artist's Statement

My work seeks meaning from the seemingly trivial and overlooked moments of everyday life. I use a combination of handmade and slip-cast ceramic forms, fabricated mixed-media elements, and modified found objects to give a visual presence to these phenomena. I am fascinated by the way that combining familiar and surreal aspects can cause a shift in an artwork's meaning, as well as the way in which the viewer can enter the work based on their own subjective reality. By employing these strategies, I seek to raise questions regarding the complexities and paradoxes found in the everyday.

My visual language is derived from the simplicity and playfulness of the illustrations found in children's books and single-panel comics. I integrate this minimalist aesthetic with nuances of humor to bring lightheartedness to the foibles, anxieties, banalities, and joy found in everyday life. I often use an amorphous blob form in my sculptures as a surrogate for the self in my investigation of the underlying meaning in everyday events. I choose this specific form to express the philosophical idea of the individual as being perpetually unresolved and in a fluid state of growth and change.

Nancy Friedmann-Sánchez & Charley Friedman

Lincoln, NE

Translated from Greek, *pan* means all, every, or all-inclusive; *optic* refers to the eye—of or having to do with sight. As an architectural structure, the panopticon, usually a prison, allows an invisible, omniscient watcher to observe occupants without the occupants knowing whether they are indeed under observation. The occupants of the penal colony are well aware that they could be under constant surveillance; they cannot escape the long shadow of the watch tower as it stands in the middle of their cells. The panopticon has become a metaphor, based largely on the writings of French philosopher and political activist Michel Foucault, for authoritarian, disciplinary governments' increasing ability to see, know, and thus regulate and control personal activity.

Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez received her Master of Fine Arts degree from New York University; her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles; and her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia.

Charley Friedman received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts; attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine; and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Artists' Statements

Panopticon aims to deconstruct violence and oppression in our current political and social world through the intersections of surveillance, weapons as power structures, and consumerism.

Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez created a haunting floor assemblage of carved wooden eyes and abstract structures, presented in opposition to found organic wood arranged in the shape of a dead animal. Spear-like shafts sticking into a skeletal arrangement of roots and branches express a physical brutality; a surrounding forest of unblinking eye sculptures elicits an uncomfortable espionage. As in the majority of her creative work, there is a wider feminist and cultural context at work here. By using the language of early 20th century modernists,



Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez & Charley Friedman
Panopticon installation, 2020, Mixed media, Courtesy of the artists

Friedemann-Sánchez critiques the violence patriarchal structures exert on the natural world and the exploitation of bodies of color and the cultures under its domination.

Charley Friedman made handmade cutouts of cartoonish, almost Seussian guns that are displayed in a grid formation covering the walls and enveloping the space, alluding to the excess of guns as consumerist items flooding society. Each of Friedman's guns exists between fantasy and reality. They are cut out to resemble toys, calling attention to the disparity between the treatment of assault rifles as playful objects and their very real potential to kill.

Friedman's work is primarily concerned with the investigation of signs and symbols. He is obsessed with the ways in which the American cultural identity is constructed around signifiers that have no inherent meaning beyond what has been ascribed to them. Exploring the ways that objects can take on meanings of the sacred, intellectual, or consumable, the work questions what kind of objects can take on these meanings, as well as the ways in which, societally, we agree to this assignment of value.

Ann Marie McTaggart

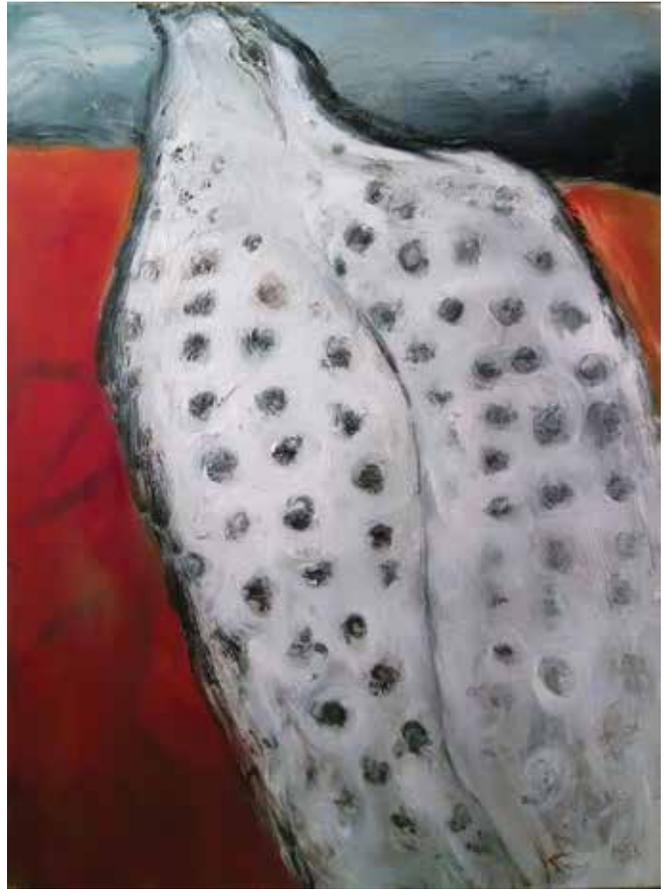
Sioux City, IA

Throughout history birds have been symbolized of the connections between heaven and earth, between this life and a life beyond—carrying messages, prayers, and blessings between humans and the gods. In many cultures, ancient and contemporary, birds are the bearers of both good and bad omens. Ann Marie McTaggart's birds are larger than life; they take on mythic proportions. She paints with the energy of flight, constantly in motion, working the translucent paint with her hands. Her white birds can be likened to the caladrius of Roman mythology, a snow-white bird that had the power to absorb diseases from the sick. The caladrius would visit someone who was ill, carefully taking the offensive disease into its own delicate bird body, and then fly away on strong white wings, dispelling the illness and curing the person and itself as it flew. Oncology nurses tend to the sick with the same care, although they usually remain in the room with their patients as they attend to their needs. Furthering the link between humans and birds is the fragile connective tissue of climate change. It is easier to observe the effect of loss of habitat in bird populations than it is in our own. Now it is our turn to protect the birds by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A 2019 report by the National Audubon Society found that two-thirds of North American bird species—389 different species to be specific—are at risk of extinction by climate change. According to the Audubon report, we can reduce the risk that birds and people face by reducing the greenhouse gasses that are warming our planet.

Ann Marie McTaggart received her Master of Arts degree with an emphasis in Fine Art Studies and Painting and her Bachelor of Arts degree with an emphasis in Painting from the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota; and a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art from Morningside College, in Sioux City, Iowa.

Artist's Statement

As a visual artist, a woman, and former oncology nurse, there are many issues of our human condition that are relevant to my paintings. My personal experiences have greatly affected the content of my work, content that centers upon courage and the ability to transcend obstacles towards a



Gyrfalcon I, 2020, Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

higher spiritual consciousness. My icon of choice is the bird form, usually centered upon either a specific or nonspecific bird species, sometimes representing an endangered species. I find the bird symbolizes a true spirituality, which for centuries has been utilized as a religious icon of hope and enlightenment. The image becomes a metaphor for self or for other. Over time, my intentions have become intertwined with both human and environmental issues. I seek to demonstrate a sincere validation of our shared experiences, to make visible the resilience of humankind and nature in the endless spirit of survival. I need to feel a spiritual buoyancy, one that uplifts and demonstrates the perseverance of each being. I connect by manipulating the paint with various tools, often using my hands as I feel this type of physical action puts intended energy into my compositions. Evident in my recent work is a lack of color, using instead multiple grays, blacks, and whites for my imagery. This technique is used to emphasize only the image and its power to impact the viewer.



Changing Bodies / Bodies Change #12, 2021,
Acrylic on MDF board, Courtesy of the artist



Changing Bodies / Bodies Change #14, 2021,
Acrylic on MDF board, Courtesy of the artist



Changing Bodies / Bodies Change #18, 2021,
Acrylic on MDF board, Courtesy of the artist

Laura Nugent

Kansas City, MO

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 induced several nationwide bouts of extreme panic buying. According to several National Public Radio reports, panic buying included toilet paper, as well as cleaning/sanitizing supplies, any and all baking supplies and baked goods, bottled water, Goldfish crackers, packaged meats, and, unfortunately, medical supplies and gasoline. For the usual consumer worried about future shortages in the supply and demand chain, paint wasn't on the top of their list. For a full-time artist, buying up as much paint as possible in all different colors when the pandemic threatened to shut down the world seemed perfectly logical. Spending most of her time in her studio, Laura Nugent has been extremely prolific over the past year, using and recycling materials she hadn't paid much attention to when she could visit a paint store anytime she wished. For so many people, the past 15 months have forced us to reconsider what is important. Nugent's playful artwork reminds us that there is joy and exuberance even in isolation, that we can be resourceful and creative if we use what we have at hand.

Laura Nugent received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, and was a student in the Independent Painting Program through Studio Arts College International (SACI) Florence, Italy.

Artist's Statement

In March of 2020, my panic buying was at the paint store. When I ran out of canvases, I dug into a stack of paper that had long lived under my studio futon. I cut the large sheets into shapes and painted until they were thick as leather. Discarded boards, which had also been laying around the studio, were jig-sawed to resemble the paper works. I painted those for months on end. Distinct forms appeared, sitting comfortably around and on top of each other. Color and texture attempted a congenial relationship on the surface. With a new, motivating body of work to occupy me, the cancellation of planned projects and exhibitions seemed more like opportunity than loss. My dialog with each piece is over how much process to reveal. Rough edges, dripping paint and imperfect layers peek out from under a finished surface. It is a tension that keeps me engaged as a maker and a viewer. My recent efforts in nonrepresentational, minimal, color-field painting previously included compositions of angular lines. Those marks have become prominent curves, strongly suggesting a figure. All these works have been a coping mechanism for the time: making the changing body aesthetically ideal, deepening my art practice, and creating works that will one day memorialize all that happened in 2020.

Bart Vargas

Omaha, NE

Who isn't familiar with keyboards? They dominate our lives—desktops, laptops, phones, tablets, synthesizers, digital pianos—keypads are on everything. No one knows how to write in cursive, let alone print anymore. Why should we, we don't need to. All we need to do is type; thank goodness for auto-correct, as funny as autocorrected typos can sometimes be. Bart Vargas forces us to reconsider the keyboard down to the individual keys on a keyboard. What do they signify? What do they feel like? We touch them every day. Can you describe the sensation of tap, tap, tapping away on keys creates? What sound do the keys on a keyboard make? What role do keyboards play in our lives? What would we do without keyboards? How many keyboards are tossed every day? According to dosomething.org, e-waste currently represents only 2% of American trash, but it is the fastest growing municipal waste stream and equals 70% of toxic waste. Only about 12.5% of e-waste is currently recycled. Another website, recyclenation.com, explains how to responsibly dispose of keyboards. The site also tells us what the ubiquitous keyboard is made of:

Computer keyboards are made of plastic and coated in a material called brominated flame retardant. ... The goal of the flame retardant, as the name implies, is to keep the keyboard from burning up if it comes in contact with a heater, cigarette or other very hot object. There is some evidence that suggests brominated flame retardants are carcinogens. They are banned in Europe but still commonly used in the United States. ... Plastics, especially those coated in flame retardants, should not go in landfills and incinerators. The flame retardant can slowly seep off keyboards and mix with rainwater and soil. When the material is burned, it releases dangerous chemicals including dioxins.

One of the most important roles artists play in society is to hold a mirror up to contemporary culture to remind us that some of the things we depend on and take for granted might not be environmentally friendly.

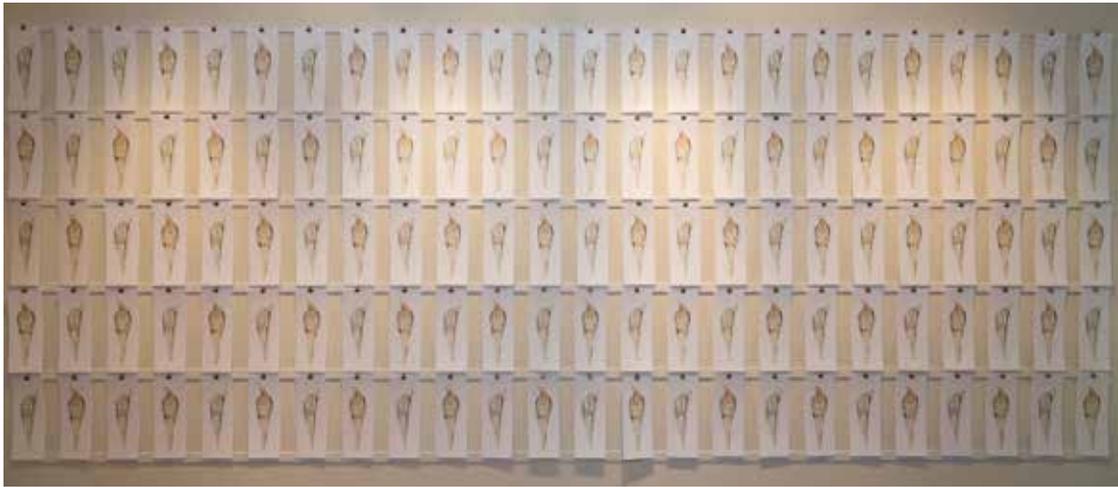


Information Bombs, 2015, Keyboard keys, plywood, foam, cardboard, paint, adhesive, hardware, Courtesy of the artist

Bart Vargas received his Master of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and his Bachelor of Fine Arts (Magna cum Laude) degree in Sculpture with a minor in Art History from the University of Nebraska, Omaha.

Artist's Statement

Aspects of salvage, appropriation, and repetition run through all my works. I recover local materials deemed unwanted or useless, including trash, recyclables, and surplus items and transform them into playful, approachable, and thought-provoking objects. This practice is most obvious in my sculptures, in which I use readily identified objects such as plastic bottles, cardboard, computer keyboard keys, and empty paint containers. I play with the familiarity of these materials by blurring their identities into universal forms like spheres, globes, maps, pyramids, pills, and skulls. These works address such diverse topics as contextual regional geography, the damaging effects of plastic on our bodies and global environment, and the multitudes of waste created by technological advancement. My sculptures evoke the taken-for-granted nature of everyday materials in society. I want my creations to act as artifacts and evidence of the early 21st century, an era of limited resources and extraordinary consumption and waste, and the dawn of the Anthropocene.



Target Practice, 2015, Digitally altered reproductions of watercolors on paper with binder clips. Paintings were done on site observing a male and a female passenger pigeon from the collection of the University of Northern Iowa Museum, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Courtesy of the artist

Joan Webster-Vore

Hudson, IA

It is not only the Audubon Society, but also *National Geographic* and *Science* as well as a host of more data-driven publications, that view the study of birds as a harbinger of climate change implications that go far beyond the avian world. *National Geographic* journalist Haley Cohen Gilliland writes, "As they soar through the sky, birds seem blissfully impervious to the stresses of Earth. Indeed, their ability to migrate makes them more resilient to habitat disruption than less dynamic creatures. ... Birds, because of their relatively greater capacity to disperse and migrate, serve as a conservative baseline for other taxa facing the threats posed by climate change. ... Put simply: Birds are sentinel species, or indicators of the environment's health, so Audubon's dim projections about their future portend even worse implications for other animals." (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/climate-change-threatens-bird-species>)

Joan Webster-Vore is keenly aware of the role birds play in our escalating alteration of the planet. The shadows of her ethereal mixed-media textiles echo the shadows of birds passing overhead and the passing of birds all too quickly becoming extinct. Webster-Vore further indicates the interrelationships between the human and flighted worlds, *Tic Tac Covid* shows the spores of the Coronavirus virus probably transferred to humans through contact with bats, another indication of the detrimental encroachment of humans into the animal kingdom.

Joan Webster-Vore received her Master of Fine Arts degree in Design; her Master of Arts degree in Textile Design; and her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Drawing and Sculpture, all from the University of Iowa, Iowa City.

Artist's Statement

Much of my work is a response to the natural environment in which we live, the illusive shadows, movements, and changes, the search for balance. The universe, the political and sociological environment, the air, land and water, our humanity, all need balance to survive and thrive.

Target Practice was inspired by the story of the extinction of the passenger pigeon. Over 100 years ago, 3 to 5 billion passenger pigeons vanished from the sky, a quarter of the bird population on this continent. They could fly as fast as 60 miles per hour. There are written reports of the birds blocking out the sun as they flew overhead, a mile wide in formation continuing as far as the eye could see. Martha, the last passenger pigeon, died in the Cincinnati Zoo on September 1, 1914. When I first learned about the enormity of what happened and how so few people knew, I felt compelled to respond. In the case of the passenger pigeon, decisions were made over 100 years ago that tipped their odds of survival. One hundred years from now, how will we have tipped the scales?



cover:
There are Places on the Map that Don't Exist, 2021, (detail) Keyboard keys, plastic bottles, foam, cardboard, paint, adhesive, hardware, Courtesy of the artist