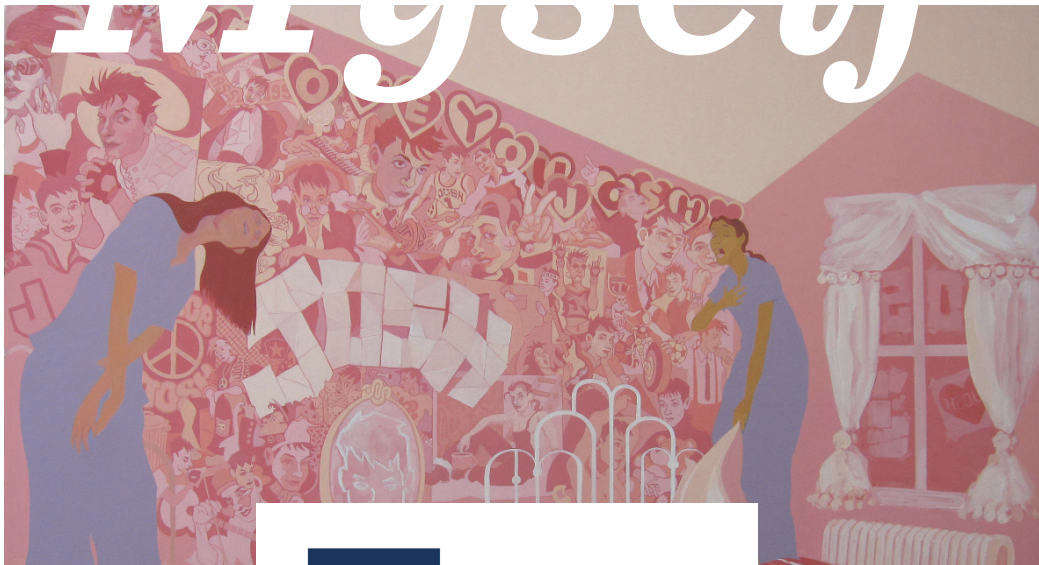




# *Myself*

A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY SELF-PORTRAITURE



University of Nevada, Reno



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A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY SELF-PORTRAITURE

**SHEPPARD FINE ARTS GALLERY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO**

January 18 – February 18, 2011

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CURATED BY

**Marjorie Vecchio, PhD**

PREFACE

**Jeremy Stern, MFA Candidate 2011**

as invited by Howard Rosenberg, Chair, Art Department

ESSAY CONVERSATION

**Joy Garnett and Mira Schor**

---

The exhibition and catalogue is dedicated to the memory of amazing  
young artists Emma Bee Bernstein and Devin Hosselkus.

# OUR SEPARATE SELVES

JEREMY STERN

AS INVITED BY HOWARD ROSENBERG

In Greek myth, Narcissus finds the ultimate romantic image in the still reflection from a living pool of water, falling in love with his own image as the purest expression of perceived beauty and ensuing desire.

What did Narcissus see when he gazed onto his own reflection; into his own eyes?

Was it that in his reflection he found both confirmation from the look of a perceived other, as well as the depth of singular dedication he was willing to bestow on that image?

What pushed Narcissus into falling in love with his own image? Did he realize he was

looking at himself? Was he completely confused by image as a separate entity... the “self” and “I”?

These are questions that have evaded rational answers for millennia.

Most of the time, mercifully, we fall short of experiencing what Narcissus experienced when seeing our own reflections or creating a self-portrait in the branching languages of contemporary art; but through his experience, and the lessons it teaches, we are able to express essential characteristics within ourselves to which no one else is privy.

Whether through classical, traditional, allegorical or metaphorical representation

we experience ourselves in the setting of exhibitions such as this, not so much to proclaim personal territory, but often to share separate, normally concealed, or, even, secret aspects of ourselves.

Self-portraits draw on the full scope of the artist's conceptual and technical abilities, at times to depict purely physical visage through uniting their choice of media with their psychological state or internal narrative; at other times to go much further.

For Freud, the dream world was a symbolic representation of man's fears and fantasies, which he projects but is

helpless to control. Here is a place where all aspects of one's personality may be projected onto the images of other people. In looking at, and interacting with, the self-portraiture of others we re-enact this subconscious search for ourselves in another's representation of self.

*Myself: A Survey of Contemporary Self-Portraiture* is a celebration of, and tribute to, the diversity of perception, imagination and talent representative of the vast ocean of individuals and stylistic perspectives worldwide, in which Narcissus' rapturous gaze is, comparatively, but the smallest of drops.

# A CONVERSATION ABOUT SELF-PORTRAITURE

JOY GARNETT: I'm trying to remember my last intentional self-portrait; I probably painted it years ago, when I was an art student living in another country. I was learning to express myself in a new language (French), which presented a real challenge for me when defending my work during weekly crits. The whole process, now that I look back on it, was an elaborate self-exploration not unlike self-portraiture, and there was some hunger and deep need involved in this. I routinely made self-portraits back then, incorporating them into still lifes and other kinds of compositions. There was the business of keeping 'likeness' intact, which seemed so important, it was part of the development of a certain kind of acuity that leads past surfaces: tracking the exigencies of the self through likeness. These things were so important to me then!

Lately I have been thinking of the whole process of making art as a kind of self-portraiture, a performance where one repeatedly discovers and renders threads of the self on the spot while working...

MIRA SCHOR: Self-portraiture was an important part of my work at its beginnings. I always say that by the time I left graduate school my agenda was to bring my experience of living inside a female body -- with a mind -- into high art in as intact a form as possible. My first interpretation of that was to place a depiction of my body into a narrative and landscape structure. I was doing work somewhat in the genre of Florine Stettheimer just around the time I learned of her work (that is to say, I got to a place and then found out she had gotten there too as had several other important women artists of the surrealist period). My next interpretation was to replace the recognizable self-portrait with a trace of self: my handwriting and diaristic writing as image and subject. In the '80s and '90s my work turned more towards representation of the politically gendered body and of political and theoretical language

JOY GARNETT & MIRA SCHOR

-- so instead of writing that had a diaristic function my paintings represented the word "painting" or "sign" or "trace" or, in one case, the letters that spelled out "personal writing." So certainly not conventional self-portraiture yet emerging from a consciousness of my "self" as a character in the game art or the game life.

In the past three or four years I've actually turned back towards a kind of self-portraiture, sometimes abstracted, sometimes figurative though not traditionally representational, more like a figure that is an avatar of self.

But because I have this close experience of types of self-portraiture I also can be quite critical of artists who use self-portraiture as a default and unfortunately who just aren't that interesting! There's a particularly contemporary wrinkle to this: just like painters may draw themselves because they are the only model who will sit still long enough, now young artists turn the video camera on themselves doing some task or something to their body. I often find that such work can become insular and kind of boringly generic, the opposite of what you hope for in self-portraiture, and I start to long for the reach of cinema, of fiction used to create a structure, a more complex, layered, exteriorization of thought and experience. So looking at the umpteenth variant of what was interesting (and structured) in early Joan Jonas or Yoko Ono, I crave Kurosawa and Ozu, Truffaut and Godard. Think of Toshiro Mifune as a kind of second identity for Kurosawa, or "Antoine Doinel/Jean-Pierre Leaud" as a fictionalized Truffaut and Leaud, again, as a slightly more innocent variant of Godard.

JG: I love Florine Stettheimer...! and I agree with you about what can happen when young artists endlessly turn the camera on themselves. There's a fine line -- or maybe not so fine! -- between propagating a narcissistic 'reality' type spectacle and putting



yourself out there. Self-editing is important and difficult, and there's a difference between inviting the viewer into some intimate space, and abusing them with a personal need for catharsis. Revealing certain things about yourself, as opposed to anything and everything, demands a certain kind of restraint; it requires an awareness of something beyond yourself, including the viewers you're trying to communicate with.

MS: I think that is right, what you say points to the fact that ultimately a self-portrait has to be a work of art beyond just narcissism. You have to understand what is interesting about you: visually, narratively, politically. Hopefully there is something interesting! It's the same as with actors: they have to understand what is interesting about their appearance, the specificity of their body or voice, and use those qualities, whether they are endowed with great beauty or not. So finally it is the mind of the artist that must be portrayed because it is the mind that gives the artist a meta-understanding of what their body, their image means beyond themselves and that gets back to and ties in with the importance of form.

Florine Stettheimer's self-portraits are wonderful on a number of levels: her color is intense and rich, her surfaces are beautiful – a white will not just be a flat area but really a sculpture, a bas-relief, and her self-portraiture is usually relational: she exists as part of a matriarchy and a sisterhood of women, her mother and her sisters, and she usually lurks quietly at the edge of the work, a shy presence within a social grouping. She is self-effacing as an image yet the one who is overseeing and pulling it together. Another self-portrait I love is absolutely the opposite in presence, is Max Beckmann's *Self-Portrait with a Cigarette* from 1923. There are many other Beckmann self-portrait drawings and etchings from that time and earlier (and of course some wonderful other works) but in that one he uses his physicality – a short, squat, strong figure made more so by the way he crowds the small mirror frame and shallow space he has set for the canvas, and he uses his drafting skills to represent his painting hand holding up a cigarette like a weapon. The intensity of his gaze goes beyond just the fact that he is focusing on himself as subject to dominate the viewer as an aesthetic project. The color of the painting is extraordinary, that tough mustard color ground!

Other works that spring to mind: a late painting by Edvard Munch where he just leans into the frame from the side, an eerie presence, older, shambling tall man lurking in his own painting. There is also the beautiful late Bonnard of a balding bespectacled skinny man wrestling his image in the bathroom mirror.

Well, there are so many amazing self-portraits. I realize I've just included paintings. I think of video performance art as slightly different. The artist uses her body as an actor or an object. But to complete my thought about the importance of understanding and using the specificity of your body I think Joan Jonas is someone who has always done that very effectively and that is even more noteworthy as she continues to use her body in recent performances. She always has had a kind of Buster Keaton solemnity to her features and it is if anything more effective now that she is older and not relying on the beauty of her youthful body. She becomes a kind of mythic little embodiment of artmaking and of a kind of courage and resilience, as well as of watchful awareness of details of the world she is showing us.

JG: Can we go back for a moment to what you were saying before, about self-portraiture being important to your work's beginnings? Perhaps there is a moment for many young artists when self-portraiture is particularly rich or useful. When I was in my 20s I had the opportunity to study painting in Paris and London. I spent a lot of time, just about every day, roaming through museums, (which, happily for me, offered free admission for students). I was particularly drawn to portraiture and self-portraiture, in both literature and art. James, Proust and Joyce were favorites; I was drawn to Manet and Fragonard, and to Watteau's melancholy clown. When the Musée Picasso opened in Paris, I was living nearby, and I visited frequently. The first installations tracked his early development, which was largely an exploration of the human condition through portraiture, which I found especially compelling.

Now that I think about it, the context for portraiture and especially self-portraiture in Europe is probably different from self-portraiture in an American context. It seems that in Europe, self-portraiture comes out of 19th century literary introspection, and also draws some of its juice from Rembrandt's self-portraits, which combine the mystical with the intensely personal. I saw a lot of Rembrandt in Paris, etchings as well as paintings, and those portraits had a huge impact on me.

Perhaps self-portraiture in American art is more self-exposure than introspection, if not downright exhibitionism. There is the lure of the spectacle, the temptation of self-exposure through mass media; of course, the phenomenon of realityTV has become THE popular medium for self-expression and self-portraiture -- or is it self-caricature? It makes me wonder about how we might 'achieve' introspection today. What are our choices when it comes to making self-referential art, what is the route to self-discovery when we are

hell-bent, as a culture, on self-exposure? The two are not the same -- they may even be metaphysical opposites.

I wonder if there are many artists who manage to achieve both introspection and a kind of raw exposure that is contemporary. From the past, perhaps someone like Egon Schiele... which might bring us to self flagellation and self mutilation, and full circle to performance art and feminist video art, actually... Marina Abramovic, et al.

MS: That is very interesting and quite likely that different cultures would invest in self-portraiture differently, or, in some cases probably not at all, at least as we would recognize it. Is self-portraiture more of a Western concern, given our focus on the individual, going back as far as St. Thomas Aquinas and probably farther?

It's important to highlight some of the differentiations you are making between "self-exposure" and "introspection," and to point to the current interest at least here in America in phenomena like reality shows, which I would argue are all about play-acting, play-writing, since the shows are if not scripted certainly edited almost live with an eye towards a narrative, which in itself is quite general and not individual. The characters on "Work of Art: The Next Great Artist" seem to each not only have but operate out of a Homeric epithet (well, that would establish it as being as old as the hills) which the editors encourage and one-dimensionalize: this person is the GAY person, this person has OCD, this person is A CHRISTIAN. They do work that they each then ascribe, mostly falsely, to these GENERIC IDENTITIES: I mean, what does doing ghastly commercial sketches of dancing figures have to do with being a Christian! It's all absolutely not conducive to because not interested in self-reflection -- that is not a value except as a simulacrum or spectacle -- and certainly not about self-expression via form. So in a world where the generic and the simulacral are actually what is trusted as "authentic" (because the notion of individuality is seen as generic too, but unconsciously so), where "generic identity" is not seen as an oxymoron, are there options for self-portraiture that both work within these conditions and somehow surpass them?

JG: (Portrait of the Artist as a [Generic] Something-or-other....!) One thing that's interesting about all these reality shows, as you point out, is that they are produced through an editing process, and are in fact highly constructed 'realities', to say the least. In that sense, the portraits they produce are made in the image of the Producer's Formula, as realized by a team of highly skilled editors

who carve something out of the raw footage provided by the unwitting contestants and their judges. The TV audience absorbs it, loves it, hates it, watches it anyway because it's endlessly (somehow) fascinating, like watching a slow-motion car wreck. But TV audiences occupy a different state of mind than art audiences: experiencing an artwork demands a different kind of attention altogether.

All of which makes me wonder about the viewers of self-portraiture. We've been focusing on the artist and the significance of the creating self-portraits; but if, as Duchamp pointed out, the viewer completes the work, is there something special or particular that occurs between the viewer and a self-portrait? I want to move away from painting (just for a moment!) to think about another intimate and apparently complex thing that happens between viewer and performer when they confront one another in an unscripted (though controlled) extended moment. I'm of course thinking about what recently took place at MoMA, for Marina Abramovic's 'The Artist is Present', where members of the public took turns sitting across from Abramovic in a kind of 'high art darshan', or sitting before the guru. The projections of the viewer upon the artwork became palpable; the needs and projections of the viewer at the moment of sitting and staring became the subject of the piece, forming the experience of the artwork for each individual with very little, yet very consistent, input from the artist/performer. Perhaps we can apply what happened there, between viewer and artwork, to what happens between viewers of other artworks, particularly self-portraits.

So my question is: do we as viewers let down our guard a little more than usual when we regard a self-portrait, because we are duped into thinking we are looking at someone else's exposure, when in fact, we are becoming complicit in our own?

MS: Maybe.. I'm not sure. I'm just as moved by a work depicting someone other than the artist, or as unmoved. Also what you say returns to the distinction you had made earlier between self-portraiture that is self-exploratory and inward-directed, and self-portraiture that is declarative and outward directed, confronting the viewer. A work can do both of course.

(NYC, November 2010)

## MIRA SCHOR JOY GARNETT

“She is self-effacing as an image yet the one who is overseeing and pulling it together...a kind of mythic little embodiment of artmaking and of a kind of courage and resilience, as well as of watchful awareness of details of the world she is showing us.”



Mira Schor, *ME*  
oil on linen, 16 x 12 in., 2008

Mira Schor is a painter and writer living in New York City. Schor is the author of *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life* and of the blog *A Year of Positive Thinking*.

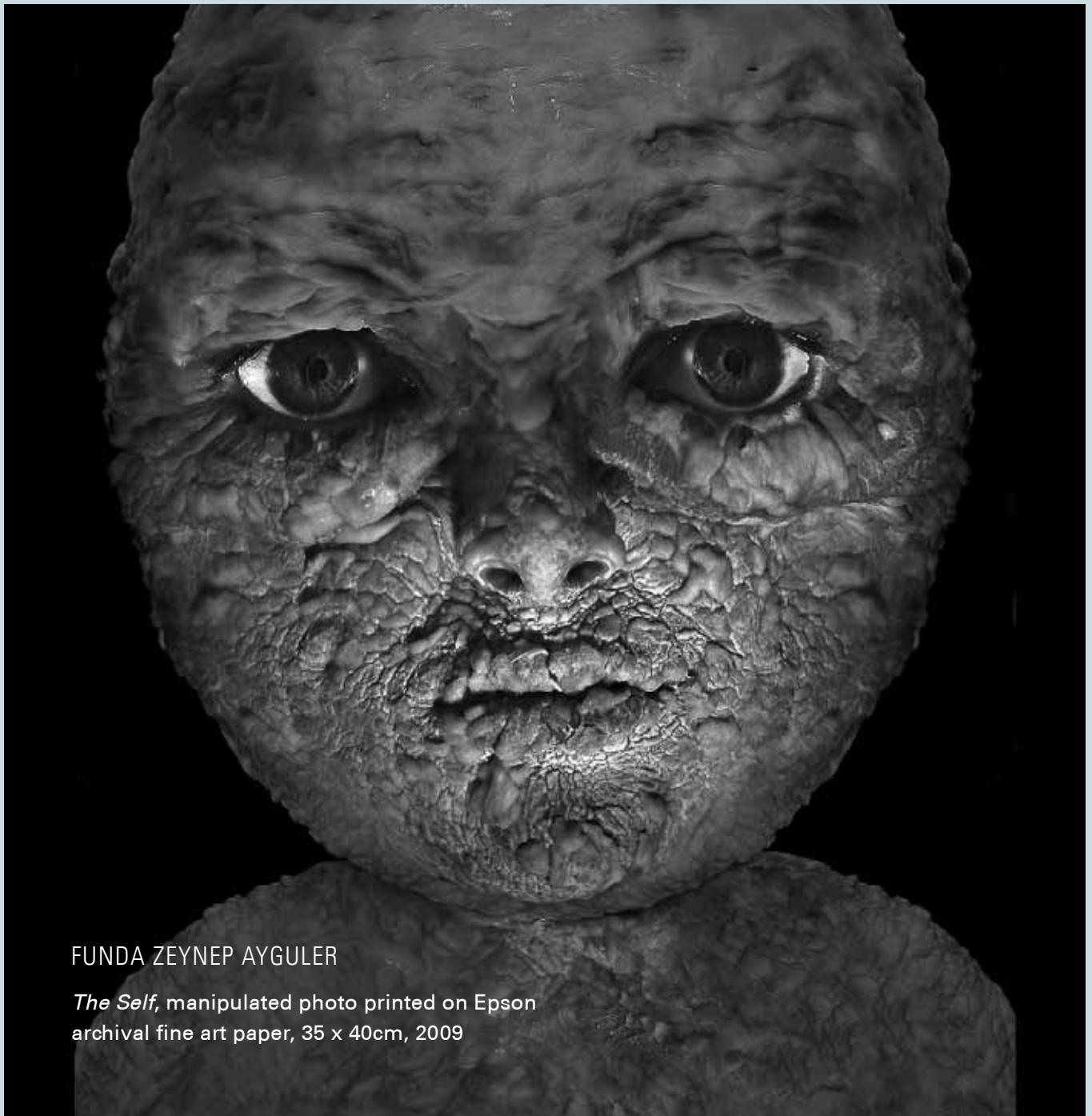


Joy Garnett, *Untitled Self-Portrait*, digital image, 2007

Joy Garnett lives in New York City, where she paints and writes. She is currently working on a family memoir about Alexandria, Egypt in the 1930s called *The Bee Kingdom*.

“Watteau’s melancholy clown... roaming through museums... hell-bent...”





FUNDA ZEYNEP AYGULER

*The Self*, manipulated photo printed on Epson  
archival fine art paper, 35 x 40cm, 2009

MARIE BERGSTEDT

*Countdown*, cotton cochet over wire,  
16 x 39 in., 2008





MEGAN BERNER

*The Explorers: The Great Plains*, archival digital  
print, 13 x 19 in., 2010

EMMA BEE BERNSTEIN

*Self-portrait with piano*, archival digital C print,  
17 x 22 in., 2006

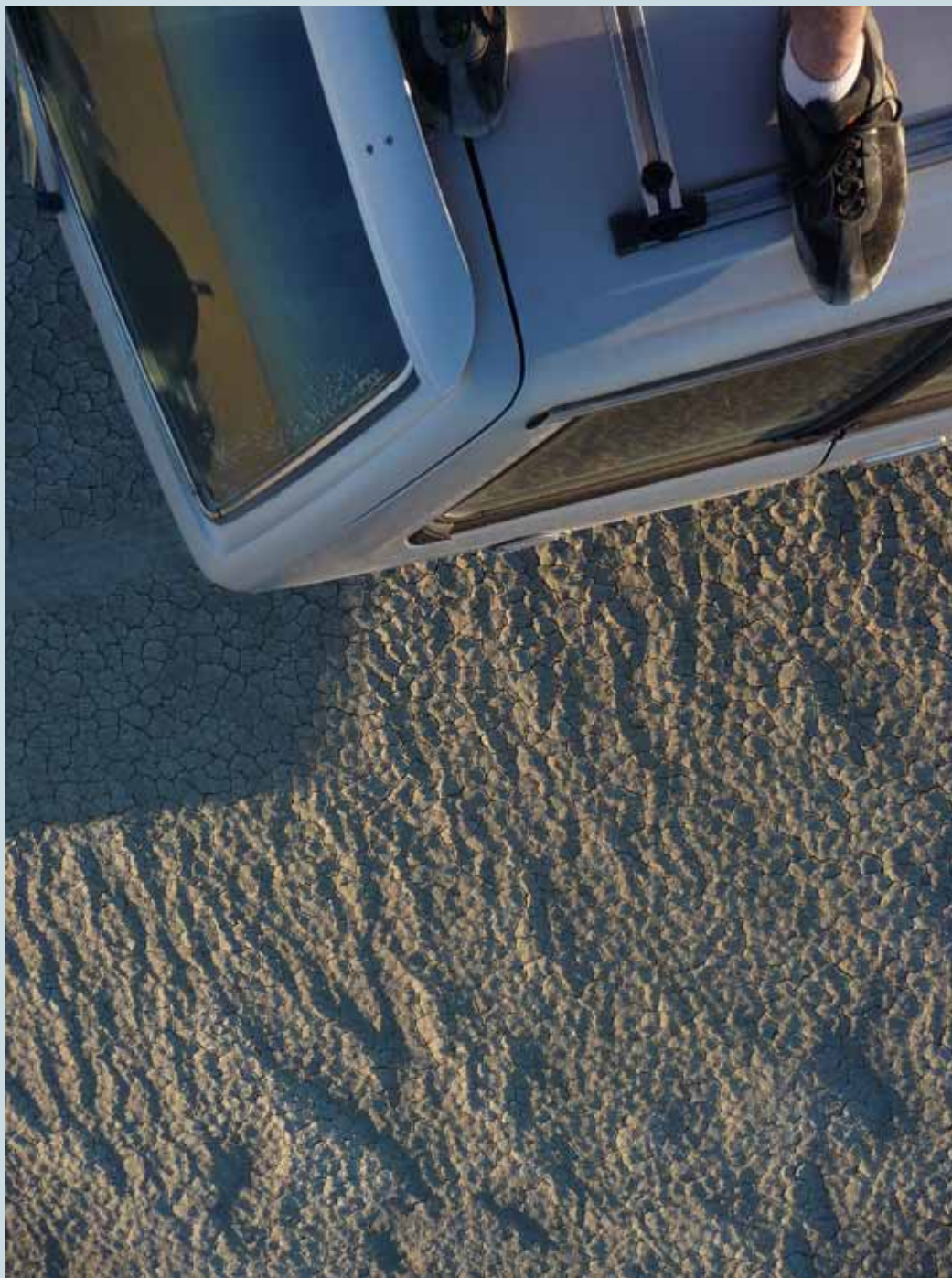


PAM BREKAS

*Surreal Bodie*, Photo, 18 x 24 in., 2009







CHRIS CARNEL

*Self-Portrait "Black-rock Perch"*

digital capture,  
variable dimensions  
2008



JEAN MARIE CASBARIAN

*Waiting 1: Underneath the Willow Tree*, Video, 14  
minutes, continuous loop, 2009





CRAIG CULLY

*Big Man in a Little Painting,*  
oil on panel, 6 x 3.5 in. 2010

MEGAN CUMP

*Witch*, C-Print, 17 x 23.5 in., 2008





JOE DELAPPE

*NoneOfTheseCandidates Macbain*

Avatar for U.S. Senate, 2010

[www.noneofthesecandidatesmacbain.com](http://www.noneofthesecandidatesmacbain.com)



MICHAEL EADE

*Gründale Afternoon*, egg tempura, colored gesso, gold,  
aluminum, copper leaf on wood panel  
18 x 27 in., 2005.

Courtesy of the artist and Lesley Heller Workspace, New York





PETER EMERICK

*Myself*, single channel video  
5 minutes 8 seconds (looped), 2010



JOY EPISALLA

*winter 1992 — january*

*1998 — present*

crocheted human hair,

paper + metal stand

23 x 12 in., 1992-2010





ELISE GARDELLA

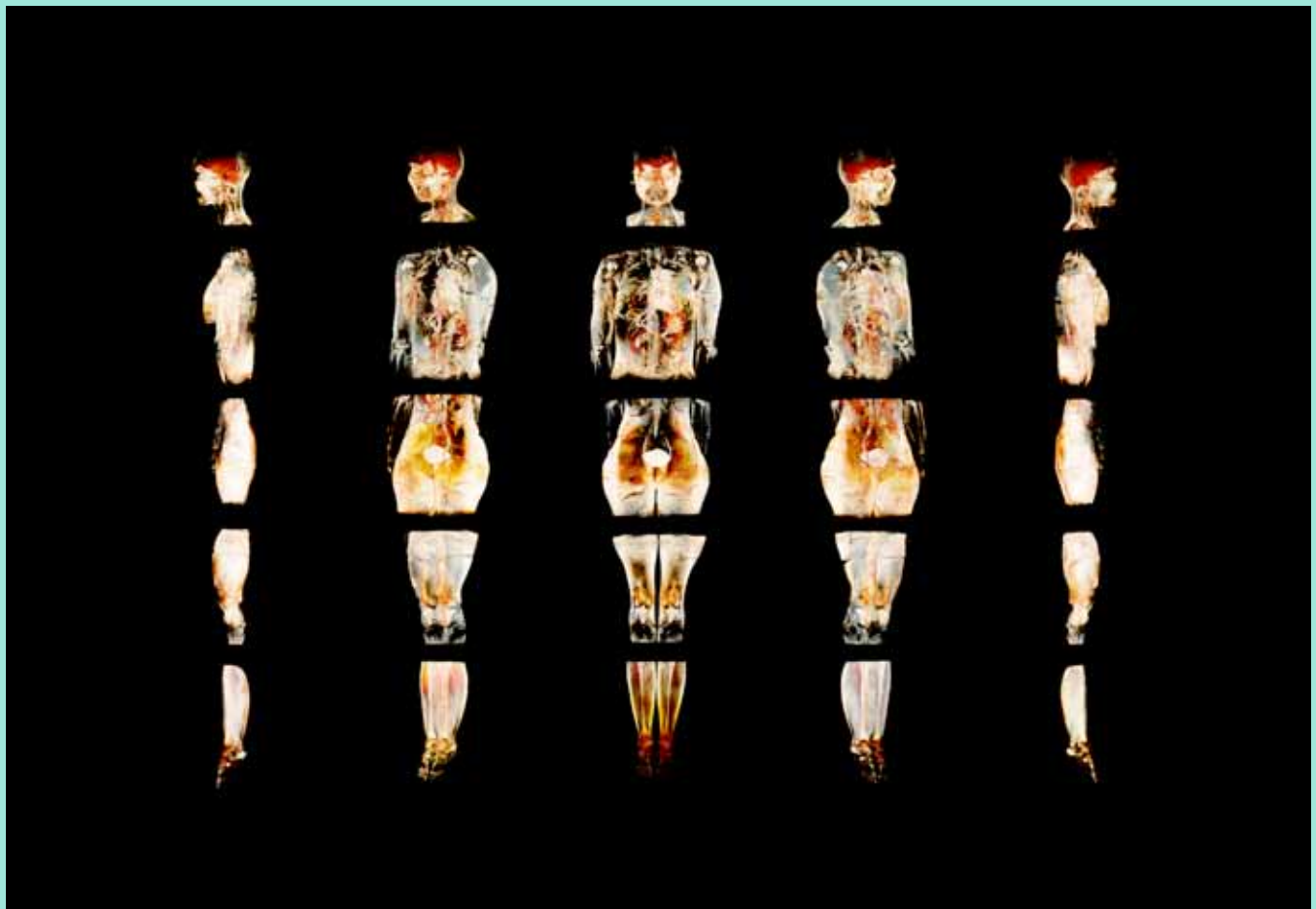
*Not Now*, c-print, 16 x 20 in., 2002

CHANTAL GERVAIS

*Étude #2 de la série "Les maux non dits"*

inkjet print mounted on Plexiglas

24 x 31 in, 2008



FREDERICKS & FREISER

536 WEST 24TH STREET NEW YORK NEW YORK 10011 TELEPHONE 212 633 6555

**Alex Gingrow**

*I am a young artist with dynamic ideas. 2010*

Graphite and acrylic on paper: 22 x 30 inches

ALEX GINGROW

*I am a young artist with dynamic ideas*, graphite  
and acrylic on paper, 22 x 30 in., 2010

JENNIFER GRAHAM

*I know I should be going...*

embroidery thread, yarn, watercolor on canvas

33.5 x 17 in., 2010







CYNTHIA GREIG

*New Eden Photographers*, toned silver gelatin  
mounted on cabinet card, 4.25 x 6.5 in., 1994



AMY GUIDRY

*Beginning*, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in., 2008





JEN P. HARRIS

*Sleep (2)*

ink, acrylic,  
pencil on  
stretched paper  
30 x 23 in., 2010

ROSI HAYES

*Uncomformity*, digital video, 14 minutes, 2010





AHREN HERTEL

*Luck*, oil on canvas  
24 x 12 in., 2010



AIMEE HERTOOG

*Frog Honeymoon Cruise*

Digital photo, 24 x 32 in., 2009





NENE HUMPHREY

*Field of Vision (for Mary)*

etched petrie dishes, mixed media,  
fabric, digital photos

4-6 in. diameter x 1.5 in., 2009

Courtesy of Lesley Heller Gallery, NYC



SUZANNE JOELSON

*Sky Flew*  
acrylic on wood,  
33 x 24 in., 2010





JOSH JORDAN

*Let's Hear It For The Boy*, acrylic on canvas  
44 x 54 in., 2000-2009

JIYEON KIM

*Square on 31<sup>st</sup>*

experimental video/animation

4 minutes 30 seconds., 2010







EUNKANG KOH

*Horn Woman*

intaglio

4.75 x 4 in.,

2007

KATE KRETZ

*Oubliette I*

human hair embroidery, convex glass, oval frame  
9 x 7 in., 2006







LARRY LEE AND JASON DUNDA

*Boos and Bakin'*, video, 6 minutes 55 seconds, 2010

ELIZABETH LEISTER

*Mirror/Mirror*, video still from performance  
20 minutes, 2010





JULIE LEQUIN

*Speech Lesson*, video, 5 minutes 20 seconds, 2005

TERYN LOEBS

*The Headaches*  
lithograph  
28 x 20 in., 2009





HOLLY LYNTON

*July*, c-print mounted on plexiglass  
17 x 23 in., 2004





MEGAN MALONE

*Self-Portrait, Nebraska*, digital photograph  
12 x 10 in., 2010



VALERIE MARGOLIS

*Me, Myself + I*mac series – Fused  
Column 1: post-Frida Kahlo, post-  
Spine-Surgery, post-Vanishing-  
Male-Twin, post-Painting, post-Pho-  
tography, manipulated digital photo  
10 x 9.5 in. with margin, 2008



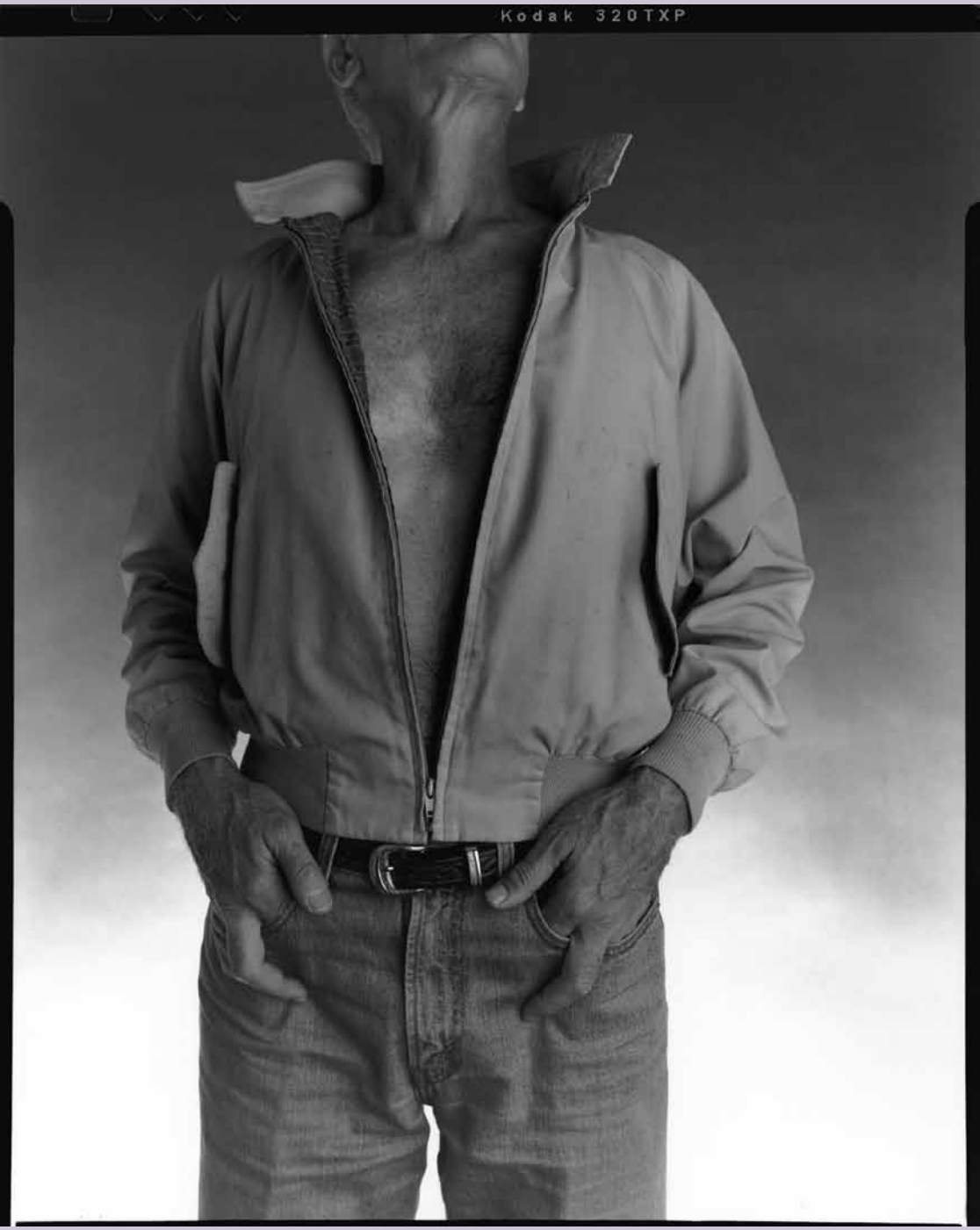
LILLY MCELROY

*I Throw Myself at Men #5*, digital print  
30 x 41.4 in., 2006



ALAN MEVIS

*Memoir, Barracuda Jacket, gelatin silver print 24 x 20 in., 2009*



ROB MILLARD-MENDEZ

*Tends to Lash Out (Self Portrait)*

wood, metal, found objects,

12 x 7 x 12 in., 2007







ELIZABETH  
MORISSETTE

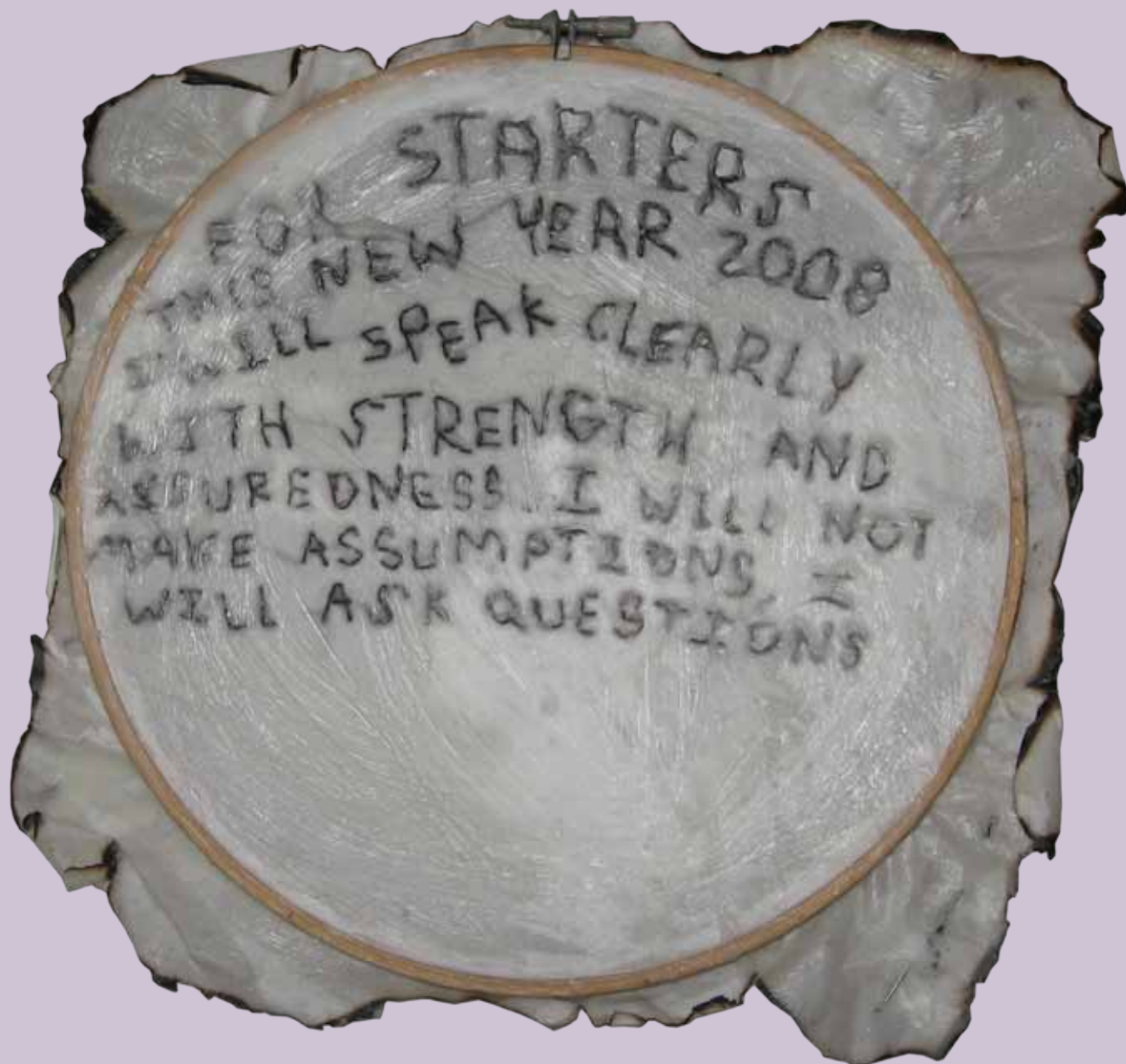
*Heritage,*  
postcards and  
acrylic on canvas  
16 x 12 in., 2010

JOHN ORTH

*It Is I*

cardboard, paper,  
acrylic, glue  
10 x 10.5 x 9.5 in., 2010





KATHRYN PANNEPACKER

*For Starters*, stitching on hoop with thread, burned edges, and wax, 14 in., 2008

MARIA PASCHALIDOU

*Self*, Photography, Digital Archival Print  
70 x 50 cm., 2005



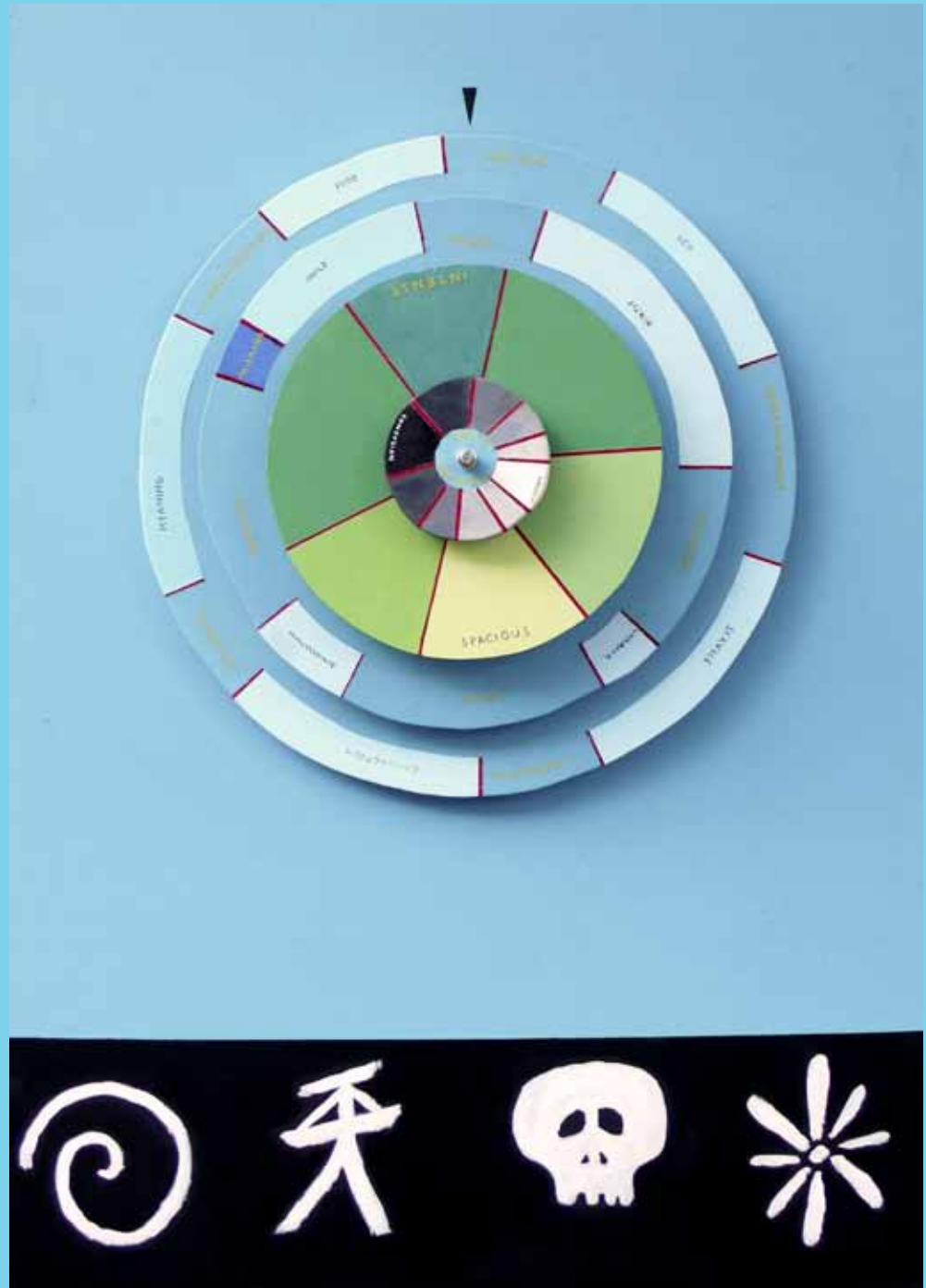


ZORAN POPOSKI

*Here*, Digital Print  
65 x 35 in., 2007



*The Loser*  
performance with  
artifact, 2010



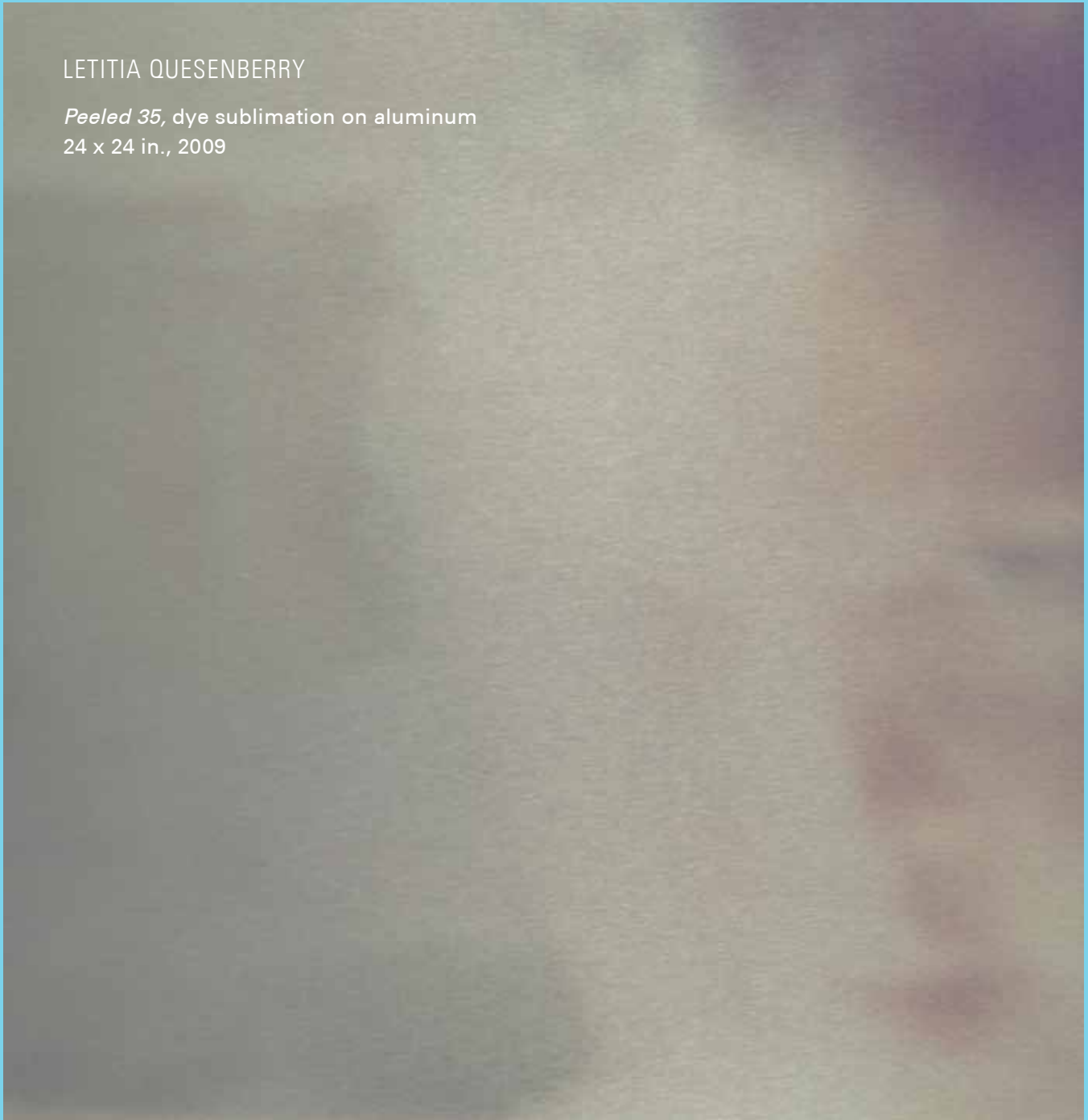


CLIFFORD PUN

*Flowerbomb, No Pun Intended,*  
digital lightjet print  
24 x 18 in., 2010

LETITIA QUESENBERRY

*Peeled 35*, dye sublimation on aluminum  
24 x 24 in., 2009





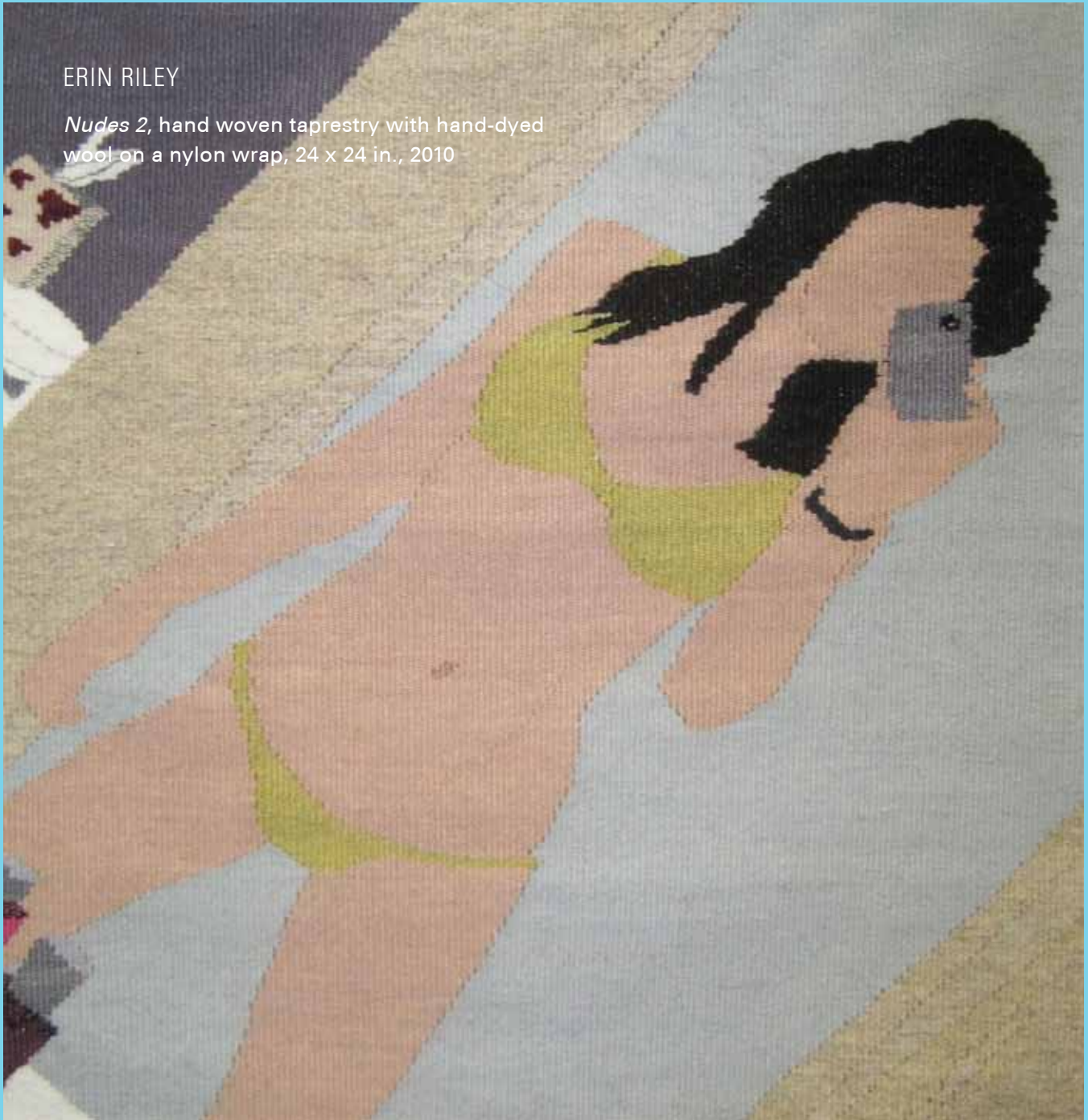
CAROL RADSPRECHER

*In Studio Self-Portrait*, digital print  
8.5 x 11 in., 2010



ERIN RILEY

*Nudes 2*, hand woven taprestry with hand-dyed  
wool on a nylon wrap, 24 x 24 in., 2010





ARIANA PAGE RUSSELL

*Cameo Un*, temporary  
tattoo and skin on mirror  
6.5 x 4 in., 2010

Courtesy of Platform  
Gallery, Seattle

SUSANNAH SAYLER

*10 Years Ago When  
My Hair Was Still  
Punk Rock*

archival pigment  
print, 16 x 20 in., 2000





MATTHEW SCHLAGBAUM

*Paternavertophobia*  
video and digital frame  
12 x 15 in., 2010





TIM SHARMAN

*Self Portrait with Red Afro*  
acrylic on wood, 20.5 x 16.5 in., 2008



EBENEZER SINGH

*Blood Pole*  
archival pigment print  
18 x 24 in., 2008

JACKIE SKRZYNSKI

*Black Eyed Susan*  
*(I'm So Happy!)*  
pencil, colored pencil,  
17 x 19 in., 2008







JOHN STECK, JR.

Three Individual Sculptures

1) *Beer Container*, 7.5 x 6.5 x 5 in.

2) *Newmans*, 4 x 8 x 1.5 in.

3) *Cereal*, 7.5 x 11.25 x 2.75 in.

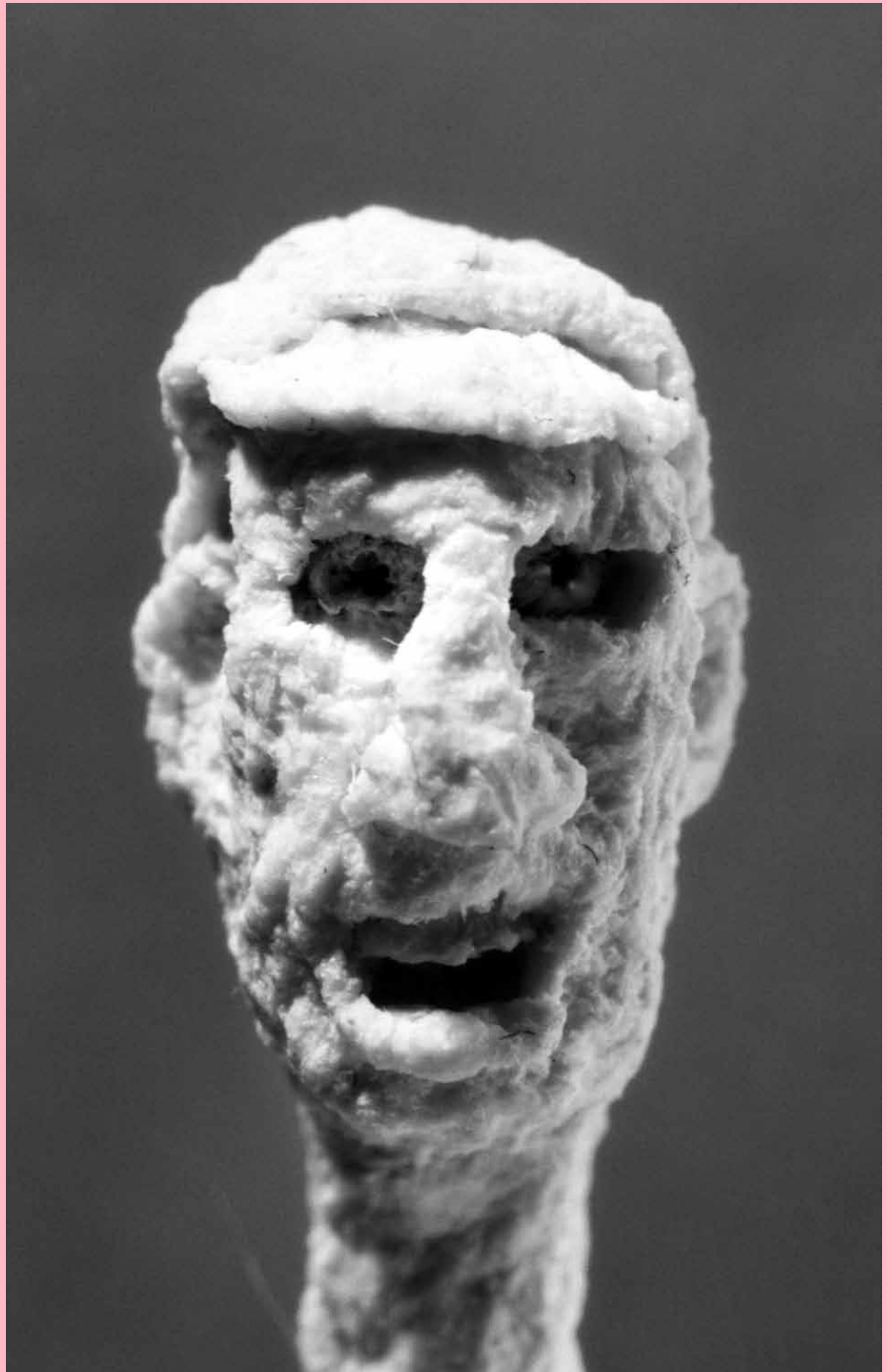


JOSHUA STERN

*Untitled Figure #9 from the  
spitball series*

silver gelatin print

48 x 78 in., 2001





ROBIN TEWES

*Self-Portrait*  
oil on birch,  
8 x 10 in., 2006

Courtesy of  
Adam Baumgold  
Gallery, New  
York City and  
Headbones  
Gallery, Toronto  
Canada



KRISTINE THOMPSON

*With Ana Mendieta*  
framed c-print, 30 x 40 in., 2007



CLARE THORNTON

*Apparent Border*

soft sculpture,

38 x 19 x 8 in., 2006/2009





CHRISTINA RENFER VOGEL

*Self-Portrait (First Nebraska Winter)*

oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in., 2010





DEBORAH WASSERMAN

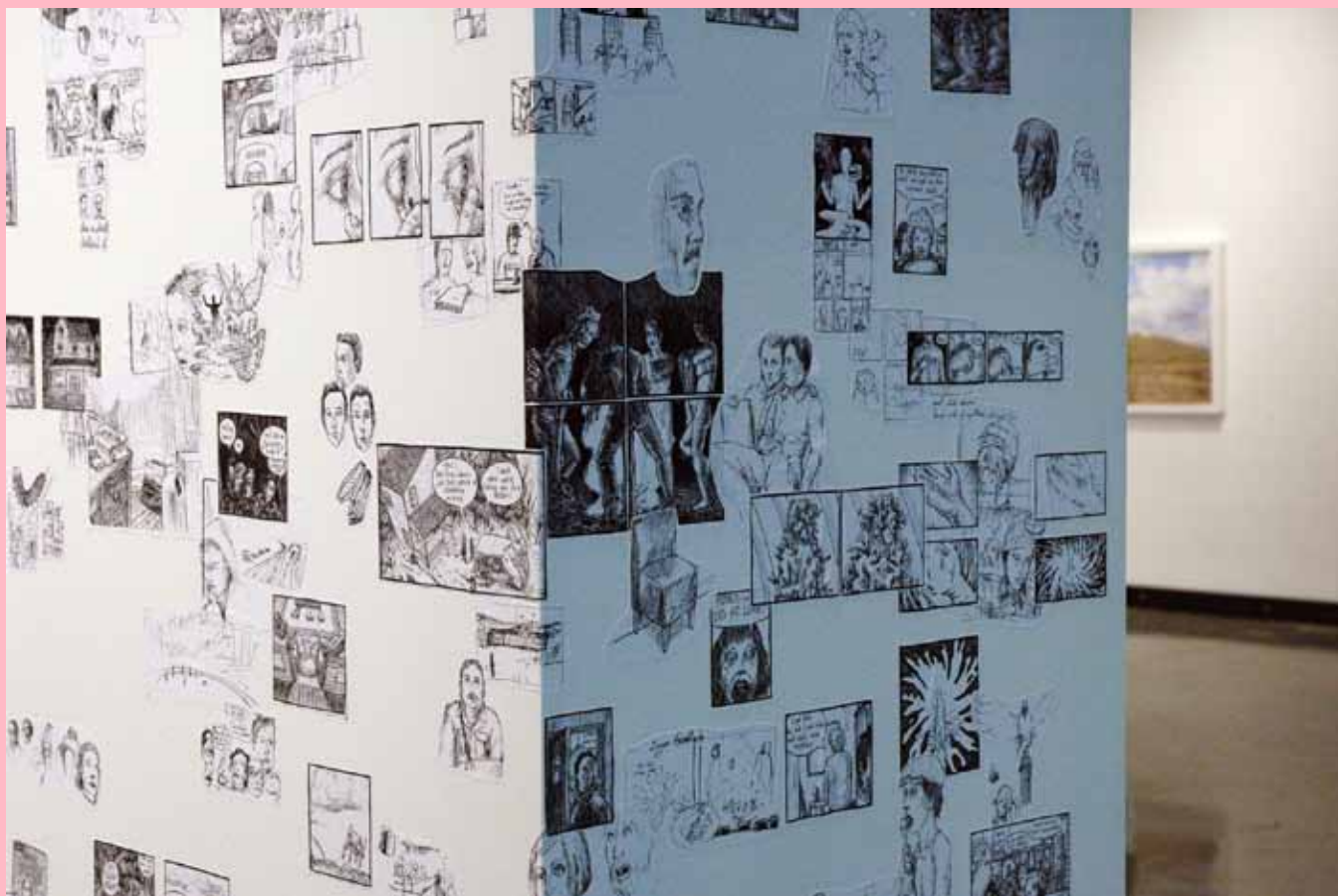
*Carry On and On*

4 minutes 9 seconds, video, 2010

JESSICA WATSON

*Me as Cate as Queen, Pt. 2*  
pigment print, 27 x 35 in., 2008





ORION WERTZ

*Complications*, dimensions variable, stickers, 2007



TAMMY WOFSEY

*Breathing Room*

linocut, 32 x 50 in., 2010



SHANE  
QUARINO  
*I Have to  
Pee!!*



KATHRYN  
CARLSON  
*Untitled*



JANOS KORDA  
*40 Years Later*



SETH  
MACH  
*This Too  
Shall Pass*



BRANDON  
LACOW  
*Untitled*



DEVIN  
STOLL  
*Untitled*



# MYSELF TOO

Concurrent with the *MYSELF* exhibition, UNR undergraduate art students Andrew Griego and Michelle Lee organized *MYSELF TOO*, a large student exhibition of self-portraiture in which all students from any level or class were invited to participate in Front Door and McNamara Galleries. These six artists were selected by Griego and Lee as *Best of Show*; a difficult task that portrays only a small amount of the overall excellence of our art students!

# FROM THE CURATOR

To all the artists for their patience with such a large project –Thank you for your excellent artwork! To Joy Garnett and Mira Schor for their thoughtful essay and consistent support of artists and art; to Art Dept. Chair Howard Rosenberg; to Ahren Hertel and Jeremy Stern for their assistance and advice in the installation; to the Sheppard Gallery Team who made this show happen on all levels: Rachel Armstrong, Daniel Auerbach, Alana Berglund, Nikki Davis, Andrew Griego, Michelle Lee; to Chelsea Otakan for this formidable, gorgeous catalog and Diane Bacey and the fine folks at A. Carlisle for printing it; to the Art Department and Friends of Sheppard Gallery; and to Wendy Ricco, Erin McGarvey and CJ Walters for just about everything and more!

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## ON THE COVER

*Self Portrait with Piano*, Emma Bee Bernstein

*Let's Hear it for the Boy*, Josh Jordan

*The Headaches*, Teryn Loeb

*Untitled Figure #9 from the spitball series*, Joshua Stern

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