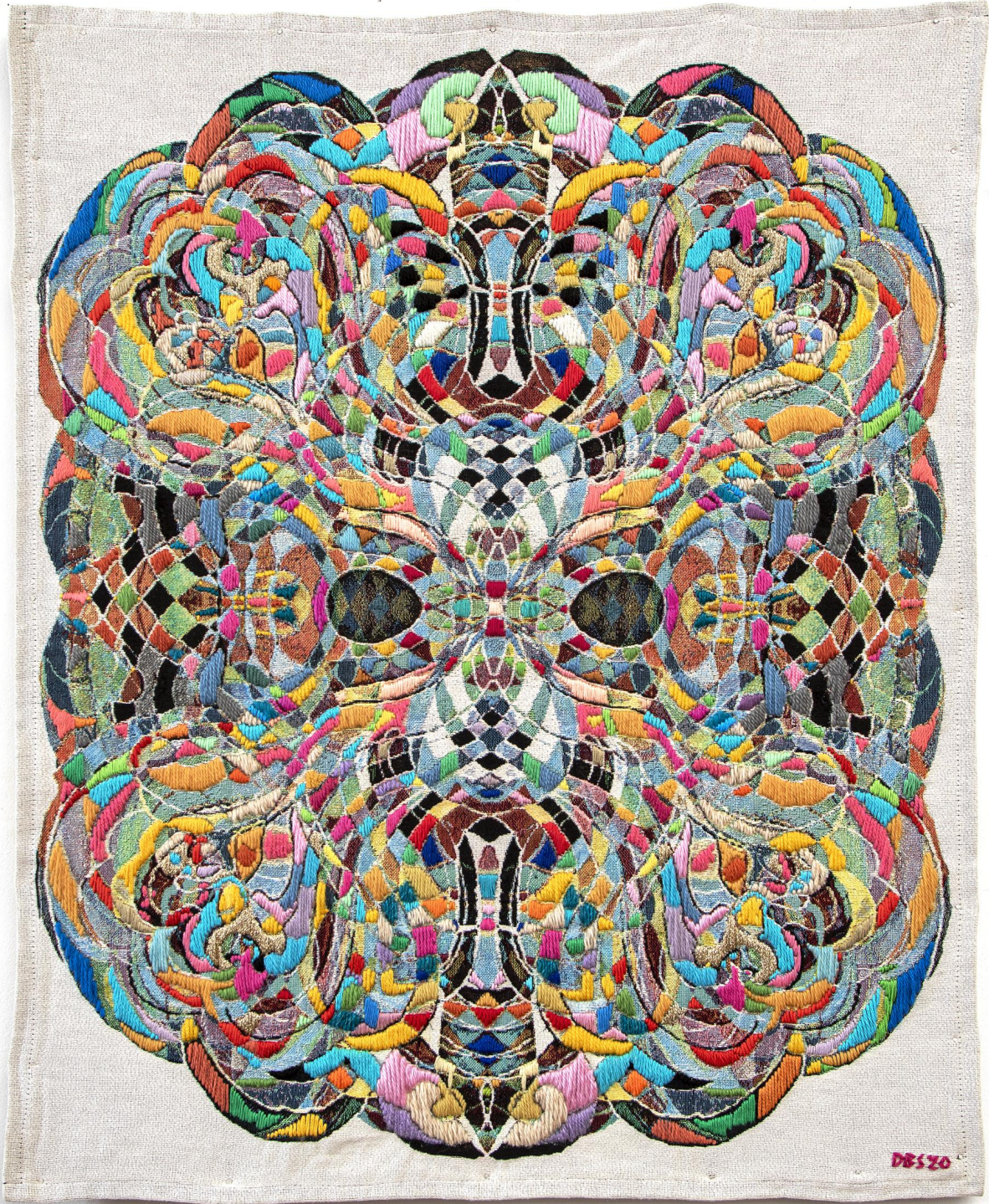


The Millay Colony for the Arts

BARNSWALLOW

WINTER 2021



David B. Smith, *Mask*, 2020

Welcome to the new year and the new world...

In supporting our “community of creators” — safely welcoming multidisciplinary artists for residencies while the pandemic raged — this *Barnswallow* presents a deep-dive into the experiences of seven of the 37 artists-in-residence who were selected to come to Steepletop in 2020. As always, the words and images of our residents speak eloquently as to how the gift of time and space impacted their work and lives, especially in midst of global and national crises. Reading the what, how, and why of their creative endeavors communicates an activist spirit along with a passion, sensitivity, and curiosity that speaks to the place and importance of artists in society. And, while making art can be many wonderful and wondrous things, it is also a consistently arduous pursuit, often lonely and difficult, without recognition or financial reward. Millay's mission of providing support, with no strings attached and free-of-charge, while ensuring a diverse and nurturing atmosphere, has always been wildly fulfilling. As cheesy as it sounds, #artcanhelp.

The power of healing and community was wonderfully present this holiday season as we gathered for our Zoom Cocktail Party Fundraiser on December 6th. The range of works presented by alums Yanyi (2018, poet), Nadia Liz Estela (2020, visual artist), Emi Makabe (2020, composer) and Ayeh Bandeh-Ahmad (2020, nonfiction writer) showcased the momentous power of the multidisciplinary, a hallmark of the Millay experience. For those of you in attendance and for those of you who donated, THANK YOU for making the night—and the cocktails—a delicious success!

Building on this online moment, we are pleased to announce the Millay Literary League! This monthly book club will feature an alum and one of their works to be read and discussed over a period of two months, with a group meeting each month. As our inaugural host, we are pleased that Emma Copley Eisenberg (2019) will steer us through her critically-acclaimed *The Third Rainbow Girl*. Centered on the unsolved murders of two young women traveling to a music festival in West Virginia, NPR offers: "*The Third Rainbow Girl* is a haunting and hard-to-characterize book about restless women and the things that await them on the road." Since the pandemic forced the cancellation of her book tour and countless public readings, we are delighted to feature Emma as our inaugural selection. More details to follow!

[Hear Emma read an excerpt >>](#)

In closing, we are heartened by alum David B. Smith's decision to make work that moves "away from the narratives of hopelessness and apocalypse and toward a place of dreaming, adventure, and possibility." As Millay enters the unknown landscape of nonprofits in 2021, we remain committed to the possibilities and the potential of artists. We trust the thought-filled insights provided by Bobby, Charles, David, Eli, J F K, Melissa, and Mokha serve as a ray of light as Winter (literally and figuratively) slowly recedes and Spring, as ever, brings the blossoms.

Stay well all, onward and upward.

Monika + Calliope

Co-Directors



David B. Smith, *Unseen*, 2020
Artist designed tapestries, polyester stuffing, thread
12" x 20"

David B. Smith

CHAOS + HEAVY LIFTING



David B. Smith, *Millay Map*, 2020
Textile and thread collage on canvas, 18 x 24 in

Millay gave me the opportunity to lean into my needs, desires, and rhythms at a time when this was difficult in my studio apartment shared with my partner and 2 cats in Brooklyn. The first part of my time there was filled with chaos and heavy lifting - processing half finished ideas, cutting fabric, collaging, sewing, layering and stuffing, I made 5 very dense pieces in my first 2 weeks and then hit a wall. I realized I couldn't go on this way and wanted to work with a lighter touch—to make work that was about the vast layers of identity, but that left space for the viewer to occupy the work. The resulting 5 pieces felt simple and open - with places for light and air to pass through.

At first it felt irresponsible to make light and cheerful work at this time, but then I realized that this is precisely what I wanted to do—to move away from the narratives of hopelessness and apocalypse and toward a place of dreaming, adventure, and possibility.

David wearing *Unseen* (2020), this piece can also be hung on the wall, and addresses issues of identity

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J F K Randhawa, *We are tied to each other and we are both falling backward* 2021

J F K Randhawa

BETWEEN + AT THE MOMENT
OF CROSSING BORDERS

In summer 2020, I drove with my partner across the U.S. from CA to NY I arrived at Millay as a member of the second 2020 covid-cohort (following the required quarantine), having left a dismantled life behind in Los Angeles. I was protesting the murders of Ahmad AuberyGeorge Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Andres Guardado, among others, and meanwhile conducting aural interviews with members of my Punjabi/Kenyan-Punjabi family who had been swept up in a colonial system of African disenfranchisement in British-occupied East Africa from the late 1890s until the late 1960s.

At Steepletop, our multigenerational cohort-pod gathered around Donna's incredible meals, bonfires, Green River currents, and forest hikes to share laughter, music, and ideas; at the same time, we grappled



J F K Randhawa, *Portrait*, 2020

with our bodies and relationships under immense external pressures. I focused on researching into and restructuring my lyric essay in-progress, a project exploring gender, millenarian rebellion, racial justice and assimilation, and settler-colonialism as these forces intersect my family's diasporic experience as farmers and government workers in North India, Kenya, and the UK.

While at Millay, I also worked on a series of visual and performative accompaniments to the writing, including one in a series of seven hand-embroidered tapestries replicating a photograph of my grandmother Jaswant Kaur (1932–2021), and filmed rituals later metabolized into a series of video poems.

An ekphrastic epistolary, the pieces that comprise this body of work are influenced by an ethics of rupture, desperation, and fugitivity, and are inflected by my own experience as a queer*, mixed-roots person in what Ana Louise Keating calls “the contact zone” between and at the moment of crossing borders.



J F K Randhawa, Screenshot of *exquisite braids: quarantine seeds*, a durational digital collaboration, 2020

Since my residency at Millay ended, I've moved multiple times, applied to graduate school, written letters, and started the process of forming a nonprofit press. I am working on fundraisers for organizations supporting farmers and laborers protesting the latest round of privatizing and debilitating farm bills in India, making loving spaces for my grief to occupy, and experimenting/playing with durational digital collaboration, video collage, and fabric paint.

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Charles Cohen, *Dunkn' Dozen*, 2020
Archival pigment prints, 13" x 19" each, ed.13

Charles Cohen

A RECORD OF HUMAN GESTURE

Walking is fundamental to both the theory and practice of my work. Afoot for extended periods, between points A and B, (usually from home in Manhattan over the bridge to studio in Queens) I am neither here nor there—both literally and figuratively unhindered by either state of mind, persona, or set of burdens. Detached, I can see myself seeing.

While studying cultural anthropology, I embraced the ethnographer's method—to blur the line between participation and observation for the sake of access and insight, not only into subject matter but also into contemporary life. Further, as a visual artist, between modalities, my practice seeks to erode the dualities on which our culture defines 'Self' and 'Other'.



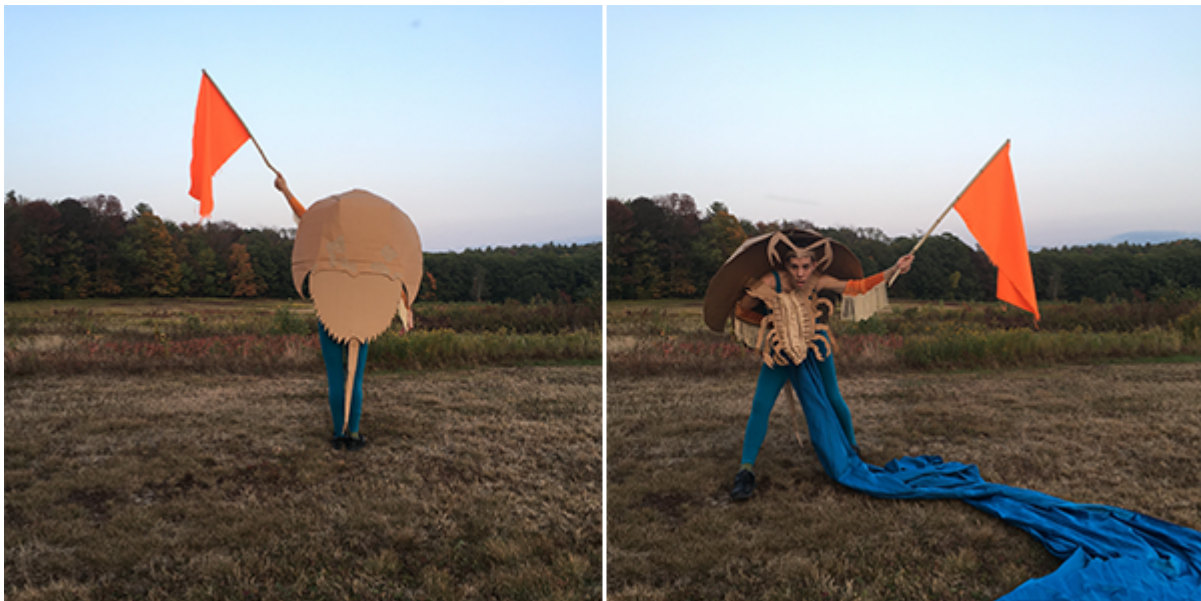
Being a pedestrian is anything but pedestrian. Windows, brick façades, thresholds, and my greatest indulgence, trash, are a record of human gesture, multiplied by consumerism and mechanical reproduction. Every Dunkin' bag begins indistinguishable from another but one touch with a user renders each vessel quintessentially unique.

I document the crumpled, trampled bags on-site (with a camera I keep with me) and silhouette one aspect, the distressed logo form, to distinguish its transformation. In the “cases” of soda, I physically collect (and scrub clean) the crushed and flattened cans to photograph them under homogeneous studio lighting.

The marks and gestures retained in the found objects offer a simple conclusion—the differences between the samples don’t disprove the similarity of behaviors but rather emphasize the connected nature of the participants. The collection of objects, reunited as images, co-authored with consumers and viewers, the origin and destination, directly addresses our shared human experience. In a dialogue about our own remains, we can recalibrate our system of values by surrendering to the recursive nature of human behavior.

Until my time at Millay I had not put this investigation into its own context. On one of the lush walks from the barn to dinner, I realized that nature, with its magnitude of copies and micro variations of leaves, blades of grass, snowflakes, and clouds is not only similar to my preoccupation with present-day artifacts but the governing force. Millay exists between the point As and Bs of daily life—so at the top of the hill I found a generous audience in my new friend and great writer, Bryon MacWilliams, to whom I could recount my epiphany. If only we would appreciate our discarded bits and iterative structures as a subset of a natural fractal expression then we might understand that all dualities, like the nature-nurture dichotomy, or self and other, are fictions invented by a small self at one end of a walk.

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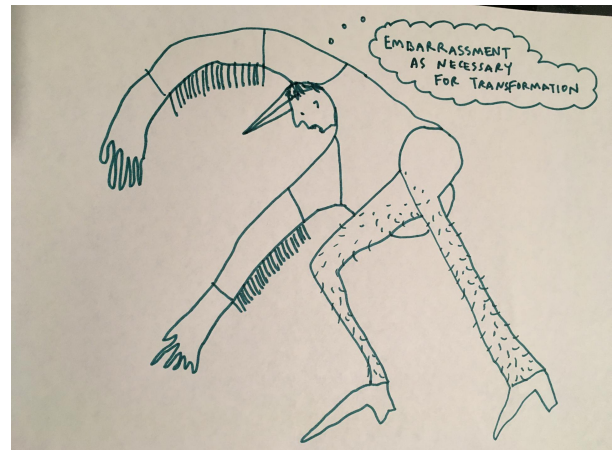
Eli Nixon, *Naturedrag*, 2020

Eli Nixon

BEASTLY-BEYOND-BINARY

My proposal for "Bloodtide", a new holiday in homage to horseshoe cabs, complete with an illustrated manual for enacting the holiday in a multitude of forms, will be published by **3rd Thing Press** in October. Spending part of September at Millay was instrumental to the development of this work and, hopefully eventually, the manifestation of this holiday's commemoration everywhere. Vincent's Steepletop vapors fueled my explorations into Naturedrag, while the landscape provided a blazing autumnal audience of trees for my awkward, beastly-beyond-binary embodiments.

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Eli Nixon, *Embarassment*, 2020



The Vincent Prize

SUPPORTING TRANS* + GENDERQUEER ARTISTS

The Vincent Prize will be presented annually and is dedicated to supporting critical work by trans* and genderqueer writers, visual artists, filmmakers and composers; it is **open to alumni** as well as new applicants and includes a stipend of \$400. Work considered may be multidisciplinary, highlighting particular challenges facing trans* creators, whose work is often ignored silenced/excluded and otherwise marginalized. We encourage contemporary queer art-making that takes risks and is not confined by outside expectation of what trans* art should be.

There are many barriers that make it difficult for trans* and genderqueer artists to be able to participate in residency programs. With your support, together we can create a safe and nurturing community where trans* creators can immerse themselves in the creation of new works that would otherwise not be possible.

HELL YES!

DONATE



Melissa Hacker, Still from *Falling*, 2020
The statue at Millay superimposed over trees at Playa, OR

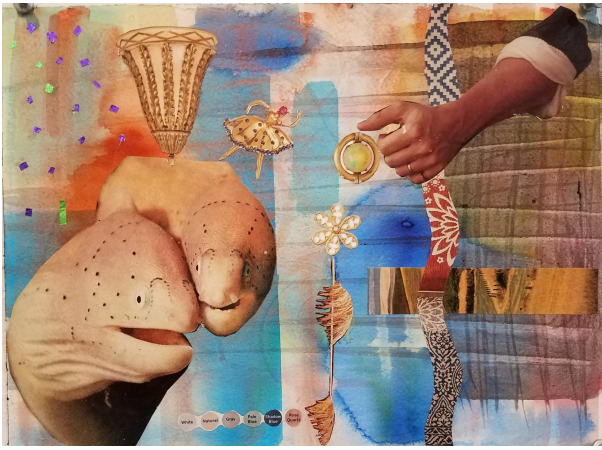
Melissa Hacker

JET LAG WITHOUT TRAVEL

September at Millay came at just the right time. Although I am a native New Yorker, city born and raised, pandemic New York is different, and I very much needed a change.

I had planned to design animations, and I ended up working on something unexpected. For the same film, I read my grandfather's just translated diaries and immersed myself in early 20th century Vienna, where he traveled from a village in the Bukovina to attend university. By the end of my time at Millay he had survived the WWI siege of Przemyśl, and was planning his escape from a prisoner of war camp in Siberia.

I brought with me a tiny toy video camera that I took on daily walks, and a few old magazines, paper and watercolors. Every morning, before sitting at the computer, I would play. It felt right to pin morning collages to the studio walls, evidence that I was making things. In January a composer friend asked me to collaborate on a music video, and I sifted through years of toy camera footage to make *Falling*, an "introspective fantasia on Autumn Leaves".



Melissa Hacker, *Collage 2020*

A few weeks after Millay, I started teaching a month-long documentary film editing class, remotely from home, in Yangon, Myanmar. With the time difference, I teach 10pm-1am, which is trickier than I imagined, jet lag without travel. Because covid logistics, I taught half of the students in November, and started teaching the second half on January 27. On February 1st, the military took over the country and arrested the leaders of the National League for Democracy, which had won November elections by a landslide. The students want to learn, so as long as there is internet, I'm teaching, and learning from them, and very much hoping for a positive outcome.



Bobby Ge, Recording session with the Bergamot Quartet

Bobby Ge

THE PROCESS OF STAR FORMATION

As tiring as it was to see Facebook fill with hackneyed posts about pandemics inspiring productivity ("Shakespeare wrote some of his best works during a pandemic!" read one gaudy motivational post), 2020 was, for me, a surprisingly fulfilling year from an artistic standpoint. I have always tended to be most productive when boarded up inside my room, and lockdown left me with little choice but to compose.

The tail end of 2020, beginning with my time at the Millay in October (as the first recipient of the Charm City Fellowship), was especially full of creativity. It was wonderful spending time with the other fellows at the colony, sharing meals, taking walks, and enjoying one another's creative work. I was able to complete *The Light That Breaks Through*, a new concerto for piano and strings inspired by the colony's extraordinary campus. That piece has since garnered some acclaim, winning 2nd place in the 2021 Red Note Composition Competition and being selected for performance in the 5th Alfred Schnittke Composition Competition.

November and December were spent on two projects: 1) finishing graduate school applications, and 2) working with the inimitable Bergamot Quartet in producing *Celeste Forma*, a music video about star formation created with the Space Telescope Science Institute and filmmaker Caroline Xia.



Bobby Ge, *Celeste Forma*, 2020

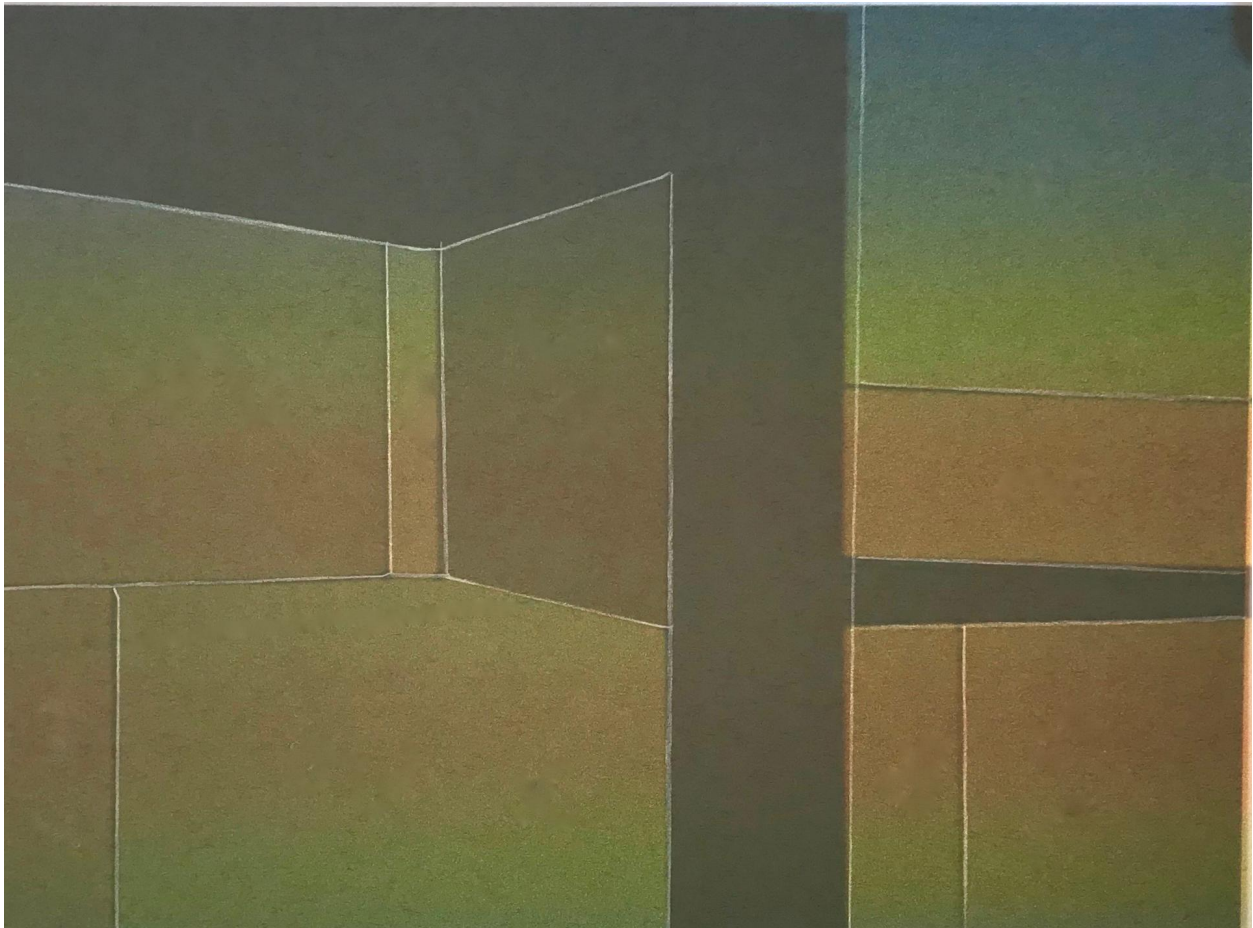
Since then, I've dedicated my energy to completing other cross-disciplinary projects: *Red*, a piano trio based on a triptych of digital artworks by a friend; *Yappie*, an original musical created in collaboration with writer Jenny C. Lares; and *a mere breath*, a solo violin piece based on Psalm 39, commissioned by Deus Ex Musica for violinist Wendy Case. I'm currently breaking ground on a new commission for Music From Copland

House as part of their CULTIVATE fellowship program; the piece is based on painter (and fellow Milly resident!) Mokha Laget's Moroccan Capriccio.

In my off time, my partner, my brother, and I have been trying out new cookie recipes, trying to learn how to cut each other's hair, and binging TV series (lately, it's been Adventure Time, The Queen's Gambit, and Community).



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Mokha Laget, *Interior Study*, 2020
Conte crayon and colored pencil, 9" x 12"

Mokha Laget

INTANGIBLE + AMBIGUOUS

My studio practice has been marked by a slower and deeper approach to process during this pandemic and a new focus on larger, more existential concerns, a feeling of reconnecting to a universal humanity through the common language of art. This time has also allowed me more exuberant experimentation, both conceptually and with materials and techniques I had not considered for some time.

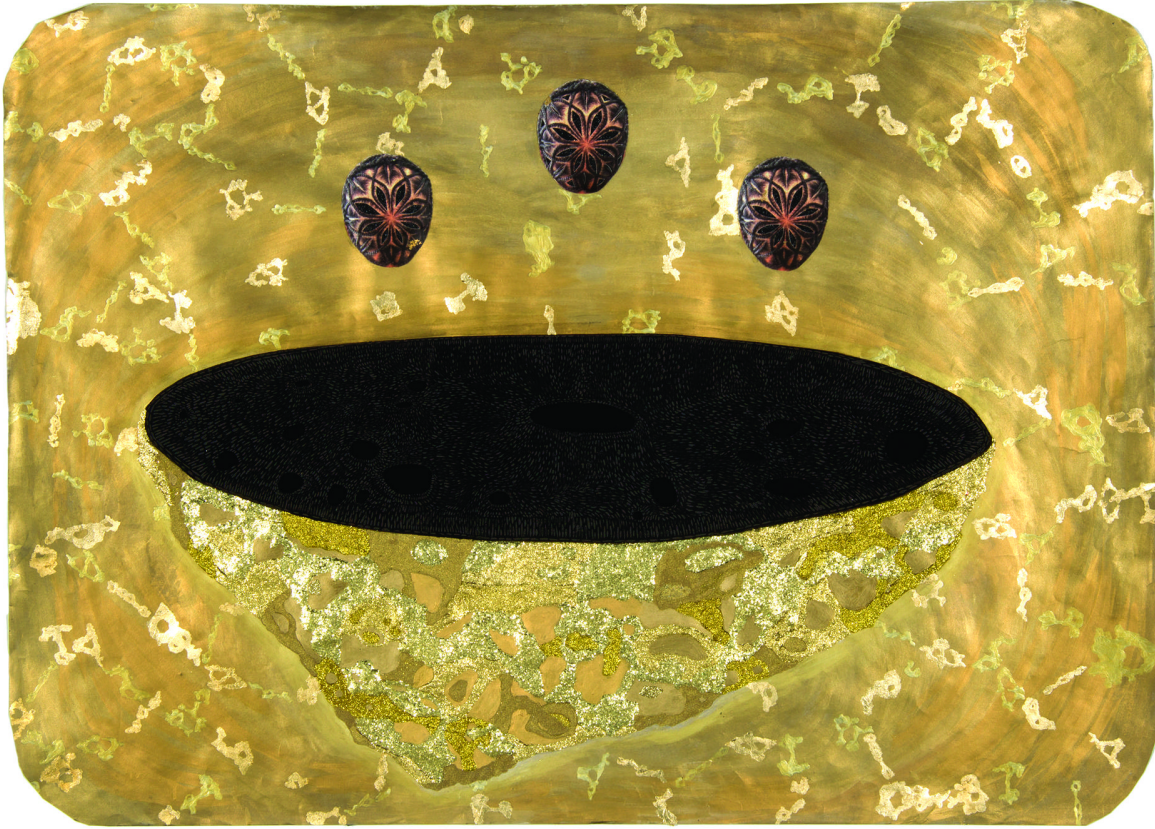
I work in a totally off grid home and studio that I built years ago on a mountaintop in New Mexico. I joked that it would be the perfect refuge in a crisis, but never imagined it would become a pandemic hideaway. I feel very fortunate to be here. The wild emptiness fills me with hope and a sense that anything is possible. The eye is not encumbered by any obstacles therefore my mind can roam freely



Working at Millay was the antithesis of the desert, with its dense greenery and riotous Fall colors. It was an intense sensory experience that allowed me to return to my NM studio with a fresh eye. But it was our pod that made this experience truly awesome.

I am an aesthetic wanderer, looking for what is intangible and ambiguous, pushing myself and the materials. Covid-19 has not fundamentally altered that.

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Alisa Sikelianos-Carter, *Venus is the Cauldron | Black is the Beginning*

EDNA Vincent 2019

MILLAY COLONY'S ANNUAL JOURNAL OF ART-IN-RESIDENCE



We are proud to share the latest issue of [EDNA Vincent](#), newly-premiered highlights of Art-in-Residence from 2019!

EDNA Vincent 2019 features cover art by Alisa Sikelianos-Carter, and inside you can find works by visual artists Max Adrian, Jeremiah Barber, Rina AC Dweck, Erika Kari McCarthy, Meg Stein, Amy Vensel, Jayoung Yoon, and composer Timo Vollbrecht, as well as writing by Bonnie Chau, Jacqueline Goldfinger, and Aurora Masum-Javed. There's even a special alumni feature by Seema Yasmin.

[Check out EDNA Vincent 2019 >>](#)

Support Millay Colony

We need art and artists more than ever.

We need YOU more than ever.

As we strive to expand support for a diversity of multidisciplinary creators, we are ever more dependent on individual contributions as the reality of post-pandemic foundation funding and government grants are less secure than ever.

We offer various levels for you to join us, please consider a donation of any amount.

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