

W H Y

A N D A L

What

The Why Annual is an exhibition of objects made by twenty-first century people, most, but not all, based in Austin, Texas. Exhibited are objects we comonly call art, like pictures, along with objects that could be called art, but aren't always, like chairs.

Where

Northern-Southern
1900-B East 12th Street
Austin, Texas

When

August 18-September 12, 2018

Who

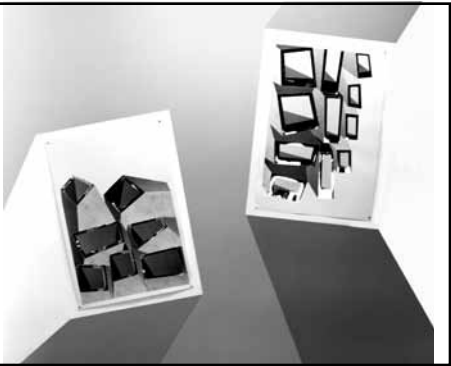
In order of appearance in this zine:

Donya Stockton
Ryan Sandison Montgomery
Gretchen Phillips
Adreon Denson Henry
Matt Macomber
Robert Jackson Harrington
Cattywampus Press
Alyssa Taylor Wendt
Elaine I-Ling Shen
Rachel Freeman
Leslie Webb
Kel Brown
Deb Norris
Stella Alesi
Beth Schindler
Amanda Julia Steinback
Mike Reddy
Phillip Niemeyer

Curated by Phillip Niemeyer
Installation design by Phillip Niemeyer & Rachel Freeman

Who, What, Where

BACK ROOM



Robert Jackson Harrington

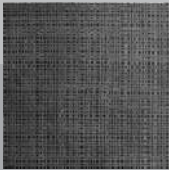


Gretchen Phillips



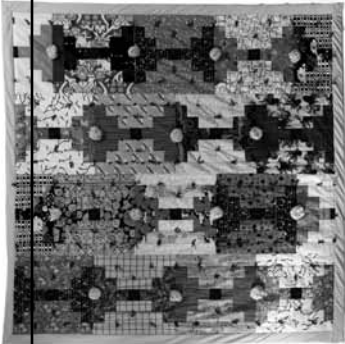
Cattywampus Press

Adreon Denson Henry



Donya Stockton

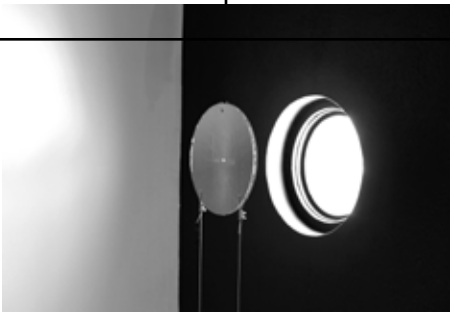
FRONT ROOM



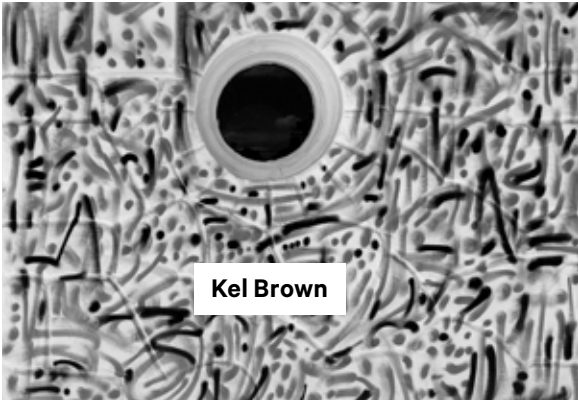
Matt Macomber



Ryan Sandison Montgomery

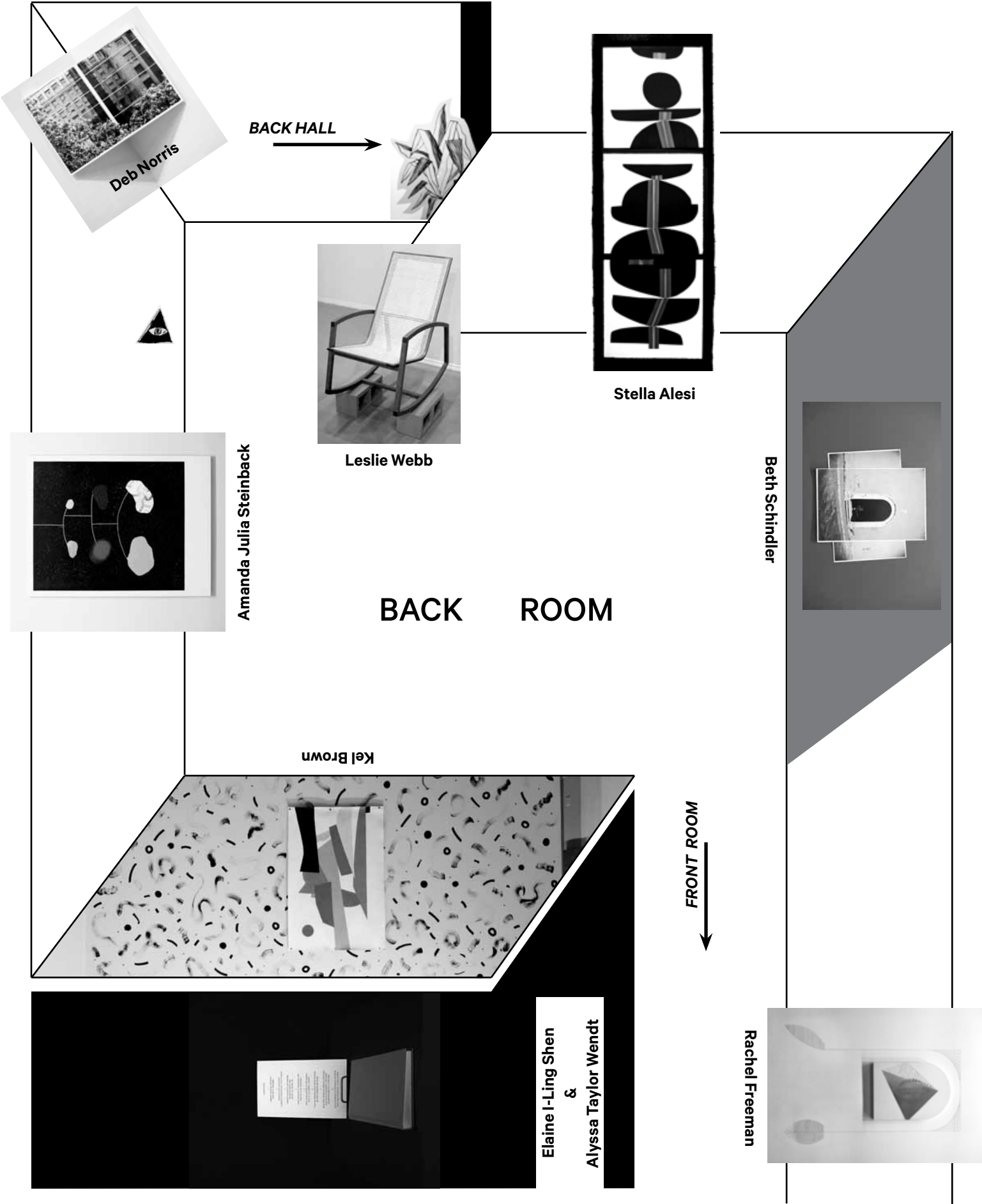


NS



Kel Brown

Who, What, Where



Who, What, Where

BATHROOM



Phillip Niemeyer



Beth Schindler

BACK HALL



Rachel Freeman

Mike Reddy

BACK ROOM



Why

Each participant is asked two questions:

Why do you make art?

Why did you make this art?

Donya Stockton

Moore, Oklahoma, 1973

Why do you make baskets?

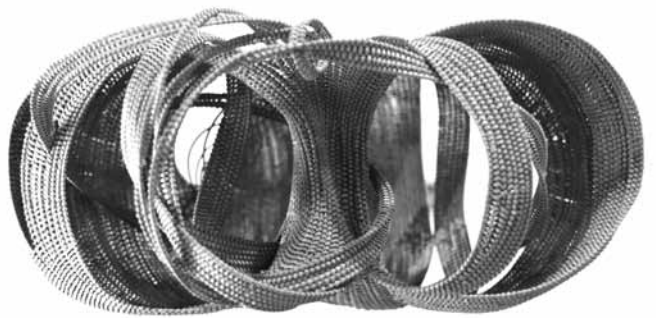
Well.. I guess the best answer I've got is that from the first basket I ever I made (1996...? A ribbed basket with natural materials), I felt a real connection to the materials and the medium. It immediately felt like this is what my hands were made to do.

I've tried almost every style/type/tradition and I love them all (with the possible exception of coiling which I feel is my weak link). It helps that most of the techniques come pretty easily, I might not like it as much otherwise ;)

Why this basket?

Because I needed to make another one (or five) for that show at Northern-Southern 🤔

But seriously, I had some ideas I wanted to work through, so this one ended up as a sampler of sorts. There's a lot going on in this thing- trying to see how far I can push the swirls and twists. It was a lot of fun to work on.



Number 47

2018

cane and reed basket weaving

Ryan Sandison Montgomery

Boston, Massachusetts, 1981

Why are you making art?

Because I get cranky when I don't.

Why did you make *Knees*?

When I was a child I blew out the knees on all my jeans. It still happens but I usually turn them into jorts or discard them right away.



Knees
2018
plexi, denim, wire

Gretchen Phillips

Galveston, TX, 1963

Why are you constantly making all the things you make (music, furniture, photos...)?

Everyone in my family is constantly creating something new. Clearly it is in my DNA. I have no choice.

Why did you take these pictures?

I know Paul Soileau and Silas Howard from two completely different times and places in my life. It makes me feel so rich that my friends are friends with each other and find inspiration from each other. I took these pictures in order to document my prosperity.



Paul and Silas Before
2012
black and white silver gelatin print

Paul and Silas After
2012
black and white silver gelatin print

Adreon Denson Henry

Bryan, Texas, 1975

Why do you make art?

I find pleasure in production. Being drawn to the visual aspects of objects at a young age; I set out to make things that hold value solely in the aesthetics—it's just been something I've always had an interest in and, in effect, have done...

My current drive comes from the desire to communicate thoughts, statements, and/or feelings through a universal visual language while pushing my own boundaries and techniques. By doing so I hope to produce unique work that will enrich the time and place in which we live.

Why did you make these particular pieces?

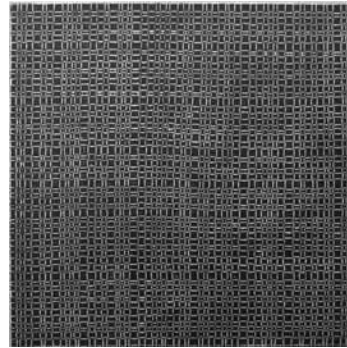
Besides their medium, the three pieces of mine in this exhibition share one commonality: They were born from experimentation of technique. *Conversations in the Sitting Room* (oval) uses a different application process than similar pieces, which are circular in shape. The vinyl strips in circular paintings overlap in a clockwise pattern while the strips of vinyl on this piece were applied with a criss-cross method. The oval piece also uses variable widths of vinyl (unlike circular pieces) and the oblong shape is a first for me. Most of my woven work is measured and cut into straight strips before weaving. With *Dreaming In Tongues* I let the pattern dictate the cut/shape of the strips. *The Little Things* incorporates a refined weaving approach where each of the strips of vinyl do not exceed .75". This lends to a purely textural aesthetic, more likened to a magnified swatch of weathered cloth or fabric.



Conversations in the Sitting Room
2018
acrylic/vinyl

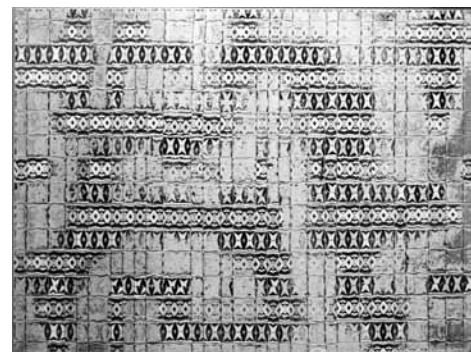
While contemplating the shape of the oval I ran across a box of old photographs from the 60s and 70s. I sat in my studio and looked through images of strangers' life

events: weddings, birthdays, Christmases, etc. I began to notice the wallpaper of a particular living room that was in a majority of the photos. The baroque gold leaf pattern seemed to enrich each occurrence. This inspired me to produce a similar pattern, transfer it onto a different medium and reinvent a familiar technique, aiming to encapsulate a little of the past while enriching the present.



The Little Things
2018
acrylic/vinyl

This piece took a lot of time to cut and weave. While I was doing this my mind began to wonder... Why use such small strips? For a refined aesthetic was the conclusion I came to. It dawned on me that there is a parallel within our own lives and experiences; Each strip woven together like the little things in our lives, creating a blanket of memory made of things that we don't appreciate until they're gone.



Dreaming In Tongues
2016
acrylic/vinyl

I'm fascinated by different religions and beliefs. During the production of this piece I was reading a lot about Aborigines and their focus on dreams. The patterns were designed to reflect indigenous societies/cultures. The sanding pattern incorporates shapes and patterns found in pictographs and tribal art, which happens to be similar to characters found in Aboriginal folklore. Basically this piece celebrates the diversity of beliefs found within indigenous cultures.

Matt Mocomber

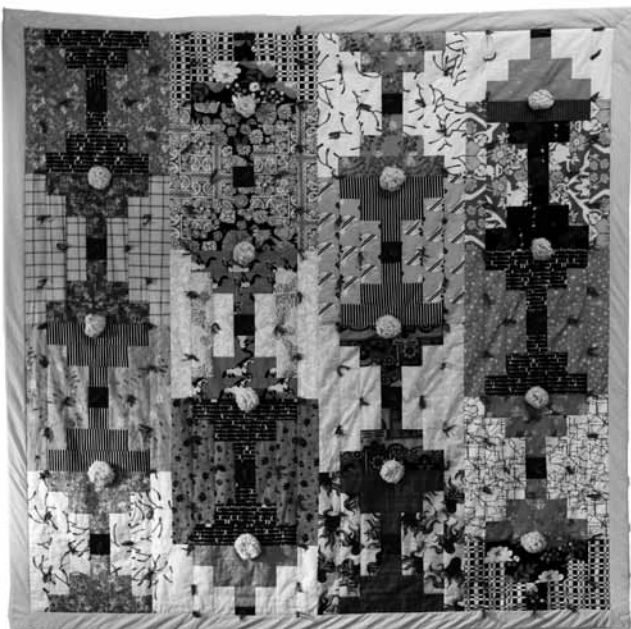
Stanwood, Washington, 1984

Why do you make quilts?

Quilts as a medium allow me to create colorful, graphic compositions within a material and process I have become comfortable working in. The creative options are nearly limitless and there are so many different techniques that can be used in the process, there is always something to learn. I am also drawn to the connection quilting has to history, there are many 19th century quilts that are surprisingly modern looking and graphic in their composition.

Why did you make this quilt?

This quilt is the second in a series of color and value exploration using the traditional courthouse steps block. Once the quilt top was assembled, I decided to play up the exaggerated scale of the patchwork in its finishing using elements found in vintage scrap quilts; The red ties, large pom poms, wide binding, and using a worn out quilt as the middle (batting) layer. This quilt was an experiment to see if enough contrast could make odd combinations of color, pattern, and texture work together.



Exaggeration

2018

cotton fabric, cotton thread, cotton yarn, cotton batting
60 x 60 inches

Robert Jackson Harrington

Ysleta, TX, 1974

Why do you make art?

I have no choice. I have this innate need to make things with my hands, drawings, sculpture, what have you. I've been making things for as long as I can remember. I imagine it's an ingrained habit really, almost like trimming your nails. It needs to get done or shit gets out of hand.

Why did you make these particular pieces?

These pieces belong to a new body of work I've recently started. I am attempting to make this work do two things. First, I want it to read as aesthetically pleasing, simple geometric shapes that create a sense of depth and illusion. Second, by coupling the idea that art is not neutral in anyway to the work it can then be critically understood conceptually. That is to say, I understand that most artwork is not dogmatic or didactic on its surface with an initial viewing. We can still consider a paintings brushwork, palette or sense of light and shade, but I no longer believe that an artwork is autonomous of its creator or the time in which it was made. Artwork is not context-less. We live in an era of meta-data where everything must be considered and acknowledge to anything.

Given that, Northern-Southern invited me to show work in their space and consider thoughtfully the wall that the work would hang on. Fully aware of exactly where Northern-Southern is located (12th and Chicon), the local politics revolving around East-Austin (gentrification) and how as Latinx, my work might read in that space, I felt that titling was vital in completing the work, vital to how it would read both aesthetically and conceptually and therefore justify my showing the work there.

I considered the term "wall" in our national context and how the word has taken on so many associations for me now. I wanted to consider this wall as an abstraction of immigration policy pursued by the Republican establishment headed and championed specifically by Donald Trump. I want the viewer to understand this work as a gesture to undermine that policy and fight it.



Robert Jackson Harrington

Imagined cenote for the Chihuahuan Desert established as a passageway to subvert artificial and obsolete obstacles that hinder the journey of human fruit seeking ways to flower

2018

acrylic on wall

As you escape the dangers of your home invaded by aliens of the north seeking only to exploit and rob you, remember these landmarks as you traipse along. Above, they try to stop, remove, and even kill. These markers serve to guide, they serve as a beacon that leads to a promise of dignity to your life. Northern Marker No. 2 or the open gate

2018

torn paper collage on paper

30 × 40 inches

As you escape the dangers of your home invaded by aliens of the north seeking only to exploit and rob you, remember these landmarks as you traipse along. Above, they try to stop, remove, and even kill. These markers serve to guide, they serve as a beacon that leads to a promise of dignity to your life. Southern Marker No. 1 or the promised path

2018

torn paper collage on paper

30 × 40 inches

Daedelus Hoffman

Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1982

Why do you make what you make?

Exploring the intersection of formalist inquiry and meaning-making, my art practice seeks to both disarm and entertain with humor, irreverence, and a willful misuse of culture. Pathologically collaborative, I work with other artists, designers, writers, and activists to create identities such as the artists collective HIX, the renegade contemporary art project space DIRTY DARK PLACE, and the artist-run micro-publisher Cattywampus Press. Through these identities we produce projects that interrogate the relationship between place, identity, and history as they feed and form Southerness.

Why did you make the books *Animals I Shot at Cabela's* and *Various Small Fireworks Stands*?

Captured in one frantic and unflinching fit on March 5, 2017 at a “premium outdoor gear and sporting goods store” in Buda, Texas, *Animals I Shot at Cabela's*, is a contemporary meditation on the century-old relationship between snapshot photography, hunting, and taxidermy. Armed with only our smartphones, we undertook this photographic safari as a means of coming to terms with the misuse of nature in a consumerist landscape and as an act of protest against this fraudulent context. Focusing its sights on the gazes, gestures, and bodies of a hundred of the countless creatures on display, this book disrupts big-box pastoralism while also looking deeply into strange but familiar tableaux.

During the July 4th weekend, we took a road trip around the Texas triangle documenting every fireworks stand we encountered with disposable, point and shoot cameras. This book is evidence of that journey with 22 full color photographs hand bound together into a matchbook style artists' book. An homage to one of our heroes, Ed Ruscha, *Various Small Fireworks Stands* is also an examination of rural architecture, commerce, and tradition.

Lindsay Starr

Las Vegas, Nevada, 1982

Why do you make books?

My work explores the intersectionality of communication design and publishing and how those two practices can merge in support of contemporary art, artists, and culture. The book, as an object, is an accessible and relatable form capable of reaching both high and low culture. Partially because of this public nature, I use the form and concept of the book as a framework for organizing and disseminating thoughts, beliefs, and inspirations into the public.

Why did you make *Failed Southern Ladies*?

I made *Failed Southern Ladies* as an homage to the cultural critic, Florence King and her book, *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady*, a memoir in which King attacks the notion that all women from the South should be clean, white, and persistently languid in manner. *Failed Southern Ladies* pushes this discourse further by combining FSA period photographs with existing feminist scholarship into a tactile publication that continues the work of debunking this problematic myth of the Southern Belle.



Cattywampus Press

Animals I Shot at Cabela's
edition of 100

Failed Southern Ladies
edition of 25

Various Small Fireworks Stands

Alyssa Taylor Wendt

New York City, New York, 1969

Why do you make art (art is the closest term to encompass all the things you both make—film, ceramics, images, performances, graphic designs...)?

To stay sane.
To complicate the conversation.
To heal where other methods have failed.
To share the dark arcane lens with which I view the world and encourage abstract questioning.

Why did you make this book?

Fascinated with acts of the divine, occult fortune-telling and elements of chance, I wanted to have a self-guided interactive piece that esoteric possibility layered with the humor and accidental wisdom of popular culture. I made a similar piece in 2008 about hubris in a Norman Mailer book that served as a springboard for the collaboration with Elaine. The best work to me incorporates self reflection and relational aesthetics, both of which are triggered by *Divination Station CCCLX*. After the first installation in 2017, I was thrilled when I visited the homes of my peers and friends and saw some of the fortune-pages framed, on their refrigerator, annotated or just saved.



Elaine I-Ling Shen

Austin, Texas, 1977

Why do you make art (art is the closest term to encompass all the things you both make—film, ceramics, images, performances, graphic designs...)?

I make art to ask questions and get acquainted with the unknown. The studio is my laboratory. My father's side of the family is full of scientists so maybe this way of thinking is in my blood.

Why did you make this book?

Divination Station CCCLX is the result of circumstance—the convergence of a specific time, place, and ideas. The book took shape while Alyssa and I were making work for a collaborative show that would open in January of 2017. The month of January typically marks a period for self-reflection and an emphasis on the future. That winter felt especially hazy. We were entering a new year under a heavy cloud of uncertainty because of the recent presidential election. With the timing of our show and general state of affairs, it seemed fitting and necessary to create a platform for finding answers, however big or small.

The book works on multiples levels—macro/micro, cosmic/human, solemn/comic. Each page presents a single fortune as a quote pulled from literature, philosophy, science, art, music or popular culture. The selected quotes are full of meaning but open-ended enough to allow for interpretation. As a visceral gesture, tearing out the page is a huge part of the piece. The crisp sound of fibers separating and distinct pull of paper resisting takes the experience out of your head and into your body. Hopefully, you walk away feeling ownership of the page and those words.

Elaine I-Ling Shen & Alyssa Taylor Wendt

Divination Station CCCLX (2017/2018)

2017/18

interactive book

6 × 9 × 1 inches

Rachel Freeman

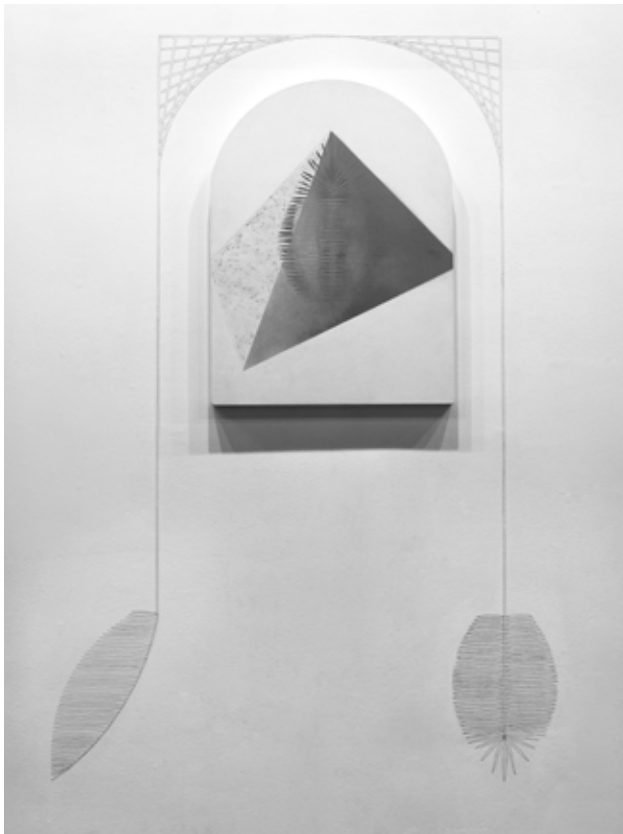
Greenville, NC, 1989

Why do you make art?

Making art aligns me with my soul purpose. I aim to find ways to apply it to every facet of life. Creative drive keeps me excited, fulfilled and moving forward. The process of making art is an incredible escape from everyday noise. It challenges me to think critically and consciously, and leads to continual self-discovery.

Why did you make this art?

This piece stemmed from the curiosity of where açai comes from. I was stubborn on the vision but flexible on the details. It evolved from a drawing into a painting into an installation. I used this piece as an opportunity to play with a variety of mediums that I don't typically work with. I enjoyed the process of not knowing where I'm going but knowing how to get there.



açai bowl

2018

phosphorescent acrylic, nail polish, gloss medium, spray paint, micron, copic sketch marker

wall drawing

2018

Leslie Webb

Georgetown, TX, 1978

Why do you make furniture?

To say that I chose furniture making is not quite accurate. It chose me. One of the clearest memories I have is cutting a piece of wood for the very first time. In reality I was not making anything terribly exciting – a shipping crate for a painting. I felt this nervous excitement as the saw blade sank into the two by four. Despite my best efforts, a concept that had been hammered into me during my parochial school education – that each of us has a calling – had eluded me. But in those few seconds, it instantaneously shifted into reality. And my life came into focus in a way I never expected.

Why did you make the Linda Lou Rocker?

I was intrigued by the idea of making a contemporary rocking chair partly due to the technical challenge. Chairs, in general, are the most complex piece of furniture to design and make. They must be strong; they must be comfortable; and they need to look good from many different viewing angles. Additionally, I felt that many rocking chairs looked like regular chairs that were stuck on rockers, especially ones with a more modern aesthetic. I decided to integrate the curve of the rockers throughout the chair. Additionally, I wanted to keep the look as clean as possible so I eliminated every part that was not essential.



Linda Lou Rocker

2017

rift sawn cherry and rattan caning

Kel Brown

Chicago, Illinois, 1988

Why do you draw and paint?

For my health

Why did you make these pieces?

Believe it or not, I haven't painted in about a month, so this piece is long over due.



Echo
2018
acrylic on canvas
36 × 24 inches

untitled mural
2018
acrylic on wall
9.5 × 9.5 feet

Deb Norris

Detroit, Michigan, 1966

Why do you take photos?

I love the magic and mystery of shooting on film—you never know what you're going to get until you see the prints. I also love still photography as a documentary medium because it is both finite and infinite—it captures discreet moments in time and history, yet a single frame can yield an infinite number of interpretations based on each viewer's own unique perspective.

Why did you take this photo?

I was randomly on this balcony and was struck by the visual of my small image against the beautiful, enormous reflection from the opposite building. I had already been thinking about ways to take a self portrait where I would appear in the frame but not actually have my image be the primary point of reference. This seemed like a perfect opportunity and I happened to have a camera with me so I snapped one shot.



Self Portrait
2015
black and white film print, 35mm film camera

Stella Alesi

Long Island, New York, 1963

Why do you make art or why do you paint?

If I knew the answer to this first question I might know the answers to all of life's secrets.

I paint because before me there was Picasso and Van Gogh, Rothko and Ellsworth Kelly.

Why did you make this series of pieces?

This series of work, which I have come to call, "the simplicity series", follows a previous series where the system of creation was densely repetitive and more heavily worked. With these new pieces, I am working towards creating a few basic forms that brought together in a simple manner bring a sense of calm, balance and contemplation. The pieces on display here, for the why-annual, are studies for larger paintings. The studies are intended to allow an exhaustion of ideas and let the cream rise to the top. They also allow me to experiment with surface, application and production issues in general.

from *The Simplicity Series*

2018

oil, wax, and making tape on oil paper

22½ × 22½ inches each (four available)



Beth Schindler

Kerrville, Texas, 1978

Why do you take photos?

I am a tactile and nostalgic person. Holding these moments in time soothe me.

Why did you take these photos?

Yukatan—That tree is in VIP

Mike P at the Carwash—We were partying



Yukatan

2015

2 digital prints of 35 mm film photograph arranged



Mike P at the Carwash

2015

digital print of 35 mm film photograph

Amanda Julia Steinback

Evansville, IN, 1984

Why did you create?

A many utilitied practice... honoring my oldest truth, searching for my pure voice, burning off emotional energies that cannot be articulated, trying to understand the worlds inside of me butting up against the worlds outside of me. I still can't tell if it's me trying to find my way through your door or invite you through mine.

Why did you make *irregular Orbiter*?

The sudden unexpected loss of a distant family member had me trying to pinpoint the exact moment my childhood had ended, a process that made me acutely aware of the speed in which time is flinging all of us toward the great forever nothing/everything. And why does that speed seem to increase the further from childhood we travel? Can we slow down? Panic attack.



Irregular Orbiter

2017

acrylic, moss, spraypaint on wood panel

36 x 48 inches

Mike Reddy

Reston, Virginia, 1974

Why do you draw?

It's a compulsion—I draw every second I get, usually in sketchbooks, but often on whatever scraps I can find—it's the way I process the world. When I'm sketching, I find myself looking for patterns, characters, new landscapes, and things that make me laugh.

I've recently gotten into taking my sketches and re-drawing them with metal nib pens on newsprint. Using a challenging tool on an unforgiving surface leads to a lot of bleeding and wobbly lines. It's a cheap material, so I can mess up a lot and just keep what I like. That said, my favorite drawings have some really good/bad elements. These are often the result of trying really hard and still failing. I worked for many years doing graphic design intended for a very broad audience, so drawing has been a place I've reserved to make weird work that might only appeal to me.

Why do you draw this stuff?

A lot of the drawings in this show are my reaction to being a relative newcomer in Texas. My move here three years ago coincided with going freelance, so I found myself wandering the backyard, or on a hot empty street during the day, or staring at house plants. So I'm all of that combined with the things I've always been obsessed with: social status, street fashion, boozing, inspirational quotes, mid-century art rehashing, isolation, and apocalyptic fears. I try to keep it a mix of bleak and positive for my own sanity.

The opportunity to do a lot of small drawings to paste on the wall for this show I found really liberating. It's close to what I do as an illustrator in that it serves a certain purpose, then is crumpled up and discarded. It reminds me of the drawings in the margins of *Mad Magazine*, my earliest drawing influence. In that context, it's very fitting that these images are found in the hallway to the bathroom.



drawings on newsprint

2018

acrylic and india ink on newsprint

Phillip Niemeyer

San Antonio, Texas, 1973

Why do you make things?

“Whys” change. Like my friend Adrian says, we sometimes do not know why we do things until they are done.

In the beginning of a project, I pretend to consider all the advantages and disadvantages, then do whatever I do.

While I am working on something, I ask why should it be this way or that way. Simple moves can be critical, like the quality of a line.

If the outlines of the project, partially complete, suggest something beautiful may emerge, I am joy. The most tedious work is pleasure. To be creative with friends, and to spend effort helping others similarly motivated... that's every cliché of happiness for me.

Projects flow together. Ideas, like Tetris blocks, fall upon us. We pile them into a shapes of sense. A conversation, a random book, bolts from the blue all converge to make some new combined thing. An idea made real, like a life, is its own reason.

Why did you organize the WHY ANNUAL?

Northern–Southern had a hole in the schedule. *Why Annual* popped from a pencil onto a piece of paper and stuck. The name defined the show.

Every exhibition creates a new community. This one is a diverse mix with much in common. We all make things—compulsively, joyfully, thoughtfully. Each person in this show inspires me.

In the completed show are certain motifs: portals, tumbling constructions, bifurcated ovals... All the work seems to talk and listen. It's a good conversation.

The logo is a cut up of the Whitney Biennial logo by Experimental Jet Set, it's a homage collage. For a graphic designer interested in art, designing for the Whitney Biennial is the ultimate feather in the cap. Texas 90s DIY taught me to decorate gas station gimme caps with grackle feathers.

Why did you make *The Past and Present are Future?*

I have been wanting to commission something for Northern–Southern's bathroom for awhile. I was not sure who to ask: “Hey, want to put your art up next to

the toilet?” With the *Why Annual*, I decided I would do some art myself—in the spirit of creative renewal. The bathroom seemed like the place for that. The piece needed a mirror, so people could check their hair and stuff.

Also, my daughter Evey asked for art that could be a magic portal.

In a private bathroom we are removed from time, off stage from our drama. In this bathroom there is a split, a sliver in the seam between two tracks of possibility.

The daughters said it “it's sort of like a magic portal.” They expected sparklers, I think.



Past and Future are Present
2018
acrylic and mirror on wall

Donya Stockton
Ryan Sandison Montgomery
Gretchen Phillips
Adreon Denson Henry
Matt Macomber
Robert Jackson Harrington
Cattywampus Press
Alyssa Taylor Wendt
Elaine I-Ling Shen
Rachel Freeman*
Leslie Webb
Kel Brown
Deb Norris
Stella Alesi
Beth Schindler
Amanda Julia Steinback
Mike Reddy
Phillip Niemeyer°*

Aug – Sep 2018

* designer ° curator

N
S

Northern–Southern
1900-B East 12th Street
Austin, TX 78702

northern-southern.com