

Virginia Fleck
available work, Austin
December 2022

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VIRGINIA FLECK

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Northern-Southern

hello@northern-southern.com
@northernsouthern

Virginia Fleck

Moth
2022
38" x 76" x 2"
post consumer can-tabs,
safety pins, woven backing mounted
on wooden substrate
\$12,000



Photography: Tyeschea West

Virginia Fleck

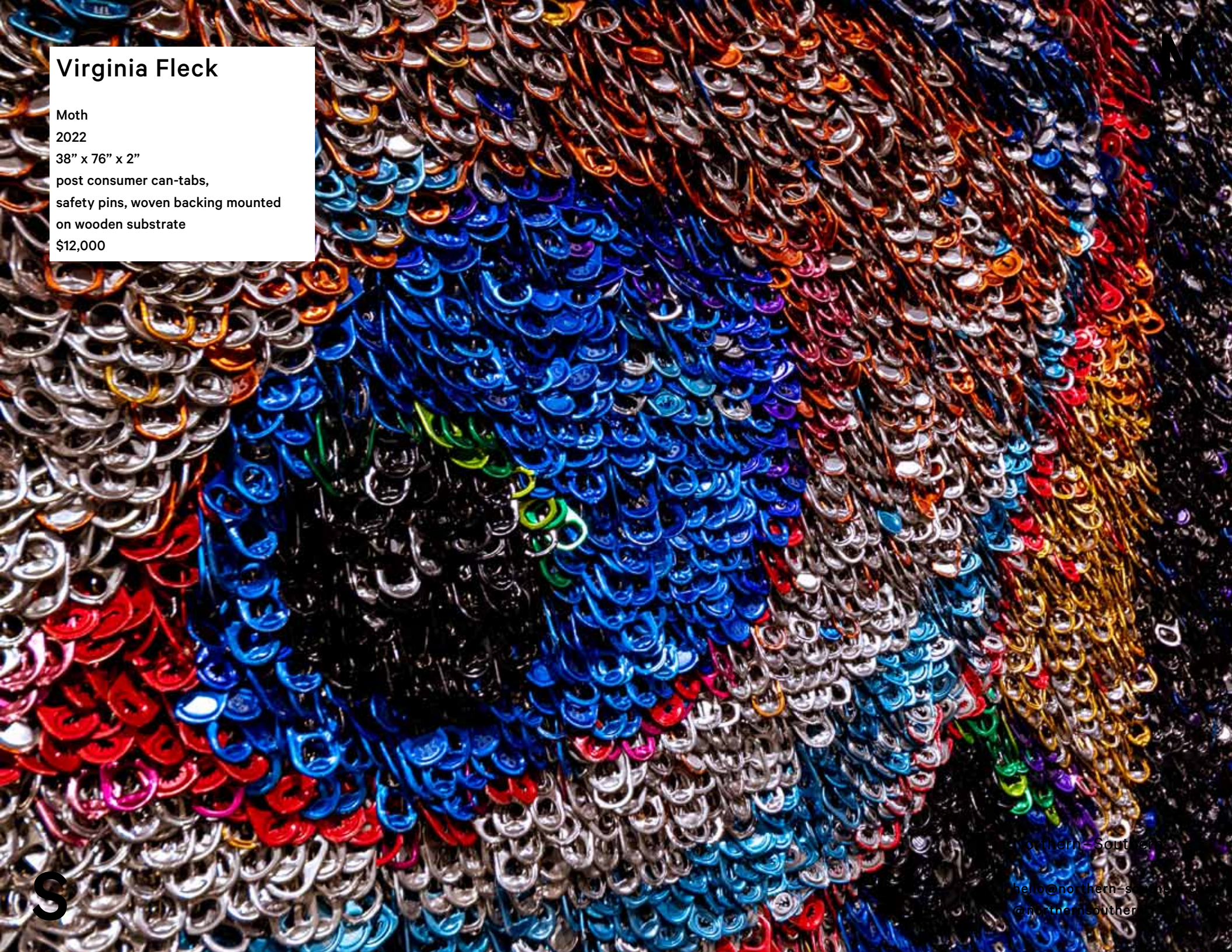
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Suspended Curves

2022

post-consumer can-tabs,
safety-pins

120" x 48" x 48"

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hand cranked sound baths

2022

vintage bingo cage, coiled wire, post-consumer, steel and aluminum can tabs and assorted can closures

small 6"x 6"x 6"

\$800

medium 8" x 8"x 8"

\$1000

large 12" x 12"x 12"

\$1200



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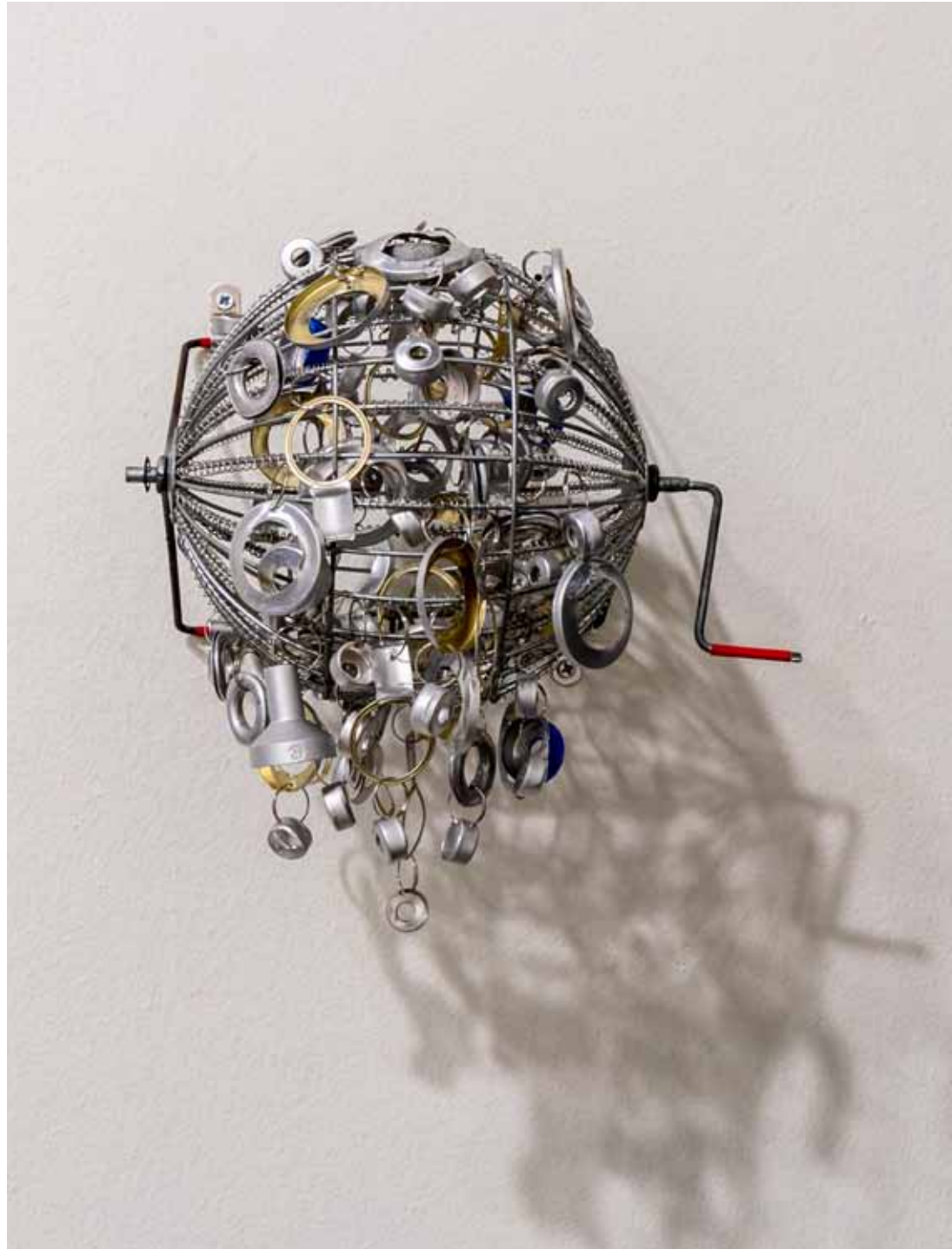
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rotating column 1

2022

post consumer can-tabs, safety pins, steel armature, rotation motor

108+” x 24” x 24”

\$10,000

rotating column 2

2022

post consumer can-tabs, safety pins, steel armature, rotation motor

120+” x 30” x 30”

\$10,000

rotating column 3

2022

post consumer can-tabs, safety pins, steel armature, rotation motor

108+” x 24” x 24”

\$10,000



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Q & A

When did you start working with can tabs?

I began using can tabs as an art material in 1993. I was at a scrap-yard, seven months pregnant, perusing metal, when I came upon a treasure-chest- sized bin overflowing with sparkly aluminum tabs. The sight of these tabs, separated from the cans, shimmering in the bright sunlight was like a mirage among the rusted scrap. Their unexpected beauty moved me to tears and I traded the few dollars crumpled in the pocket of my maternity dress for a bucket of tabs. For the rest of my pregnancy, I created long chains of these tabs, which would eventually become sparkling ethereal artworks. It's been almost 30 years since my first bucket of tabs. I continue to collect and explore can tabs as a medium.

Why can tabs?

Born to a devout family in 1960 and raised in the last recognizable Irish enclave in New York City, my childhood was steeped in the magical thinking of religious doctrine. Penance, sacrifice, miracles of transformation, and the sensory drama of the Catholic Mass informed my earliest beliefs.

Aluminum, an element rarely found in its pure state, must be mined, smelted and electrified to reach purity in an involved alchemical process that mirrors the magic of Catholic transubstantiation. Purified, aluminum is fabricated into branded cans and can-tabs that contain the beverages that we consume. I am especially drawn to can-tabs as a material because, depending on one's beliefs, they are either treated as disposable or valued like

currency. Can-tabs have near-magical social metrics pertaining to their value, illustrated by long-lived urban legends, among them, the belief that a gallon of saved tabs is worth \$100, and that can-tabs are like tokens- redeemable for chemotherapy for children in need.

The shimmering lightness of your work belies the labor involved. Much of it seems like ritual, like a Rosary?

As a child and young adult I was drawn to the beauty of the rosary beads and the soothing redemptive nature of repetitive prayer.

The can tabs in my sculptures are no longer in service to consumerism. The slow, mindful, handwork of transforming individual can-tabs into long chains is a mindful devotional ritual that rescripts the original intention of their branding. In their sculptural incarnation, the can-tabs take on a baroque, upcycled, aesthetic that transcends their utility.

One work in the show is representational or symbolic, the vestment-like moth. It took eight months to assemble. What about the moth inspired this devotion?

In some parts of the world, it is believed that the soul of a deceased relative can take form as a moth to visit us in this realm. About a year ago I was awakened by a hug from my father who has been deceased for almost 40 years. I smelled his cologne and felt his cheek against mine during the brief

embrace. I'm sure this could be explained away scientifically, but my body's truth is that for 3 or 4 glorious seconds I was getting hugged by my Dad. I made a representational moth to honor the sensory realness of the visitation. It is currently stretched over a wooden backing but it also functions as cape that can be worn as a hug.

Some of the new work is as much acoustic as visual. Can tabs in bingo cages cranking circular shimmers, elegant, quirky and spare. What led you to sound and interactivity?

Initially, I was drawn in by the sparkling quality of the can-tabs and because I am suited to repetitive handwork, I also loved that they are small, near identical units that I can work with in an additive process. The gentle tinkling sounds that occur while making can-tabs sculptures was a calming sensory surprise. Over the years I have become extremely attuned to the subtle sound differences of each type of can-tab. Each hand cranked sound bath sculpture has its own sonic signature, operating them by hand takes initiative and physical movement, a much-needed counterpoint to how we interface with our screens. Physically hand cranking the sound baths gives you agency in your sound experience.

Questions: Phillip Niemeyer

Answers: Virginia Fleck

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