



RIOT A NATIONAL DISGRACE

The St. Louis Argus

East St. Louis Shrouds Country in Shame. Mob Commits Most Atrocious Crimes On Jaccat
cent Negroes' White Police and Militiamen Look On With Apathy. President Called
On To Stop Mob Violence. War Department Asked To Take Hand In Investigation
Over To Demand
An Inquiry Into
East Side Riot
LAWYER WARNS
CHICAGO NEGROES
TO WIN SETTLE
THOUSANDS LEAVE
EAST ST. LOUIS
CARED FOR HERE
Outbreak Caused By White Men In
Automobile Shooting Has Negroes
Flames Smolder Night, Policemen
Machetes For Rioters Are Seen.

NEGROES DID NOT START TROUBLE

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DIS CONNECTION

ARTISTS ON DISPLACEMENT

Curated by Elana Kundell
April 1 - May 27, 2023

Studio Channel Islands Art Center
Camarillo, CA



Nurit Avesar, *Places We Carry (detail)*, 2023
Paper, thread, cheesecloth, acrylic and oil on canvas, 52" x 42"

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition presents a quilt of human stories through the work of eight women artists exploring topics of forced displacement and the basic human need for connection and home.

Through transformative art practices and an inspiring array of materials, these artists reveal what is hidden and almost beyond language. The works excavate histories, explore vulnerability, consider our relationships with the earth and each other, and speak to our common humanity.

Layered, symbolic, and imbued with meaning, these artworks invite us to listen, to reflect, and to see our own stories of loss and resilience in them.

–Elana Kundell, Curator



IN DISCONNECTION

ART IN A WORLD OF DISPLACEMENT

By Peter Frank

All of humanity, it seems, is on the move, is trying not to be, or is trying to fend off those who are. Even as they dissolve, borders designate sites that attract migrants - and sites that have repelled them. But once a border is crossed, once a barrier is breached, what of the crosser? What of those who have been left behind? What of those who presumed they were isolated from emigration and emigres? Who is safe from whom? Who remembers whom? Who recognizes whom? Who is invading and who is fleeing?

The friction of nations and societies and individuals against one another has inflamed human discourse since time immemorial. But in a time of hypermemory, technological and otherwise, when almost everything, true or false, can be known, how do we recognize who is friend and who is danger, who is part of your realm and who does not belong, who will let you in and who will block your path? And just how atavistic, how primitive, how basic to survival are these questions? Bronze age or digital age, it is homo sapiens enacting flight or fight as only a reasoning animal could. But the information always outpaces the reasoning...

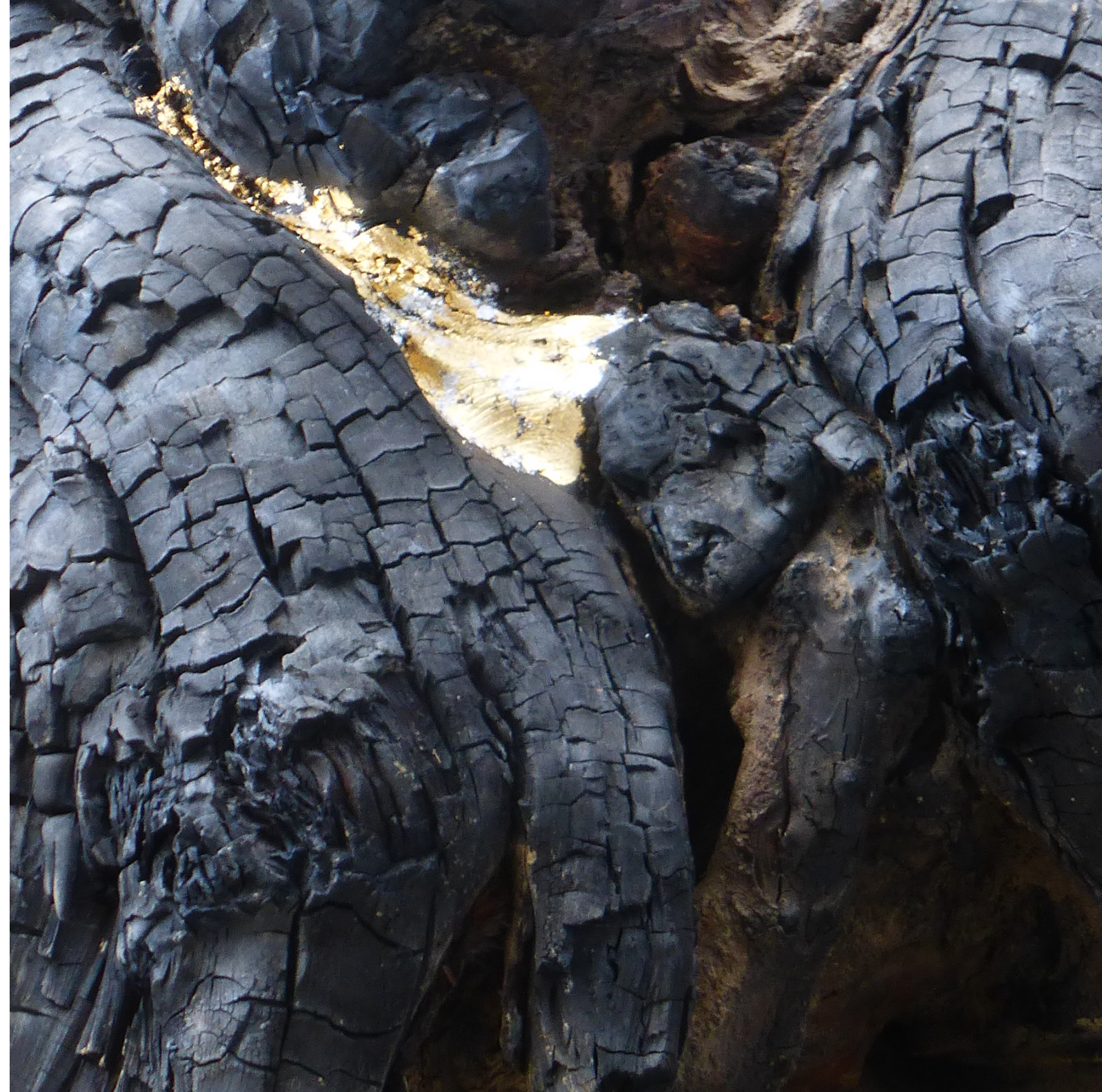
Art-the invention of alternate perception(s) - may be the only comprehensive way of regarding, even addressing, today's migration and its agonies. Artists, especially, can manifest the actions and reactions of individuals caught up in this historic wave, drawing as they do on personal experience and recollection. Artists are our oracles, sensitive as they are to the tremors of personal history. If we know what to look for - and/or how to look for it - the artist's voice can provide us new and more profound understanding. For the most part, however, artists are admired for their voice but not for what they say.

There is an urgency to the work assembled here that would seem to warrant attention, from art audiences and the wider public. But our vantage is limited; for all their eloquence, these painters and sculptors and multimedialists ruminate mysteriously, or would seem to be. Their recollections of turmoil endured and observed, and their regard for current strife, strive to change our minds. But our own mundane anxieties, and the stresses peculiar to our times, obscure our reception of their message. Then again, if these artists are preaching to the converted, perhaps they are spurring the convinced to further action, or at least deeper comprehension.

This enhancement of enlightenment is the gift that gets through. These artists, who have been cocooned in trauma, who live with loss, who have inherited memories of displacement and doom or themselves crossed many borders laden with psychic luggage, reach us, however indistinctly, through the power of their pathos. Some here have gone in search of a homeland always out of reach. Some have fled a cruel and unjust force. Some have been released into voids, and some have already past the event horizon. These artists have both pain and transcendence to share with us. "Show your wounds," urged Joseph Beuys. This is a show of eloquent scarring.

Do female artists convey their agony and their ecstasy more effectively than their male counterparts? Why does an all-woman show like this make sense even a priori, even in the abstract? The empathic energy and sympathetic heart we associate with the feminine spirit seem particularly appropriate, even necessary, to the task of witnessing these artists have taken on (whether by choice or by fate). They not only perceive the personal as political, but the political as personal.

Sigrid Orlet, *A LIFETIME BURNING IN EVERY MOMENT II* (detail), 2021





Artmaking is not a search for solutions, it is a means of identifying problems. These women are artists, so problems - inside the studio and out, on the to-do list and on the radio - present themselves as if begging to be translated into the difficult Delphic confabulations we recognize as the art of our moment. Each artist's oracular visions take a different form, address different facets of the given situation, examine current conditions from a different standpoint. Each artist is a summation of experiences, after all, and each summation regards the world uniquely. Brought together, the summations give dimension to what can seem either a schematic argument or an overwhelming portent. The emigration of masses, and the climate change that helps drive them, becomes translated into witnessed realities and felt impacts through art.

These women are artists of our moment. These artists are women of our moment. Something clear and poignant, perhaps lucid enough to be not just admired but understood, comprises this gathering of work.

Los Angeles
March 2023

Fatemeh Burnes, *Lullaby* (detail), 2013-2015
Oil Paint and Pigment on Canvas. 72" x 60"



Fatemeh Burnes, *Wonderland*, 2015
Oil Paint and Pigment on Canvas, 72" x 108"



Fatemeh Burnes

I am preoccupied with the nature around us and within us, the history that we make and have made--a history defined not by time but by energy. I look at modern events and tragedies, both ecological and social, and how those events manifest in contemporary life. I make art not just to produce objects, but also to explore phenomena, whether they occur in the world or in my dreams, as thoughts in my mind or as rocks on the ground.

An ingrained impulse prompts my restless and spontaneous nature to continually set up artistic problems for myself. The process of solving a problem becomes more engaging than the solution itself.

Painting instinctively, I favor subconscious association. In fantastical invented spaces, perceptually recognizable and unrecognizable images and forms find their position fluidly. These visual poems are intermingled with opposites struggling for parity, debating the interchangeability of order and chaos, reality and fantasy. I utilize materials playfully and symbolically. The layering constructs and deconstructs, covers, recovers, exposes, and transforms time, space, and language organically.

Combining means and modalities such as carving, miniature painting, and gestural abstraction is inevitably a component of my fluid and conceptual process.

My painting and photographic series often parallel each other in layering and complexity. The photographs record my sensitivity to the perception of light, movement, and the drama of the moment. I use physical manipulation to create surreal compositions that extend beyond reality and visual perception.

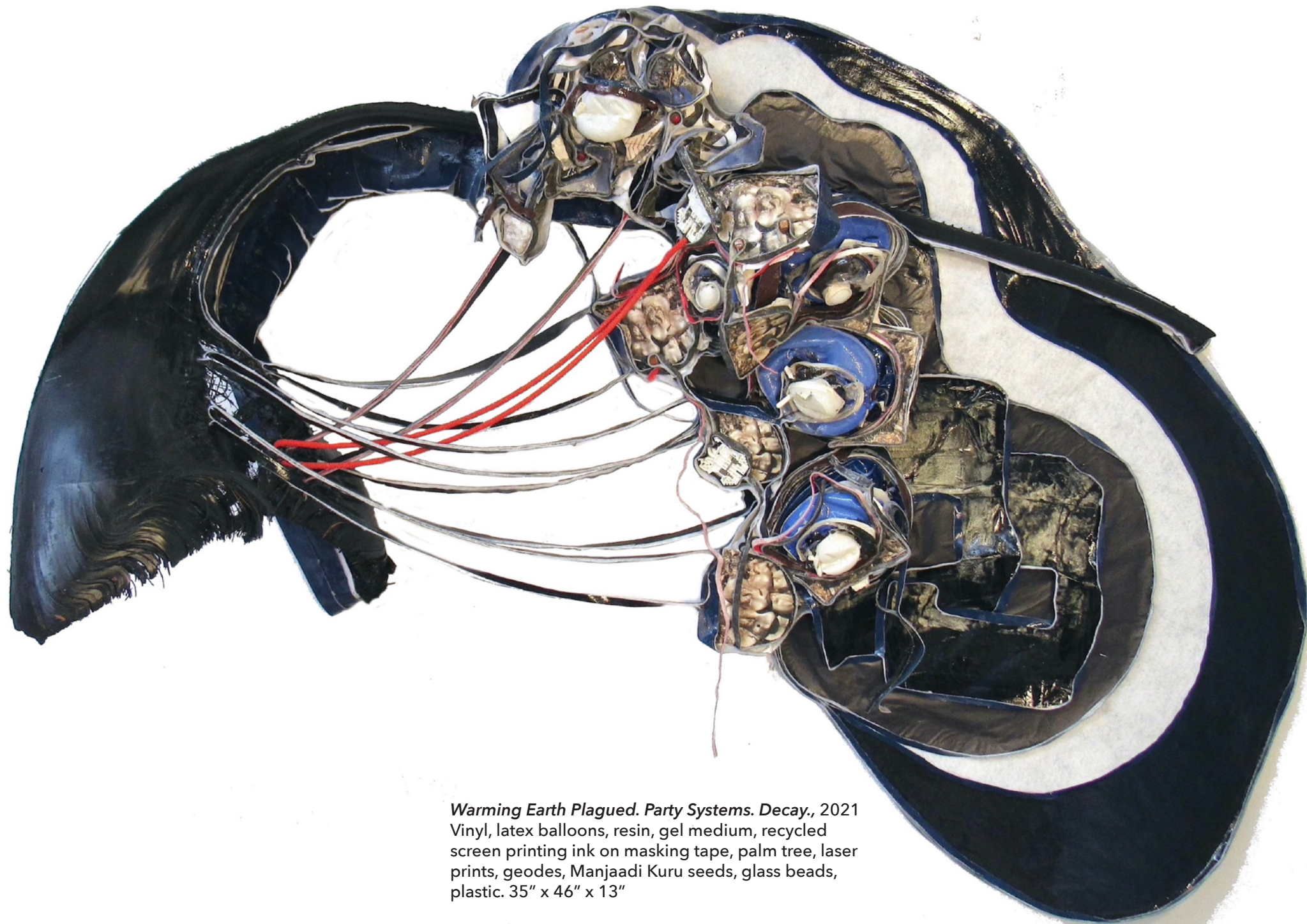
Fatemeh Burnes , *Fool's Paradise*, 2018, Oil, asphalt, drywall and pigment on canvas, 60" x 60"



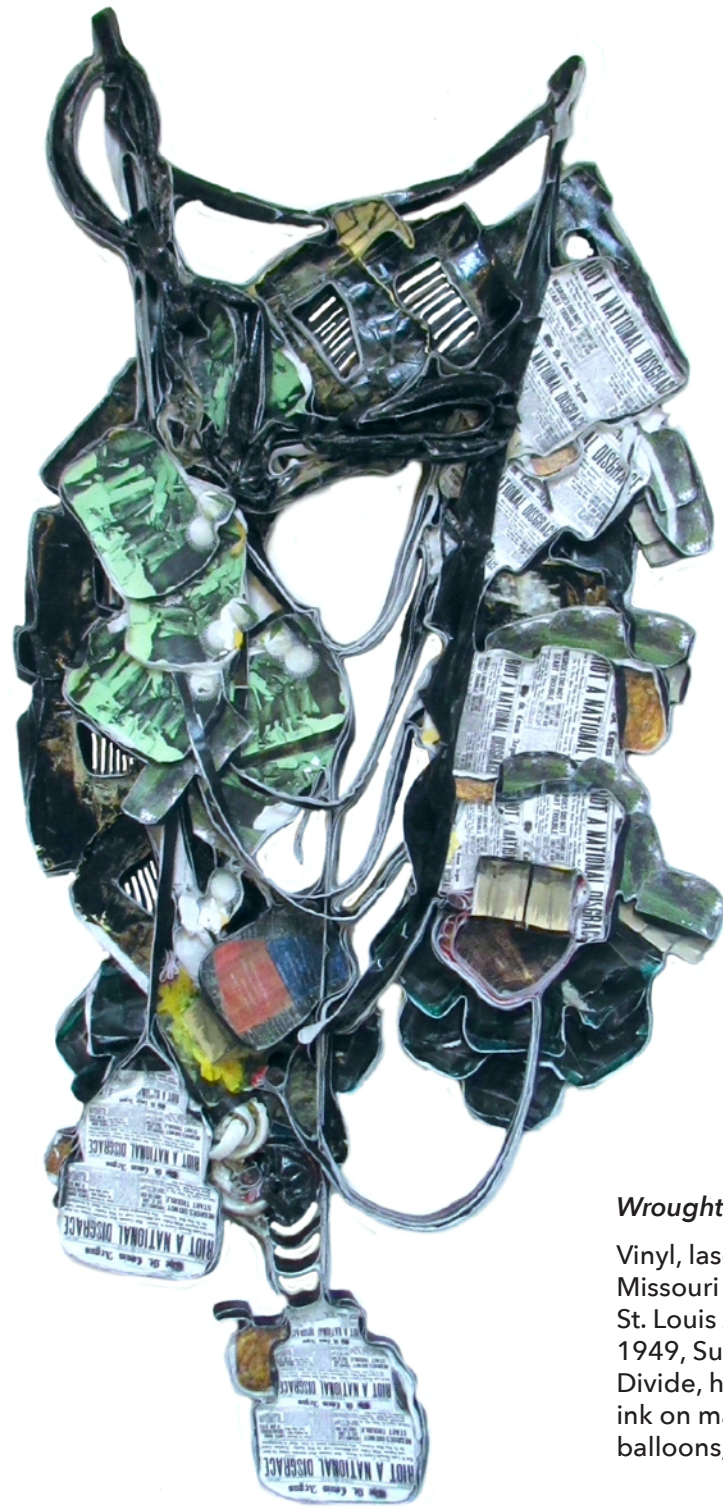
Alicia Piller

Mimicking forms of cellular biology as a method to locate the root of human histories; my mixed media practice is as much about materiality as it is about content. Mixed media works investigate the relationship between the macro and micro perspectives within systems of knowledge, meaning, and bodily form. Capturing the energy surrounding physical matter and/ or a particular situation is key; presently attempting to reconcile questions about the current state of our times. Examining traumatic histories, both political and environmental, I have begun to use my own body (and others) to activate a sculptural work. I document these moments with digital photography and video, later utilizing the photos as objects within a sculptural piece.

Working on a macro/micro level, I breathe life into materials removed from their 'natural' environment. Through manipulation of unconventional and marginalized materials like latex balloons (stemming from my background as a clown); I create structures on a cellular level. Each component touched: wrapped in fibers, usually vinyl or leather. All encased objects, becoming membranes; each membrane pieced together to create a larger 'organism'. These 'organisms' are often thoughts of the past manifested in the physical world, a moment in time usually encapsulated by the modern day materials like resin and gel medium. These enveloping sculptures and installations expand out, to actualize singular systems that feel equally familiar and foreign. The construction of each work becoming a biological unfolding of time, that begins to examine the energy around wounds left by historical traumas.



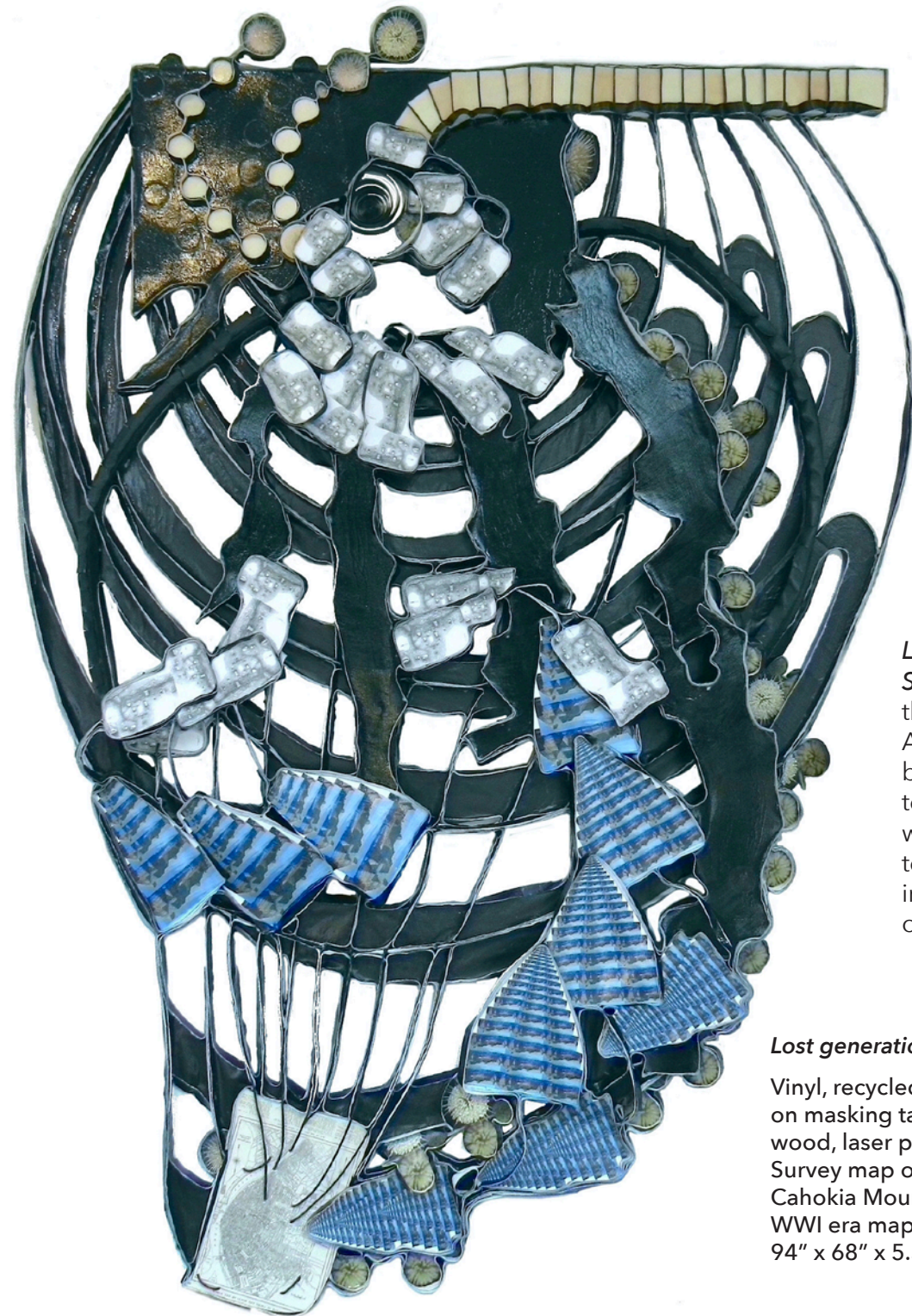
Warming Earth Plagued. Party Systems. Decay., 2021
Vinyl, latex balloons, resin, gel medium, recycled screen printing ink on masking tape, palm tree, laser prints, geodes, Manjaadi Kuru seeds, glass beads, plastic. 35" x 46" x 13"



Wrought-iron fences. Cultivating divides. moves forward in time, specifically touching down in the St. Louis area. Echos of the past civilizations in the area (Sugar Loaf Mound) weave their way into the overall design, which pulls in photographs taken from local newspapers of the East St. Louis race riot of 1917 and the Fairgrounds Park riot in 1949. These images, used as objects, are repeated and examined, highlighting the tragedies of racism. What does it mean to be a human being living in the world, wanting to enjoy the local pool on a hot summer day, only to be harassed and beaten for their presence; for the color of their skin? This history has created divides that can be seen today; seen objects/images of: current map of the 'Delmar Divide' & a heat map of St. Louis. (Segregated city)

Wrought-iron fences. Cultivating divides., 2021

Vinyl, laser prints (Button bush plant, yellow maple, Missouri primrose, East St. Louis race riot 1917 The St. Louis Argus Newspaper, Fairgrounds Park riot in 1949, Sugar Loaf Mound present day, map of Delmar Divide, heat map of St. Louis) recycled screen printing ink on masking tape, gel medium recycled tape, latex balloons, resin. 49" x 38" x 11"



Lost generations. Shaping time. examines the inhabitants of an America once covered by ocean, looking back to ancient civilizations wiped out and forgotten; recognizing colonial invasion and its effects on society.

Lost generations. Shaping time., 2021

Vinyl, recycled screen printing ink on masking tape, gel medium, pine wood, laser prints (Button bush plant, Survey map of Native Settlement 1819, Cahokia Mounds), clock spring, nylon, WWI era map of St. Louis (1926). 94" x 68" x 5.5"



Arezoo Bharthania

My work reflects the experience of creating a home while existing in a state of in-between. It is a narrative formed through layers and gestures that blend my childhood and early adulthood in Iran with my current life in Los Angeles. The space I occupy is navigated through the bodily experience of womanhood and a balance of dichotomies: public and private, psychological and physical environments, here and there. Constructing a home within this space, making connections to build anchors within the disconnect and displacement of diaspora fuel my artistic explorations

The homes that I have inhabited across geographies represent a multilayered construction of identity influenced by interdependent forces that define roles, govern behaviors, and order power relationships. The Iranian identity I carry in the United States relies heavily on my history as an immigrant. Utilizing my personal history as a filter, my work honors the common experiences and materials of everyday life from which people build a home. This includes personal human experiences of love, work, observation, memory,

emotion, sensation, nostalgia and desire; and the universal struggle to pull forth vivid memories that have been reduced to flashing glimpses as time creates distance between past experience and current life.

I make mixed-media work to communicate, mutate, and abstract layers of memory along with elements of the home with the knowledge that both are inextricable from political and social contexts.

As Gayatri Spivak wrote, using the displacing gesture as a reversal is a way to reclaim the dubious privilege of having a voice. I aim to build a ground from which I can speak.

LAX/IKA - IKA/LAX, 2020

Approx. 8' wide (dimensions variable)
Printed fabric, transferred image, acrylic, spray
paint, yarns and threads, vellum, mylar



LAX/IKA - IKA/LAX, 2020
Approx. 8' wide (dimensions variable)
Printed fabric, transferred image, acrylic,
spray paint, yarns and threads, vellum, mylar



María Adela Díaz

María Adela Díaz is an artist in exile who references her personal experiences of displacement and violence, situated within the history of her homeland, Guatemala, to reflect on sociopolitical, gender and climate change issues. Her conceptual art demonstrates that exilic consciousness may be articulated and continuously developed through diasporic artistic expressions. Díaz's artwork, installations and performances show traces of hope and sorrow in displacement and migrations. For instance, in "Nostalgia" she aims to draw attention to the commonalities of human experience by creating a rain-stick sculpture that imitates the sound of water, weaving grief and hope into one interactive experience.

Her work invites audiences to understand displacement from a common perspective—the search for a safe environment and equality. Díaz's diasporic artwork gives a personal context to the global crisis of conflict and displacement.



Nostalgia
Interactive sculpture
Ventura, California 2022

"Nostalgia is a full sensorial experience that creates an emotional connection with the other participants. Each person who interacts plays a role in triggering people's memories about the sound of water."



Foreign Bodies
Public intervention/ performance, Ventura, CA. 2020

"Migrant bodies are read as foreign bodies that are often rejected and discriminated against. We are the bodies that society wants to make invisible— bodies that occupy a space that by origin does not seem to belong to us. These vulnerable bodies that leave their lands unite on the surface of the sea, carried away by many currents, without rescue."



Territorio Invisible/Invisible Territory
Video performance
Simi Valley California, 2005

"Artist painting herself, disappearing from the landscape where she once lived without being noticed. Femininity as marginality reflects on the notions of border, threshold, and limit. Women, by possessing the labile properties of the borders, pose a construction of identity in permanent change."

Marthe Aponte

I am a self-taught artist living at the edge of the Mojave Desert. I draw inspiration from my life in France, Venezuela, and California, influenced by African and Australian aboriginal people's artistic traditions as well as the flora and fauna.

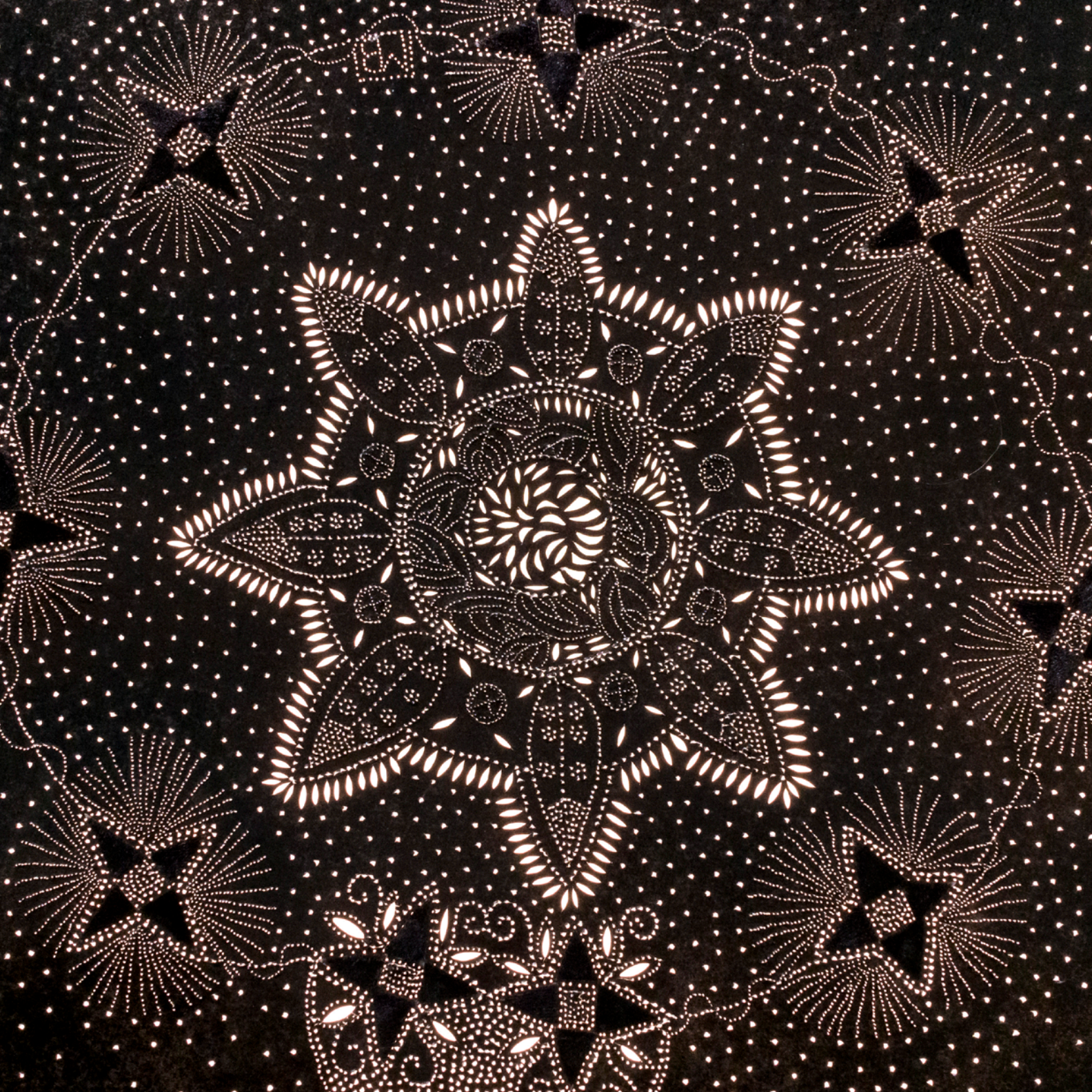
My current practice focuses on "picoté", an art form defined by delicate patterns and textures produced by piercing tiny holes in paper with a punching tool. This unique technique was probably born in France, around the 13th century. I enjoy creating contemporary designs inspired by nature and the human body imbued with a touch of surrealism.

I discovered this art form a while ago. It reminded me of my mother's embroideries, my mother-in-law's crochet and my aunt's sewing. I feel I am part of this lineage of women as I work in my studio in complete silence piercing holes with my awl.

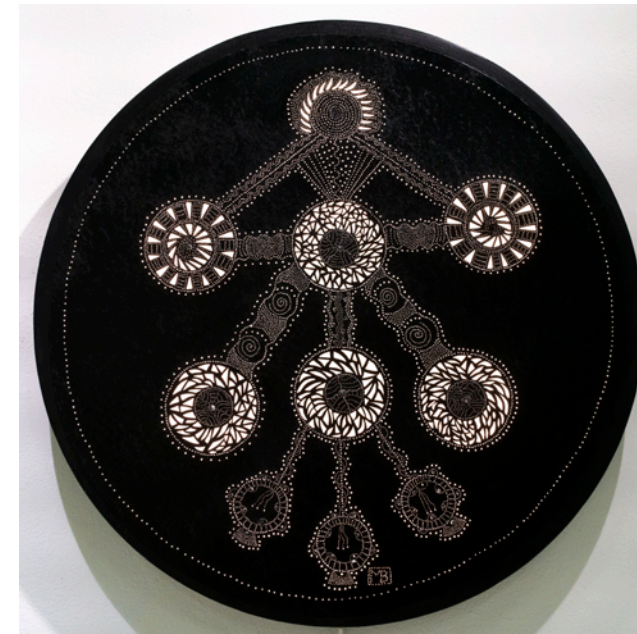
The physical proximity of punching holes in paper and sewing sequins and beads for countless hours to make complex compositions, raises awareness about the meaning of small gestures that could be considered insignificant but acts as a reminder of our personal connection with time and the sacred.

Marthe Aponte, *Unidentified object*, 2016
Picote, stitching, beads, fabric. 20" x 20"





This series of black shields was created during the Covid pandemic in 2021. Because of the extreme contradictions and conflicts during that time, I felt a need for protection from a toxic environment. I imagined shields with holes that would invite vulnerability and light. Inspired by creation stories, my shields are a reminder that there is a connection between light and darkness. Even in the worst situation and isolation, there is always going to be some possibility of light, some little stars that are trying to come through. Both light and darkness are part of an existential dialectic that is in constant conversation. They complement each other.



Marthe Aponte, *Shield 1* (detail), 2 & 4, 2021
Picoté with beads, paper, lightbox. 21.5"

Sigrid Orlet

Sigrid Orlet is a second-generation refugee from Germany. She produces a variety of media including painting, photography, sculpture and installation concerned with unearthing the roots of humanity as an aspect of the coherent whole of existence.

Art critic Shana Nys Dambrot has written of her work,

“Sigrid Orlet’s background in the field of Creativity Studies had her ‘investigating the complex nature of symbol formation in deep scientific inquiry. . . .’ And her moving and innovative mixed media paintings and sculptural installations give literal and allegorical form to this conceptual foundation.

“Using hefty, dimensional materials like burlap, and dried plant roots, and favoring a richly, fertile palette of earth and autumnal shades along with sensual, distressed, painterly surfaces and salient pieces of text, Orlet both honors and generates the symbolism of a kind of pagan art history.



Sigrid Orlet, *Roots and Wings III*, 2021
Archival pigment print (found wood)



Sigrid Orlet, *A LIFETIME BURNING IN EVERY MOMENT II*, 2021
Archival pigment print (wood, gold leaf)

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

—T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

After moving “back home”, I started hitting the trails. Due to changes in climate, drought and infestation by bark beetles, forests have been dying at record speed in the area. Generations of fir trees are being cut down. The verdant hills of my childhood now look like a wasteland. Yes, there is re-forestation but the saplings will need time. On my hikes, I sometimes come across roots or pieces of dead wood that speak to me. I carry them home. In time, the wood will share its story, all I do is listen. That is how *ROOTS & WINGS III* came into being: by listening.

The piece titled *A LIFETIME BURNING IN EVERY MOMENT* was born from the root of an old plum tree. When the half-burned root emerged from the fire, I perceived a symbol for all life: strength, resilience, and hope continuously emerging from the center. There are so many stories hidden in this root. I am afraid it would take years to write them all down.

Natural materials have always been important in my work. The creative process seems to bring out a more timeless aspect of the trees and the roots. No longer dependent on sunlight and water, these pieces become messengers that invite us to listen.



Janet Neuwalder

Clay is an ancient living material. As a natural material, I see all of humanity encoded into clay's structure. Looking at Neolithic vessels and early fertility figures, I am a part of the long lineage of object makers, seeking to say something and be heard.

I use clay, responsive to my touch and reacting as if in conversation; the dialogue seems inexhaustible. As a natural material, it has a code and properties that require respect, collaboration and acknowledgement inherent to its materiality. Clay cracks, bends, separates, crumbles, as it should and my role as a maker is to understand its properties and limits. I use verbs: pushing, smearing, pounding, supporting and layering, in an actual and poetic way, to form and inform the work.

My use of clay-coated objects and papers, historical and personal images, allow me to weave the personal and universal. The firing process is an encoding petrification process and the work becomes a contemporary fossil.

The use of multiples, fragments, and fading images speak to the multi-faceted complexity of human existence; the sense of time and the implication of the forces of growth, deterioration and regeneration, confirm the continuity of existence. As one humanity, how can we coexist with each other globally while valuing and living on planet Earth?

What is often left is concrete evidence that fragility is strength.

Shikata Ga Nai is inspired by the shells found in the harsh desert at Topaz, a WWII Japanese-American internment camp in Delta, Utah, which was formerly an ocean. These were collected by the internees and turned into handicrafts known as the Art of Gaman (which means persevere).

Each shell represents a person ("resident") that was interned in Topaz. 11,000 people came through the camp, 1942-45.

The shells form into different configurations, all interconnected. Each handmade piece is a delicately pinched porcelain shell.

Janet Neuwalder
Shikata Ga Nai
It cannot be helped
2023, Porcelain clay, 60" x 60" x 20"



Janet Neuwald, *Topaz* (detail), 2015-2023
Clay, table. 8" x 72" x 48"



Janet Neuwald, *What is Left II* (detail), 2023
Clay, stainless steel shelves. 60" x 80" x 8"

Nurit Avesar

This body of work is about global warming and its unfolding impacts. The recent mega fires and floods in California made me realize that the issue of global warming is personal for my family and community.

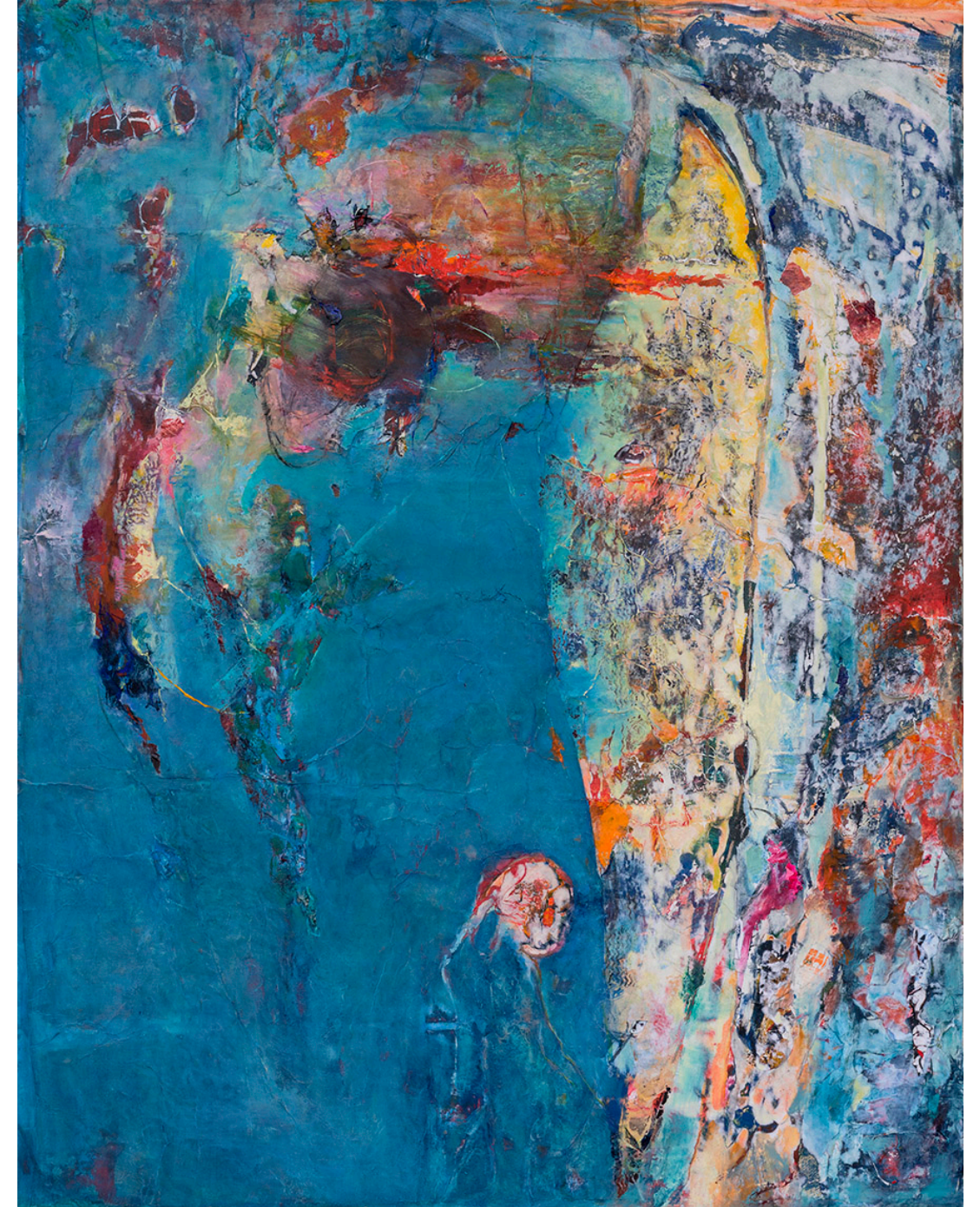
My practice is rooted in the Process Art movement. I begin by painting on paper or canvas. I then adhere fabric, thread and other material to the first layer. Following, I cover and paste a second sheet of paper on top. Next, I paint and sand that compound surface and continue to manipulate the distressed surface. I frequently tear away segments, add and collage rust, graphite, fabric and paper, window screens, and plastic sheet, sand, as well as paint on top. I often repeat this process of multi-layering and sanding several times. Some of my pieces are combinations of as many as ten distinct layers.

The rigorous process of tearing finished paintings, adding and rebuilding layers of unlikely materials, in order to merge them into new and coherent images, metaphorically alludes to the power play throughout history. It is about forces that tear the fabric of our societies, and the creation of new reality from the old fragments. It invokes the reexamination of cultural legacies and historical events and their weight on the present.

At this moment in history, we are already witnessing the effects of global warming. Our world will be irrevocably changed by the collapse of ecological systems, rise of sea levels, and changes of weather and wind patterns world-wide. Tragically, climate change will devastate the lives of millions of people around the world and will bring a mass wave of extinctions. Natural disasters, wars over scarce resources, mass migrations, and worsening inequality are in store for us.

It is hard to come to terms with the knowledge that the world as we know it is changing. The same way I expect days to follow nights, I have always expected that weather patterns will be predictable and will support the existence of humans, flora and fauna. The lives of my children and future generations will be very different with the turbulent vanishing of familiar landscapes, communities and species.

Nurit Avesar, *Fallout*, Mixed Media, 65" x 50"





Nurit Avesar, *Icarus*, 2019
Mixed Media on Canvas, 48"x 70"



Nurit Avesar, *Changing Grounds*, 2019
Mixed Media on Canvas, 58" x 45"





What survives is evidence of its strength—what is possible, enduring and important—despite its fragility, transformation and erasure with time.

—Janet Neuwald, Ventura, CA

Curator Elana Kundell is a longtime Artist-In-Residence at Studio Channel Islands whose oil and mixed media paintings explore our connection with nature, the body and each other. Her experiences as the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor led her to curate this exhibition focused on the theme of displacement.

Kundell's artwork has been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) Artists Gallery, the Carnegie Art Museum in Oxnard, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles, CA for the Fresh! Art Auction, the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, and in galleries in the United States and in Korea. Her artwork resides in numerous private collections in the United States and abroad.

DIS CONNECTION ARTISTS ON DISPLACEMENT

Curated by Elana Kundell
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Maria Adela Diaz | Alicia Piller | Nurit Avesar
Fatemeh Burnes | Arezoo Bharthania
Janet Neuwald | Marthe Aponte | Sigrid Orlet

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Left: Janet Neuwald, *Origin Unknown* (detail), 2022-2023

Cover: Alicia Piller, *Wrought-iron fences. Cultivating divides.* (detail), 2021

Installation views & photos of Janet Neuwald's artwork courtesy of Donna Granata, Focus on the Masters

DIS CONNECTION