

TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Unsilencing Myers Art Prizes

Dates: Jan 20-Feb 6

Reception: Jan 23, 5–7pm

Teachers College, Columbia University | Program in Art and Art Education
525 West 120th Street | New York, New York 10027
www.tc.edu/macygallery

The Myers Art Prize Competition

The Myers Art Prize is an annual juried art competition open to all students in the Art and Art Education Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. The 2020 competition invited students to explore how art can contribute to unsilencing identities that have been historically suppressed. We are honored that this year’s juror was Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz—activist, poet, and professor in Teachers College’s English Education Program.

The *Unsilencing* exhibition features the ten artworks selected for the prize from a large pool of submissions. The award-winning works engage with a range of timely issues that affect the world and touch individual’s lives. Collectively, the artists / educators / researchers in this show highlight the importance of dialogue around trauma and mental health challenges. They recognize the creative potential of neurodiverse communities and honor the significance of unrecognized labor. They remind us of the tremendous weight that certain words can carry in a racially unjust society. They shine a light on rich ways of knowing and on important voices that are sidelined in traditional academic work.

Please join us in celebrating our Myers Prize winners and their thought-provoking creations, which will also become part of the Teachers College Art and Art Education Program’s permanent collection.

Olga Hubard
Director and Associate Professor

Reactions from our 2020 Myers Prize Judge, Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz

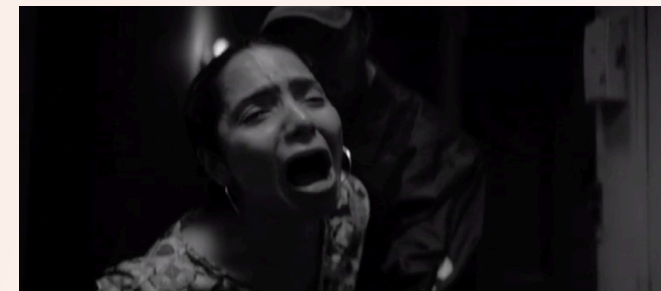
There is a time to honor silence, but also a time to break it.

To break our silence is to live.

Unsilencing is a way to bring light into the world.

In unsilencing myself, I hope to encourage others to speak.

When we break our silence, we live our lives in new and liberating ways.



Carianna Arredondo

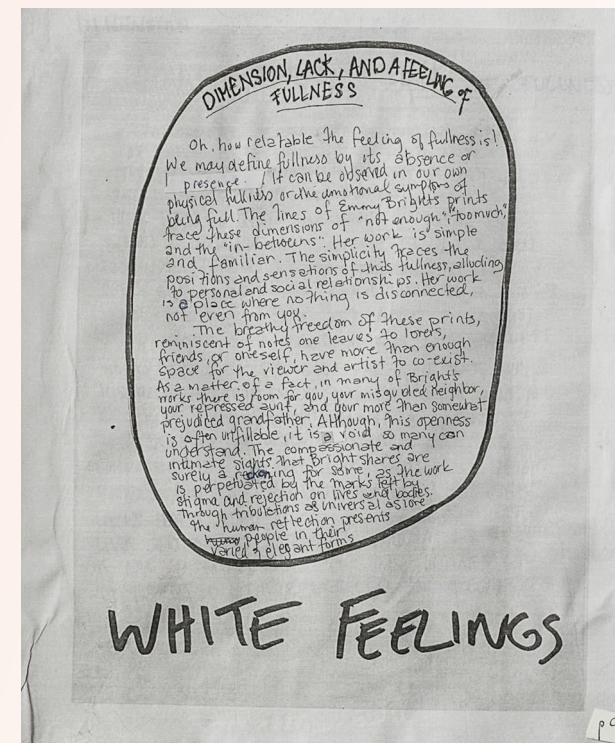
Venus

Duration: 01:50

2019

Having grown up in an environment full of dualities—living in a both loving, yet violent household, negotiating my cultural heritage and mixed ancestry as a Chicana, Tejana, and, child of Eastern European descent, and navigating the world as a bisexual woman —my work often illustrates the complexity of identity. As a visual artist I explore specific materials, gestures, and rituals that wrestle with memory, trauma, spirituality, and place. My work serves as a testimony that, without darkness, we do not see the light.

VENUS is a single-channel video that is a vignette into the complex identity of womanhood. Juxtaposing a video loop of an unknown woman pulling away from an ambiguous male counterpart, with the droning electromagnetic sounds of the planet Venus, I recite a portion of a list poem I had written in response to the wrestling of the feminine and the sublime. Women, particularly women of color, have often been silenced throughout history—VENUS is a reminder of the continual pull and push, the wrestle, the riot, the epic, the labor, to never surrender for as long as you have the strength.



Kristina Davis Bivona

Women and Text

Color Zine

18 inches x 18 inches – 12 pages

2018

Women and Text is a multi-page oversized zine spread featuring women who incorporate text into their artistic practice. This is not only significant in the evolution of contemporary art but also the evolution as visual art as a form of learning. For art educators, it is significant because it points to forms of scholarship that are made by hand. Often we try to validate artworks with scholarship and publishing but these works, these artists, these women of color and queerness and culturally responsive practices, create works that can stand on their own and educate as works of art. The use of text is part of this, just as in the work of art education, we “include” visuals these artists “include” text. The format of a zine created a synthesis of scholarly art education and the connectedness of an artwork. Together, as a work, I was able to transcend the distance of scholarship from the source and close the gap in understanding works of art as knowledge.



Jesl Xena Rae Cruz

Trial and Opportunity

A handmade paper-folded soft sculpture with poetry written on handmade paper in ink

15 inches x 9.5 inches x 6 inches

2019

I have chosen to create my art piece by integrating book and paper arts and poetry writing. Throughout the process, I found myself engaging in introspection, by looking back at the past, looking forward into the future and being aware of, and embracing the current situation, in facing the reality of what my students can do, and what they can be empowered to do through the arts. The paper-folded mountain-like paper sculpture symbolizes the challenges and all the hurdles my students may need to overcome on their journey to the peak of the mountain. As you can see, there are different levels on the sides of the mountain which represent a step-by-step progression that leads to the top, which I will go through with them, as I guide them through the learning process. Another important aspect of this art piece is the bird-shaped silhouette on the paper that serves as the base for the paper-folded mountain. The bird-shaped silhouette represents either a supportive parent, teacher, or friend who provides words of support and encouragement to the brave, little paper-folded crane, which represents a student, at the top of the mountain, getting ready to fly and soar. My art piece is very much inspired by a quote from Maxine Greene:

“For me, the child is a veritable image of becoming, of possibility, poised to reach towards what is not yet, towards a growing that cannot be predetermined or prescribed. I see her and I fill the space with others like her, risking, straining, wanting to find out, to ask their own questions, to experience a world that is shared.” ~ Maxine Greene

Sungah Jun

Fragmented Whole

Transferred images on birch plywood /Mixed media on unprimed canvas

Fragmented Whole 3: 48 inches x 72 inches

Fragmented Whole 7: 45 inches x 84 inches

Fragmented Whole 10: 48 inches x 72 inches

2017

When I encounter strangers, I tend to become curious about their inner universe. By nature, humans are ironic beings who are impossible to decipher to the full extent. How can I truly understand someone when I can't even comprehend myself? In social media, digital posts of daily life become a selective disguise rather than a realistic representation. I almost hear the silent roar of cyber inhabitants who are entangled in exhibitionism, voyeurism and deficiency. They become quick to judge through a few extremely manipulated facades on a screen. A few years ago, I assembled paper sculptures to photograph as objects. My current series combines men with paper structures that serve as mutative elements. Each standard-sized printing paper transfigures into various forms as atoms transform into diverse creatures. To challenge my skills, I fused both analog and digital techniques such as painting, digital transferring, and collaging images based on the photographs of figures. It would be ridiculous to claim that any language, emotion, intuition, reason, judgment, cognition, or moral conduct can fully explain humanity. The inadequacy is a driving force towards understanding the essence of humanity. I find pleasure in integrating my personal connections and others' stories with my art. In the process of communicating with various kinds of people about their experiences and beliefs, I give full play to my imagination.



AutumnLin Kietpongler

I had a dream that you were beneath a stary sky...

Organza, Thread, Digital Embroidery, Paper, China Silk, Audio File

24 inches x 12 inches x 8 inches

2019

The story I tell is of my dreams, both sleeping and waking. My work is narrative-driven, expressed for the body through creative technology. When I work with narrative, I speak in symbols, in fabric, in color. The story which I cannot say, the story I wish not to speak into existence, and the story that I am compelled to tell no matter what. These three things rolled into one; that is what I create. Words are fabric; the cloth is a story; a stitch is a song. The words on this fabric are written in my own hand and crossed out; they cannot be read. The illegible script is digitally embroidered on this dress and the lines run into each other, overlap, and unravel to tell a story. The words are spoken by a young Asian-American woman, but her voice is unheard, suppressed, silenced. Her name isn't written; perhaps her original name has been taken from her. Perhaps she bears the name of her father; maybe it is the name of her husband. I know that the name of her mother has vanished; the name of her grandmother is gone, the name of her female ancestors is lost to time. The words of my young woman cannot be read, but perhaps now they can be heard. As time moves forward, there is away. The sound waves printed on the back and train of the dress are a visual representation of her voice. Technology can now be used to play the audio file in the location of the dress. We can finally hear her voice, as the crack of it breaks in the air, unsilenced; she can tell her story. We can finally know a small piece of who she is, and her voice is in the world.



Hyunsoo Kim

Voices of the Unheard

Textile, Laser cutting

25 inches x 29.5 inches

2019

While working with factories and manufacturers in developing countries as a fashion merchandiser, I became aware of critical issues behind the fashion and textile industry. This ongoing “Sustainable Leather” research reveals critical issues of environmental pollution, animal rights, and human welfare behind the leather tannery production, which require immediate public attention. In reality, millions of animals go through cruel treatment while they are alive, and killed for their skins while conscious without any painkillers. Leather manufacturing facilities have moved to developing countries to avoid increasing labor costs, strict laws on toxic chemicals, and sewage treatments. Decades of exposure to toxic chemicals dumped right into the river from the leather tannery have resulted in towns in India and Bangladesh not only suffering from polluted water, air, and soil but also illnesses such as lung cancer and skin discoloration. The focus of research is on the reduction of water waste and chemical use in textile production, minimizing environmental impact, and coming up with innovative production methods utilizing technology and fiber properties, suggesting energy-efficient, ethical, and sustainable production. Tone on tone, textiles were laser-cut and transferred on to a translucent textile to visualize unheard voices.



Grace Ludmer

Rattled

Porcelain

Circular forms ~ 2.5 inches x 2.5 inches

Snails ~ 4 inches x 3 inches

Stacked faces ~ 2 inches x 6 inches

Pillows ~2.5 inches x 1.75 inches

2018

Depression is common. So is hiding it.

For me, talking about my depression with others has been one of the most helpful tools in getting better.

I created this collection of porcelain rattles as a way to give my (and maybe your) sadness a playful way to be seen and heard.

Ashley Mask

Labor

Pencil, pencil shavings

8 inches x 10 inches

2019

Two components--a pencil and pencil shavings--exist side-by-side. The connection between the two is the work of shaving down the pencil, turn-by-turn, along with the passing of time and allocation of energy, unseen, unheard, unknown, except in the imagination of the viewer. The pencil and its shavings become a monument to the labor that was invested.

Consider all of the objects that we come into contact with everyday, as monuments to the unseen, unheard, and unknown labor that made them. Who are the people giving their labor, their time, and energy? What might their lives entail? How might we know and appreciate and care for those who gave their labor, as we care for the objects they've made?



Eric Mason

The Power of a Word / It's Not Me It's You

Video Diptych

Duration: 1:54 and 3:34

2019

What is a nigger? What are the differences between the term "nigger" and the phrase "the N-word?" Why was "nigger" created, and how does this word carry so much power within Western culture? Nigger and the N-word are complex American concepts, and the term itself holds 400-plus years of power and meaning. The N-word acts as a surrogate for the term "nigger," and while gaining recent popularity, the meaning is not dissimilar. The term "nigger" can be violent, forceful, demeaning, classifying, or even endearing. Nigger holds weight in the global lexicon of race relations and thus is an important term in all cultures. It is a word associated with simulacra and has been applied to a certain group of people. The word "nigger" is alive; it is not just a sound or the letters N-I-G-G-E-R printed in succession on paper. It can possibly be considered a context. The mere utterance of this word can lead to situations of discomfort or all the way to violence. Will this word ever lose its power? Will Western society ever acknowledge its creation of this word and its lasting effects?

Carina Maye

I Know You 32 Series 1-3

Digital Print, Archival Premium Luster Print

4 inches x 3 inches (each)

2019

I Know You 32 is a still life series bring together images, objects, and memories of family's homes. As my family grows older in age, many spaces in their homes remain simultaneously much as I remember and different from what I knew from my childhood. The reason for these changes in their areas may be unknown to me but speaks to the shifts taking place in their lives as they continue to live and experience their world as their complex self. As I change and evolve as an artist, educator, and researcher, it is crucial for me that my work moves away from solely commenting on my perspective of the disenfranchised and looks to allow my subjects to speak for themselves.



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2020 Winners

Carianna Arredondo

Kristina Davis Bivona

Jesl Xena Rae Cruz

Sungah Jun

Autumn Kietpongert

Hyunsoo Kim

Grace Ludmer

Ashley Mask

Eric Mason

Carina Maye

Teachers College Columbia University | Program in Art and Art Education

Olga Hubbard, Director

Carina Maye, Macy Art Gallery Coordinator

525 West 120th Street | New York, New York 10027 | Macy Hall 444

Tel 212.678.3360 | **www.tc.edu/macy gallery** | Mon–Thurs, 11 AM–6 PM | Fri, 11 AM–5 PM

Directions By Subway: #1 Train to Columbia University–116th Street
By Bus M4 & M104 on Broadway; M11 on Amsterdam Ave.