

L I L I A N A  
[.] B L O C H  
G A L L E R Y

SEPTEMBER 14 - NOVEMBER 16, 2019

“Prone Anxiety”  
Shawn Mayer



# artist statement

"PRONE ANXIETY"

*Prone Anxiety* is a collection of works derived from Shawn Mayer's anxiety, which has afflicted the artist in the last few years. The work itself is an attempt to overcome fears born from that anxiety, or, at the very least, come to a clearer understanding of them. In this new body of work, Mayer becomes a maniac insider of the psychological transformation of American middle class in the era of social media.

# essay

"PRONE ANXIETY"

About Shawn Mayer and his anxiety. Mental health is a private matter, and the stigma drives us all underground. Except for the occasional overshare (which I welcome), people tend to be pretty quiet about these internal struggles. Disclosures of this type of personal information can be risky to our social standing, employment status or healthcare coverage. Vulnerability is wrongly perceived as weakness; as a sign that a person isn't unshakeable or isn't strong. Being honest about almost anything is an enormous risk. Artists by proclaiming our vocation as a "seeker or truth and beauty," an "explorer of the human psyche" or a "student of the world," we've crossed over. We've already accepted our difference: We are outcasts, outliers, shamen. We don't belong in "polite society," where conversations about politics and religion must be avoided unless everyone is in absolute agreement. Artists ruin everything by pointing out the truth. We shine a light into dark corners; even when they're our own dark corners. Frankly, I find it difficult to give a damn about art that isn't personal or honest or doesn't embrace at least some risk.

Now, about Shawn Mayer and his work. He's clever, he's sly. He's the

Andy Kaufman of contemporary art. His craft is high, and he sweats over details. He's inventive; never satisfied with regurgitating what he's already seen or read. He's looking for new forms, and not in a superficial way.

Mayer is a sensitive creature, a wonderful weirdo, who is not weird at all, but rather OPEN and PLAYFUL and SMART which makes him ...WEIRD! Not the branded "weird" of his newly adopted home base of Portland, Oregon, where the artist laments the \$10 avocado toast. He misses the authentic weirdness of the Midwest: The weirdness with tooth, tooth from contradiction. Like the contradictions found along a Missouri highway in the juxtaposition of Jesus billboards next to Porn billboards, followed by more Jesus billboards. And while Portland is busy sanding off the edges and baby-proofing language, Mayer wrestles with true meaning.

Like Shawn Mayer, I have questions about my own mental wellness, perceptions and psychological strength. I once expressed to a therapist that I might be too sensitive. He asked, "too sensitive for whom?" It hadn't occurred to me that I was devaluing my natural reactions because it might be "too much" for someone else. I was concerned that my moods



and thoughts would infringe on the comfort of others. Inconvenient attributes are socially devalued - sensitivity, intellectual curiosity, empathy, gentleness and playfulness can all evoke chastisement. In my particular case, the major issue was that these characteristics didn't affirm my gender. These characteristics presented weak spots in my amour. These characteristics made me vulnerable. Vulnerability would make it more difficult to excel in my childhood tasks of farming and hunting. So within that environment, my gifts were not gifts. Thank God I was not cured; or so effectively shamed that I lost all sensitivity, because how can you make anything honest or insightful as an artist without acute sensitivities? And as is the case with Mayer, who has struggled to understand his anxiety disorder, he has come to embrace anxiety to the degree he does not wish to banish it but rather, to balance it.

Mayer uses photographs to emulate socially acceptable participation in 21st century cyber-society, and he cannot resist a tiny bit of mocking. Yet he's so clever, charming and capable of producing beauty and comedy in tandem, we accept this mocking as insight. Or is it that we're all too

busy posting and “liking,” “liking” and posting, to realize that the image of a lone, chubby man playing Pokémon-Go in an empty parking lot is our own avatar? Could this mathlete be any of us? Is it possible we are also preoccupied with non-activities as an excuse for being, as an entertaining distraction from the void and a break from existential dread? Mayer is watching his peers and neighbors. How are they doing it? Are they more believable, convincing? These voyeuristic images of a couple embracing in a rear-view mirror, an audience on bleacher seats, patrons of a spa bath are all a testament to how others live and how Mayer might one day adopt a less self-punishing, less self-critical and more carefree existence.

Mayer is the proverbial “canary in a coal mine.” Feeling overwhelmed, he is pushed to the point of exhaustion; anxious to the point of paralysis; hopeless to the point of liberation. The artist-comedian speaks to the freedom he feels onstage, when his role is more clearly defined. On stage, he ironically gets reprieve from obsessively worrying about how his personage is being perceived. The spotlight and microphone give him an opportunity to relax and be an untamed and saturated version of

himself. In the role of comic, his task is much simpler than navigating the 24/7 walk-a-day societal minefield of an undiagnosed and unmedicated neurotic. In the art world the stigma of neurosis can be played like an Ivy League degree. Observe the pathos of Van Gogh's struggles with mental illness and the self-generated mystique of Dali and Warhol. Are artists legitimized by personal demons? Does the audience demand quirks? "Give us something embarrassing, something secret, something relatable!"

Final words: if you are dealt the hand of being a sensitive and anxious person, like Shawn Mayer and the writer of this essay, do yourself a favor and find a way to turn that deficit into an advantage. Use these lamentable attributes that could cripple a lesser human to fuel your passions, then do everyone a favor: blow the lid off of something—artfully, of course.

**-Heyd Fontenot**

HEYD FONTENOT IS AN ARTIST/DESIGNER/ AND FILMMAKER. HE IS THE FORMER DIRECTOR AND CHIEF CURATOR AT DALLAS' CENTRALTRAK ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM (2011 TO 2016), AND ARTPACE, TULSA ARTIST FELLOWSHIP AND CASA CHUCK RESIDENCY RECIPIENT IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.

# essay

"A VOID WIGGLES IN THE MOTEL POOL"

I've avoided writing this. Like many of us, one of my favorite personal avoidance techniques consists of scrolling. First through the screen: scrolling through Instagram. Scrolling through Facebook. Scrolling through specific dating app. Secondly, in body: Scrolling thru strip malls. Target. Bookstores. Movie stores (Kidding, RIP to all victims of the scroll). I avoid because I'm anxious. What is there to be anxious about? To rip an Anthony Jeselnik tag: "You know exactly what I'm f\*cking talking about".

Shawn Mayer, the artist you'll encounter at this show rightly entitled *Prone Anxiety*, is similar to most current humans in this way: beyond overstimulated and hellishly anxious, a life that consists of mitigating rather than addressing. In fact, a lot of Shawn's works are birthed in or hold close relation these scrolling locations: Instagram, Facebook, strip malls, Target. Not because Mayer panders, but because they're unavoidable. It's precisely this crushing prevalence that Mayer plays in throughout *Prone Anxiety*.

I use the word "play" specifically. It's what Mayer does: he plays. This show displays his unique ability to warp an image, object, or unfortunate plastic fan into an item of both humor and terror, addressing both with a snaggle toothed



# essay

"A VOID WIGGLES IN THE MOTEL POOL"

lack of judgment. Contexts are befuddled, unrelated images in the grid of the white frame, a rug that's woven with an image of god-knows-what-but-it's-creepy. A viewer will catch themselves hee-hawing only to tense up. But we've seen this before, right? Nauman, Baldessari, Broodthaers. This type of play has precedence.

Once the play stops is where Mayer truly begins to separate from the pack. Unlike the above names, Mayer does not push himself into the absurd for the sake of itself but because he's searching for a connection. This is what I find most enticing about Mayer's pieces: his investigation yields a fortification of, if not hope, at least perseverance. Mayer edits, curtails and frames with purpose; calling attention to our own ability to shape our anxieties, to (literally) frame our fears. Mayer has managed to distinguish his voice within the information onslaught, an acknowledgement of coexistence that's affirming. It's true, we are objects to these systems but we can rehearse subjectivity.

My favorite work is the long video with the pool (at the time of this writing, it's in a shared Google Drive folder entitled "VID\_20180730\_230858.mp4"). One will overhear indiscernible yammering and "splishing" while watching the reflection of

# essay

"A VOID WIGGLES IN THE MOTEL POOL"

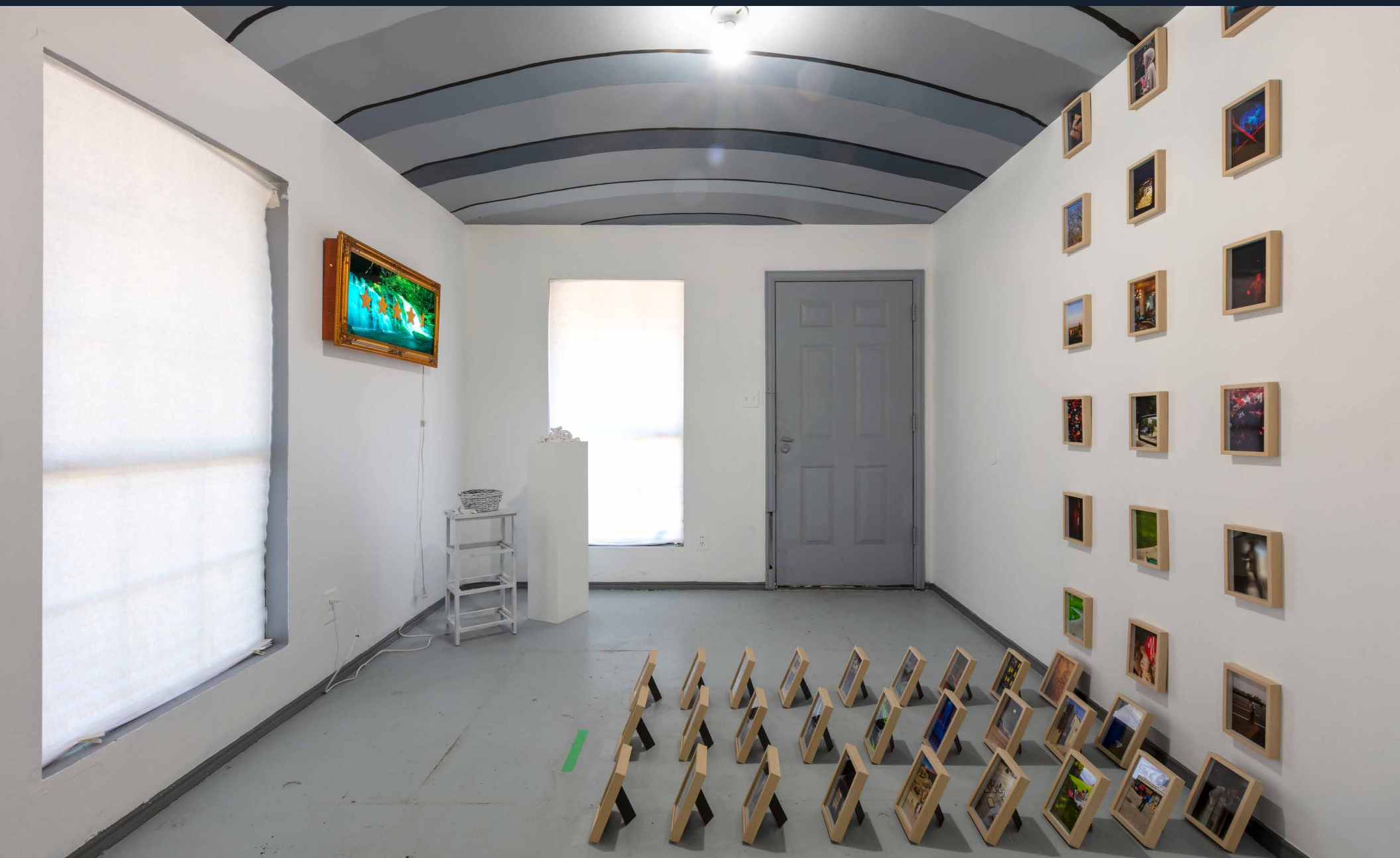
a dark opening hover over a slightly disturbed motel pool. In a fixed shot, a viewer will watch this void wiggle in the pool for ages as it builds a sort of entropic smile. It's not in itself frightening but it's that familiar sort of constant, horrid potential gleaming through the screen that can cake one in dread. This goes on for ages. Then, in a moment of complete and total disregard for the tension built, a small child slaps his way across the center of the camera. It's a sort of jovial middle finger to all the darkness.

**-John Logan**

JOHN LOGAN WORKS IN THE ARTS. HE IS CO-FOUNDER AND LECTURER OF ART SKOOL AND CURRENTLY WORKS AS THE COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER AT THE CREATIVE ARTS CENTER OF DALLAS.

# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"





# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



LILIANA  
[.] BLOCH  
GALLERY

# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"





LILIANA  
[.] BLOCH  
GALLERY

# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



LILIANA  
[.] BLOCH  
GALLERY

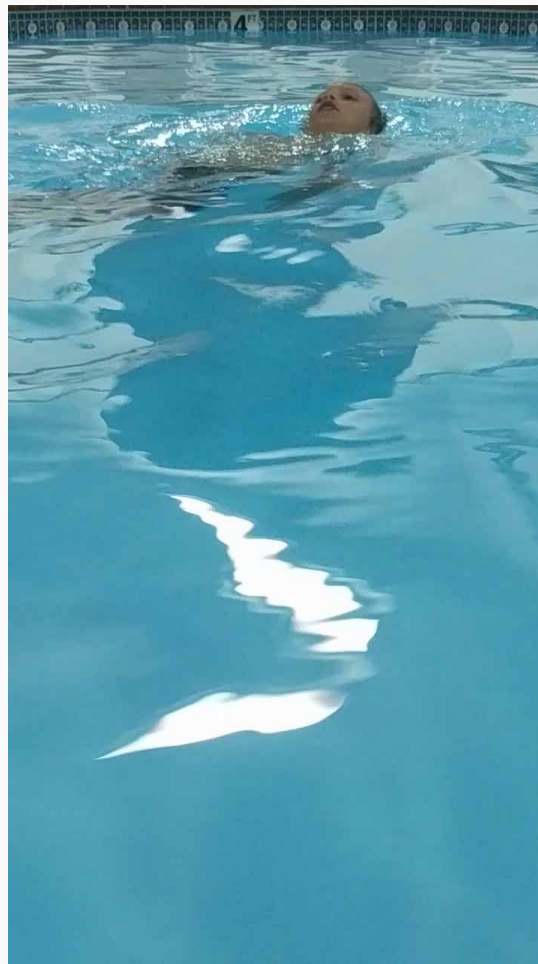
# installation views

"PRONE ANXIETY"



# “Twin Falls, ID, Jul 30, 2018, Mon, 11:08 PM”

2018, VIDEO, 00:06:52





# “Review”

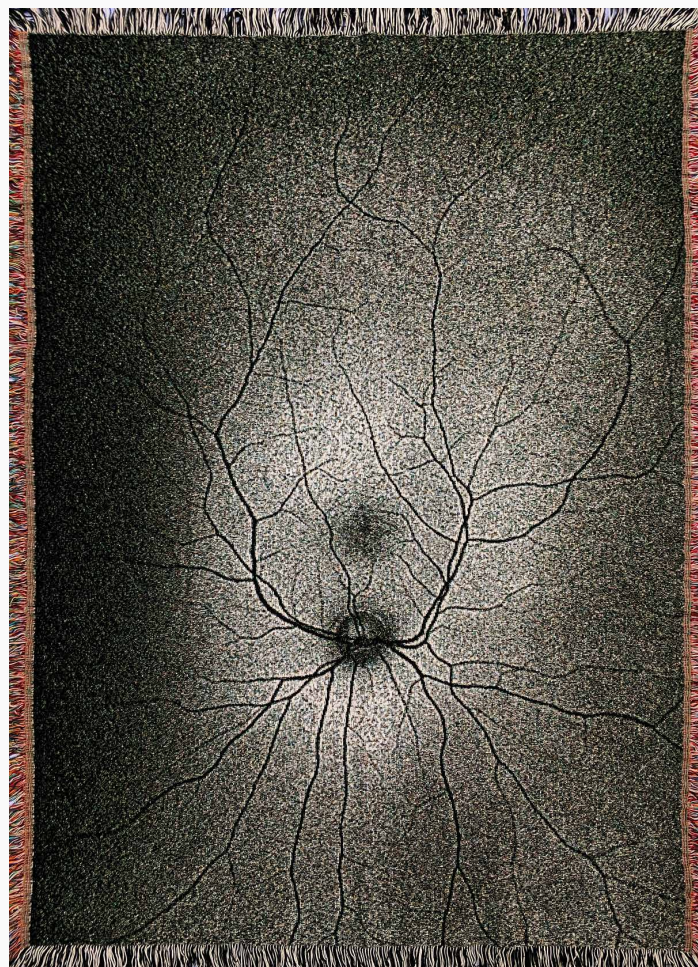
2019, MOTION SIGN, CLAY, ACRYLIC, 39"W X 19"H





# “Receptor”

2019, TAPESTRY, 37"W X 52"H



# “White Noise”

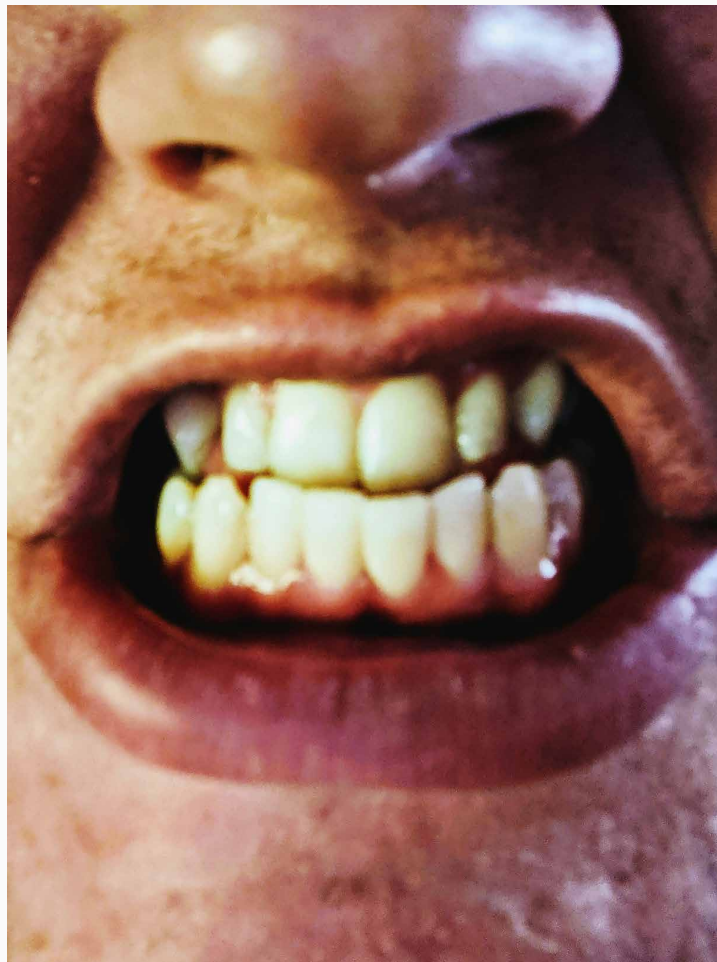
2017, OSCILLATING FAN, SILVER LEAF, PROJECTION, AUDIO, SIZE VARIABLE





# “A Bad Habit”

2019, PERFORMANCE PIECE: LIVING ARTIST, PLASTER, SIZE VARIABLE



# “The First Shadow Puppet”

2019, PERFORMANCE PIECE: LIVING ARTIST, OVERHEAD PROJECTOR, INKJET TRANSPARENCIES, SIZE VARIABLE

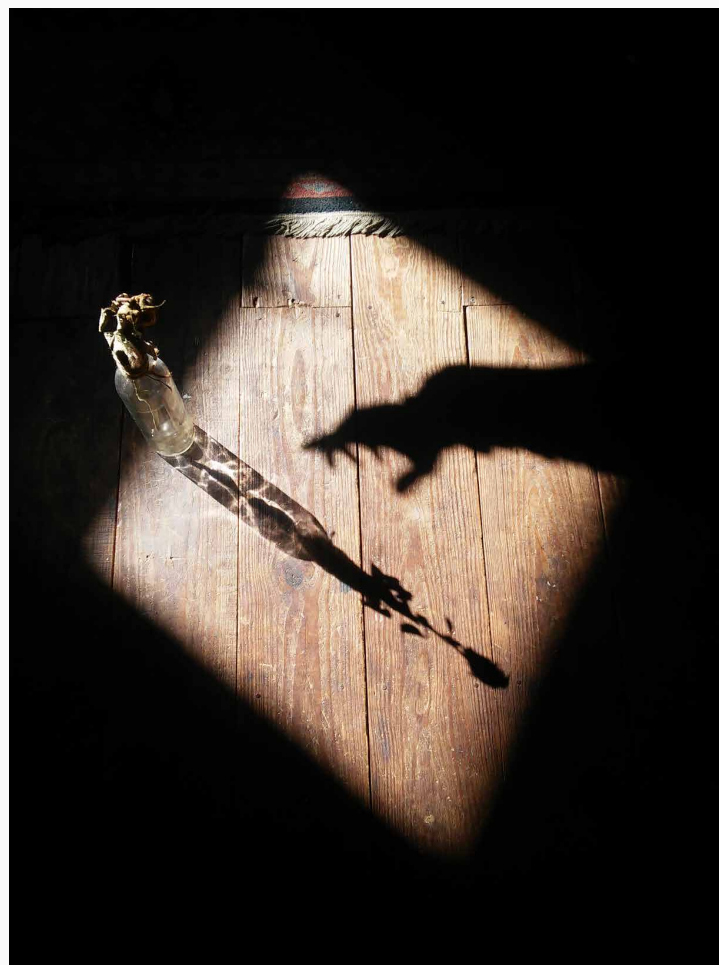


IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER BY DATE TAKEN

# “Time Stamp”

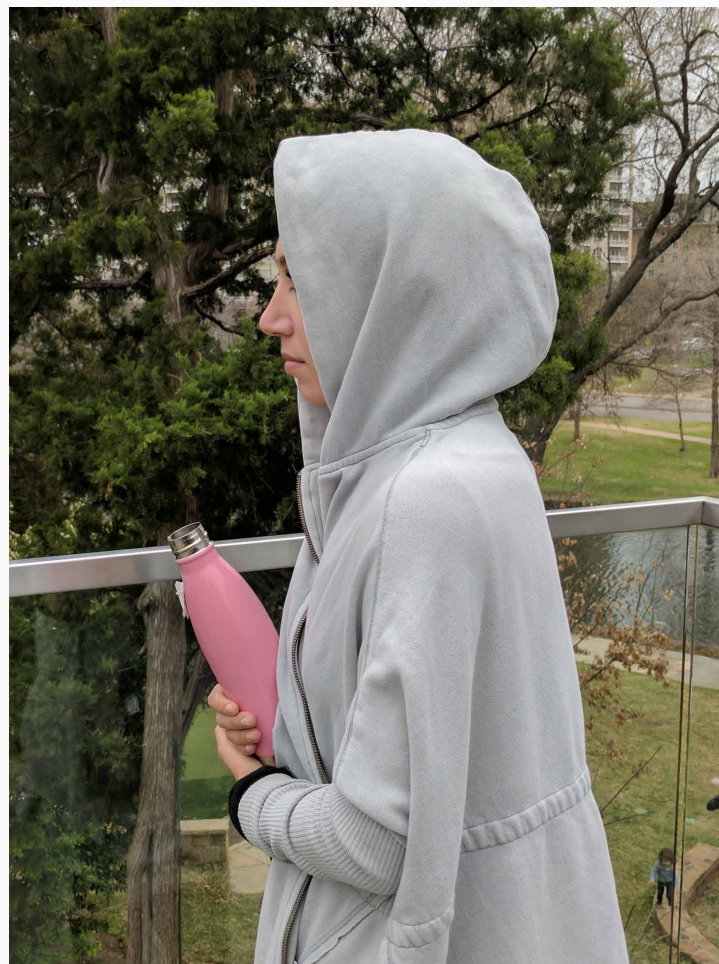
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2016, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



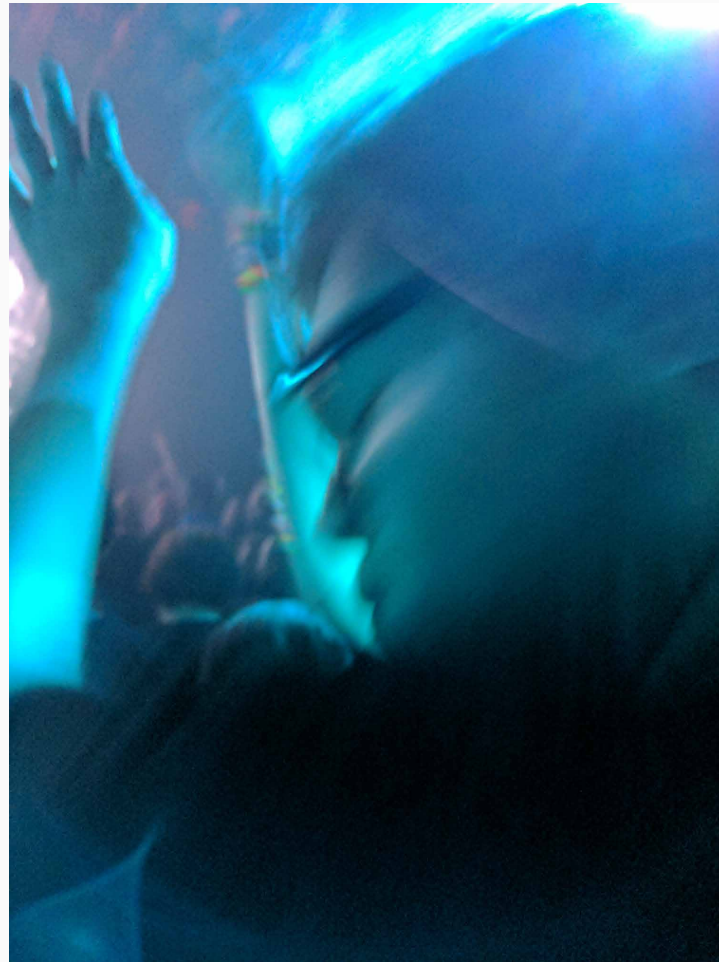
# “Dallas, TX, Feb 11, 2017, Sat, 2:25 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Mar 4, 2017, Sat, 1:06 PM”

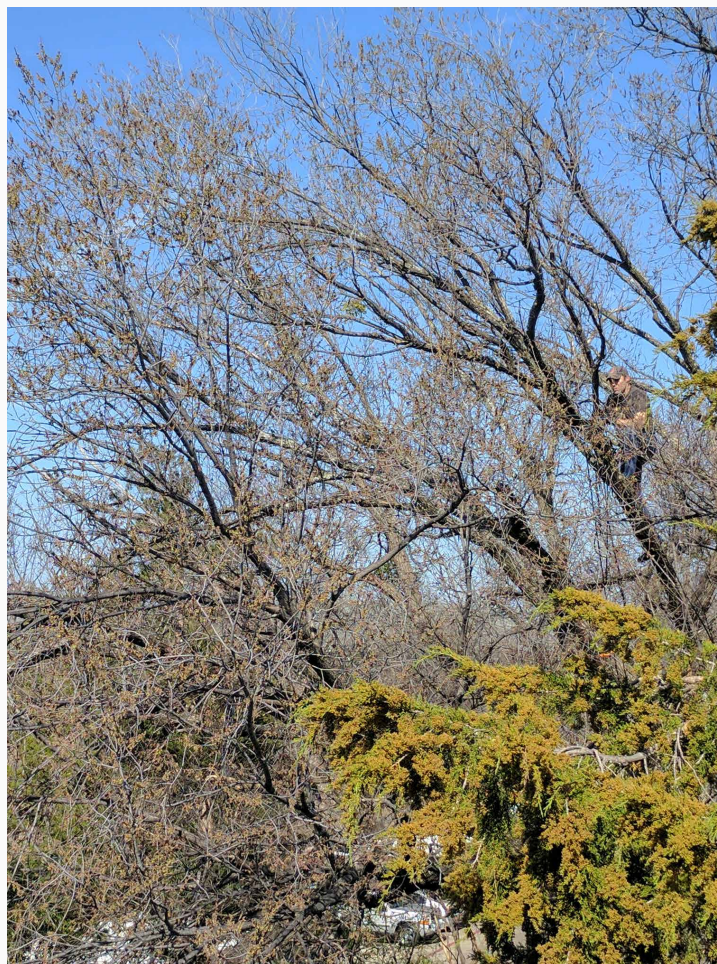
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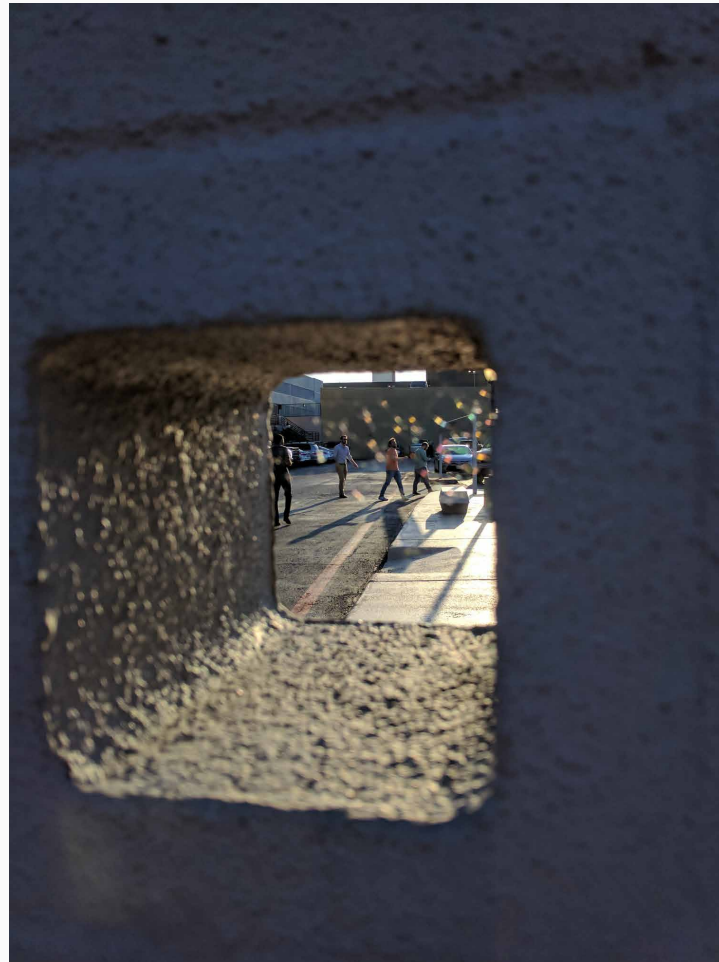
# “Dallas, TX, Apr 16, 2017, Sun, 12:52 PM”

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# “Dallas, TX, May 6, 2017, Sat, 7:12 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



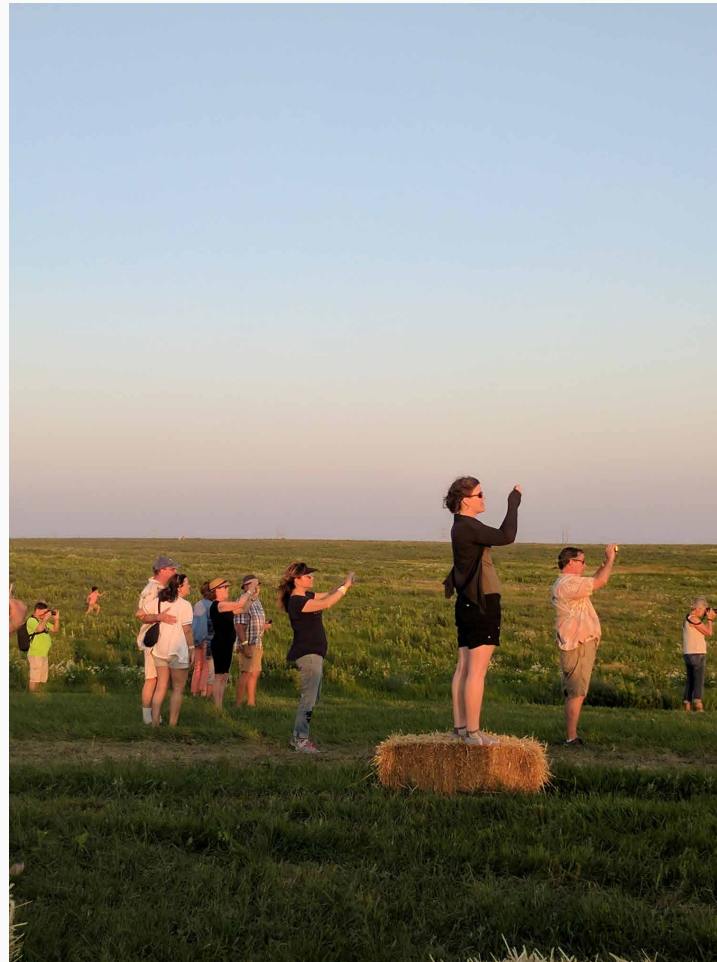
# “Waxahachie, TX, May 21, 2017, Sun, 1:20 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Flint Hills, KS, Jun 10, 2017, Sat, 8:20 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





# “Carrollton, TX, Jun 24, 2017, Sat, 5:46 PM”

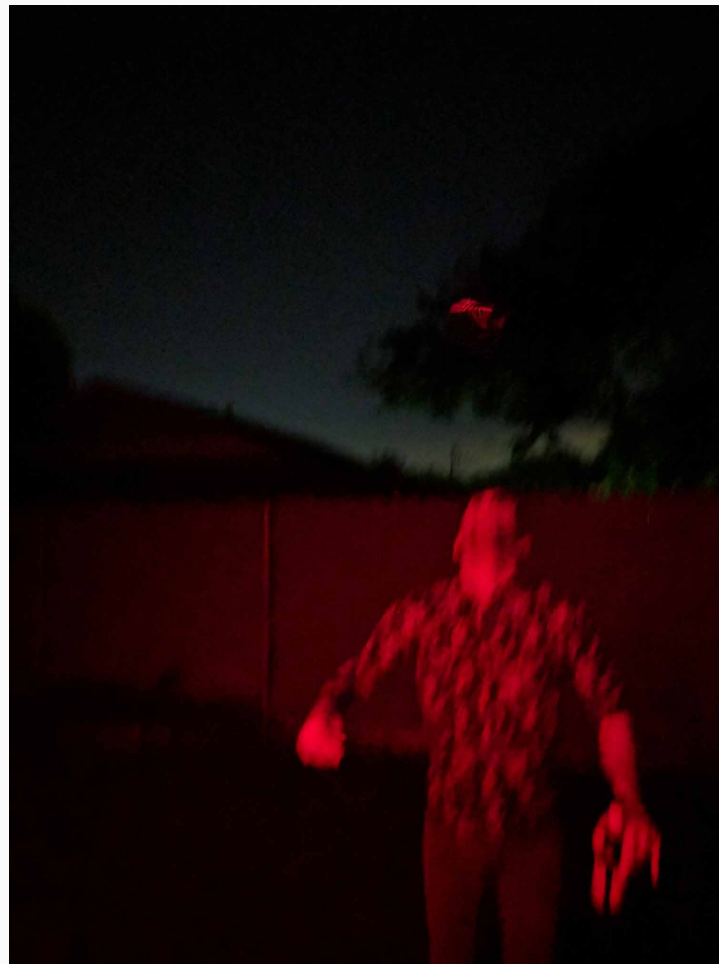
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# “Dallas, TX, Jun 24, 2017, Sat, 10:55 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Jun 24, 2017, Sat, 11:04 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Jul 3, 2017, Mon, 3:46 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



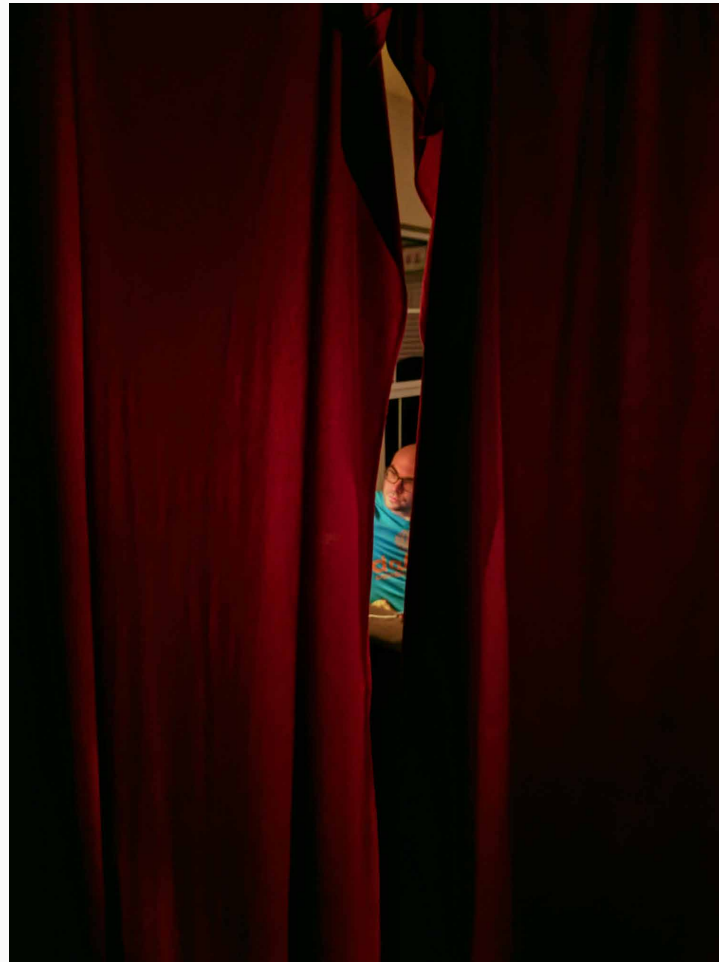
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# “Dallas, TX, Jul 30, 2017, Sun, 9:36 PM”

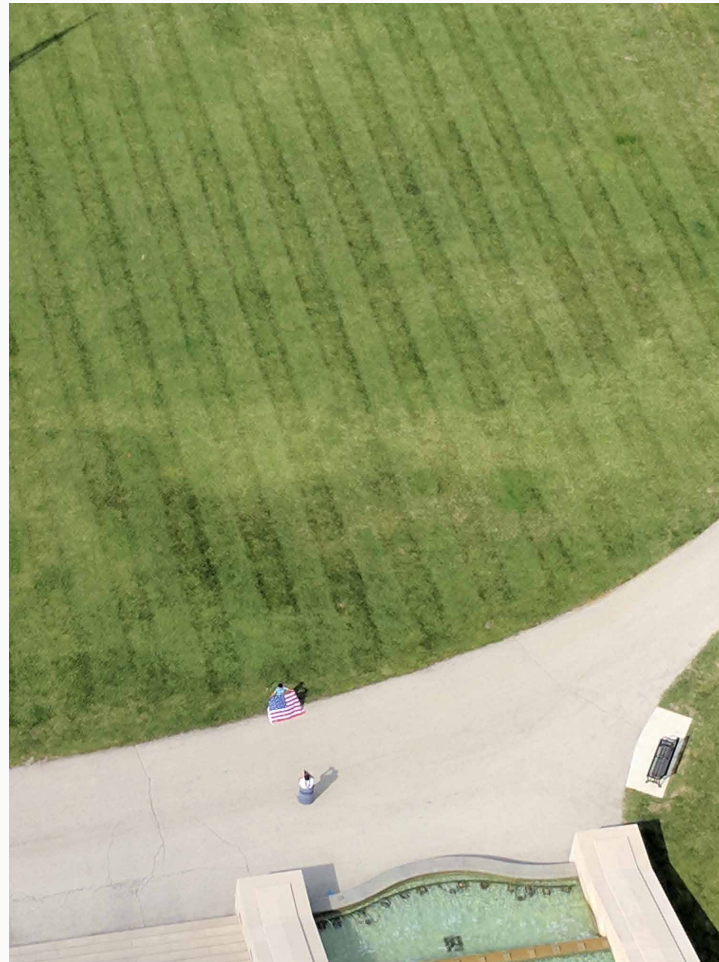
2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





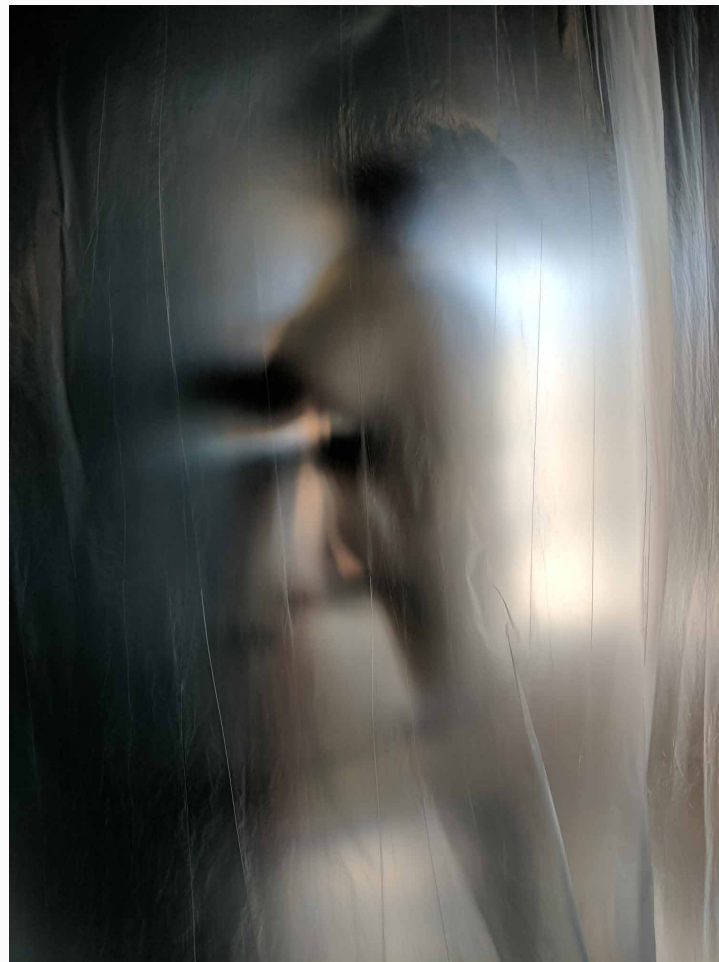
# “Kansas City, MO, Aug 26, 2017, Sat, 4:13 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Aug 29, 2017, Tue, 9:59 AM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Sep 16, 2017, Sat, 12:47 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Orlando, FL, Nov 3, 2017, Fri, 8:19 PM”

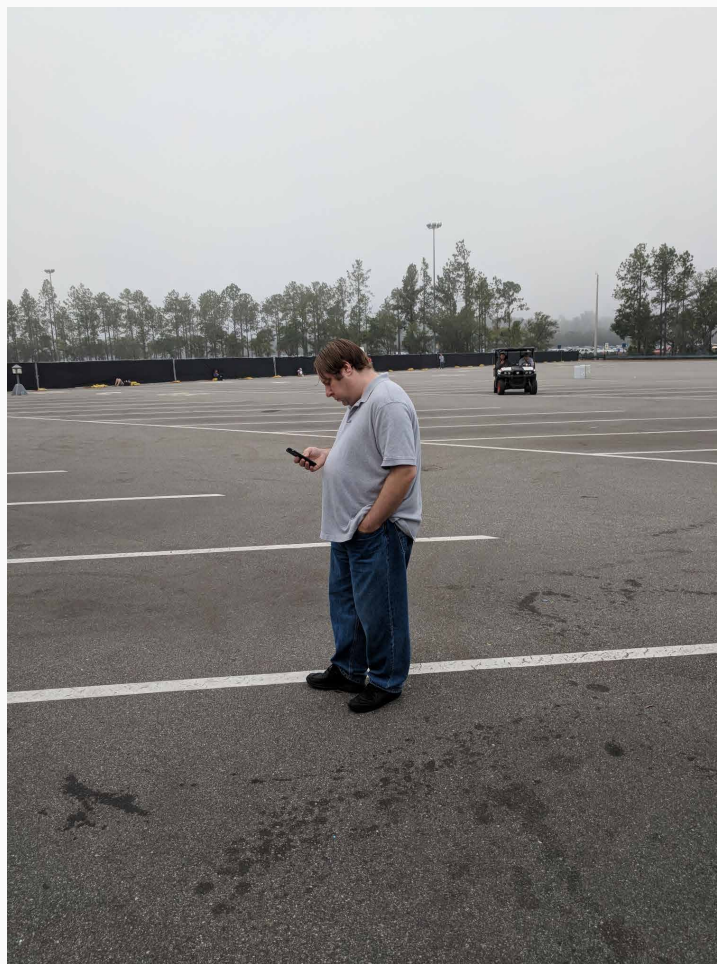
2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





# “Orlando, FL, Nov 5, 2017, Sun, 7:10 AM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



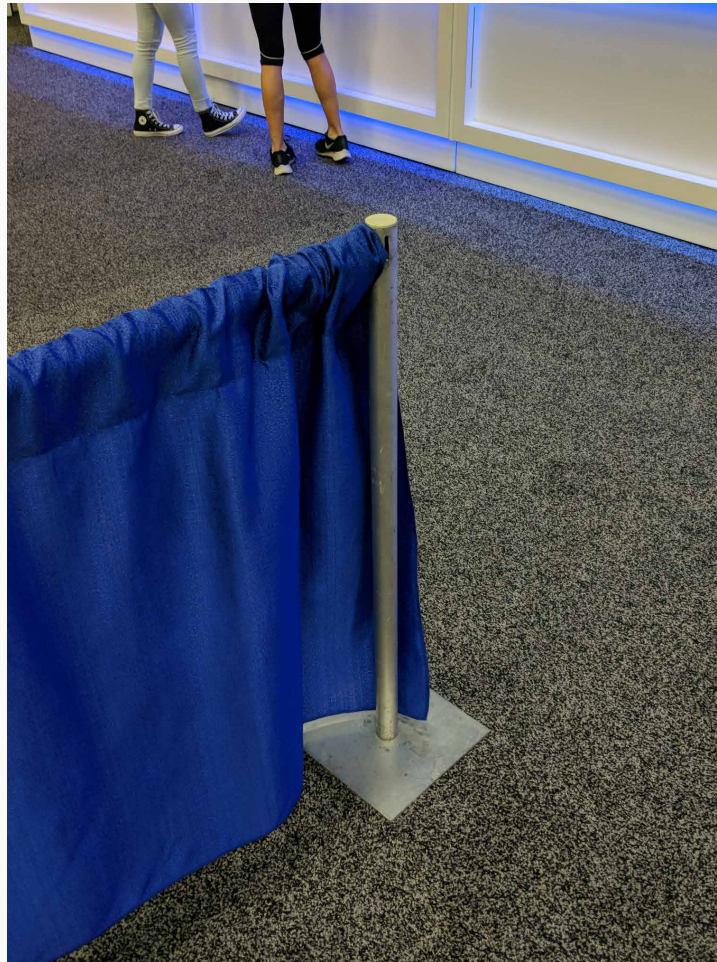
# “Dallas, TX, Nov 6, 2017, Mon, 6:00 PM”

2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Dec 9, 2017, Sat, 1:40 PM”

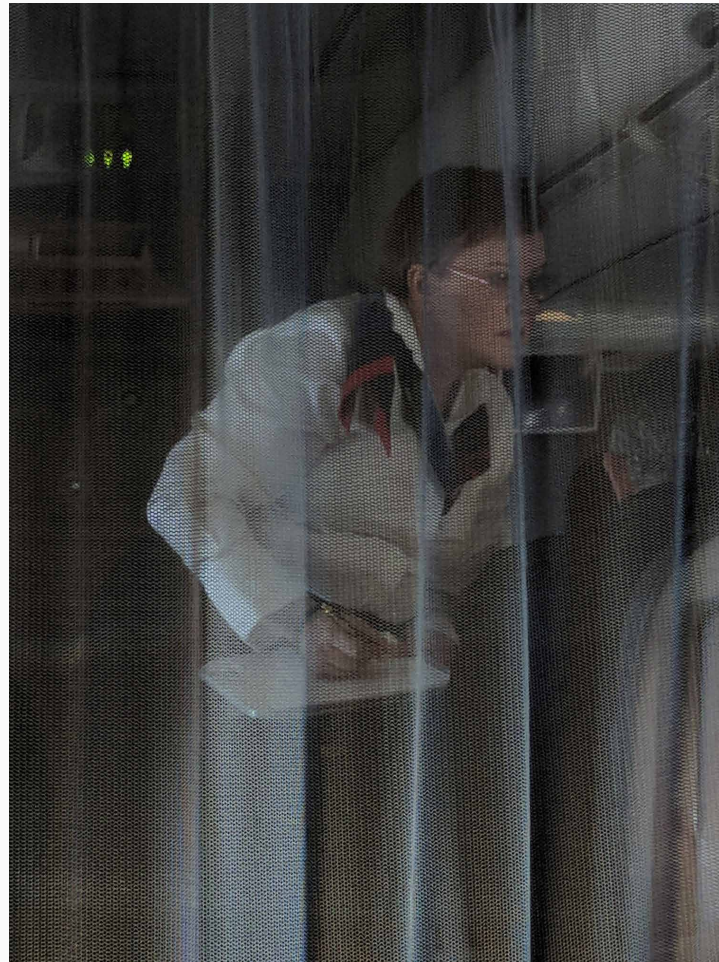
2017, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





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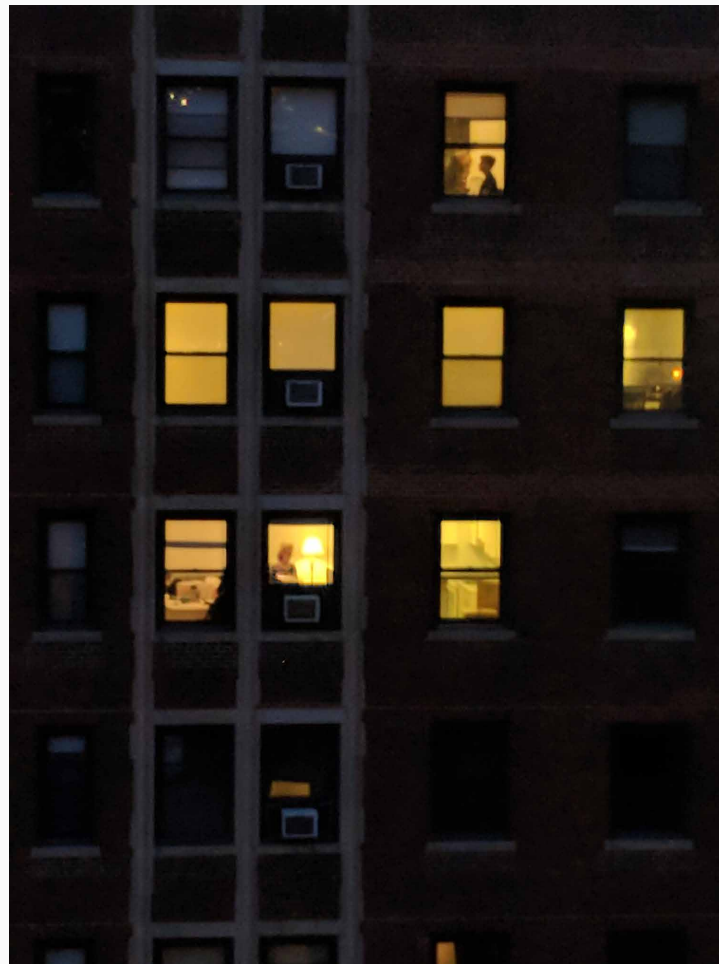
2018, INKJET PRINT, 5" X 7"





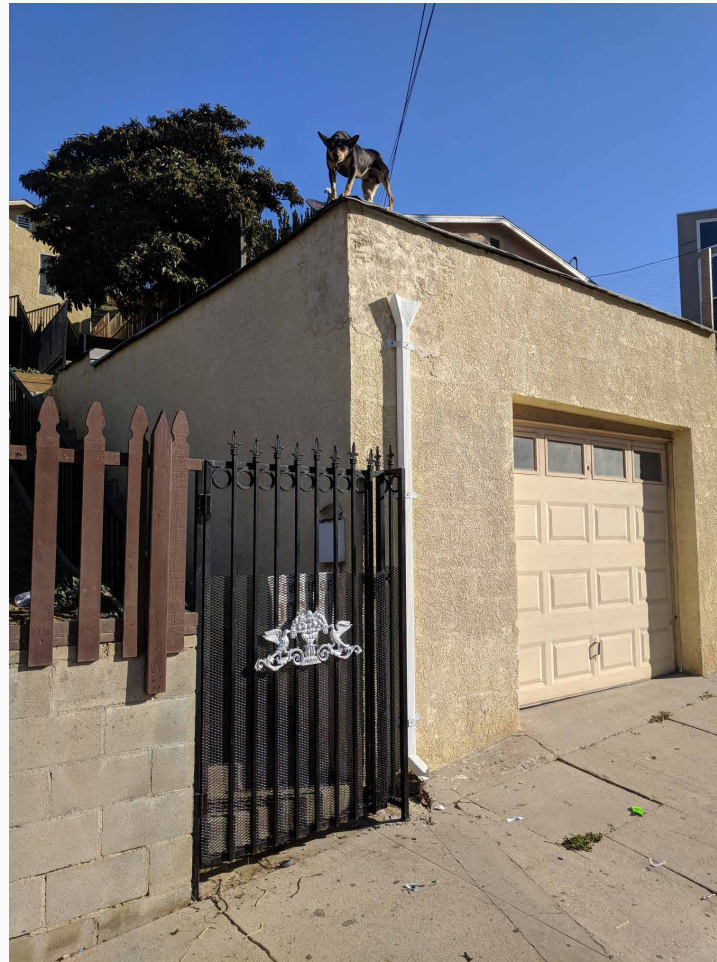
# “Chicago, IL, Feb 3, 2018, Sat, 5:29 PM”

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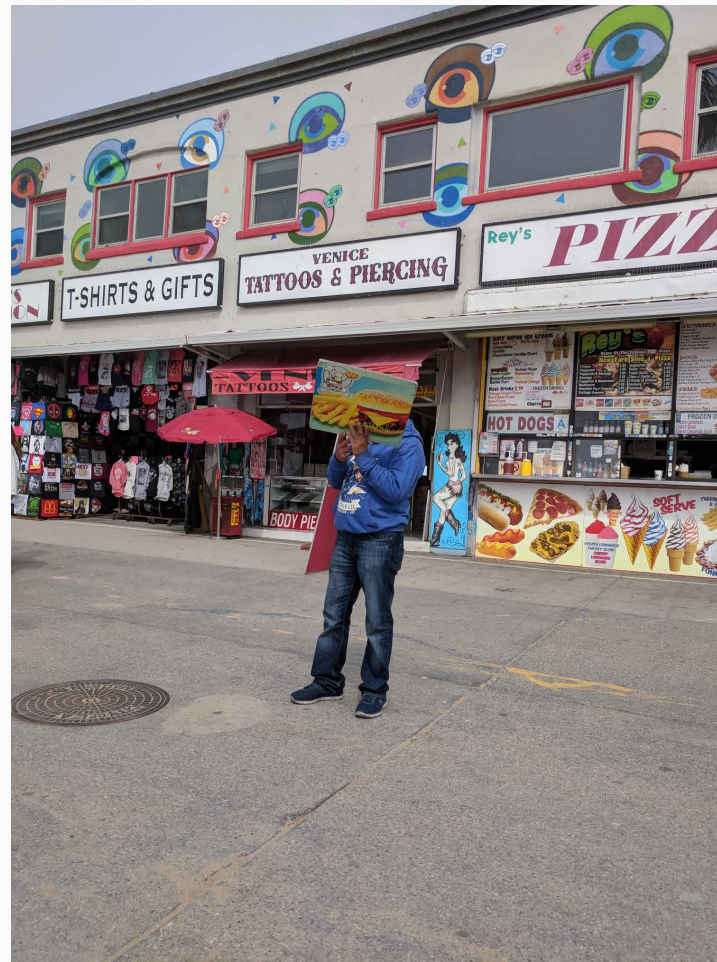
# “Rose Hill, CA, Mar 9, 2018, Fri, 8:25 AM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Los Angeles, CA, Mar 9, 2018, Fri, 1:01 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “West Hollywood, CA, Mar 10, 2018, Sat, 10:25 PM”

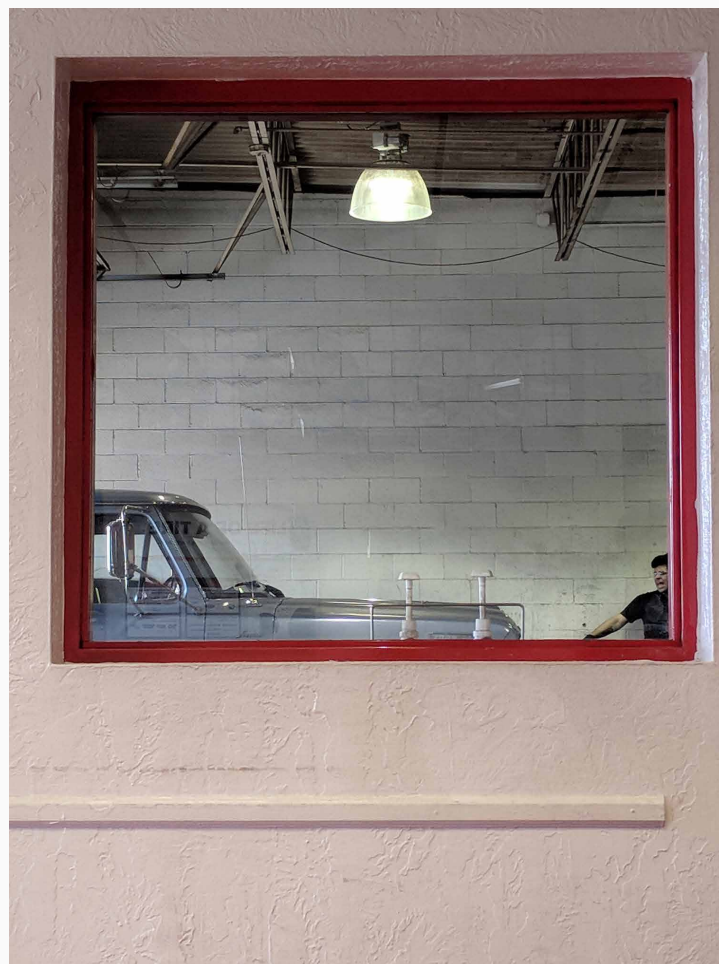
2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





# “Dallas, TX, May 12, 2018, Sat, 1:33 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



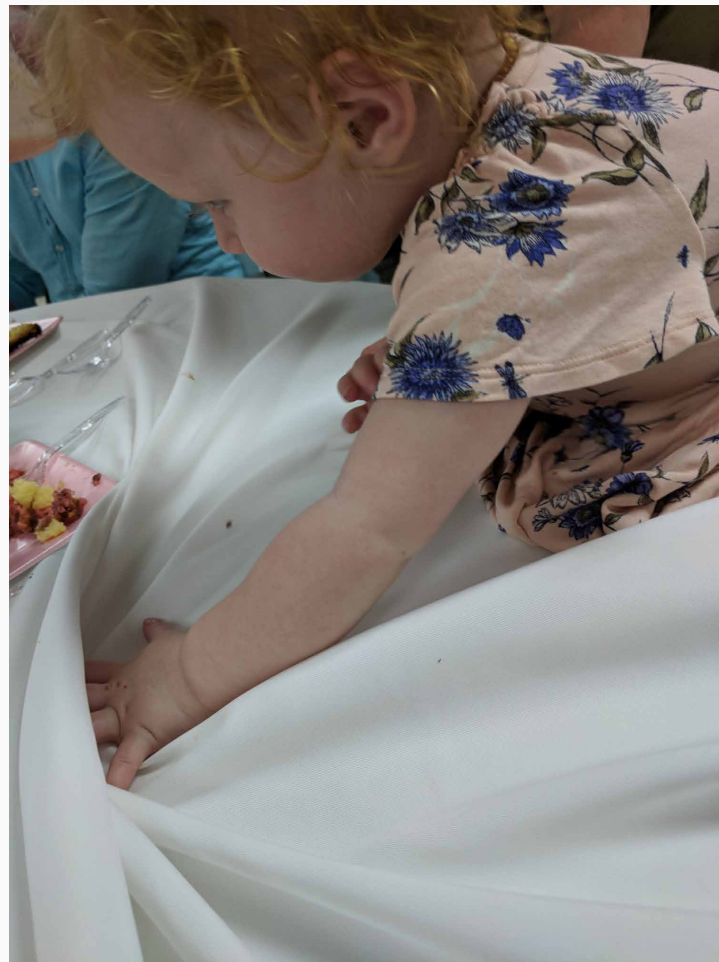
# “Dallas, TX, May 19, 2018, Sat, 1:44 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Russellville, MO, May 26, 2018, Sat, 3:00 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Dallas, TX, Jun 5, 2018, Tue, 8:48 PM”

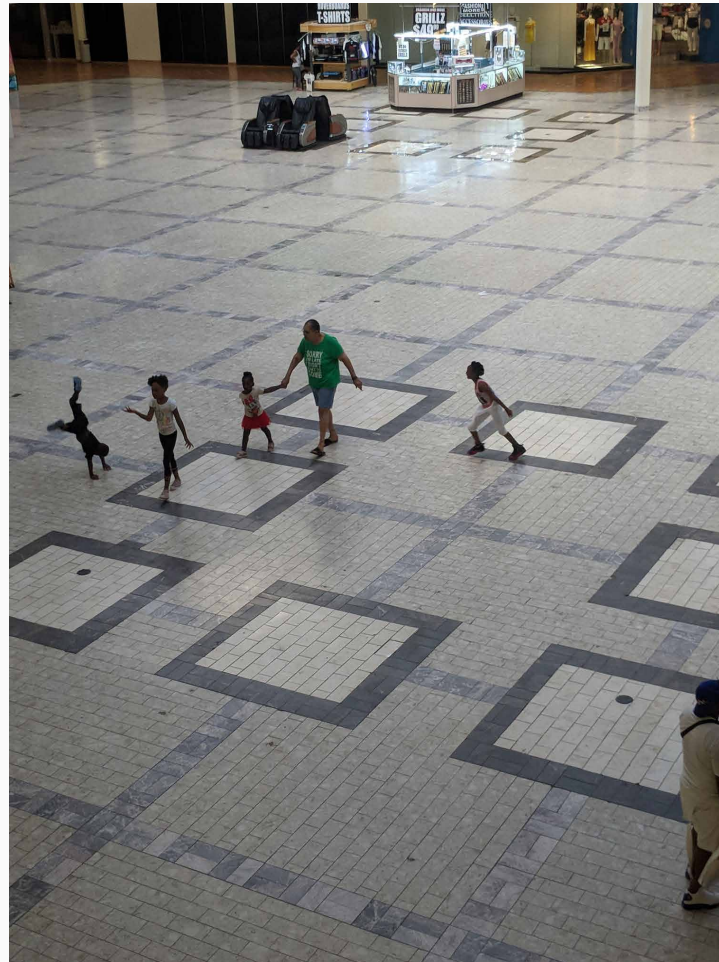
2018, INKJET PRINT, 5" X 7"





# “Dallas, TX, Jun 16, 2018, Sat, 4:13 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



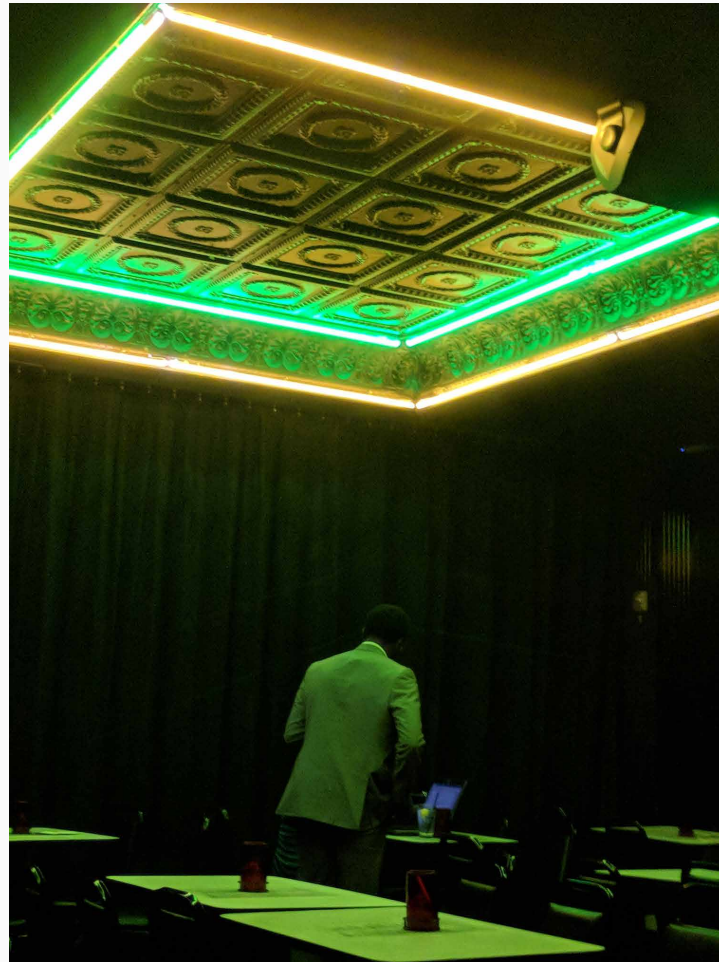
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2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Addison, TX, Jul 16, 2018, Mon, 9:27 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Echo, UT, Jul 30, 2018, Mon, 6:39 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





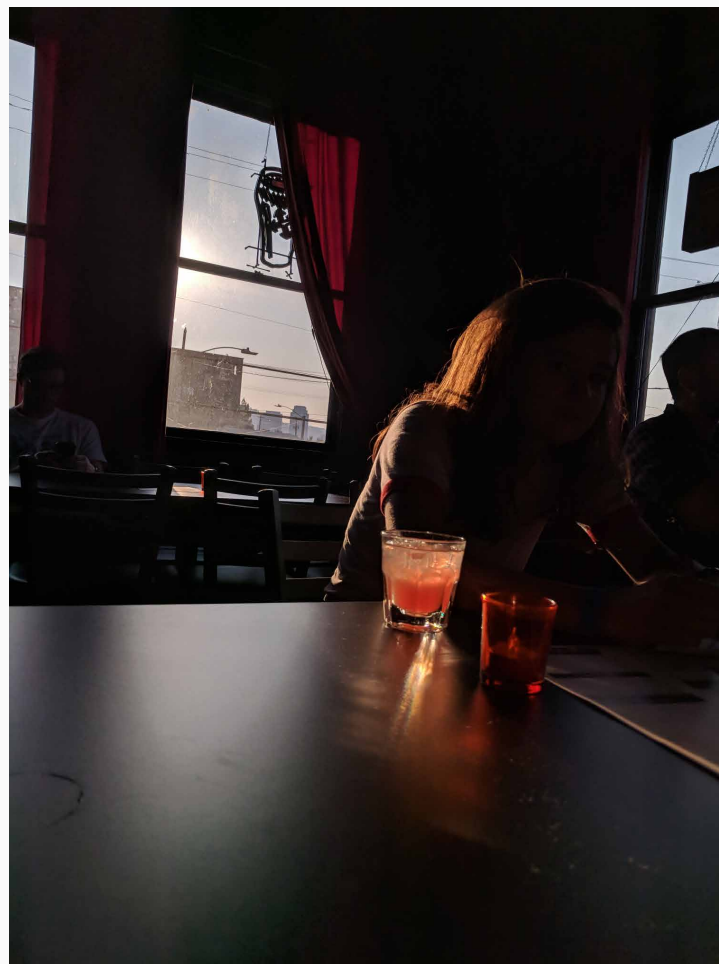
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2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



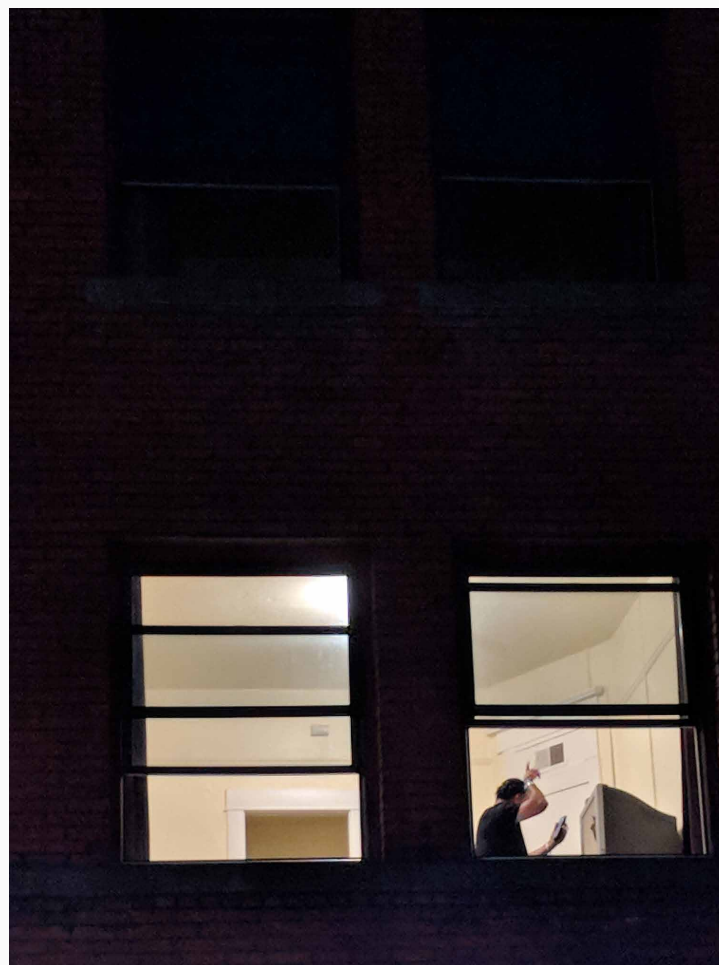
# “Portland, OR, Aug 7, 2018, Tue, 7:08 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Portland, OR, Aug 11, 2018, Sat, 9:40 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Walnut Grove, WA, Aug 25, 2018, Sat, 5:16 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





# “Dallas, TX, Nov 16, 2018, Fri, 10:40 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Portland, OR, Dec 1, 2018, Sat, 9:29 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Portland, OR, Dec 8, 2018, Sat 2:15 PM”

2018, INKJET PRINT, 5" X 7"



# “Portland, OR, Dec 8, 2018, Sat 2:20 PM”

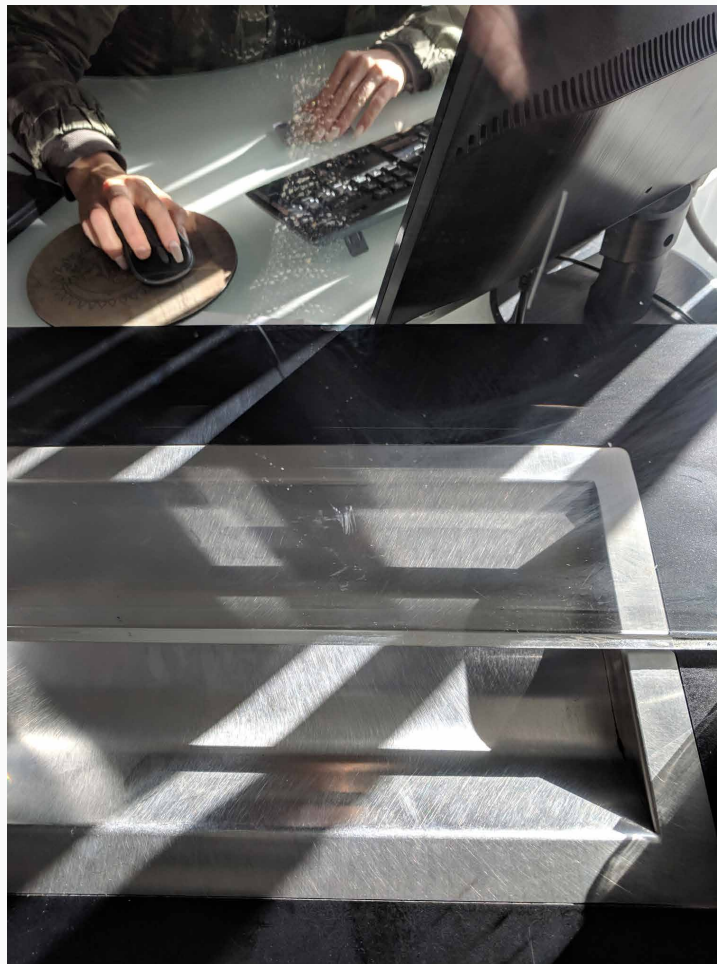
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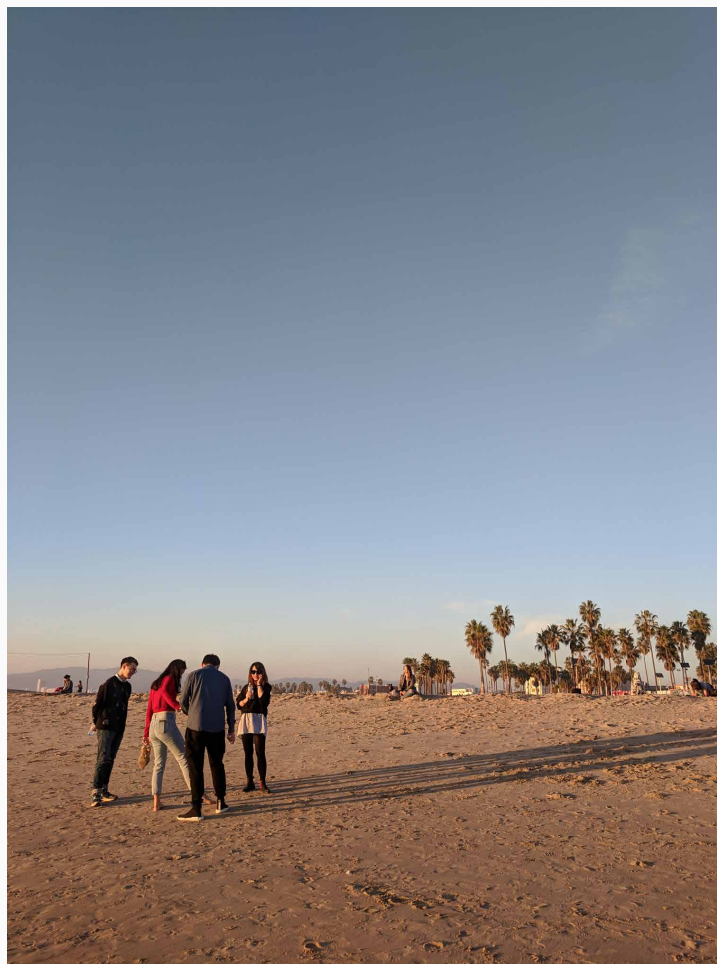
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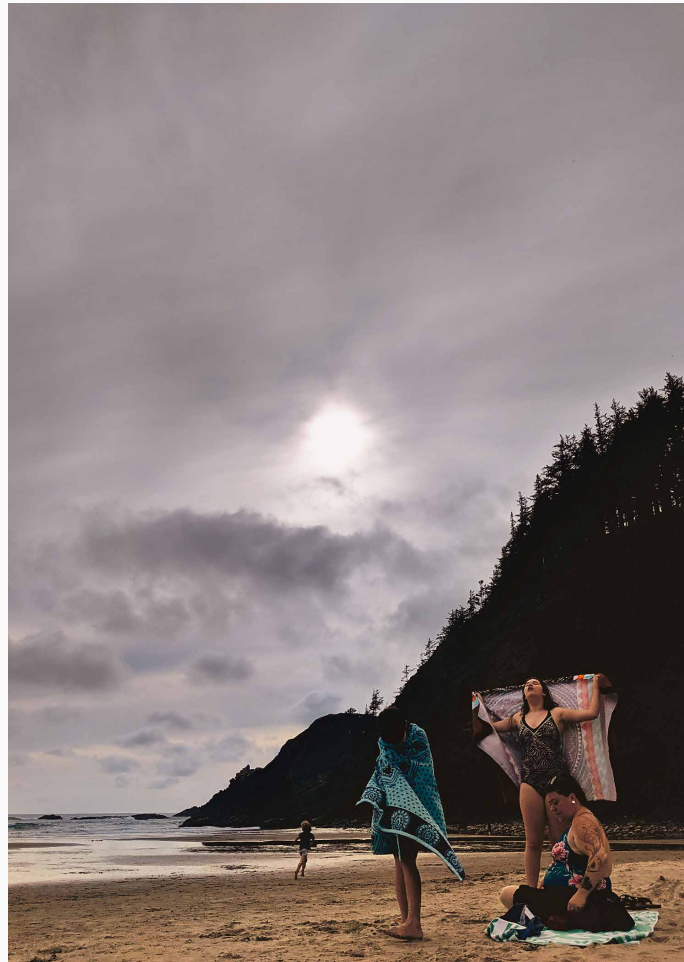
# “Mt. Hood, OR, May 5, 2019, Sun, 4:44 PM”

2019, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H



# “Ecola State Park, OR, Jul 13, 2019, Sat, 6:11 PM”

2019, INKJET PRINT, 5"W X 7"H





Shawn Mayer completed his MFA in Arts and Technology at the University of Texas at Dallas in spring 2014 and holds a BA in Music and a BFA in Drawing from the University of Missouri (2008). He has worked in animation, production and postproduction for television and commercial programming. His work aims to bridge the gap between physical, traditional and technological media, combining them with immersive and interactive elements to create new and unconventional art. His areas of focus include online media, emergent play and folk practices displayed in gallery spaces to create unexpected experiences. Shawn was accepted as a resident at CentralTrak: the UT Dallas artists' residency in 2013. His work has been shown at the Lawndale Art Center, the Houston Art League, CentralTrak, RO2 Art, 500x Gallery, and Deep Ellum Windows. His work is currently being represented by the Liliana Bloch Gallery in Dallas, Texas.

# curriculum vitae

SHAWN MAYER

## EDUCATION

2013 Master of Fine Arts  
Arts and Technology  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, TX

2008 Bachelor of Fine Arts  
Drawing  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

Bachelor of Arts  
Music  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

## SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

2019 *Prone Anxiety*  
Sweet Sculpture Park  
Dallas, Texas

2016 *Undisclosed Visions and Pre-teen Rituals*  
*\*As Recalled by a Full Grown Adult*  
Liliana Bloch Gallery  
Dallas TX

2014 *If You REALLY Want to Know*  
CentralTrak  
Dallas, TX

*Just Can't Help But*  
Deep Ellum Windows  
Dallas, TX

## SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2017 *The Architecture of Limitless Delusion*  
Texas A&M University-Commerce Gallery  
Dallas, TX

URBANO  
Liliana Bloch Gallery  
Dallas, TX

2016 *Drawing Quote Unquote*  
UTD Arts and Technology Gallery  
Dallas TX

*BeeFlix*  
Beefhaus  
Dallas TX

2015 *co | action*  
500x  
Dallas TX

# curriculum vitae

SHAWN MAYER

*And They Papered The Walls*  
Liliana Bloch Gallery  
Dallas TX

*Rapid Artists*  
Rapid Convention  
Long Beach, CA

*Who's Afraid of Chuck and George?*  
CentralTrak  
Dallas, TX

*Bird Art: The Artist's Eye View of Birds*  
Bath House Cultural Center  
Dallas, TX

2014 *Domestic Partnership*  
Liliana Bloch Gallery  
Dallas TX

*Chaos!*  
RO2 Art  
Dallas, TX

*Hot and Sweaty 3: The Open Show*  
500x  
Dallas, TX

*Residency Exchange*  
Lawndale Art Center  
Houston, TX

*The Paintings of \*George W Bush*  
CentralTrak  
Dallas, TX

*The Function Of Attention*  
Houston Art League  
Houston, TX

2013 *CentralTrak Open Studios*  
CentralTrak  
Dallas, TX

*Video Group Exhibition Fundraiser*  
The Dallas Contemporary  
Dallas, TX

2008 *Game Over. Continue?*  
University Of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

*Undergraduate Juried Art Excellence*  
University Of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

# curriculum vitae

SHAWN MAYER

2007 *Undergraduate Juried Art Excellence*  
University Of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

*Casual Orchestration*  
True/False Film Festival  
Columbia, MO

## LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

2014 Guest Lecturer  
Artist Work Kyle Kondas' Graduate Digital  
Media course  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, TX

Guest Lecturer  
Appropriation and the Animated GIF Sally  
Glass' Digital Imaging course  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, TX

Guest Lecturer  
Digital Playgrounds Dr. Evans' Issues in  
Games course  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, TX

2013 Presenter and Panelist  
Take One Down and Pass it Around:  
Modern Folk  
Gaming Practices RAW Symposium  
University of Texas at Dallas  
Richardson, TX

2012 Presenter and Panelist  
Ratings Exchange:  
A New Currency Flow Conference  
University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX

## RESIDENCIES

2013 -  
2014 CentralTrak  
the University of Texas at Dallas  
Artist Residency  
Dallas, TX

## PRESS

2017 *7 Dallas Artists to Watch in 2018*  
Rachel Williams  
Dallas Observer  
November 30



# curriculum vitae

SHAWN MAYER

2014

Shawn Mayer Interview 2014  
TheHateBreaker  
YouTube  
Mar 25

Q&A Interviews by ALH Interns:  
Q&A with Shawn Mayer  
Steffi Cummings  
Art League Houston  
March 17



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