

MARY B. HOWARD INVITATIONAL:  
*AN EXCELLENT  
THOUGHT  
ABOUT  
A QUALITY  
IDEA*

Curated by | 'sindikit | and Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art



November 21, 2020–February 6, 2021

Rahne Alexander  
Matthew Mann  
Omolara Williams McCallister  
Zia Palmer  
Mojdeh Rezaeipour



# INTRODUCTION

In *An Excellent Thought About a Quality Idea*, five artists were invited, from more than seventy proposals, to revisit an older artwork and to redevelop the work into a new project. Rahne Alexander, Matthew Mann, Omolara Williams McCallister, Zia Palmer, and Mojdeh Rezaeipour were selected by Guest Curators **Zoë Charlton** and **Tim Doud**, co-founders of | **'sindikit** |, and Tephra ICA Associate Curator Erica Harrison. The 'sindikit project is committed to supporting studio research and experimentation with an emphasis on gender, sexuality and race. The curators were specifically interested in the complexities of identity and supporting research practices. Based on the prompt, each artist made an entirely new artwork by expanding the genre and materials or exploring their ideas in a completely new medium.

*Named in memory of Mary B. Howard, an artist, long-time board member, and staunch supporter of Tephra ICA, this exhibition is supported by ARTSFAIRFAX and the Virginia Commission for the Arts.*

## ABOUT GUEST CURATORS ZOË CHARLTON AND TIM DOUD OF | 'SINDIKIT |

The 'sindikit project is a creative, self-funded endeavor that emphasizes and extends collaborative practices as artists and educators. Their interest in the intersections of art, community, and education makes it crucial to work both in and outside of the University system. 'sindikit is a platform that includes artist projects, creative community conversations between cultural activators, visual artists, and their co-conspirators. The 'sindikit project was founded with an interest in discussing socio-political and cultural issues that affect art and artists.

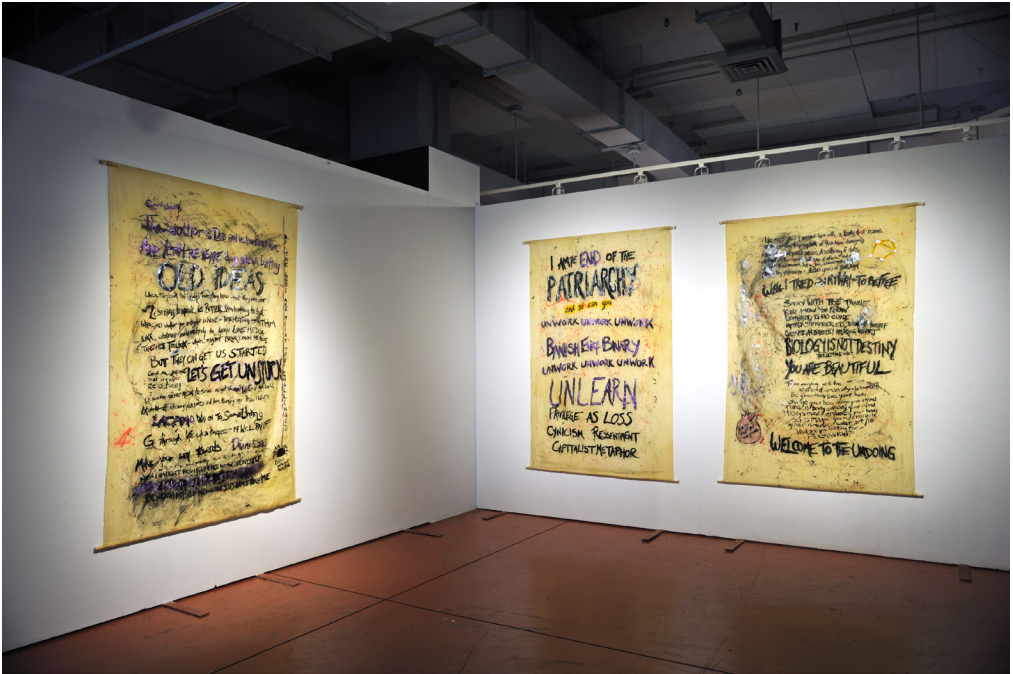
*This exhibition was conceived precisely for pushing boundaries and providing a space to openly share perspectives. Intimately linked to the regional artist community, Tephra ICA is committed to the countless voices comprising that community and recognizes the importance of creating and affirming values and practices that encourage care, support, and accountability. The artists and guest curators in this exhibition, with Tephra ICA's staff and board, together present this very important research and practice.*



Rahne Alexander, *I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You* (detail), 2020

## RAHNE ALEXANDER

Rahne Alexander is a queer inter-media artist and essayist working in video, sculpture, performance, and installation art based in Baltimore, Maryland. She is an alumna of Signal Culture and the Experimental Television Center and former organizer for the Transmodern Festival. Her video art has been screened in galleries and festivals across the country. *Queer Interiors*, a year-long collaborative multimedia installation, was commissioned by the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2016. A component of this installation, *The Baltimore LGBTQI+ Home Movie Quilt*, was awarded a Saul Zaentz Innovation in Film and Media Fund fellowship. She is a musician, poet, and an essayist, contributing to several award-winning anthologies. Her first book of collected essays, *Heretic to Housewife*, was published by Neon Hemlock in 2019. She performs music with several bands including Santa Librada and is currently a graduate student in the Intermedia + Digital Arts MFA program at University of Maryland, Baltimore.



Rahne Alexander, *I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You*, 2020



## ARTIST STATEMENT

*I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You* is a manifesto of sorts, comprised of catalyzing concepts and conclusions that have driven me as an artist, citizen, and woman.

Presented across three 4' x 6' silk scrolls, the text echoes aspects of drop cloths, battle flags, and notebooks, and is intended to evoke self-doubt, erasure, reiteration, and the editorial hand.

*I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You* was developed for the Mary B. Howard Invitational: *An Excellent Thought About A Quality Idea* as a reanimation of some of my oldest practices — stream-of-consciousness writing on “scrolls” (actually, commercial paper towels) and little mementos mori written for the artists and historical figures who have significantly moved me. These are presented with my newest practice – writing and painting on silk, a fabric of natural strength, and transparency.

In most cases, a manifesto is written for the author first, and this is no exception. *I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You* is an early 21st-century trans feminist statement of purpose, a letter of encouragement for my past self, and a travelogue of how I have arrived where I am today.

- Rahne Alexander



Matthew Mann, *Negroni Wave*, 2019

## MATTHEW MANN

Matthew Mann is a painter based in Washington D.C. Taking inspiration from a range of visual media, including quattrocento frescos, Looney Toons cartoons, photography, and graphic design, Mann has built an expanded vocabulary of subjects, architecture, birds, punk ephemera, and other artworks, to deploy within his work. Mann's paintings reflect his pleasure in free association, humor and his experiences as an artist and citizen. Recent exhibitions include *Fixer Upper* at Trestle Gallery in Brooklyn, N.Y.; *Mod Cons* at Brick Red in New Orleans, L.A.; *Luxury Trouble* at Studio 1469 in Washington, D.C.; *Strange Landscapes* at Arlington Arts Center Arlington, V.A.; and *Shape Play* at Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Philadelphia, P.A. Mann received his MFA from American University in 2002. Mann received his MFA from American University in 2002. Matthew is one of the inaugural resident artists at STABLE.



Matthew Mann, *Rogue Wave (Zlötuhb)*, 2020

# ARTIST STATEMENT

In times of uncertainty, or between projects, I have periodically resorted to painting depictions of the sea in tumult. I began painting the *Rogue Wave* series in 2017 during a period of personal uncertainty that, in hindsight, seems quaint compared to our current moment. The title of the series is taken from a seldom observed and unpredictable ocean wave phenomenon that produces gargantuan waves capable of swallowing ships. Stylistically, the paintings marry a few longtime interests of mine: Zen brush painting, Abstract Expressionism, and 17th and 18th century maritime disaster paintings from England and the Netherlands. *The Rogue Wave* paintings employ the visual language of gestural abstraction to depict improbable, cartoon-like waveforms.

*Rogue Wave (Zlötuhb)* is the newest and largest painting in the *Rogue Wave* series. The painting takes its name from the ship that was sailed in J.A. Mitchell's 1889 novella *The Last American*. *The Last American* is one of the first things that I read at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it struck me as particularly relevant. Set in the 30th century, it is the story of the rediscovery of America nine hundred years after its collapse by Persian explorers. As they encounter New York City and Washington D.C., they depict each city through piecemeal descriptions of the ruins of major monuments including the U.S. Capitol Building, Brooklyn Bridge, and Wall Street. As they travel, the explorers recount the story of America's demise. They tell stories about Americans being disloyal to one another, but having steadfast allegiances to money and material acquisition. These traits, exacerbated by plagues, climate change and greed, cause the undoing of America in the 1990s. The unseen cataclysms leading to the downfall of America in *The Last American* parallel the crises that we face today and are similar to rogue waves, a convergence of forces capable of incredible destruction.

- Matthew Mann



Omolara Williams McCallister, *For Whose Sins* (detail), 2011

## OMOLARA WILLIAMS MCCALLISTER

Omolara Williams McCallister (pronouns: o, love, Beloved) is a dynamic creator who shows up in many forms.

O's work is a call and response blend of sculpture, performance, installation, ritual, space holding, community building, surface design, adornment, word, sound, song, movement, moving images, and photography. Some of the roles that Omolara steps into are artist, educator, organizer, cultural strategist, and conjurer.

O's work grows out of love's processing of everyday experiences of identity-based violence and the individual and collective trauma that it creates. O's works use ancestral tek — traditional ecological knowledge — to manifest ways to transform and move through those experiences towards personal and collective liberation. In all things, O embraces and celebrates the expansive deliciousness of beloved's families: collections of people who define ourselves, shape our experiences, and create new worlds and ways of being every day.

In all of its forms O's work is made to be immersive and interactive, to be co-authored by the people who inspire and encounter it. O gives thanks to: all of the many folks who have mothered beloved; to the communities of folk who hold O in accountability and love; and to all the folks past and present who have made O and O's work possible. Ashe.



Omolara Williams McCallister, *Where Do Monuments Go To Die?*, 2020





# ARTIST STATEMENT

*Where Do Monuments Go To Die?* is an immersive, interactive, installation space that combines moving image, text, sculpture, and organic materials. In this piece I confronted the noose, the hangman's knot, as a symbol and a tool of white supremacist anti-Black terrorism in the United States. The question motivating the work is: how can we reclaim the psychological space and generational trauma that we have inherited around this object and the history of lynch mob violence in the United States? How can we rewrite the script which flows as follows:

- 1 - noose is anonymously placed on public display as a threat to a Black person who has claimed space in a place preserved for whiteness
- 2 - Black person is triggered, outraged, seeks recourse, finds none
- 3 - noose is removed from sight, intact, continues to haunt us until it show up again and again and again and again

This installation is my rewriting of the script. In my story the rope is a tool, formed into a noose, a slip knot, that can be easily untied. The same way that generations of communities have passed the knowledge of how to tie this complicated knot which is only used for one purpose, we can pass down knowledge of how to dismantle it and all of the white supremacist systems that it stands for. We can refashion this noose back into a rope, a tool of endless possibilities.

The video *Where Do Monuments Go To Die?* demonstrates this process. The soft sculpture *Noose Nap Flag* offers an opportunity to physically put the newfound knowledge into practice. *Noose Nap Flag* is made of over 7200 nooses, one for each carceral facility: each prison, jail, detention center, immigration detention center, psych jail, youth detention

center, etc. in the United States. In dismantling this flag, noose by noose visitors are offered an embodied experience of what it feels like to process some of that generational trauma, face fear, find a new way, prepare ground to build anew, tell a new story.

*Where Do Monuments Go to Die?* directly references *For Whose Sins?*, which looks at the complex relationships between morality and sin, desire and disdain, as relates to anti-black racism in the U.S. South, black male bodies, white masculinity, and white supremacy.

- Omolara Williams McCallister



Zia Palmer, Vera Dominguez, 2020

## ZIA PALMER

Zia Palmer is a Washington D.C. metro area-based artist, photographer, archivist, family historian, and documenter of the often slow changes in communities, landscapes, and architecture. Through analog photographic processes, Palmer documents vestiges of ancestral locations in North Eastern New Mexico.

Her work addresses liminality, a patient place of transformation that lies between a threshold in time. Exploring the thought that land has memory, recording all that took place there, has become a catalyst in linking the illusive aspects of memory, identity, and family history into something tangible.

Palmer's work has been exhibited at the Fridge Gallery in Washington, D.C. and Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria, VA.



Zia Palmer, *Women of The Same Blood*, 2020

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Family history has been a key element throughout my practice. *Women of The Same Blood* is a body of work where I investigate my own identity, belonging, and concept of home in comparison to other women in my family. Included are fifteen women descended from my great grandmother through four generations who I have asked a series of questions pertaining to their experience with identity, culture, and heritage. I am interested in the varied feelings and experiences from women of the same blood. My goal is to connect the women in my family through the topic of identity, which is not often discussed, in order to preserve the spirit of my ancestors and hold on to what is being lost throughout the passage of time.

- Zia Palmer



Mojdeh Rezaei, *Stories We Tell Ourselves* (detail), 2020



## MOJDEH REZAEIPOUR

Mojdeh Rezaeipour creates mixed media works, installations, and films that explore notions of time, of home, and of memory. Rezaeipour's work lives between dichotomies — joy and mourning, the imaginary, and the lived experience — as well as vacillates between iconic imagery and multimedia, site responsive interventions. She has been the recipient of multiple awards and fellowships, including The Studio Visit Fellowship at Takt Berlin, second place at The Trawick Prize, The Nicholson Project Artist in Residence, and a Wherewithal Research Grant. Her work and voice have been featured in *Image Journal*, *DIRT*, *BmoreArt*, *The Washington Post*, and NPR.

Rezaeipour is a graduate of University of California Berkeley with a BA in Architecture and of Alt\*Div, an alternative divinity school, centering the intersection of justice and art as spiritual practice. She is currently based in Washington, D.C. at STABLE and has an upcoming Studio Fellowship at VisArts.



Mojdeh Rezaei-pour, *Stories We Tell Ourselves* (detail), 2020

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I was born in Iran and immigrated to the US with my family at the age of twelve. My artistic practice began with explorations of identity and belonging rooted in immigrant and diasporic experiences. I create mixed media works, site specific installations, and films that incorporate existing bodies of my 2D, sculptural, and video work as a part of their immersive vocabularies. These works often incorporate movement, color, light and shadow, natural elements, and my own body, in addition to objects and relics that carry a story or a sense of place. I start with however little I know, and clue by clue, a work unravels. Through this unraveling, and piece by piece, I create spaces to invite audiences inside of my own learning and allow them to engage with it in a playful way. I am devoted to and a student of this process.

For the *An Excellent Thought About A Quality Idea* exhibition, I have revisited a collection of my drawings created from ages 4–9 and brought them to life through analog collage stop motion animation, installation, time-lapse movement, and projection mapping. The resulting work is a colorful world born out of the primary creative expressions of my younger self in a nonlinear collaboration across time and space. Throughout the duration of this exhibition, this world will go through a series of transformations as I occasionally add to, interact with, animate, and document its evolving visual language and layer new elements into the videos. I view this piece and this process as a simultaneous poem, prayer, and puzzle.

- Mojdeh Rezaeipour

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

## **Rahne Alexander**

*I Am The End Of The Patriarchy And So Can You*, 2020

Silk, commercial and homemade inks, and poplar dowels

72 x 48 inches

## **Matthew Mann**

*Rogue Wave (Zlötuhb)*, 2020

Oil and acrylic on plywood

107.75 x 96 inches

## **Omolara Williams McCallister**

*Noose Nap Flag*, 2020

Sisal twine, hemp twine, staples, and plywood

48 x 96 inches

*Where Do Monuments Go to Die?*, 2020

2:45 minutes projection, hemp rope, and compost soil

Variable dimensions

## **Mojdeh Rezaeipour**

*Stories We Tell Ourselves*, 2020

Mixed media and video installation

Variable dimensions

**Zia Palmer**

*Lila Dominguez, 2020*

*Mercie Dominguez, 2020*

*Vera Dominguez, 2020*

*Romanita & Chanita Maes, 2020*

*Romana Sanchez, 2020*

*Loretta Lopez, 2020*

*Lou Ann Lopez, 2020*

*Lorene Lucero, 2020*

*Zia Palmer, 2020*

*Angeline Palmer, 2020*

*Leigh Palmer, 2020*

*Selina Polaco, 2020*

*Felina Chacon, 2020*

*Alexis Chacon, 2020*

*Alexandria Chacon, 2020*

Tintypes

19 x 11 inches each

Courtesy of the artists.

The mission of the Tephra ICA is to enrich community life by promoting involvement and excellence in contemporary visual arts.

We gratefully acknowledge the leadership of our Board of Directors and the valued support of our sponsors, members, and patrons.

This catalog was published in conjunction with Tephra ICA's exhibition Mary B. Howard Invitational: *An Excellent Thought About a Quality Idea* on view November 21, 2020–February 6, 2021, made possible in part through the generous support of Allegra Print.



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