



# Master of Fine Arts

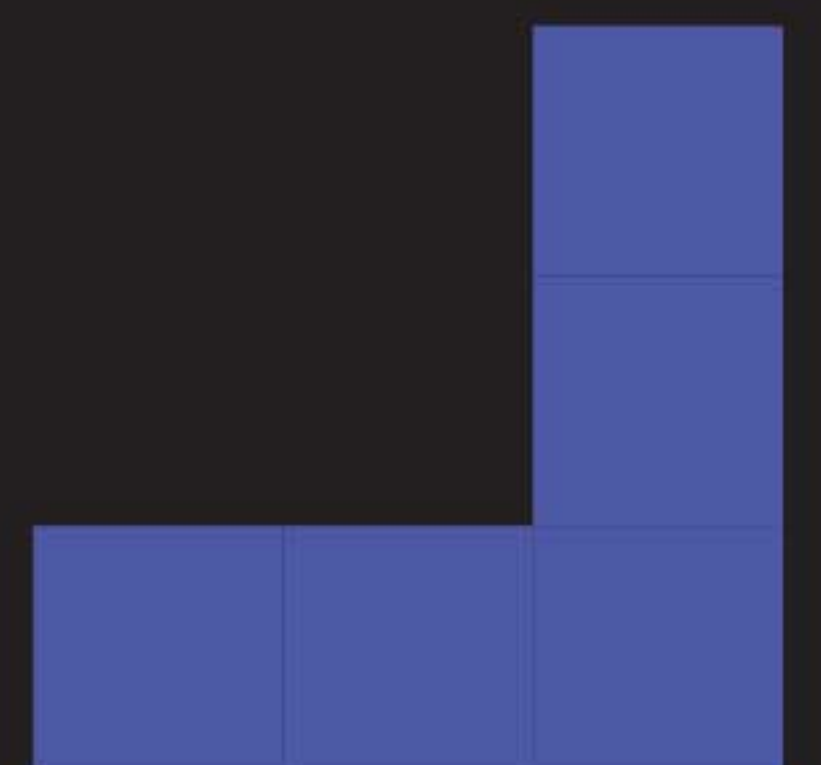
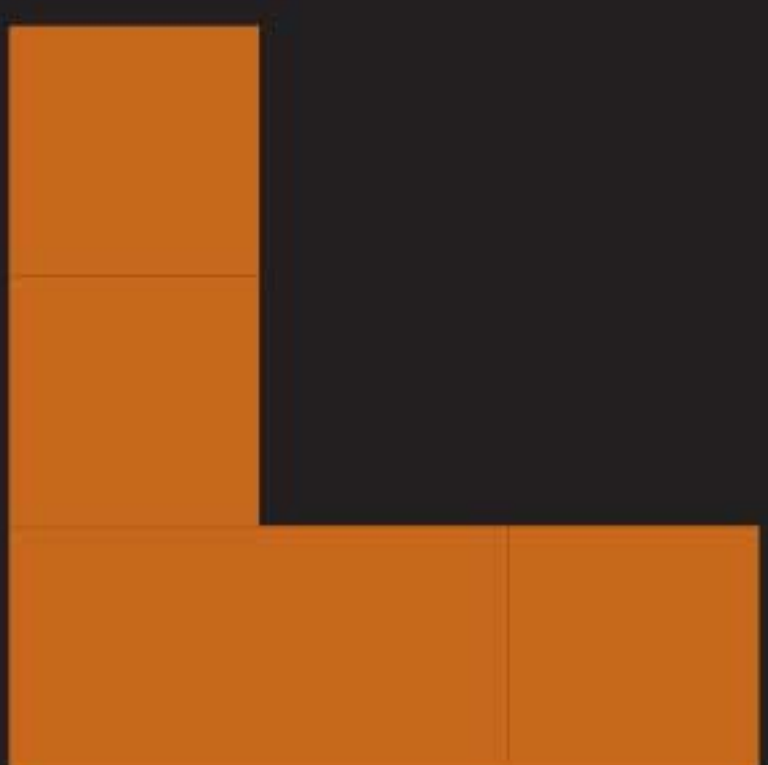
## Studio Art Candidate Exhibition 2023

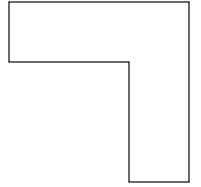
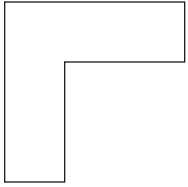
Jill Hannon

John Klaiber

Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba

Dafne Navarro





# Master of Fine Arts

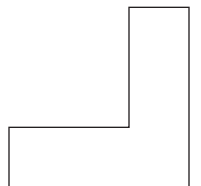
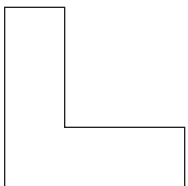
Studio Art Candidate Exhibition 2023

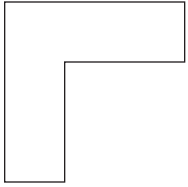
Jill Hannon

John Klaiber

Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba

Dafne Navarro





# Table of Contents

- 4    **Introduction**  
by Rachel Clarke
  
- 6    **The Inaugural MFA  
at Sacramento State**  
by Andrew Connelly
  
- 8    ***Energies in Being***  
by Julia Couzens

**12 Jill Hannon**

**18 John Klaiber**

**24 Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba**

**30 Dafne Navarro**

**36 Acknowledgements**

# Introduction

*by Rachel Clarke*

It is an absolute pleasure to see the culminating work of our first graduating Master of Fine Arts class exhibited in the University Library Gallery. Known as the terminal degree, the MFA is the highest academic degree available in the Fine Arts. Over the duration of two years, involving intense studio practice, Jill Hannon, Dafne Navarro, John Klaiber, and Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba have each demonstrated the creative excellence that MFA study demands. Underpinned by research and critical dialog, they have refined their artistic and creative abilities and have deepened a conceptual understanding of their work. This exhibition is testament to the commitment necessary to reach the masters level – which is a preparation for lifelong professional dedication to fine art.

What I particularly love about this group of graduates is the personal and artistic growth I have witnessed in each of them as they have made their way through the program. In each case their studio work has evolved dramatically. They allowed themselves to let go of ideas and practices that no longer served the work, opening a space for new ways of thinking and making to emerge. This openness required that each artist listen not only to others, but listen carefully to themselves - as well as looking,

thinking and making with great discernment - so they could become more empowered by their own artistic decisions.

Emerging out of struggle, doubt, determination, and courage, the culminating work in this exhibition - beautifully selected and curated by artist Julia Couzens – highlights the accomplishments of each artist. Jill Hannon is a painter who works with imagery that elicits a sense of tension between states of order and chaos. In Dafne Navarro's sumptuous large-scale drawings, the viewer enters a world where bodies and gender identities are fluid and boundless. John Klaiber's monumental ceramic sculptures explore ideas of ritual and respond to his life experiences, and Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba's installations and ceramic objects embody transformations in nature, materials, and states of being.

As the first MFA cohort, these students were not only forging their own artistic journey, but they were also pursuing a new path in our program. In this regard, they shared the experience with the department faculty, who advised, mentored, critiqued, supported and guided them through the new program, while also adapting to the consequential transition from an MA to an MFA



Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba, *Law of Entropy*, 2023 (detail)

program. The success of this first graduating class is also a testament to their hard work, as well as to the department staff who are responsible for the behind-the-scenes activities that make everything possible.

I want to thank the Graduate Coordinator, Andrew Connelly for his steady hand at the helm, the Studio Art and Art History faculty for their tireless dedication, Dean Sheree Meyer and Associate Dean Christina Bellon for their ongoing support and belief in our students, Library Gallery Curator Kelly Lindner for her

commitment and guidance, the Art Department and Library Gallery staff for everything they do, and Julia Couzens for her time and efforts in curating this outstanding inaugural Master of Fine Arts show.

**Rachel Clarke**  
Professor of New Media Art,  
and Art Department Chair

# The Inaugural MFA at Sacramento State

*by Andrew Connelly*

For over 50 years, Sacramento State offered a Master of Art in Studio Art degree. The two-year program was structured the same as a Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art. The MFA is considered the terminal degree in the field. However, our MA degree credential enabled students to put together strong portfolios to apply to other MFA programs. Our students often returned to Sacramento State and reported that our MA program was more rigorous than their current MFA.

In 2011, I was appointed to the role of Graduate Coordinator with the intention to elevate the MA program to an MFA. With the support of Department Chair Carolyn Gibbs (2016-2022) and the contribution of the Studio Faculty, we initiated, wrote, and received approval for both a Bachelor of Fine Art and a Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art programs. Both professional degrees were approved by the CSU and the National Accreditation of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). This has defined a new chapter for the Department of Art at Sacramento State, further elevating our high standard of professionalism.

In the Fall of 2021, we accepted our first cohort of graduate students. As Graduate

Coordinator it is immensely satisfying to see such an accomplished group of Artists complete their degrees at Sacramento State. These Artists are prepared to enter the profession with experiences they will take to gallery exhibitions, teaching at the university level, and art administrative roles. In June of 2023, we break ground for a new Art Sculpture Lab facility with a 3,500-square-foot wing dedicated to the MFA. We have many goals for the future of this program at Sacramento State and the MFA Candidates of 2023 helped clarify future objectives. These four accomplished Artists will be held historically and justifiably as the outstanding inaugural class.

**Andrew Connelly,**  
Professor of Art, Graduate Coordinator



Jill Hannon, *Imagine*, 2023 (detail)

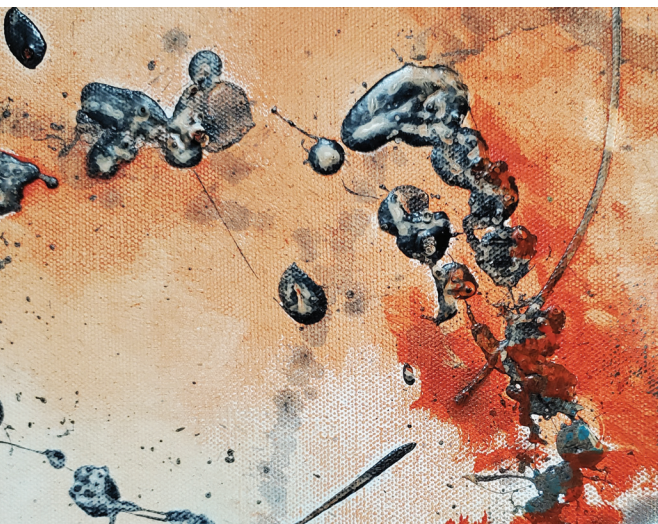


# ENERGIES IN BEING

## The 2023 Inaugural Master of Fine Art Exhibition

*By Julia Couzens, Curator*

The backdrop for this inaugural Master of Fine Arts exhibition is a multifaceted and increasingly decolonized period in art's history. The exhibiting artists are the first Sacramento State graduates to be granted MFA degrees, achieving acknowledged voice and standing in this liberated moment.



Jill Hannon, *Imagine*, 2023 (detail)

Their education has flourished in a generation-shifting time. Eurocentric and patriarchal

histories that trampled indigenous cultural histories are no longer preeminent. Feminist and craft-based practices are not dismissively pushed aside. Digital media and new technologies are now global platforms for artists formerly siloed in rural backwaters. The urgency of identity politics, social justice, and environmentalism, leveraged by traumas and complexities of contemporary life, are breaking down the doors of socially cloistered studios. Self-absorbed notions about what constitutes artistic success or failure are being tested by new intersectional models of community and inclusivity. As Andy Warhol famously observed, "If everyone isn't beautiful, then no one is."<sup>1</sup>

The drawings, paintings, and sculpture that comprise this exhibition demanded significant effort. Deploying research, humility, and imaginative muscle, Jill Hannon, John Klaiber, Dafne Navarro, and Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba have crafted their accomplished work through resolute grit. Countless hours making and unmaking their chosen forms have taught these artists how to move their efforts forward. They have learned how to meaningfully pay attention

---

<sup>1</sup> Andy Warhol, *The philosophy of Andy Warhol: from A to B and back again*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975)

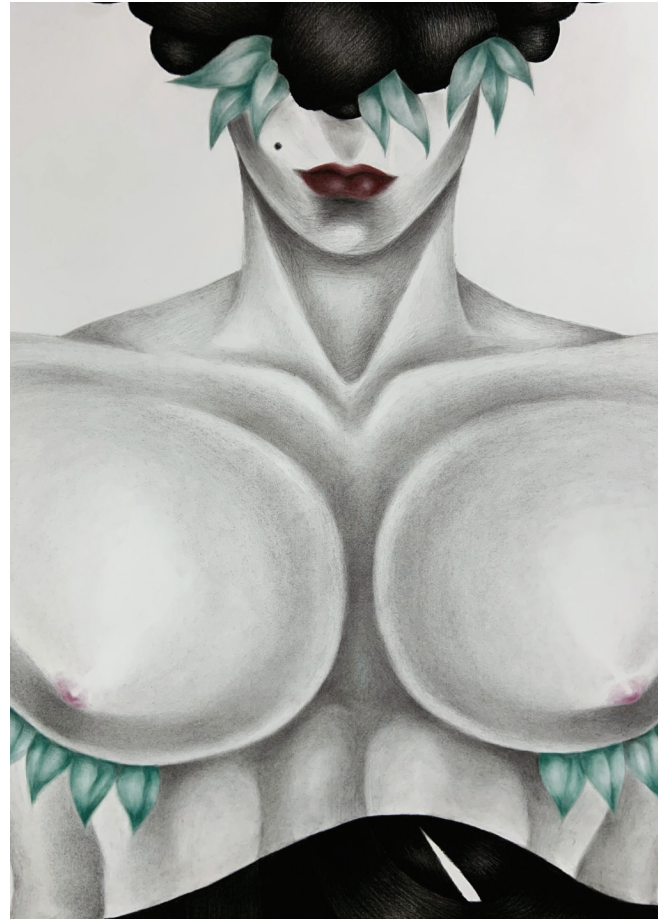
to themselves. Their sensory triggers no longer founder unrecognized and left for dead.

These triggers activate the artists' primary world, the world as it is, not as it's expected or told to be. To maximize productive studio life, the artists have teased out material form and critical elements unique to each of them and put those components into play. The abiding character trait or lifeline defining a rich, authentically worthy, and creative life is knowing how to work on the work. That is the mastery. Not the work itself.

The works on display are framed by this unsettling and divisive moment. The works are not immutable, definitive, and absolute ideations. They are energies in being -- expressing, living. They are lives in which we involve ourselves as viewers. They are trembling beginnings bubbling into consciousness – fledgling starts in tune with the truth of our interconnected humanity and porous, mutable experience.

Jill Hannon focuses on the profound possibilities and challenges of abstract painting. Her massive gestural works recirculate the trajectories of abstract expressionism. Retooling AbEx formal delivery systems, such as gesture, stains, and spills, Hannon's paintings celebrate open-hearted awkwardness drawn from her experience. Her negotiations with color possess jarring collisions between vexing dissonance and domesticated, harmonic blends.

The clunky, unsettled nature of Hannon's palette is the bracing slap in the face that keeps the adventurous viewer looking. This wildness pokes at canonical and conditioned notions of taste, notions so tamed that they no longer challenge us to examine who we are. In a work such as *Intervals*, she joins equally sized painted canvases into a giant grid of flat-footed paint scrapings larded with looping calligraphic lines. The harsh



Dafne Navarro, *Vidina*, 2023 (detail)

shingles of chalky pigment push back against the sinewy vitality of dripped and leaking line, arguing for grand, untamed exuberance as a still evergreen human need.

John Klaiber hand-builds muscular ceramic sculpture suggesting devotional vessels, baskets, and funerary urns. Thick rolls of clay are coiled and stacked with a technique known as Roman style to create forms of archetypal simplicity. Poked and punched, his forms allude to expressive intentions laden with a potent sense of history and to the spiritual concerns of memory, reverence, loss and pathos. To the extent Klaiber finds creative ground in these



Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba, *Law of Entropy*, 2023 (detail)

realms, the work's formal references to such noted Sacramento/Davis ceramic sculptors as Robert Brady and Robert Arneson give congruence and meaningful lineage to his work.

But Klaiber's newest work, *Rebirth Bassinet AKA King of Trash* lands on more restless ground. It feels fresh, urgent, and itchy. Colorful, hastily painted letters and cryptic notations are slapped on to a bifurcated urn. This is birth propelled by heat-seeking need and not the solemnity of slow-baked homage.

Dafne Navarro's drawings combine an exceptional sensibility with an exceptional control over material. Their superbly crafted works on paper writhe with an aggressively erotic charge. Polymorphous sexuality, fetish-y ornamentation, and unstinting reveries of dark, gleaming, rendered light grant singular power to their figurative drawings. Formal strength is the engine driving speculations on androgyny, queerness, and dream state transformation. These mural-sized, ecstatic works liberate desire from our repressive

society and macho culture. The work's seductive sheen is a graphic siren, summoning the viewer to examine private language, difficult beauty, and human connection.

Navarro writes of "the bodies we wear." The diptych *Habibi* critiques our constructs of gendered intimacies, sexual desire, communion, and entrapment. Outsized, elongated skeins of shiny black hair swath two muscular bodies in strappy connection. Dark, surrealistic eyes stare out from parted, stylized chignons, signaling Georges Bataille's 1928 erotic novella, *The Story of The Eye*. Bataille's themes of transgression and the unconscious are closely intertwined, manifesting his belief that they are fundamental to understanding human behavior and the nature of existence. This philosophy informs Navarro's challenging work and speaks to the deeper connection and embracing mysteries that Navarro's work evokes.

Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba clobbers, molds, rolls, and pummels clay into tubes, stumps, chards, and amorphous globules, literally forming the



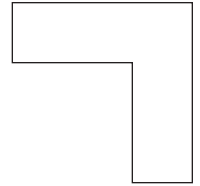
John Klaiber, *King of Trash AKA Rebirth Bassinet*, 2023 (detail)

bedrock of his ceramic installations. Creating his own version of nature, Lozano Ruvalcaba deploys earth to address earth. He disguises nothing, and with an insistence, shows the guts. Attuned to the marks and traces that time imprints on both inert and living things, there's a roughness to his textures -- lumpen, crude, and pocked. Once fired, he stockpiles the index of forms in accumulating heaps, like dredged piles of earthly debris. Practicing kiln-fired particle physics, the shape and scale of Lozano Ruvalcaba work expands and contracts contingent upon the scope and gesture of his installations.

Lozano Ruvalcaba is a student of nature and cultivates a mindful relationship to the natural world through extended backpacking trips over designated wilderness and mountainous terrain. His culminating installation, *Law of Entropy*, retrieves from the memory of these sojourns. It is a material rumination on notions of origin, the inevitable transformations of the body, and earthly grace.

Julia Couzens has exhibited drawings and textile constructions throughout the United States and internationally. Her work has been recognized with a Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellowship and twice nominated for the SFMOMA SECA Award. Public collections include the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Berkeley Art Museum, Crocker Art Museum, Manetti-Shrem Museum, Weatherspoon Art Museum, and Yale University. Her critical writing has appeared in *Ceramics: Art and Perception*, *Sacramento Bee*, *SquareCylinder*, and *Two Coats of Paint*. She received her MA from Sacramento State and her MFA from U.C. Davis.

Alberto, Dafne, Jill, and John  
– Working with you has been my honor and pleasure. Good luck and stay fierce! Julia



# Jill Hannon



*Intonation, 2023 (detail)*



Jill Hannon entered Sacramento State in 1982. Some challenges in life hindered her academic progress. Years later, she took advantage of the opportunity to finish her education and earned a BA in 2020 and her Art K-12 teaching credential in 2021. She is now completing her MFA with plans to continue teaching and developing her studio art practice.

My artwork is birthed from my personal experiences and guided by my heart. I use paint on canvas to tell my story, whisper ideas, share truths, and weep in sorrow as each of my works attempt to capture moments that define who I am as a person and as an artist. Elements of simplicity and complexity converge into one image as frenetic energy is coupled with light-handed serenity. Each mark has its own individual power, yet the places of saturated color, the use of bold lines, and patches of airiness work together to offer a narrative that is unique to the work. The abstract style provides a platform for personal interpretation and inner dialogue as line work weaves in and out of organically shaped color fields. Each painting is its own entity, with its own voice, yet holds together as one conversation that is meant to be explored.



*Imagine*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 96 x 108 inches



*Intonation*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 96 x 108 inches





*Intervals*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 96 inches



*Intervals, 2023 (detail)*

# John Klaiber



*Bodi and Hazel with the  
Infinity Flowers,  
2023 (detail)*



John Klaiber is a Sacramento born and residing artist. He is earning his MFA at Sacramento State in the spring of 2023. His works consist largely of ceramic sculpture but he also works seriously in many other mediums such as music, digital, video, found object, painting... When not creating work or teaching art he likes to relax spending time with friends, loved ones and contemplating the nature of space, time and human experience.

Brimming with the emotion of both losing my best friend and spiritual guide to a fate of violence and having my wonderful sweet little baby daughter born to me and my amazing fiancé in one year. My dreams, my life, my heart and my studio have been filled with a sea of sentiment, which I have poured unabashedly into the clays of this offering.

It is all created from clay using largely the relatively new to me technique of roman style hand building. Coil by coil, slab by slab, dream by dream the works have constructed, and grown into a series of hand and dream build forms which range from 3" tall to almost 9' in height.

From tiny figures to giant sarcophagi, my heart both bursts with joy, gushes with sorrow and offers the love and experience of this time and work for you.



*Dream Portal*, 2023, Fired Clay, 33 x 21 x 21 inches

*Sarcophagi*, 2023,  
Fired Clay,  
8.75 feet x 24 x 30 inches





*King of Trash AKA Rebirth Bassinet, 2023, Fired Clay, 52 x 33 x 21 inches*



*Infinity Mask*, 2023,  
Fired Clay  
15 x 12 inches



*Dream Mask 1*, 2023,  
Fired Clay  
15 x 12 inches



# Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba



*Law of Entropy,*  
2023 (detail)



Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba was born in Tijuana, Baja California Mexico in 1993. His family immigrated to the U.S.A in the year 2000 when he was 8 years old. He attended Mendocino College as an AB540 student where he earned an AA in ceramics in 2015. He then transferred to Sacramento State as a Dream Act recipient and earned a BA in ceramics in 2017. He applied and started the MFA program at Sacramento State in 2021.

My sculptural ceramics are informed by the phenomenology of natural landscapes and the philosophical implications that I derive from their activity. I observe natural processes and relate my own life experience to them by personifying their gestures. I employ calculated movements to shape clay into the forms I observe. Their formal considerations are influenced by the material tendencies of the clay itself. Clay is responsive to touch and records everything that happens to it. However, the material has its own personality and limitations that apply themselves to my expressions. These attributes of mass, plasticity, and gravity lend themselves to depicting the activity of natural landscapes. I use clay's ability to crack and break to capture the effect of splitting tree bark and the corrosion of stone. The finished piece becomes a conversation about the meaning of events and perseverance between me, the world, and the material.



*Law of Entropy*, 2023, Stoneware, variable dimensions



*Law of Entropy,*  
2023 (detail)

*Law of Entropy,*  
2023 (detail)





Law of Entropy,  
2023 (detail)





*Root*, 2023,  
Stoneware  
24 x 24 x 24 inches

# Dafne Navarro



*Habibi, 2023 (detail)*



Dafne Iris Navarro is a Mexican-American artist who was born in Irapuato, Mexico in 1993. Dafne earned their BA in Studio Art in May of 2019 at California State University, Sacramento. They currently live and work in Sacramento, visiting their home country of Mexico at least once every year. Dafne is fond of farm animals, and finds solace in taking care of two cherished mini pigs. Aside from visual art, Dafne is also a lover and writer of novels.

In my work, themes of androgyny, queerness and sensuality fuse in a visual state of dreamlike transformation. These themes emerge within a greyscale world, existing in the form of ambiguous bodies. The larger-than-life figures that appear within these drawings are defined by their symbolic narratives. Ideas of love and companionship pervade these figures whether they are alone or together. The bodies, though large and muscled, possess fluid qualities, blurring the lines between what could be perceived as sexed.

My work is here to challenge the traditional preconceptions of gender, and to communicate the poetic association between life and death, togetherness and separation. My hope is that this work will open the doors of interpretation; to lay bare the magnetic qualities which beauty and romance offer as a whole, and how our wish for connection not only follows us while we lose time in our thoughts, but also while we live out our daily realities through the bodies we wear



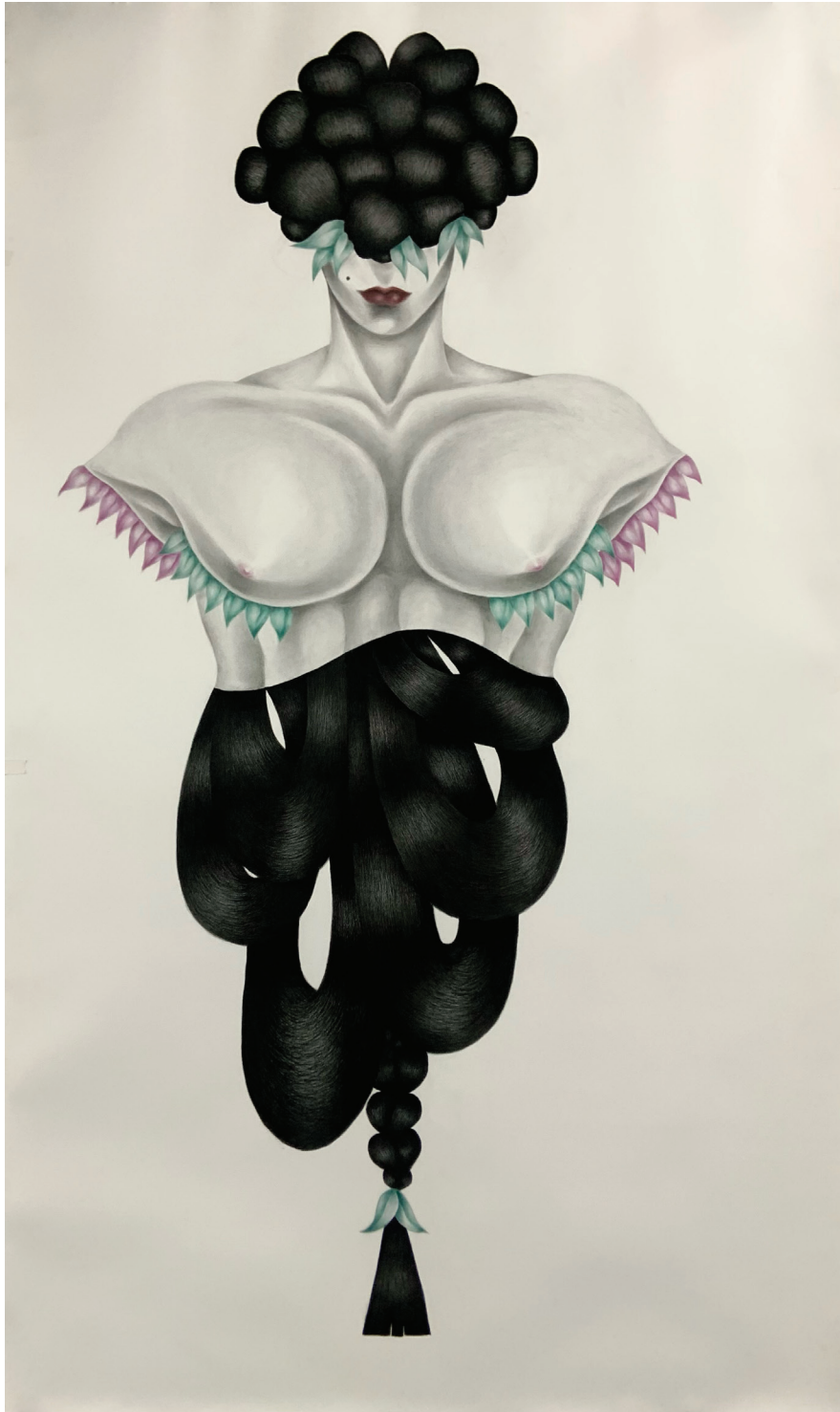


*Habibi*,  
2023, Charcoal, chalk  
and graphite on  
paper, each panel:  
90 x 55 inches

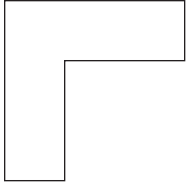




*Emperor*  
2023  
Charcoal and chalk  
on paper  
90 x 55 inches



*Vidina, 2023*  
Charcoal, chalk, and  
graphite on paper  
90 x 55 inches



# Acknowledgements

As Sacramento State's inaugural MFA class, we would like to express our deep gratitude for the opportunities provided to us in accomplishing our goals of becoming better artists and people.

Thank you to our Art department chair, Rachel Clarke, and our graduate coordinator, Andrew Connelly. Thank you to the professors who have guided and taught us: Sarah Flohr, Ian Harvey, Tom Monteith, Robert Ortbal, Scott Parady, Summer Ventis and Peter Williams. We are also appreciative of the support from Ben Hunt, Elaine O'Brien, Chuck Owens, Kevin Ptak, Jolie Roberts, and Kate Wallace.

Jill Hannon would like to thank her husband, Dave, and their children for all their love and support, extended family and friends for their unending encouragement, and her Mom and Dad, for the love and support felt from beyond.

John Klaiber would like to thank his family, especially his parents Donna and Chuck, his love Megan, their sweet little baby Hazel and his awesome star dog, Bodizatva.

Alberto Lozano Ruvalcaba gives thanks to his mother Isabel Lozano and father Jose Alberto Lozano for raising him and pushing him to attain higher education, his wife Taylor

Lozano for her support and encouragement, his sister Alejandra Lozano and his brother-in-law Zachary Chapman for their generosity in providing a place to rest and be at home away from home.

Dafne Navarro would like to personally and affectionately thank their brother, Cristobel, their sister Miranda, and mother Maria Dolores, as well as their partner-in-crime Valentin Benner, and their pet companions & friends, particularly Hughie and Scott Ward, two cherished mini pigs.

We would also like to thank the curator of this exhibition Julia Couzens, the gallery staff Kelly Lindner, and Mustafa Shaheen for their commitment in sharing with us their expertise in gallery operations.

And finally, we are grateful for the opportunity of working together, as colleagues and as fellow creators, for all the time and meaningful conversations that we've shared throughout the length of this life-altering program.

©2023 University Galleries,  
California State University, Sacramento

This catalogue is produced in conjunction with  
the exhibition *Master of Fine Arts Studio Art  
Candidate Exhibition 2023*, University Library  
Gallery, California State University, Sacramento,  
May 2 – May 26, 2023.

University Galleries  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Kelly Lindner, Galleries and Collections Curator

Department of Art  
College of Arts & Letters  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819

Rachel Clarke, Department Chair

This catalogue is funded by Instructionally  
Related Activities (IRA) and the Department of Art

Catalogue design by Kevin Wilhite



**SACRAMENTO STATE**  
University Galleries



SACRAMENTO STATE  
University Galleries