UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
SCHOOL OF ART + ART HISTORY + DESIGN

2020 - 2021
MFA + MDes

THESIS EXHIBITION
MAY 29 — JUN 27, 2021
Each year, the Henry presents the University of Washington’s School of Art + Art History + Design Master of Fine Arts and Master of Design thesis exhibition. Throughout their programs, fine arts and design students work with advisers and other artists to develop advanced techniques, expand concepts, discuss critical issues, and emerge with a vision and direction for their own work.

The 2020–2021 University MFA + MDes Thesis Exhibition is organized by Katie Miller, Public Projects Manager and Preparator.

Participants

2021 MASTER OF FINE ARTS
Payton Cahill
Henry Detweiler
Jacob Fetterman
Xiaoyi Gao
Holly Hazelton
Midori Hirose
Jia Jia
quinn mcnichol
Siegmund Skalar

2021 MASTER OF DESIGN
Solji Lee
Taylor Miles Hopkins
Vassilissa Semouchkina
Fei Shao

2020 MASTER OF FINE ARTS
Zack Davis
Stefan Leandro Gonzales
Pinchuan (Larry) Huang
Stephanie Simek
Shuo Yin

2020 MASTER OF DESIGN
Jeremy Barriboeau
Cal Dobrzynski
Samer Fouad
Piper Loyd
Justin Lund
Jeremy Viny
Jeremy Barribeau is a multidisciplinary designer with a background in industrial design and user-experience design. He is originally from South Africa and grew up in New Zealand, where, in 2011, he received his Bachelor of Design (Industrial design) from Victoria University, Wellington. Jeremy started his career as a highly entrepreneurial high school drop-out, and since then has travelled the globe, working for startups, consultancies, governments and multinational corporations. His work ranges from conceptual to commercial. He has authored numerous patents and defensive publications, and a number of his projects have received Red Dot and iF awards. Upon graduating, Jeremy plans to continue his work with the UW Bioengineering Department and Center for Dialysis Innovation.

Committee:
Axel Roesler, Chair
Audrey Desjardin

Exhibitions and Awards:
2019  
MDes Works in Progress, Installation, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019  
"Post Utility Industrial Design: Refocusing for Resiliency," Presentation, International Design Conference (IDC), Chicago, IL
2019  
Microsoft Design Expo Competition Finalist (Team project), Redmond, WA
2019  
Frank L. and Catherine D. Doleshy Endowed Fellowship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2018  
University of Washington Top Scholar Award, Seattle, WA
Payton Cahill is a multimedia artist from Northern California. Through her work in glass and sculpture she explores a fascination with the natural world. Cahill obtained her Bachelors of Fine Arts from California State University, Chico in 2018 and is now pursuing her Masters of Fine Arts at the University of Washington. Cahill has worked at the Pilchuck Glass School over the past 9 years. She has worked on notable projects such as a glass installation at University of Miami’s Medical Center and has displayed her work across the west coast.

Nature has a process for everything that is created and understanding that process helps her to understand her own purpose in making. There is a natural method of inquiry that drives the work; a methodology to the way she investigates and organizes the world around her. Cahill explores human experience through the lens of the natural world while calling attention to preservation and its changing role. Encrusted with crystals her work explores fossilized fragments of our everyday world that speak to our current place in time and our connection to nature.

Committee:
Mark Zirpel
Doug Jeck
Jamie Walker
Emily Zimmerman
Pause echoing. Springtime. Plaster that looks like stone that looks like beliefs. Node of moral coherence pulled in six or more directions. 95 years of mutual abrasion. Pressure fit.

Committee:
Ellen Garvens
Rebecca Cummins
Aaron Flint Jamison
Henry Detweiler

U.S., born 1989
BFA, Georgia State University

Henry Detweiler is a multidisciplinary artist and writer currently based in Seattle, Washington. His practice includes painting, video, performance, installation, sound, text, and data-driven projects. He studied Drawing, Painting, and Printmaking at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, earning a BFA in 2012.

His work has been featured in Hyperallergic, New American Paintings, WABE Atlanta, and Emergency Index Volumes 3 and 5 from the Ugly Duckling Presse. He served as director for MINT Gallery and has contributed writing to BurnAway and ArtsATL. Since 2011, he has frequently collaborated with Dashboard, an Atlanta-based arts nonprofit, and has been an artist-in-residence at the Vermont Studio Center, Nes Artist Residency, and the Association of Icelandic Visual Artists. He has work in the permanent collection of the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

Committee:
Rebecca Cummins
Ellen Garvins
Flint Jamison

Hand-bound books – 8 volumes, approx. 12k pages

Courtesy of the artist.
Cal Dobrzynski

U.S., born 1994  
BDes, Pennsylvania State University

Cal Dobrzynski is an educator and user experience designer who enjoys using her skills for social good. Born and raised in New Jersey, Cal attended the Pennsylvania State University and received her Bachelor of Design in 2016. Prior to attending the UW, Cal worked as a digital and print designer in NYC at Coach Inc. Cal is currently an adjunct faculty member in the UW HCDE undergraduate department and a UI/UX Designer at Moxie Sozo in Boulder, CO. Cal is also a volunteer at the Frye Art Museum, and a design consultant for the UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center’s new Memory Hub for dementia-friendly communities.

Committee:
Kristine Matthews, Chair  
Annabelle Gould  
Dr. Lee Burnside

Exhibitions and Awards:
- 2020 de Cillia Graduating with Excellence Award, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- 2019 Looking Forward, Installation, Seattle Design Festival, Seattle, WA
- 2019 MDes Works in Progress, Installation, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 2019 Boyer and Elizabeth Bole Gonzales Scholarship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
Jake Fetterman

U.S., born 1992
BFA, Western Washington University

Through a multi-disciplinary approach, Jake Fetterman brings into question the role of the facade in the queer experience, interrogating its necessity as a form of self defense and as a mode of self expression. Coming from the heritage of Eastern Europe as a first generation American, they reference western histories, mythologies, and aesthetics. Using these themes is a way to explore the politics of the queer body, its relationship to constructed space, and the ever shifting nature of identity. They grew up in the Pacific Northwest and received their BFA from Western Washington University in 2015, and recently completed a Post Bacc at Colorado University, Boulder in 2019, before coming to the University of Washington.

Committee:
Doug Jeck
Michael Swaine
Adair Rounthwaite
Robert Yoder
Samer Fouad is an artist and graphic designer. Although his degree is in graphic design, Fouad considers himself a mixed media artist, combining sculpture, video, graphic design, photography, digital collage, and various printmaking methods. His work has been showcased around the world, including New York City, Tokyo, Doha, France, Spain, Italy and Budapest. Fouad has been published in The AIGA, Adweek, Beautiful Bizarre Magazine and Design Sponge. Fouad has lectured and given design based workshops at many universities and studios around the world and has recently given a TEDTalk on “Comfort Kills Creativity.” Fouad was an artist-in-residence for the Mana BSMT program, located at Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, Palazzo Monti in Brescia, Italy, and Nouvelle Vague Gallery in Marbella, Spain. He is a co-founder of the Newark Print Shop in New Jersey.

Simultaneous to his career as an artist, Fouad taught advanced printmaking and graphic design for the undergraduate BFA Program and book arts for the MFA Program, at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He was also a teaching assistant in visual communication design for the Undergraduate School of Art and Design and was a lecturer for the masters program of the School of Human Centered Design and Engineering, at The University of Washington. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Design at Pacific Lutheran University.

Samer Fouad holds an Arts, Culture, Media degree with a Bachelors in Fine Art within a concentration of graphic design and a minor in art history from Rutgers University. He also holds a Master of Design degree from the University of Washington.

Committee:
Kristine Matthews, Chair
Audrey Desjardins
Jill Randerson
Influenced by the drastic societal and economical change China has experienced since her childhood, Xiaoyi Gao is drawn by the intimacy brought by antique and dated objects and places forgotten in time. Her work is rooted in fragments of mundane life and personal experience. Physical motions, carried through her own and others' bodies, appear in several of her pieces, displaying her inspection of intimacy between strangers, lovers and family. Usually captured in films, performance and paintings, narrations of personal memory is also a recurring theme in Gao's work. She collects photos, audio recordings, films, text messages or letters to use as her materials. She merges them or breaks them down to combine them with traditional art mediums such as painting and sculpture.

Gao was born and raised in Chengdu, China. She received a B.F.A in painting from the University of Washington in 2018 and was a resident artist with School of Visual Arts, New York in 2019. She received a grant from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation in Quebec, Canada in 2018.

Committee:
Helen O'Toole
Zhi Lin
Michael Swaine
Whitney Lynn
Ann Gale
Philip Govedare
David Brody

Exhibitions and Awards:
2020 Still Waters Run Deep, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020 SVOX.TV, London, UK
2020 Notes on the unseen, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020 Things Behind The Sun, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019 OPEN STUDIO, School of Visual Art, New York, NY
2018 Permanent collection, Husky Union Building (HUB), Seattle, WA
2018 Meany Center Art Exhibit, Meany Hall, Seattle, WA
2018 SAVANNAH BECK + XIAOYI GAO two person show, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2018 Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
2018 HUB Director's Art Prize, , University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2018 Parnassus Graduating with Excellence Award, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2017 Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Endowed Art Scholarship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Xiaoyi Gao
to relive the past, to recover the future, 2021
5 channel video installation
Courtesy of the artist.
Stefan Leandro Gonzales

The politics of my work is in a constant flux. Maybe this is because my own identity is in a constant flux or maybe it is because the rapid movement and accumulation of information keeps one in a constant state of questioning. I am Prio / Manso / Tiwa, a collage of colonization. I am a trans/non-binary individual. My practice centers around decolonizing Art and its institutions. This effort is backed by my position as an arts educator, set out to leverage radical pedagogy as a tool of decolonization. I grew up in Colorado where I eventually moved to Seattle, Washington to attend Cornish College of the Arts to receive my Undergraduate degree followed by my attendance at the University of Washington where I completed my MFA in Photomedia and currently maintain a position as an instructor of record.

Committee:
Aaron Flint Jamison
Rebecca Cummins
Ellen Garvens

Exhibitions and Awards:
2021  Something To Hold on To, Makena Gadient, DECK Gallery (curatorial project)
2020  Dare To Judge, Sean Sullivan, DECK Gallery (curatorial project)
2020  Jacob Lawrence Curatorial Residency, Seattle, WA
2020  New Photography From the Pacific NW, Melanie Floods Project, Portland, OR
2019  Resource Monuments, THE MOUNT ANALOGUE, Seattle, WA (solo exhibition)
2018  While Supplies Last, Capitol Hill Art Walk, Seattle, WA
2016  Artist Are In Tents, The Closet Gallery, Seattle, WA
2016  CoCA Gener8 Artist Studio Space, Seattle, WA
2015  360deg North, The Closet Gallery, Seattle, WA (solo exhibition)
2015  While You Woke-Before You Sleep, Wheel-House Coffee, Seattle, WA
2015  Wide Open Studios, Signal Fire Arts, Portland, OR
Holly Hazelton is a visual artist that grew up knowing, loving, and connecting with the trees and landscape of Iowa. In August of 2020, a storm known as a derecho swept across the Midwest and destroyed 70% of the beloved and iconic tree canopy in her hometown of Cedar Rapids, spurring her investigation into the role trees played in her formative and current experiences of landscape space. Through the lenses of loss, grief, and memory, her current work explores her changed relationship to the blasted landscape and the empty spaces the trees leave behind.

“Tierratrauma” is a term for the deep emotional pain felt from negative environmental change. With the derecho being one of many increasingly intense natural disasters to come as a result of climate change, the experience of loss of sense of place will become an increasingly universal and familiar feeling. How does one deal with place-based grief? Hazelton’s derecho paintings use memory as a starting point to bring back a sense of place to a place that no longer make sense without the trees. Through the hazy and disorienting qualities of personal grief and the physical intangibility of the void, she rediscovers the trees’ presence through the layers of her paintings as a means to mourn, honor, testify, and memorialize the lives of the lost trees.

Committee:
David Brody
Ann Gale
Philip Govedare
Zhi Lin
Helen O’Toole

Awards:

Exhibitions and Awards:
2021 de Cillia Teaching with Excellence Scholarship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2021 Ingham Award, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2021 Graduate Teaching Assistantship in Drawing, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2020 Notes on the Unseen, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020 Still Waters Run Deep, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020 Things Behind the Sun, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2018 Juxtapose, Raygun Art Gallery, Cedar Rapids, IA
2017 Plein Air, Pearson Lake Art Center, Weaver & McIlrath Galleries, Okoboji, IA
Midori Hirose

U.S., born 1973
BFA, Pacific Northwest College of Art

Midori Hirose (b. 1973, Hood River, Oregon) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Portland, Oregon. In alchemy, materials transform from base metals to precious ones. Hirose’s work investigates similar phase shifts, exploring material changes, both perceived and actual. As Hirose investigates and alters materials, she works to identify their structural polarities and absolutes, playfully exploring the elements of forms to concretize, reveal, or catalyze their different states. Research, materials, techniques, and metaphors exist as an evolving taxonomy of physical “models.” Hirose calls her relationship to this history “material storytelling.” She sees her sculptures as dimensional illustrations of these investigations.

Hirose’s work has been exhibited nationally at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, California; Disjecta Contemporary Art Center for the Portland Biennial; group exhibition at The Lumber Room in Portland, OR and has shown internationally in group exhibitions for the Carian Project in Turkey; East/West Project, Berlin, Germany; and at the Newberg Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland. Hirose performed at Performance Works NW and in several Portland Institute for Contemporary Art TBA festivals, Oregon. She has received grants and awards from the Regional Arts and Culture Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation. In addition, Hirose is a core member of Snack Bloc, founding member of Trash Hackers Collective and CHIME.

Committee:
Rebecca Cummins
Ellen Garvens
Aaron Flint Jamison
Pinchuan Huang

China, born 1987
BFA, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts

Pinchuan Huang makes art with a realistic approach while also providing the viewers a sense of being between convinced and suspected. Exploring the possibilities of objective representation, his works are usually haunted by a quirky atmosphere. Dense sentiment can be seen through those meticulously made pictures. The relationship between the calm depiction and the unresting feeling on behind seems always in tension, which makes experience and understanding on his work internally complex.

Huang has worked in a representational style for long since 2007, his first undergraduate year, in Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. In the year of 2018, Huang began his study in the master program of Painting & Drawing in the University of Washington, Seattle. During the program, he has a great chance to make development outside his previous practice and experiment a wider possibility of his art. New visual languages he tries, such as highly saturated color composition and dramatize settings that imply a sense of humour, inject new and dynamic blood in his art.

Committee:
Helen O’Toole
Ann Gale
Philip Govedare
Zhi Lin
David Brody

Exhibitions and Awards:
2019  Irreducible Forms, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle WA
2019  Painting & Drawing 2nd year MFA student Summer work exhibition, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019  Cobblestones and Lumber: UW x SFAI, SFAI Fort Mason Campus, San Francisco, CA
2019  Work in progress exhibition, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2016  Reach and Surpass Perfection, Yihaitang Art Museum, Guangzhou, China (solo exhibition)
2015  Youthful Vitality, Group exhibition of The National development plan of Youth Painters, The Art Gallery of China National Academy of Painting, Beijing, China
2014  South & South — 60 Experiences of Art, New Shiwan Art Museum, Foshan, China
2014  12th National Exhibition of Fine Arts, China, Section of Oil Painting, Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, China
2014  Image’s Narratives, 5th Exhibition of Guangdong Contemporary Oil Painting, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
Jia Jia is a multi-media artist. She works primarily in installation, incorporating sculpture, video, and performance. Her practice uses satire and humor to imagine everyday objects anew. The work questions how globalization and a technologically saturated society influence the ideology of the individual and how the individual behaves in a society filled with contradiction and stimulation. Having studied and worked between China and the United States, Jia Jia's artistic practice is influenced by the countries' contrasting socialization and cultural differences. She earned her BFA in Ceramics from China Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2016. She also studied as an exchange student in Alfred University's Ceramics Department and was a resident at California State University, Long Beach.

My artistic practice has been influenced by my experience of living, studying and working between China and America. I am curious about both personal emotion and the larger factors at work in society and cultural contexts which influence individuals deeply. I am interested in how technological developments bring about synchronization and globalization in communication. Topics I explore and challenge the audience to experience in my work include: What do we receive from the image world? How do different media interact? How can we understand that truism that “seeing is believing” in a contemporary context, and how is that belief made real at the level of our bodies and senses?

Committee:
Michael Swaine
Stephanie Hanes
Whitney Lynn
Adair Rounthwaite
Nick Geankoplis

Exhibitions and Awards:
2020 Notes On the Unseen, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020 It’s On the House, North Gallery, Ceramic and Metal Arts Building, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2020 __ stifled(s) __, South Gallery, Ceramic and Metal Arts Building, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2016 Desquamation, International Ceramic Fair, Jingdezhen, China
2020 Boyer and Elizabeth Bole Gonzales Scholarship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA

Various mediums

Jia Jia
how, what, receive, accept, 2021

Courtesy of the artist.
This thesis explores how the AV-taxi industry directly increases the mobility of people with disabilities. This exploration attempts to create Universal Access Principles to AV-taxis to make them highly accessible for people with disabilities. The thesis, achieved through discussion and co-design with users with disabilities, makes one look forward to the economic and cultural lives that will change with the advent of a new mode of transportation, AV-taxis.

Seattle-based UX designer, Solji Lee, has been honing her skills in Universal Design for the past several years. Initially a product designer, Solji enjoyed solving problems in visuals in a rapid phase with her design thinking skill.

Committee:
Jason O. Germany, Chair
Ahn Sang-gyeun
Axel Roesler

Awards:
2021 University of Washington Striker Design Graduate Award, Seattle, WA
2021 CREATE Student Minigrant, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
Piper Loyd

U.S., born 1981
BA, Colby College

Piper Loyd is a visual communication designer and design strategist. Prior to her work at University of Washington, she wore many hats at the global design firm IDEO - most recently as a marketing lead and chief of staff. Throughout her master’s degree, Piper has been a teaching assistant in the School of Art+ Art History+ Design, as well as a lecturer in the Human Centered Design+ Engineering department. She served as a career liaison for the Division of Design, helping connect students to potential employers. During summer terms, Piper held design internships at Pioneer Square Labs and Starbucks. Originally from the mountains of Idaho, she still likes being outside as much as possible - unless she's in the kitchen baking cookies or, more recently, sourdough bread.

Committee:
Annabelle Gould, Chair
Jayme Yen

---

Piper Loyd
Thesis: Book inventory spreadsheet that grew throughout the process and tracked new discoveries or connections.
Thesis: Stack of books during reorganization experiments.
Process: Examining and editing marked pages of old books. Seen here, All the Pretty Horses, read in 1996.
Workspace: I’ve taken over an antique desk in a hallway nook of the house. It doesn’t get much natural light, but it’s cozy.
There is enough space to spread out a few materials and have a stack of books to pull from.
Process: Book making experiments and prototypes, based on book inventory or thesis process.

Courtesy of the designer.
Before joining the MDes program, Justin worked professionally in the field of industrial design. As a Senior Designer at TEAGUE, in the Aviation Design studio, he led multiple design efforts to create high-fidelity full-size mockups related primarily to aerospace interiors, products, and experiences. As an Industrial Designer at Glosten, a marine design and naval architecture firm, he helped to form, lead, and grow a multidisciplinary and cross-functional design team. Prior to these experiences Justin spent many years as both a fabricator and designer in the museum exhibit industry.

At both Glosten and TEAGUE, Justin initiated and led company-sponsored student design projects with both Western Washington University and the University of Washington. These experiences with academia inspired him to obtain his Masters of Design degree at the University of Washington in the School of Art + Art History + Design where he is now a Lecturer.

In parallel with his design career, Justin has regularly performed improv comedy around Seattle and has found the process of improvisation to be highly beneficial to the design process. Justin enjoys playing games and spending time with his wife Nico, and daughter Vega. They all love music and have been known to play moody goth songs together on occasion.

Committee:
Jason O. Germany, Chair
Sanggyeun Ahn
A painting practice creeps beyond the edges of a canvas: its imagery converses with the tangible world, leaning into objects that are sculpted, words written on pages in a quiet book, or particular things arranged in a particular way. A body which once turned inward and covered itself carefully slowly unfolds, begins to feel the ground it lives on and flow with the air around it. A spirit grows wild, even after it’s been tamed by repeated prayers, sacred names and holy waters.

I listen to folk music that reminds me of my dad, and I read books that recall my mother. News and daydreams and longings for an unattainably perfect future merge with these sounds and words. My medicinal herb garden grows slowly, protected by mugwort and yarrow. Contained inside these parentheses of my life, I make art that wonders how my experiences affect my white/pink body/mind as I move through space to interact with plants and other humans. Through this embodied examination, I engage with the regenerative healing magic that I imagine art to be.

Committee:
Helen O’Toole
Ann Gale
Whitney Lynn
Adair Rounthwaite
Zhi Lin
David Brody
Philip Govedare

Exhibitions and Awards:
2020  Boyer and Elizabeth Bole Gonzales Graduate Award, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2020  Notes on the Unseen, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020  Still Waters Run Deep, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020  Things Behind the Sun, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019  Future Paradise, The Living Gallery Outpost, New York, NY
2019  Plein Air: Paintings & Drawings; Gallery Artists & Alumni of Mount Gretna School of Art, Lancaster Galleries, Lancaster, PA
2018  ///THE\\\JUNGLE\\\LINE\\, Studio 34, Philadelphia, PA (solo exhibition)
2017  Vibes, Tattooed Mom, Philadelphia, PA
2016  Homebodies: Lancaster, Moira Records, Lancaster, PA
2015  Tigress Tempest Temptress, Discerning Eye Center for the Arts (DECA), Lancaster, PA
Taylor Miles Hopkins is a visual communication designer based in Seattle, Washington. In 2017, she graduated with a degree in English writing which cultivated her love for publication design and typography. Prior to her work at the University of Washington, Taylor designed visual identities and interactive experiences for local and socially-responsible organizations in her home state of Pennsylvania. As a graduate student, Taylor has been a teaching assistant, a guest speaker, and a zine-making educator in the School of Art + Art History + Design as well as the Human Centered Design + Engineering Department. She is the lead graphic designer at the Jacob Lawrence Gallery and a member of a design research group focusing on the effects of climate change.

Committee:
Annabelle Gould, Chair
Audrey Desjardin
Jayme Yen

Exhibitions and Awards:
2021 University of Washington Striker Graduate Award, Seattle, WA
2021 University of Washington Studio Tour, Seattle Art Book Fair, Seattle, WA
2021 The New School’s Anthropology and Design Exhibition, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
2020 MDes Work in Progress, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2020 Designing for a Healthier Future, Microsoft Design Expo
2020 Boyer + Elizabeth Bole Gonzales Scholarship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2019 University of Washington Top Scholar Graduate Award, Seattle, WA
Vassilissa Semouchkina

Russia, born 1994
BA and BS, University of Michigan

Vassilissa Semouchkina is a multidisciplinary designer and scientific communication specialist. Born in Saint Petersburg, she grew up spending time between the Russian Federation and Pennsylvania, before eventually moving to Michigan. She graduated in 2016 from the University of Michigan with two degrees: a Bachelor of Science in Architecture and a Bachelor of Art in Art and Design.

Prior to graduate studies at the University of Washington, Vassilissa worked as a senior designer at Michigan Technological University. During her time at UW, she has been a teaching assistant for both the Division of Design, as well as the Master of Human-Computer Interaction + Design Program. She also worked as the creative director for the UW Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and as a scientific communication specialist for the UW Design Help Desk. After graduating, Vassilissa will work as a visiting guest instructor in the UW Division of Design and will pursue opportunities to further her interests in design-science communication.

Committee:
Karen Cheng, Chair
Kristine Matthews

Awards:
2021 University of Washington Striker Design Graduate Award, Seattle, WA
2020 University of Washington Striker Design Graduate Award, Seattle, WA
2019 University of Washington Top Scholar Award, Seattle, WA
Fei Shao is an interaction designer passionate about the digital experience becoming a part of our new landscape. She holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree in China Academy of Art with a concentration in Architecture.

At the University of Washington, her work has focused on exploring how digital technologies can flow naturally into people's daily lives by leveraging the physical environment. During the year of 2020, when video calls unexpectedly became the main source of communication, she was drawn to how the situation has changed the way people perceive their environment and how it would affect human relationships in the longer term. For her thesis project, she started by focusing on studying the evolving norms in virtual workgroups, and continued by designing to foster team culture in virtual workplaces. Her final project speculates a future where technology remains the main source of workgroup communication and presents a plausible solution to how digital experience can help stimulate employees to feel connected and motivated in distributed locations.

Committee:
James Pierce, Chair
Audrey Desjardins
Stephanie Simek

U.S., born 1982
BFA, Rutgers University

Stephanie Simek works with a wide array of materials, making works in two dimensions, three dimensions, time, and sound. Projects have included a room-sized crystal radio, self-assembling keys, a gallium-based lathe, and an observatory tower in Corinth, Vermont. Simek has made exhibitions and had residencies at Signal Culture, Museum of Contemporary Craft, Melanie Flood Projects, PDX Contemporary, Littman Gallery at Portland State University, Feldman Gallery at Pacific Northwest College of Art, and Fairbanks Gallery at Oregon State University. She has lived in the Pacific Northwest since 2007.

Committee:
Rebecca Cummins
Ellen Garvens
Aaron Flint Jamison
I have a weird relationship with corridors.

Architects will try to avoid the corridor space, that was once thought of as transformative, at all costs. I, however, feel a strong attachment, because I've been spending much time in them. I hold strong concern for the piece of un-architecture that they are.

The early 19th century introduced corridors on a grand scale in city halls, courthouses and state houses. By proposing a space between the public and the private, they would minimize awkward contact outside of one's peerage. They would link the institution to the outside world both in real and symbolic terms. For many soviet thinkers and modernist architects, corridors promised to be a forum, a social place, a setting of collective functions and social exchanges. That somehow utopian moment ultimately waned. One key problem turned out to be: ventilation. A corridor is after all the intersection or the common ground between several different chambers, which might be lacking proper circulation of light, air, or critical thought.

Despite their dubious reputation, and much to my relief, corridors have made somewhat of a re-turn in architecture — they live on in sewage outlets, back-room service shafts and fire exits. They are enshrined in the means of egress of buildings soon-to-be-built while lingering on in old buildings like schools, universities and courthouses. But they also keep spawning soulless enemies and hold all the terror of the military-industrial complex, so I guess this comes at a price.

Committee:
Ellen Garvens
Rebecca Cummins
Flint Jamison
Shuo Yin

China, born 1995
BFA, University of Washington

My art practice is a study and discussion about identity issues. As a Chinese man who moved across the globe to live in the U.S., I went through challenges like language barrier and cultural shock to realize, from the perspective of an immigrant, the struggle of merging into a culturally different society, and how that could inspire me to analyze the issues of identity through visual languages. Therefore, I began to document my self-grooming routine, through which I visualized cultural assimilation in both charcoal and oil media. After two self-portraits of self-grooming scenes, I started to experiment with water-based medium for its fluidity, juxtaposing the representational nature of my work with an abstract way of handling the material. My thesis project consists of a diptych that originated from tiny snapshots. By blowing up small images such as an ID photo over 100 times, forms start to take shape on their own terms, layer by layer. The image is no longer a representation of the likeness of a human being. Instead, it becomes a metaphor of a social system in which the immigrants formulate their identity by exposure, interaction, and reinvention.

Committee:
Zhi Lin, Chair
David Brody
Ann Gale
Philip Govedare
Helen O'Toole

Exhibitions:
2019  Erasure and Tracking, Sand Point Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019  Tropical Lab 13: Erase, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore
2019  Irreducible Forms, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA
2019  Cobblestones and Lumber: UW x SFAI, San Francisco Art Institute, CA

Shuo Yin
CA, 2020
Oil on canvas

Shuo Yin
WA, 2020
Oil on canvas

Shuo Yin
Water Series 1, 2020
Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the artist.
The information we access on the internet appears immediately but usually lives far away. A search for holiday decorations might take you from a server in Montana to India to Northeastern Canada. The Desktop Odometer is a device that shows users the distance they travel when browsing the web by tracking the total miles between their current location and the server from which they are requesting information. Upon connecting the Desktop Odometer to their computer via a web browser extension, users are able to see how far information travels while surfing the web in real time. The Desktop Odometer is a Discursive Design artifact that allows users to observe certain aspects of the Internet's elaborate and largely opaque infrastructure in relation to how they use it. Recognizing the vast distances information travels while one navigates the web brings this facet of the Internet into the foreground of a user's experience. I describe the three approaches I used to investigate opaque infrastructures: the first was making the Desktop Odometer itself, the second was selling the Desktop Odometer on Amazon.com as a way to elicit user-generated feedback about the inner workings of the internet, and the third was gaining firsthand experience of the seller's side of Amazon.com.

Committee:
Audrey Desjardins, Chair
Karen Cheng

Awards:
2019 ACM CHI 2019 Honorable Mention Award
2019 UW Division of Design Striker Travel Award, Seattle, WA
2018 Frank and Catherine Doleshy Endowed Fellowship, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2018 University of Washington Top Scholar Graduate Award, Seattle, WA