

# FACULTY BIENNIAL



DEVOSART  
MUSEUM



Printed in conjunction  
with the exhibition:

# **NMU ART & DESIGN FACULTY BIENNIAL**

**JANUARY 21 — MARCH 24, 2019**

## **DeVos Art Museum**

School of Art & Design  
Northern Michigan University  
[nmu.edu/devos](http://nmu.edu/devos)

### **MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

Emily Lancot

### **COVER DESIGN**

Noah Roberts

### **DESIGN**

Edwin Carter & Noah Roberts





# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

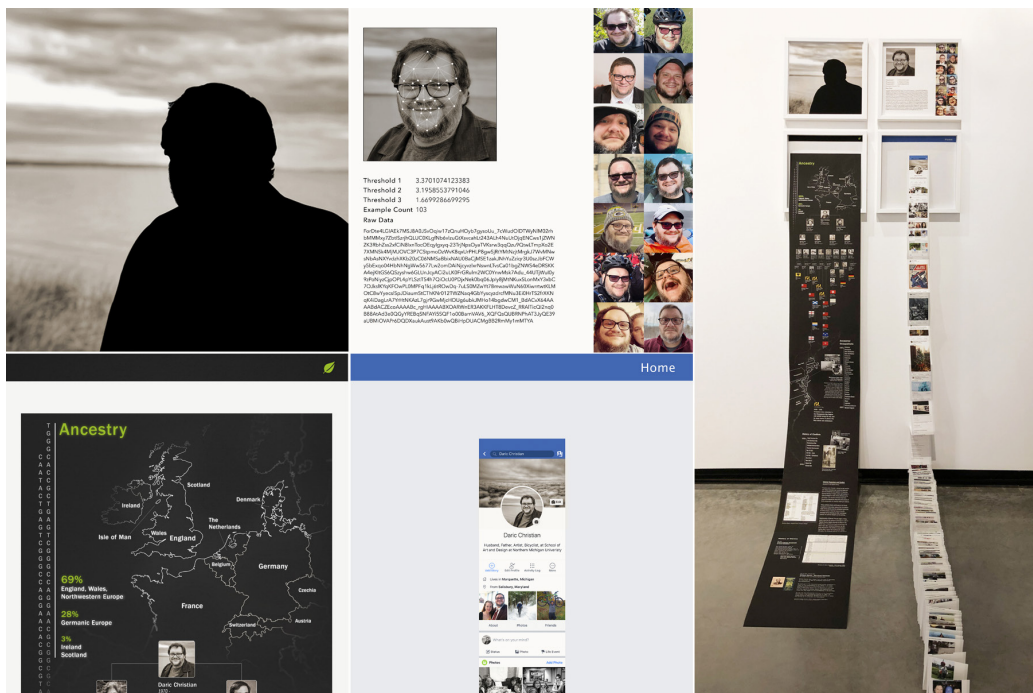
The Faculty Biennial Exhibition is a celebration of the creativity found within the current faculty of the NMU School of Art & Design. Highlighting creative achievements in all media and concentrations, this exhibition gives the NMU and broader community the opportunity to see the talent within the School firsthand.

Featuring: Daric Christian, Taimur Cleary, Keith Ellis, Jessie Fleury, Paul Hess, Steven Hughes, Brian Kakas, Emily Lanctot, Stephan Larson, Christine Lenzen, Michael Letts, Steve Leuthold, Gabrielle McNally, Jane Milkie, Christopher Moore, Peter Pless, Julie Clark-Risak, Alison Taras, Jason Schneider, Dennis Staffne, Tracy Wascom, and Dale Wedig.

## **Lectures & Discussions held in conjunction with the exhibition:**

Friday, February 22, 2 pm - *On Practice:  
Art & Design Faculty Panel Discussion*

Friday, March 15, 2 pm - Dr. Mits Oba presents  
*Petit a, Petite é : Mirrors in Art and a Reflection  
on the Faculty Biennial 2019*



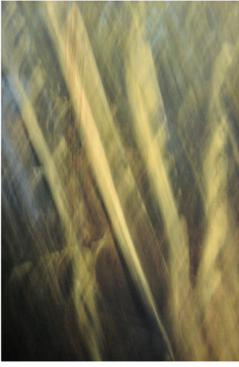
# DARIC CHRISTIAN

## SELF-PORTRAIT IN FOUR PARTS

*Inkjet Prints*

2019

How does one define a self-portrait at a time when individuals are creating vast public repositories of information about themselves while simultaneously providing ample visual examples of their self-captured appearance? Artist self-portraits are purported to provide the audience with specific insight into an individual, but in a society creating imagery of themselves at such a high frequency is that still possible or even interesting? Does the artist provide visual or social cues in these portraits that are overlooked or worse, brushed off as something contrived?



# TAIMUR CLEARY

## UNTITLED

*Photo-transfer on poplar*  
2018

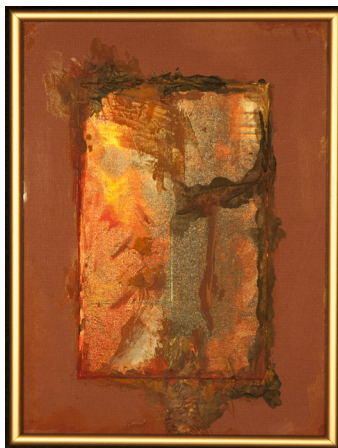
## SOUTHERN FACE (SPRING)

*Oil on board*  
2018

## FROM THE SHARED TOYS SERIES

*Mixed media and photo-transfer on  
watercolor paper*  
2018

I am interested in compressing the space between practices of teaching and making art. Often, my most fruitful efforts to balance the endless demands of each practice have come when I create room for them to overlap. Most recently, and as often as possible, I have been trying to complete the assignments I give my students. This challenges me to make engaging coursework and allows me to share my art-making practice directly. It also provides students helpful insight for overcoming issues in their own solutions to the assignment. Perhaps most importantly, it affords me time to make art. All the work here was created as part of an assignment or workshop that brought my teaching and making practices together. The pieces range from classical, indirect oil painting techniques, to photo-transfers on wood, to collaborative, high-production work that questions traditional critiques of craft and originality.



## KEITH ELLIS

**16 | 72**

*Mixed media*  
2019

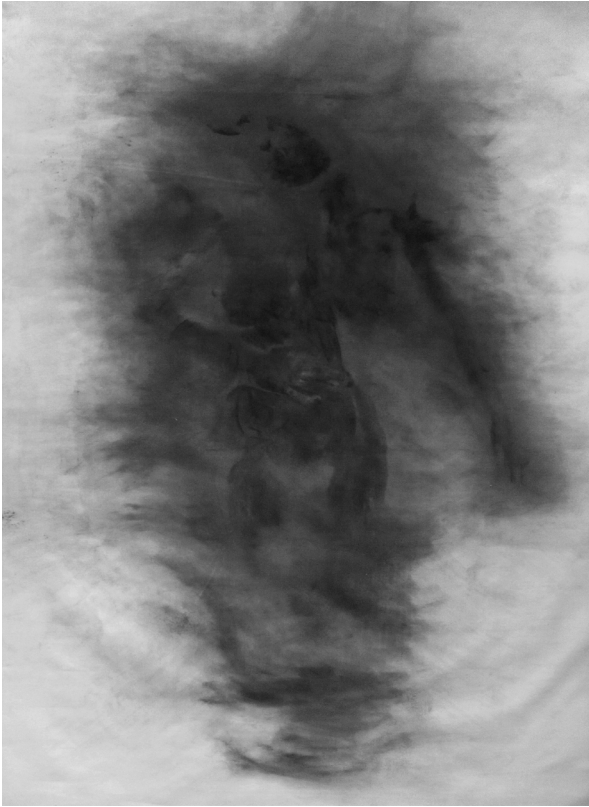
**50 | 34**

*Mixed media*  
2019

**09 | 85**

*Mixed media*  
2019

These works are compositional and material experiments in merging both digital and physical texture. Each piece started with the same number of typographic and photographic assets collected over the last year and this imagery was assembled intuitively in Photoshop. The physical texture was applied afterward, using a mixture of automatic painting and conscious brushwork. The textures attempt to break out of the frame, as if they cannot be contained.



# JESSIE FLEURY

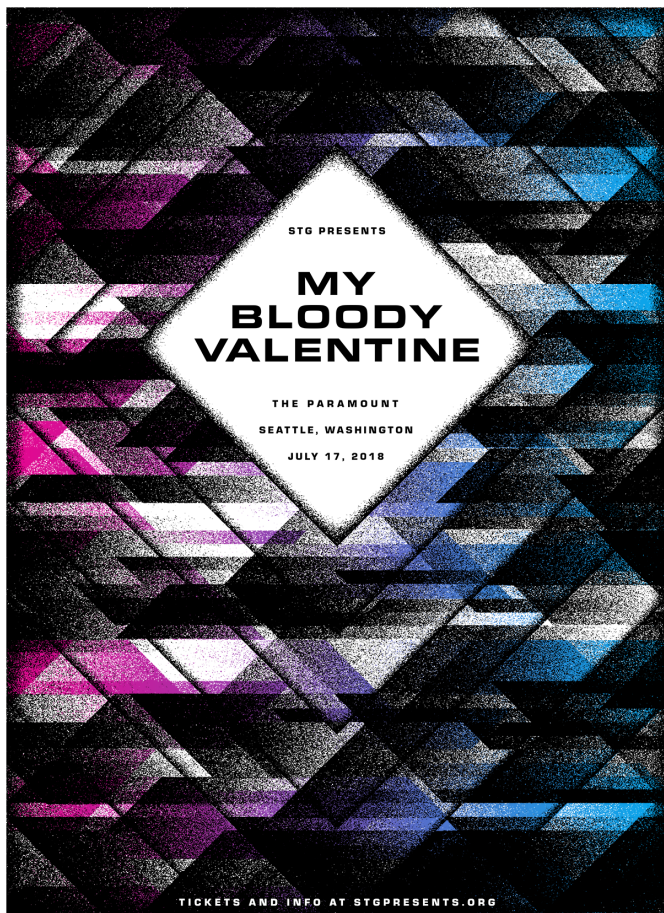
## UNTITLED 3 (TRACES SERIES)

*Charcoal on canvas*

2016

Self-reflection is the act of calmly organizing one's thoughts, free of the social constraints of everyday life. However, insecurities and buried anxieties often creep into these sacred moments and call into question ideas and beliefs which were once firmly held, dissolving the self-constructed boundaries of identity. My work addresses these meditative and emotional qualities of self-reflection that can result in moments of clarity and confusion. In engaging with meditative processes my work explores the relationship between the ineffable and the tangible and reveals the confusion that exists between comfort and suffocation, affirmation and dissipation. By turning to my own body as mark maker, I mourn the perceived loss of my inner self and my identity. Recording my body becomes a catharsis, a way to reassure myself of my physical existence amid the confusion of my psychological dissolution. Through this work, I explore the generative possibilities of abiding by loss and uncertainty rather than seeking to dispel them.





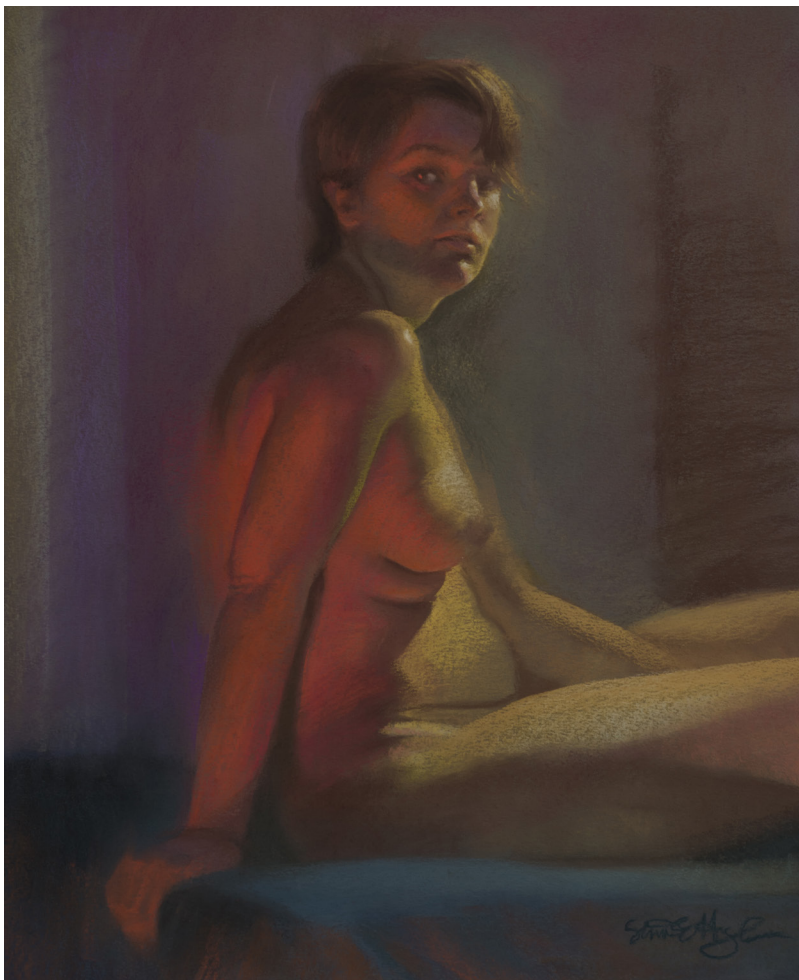
## PAUL HESS

### MY BLOODY VALENTINE

*Screen print*

2018

In 2014 I founded a one-person studio named Northmost Outpost. Its primary function was to design and screen print concert posters. I attempted to fuse the tone and personality of each headlining act with my own love of 80s and 90s pop-culture and vintage ephemera. Five years later, in 2019, I've resolved to stop designing concert posters as they no longer align with my goals as a designer. This collection serves as something of a bookend to my poster-making career with each piece acting as both totem and measuring stick of where I was in my life both personally and professionally.



## STEVEN HUGHES

### **RED FASHION**

*Pastel on paper*

2017

Drawing is less a skill than an inquiry. The attentiveness with which I approach the subject is not to get better at drawing, but rather deepen my thinking. In practice, an artist is in a constant state of testing or disproving visual hypotheses. The critical eye, with which one must engage their artwork, provides the framework for an artist's message to be honed into its clearest form and communicated. Each session drawing from life contributes to the progression of this knowledge. Achieving a good or bad outcome is irrelevant to the transformative experience of drawing, one that is recounted across the surface of the paper with every decision made.

# BRIAN KAKAS

## ARCHITECTONICS

*Hand built stoneware*

*Cone 03 soda fired*

2018



Applying the methodologies of art, architecture, science and technology to ceramic design, I seek to create a “new nature” in the structural design of ceramic objects. Poetic forms with a mathematical foundation; these ceramic sculptures reference structural architectural design and mathematical theories including systems of growth, pattern and dimension. Combined with interests in cultural identity, history, and space, the sculptures embody the constantly evolving world we live in, shedding light on the relationships between tradition and the modern identities rapidly evolving around the world.



# EMILY LANCTOT

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LISTENING AND TALKING

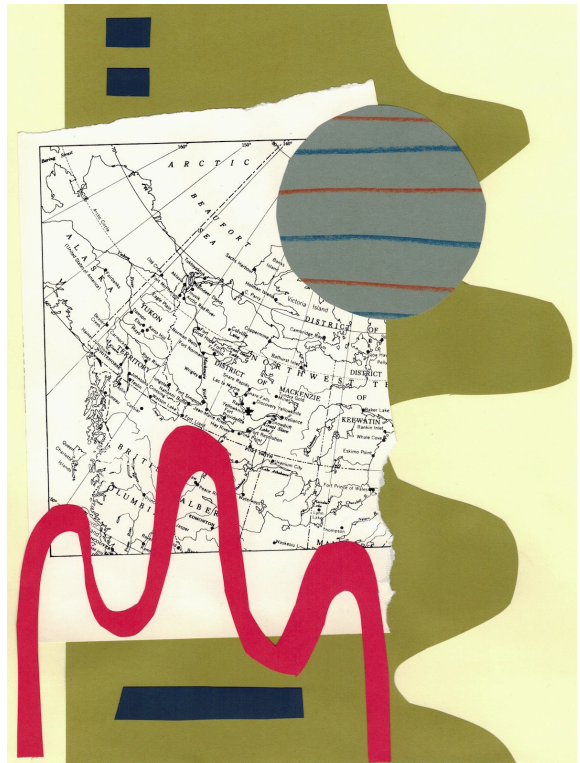
*Mixed media collage*

2018

My interest in collage stems from a love of language – both literal and visual, design, advertising, and a fascination with the banal - all of those everyday moments and things that are anti-monumental. Design, whether it was completed yesterday or a century ago, speaks to a way of living in a specific moment. Advertising has always shown us how to escape the banal and elevate the everyday. It points out what is available for us to desire.

Part of the joy of making this work is the ritual. I spend a little time each morning making. The physicality of cutting, pasting, painting, and drawing on paper creates a space for ideas to collide and new thoughts to emerge.

The works on display are sketches from my daily practice; they are the remnants of language/things/ideas that I am constantly processing. They are bits and pieces, or parts, of a larger whole.





## STEPHAN LARSON

### PERPETUATE

Animation

2019

*perpetuate* arose from my unresolved quandaries about technology. On one level, much of our technology (and by association, our industry) is detrimental to the planet: consumption of non-renewable resources, waste and byproduct dumping, solid/liquid/gaseous pollution, and cost supplanting sustainability. On a different level, technology saves life and enhances the quality of life: modern medicine would not exist without chemicals, metal, and plastic; food production would not be sufficient to feed the world with horse-drawn plows; culture is enhanced by ease of communication and fast transportation. In a continuation of those contradictory perspectives, *perpetuate* was created using a lot of technology – computer animation. The animation depicts nature giving birth to new life in an inhospitable environment, bringing life to a lifeless place in a display of hope and perseverance... only to be crushed beneath the feet of technology. In this case, “perpetuate” has a double meaning – nature will persist, and man will persist in stomping on it. And so my quandary remains.



## CHRISTINE LENZEN

### IN THE WOODS

*Cyanotype on birch bark*

2018

At face value, the photographs from the series *In the Woods* are an homage to our natural world's picturesque beauty. For each piece, portraits of trees are printed directly on birch bark using the cyanotype process. Every tree in the forest is unique, and similarly, due to this printing process no piece from this series can be exactly replicated. However, due to the high acidity of the birch onto which these images are printed, over time every one of them will potentially change color, degrade, or eventually vanish.

While we may revere the natural world's beauty, societally we practice a disregard for its future. Without preventative measures, our beautiful natural spaces, like these images, will continue to disappear.



## MICHAEL LETTS

### **BROKEN THINGS**

*Charcoal and carbon on paper*

2019

These drawings emerge as a contemplation on living, as milestones in a journey, or maybe more like tracks in the snow. The forests of coastal northern Michigan enclose structures for action, almost abstract or architectural spaces; intimate grottos or sweeping chambers, cathedrals of ritual and recall. Drawing is a singular pursuit, a meditation, scribbling on the wall, asserting power over shadows that overtake a search for true light. The works stand mostly only for themselves, a record of reaction, not fiction or depiction, but an arena of hope and hapless visions.

My images are at once personal and collective, suggesting origin tales, exploring enduring forces. They chart the denizens of a garden and the relics of resource and recourse. Life size scale catalyzes immersive spaces; animals assert and absorb felt notions. The bestiary connects us within the draws of nature, of physical wisdom. Owning the pride of reflected gaze, being's still presence stands poised at deep divides, almost paused, a nexus at the discord within a nature that is us.



# STEVEN LEUTHOLD

## FACING THE MOUNTAIN

*Ink and oil on paper*

2014

In these paintings, I have rendered human figures in a gestural, luminous manner. By luminous, I am referring to a focus on light and color in contrast to a concern for anatomical delineation. The psychological function of color and light in combination with the figurative subject plays a central role. Why and how has the figure continued to play a part in modern art? Perhaps the endurance of the human subject relates to the psychological impact that representations of the human figure have had upon viewers in earlier historical periods. Some of the earliest subjects, such as those seen in Native petroglyphs, were human. Throughout history, artists have employed light and color to heighten the psychological impact of this subject. The British painter, writer, and curator Timothy Hyman stated, "Much of the history of twentieth-century painting could be retold in terms of artists who, having long ago discarded naturalism, are nevertheless impelled to create a world of figures, to reconstitute the image anew." My work engages the symbolic and expressive importance of the figurative tradition in earlier periods and explores how the luminous figure may be meaningful in the present.





## GABRIELLE MCNALLY

### HORSEHAIR

*Digital video and audio*

2019

Horsehair is an experimental video poem exploring my personal philosophy regarding the relationship between fate and freewill. I have always considered myself a fatalist and also, ironically, have always had a profound fear of a lack of control. This video grapples with finding a balance between the two. My work regularly deals with serendipitous intersections between concepts and the materials used to explore said concepts through a form of video/audio collage. This work is comprised of appropriated video and audio materials paired with a poetic voice-over performed by my son, creating a fragmented first-person narrator. It includes heavily manipulated video footage of writhing nematomorpha (horsehair worms), a parasitic animal that controls its host insect's brain, causing the host to drown itself and free the parasite inside. The voice-over text, the images and ambient soundtrack, and the disparate relationship between the two creates an active spectator who is tasked with making meaning out of seemingly disparate materials. Horsehair explores and merges multiple themes including spirituality, mythology, biology, science-fiction, innocence, and transcendence.

# JANE MILKIE

## TRIBUTE

Digital print

2018



My work is a tribute to students who have experienced the loss of friends and family due to opioid addiction. It is sad to learn that many of their loved ones died young. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 72,000 US drug overdose deaths were estimated in 2017—a 2-fold increase within a decade. The sharpest increase occurred among deaths related to fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (synthetic opioids) with nearly 30,000 overdose deaths.

The *Papaver somniferum* is commonly known as the opium poppy. Its consumption and medicinal application date back to antiquity. My illustration represents a common garden poppy grown in my yard last summer—a perennial that signals the beginning of summer. Its vibrant color and delicate blossom are short-lived - within a week or so wind and rain extinguish them. Artificial red poppies (the remembrance poppy) have been worn since 1921 as a symbol to remember those who fought and died in World War I. The remembrance poppy was inspired by John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields." Its opening lines refer to the many poppies that were the first flowers to grow in the churned-up earth of soldiers' graves in Flanders, a region of Belgium.

The overdose-reversing drug Naloxone (Narcan, Evzio) saves lives. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website states that in 2016, Michigan passed a Naloxone standing order law. This allows a pharmacist to dispense Naloxone without an individual prescription and without identifying a particular patient. In addition to a doctor's prescription, family, friends, or others can now obtain Naloxone to use in an emergency without an individual prescription.

Scientific botanical illustration used for learning about plants inspired my imagery. My work is intended to inform as well as to pay tribute to a current lost generation.

# CHRISTOPHER MOORE

## LITTLE ANVIL-HEADED DOG

*Intaglio monotype*

2018



When I am creating work, exploration of process and technique tends to take precedence over any “message” I am trying to convey. This print is part of a series that is a hybrid of collagraph and intaglio printmaking techniques. The printing plates were created by crumpling sheets of copper foil, and then crushing them flat, creating the wrinkled textures. They were individually inked in relief, and layered on top of each other. This method means that no two prints can be identical, and it allows for countless variations on a theme.





## PETER PLESS

### ORDER

*Stainless steel, bronze*

2018

Artifacts are representations of culture within specific eras. Regardless, if these objects are historical or contemporary, they may exist for the purposes of survival, ritual or pleasure. Though the function and meaning of many artifacts have been deciphered, some remain ambiguous but possess an emotive narrative of their craftsperson.



## JULIE CLARK-RISAK

### **BOWL**

*Raku-fired ceramics*

2019

I find clay to be a dense and heavy medium. For these pieces, I challenged this concept by incorporating wing symbols to increase the feeling of lightness and flow. The teapot and the bowl also focus on the relationships of balance and stability. They are fired in the ancient Japanese technique of Raku. Unlike traditional firing methods, Raku pottery is very rapidly fired and quickly cooled. The glaze is a metallic one which has been produced by my family for over 30 years. The interaction of the heat and flames with the metal in the glaze produces the colorful patterns.

# ALISON TARAS

## STRIDE

*Oil on canvas*

2018

What compels us to capture the likeness of creatures and elements of the natural world? To capture, to possess, to dominate what we desire, what we fear? Or to absorb, like an atomic particle, the essence of its being? If the latter, capturing the likeness of an elk is desiring to absorb its persistence: its ability to endlessly grow and regrow horns of bone; to continue on treacherous routes year after year in search of food, family, and shelter; to face all terrains, all weather with a straight focus on the future, bugling its presence.







## JASON SCHNEIDER

### SEGMENTED DISC

*Corrugated cardboard*

2017

I am interested in exploring the beauty and character of corrugated cardboard in both functional and sculptural forms. This study of the fine use and function of this low-status, recyclable, and often overlooked material is what motivates me. The inventive process of creating finely crafted objects with corrugated cardboard is exciting and stimulating, often resulting in a surprisingly elegant surface and form.



## DENNIS STAFFNE

**DALE**

*Digital photograph*

2017

For most of my photographic career I have avoided portraiture. My work has included architecture, landscape, and commercial. However, in the past few years I have been approaching the direction of portraiture. The two portraits in the 2019 Faculty Exhibit depict two approaches to creating a photographic portrait. There are many approaches and I look forward to exploring more in the future.





## TRACY WASCOM

### #7, FROM THE SERIES COMPOSITIONS IN RED

*Pigment ink on paper*

2017

The visual language of quilting - remnants and patterns - are combined to examine the perception of fixed certainties. The alluring blocks, with their rhythmic designs and slick decadent textures, are constituted from selections of various "problematic" substances: muscle, sinew, fat, silver skin, offal, and viscera. The seeming incongruity of manipulating these "abject" materials into something visually captivating is deliberately paradoxical. The images actively embrace perceived antitheses: seductive/repulsive, beautiful/grotesque, treasured/worthless, even flat/raised. Not bound to one state, but fluidly—sometimes slyly—shifting between them. Their contemplation reveals how perceptual experience can be overwhelmed by our conceptual overlay. Offering challenges to rigidly dualistic thinking, the images push and pull, ultimately leaving each to find their own equilibrium.

# DALE WEDIG

## DIVIDED

*Copper, aluminum and granite*

2018

These works document force I have delivered to a sheet of copper using my arm and a hammer. They express my continued desire to learn more about forming metal and making ideas become objects.







## MISSION

The DeVos Art Museum enhances the mission of Northern Michigan University through exhibitions and programs that engage creative culture across campus, local and regional communities.

## VISION

Connecting people, art and ideas through exhibitions and collections that celebrate interdisciplinary thinking and diverse perspectives.

**ArtThrivesHere.**



**NORTHERN MICHIGAN  
UNIVERSITY**

