Practice:

Hannah Shimabukuro
Ilana Harris-Babou
Jean Zhuang
Autumn Von Plinsky
Susanna Koetter
Glorilí Alejandro
Jane Long
Leeron Tur-Kaspa
Rachel Needle
Andrew Nelson
Hana Omiya
Aaron Seriff-Cullick
Isabel Bird
Katherine Oshman
Austin Lan
Max Saltarelli
Paul Doyle
Amelia Sargent
Ellen Su
Ngozi Ukazu
Meghan Uno
Sebastian Prokuski
Catherine White

Undergraduate

Senior Projects in Art

Yale

2013
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Glorilí Alejandro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Isabel Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Paul Doyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ilana Harris-Babou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Susanna Koetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Austin Lan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Jane Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Rachel Needle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Andrew Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Hana Omiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Katherine Oshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Sebastian Prokuski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Max Saltarelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Amelia Sargent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Aaron Serif-Cullick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Hannah Mitsu Shimabukuro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Ellen Su</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Leeran Tur-Kaspa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Ngozi Ukazu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Meghan Uno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Autumn Von Plinsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Catherine White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Jean Zhuang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Advisors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 23 art majors of 2013 are a diverse and hard-to-pin-down group. It includes painters who make animations, a sculptor who makes robots, a data-guerilla, a hoarder-cum-sculptor, photographers who make videos, and an inordinate amount of “twerking” represented here. Their practices are broad and mutable. These Yalies are Texans, Georgians, New Yorkers, Californians, Chic agoans, among others, and a connect-the-dots of their hometowns would zig-zag briskly from east to west and back again and again, dipping down into the Lone Star State on each trip back and forth, over and over, with detours and pit stops made in Colorado, in Baltimore, in Jersey, down to Boca. A sunny side trip would have to be made way out to Hawaii, before the zip line pulls us way back to Connecticut, to New Haven, to Chapel Street, to the studio.

In this booklet the reader will find our young, bold travelers at work in these studios and in the labs of Green Hall and the Edgewood building. Their work is frozen in some Springtime moment between its inception and completion on these pages, and what you, our audience (along for the ride) see on the adjacent walls of the Green Hall Gallery is the culmination of four years of intense study, training, discovery, experimentation, of failure and success, self-reflection and, ultimately, self-direction. Our journeymen and women are now here at another junction, as they pause to reflect on the psychological and conceptual distances that they have travelled during their time at Yale. Trips across campus, from Beinecke to Howe, or from Norfolk, CT to Auvillar, France, and from 217 Green to 217 Edgewood could maybe be marked not in steps and feet or meters and miles, but in some innumerable, some unknowable unit of measure in which a foot in the door of a guest lecture or a studio visit at just the right time equals a million light years in one’s mind.

The journey these students of art have made has snuck up on them, yes, as the destination. But for now, that end point is hung on these walls, and arranged on these floors, and stowed in these nooks and crannies, assembled here on a brief stopping point on the way to the next beginning. These 23 at work in their studios and out in the world - here they are with their results, their edits, their what-have-yous. Their artmaking practice at Yale might have been just that — practice. But practice makes perfect, doesn’t it? Being here now, ready and poised to go out and make a life of some sort in the arts, on one’s own for the first time, is exactly the perfect place to be.

Lisa Kereszi, Critic
Acting Director of
Undergraduate Studies
2013
Glorilí Alejandro

This animated video integrates parts of my studio painting practice with the flexibility and dynamics of animation. The versatility and materiality of physical paint combine with the physics bending options available using modern animation tools to give the final result a human touch while still showing impossible scenes. After working on paintings depicting the experience of being deep underwater and the play of light in depths and chasms, my imagination was captured with the idea of bringing them to life, and bringing the experience of submersion to life.

All the elements were generated using paint so that the work’s roots in the real world could be appreciated and then manipulated. The moving paintings take on a new dimension of relatability with us as kinetic beings. A bridge is created between the real world that we experience with all our senses and a different world only accessible when we leave the rules of this one behind. The animation itself deals with the subjects of fear, wanting, and the power of the imagination. It is atmospheric, surrounding the viewer in its world of sight and sound, until the final cut.
Isabel Bird

I am embracing my imagination. I am recognizing my struggles within the studio and learning to face them. I am accepting my consternation with material constraints and realizing that the stretcher bars of a canvas are not solid boundaries. I am turning my doodles into paintings and my paintings into collages. I am forgetting my fears.

Bedford, NY
Calhoun College
Painting concentration
Medium: paint
Recently I have been thinking about how we read time into objects and images based on their material and visual qualities. I’m interested in how art exists in time—how we relate certain styles with particular periods of time, how we approach contemporary works differently than we do older works, and how artists can manipulate viewers’ sense of time through their works’ form, for example. I am not sure how pertinent any of these musings are to a viewer’s experience of my work, or how connected they were to the decisions that went into creating it, but perhaps they provide some food for thought.

Paul Doyle

Houston TX
Berkeley College
Graphic Design concentration
Medium: mixed
Ilana Harris-Babou

I am interested in haptic vision and hyper-tactile surfaces. This semester I have been working primarily with paint and the moving image. I create ephemeral paintings. These paintings are documented in video and sometimes persist in the form of still artifacts. In these videos, I relish in the opportunity to manipulate mundane surfaces just enough for them to be momentarily entertaining. I want to leave the documentation of my painterly gestures ragged around the edges so that they might betray the particular or the personal. I want each brief cut of video to be a moment of revelation that is swift enough to let art supplies seem tangible and yet mysterious.

I have formed a new character for myself out of the materials in my studio, the lens of the camera, and ambitious rhythms of a rap beats. She is an obscured video vixen, caught in the act of making the world around herself. She comes up to the surface of the screen and pushes up against it. Is she confronting a fourth wall, or an amorphous membrane? At times she seems as if she is pressed under glass. Her gestures are simultaneously aggressive and playful. Her studio is a stage on which she can melt her own violent or visceral experience of hip-hop music.

She wants to know what is underneath the surfaces around her. She scratches this itch so hard that she peels back the synthetic skin of the image—only to find another layer of vinyl or formica beneath it. In a moment of weakness she eats the ice-cream she intended to paint with. In a moment of frailty the jug of acrylic paint slips from her hands and falls onto the table in front of her. What she makes is purposeless but perhaps exquisite. Sometimes the material interactions in the videos are alchemical. Clay from the 99 cent store can be transformed into gold in the right lighting.
In my long-standing attempt to create an autonomous work(-of-art), I’ve found myself with a reservoir of partial paintings which are dependent upon one another in order to feel complete. Altogether they bespeak an inclination to claim images as my own. In the studio, they function as indices of fleeting, amorphous memories.

I like to think of the studio as a lab for generating self-reflexive data wherein each piece is meaningless isolated from its time of creation. By its “time,” I mean not just the time of clocks, but also of history, of internal sentiments and shared attitudes, of what came before and after. I see these constituents as synonyms or declarations of affinity for their respective analogues found outside. Collectively they seem to render a voice residing in the interstitial space between an apparent self and other, one which is fictional, maybe, or hypothetical. At this juncture, my work is united through the affect of what I can best describe as a teen gurl, and what I present is her wall.
Austin Lan

I choose to make work about anxiety, because of its ubiquity. Most, if not all, people have had experience with anxiety, and its power to suffocate. My work serves as a meditation on this helplessness of anxiety, as a window into understanding chronic anxiety and mental disorders more generally.
Jane Long

units = ideas, data, information, facts, truth, perception
+= systems, processes, repetition, growth, expansion, feedback
loops, interaction, analyses
& visualizing things we can’t directly perceive, data v. information, data manipulation, objectivity, ownership, subjectivity, identity behind the objective, scientific information as fact + basis of understanding of the world.

Syosset, NY
Silliman College
Medium: computers
+tangible life stuff
In Douglas Hofstadter’s 2007 book, *I am a Strange Loop*, Hofstadter tries to describe how individual brain processes, though meaningless when isolated, work together to form living, breathing, human identities. He writes: “Those little sensual experiences are to the grand pattern of your mental life as the letters in a novel are to the novel’s plot and characters—irrelevant, arbitrary tokens, rather than carriers of meaning. There is no meaning to the letter ‘b,’ and yet out of it and the other letters of the alphabet, put together in complex sequences, comes all the richness an humanity in a novel or a story.” Reading this reminded me of the ways that I use graphic design—especially, when I am developing design in which the form of design embodies its content or significance. Within a project, a single design decision lacks meaning on its own; but ideally, the accumulation of all the decisions about typeface, page shape, color, etc., coalesce to form an aesthetic identity and meaning for the project as a whole.

To better understand my relationship to my work, I wanted to create a thesis project that redefined my role as designer. To do so, I separated myself from individual design decisions and replaced myself with a data based system for book design. This system, which I call “Biblio-matic,” is a set of rules that govern the layout and design of any text. Using factors such as complexity, syntax and readability, Biblio-matic looks at characteristic from the text to determine the following design elements: paper size and proportion, typeface, font size, leading, margin size and grid, and color palate. Once I created a functional system, I experimented with using the rules, both as a sketching tool and as final design itself. I found the results unusual, often times ugly, but always surprising. Ultimately, Biblio-matic provides me with insights and entrances into the text which I would be unable to identify any other way.
When the words from shipping boxes are brought into the light, they bring with them the complex undercurrent of the human metropolis—a cardiovascular network of comings and goings. The boxes move nearly undetected from place to place, yet they give the buildings a name and the concrete a smell.

No one knows where they come from, really. The far-away factories, farms, and plants they represent only need to exist in the names and addresses printed on their sides. They could signify anything from a utopian barnyard to an assembly line operation. Their reality is therefore entirely dependent on the viewer’s will.

The cardboard box is printed in black ink, featuring essential information such as company address and logo, certification labels, barcodes, and shipping numbers. As a diluted form of in-store packaging, cardboard boxes plainly provide the most pure presentation of this just how little we actually know about our foods. With the hierarchy of information flattened, we are asked to see the corporation for what it is. That is, a total mystery.

My goal is to make clear this constant mystery, otherwise obscured by the noise of our man-made environment.
Long ago, there was only water on Earth and the world belonged to all the fish and the creatures of the sea. Today, I eat these beasts in one-ounce slivers, raw and ravished with a dash of soy sauce. So indulgent yet fundamental are they to my diet, that sushi had to be given an alternative fate that was more than just a dish.

Using acrylic, oil, ink, and graphite, this story re-imagines a restaurant where the food we eat comes alive and tries to eat the diners instead. Scenes and dishes are inspired by real experiences at Mari’s Japanese Cuisine. Characteristics of the sushi the artist ate as a child determine the major concepts of the piece. Shape and textures mimic sharp bones and slippery skin of fish; warm colors signify flavor and the freshness of the meat. The book and the painting attempt to reconsider food as spirits of enchantment and danger, and humans as one vulnerable member of the food chain.
Katherine Oshman

For my senior project, I wanted to blend my passion for animation with my concentration of Painting. I have spent a lot of time in zoos drawing animals since an early age. When I’m sitting and drawing, people always whisper and point at me, saying, “Look its an artist!” and comment on my work without acknowledging my ability to hear them, as if I’m part of the exhibit, an animal attraction as well. But this is a two-way channel: I often then eavesdrop on the conversations people have as they look at me and the animals.

So at the zoo I’m often actually observing people and their interactions with the animals, rather than just the animals. In my project, “Zoo,” I search YouTube for low-quality videos of people at the zoo, using their speech and narration as the source material for the audio in my animations. Then I paint, animate, and project zoo animals large, themselves saying what the people have said. Through this reversal, “Zoo” confronts the voyeuristic elements of a zoo and points out the absurdity or hidden meaning behind the act of anthropomorphizing. We often project ourselves into the animal’s actions and create a narrative of their thoughts and personalities, which instead ultimately reveals our own traits and desires.

Lastly, I wanted to create a connection between myself the “performing” artist and the captured animal. The gallery setting is comparable to the zoo setting, as both are forms of passive visual spectacles. Therefore I leave the works as both illustrations of animals and paintings—I want them to be obviously the animal, but also obviously a painting, living in both worlds at once.

Houston, TX
Pierson College
Painting concentration
Medium: animation (with watercolors & Adobe After Effects)
As I maneuver and manipulate the ephemerality of my own adolescence I am both a player and an archivist. Through photographic descriptions of vestigial innocence and bruised surfaces I seek to unravel my sincere and uncritical participation.

Sebastian Prokuski

Chicago, IL
Trumbull College
Photography concentration
Medium: photographs
I believe in the humor of anticlimax, the profundity of the non-descript, and the poetry of suburban Southern California’s residential and plant life. My thesis video is at once an unsolicited massage, a critique of the institution, a step forward in storytelling, and a shockingly intimate self-portrait.
I paint people because I can't help but give in to our race's rigorous self-fascination. The petty dramas and posturing, our eagerness to adopt roles, affectations and other social shorthand to reach out to each other mask deeper insecurity, a pure and hesitantly hopeful desire to connect, to understand each other. Sometimes a flicker of the eyes, a turn of the head, a slight gesture will cause the mask to slip and a flash of naked vulnerability will be exposed.

Bright colors and gestural, painterly brushwork heighten the heat and energy of my images. The fantastical fluorescent airbrush and glitter contrast with the messy, earthy oil to confuse fantasy and reality, exterior events and interior psychology. I combine and layer individual images to create the frenzy of experience, highlighting the subtle moments that get lost in the crowd.

Amelia Sargent
Dallas, TX
Saybrook College
Painting concentration
Media: paint and photographs
My senior project is about me, myself, and I. It’s about me, the Aaron Seriff-Cullick that the world sees. It’s about myself, the Aaron Seriff-Cullick that I see. And it’s about I, the Aaron Seriff-Cullick that sees. Oh, and it’s a movie.

My source material for this project is anything that exists in the world, with the sole qualification that one of the three of us (me, myself, and I, I mean) engages with it. Photographs I’ve taken, photographs I’m in, letters I’ve written, letters I’ve read, videos I’ve watched, and videos I’ve made—it’s all fair game. From that great big pool of material, I fish for the bits and clips and pieces that strike a chord with me, or myself, or I. That process leaves me with a glistening, glimmering pile of gemstone puzzle pieces, which I just have to sift through, sort out, and solve. If all goes well, that’ll leave me with a pretty little puzzle—a twinkling mosaic of my experience which deflects, refracts, and absorbs inclement light all at once—in just the same way that me, myself, and I do. Aaron Seriff-Cullick, made into a movie. Aaron Seriff-Cullick, made a movie. Aaron Seriff-Cullick made a movie.
Hannah
Mitsu
Shimabukuro

I like to think of materials as individuals, and I obsessively work with a material until I feel as if I know how it would want best to be used. It is through my relationship with materials that I try to make sense of the other interactions that fascinate me. My recent work deals with the idea of relationships that both constrain and support us. This ranges from looking at the individual within society, the constant appropriation of architecture to the present, reimagining history to benefit us today, power dynamics between friends or families, and the tensions inherent in one single body.
Technology is increasingly becoming an essential part of our lives. From machinery to computers, we interact with technology every day, most of which is created in service of humans. I am deconstructing the relationship between humans and technology using simple robots. These robots are not created to complete a task or serve a specific purpose; essentially, they are useless from a technological and utility standpoint. That is not to say, however, that they are meaningless. The robots possess their own autonomy and exist within their own context. By virtue of the creation process, the robots become individuals. Though they may be built from similar materials and plans, they take on their own movement and characteristics as a direct result of their making.

The robots are equal parts humorous, empathetic, and absurd. Humor comes from the situations that the robots end up in and from the interactions between viewers and robots. Empathy comes from the natural human tendency to anthropomorphise and ascribe human characteristics to non-human beings. Additionally, a live feed from the robot’s point of view acts as a proxy for the robot’s perspective and creates an empathetic response. Absurdity comes from the premise of a hand-made robot, as well as the concept of empathizing with a machine that clearly cannot think or feel.

Ellen Su

Palo Alto, CA
Timothy Dwight College
Sculpture concentration
Medium: robotics
The group of sculptures I am showing for the senior thesis has evolved from a playful investigation of domestic, commercial, and found objects. My main interest of exploration is material culture, specifically how our bodies are mediated through mass-produced objects and experiences. I am interested in the moments where the designed utility of an object misregisters with its actual use. If art is a process of creating non-utilitarian things, I want to make objects that suggest utility but resist contextualization. I hope to use the surreal and humorous in order to call into question relationships we take for granted. I am drawn to materials that are ubiquitous and overlooked; exposing dichotomies between what is considered real and what is considered synthetic is also important. My work is not a negation of the material culture around us, but rather an exploration of the struggle for personhood within it.
The Computing and the Arts major was officially approved by Yale College in 2008. It is designed both to equip students of the arts with computational tools and to direct computer scientists into avenues of exploration in the visual arts, music, and theater. The major culminates with a yearlong senior project where students explore and develop a program in the Fall and use this program as a component of their art investigation in the Spring.

I present Morphelation, a simple tool that uses color-layers to facilitate interpolation in 2D animation. Image morphing is a process where a source image transforms into a target image through a series of in-between images. In the source and target images provided for morphing, pixels migrate based on linear interpolation of a pixel’s original position in the source image and the position of the closest pixel in the target image. To create localized and more controlled morphing, Morphelation uses color to specific pixel migration paths. The results depict uncannily organic growth and decay, and transformations that are both novel and tactile.

Ngozi Ukazu
Houston, TX
Jonathan Edwards College
Computing and the Arts major
Medium: digital
I investigate how texture, pattern, and sculptural form give birth to conversations about childhood, cultural identity, and fantasy. While absorbing visual cues from fashion, fairy tales, and dreams, I make tableaus that capture resonances among numerous disparate elements. My interest in severe aestheticization and graphic compositions determines how I construct photographs that communicate personal definitions of beauty and perfection. I seek to imbue conventionally appealing images with darker messages while earnestly approaching themes of fascination and visual spectacle.

My experiences exploring the Japanese urban landscape has implanted impressions in my head of a wonderland ruled by whimsy and wackiness, overwhelmed with pattern, color, and texture. As I construct narratives revolving around childlike, female figures, I attempt to physically realize such a universe in the studio. By submerging my characters in fantastical scenes and subtle nightmares, I hope to circumvent waking reality and create moments where one can enter dreams awake.

Meghan Uno

Walnut Creek, CA
Calhoun College
Photography concentration
Medium: photographs
My senior thesis revolves around my idea of home, more specifically, my upbringing in the South. While I can’t say I spent the majority of my childhood in a strictly rural environment, the aesthetic and mindset of the rural south has very much shaped my thoughts and my experiences. I wanted to explore this through a series of landscape paintings that focus on literal places I remember from home and the feelings I have about them.

Having gone far from Georgia for college, I find myself looking back on my life at home, my mental image of it, its color, the buildings, the people (or usual lack thereof). I chose to explore this topic I’m so familiar with with a medium traditional to the landscape, but not as familiar to me. I hope that viewers looking at my pieces can start to connect with my sense of their past and pleasant solitude, and possibly begin to reminisce and wonder about these places that they may have never been to.

Autumn Von Plinsky

Augusta, GA
Timothy Dwight College
Painting concentration
Medium: oil on Canvas
My work focuses on the overlap between fashion, art, and popular culture. I make paintings that are direct responses to paintings, photographs, and advertisements that deal with female beauty as an ideal or as an aspiration for women. I am particularly interested in the way in which the portrayal of the female body in fashion, art, and popular culture has converged so that to talk about one is to naturally reference the other. All three are consumed with capturing a particular ideal, a fantasy that is within reach, but is fleeting or not attainable. In my work, I reference well-known painters, designers, and fashion icons that deal with this pursuit and fantasy, while simultaneously pursuing my own particular aesthetic.

Catherine White

Denver, CO
Saybrook College
Painting concentration
Medium: paint
I want to feel your body on mine I want you to hold me but you can’t even hold yourself together how can you possibly hold me stop wanting good foods and good sex stay in this place with me we have everything we need we have a pool and a couch and a rug stay in this place with me and we will always be safe and we will never be lonely.

He is shirtless, standing at the top of a dirt hill. He is cradling a rack of fresh ribs, with skin still hanging off of it and a patch of fur sliding around on top. He walks over, grinning from cheek to cheek and reaches his hand forward in greeting and, as he leans forward, the skin and hair slides off of the ribs to land on the dusty ground. SPLAT! The dust disperses into the air and the skin glistens in the sun. Still grinning widely, still holding this enormous rack of ribs, the man bends down to pick up the hair with all the dirt stuck on it and plops it back on the ribs. Still grinning more than ever, he proceeds to bow his head to us and continue walking down the hill.

Cradling is so tender a gesture. I long to hold onto the sense of security that it might give, but everything is too wobbly for this to be possible. The room is suddenly unfamiliar, suddenly too large. The body can’t even hold itself together but it is still insatiable in its want for the touch of other bodies, and for food. To me, the human weakness for indulging in these needs is honest and gross and poignant, and occasionally dangerous. It is something that seeks to, but can never succeed in, dispelling our universal loneliness.

Jean Zhuang
Boca Raton, FL
Morse College
Painting concentration
Media: oil paint/mixed media
there's a special place
Advisors

Anna Betbeze
Paul Doyle
Susanna Koetter
Julian Bittiner
Andrew Nelson
Sandra Burns
Ilana Harris-Babou
YaJu Chol
Austin Lan
Johannes DeYoung
Glorilí Alejandro
Ngozi Ukazu
Benjamin Donaldson
Max Saltarelli
Dru Donovan
Sebastian Prokuski
Anoka Faruque
Autumn Von Plinsky
John Gambell
Rachel Needle
Brent Howard
Ellen Su
Lisa Kereszi
Aaron Serif-Cullick

Marie Lorenz
Hana Omiya
Hannah Shimabukuro
Samuel Messer
Isabel Bird
Amelia Sargent
Michael Queensland
Jane Long
Victoria Sambunaris
Meghan Uno
William Villalongo
Leeron Tur-Kaspa
Jean Zhuang
Anahita Vossoughi
Catherine White
Natalie Westbrook
Katherine Oshman

Practice:
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Photography
Casey McGonagle

Design
Marina Mills Kitchen
Stefan Thorsteinsson

Artwork Credits
Susanna Koetter: 10
Autumn Von Plinsky: 18
Leeron Tur-Kaspa: 46
Ellen Su: 54
Rachel Needle: 56
Meghan Uno: 58
Amelia Sargent: 88
Andrew Nelson: 92

Dean of Yale School of Art
Robert Storr
Associate Dean of Yale School of Art
Samuel Messer
Acting Director of Undergraduate Studies in Art
Lisa Kereszi
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Fall 2012
Clint Jukkala
Teaching Assistant
Thomas Chung

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