



CONFAB Juried Exhibition Artist Statements

Brian Bailey, Jr.

Lil' Sliders, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

Brian Bailey, a self-taught multifaceted artist, embarked on his creative journey at an early age. His professional endeavors led him to serve as a creative lead at a renowned national park, where he excelled in crafting unique brand experiences and brought two captivating restaurants to life. Fairly new to the medium of painting, Brian has been able to find his unique abstract style and create a community of freedom in artists in the area, and become this breath of fresh air in the DC art scene/culture. In 2023, Brian was honored with the Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in Arts Education, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the community's creative growth. His art transcends mere visuals, weaving hidden narratives with ethereal perspectives, inviting viewers into a world of deeper meaning. Through his ongoing exploration of artistic passions, Brian Bailey not only nurtures his own creative spirit but also inspires the community to embrace distinctive self-expression in every aspect of their lives. Presently, Brian Bailey calls the vibrant surroundings of Washington, D.C. home, where he continues to be a driving force for art and expression within the community.

Max Benecke

The Scream, Water soluble graphite on yupo, 2024

Self-Portraits' have always been a strong source of inspiration from which I can draw. These self-portraits are from a time when I needed an artistic challenge, so I committed to doing fifty (mostly) oil paintings in a month. I even posted the self-portraits to my instagram to keep myself honest about finishing my painting marathon on time - roughly 1.5 paintings a day. The artistic challenge revealed how experimental I am with the self-portrait, moving between realism ("Self-Portrait 15/50"), abstract ("Self-Portrait 5/50"), and expressionistic styles. I hoped to reveal my personal style through repetition, but the artistic challenge only opened my horizons as to what is possible with the self-portrait. "The Scream" attempts to move beyond the self-portrait by expressing an ineffable moment, a scream, and the head is distorted by that scream.

Halcy Bohen

Syrian Refugee Dad & Child, Acrylic on canvas, 2015

Rio Grande Migrants (Salvadorian), Acrylic on Canvas, 2019

Residents Flee Their Homes (Mosul, Iraq), Ink on paper, 2017

On the theme for this Washington Studio School exhibit—contemporary issues—Halcy Bohen offers three “Refugee” paintings. Critics often describe her work—in a range of styles & media—as “filled with movement, fluid lines and color.” They praise her use of “the slightest line and action to capture the subject, revealing the essence of the being itself.”

Subject matter in her work includes plein air, animals, interiors, still lives—but mostly people—thus very relevant to this exhibit—and allied to her career as a psychologist. Each role requires both close observation and a creative response from her.

Her work has been juried into/exhibited in numerous shows including the Yellow Barn Gallery, the Smithsonian, the American Painting Gallery, the Watergate Gallery, the Landow Gallery, the Bethesda Library, as well as exhibits in Maine and NYC. Her published work has appeared on CD albums and journals. She taught children’s art for the DC Department of Recreation, and in multiple workshops abroad. She has also written and illustrated many children’s books for and about her large family.

Clara Beyer Bower

My Boobs Are Voting for a Woman, Oil paint on wood panel, 2024

The first thing I learned about my boobs was that everyone wanted to see them. Did you know that when girls go through puberty, we do it in public? That our physical changes happen on the front of our bodies, changing the shape of our shirts? If you didn’t, a fifteen year old boy is happy to point it out. Next, I learned that it was my responsibility to hide them. Wear different shirts. Slouch a little. Do not text your ex boyfriend a picture of them for his fraternity scavenger hunt. People say that boobs grant a woman power, but that power has rarely felt particularly empowering. Showing them off leads to objectification and harassment, and hiding them reinforces my body as a source of shame. Which, frankly, I am sick of.

This series, “MY BOOBS”, explores the relationship between myself, my body, exposure, vulnerability, and real power. It is my response to an exhausting reality. If I have to navigate this space — having a body, being a woman, being seen, cramming the boobs into a swimsuit which somehow feels more revealing than nudity — I’m doing it on my terms now. So, yes. You can see them.

Yigit Cakar

Heroic Artifact, Oil on Board, 2024

Self Portrait with AI, Oil on cradled board, 2023

I am a Turkish artist who studied, lived, and worked around the world. This experience taught me that people across continents are just that, people. We are more similar than we were taught, and we all live in hurried lives where we cannot find the time to stop and think, to question, or even to enjoy.

My work aims to change that by giving viewers a moment of reprieve from the rush and give a moment of solace; sometimes by admiring the little things in life, and sometimes by sharing a feeling we do not speak about. If two strangers share a memorable moment due to my work, my work has accomplished its purpose.

Chris Combs

Fake Plastic Trees, Rosewood enclosure, aluminum composite, LCD, upscaled video, computer, 2024

Time-based: An ever-shifting landscape of semi-imagined trees seethes in this fictional consumer device, which imagines a world in which window views of natural scenes are replaced by algorithmically generated simulacra. The video shown on the device was made by filming tree boughs waving dramatically in a strong breeze; downscaling them to a very small resolution; then repeatedly using an “AI” upscaler to generate more and more fictional detail. The resulting imagery seethes seamlessly between blocks, bleary outlines, and crisply reimaged leaves; at times, off-base visuals creep in, such as telephone poles and buildings. From a distance, it does approximately resemble the original video captured by the artist; the differences are in the details. Set in a rosewood instrument enclosure, its front panel was designed and engraved by the artist in aluminum composite material. Requires electricity. Tabletop or pedestal.

Insert 25 Cents to Feel Something, Lens, LCD, steel enclosure, acrylic, polyurethane, coin acceptor, 2024

Interactive: This art-cade machine rewards the curious payer with a public-domain cat picture, shown in a flickering, projector-esque style, and one of a number of early recordings of cat-themed songs (including meowing). Its lettering is my homage to the boardwalk classic, “Relax-a-Lator.” I applied the lettering, scraped most of it off, reapplied it, scraped some off again, and finished the whole machine with chalk paint, aging wax, and matte polyurethane. “Insert 25 Cents to Feel Something” is set in a vintage factory-floor steel enclosure and features a modified glass flashlight lens, LCD, and internal sound system. Requires electricity. Wall-mounted.

Point of Sale, Vintage POS VFD display terminal, aluminum case, computer, hardware, 2020

Time-based: Using a screen from a cash register, also known as a “point-of-sale” system, this artwork displays a series of messages to you, changing over time. The text addresses themes of environmental devastation, consumerism, and pandemic hoarding.

Chris Combs's artworks respond to pressing themes of surveillance, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic failure—and to the viewer, using facial recognition and motion sensing. He employs a wide range of practices to create circuit boards, software, and enclosures for interactive and time-based wood, metal, and found-object sculptures, which both embrace and question technology. Their custom circuitry is engineered by the artist and hand-soldered with millimeter-scale components. His sculptures address changes in our built technology environment—changes which often occur before we understand their implications.

C. S. Corbin

Room, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

I create surreal images by blending colorful elements of personal storytelling, nature, and cinematic references to explore the trans experience. I use feminine and masculine stereotypes as satiric tools to play with the performance of gender and sexuality as well as honoring our past selves. I'm interested in highlighting how our culture markets and capitalizes on personal growth yet uses that same power to invoke shame upon bodily autonomy. I strive to provide the viewer with a nostalgic, dream-like lens in order to safely delve deeper into their own biases while existing in the patriarchy.

H. Paul Davis

Pass Manchac, Oil on canvas, 2024

My work engages with the intersection of landscape and memory. In this painting, I explore the Louisiana bayou, a region rich in cultural heritage and ecological significance. The bayou's timeless beauty, juxtaposed with its vulnerability to environmental change, creates a tension that mirrors the complexities of our world.

The telephone wires, a ubiquitous feature of rural landscapes, serve as a visual metaphor for the interconnectedness of past and present. They symbolize the enduring spirit of the communities that have thrived here for generations while also hinting at the challenges they face in an increasingly interconnected and changing world. This painting aims to evoke a sense of both

nostalgia and urgency, inviting viewers to consider the delicate balance between preserving the past and shaping a sustainable future.

Anna Demovidova

Broken Walls, mixed media collage on artboard, 2024

Broken Lives, mixed media collage on artboard, 2024

The long-time subject of my work is women - our mercurial moods, feelings, and thoughts - as we evolve through our experiences and interactions - and in repose, reflecting on our lives. My women are often alone (but not lonely), thinking and reflecting. I explore what we are like when we are with just ourselves...

To quote Henri Matisse, "What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter – a soothing, calming influence on the mind, rather like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue."

Unfortunately, with the world so troubling and tragic, it isn't possible to stay away from depressing subject matter. When my birth country, Russia, invaded Ukraine, I felt like a piece of my soul was being rendered away, and I felt helpless. I created aesthetically pleasing work, which, at a closer look, revealed human suffering. I wanted this proximity to evoke hope, not despair, to give out strength. To bring light.

Jeremy Bearer-Friend

Alas!, Pen and ink, 2024

Queer people are at the center of my work. I draw their faces and their hands. And then I tell stories about their lives through my pictures. The simplicity of my work invites viewers to consider what they might make themselves if artmaking didn't have a fence.

My current projects include a visual reimagining of Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hassidim*, inspired by my own Yiddish heritage, and a comic book about sharing resources. My handbound and self-published work is sold in Amsterdam, Brooklyn, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. My comic book *Bar Talk*, drawn exclusively inside gay bars, sold out at DC Zinefest 2023 and a broadside sold at the *Postcards from the Edge 2024* exhibit in New York in support of Visual AIDS. Reproductions of my drawings have also been published in *Clerestory*, *Embryo Concepts*, *End of Business*, *Hallowzine*, and *The Indy*.

Imani

Comfort, Acrylic on canvas, 2021

Imani Gardner is a local multidisciplinary artist currently based in the DC, Maryland, Virginia area; trained in industrial design and a self-taught painter. Their work spans a variety of mediums, often utilizing acrylic and oil paints as well as recycled materials. Their work is driven by both personal and communal experiences.

Experiencing the world as a queer Black trans individual has a profound effect on their creative approach. Imani often draws inspiration from domestic spaces, the people within them, and themes of intimacy, connection, and creation. Their intention in sharing art with the world is to share a piece of themselves. Gardner's creative work has always been a means of expression, providing a safe space to explore vulnerability, connect with others, and practice authenticity. To those who resonate with these themes, they offer a warm invitation to their corner of the universe and wish you the safest of travels.

Anjelika Deogirikar Grossman

Above the Fold III, Watercolor and mixed media, 2022

As an activist artist and educator, I am motivated to explore social and political issues in my work in partnership and dialogue with the community. As an immigrant and woman of color, I value the power of community engagement, and my own journey as a 'third-culture kid' has informed my north star to create communities of belonging. My practice bridges mediums exploring watercolor painting, mixed media, and textile arts. Like quilts or patterns, the "Above the Fold" series explores how stories are woven into our lives — through traditions, culture, and the news. This series explores questions such as — What stories grab our attention? Whose stories are centered? Who is framing the narrative? What stories need to be elevated? I invite you to consider: What stories do you think should be on the front page "above the fold" of a newspaper? Frames have been donated by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Katie Hartley

It's Late, Pen, marker, sharpie, and crayon on paper, 2024

These works reveal moments when I felt consumed by emotion. While drowning in anxiety, anger, fear, sadness, or joy, I scraped lines and shapes across a sketchbook from Five Below. The drawings began as purely therapeutic, not intended to be shown, but developed into their own series after encouraging words from my Therapist. The sketches started in pen and ink only, using ball point pens from my nightstand in early 2023. But soon, the process shifted: instead of dissociating as I released my emotions onto the paper, I became mindful of each mark I made, observing how it altered the next mark and

the next. I incorporated sharpie and acrylic markers that blended and layered to add a wide spectrum of colors, and I embraced the portability of a sketchbook, which kept the process quick and easily accessible. After struggling with a particularly bad bout of anxiety recently, I've tried to take more time to stop and name what I'm feeling; these drawings offer a visual documentation of that process. Perhaps if I lay out my emotions on paper, stretched and flattened and exposed, I can be curious about them instead of judgmental or afraid. Maybe I can even come to accept them.

Uyen Hoang

Maggot's Puberty, Acrylic on stretched canvas, 2024

Maggot's Puberty reflects the transformation of an undesirable creature that lives in rot, a maggot, into its final and no less disgusting form, a fly. However, this fly and its existence are romanticized in its uncannily human home. Inspired by *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, the main character's grotesque and physical degeneration into a bug parallels the continuing physical retrogression of Man's society in the shadow of capitalism and its class struggle. Under such system, one must confront their darkest form in order to not be consumed by their living condition.

Rikasso

The Waitress from 156 and Lenox, Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 2023

My name is Erik Holden; I am a DC based artist and Gallery Director for Foundry Gallery in Washington, DC, who began his self-taught career in 2011. My works present collages of figuration, pairing subjects from classical and pop culture references. Figures come together from different worlds while some individual bodies are assembled in themselves. While the subjects of the paintings clash with their highlighted differences; they also vibrate with the frequency of unifying themes.

My submission to "Washington Studio School Call for Submission: CONFAB Juried Exhibit" is themed on self-perception through the lens of pixelated faces. Each piece reflects the struggle we face in defining ourselves amidst the chaos of modern life, particularly during hardships endured while pursuing life goals. The pixelation serves as a metaphor for the fragmentation of identity in an increasingly digital world, where the boundaries of self can become obscured. The interplay of sharp and blurred edges mirrors the clarity and confusion we experience daily that create layers of depth and complexity.

Ultimately, my art is a celebration of the human spirit's capacity to confront and transcend its challenges, encouraging us to look beyond the surface and recognize the shared struggles that

unite us.

Katty Huertas

What Are You Seeing?, Acrylic on canvas, 2015

Just like myself, my work often finds itself in the in-between. In between mediums, in between fields and in-between cultures. My journey is a celebration of multiplicity—a refusal to be confined by the boundaries of any single form or tradition. Spanning from the digital to the analog, the moving and the still, the flat and the 3-D, I seek to craft a universe that is as vibrant and diverse as the world that inspires it, which is my culture and heritage. Inspired also by magic realism, I aim to create moments of whimsy and wonder juxtaposed with darker, more introspective reflections. My practice explores identity, belonging, gender, and societal expectations. Drawing upon my own image and experiences as an immigrant, I delve into the female experience, using self-portraiture as both a mirror and a magnifying glass as I believe the personal is the political. Through experimentation with identifiers and archetypes such as fashion, I interrogate the ways in which societal standards shape our sense of self and belonging. Central to my work is the color palette I use, which dances between the sweet and the sinister creating surreal spaces that are based in reality.

Fadia Jawdat

House of Sorrow, Mixed media and collage, 2020

Disparity, digital collage print, 2015

In a world of turmoil and loss, I was lucky to discover Art in early childhood as a place of refuge. Art was my voice when I was silenced, my existence when threatened.

Collage and mixed media speak to the complexities and layers of the history I was born into. As an immigrant, I am still haunted by the Middle East and the scars of war. I research and record, eager to reconstruct a muddled identity and the story of generational trauma, dispossession, and displacement. I collect remnants of a culture and a land that are being erased and yearn to rewrite a history I wish I could reinvent. With my work I mend, reconstruct, and preserve: acts of resistance and affirmation.

My medium is an amalgam of materials: fragments of paper, pen, ink, paint, and debris.

My process is intuitive and spontaneous. My first triggers are events and experiences that lead to the reading of the news, a poem, a statement or an image. I respond by laying down a few lines, layering ripped paper, scraping, and excavating. The narrative is an unfinished perpetual story where chaos is organized and mayhem is possibly appeased.

Alexandra Knox

Contemplation #2, Oil on canvas, 2024

Painting is a type of meditation for me. It's an extended, delicious break from my mind's chatter and an even more chatty world.

In two of these works of oil on canvas, I chose plants in shade. Shade offers luscious, complex greens and blues and darks. And light moves gently on the leaves. So soothing. As such, these paintings, *Contemplation #1* and *Contemplation #2*, are part of a larger series that have become an inner garden—an antidote to the information overload of other parts of my life and a celebration of the gorgeousness of nature.

The garden is fallow in winter, and so I work in the studio where I use what is at hand. The still life, *Hierarchy with Red Bird*, is structured in the same way that medieval artists depicted their subjects. I arranged familiar, unremarkable items from large to small, top to bottom, as in medieval paintings. The placement of the objects, however, doesn't imply their importance to me, whereas in medieval art the order very much indicated social stature. By omitting most of the shadows, the image flattens and itself starts to feel modern. Some items seem to float. Yet the placement of objects in a solid order provides a reassuring structure with a bit of playfulness. All three works, I'd venture to say, have a deliberate rhythm and an emphasis on color and pattern. These three elements create delight for me, and sometimes mystery. The works can deliver their own visual complexities— but as they become distilled, they settle in themselves. This is when I know they are complete.

Anthony Le

I Love Yous Are an Act of The Present, Acrylic on canvas, 2024

I make surreal images of people close to me, pop culture references and my own self-image in narratives about bias, power and the joy of nonconformity. I investigate masculine stereotypes in our patriarchal society and offer counter-narratives of vulnerability as strength. I'm interested in remixing Asian iconography to dismantle the model minority myth, emasculation and fetishization. I'm exploring queerness through scenes of social deviance and otherness through anthropomorphic metaphor. I pinpoint moments of humor, joy and duality to show how my Asian and nonbinary identity feels expansive. I co-founded the Model Mutiny art collective with Ashley Jaye Williams, and we collaborate on sculpture, performance and fashion with a focus on body acceptance, gender expression and promoting solidarity.

Rebel Leona

You and Me, We Are the Same, Acrylic markers on canvas paper, 2023

As Rebel Leona, I embrace my identity as a Peruvian-American and queer visual artist, embodying the resilience of my "otherness" and growing up as a third-culture kid in the U.S. and abroad. My alias, "Rebel Leona," plays on "rebellion" and "lion," intentionally conjugated in Spanish to evoke "female rebellion"—a nod to my roar through art and heritage. Having grown up in ever-changing environments, my artwork reflects the personal journey of "being seen" and "seeing." I often move between observer and observed, with symbols like eyes representing this tension. My linework challenges boundaries and dismantles barriers. Whether colorful or monochromatic, I strive for my art to feel inclusive and fully aware of its presence in space, time, and culture. Never in isolation, always in resistance. Sharing stories through art creates compassionate spaces. My personal work and advocacy aim to challenge norms and spark dialogue on cultural and societal issues. I hold a B.A. in Cultural Anthropology from DePaul University and a Master's in Communications from France. Born in the UK, and raised in Peru and the U.S., I'm trilingual. Since 2017, Washington, DC, has been my home.

Leo Lex

Perception, Blown glass with hot/furnace-formed murrine and flat cane, 2024

Perception began as an experimentation in color using flat cane, unused murrine from previous works, and blown glass forms. I enjoy the visual effect and abstraction of small, contrasting panels of color. As the collective piece came together, I realized that those contrasts and differences could convey a broader message about how individuals receive information. The blown forms became abstract heads, and the colored panels, faces or filters. Our perceptions are colored by our background, identity and experiences, even if what we see or hear would seem to be the same as the person next to us. This dissonance becomes even more poignant as we consider how ideas, information, and misinformation are broadcast and absorbed in the context of political activity. I have been a glassblower and glassblowing instructor (periodically) for the past 15 years. Perception marked a turning point in my artistic expression because prior to creating it, I focused primarily on functional design. The piece has a total of 17 components, but it can be scaled down; a minimum of 3 components is sufficient to convey the message.

George Lorio

Pelletized, Constructed armature with wood pellets, 2024

Current images comment on ecological destruction and view of renewal. By maintaining trees, the life cycles of these grand organisms consume carbon dioxide, captures carbon, produces

oxygen, limits soil erosion and engenders city cooling via the arboreal canopy: one antidote to the climate crisis. I construct fictions of trees, stumps and logs; they are not renderings but re-interpretations of living forms. I do not alter the natural found color of the bark and sticks. I glue them to a constructed armature completing the attachment with an overlay of medium. The end grain of logs notes the distortions in the growth rings resulting from injury—a callus. It is similar to the swelling around a cut in human flesh. Constructing a sculpture alluding to a living tree with these waste pieces is a form of incantation, a poetic activity. It is an antidote to present land development which appears to care more for denuding the landscape of trees in favor of barren parking lots and massive concrete and glass structures which are impervious to seed penetration.

Nicole Maloof

Forbidden Candy Jar I, Plastic Autosoft 90 Infusion Set molds in glass jar, 2024

I investigate my relationship to my body and its implications in spaces through material exploration and abnormal forms. I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes when I was four years old. By working with homemade hard candy, spent medical supplies, plaster, acrylic paint and resin, I seek to challenge expectations as I create bizarre artworks that are humorous, ironic, childlike, and disturbing simultaneously. I create sculptures comprised of molds by casting my used Autosoft 90 Infusion Sets. The Autosoft 90 Infusion Sets insert a cannula in my body where the insulin I administer enters; I use one set every three days and have done so since I was six years old. At this point, I have used approximately 2,455 Infusion Sets throughout my life. Throughout the sculptures, there is an overwhelming sense of collection, material and excess. Repeating shapes pile upon each other highlighting the sheer amount of these items I have used in my life. My lived experience of Type 1 Diabetes is constant and dominant. While I do not view Diabetes as a negative, my art practice attempts to parse out the realities of living with this autoimmune disease in whichever media necessary.

Paula Mans

Dahomey, Mixed media on wood panel, 2022

Paula Mans views collage as emblematic of the interconnectedness of the African diaspora. Just as the dispersed people of the Diaspora are tied together by the common thread of ancestry, in collage, disjointed pieces are fused to communicate one story. During the transatlantic slave trade millions of West Africans were forcibly displaced and thrown into the bellies of ships alongside fellow enslaved people with whom they did not share a common language, ethnicity, or religion. Rather than perish, these enslaved Africans chose to survive weaving together fragments of their diverse identities to form new cultures in the Americas. In her practice, Mans

uses collage as a tool that mirrors these historical processes. Drawing from imagery of people from across the African Diaspora, the artist deconstructs, bonds, and resignifies disparate parts to assemble forms that communicate shared experiences. Mans creates works that serve as visual records of Black protagonism, using the Gaze as a deliberate tool to amplify the agency of her figuration. Rather than subjects to be viewed and consumed, Paula Mans constructs figures that look defiantly out onto the world—engaging, confronting, and challenging the viewer.

Trei Ramsey

Take the Money and Run, Acrylic on canvas, 2022

Trei Ramsey is a self-taught multidisciplinary visual artist who works and lives in Washington D.C. He creates work that is described as powerful, colorful, and fun. Ramsey’s practice as an artist is inspired by his childhood obsession with Saturday morning cartoons, mythology, comic books, and western art history. Ramsey seeks to create a body of work that speaks to groups that are often ignored, by using the eclectic concepts he absorbed while growing up in America. To that end, Ramsey uses pop-art, surrealism, and cartooning to create work that looks or feels familiar but twists what is known to expose what is often hidden or purposefully relegated to obscurity: “it is like comfort food supplemented with essential vitamins, the equivalent of coating strong medicine with a chocolate shell.” Ramsey’s artistic goal is to uplift, educate, and explore how we are similar to each other. He also wants to show how art and artmaking are accessible and vital for everyone. For those reasons Ramsey uses cartoonish imagery, vivid colors, and nostalgia in his work.

Ramsey is also an actor, writer, DJ/producer, and an aspiring toy designer. He has published a children’s book, a collection of short stories, and is featured in various short films and video games. He earned his BFA in theater from Howard University.

John Swords

Official Artwork JS-717, wood, metal, ink, plastic, tape, and paper, 2024

Inspired by the workings behind development of new construction in DC, I translate the bureaucratic paths and proper assembly certifications viewed on site into a fictional reality of the channels that result in a new work of art. Through the ludicrous processes and comically absurd fabrications presented in Official Artwork JS-717, I hope to remind viewers of the grounded accessibility that accompanies the creative process. Art must not be sanctioned, and the act of creation cannot be limited. Please note: The address of original exhibition (Studio Gallery on R St.) is listed on the work. If selected, I will file an Exhibition Location Revision Application so that the work can be shown at Washington Studio School. Thank you, John S.

