

# HEIGHTSARTS

## Figurative / Abstract

**March 18 – May 15, 2022**  
CURATED BY HELEN LIGGETT

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO THE  
EXHIBITION COMMUNITY TEAM

**Team Leader:** Greg Donley  
**Team Members:** Sharon Grossman, David King,  
Michael Weil, Amber Ford, Katie Mongoven

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

- Annie Becker*
- Carmen Romine*
- Claudio Orso*
- Corrie Slawson*
- Karin Dijkstra*
- Peter C. Johnson*



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## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

**Figurative/Abstract**

**Curated by Helen Liggett**

We begin with the Figure. Then the artists take liberties. And aren't artists always taking liberties?

What if the ability to abstract from the referent enabled classical figurative art and the desire to express (something), and make connections (to ideas, materials, the mind) is foundational in abstract work? Leonardo said in reference to his drawings: "Observation + imagination". He didn't specify how much of each.

In this exhibition, we assume figurative and abstract art are porous categories and ask how contemporary artists navigate the territory.

## RELATED PROGRAMMING

**EKPHRASTACY: Artists Talk + Poets Respond April 21st, 7PM**

The Ekphrastacy literary program is a series of artist talks and poetry readings held regularly in conjunction with our special exhibitions. Hear the exhibition artists and Cleveland-area writers Michael Loderstedt, Amy Hughes and Shelley Chernin, selected by Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Ray McNiece, share poems and speak about ideas and processes behind Figurative/ Abstract and Spotlight: Jane Alexander.

# Annie Becker

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I love rusty, metal junk. Like a kid in a candy store, looking at it actually makes me happy. How the colors change and combine. How they move through the piece creating an intense overlay, the patina adding a spectacular dimension of character. And the pieces below the rust and patina?

Solid, imperfect, heavy, historical, advertising with a story to tell. Finding the right combination of weights, shapes, colors and character takes contemplation and a bit of a different perspective. But when it all comes together, it's no longer junk — it's a treasure

## BIO

Annie Becker is a self-taught artist creating sculptures out of soon-to-be discarded, often-times-rusty-and-washed-out, past-their-prime-materials. Her work features humans, animals, robots and other sentient beings. Her artwork is about second chances and new beginnings; it's about making something out of nothing and creating happiness along the way.



- Rusty + Lax out for a walk***, Found Object Sculpture, 7" x 3" x 2.5", 2021, \$178  
***Reynaldo + Leora tie the knot***, Found Object Sculpture, 9" x 3" x 3"; 8" x 4" x 4", 2021, \$398  
***Wayne + Quinnie enjoy father and son time***, Found Object Sculpture, 9.5" x 4" x 3", 2021, \$258  
***Elon contemplates his big plans***, Found Object Sculpture, 8" x 3" x 3", 2021, \$138  
***Nutmeg ready for girls night out***, Found Object Sculpture, 8.5" x 3" x 2.5", 2021, \$138  
***Daisy ready for a night on the town***, Found Object Sculpture, 8.5" x 4" x 3", 2021, NFS  
***Olive + Tick Tock, her constant companion***, Found Object Sculpture, 8" x 3" x 3", 2021, \$188  
***Francine poses for the camera***, Found Object Sculpture, 12" x 3" x 3", 2021, \$138  
***Maurice on his first birthday***, Found Object Sculpture, 5" x 2" x 3", 2021, \$128  
***Marty + Pat Canoeing on the Cuyahoga***, Found Object Sculpture, 14" x 7" x 5", 2022, \$398  
***Baby Girl on her first birthday***, Found Object Sculpture, 5" x 2" x 3", 2022, \$128

# Carmen Romine

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My work explores human connection and identity through a relationship with the natural environment. I primarily work with natural dyes, botanicals, paint, and other mixed media. I'm inspired by rural surroundings that form simple shapes of soil lines in a large field, water currents, and how mountain ranges fade into the distance. The views are ongoing and continuous like the natural cycles of time.

I make abstract landscapes that investigate ideas behind technology advancing and transitioning from paper to digital divides. By using paper as a material, I intend to draw on its symbolism to create a sense of touch and human presence for what could someday become an ancient tool for culture and communication. The work is fabricated through heavily process-driven steps of repetition—cutting, crumpling, piecing, and gluing.

I view these creations as metaphorical landscapes like pages in a book; the compositions are incremented into impressionable units that become accumulative, rhythmic, drifting, and ultimately dream-like. My work is tactile and intended to create the feeling of a physical shared experience, while delivering a quiet presence that reflects a meditative quality in a world that is always on and so loud



## Carmen Romine continued

### BIO

Carmen Romine was born 1987 in Grand Rapids, MI and grew up in Medina when her family moved to Ohio. In 2010, she graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Art earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Fiber and Material Studies. Over the past ten years, Romine has continued her practice focused on concepts of sustainability and developing methods of art making inspired by traditional fiber art and process-driven techniques. Carmen creates abstract landscapes out of paper and other mixed media that are meant to replicate an emotional connection to the landscape from memory. The compositions expose the perspective of change through technology and human growth. Her work questions the intrinsic value of consumerism and humanity's relationship with its environment.

In 2020, Romine was selected as one of the 10 participating artists for the "Paper Routes: Women to Watch" exhibition held in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery.—An exhibition that was in partnership with the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC. Her work has been collected by businesses and residential clients throughout Northeast Ohio and continues to gain public recognition.

Romine currently resides in Cleveland Heights, OH where she works out of her studio making artwork, building frames from her basement woodshop, and eco-printing every season with turkey roasters in the backyard. In addition to her practice, she makes handmade books and teaches fiber art workshops.

***The Ridgeline***, Thermal receipt paper, matte medium, museum UV plexi-glass, pine wood , 24" x 44", 2020, \$2400

***Terminals***, Thermal receipt paper, matte medium, museum UV plexi-glass, pine wood , 26" x 50", 2020, \$2900

***Open Space***, Seamless archival backdrop paper, bookbinding PVA glue, pine wood, 48" x 36", 2022, \$3800

***Botanical Print No. 30, Winter***, Alum, rust, & seasonal botanicals, 16.5" x 14", 2018, \$300

***Botanical Print No. 33, Winter***, Alum, rust, & seasonal botanicals, 16.5" x 14", 2018, \$300

***Botanical print No. 3, Fall***, Alum, rust, & seasonal botanicals, 11" x 16", 2018, \$250

***Botanical print No. 3, Fall***, Alum, rust, & seasonal botanicals, 11" x 16", 2018, \$250

# Claudio Orso-Giacone

## ARTIST STATEMENT

As a child in my Italian hometown I remember participating in the carnival parades that celebrate the beginning of the Christian Lent, and I hold a fond memory of dressing in costume and being on floats proceeding among cheering crowds through the main street. The joyous awe of the children witnessing such creative madness stayed with me to this day, when I brought back the parade to Oberlin. For one edition we decided to make cardboard masks for all the hundred and fifty kids in the school, and for that purpose we used poster board following the directions of a Seventies craft book by Michael Grater. This gigantic production opened my eyes to the magic that can be done with staples and glue guns, and the next year we started working with recycled cereal boxes, soda can packaging and six-pack containers. Since most of my artwork is monochromatic, matching colors and forms became an obsessive liberating task for me. It was an honor to have Robin Vanlear coming to see the puppets I made for an opera, and even a greater honor to be invited to that landmark event that she had created. Once under the Parade big tent, I got to meet and observe in action the truly amazing group of artists that make the magic happen.

As I look at the work done, it appears evident to me the influence that the only art history class I truly loved had on me: it was African Art, was taught at Mesa College by the great scholar Barbara Blackmun, and made me understand the alchemic power of commitment of making masks. I am overjoyed at the thought that somewhere in the memory of many children there is a moment in which they saw some of the work I have done.

***El Tigre***, Printed cardboard, metal staples, 15" x 20" x 25", 2022, \$950

***Nanabozho***, Recycled cardboard, metal staples, 11" x 36" x 45", 2019 - 2022, NFS

***Master Peter***, Recycled cardboard, metal staples, 33" x 52" x 33", 2012 - 2022, NFS

## ***Claudio Orso-Giacone continued***

### BIO

Claudio Orso Giacone is a print, paper and clay artist from Torino, Italy, and lives in Ohio. He has exhibited his prints across the US and in Europe. Early participant to a state-sponsored Reggio Emilia pedagogy study group, he applied this approach to a very wide range of audiences and academic levels, and maintains to date a strong commitment to art practice and sharing as a service for the community. Past experiences include ArtZreach, a project of art process and education for teens at the Lorain County Juvenile Detention Home, and the Oberlin Big Parade, an all-town event featuring a procession of home-made floats and acts from community groups. Orso works as visiting artist for several organizations in Cleveland, and has been the first artist resident at the Morgan Conservatory and Art of Papermaking, where he is an instructor and was recently chosen for the NEA Apprenticeship grant. He collaborated to create and run the Apollo Outreach Initiative at Oberlin College, a project of media literacy in practice, bringing college students to mentor young and older participants in the community in narrative and documentary short film productions. Orso has also worked as featured and outreach artist for the Parade the Circle, an historical celebration organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art.



# Corrie Slawson

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Corrie's work explores forms and narratives related to social and environmental equity. She analyzes overarching patterns in development, population loss, land-use and climate change through printmaking, painting, photography, performance and drawing. The imagery is garnered from personal experiences with collaged elements. Visual references to history related to land-use are presented in the context of imperiled with decision-making stuck in a cycle of sprawl and divestment.

## BIO

Cleveland Heights native Corrie Slawson earned her BFA at Parsons School of Design in New York City and her MFA at Kent State University. Her work has been exhibited in the US and internationally, including at MOCA Cleveland, The Toledo Museum of Art, Akron Art Museum, The Massillon Museum, Centro Cultural de Tijuana, Galerie Module Drei in Dresden, SPACES and Zygote Press. She has received two Individual Artist Awards from the Ohio Arts Council (2012 and 2019). With support from SPACES Satellite Fund, The Andy Warhol Foundation and Akron Soul Train, Corrie and a team of NE Ohio-based artists produced *Feast*: a ballet, the film adaptation of which was recently awarded a Gold Laurel at the Virgin Spring Cinefest in Kolkata, India. Slawson is part-time faculty in the Painting and Drawing Department at Kent State University School of Art. Her work is represented by Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Gallery in Cleveland, OH.

***Blue Footed Boobies are endangered; Harlequin Toad, now extinct. Rabbit is distraught.***, Oil and mixed media on plywood, 48" x 24", 2020. \$5000

***Arctic Ice holds 10% of the world's fresh water; melting glaciers alter the ocean through sea level rise and by changing Ther Circulation (ocean currents).***, Oil and mixed media on plywood, 48" x 24", 2021, \$5000

***Elephants live in a range of habitats, exposed to broad climate variability (offering some resilience.) But sensitivity to high temperatures and dwindling fresh water endangers them.*** Oil and mixed media on plywood, 48" x 24", 2021, \$5000



## Karin Marleen Dijkstra

### ARTIST STATEMENT

Karin Marleen Dijkstra is a watercolor artist who draws inspiration from music and nature, from mythologies and fairy tales, and is particularly influenced by the paintings of the Golden Age Illustrators. Her work seeks to capture the intensity of a child's way of experiencing the world and how that echoes into adulthood. She hopes not so much to generate a sense of nostalgia but to allow for the momentary immersion of the adult self in that magical childhood sensory world.

### BIO

Karin is Dutch-American and has lived in the Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland, Scotland, and England, and she draws from the cultures and landscapes of those places. She is graduate of Vassar College and currently lives in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

***Fox and Berries***, Watercolor, 5" x 5", 2021, \$175  
***Requiem***, Watercolor, 12" x 18", 2020, \$600  
***Impromptu***, Watercolor, 18" x 26", 2022, \$900  
***Kohlrabi***, Watercolor, 10.5" x 7.5", 2020, \$250  
***Night Birches***, Watercolor, 7" x 10", 2021, \$300  
***Ravens***, Watercolor, 6" x 8", 2021, \$22  
***Red Cabbage***, Watercolor, 10.5" x 7.5", 2020, \$250  
***Stag***, Watercolor, 4" x 4", 2021, \$150



# Peter Christian Johnson

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My work explores the tension between balance and collapse, between precision and failure. It is a meditation on entropy that uses architecture as a foil to examine the dichotomy of beauty and loss. I am interested in transformation, which is expressed in both destruction and growth. Much of my work involves creating complex porcelain structures that are encouraged to warp or collapse in the strain of the firing. They expose the relationship between soft and hard, the fluidity of a membrane, and the moment of intersection between these contrasting elements. Ultimately they are a metaphor for the human condition, paradoxically both broken and at times beautiful.

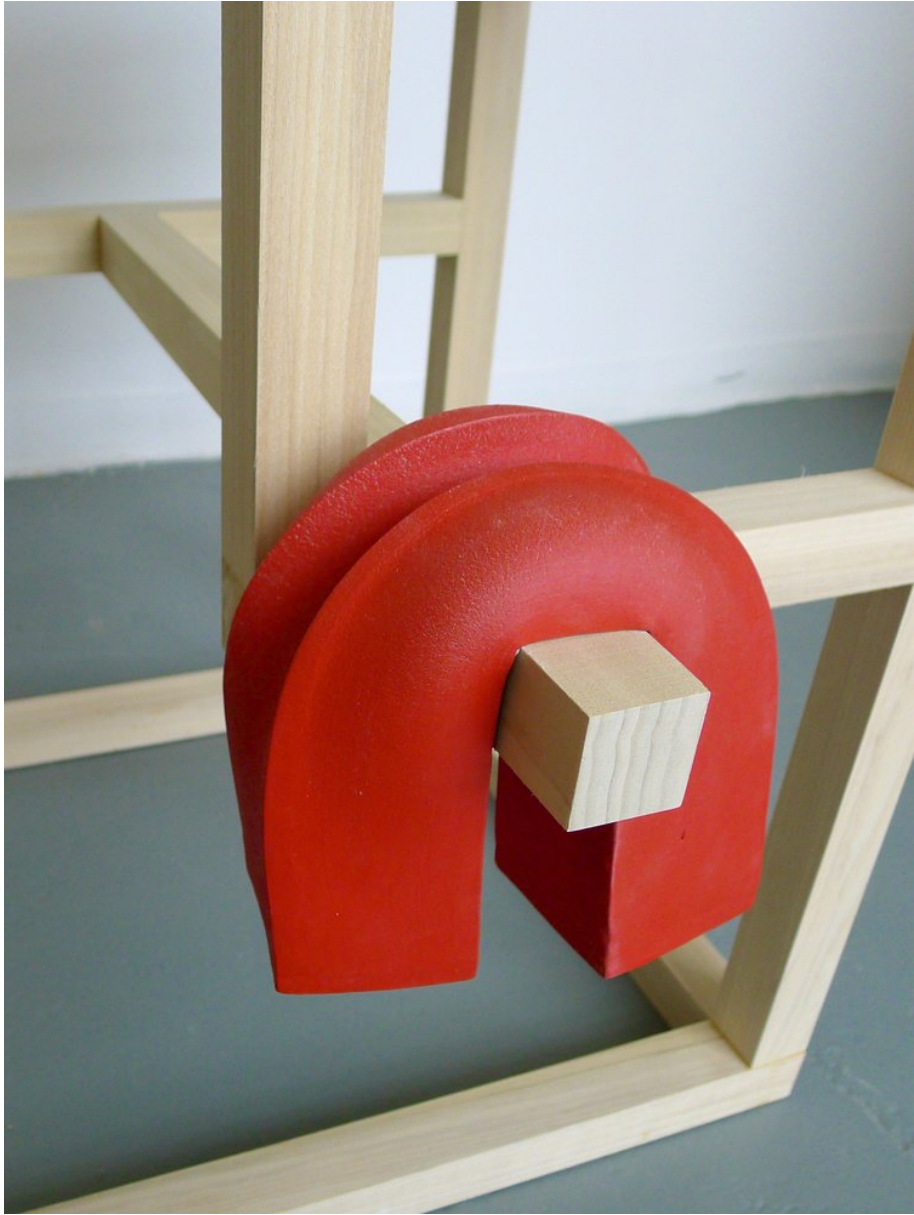
## BIO

Peter Christian Johnson is currently Associate Professor of Art at Kent State University after serving more than decade as the head of the ceramics department at Eastern Oregon University. He has received the Oregon Arts Commission's Individual Artist Fellowship, is a three-time winner of the Ohio Arts Council's Individual Artist Excellence Award, and was a Matsutani Fellow at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts. He was awarded first place in the 2018 Zanesville Prize for Contemporary Ceramics and was recently part of the 61st Fienza Prize in Italy. He exhibited in the 2017 and 2019 Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale along with exhibitions in Canada, Australia, China, Italy, Korea, and throughout the United States. His work has been published in numerous publications including the recent *Ceramique; 90 Artistes Contemporains* by Pyramid Publishing and in the book *Contemporary Ceramic Art*, published by Thames and Hudson in 2020.

**The Violent Bear It Away**, porcelain, poplar wood, concrete, and laminate, 65" x 27" x 23", 2018, \$8000

**Everything that Rises Must Converge**, porcelain, poplar wood, concrete, and laminate, 42" x 25" x 30", 2018, \$8000

**She could never be a saint, but she thought she could be a martyr if they killed her quick**, Porcelain, poplar, nylon strap, 36" x 8" x 17", 2020, \$4000



## **VOLUNTEER FOR A HEIGHTS ARTS COMMUNITY TEAM**

Heights Arts has a long history of inviting the community to share their passion and expertise to help the Organization develop and present its public programming. Three ongoing Volunteer Community Teams are charged with facilitating the strategies and action plans for Heights Arts core programming in the literary, musical and visual arts disciplines. The purpose of Heights Arts' community teams is to expand community engagement in developing and presenting the programs of the organization and to tap the significant expertise that resides in our community. We invite poets, musicians, artists, and other members of the community to work with us to select and showcase the region's visual artists, poets and musicians in our literary, musical, and exhibition programming. To read more about our community teams and submit an application, visit [www.heightsarts.org/volunteer-community-teams/](http://www.heightsarts.org/volunteer-community-teams/)

## **BECOME A HEIGHTS ARTS MEMBER**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the arts, and now more than ever we appreciate your consideration to give to Heights Arts by becoming a member. As a member of Heights Arts, you receive discounts, special invitations, members-only events plus perks from our community partners. Your membership is tax-deductible and you have the opportunity to brag that you are helping to support local artists, musicians, creative writers, and public art in the community. You'll have your finger on the pulse of all things Heights Arts. What are you waiting for? Join us today! Membership information can be found on our website at [www.heightsarts.org](http://www.heightsarts.org)

## **JOIN US FOR A HAIKU HIKE**

Join Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate Ray McNiece on a seasonal morning ginkgo (haiku walk), learning and creating poetry according to centuries-old traditions. These customs cultivate a seasonal awareness that improves one's powers of poetic and natural observation. Hikes will begin with a formal introduction to haiku, continue with stops along the way, then conclude with a final sharing. Time: 10:00am -12:00pm (limit 15 per hike). Tickets are non-refundable unless the hike is canceled. Meet at the nature center at Shaker Lakes; bring a notebook and something to write with.

**Session 4 - Saturday, April 23, 2022**

**Fee: \$20.00 General \$15.00 Members**



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