


MFA THESIS EXHIBITION 2022

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DILGE DILSIZ DANIEL DONATO HEATHER WESTON

PAUL W. ZUCCAIRE GALLERY STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY MARCH 19-APRIL 14





This exhibition is one of the final requirements of our three-year Master of Fine Arts degree program. The artists have gone through a rigorous proposal process and have spent the past ten months researching, creating, and installing their work for their final show at Stony Brook University. Through close interaction with faculty, they have honed their artistic techniques and developed the means to express their personal vision in words as well as in art.

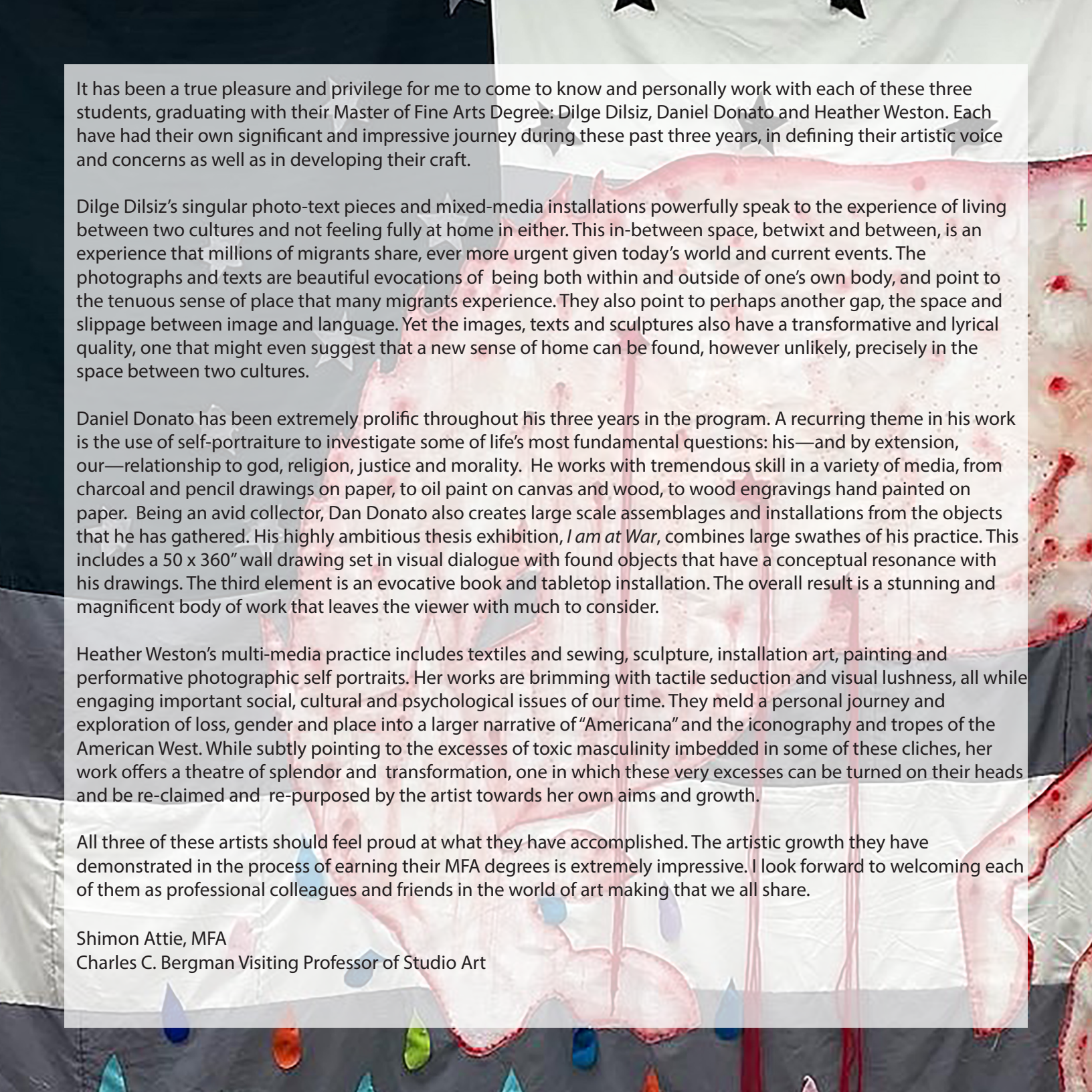
MFA candidates are encouraged to increase their breadth of knowledge by engaging with faculty in Art History, Philosophy, Theatre Arts, Music, History, and Women's Studies as well as the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. They also have transdisciplinary access through the Department's affiliation with the Humanities Institute and the Simons Center for Geometry and Physics. In addition, they have the advantage of being part of a large, world-class research university with resources that include the historic Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center. Finally, our proximity to New York City has enabled us to expand the influences on these exciting young artists through group visits to studios and exhibitions throughout the metropolitan area.

Our students have also benefited from meeting and listening to incredible visiting artists who have come to Stony Brook: Toni Blackman, Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Ackroyd & Harvey, Dread Scott and Jenny Polak, Young Min Moon, Ha Na Lee, Basim Magdi, Christine Kim and Cinthya Santos-Briones, to name a few. We especially appreciate the artists who have taken the time to do studio visits (both in person and virtual) with our students, giving them valuable critiques as they create new work. Our students focus on their own practices in individual studios on campus, and have access to our excellent technical facilities which include state of the art computer studios including the recently inaugurated Future Histories Studio, a metal foundry, ceramic kilns, photography darkrooms, and lithography presses.

The art department wishes to thank Karen Levitov, Director of the Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery, for her continued support of the MFA exhibition. In recognition of her contributions to the Department of Art we have voted to confer her the title of Professor of Practice. Her class on curation is a guide to the practical and creative considerations in mounting a show, and our students have taken advantage of this unique class; she also has invited PhD students to participate in curating exhibitions in the Gallery, including the SUNY PACC-winning exhibition *Mis/Communication*. She is a force for good in the department, the university and the wider world of art. Beyond her powerful curatorial eye, she is meticulous in her communications and anticipates problems before they arise. She truly cares about the art and the artists and our students and the larger community benefit from the shows she brings to campus. During the pandemic I was so grateful that she was able to keep the space open for everyone to enjoy art while socially distancing. In times of hardship, we turn to art to help make sense of the world.

I now turn the introduction of the show itself to our newest faculty member The Charles C. Bergman Visiting Professor in Art, Shimon Attie. Professor Attie has been working with the students through the pandemic to ensure that their work is of the highest quality and I am pleased to have him as a colleague and honored that he would like to write the catalog essay.

Dr. Margaret Schedel
Chair, Department of Art



It has been a true pleasure and privilege for me to come to know and personally work with each of these three students, graduating with their Master of Fine Arts Degree: Dilge Dilsiz, Daniel Donato and Heather Weston. Each have had their own significant and impressive journey during these past three years, in defining their artistic voice and concerns as well as in developing their craft.

Dilge Dilsiz's singular photo-text pieces and mixed-media installations powerfully speak to the experience of living between two cultures and not feeling fully at home in either. This in-between space, betwixt and between, is an experience that millions of migrants share, ever more urgent given today's world and current events. The photographs and texts are beautiful evocations of being both within and outside of one's own body, and point to the tenuous sense of place that many migrants experience. They also point to perhaps another gap, the space and slippage between image and language. Yet the images, texts and sculptures also have a transformative and lyrical quality, one that might even suggest that a new sense of home can be found, however unlikely, precisely in the space between two cultures.

Daniel Donato has been extremely prolific throughout his three years in the program. A recurring theme in his work is the use of self-portraiture to investigate some of life's most fundamental questions: his—and by extension, our—relationship to god, religion, justice and morality. He works with tremendous skill in a variety of media, from charcoal and pencil drawings on paper, to oil paint on canvas and wood, to wood engravings hand painted on paper. Being an avid collector, Dan Donato also creates large scale assemblages and installations from the objects that he has gathered. His highly ambitious thesis exhibition, *I am at War*, combines large swathes of his practice. This includes a 50 x 360" wall drawing set in visual dialogue with found objects that have a conceptual resonance with his drawings. The third element is an evocative book and tabletop installation. The overall result is a stunning and magnificent body of work that leaves the viewer with much to consider.

Heather Weston's multi-media practice includes textiles and sewing, sculpture, installation art, painting and performative photographic self portraits. Her works are brimming with tactile seduction and visual lushness, all while engaging important social, cultural and psychological issues of our time. They meld a personal journey and exploration of loss, gender and place into a larger narrative of "Americana" and the iconography and tropes of the American West. While subtly pointing to the excesses of toxic masculinity imbedded in some of these cliches, her work offers a theatre of splendor and transformation, one in which these very excesses can be turned on their heads and be re-claimed and re-purposed by the artist towards her own aims and growth.

All three of these artists should feel proud at what they have accomplished. The artistic growth they have demonstrated in the process of earning their MFA degrees is extremely impressive. I look forward to welcoming each of them as professional colleagues and friends in the world of art making that we all share.

Shimon Attie, MFA
Charles C. Bergman Visiting Professor of Studio Art



DILGE DILSIZ

As a woman from Turkey, living in and between cultures, I am acutely aware of the hierarchical structures around the world. My dual degree in art and psychology shapes my understanding of power dynamics in society and leads me to interrogate the adversities one might face due to coming from a marginalized background. I find home in those who are brave enough to tell me about their burdens and I try to portray the struggles that they have endured in relation to power and society through my photographs.

My current work uses a hauntological approach to depict the liminality of diasporic individuals, in the manner of a ghost, to accentuate the fading of their social and cultural past. With this technique, I aim to create visuals of human geography that metaphorically reflect on diaspora. I believe that these individuals are charged with an enormous burden that calls upon them to sacrifice their individual identities and heritage to satisfy the demands of the new culture that they settle into. Respectively, I investigate troubled power structures that are created by the various pressures placed on oppressed and alienated populations.

Wavering Between, 2021, digital photograph: metallic print on black styrene, 24 x 36"



DANIEL DONATO

My art investigates the dynamics of spirituality and authority from my connection with the Catholic Church. I contemplated the calamities that make it difficult for Catholics to remain faithful to God. With labor-intensive drawing practice I symbolically reference the laborious practice of ritualistic prayer.

I am at War is a charcoal drawing on a thirty-foot sheet of paper with twenty self-figures embracing and celebrating ritual objects I found at antique shops. Sitting below the image of each figure are the physical objects resting on the floor. As well as collecting objects, I take on the roles of my characters as I wear and hold props to better understand a more believable gesture that gets translated into the drawing.

Also on view are three tables with art history books opened at specific pages, serving to contemplate questions such as: What is sanctity? Did spirituality ever activate objects or institutions? Does spiritual energy leave objects? The conflict with these issues makes it hard for me to accept the history surrounding the Catholic Church.

I am at War (detail), 2022, charcoal on paper, 50 x 360"



HEATHER WESTON

My practice speaks about the mourning process, grief, gender and how I integrate myself into specific environments. The work is realized through performance, installation, sculpture, photography and painting. I use iconography of the American West to speak about my inherited body and history within the context of national narratives of pain, power and control. I create compositions that appropriate rodeo aesthetics and reinterpret Americana tropes, ideals, tragic heroes and their cultural associations with the male macho. Horses, fence posts, cowboys and stars are used in patterns and motifs made from leather, used bed sheets, fur and other sourced scraps that hold emotional significance to my past. A main inspiration in my work is the farm property in New Jersey where my family has lived for three generations. At times I install my work directly onto the surface of the barn as a means of integrating material objects onto my personal relationship to the land, my family and property. I commonly gather materials from the barn itself such as pony hair, manure, discarded trash from the 1950s, wall boards from a collapsed chicken coop and other artifacts that encompass the property's "essence." The work can also be seen as dystopian in its approach to topics of shame, sex, grittiness, memorials and road side attractions driving down Route 78.

Leather Daddy, 2021, leather jacket, 33 x 53"

The MFA Thesis Exhibition 2022 is the culminating embodiment of the intensive three-year MFA program at Stony Brook University. I would like to thank the artists for the process of creating and presenting their compelling and beautiful work.

My gratitude to Dr. Margaret Schedel, Chair of the Department of Art, Shimon Attie, the inaugural Bergman Visiting Professor of Studio Art, and Associate Professor Isak Berbic, MFA Graduate Program Director, for their contributions to this exhibition and catalog. I also want to express my appreciation to the staff of the Staller Center for the Arts, especially Director Alan Inkles and Public Programs Manager Georgia LaMair Tomczak, as well as our student gallery assistants.

The 2021-2022 Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery exhibition schedule is made possible by a generous grant from the Paul W. Zuccaire Foundation. Additional funding has been provided by the Friends of Staller Center. We are extremely grateful for their support.

Karen Levitov
Director and Curator, Zuccaire Gallery
Professor of Practice, Department of Art

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Designed by Heather Weston

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