

Emergent Momenta

Joshua Watts



FN Designs Presents

Emergent Momenta

Joshua Watts
13th March - 30th April 2017

CURATOR'S FOREWORD

The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once.

- Albert Einstein

I am pleased to present Joshua Watts at FN Designs gallery for his solo exhibition "Emergent Momenta."

His last solo exhibition was at the Hite Art Institute in Louisville and was a very transitional period for his works. He was still very much experimenting to find the most effective way to present them to a gallery audience. It was also the first time he had featured video time-lapse works in an exhibition.

Emergent Momenta reflects a much more refined and cohesive approach to exhibiting these works in a gallery environment. The video, viewer-reactive works, and photography are all reflections of the same thread of inquiry that has been part of his creative research in the past few years.

Joshua brings artworks that were created in outdoor public spaces into the more traditional gallery space.

When asked about his inspiration he says: "A few years ago, I ran across the work of Ken Matsubara in Art Dubai, which I found to be an amazing confluence of found objects, video, and photographic imagery. The Encapsulations series was certainly inspired by the intimate and poetic nature of his works. I find myself more and more drawn towards artworks which have to be experienced in person to be fully appreciated, rather than images on a computer screen. This phenomenological viewing experience has always been one of my goals, which is probably why the works of Agnes Martin have remained as one of my favorites for many years. I enjoy work that requires or at least encourages viewer introspection as part of the aesthetic experience. I see the divers in my Engagers series as a physical manifestation of the same type of transformation her works undergo when viewed in person."

Matisse has always been one of my favorites, even before I was in high school taking my first art classes. I remember reading about how he created some of his last works, using paper cut-outs. He was in such poor health that many of them were cut while he was sick in bed. I took this as a strong lesson in what it would take to practice art as a professional. Here was someone who had accomplished so much in his lifetime, yet not content to let his last artworks go unfinished. I look to this work ethic as an example of how to properly lead a creative life."

Joshua's work always seems to explore facets of daily life, trying to offer viewers alternative ways to read particular events or individuals. Lately he focuses on time as a natural extension of these previous explorations, relying less on his own subjective interpretations and instead allowing a more unplanned narrative to unfold. In particular, the Amalgams series was rooted in the idea that he could find something interesting to share in his work, regardless of the environment where he was recording.

In regard to the video works, Joshua states, "I was amazed at how recording over the course of many days allowed the camera to find the most amazing and tiny events that I never would have discovered otherwise. Watching slugs crawl across a wall, capturing streaks of planes in the night sky, or seeing an entire field of soy rise with the sun and fall as it sets were just a few examples. My hope is that people who come to see the works will feel the same sense of magic with what they are seeing."

With these new works, we hope for viewers to walk away seeing the world and their personal environment in a different manner altogether. The passage of time is something we all take for granted as a linear progression that we have no control over. In creating these new pieces, Joshua found himself looking at time in a new way, seeing his life not as a series of moments, but more like an amalgamation of past experiences, which have led him to the present.

Our time on earth is infinitesimally small when you look at it comparison to the larger universe, but we still have to find a purpose for our actions. Looking through the lens of timelapse videography, Joshua hopes to provide some small insight into how we can fit into the universe in the best way possible.

Sheikha Wafa Hasher Al Maktoum
Founder Director, FN Designs



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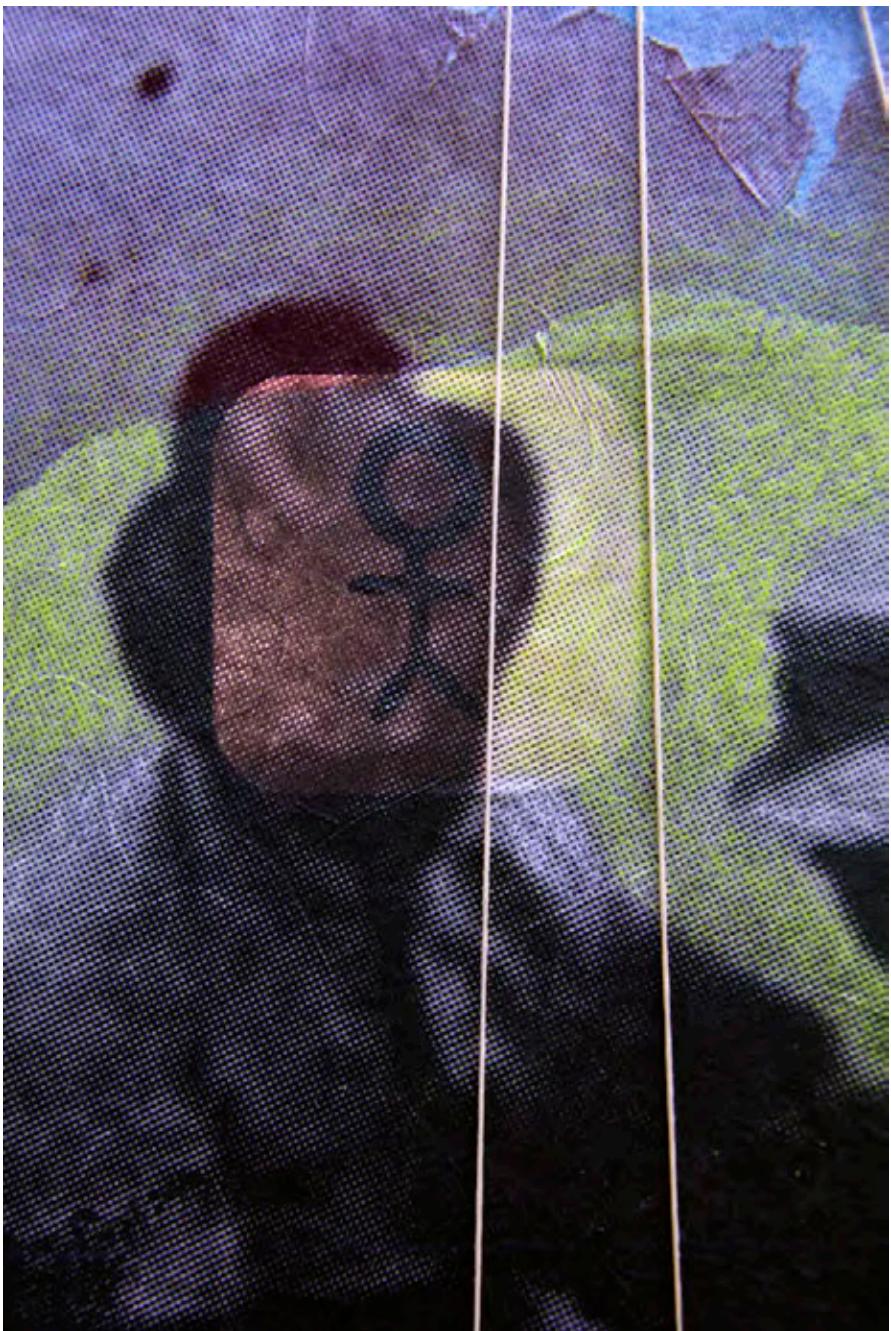
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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: NEW VISIONS IN THE ART OF JOSHUA WATTS

In the rational mind, time moves forward and never stops to look back. However, this tracking of time does not align with many cultures in the world that view it in a more cyclical manner. For example, Buddhists believe in reincarnation. Even the stories coming out of Hollywood offer opportunities to repeat moments through time travel. There are also accepted concepts that talk about the relativity of time, like *déjà vu*: that feeling of having having previously been in a particular situation. As such, time is offered up as flexible in movies, stories, as well as philosophies and religious doctrines. Joshua Watts' dreamlike images could be explained as documenting this very subjective nature of time.

Even as the artist explores the perception of passing moments, he displays still photography. This allows him to freeze time. However, movement can be found in the way he creates his imagery. His method utilizes a more traditional technique for capturing the progress of time: video. By setting up time-lapse videography, he has the ability to record vast amounts of activity. After this process, he sifts through the countless frames that result from the process of video-recording and then selects some from thousands of pictures.

Although the end products are motionless pictures, they, in fact, throb with movement. There is a perceptible vibration in Watts' photographs, and this recalls Hiroshi Sugimoto's theatrical images. The latter artist's act of exposing his camera in front of an empty expanse of sea for long periods of time produced painting-like photographs that pulsate with life. Watts achieves a similar effect in peopled landscapes.

The resulting effect of digitally layering images is ghostly with elements appearing and disappearing as forms lose solidity and sharpness. Watts records the comings and goings of a particular location over a period of time, and what we see is the transformation yet repetition of events. Instead of a linear and forward-moving progression, things get repeated.

The artist does not set up extraordinary moments to document and reiterate. Instead, he chronicles the ordinary actions and rituals that encompass our everyday lives, some of which are his personal recollections. Yet in his pictures, the familiar is turned strange or magical. The uncanny nature of his imagery is pushed further through the ethereal effect of the technique he employs.

The hazy, reverie-like quality brings to mind the art of Christian Boltanski whose work since the 1960s has explored memories of groups of individuals. He re-photographed Jewish schoolchildren's photographs and transformed them into haunted visions. This is, in fact, how our recollections work, whether collective or individual. They are often fuzzy and uncertain, and distort the notion of time.

Dreams have the same dynamic quality to them; of course, they are composed out of our memories. It is this kind of feeling that Lewis Carroll examined in stories like *Through the Looking Glass* in which time warps and bends. Watts offers a bit of the famed author in his multimedia work employing glass objects and video. To really be able to see the image, viewers have to choose to look through a glass vessel. Like Carroll prompts of his readers, the artist is perhaps asking us to let go of our preconceived ideas to facilitate alternative ways of seeing.

Philosopher Walter Benjamin (and John Berger on his heels) investigated how we look at our environment. He was fascinated to note the significance of photography in tandem with how we perceive the world. As he wrote, photography changed the nature of human vision by offering sights that previously could not be seen. Joshua Watts explores this momentous development by utilizing video as a way to record and then re-present what we see and experience. By doing this, viewers are offered new visions to challenge what we think we know and understand.

Atteqa Ali
Art Historian
Assistant Professor, Zayed University



AMALGAMS

In this series, time is compressed into a single flat surface that blends multiple moments into a cohesive narrative. Created using thousands of images collected over the course of many days, these works are amalgamations of emergent behaviors revealed by the passage of time. Solar-powered lightboxes are installed specifically for each site and change appearance through cycles of day and night. The camera records every detail within the narrow confines of a scene, documenting an evolution that unfolds over the course of several days. The resulting images are then studied frame by frame to find and develop a cohesive narrative. Spending days recording a specific location and the subsequent examination of the results leads to a fundamental shift in how the space is perceived. These works are an attempt to share this discovery with viewers and provide a new way of perceiving the passage of time.



Additive Family Portrait

(Combined selections from 13,707 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Ft. Worth, Texas

32°52'30.66"N, 97°22'57.45"W

2017

Edition of 3



Ghost in the Field

(Combined selections from 17,450 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

San Jose, Illinois

40°18'51.99"N, 89°38'24.44"W

2016

Edition of 3



Totem (Listen)

(Combined selections from 18,733 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Pekin, Illinois

40°33'36.09"N, 89°38'27.08"W

2016

Edition of 3



Nurture (Home is Everywhere)

(Combined selections from 14,101 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Agia Anna, Cyprus

34°56'30.3"N, 33°29'04.6"E

2016

Edition of 3



All the Days

(Combined selections from 18,418 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Forest City, Illinois

40°23'23.14"N, 89°48'41.20"W

2017

Edition of 3



The Constructed Horizon

(Combined selections from 12,547 images)

24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Dubai, UAE

25°11'37.59"N, 55°15'49.00"E

2017

Edition of 3



The Beach (Prayer)

(Combined selections from 7,294 images)

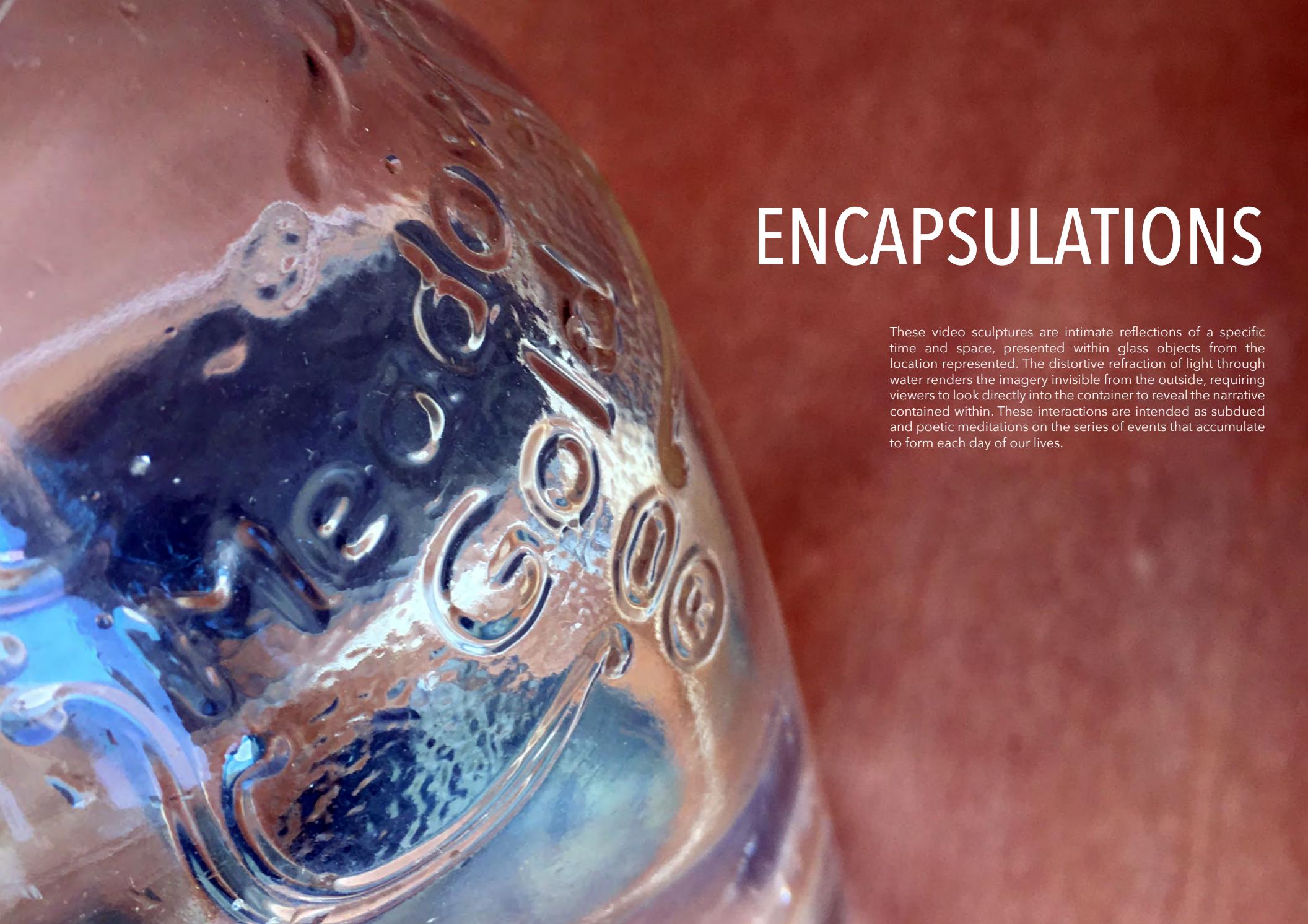
24 x 36" (61 x 91cm)

Dubai, UAE

25°10'43.69"N, 55°13'13.44"E

2017

Edition of 3



ENCAPSULATIONS

These video sculptures are intimate reflections of a specific time and space, presented within glass objects from the location represented. The distortive refraction of light through water renders the imagery invisible from the outside, requiring viewers to look directly into the container to reveal the narrative contained within. These interactions are intended as subdued and poetic meditations on the series of events that accumulate to form each day of our lives.

**Flow**

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object
Amsterdam, Netherlands
52°22'29.04"N, 4°53'57.84"E
2016

**Obscure**

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object
Dubai, UAE
25°11'37.59"N, 55°15'49.00"E
2016

**Construct**

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object

Barcelona, Spain

41°24'13.82"N, 2°10'29.34"E

2016

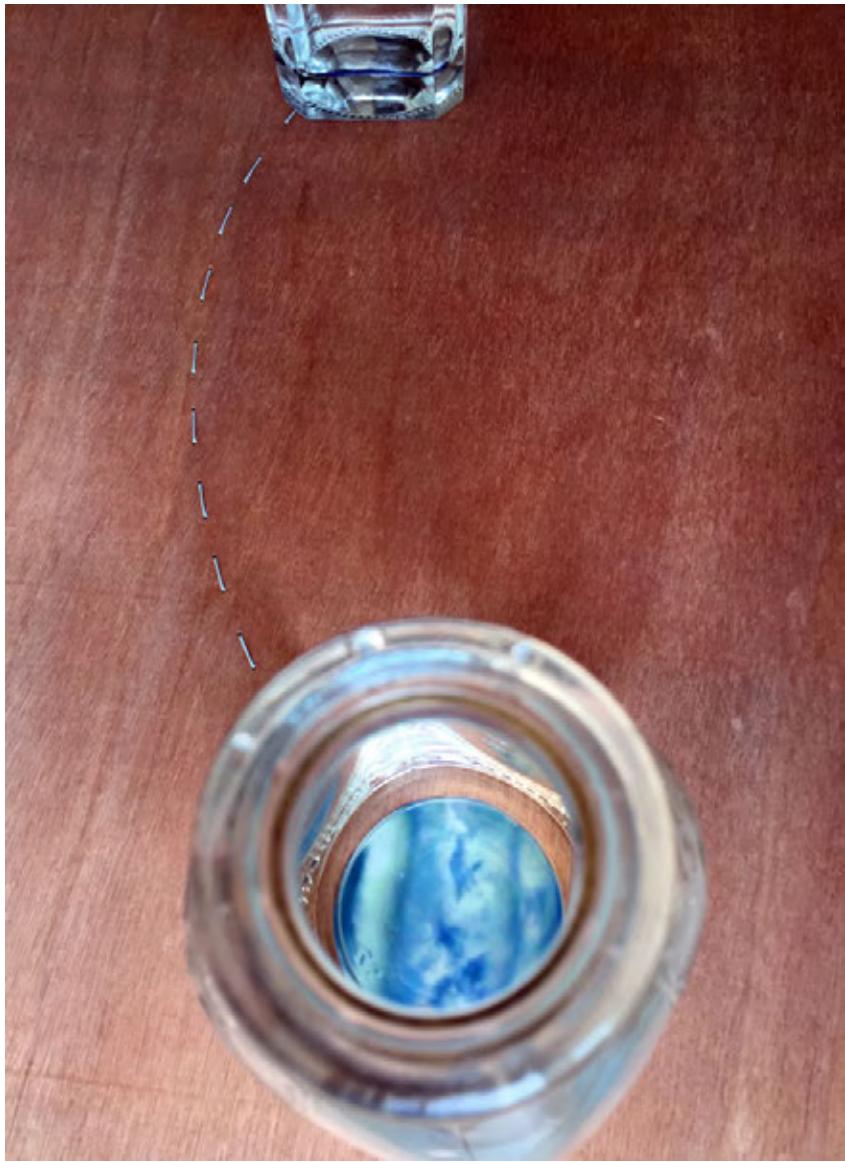
**Harness**

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object

Agia Anna, Cyprus

34°56'30.3"N, 33°29'04.6"E

2016



Under the Same Sky

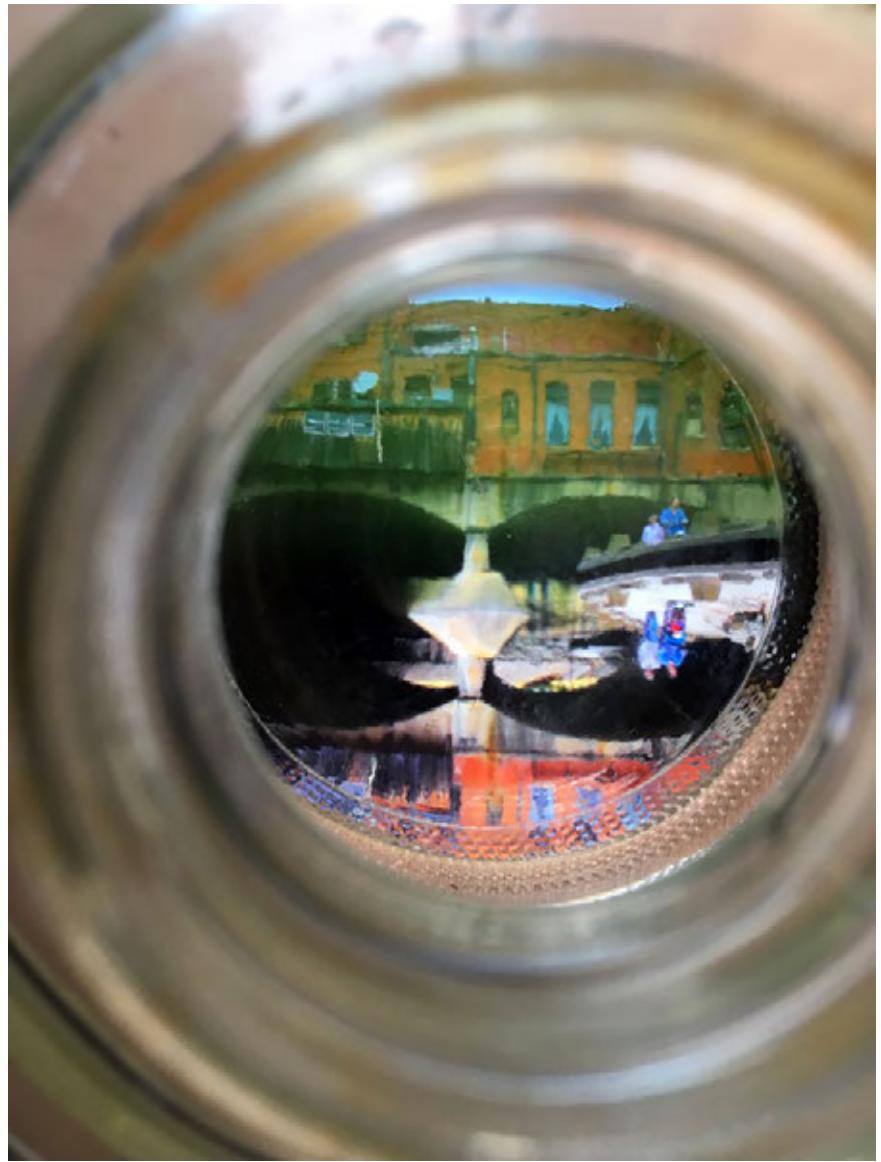
Site-Specific Videos in Found Glass Objects

Forest City, IL - Dubai, UAE

40°23'23.14"N, 89°48'41.20"W -

25°11'37.59"N, 55°15'49.00"E

2016-17



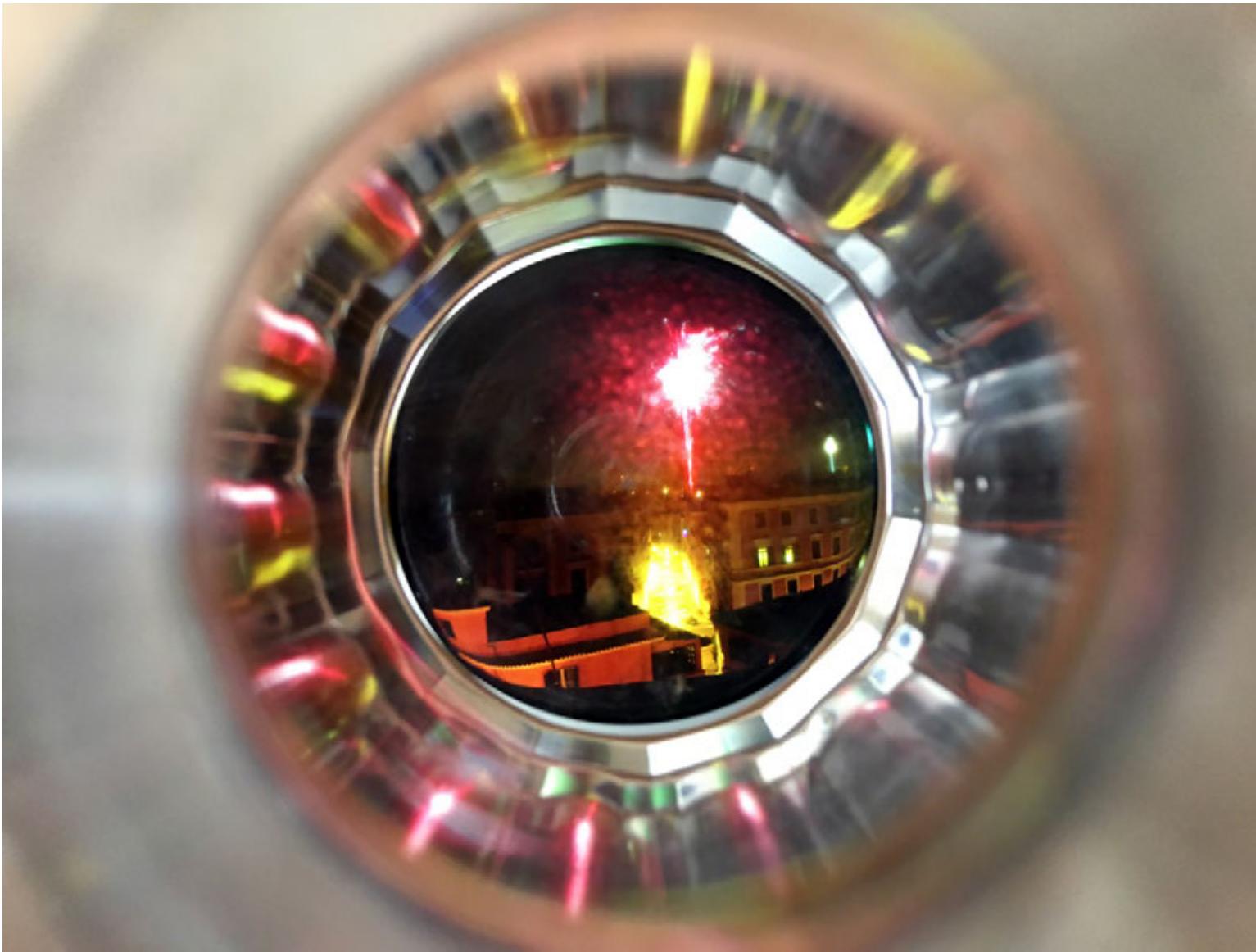
Passage

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object

Ft. Worth, Texas

32°47'22.24"N, 97°20'54.86"W

2017



Resolutions

Site-Specific Video in Found Glass Object

Rome, Italy

41°53'13.95"N, 12°27'57.81"E

2017

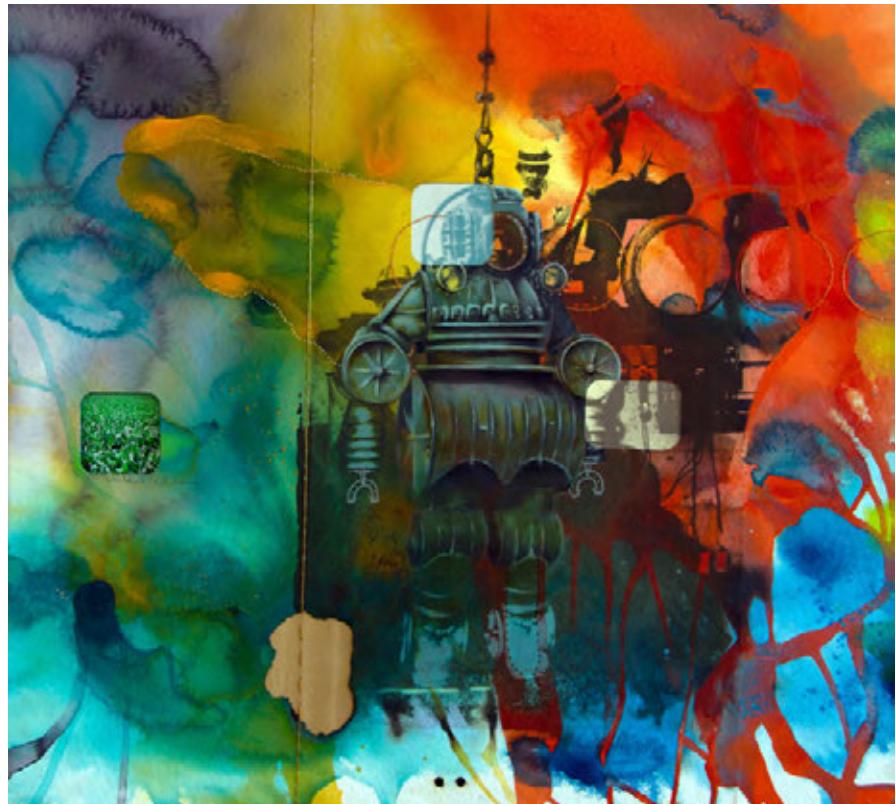
ENGAGERS

These autobiographical works are a series of self-portraits embodying different aspects of the artist's life, using the divers as a representation of himself in each scene. Specific ideas and events are depicted and then transformed as a viewer approaches the lightbox, providing additional context or alternative readings for what is initially shown on the surface. Each artwork is the beginning of a conversation that requires direct viewer interaction in order to continue. When this conversation is initiated, it allows the discovery of additional ideas as the two-way dialogue between viewer and artwork unfolds.

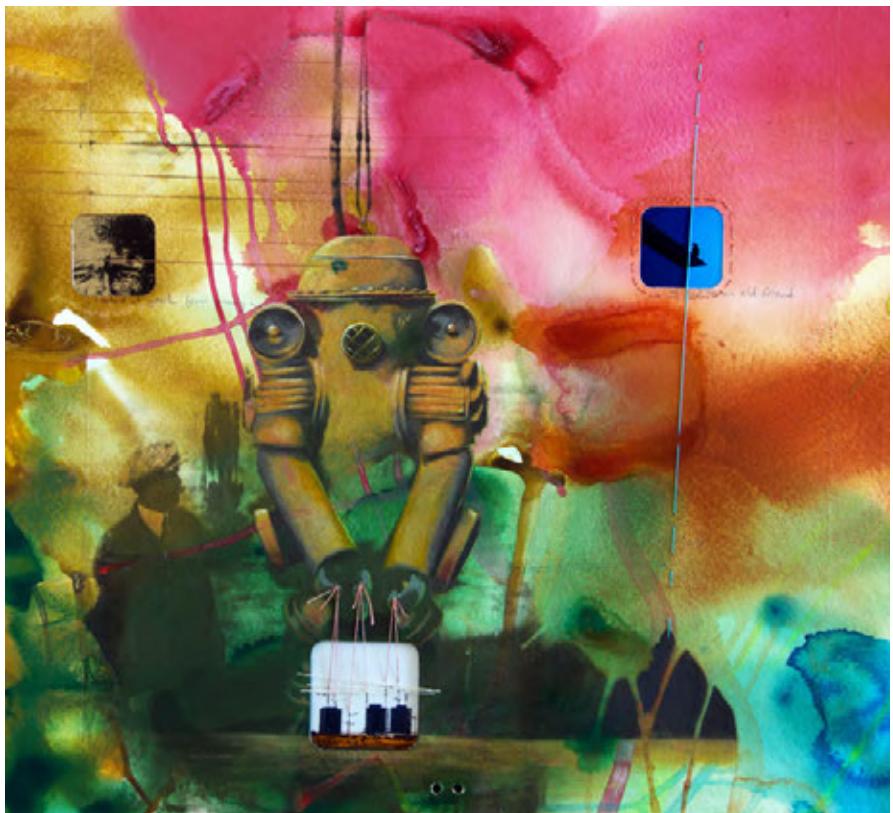
...talked to an old friend.



The Diver (Helping Hand)
Interactive Mixed Media
30 x 33" (76 x 84cm)
2015



The Diver (Home is Far)
Interactive Mixed Media
30 x 33" (76 x 84cm)
2015



The Diver (Shaping a Reality)

Interactive Mixed Media

30 x 33" (76 x 84cm)

2015



The Diver (Commitment)

Interactive Mixed Media

30 x 33" (76 x 84cm)

2016



The Diver (An Armoured Isolation)

Interactive Mixed Media

30 x 33" (84 x 76cm)

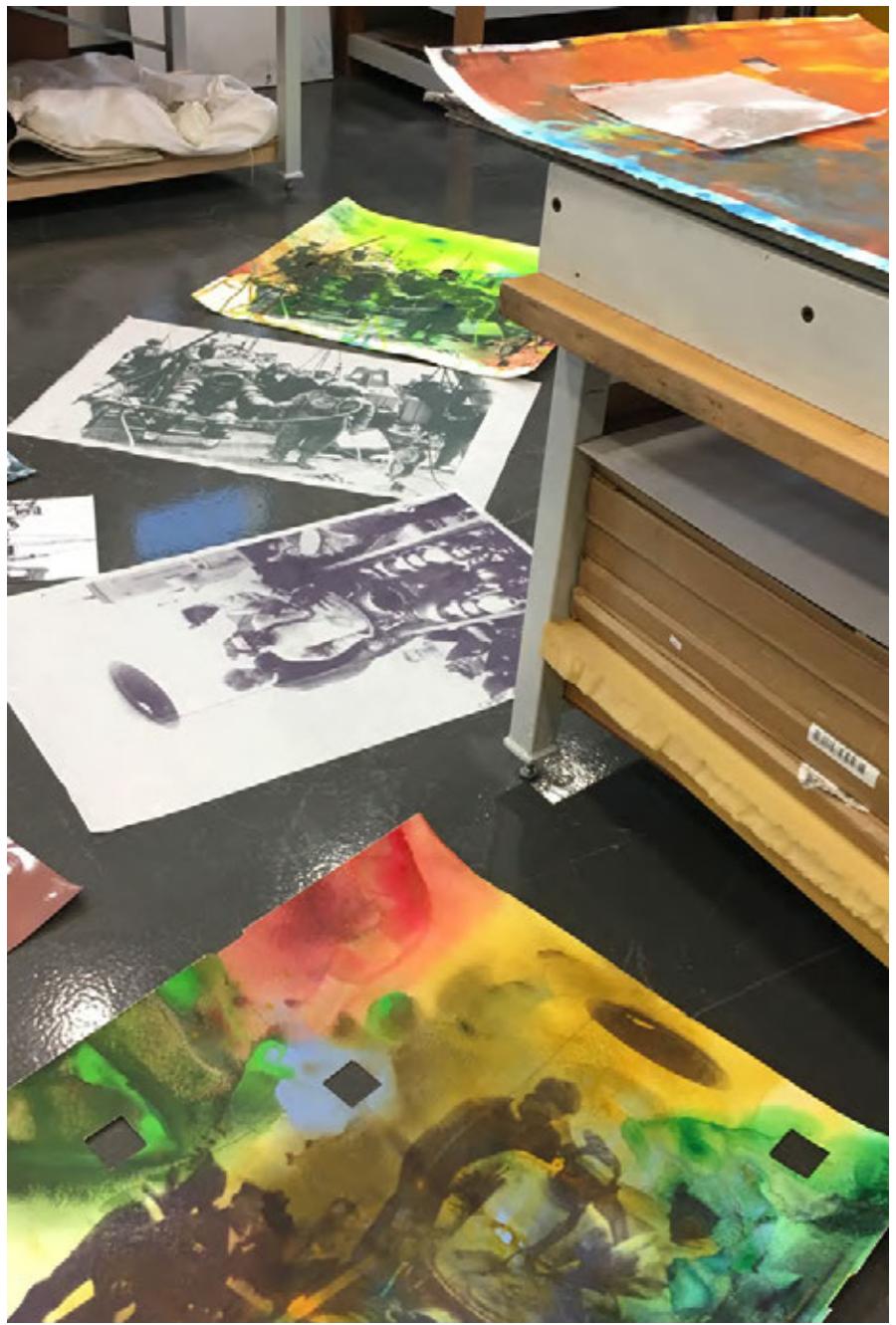
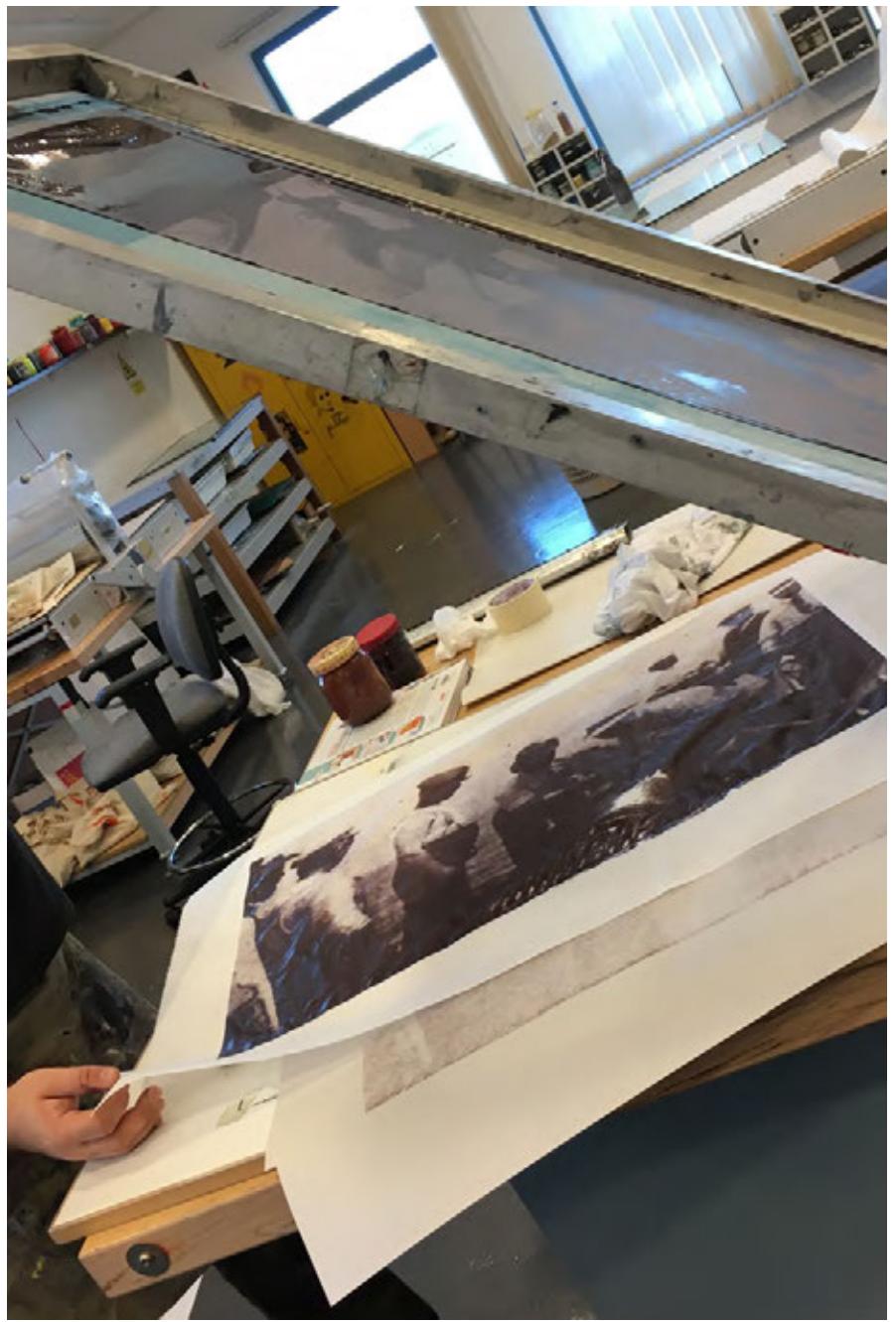
2016



The Diver (Absence)
Interactive Mixed Media
30 x 33" (84 x 76cm)
2016



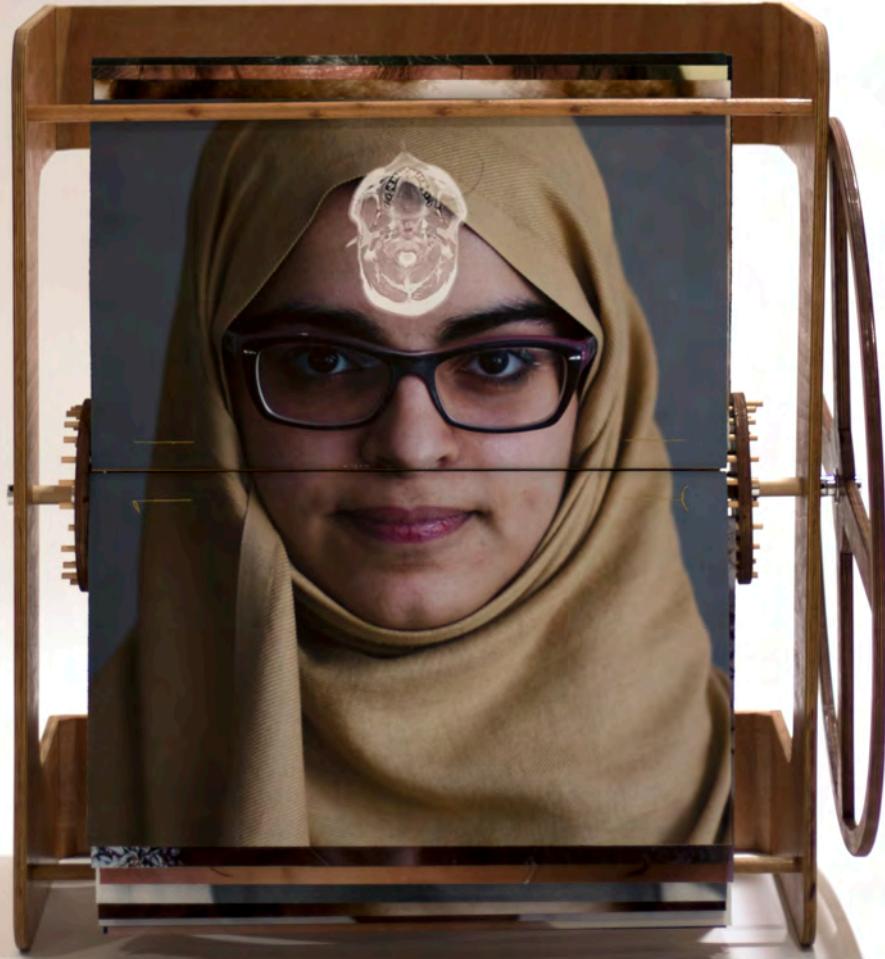
The Diver (Within the Pale Strata)
Interactive Mixed Media
30 x 33" (84 x 76cm)
2016



SEQUENCES

These large-scale flipbooks invite the audience to control the passage of time as each page is turned rapidly to create the appearance of motion. *Imprint* is an autobiographical representation of memory through the lens of interpersonal encounters, collecting portraits taken over the course of many years and merging them with MRI scans of the artist.

Passing Through is an exploration of the human figure in motion through two different methodologies. Lightboxes following the exacting studies of Eadweard Muybridge's examinations of human locomotion contrast with the more painterly approach of long-exposure night photography.



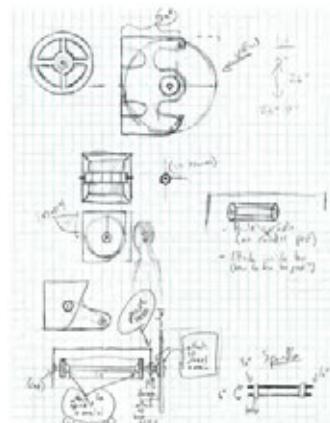
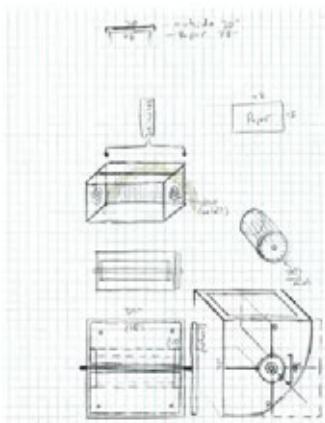
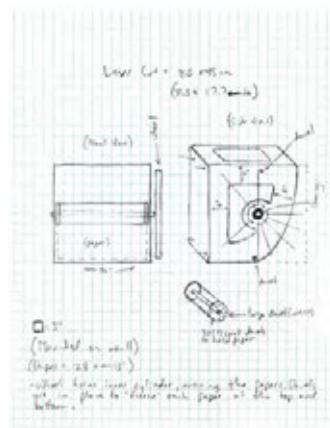
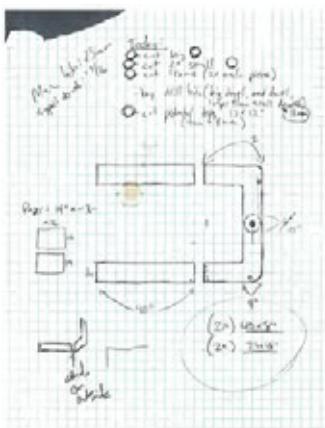
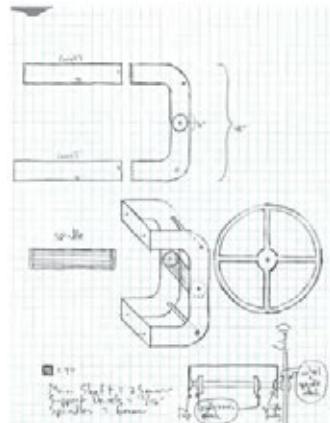
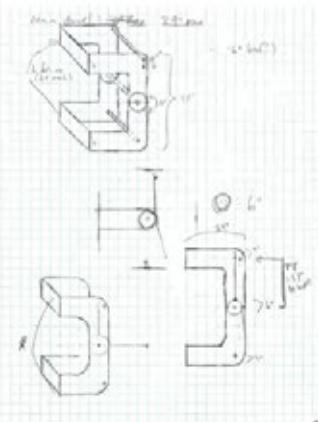
Imprint
Wall-Mounted Mechanical Flipbook
42 x 48 x 32" (107 x 122 x 81cm)
2017





Passing Through
Wall-Mounted Mechanical Flipbook
42 x 48 x 32" (107 x 122 x 81cm)
2017







ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joshua Watts

Joshua Watts was born and raised throughout the Midwest, receiving his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2000 from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois under Professor Oscar Gillespie. While pursuing his undergraduate degree, Joshua taught in both public and private youth arts courses in the Peoria area, sharing multiple creative possibilities with his students. This experience would form the foundation of his desire to later teach at the university level. During his undergraduate study, he actively exhibited his work in both group and solo shows including the first undergraduate exhibition ever to be held in the Lakeview Museum of Arts and Science in Peoria.

After graduation, Watts began travelling for the next five years- going to California in the winters, Alaska in the summers, and even spending a winter in the Czech Republic. While constantly moving, Joshua continued exhibiting extensively, primarily charcoal and mixed media work based on the various locations he inhabited and beginning to explore alternative photographic media in his creative research. The culmination of his travels was a return to academia at the University of Alaska in Anchorage, where he studied printmaking under Professor Garry Kaulitz with a focus on monotypes and then moved on to complete his Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

During his 3 years of graduate study, he remained an active member of the printmaking community by assisting at Frogman's Print and Paper Workshop, organizing national portfolio exchanges, and annually attending meetings of the Southern Graphics Council. In addition to conducting multiple printmaking workshops, Watts taught many semesters of Drawing I and II at USD on an ongoing basis. His courses always emphasized the creative and expressive use of materials in student work.

During the spring of 2007, Watts conducted a series of visiting artist workshops at facilities from Vermillion, SD to the east coast of the United States over the course of six weeks. Five schools hosted in all, including: Grandview College in Des Moines, IA, Bradley University in Peoria, IL, University of Buffalo in Buffalo, NY, George Mason University in Washington, DC, and East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. At each institution, he demonstrated viscosity monotype printmaking techniques to students, which are a painterly method of creating unique fine art prints on paper. Students worked with his assistance to create their own work using the methods demonstrated.

The summer after graduating from USD, Watts was invited to teach a summer course at the Santa Reparata International School of Art in Florence, Italy. This course explored fine art bookmaking and encouraged the aesthetic and expressive growth of students in

contemporary bound structures. Using the historical setting and guided tours as an impetus for many of the projects allowed students to integrate their surroundings into the work produced during the summer session.

Since 2008, Joshua Watts has been an Associate Professor of Visual Arts at Zayed University in Dubai, UAE. Students in his Printmaking courses interact with the global art community through exchange portfolios each semester and are regularly exhibited in print exhibitions around the world. Recent examples of exchange portfolios include Alberta College of Art and Design, West Virginia University, VCU Doha, and University of Hawaii at Hilo. Teaching a variety of courses in printmaking, senior project, mixed media and book structures, the sustained development of his own work continues while promoting the aesthetic, conceptual, and expressive growth of students in his courses and public workshops.

His most recent work began to take shape in the summer of 2013 when he noticed solar garden lights on a store shelf. Over the next few months, he began to create works which would bring his ideas out of gallery spaces and into public environments through site-specific solar lightbox installations. During the daylight hours the solar cell charges a battery while a photographic image is visible through the lightbox glass. As the sun goes down, the light is activated to reveal additional information that transforms the original image- providing a new layer of information for viewers to discover.

The changing nature of these works has led him to begin using time-lapse videography as a way to demonstrate how the installations evolve through the course of a day and night. This relationship between the external spaces and internal transformative dialogue allows each work to speak in ways not possible within a gallery context while bringing these unique creative visions into the public realm. Over time, these timelapse recordings would become the basis for creating works which flatten and compress the overall span of time into a single image. The "Amalgam" series is created by combining select images from thousands of possibilities and shaping them into a single cohesive statement.

The work of Joshua Watts has been featured in over 70 international group and solo exhibitions in venues including Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Venice, Portugal, Malaysia, China, Bulgaria, and Dubai. Recent notable exhibitions include Colorprint USA, ISEA 2014, Art Dubai, Sikka Art Fair, Douro Printmaking Biennale, Guangzhou International Miniprints Biennial and the Southern Graphics Council Traveling Exhibition.

To see more of his work online or to contact the artist, please visit www.joshuawatts.net.



... couldn't call home.



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