



THE  
EYES  
HAVE IT







# THE EYES HAVE IT

Lehman College Art Gallery City University of New York

The exhibition, *The Eyes Have It*, was organized by Bartholomew F. Bland and Laura J. A. De Riggi, Lehman College Art Gallery.

This catalog is published on the occasion of the exhibition, *The Eyes Have It* at Lehman College Art Gallery, City University of New York from August 31 - November 13, 2021.

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Design                      Alex Stevovich

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**Cover:** Katherine Knauer. **Big Eye**, 2015. Quilt, 66 x 72 inches, detail

Courtesy of the artist. Photo Jean Vong

**Title Page:** Lehman College Art Gallery Lobby. Foreground: Tony Oursler. **Eye**, 2019,

8-inch sphere; foam, resin, unique video

**Above and on Pages 3, 5 and 7:** Sima I. Schloss. **The Eyes Have It**, 2021. Mixed media, site specific installation, detail. Courtesy of the artist



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## The Eye, Observing

The graceful line of the eye, its colors, and its leading place in our senses has intrigued the painter and sculptor from antiquity to today's art movements. Artists have always incorporated the eye into portrayals of human endeavor, often depicting it as a talisman against evil, a harbinger of observation, and a comforting sign of God's watchfulness. Today, the eye continues to enthrall artists: its powerful associations and captivating gaze are coupled with its roles as the embodiment of sight and as visual metaphor for our need to see and be seen.

*The Eyes Have It* represents a moment of transition for Lehman College Art Gallery, as we re-inhabit our space after a nearly 18-month closure, the unfortunate result of the ongoing Covid epidemic. During that time, the Gallery organized several virtual exhibitions, but *The Eyes Have It* has special meaning for the Gallery's staff and visitors — it represents the change to physically as well as metaphorically “see” art anew. This show is a dazzling array of artistic vision centered around the eye, sight, and the politics of observation. Long in the making, the genesis of *The Eyes Have It* goes back more than four years to a series of conversations with the Gallery's former Curatorial Assistant, Laura De Riggi. Her insightful observations about the visual power and historical resonance of the image of the eye in art sparked the original idea for this project. Like a kind of “Where's Waldo?” endeavor, once one is conscious of a motif, it is amazing how frequently it appears, unbidden, amidst our peregrinations through galleries, artist studios, and museums.

For a gallery of Lehman's size *The Eyes Have It* is a big show, representing four dozen contemporary artists who create a mosaic of meaning from photographs to paintings to video. From Pakistan and Guatemala, from Greece, Italy, and Spain, the Bahamas, Canada, and London, and across the United States, from Maryland to California, these artists truly bring “the eyes of the world” to the Gallery. They show us the issues

consuming our public discourse and reflect differing experiences of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity— as varied as the contested role of female drivers in Pakistan, whose eyes are all we are allowed to see; exploration into the electronic eye of surveillance and how it may discriminate against people of color; and technological attempts to visually single out members of the LGBTQIA community.

Among this exhibition's highlights: Gregory Halili, in *Sorrow II* (2014) creates a literal depiction of the eye, while using a medium that combines historic religious symbolism with contemporary creative techniques: he chose mother of pearl, with a whiteness that resembles the sclera or outer layer of the eyeball, to create the eyes of the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Sorrows. Her tears are formed by the naturally occurring formation of pearls on the shell. The artist HoruX, in *The All Seeing Mother* (2021) turns to digital photography to reinterpret commonly seen religious images into surrealist works suffused with symbolism. In video works, Carlos Aires comments on the power of the "eye-to-eye" connection of police power and the power of the State in the slightly ominous, but charmingly sensual *Sweet Dreams Are Made of This* (2016), while Zach Blas more overtly posits the dangers of digital recognition in his *Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face* (2012). In her highly topical 2021 *Tempting Eyes* series, Humaira Abid contemplates the politics and power of a woman's eyes within an otherwise covered face, at a time when women's rights to such essential activities such as driving are increasingly under threat by a resurgence of the Taliban. In *Shade* (2014), Derrick Adams creates a figure of striking contrast, as he similarly explores the politics of the covered face. In his collaged composition only the eye is visible, combining jarring aspects of determined militancy with a feminine floral.

Laura Karetsky humorously explores the Covid-19 crisis in *We're Going to Have to Learn to Read the Eyes a Lot Better* (2020), by showing the eye seen through a phone or monitor lens. Her lens addresses the constant need to see and be seen through digital conversation. In a black mirror, Lauren Fensterstock's *Scrying #3* (2017) melds the ancient and modern, both reminiscent of today's eye-in-the-sky cameras and early scrying glass, its translucent surfaces an eye to the past, present, and future. Her work forces us to face our own reflections, our own beliefs, our own souls.

A great many people worked hard to make *The Eyes Have It* a physical reality for the Gallery and under challenging circumstances. I am very grateful to the artists whose creation of the objects on view have made one of our most beautiful installations in this space. Their works are truly windows into souls. At Lehman College, I am grateful to

our incoming President, Dr. Fernando Delgado, for his support of the Gallery, as we transition back to our role as venue to serve the public after our long, COVID-related closure. Susan Ebersole, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Lehman College Foundation, has been a dedicated supporter of the arts at Lehman College, providing enthusiasm, resources, and thoughtful advice as the Gallery continues its develop its mission. All of our devoted board members, co-chaired by Marina Garde and Dolly Bross Geary, have worked determinedly, both to further the mission of the Gallery during trying times and to celebrate its re-opening. I am lucky to have a wonderful staff: Deborah Yasinsky, Curator of Education, did a superb job organizing the accompanying education programs for the exhibition and acting as my partner during the final months of exhibition preparation, and Mary Ann Siano, Grants Associate, worked to acquire the funding that allowed us to undertake such ambitious programming. Ashley Lum provided valuable Registrarial support, Elba Rodriguez did fine curatorial research, and Joddys Tollinchi did an exemplary job identifying artists for the many iterations of our checklist during the early stages of the project. Donna Pagano oversaw our elegant installation with talent and efficiency. Most particularly, Laura De Riggi, my co-curator on the project, brought her enthusiasm, insights and good humor to the long and winding timeline of this exhibition's planning that eventually came to fruition. Linda Locke did a fine and careful job with our editing, exhibiting great patience with our delayed schedule and myriad changes. As always, her creativity and dedication serve as a reminder to me that the love of the job is in the work. Alex Stevovich created the handsome design that showcases the works on these pages. I owe my special thanks to Kevin Ritter and Penelope Fritzer, my personal curatorial sounding boards.

"Eye-appeal" has long been a catchphrase for what we find attractive, and many images of the eye in this exhibition are drenched with beauty. Beyond its surface attraction though, the eye represents "perception" or the ability to understand, to examine, inspect, or interrogate. We use our eyes to gather information from which we draw our opinions. The current moral and political climate demands that artists look at how we, as individuals, function in a large and complex society. We hope the talented artists in this volume will stimulate your observing eye and your ideas.

Bartholomew F. Bland  
Executive Director, Lehman College Art Gallery

## HUMAIRA ABID

Abid immigrated from Pakistan to the United States in 2008 and then returned to the Middle East in 2018 to visit Saudi Arabia, around the time that country gave women permission to drive as a part of the new freedoms and mobility. Abid's observations of Saudi women inspired her artistic comment — *Tempting Eyes*— eye portraits on wood frames that look like the rearview mirrors drivers use to see behind their cars. Abid's dramatic designs of women's eyes seen above their masked faces are based on the proscriptive Saudi law informally know as Tempting Eyes. She explains, "Eyes are the only part [women] are able to show, when the rest of their bodies are covered, and they make their eyes really pretty. So the government introduced the Tempting Eyes law — if women make their eyes really pretty, they can be charged for that." Also, for her the rearview mirror is both a symbol of forward motion and a looking back to what one leaves.

**Tempting Eyes with an Ornament**, 2021. Carved and stained pine wood, pigments on handmade wasli paper, tru-vu museum acrylic, 9 x 4 x 13 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Adeel Ahmed



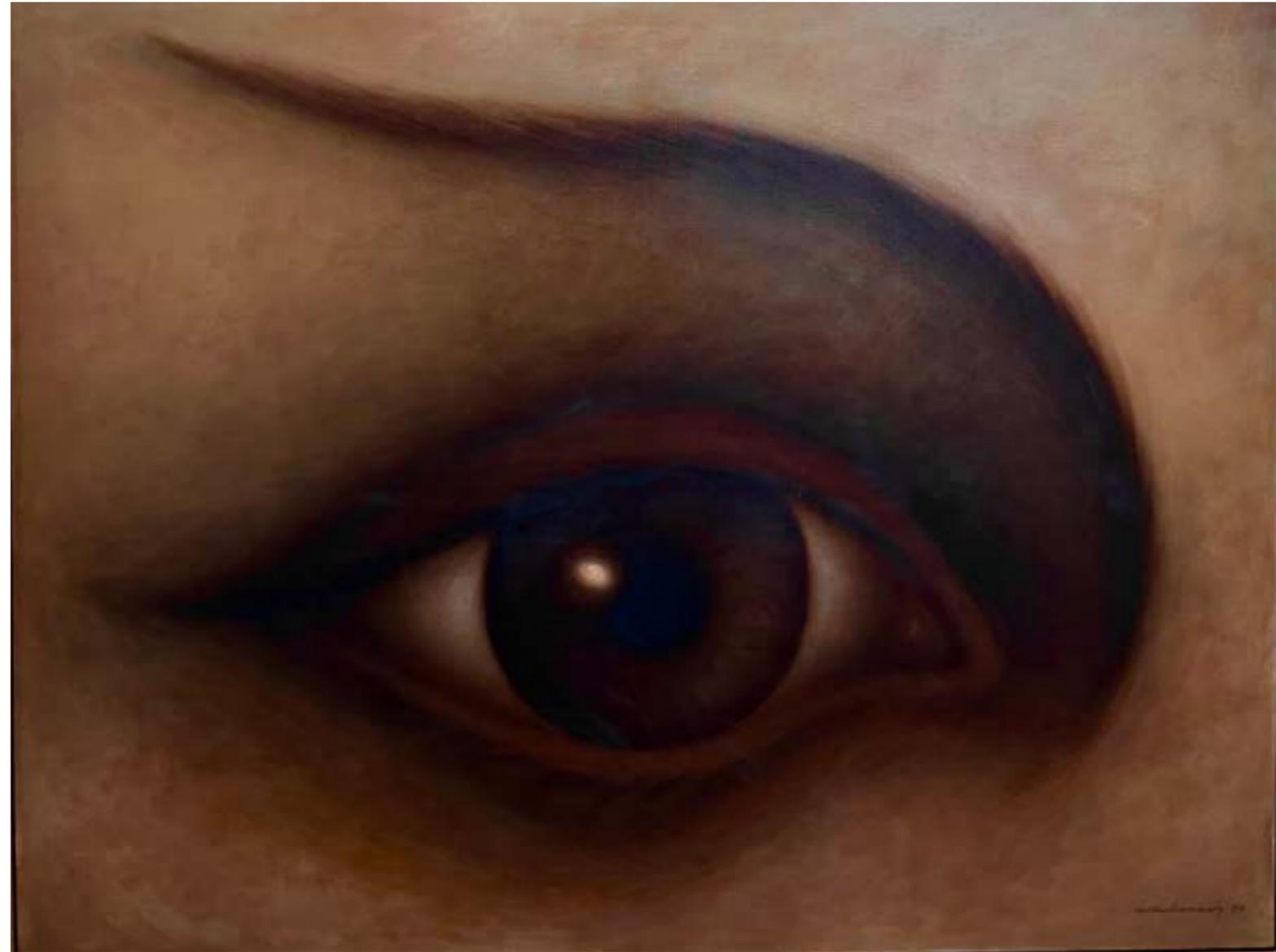
HUMAIRA ABID



Above: **Tempting Eyes - XV**  
Opposite: **Tempting Eyes - XVI**  
2021, Carved and stained pine wood, pigments on handmade wasli paper, tru-vu museum acrylic  
9 x 4 1/2 x 4 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Adeel Ahmed

## RODOLFO ABULARACH

*Artemisia's* huge eye with elegantly arched brow is typical of the work of Abularach. For several decades, large graphic eyes were a major subject for him, and he regarded the eye as the true "window of the soul," reflecting our deepest emotive states. The artist used cropped details of the staring eye to examine both the psychological and spiritual states represented by this organ, universal to human and animal. *Artemisia* dates from fairly early in Abularach's career, when the titles he selected for his works often alluded to literature or ancient Greek mythology. The colors in these early paintings are somewhat more naturalistic and subdued than the coloration we see in his later canvases, where the eye becomes increasingly graphic, approaching the simplified lines of the famous CBS logo designed by Bill Golden in 1951. That starkly graphic eye was based on a Hex symbol, the "all-seeing eye," painted on the barns of Shakers who lived in Pennsylvania Dutch Country. Its purpose—to ward off evil spirits.



**Artemisia**, 1978. Oil on canvas, 49 x 60 inches. Courtesy of Anita Shapolsky Gallery

## DERRICK ADAMS

Adams creates a figure of striking contrast in *Shade*, as he explores the politics of the “obscured face.” In this collage only the eye is visible, combining jarring aspects of a masculine, determined militancy with a softer, feminine floral background. Adams’ work highlights aspects of Black urban culture and Black representation. *Shade*, drained of the bright color we see in much of his work, takes on several subtle meanings: it suggests the garments that cover the head of the figure provide the safety of darkness as well as coolness from the sun; it also suggests the darkening of artistic shadowing and shading, and, from a different perspective — the slang of a sneering expression that throws contempt at another. The collaged elements are the features of the face that exist on slightly different picture planes, giving the eye of the figure an unnerving aspect. Angled too far forward for a traditional profile portrait, the figure possesses an all-seeing, fish-eye stare that matches its duck-like lips. *Shade* recalls both Picasso’s Cubist breaking of the picture plane in portraiture and the distinctive collage work of Jacob Lawrence.

**Shade**, 2014. Digital C-print, 24 x 18 inches, AP 2/5 (from an edition of 20, 5APs)  
Courtesy of the artist



## CARLOS AIRES



Aires comments on the “eye-to-eye” connection of police power and the power of the State in the slightly ominous but charmingly sensual *Sweet Dreams Are Made of This*. Filmed in the ballroom of Madrid’s Museo Cerralbo, the video shows two policemen wearing anti-riot uniforms, their faces, encased in helmets, concealed, except for their eyes seen through the helmets’ eye holes. Their eyes, locked on one another, dance a tango version of a famous 80s song written and performed by Eurhythmics, a British music duo. The last line of the refrain repeats *Everybody’s looking for something* and underscores the haunting lyricism of the music. Aires notes that the tango, originally forbidden by the Catholic Church, was a mélange of African, Italian, and Hispanic cultural influences, danced by the working class, and usually by two men. The artist also points out that in today’s Spain brutal officers cannot be charged because they cannot be identified —their faces are hidden behind helmets, and government law makes it illegal to take videos or any form of visual record of police forces or police in uniform, without government permission. Aires said, “I am aware of the fact that I could have never gotten permission to make this piece.”



**Sweet Dreams Are Made of This**, 2016. Video, 4:21 minutes. Courtesy of the artist

Above and Below: Video stills



## JANINE ANTONI

Antoni suggests something about the delicacy and the pain of intimacy in *Mortar and Pestle*. The work graphically depicts the artist licking the exposed eyeball of her husband and conjures a visceral sense of the tongue on fragile tissues, almost too sensitive to bear. The ironic title suggests the heavy grinding of the traditional marble implements used in cooking and medicine to grind substance to powder, and contrasts with the slowness of the licking motion necessary not to damage the eye. In this work that suggests intimacy that is painful if too close, Antoni has created a metaphor that reflects her heritage: "Coming from the Caribbean Islands, I was painfully aware that, by American standards, I always get too close to other people. I really can't make a point without touching someone." Here, she takes that impulse to the extreme. Speaking of her husband, she said, "I wanted to know the taste of his vision."

**Mortar and Pestle**, 1999. C-print, 48 x 48 inches. Edition of 10 and 2 AP (#6/10), (P8265)

©Janine Antoni. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York



## FIRELEI BÁEZ

Báez creates a haunting woman — a figure of cerulean, aquamarine, and sky blue spattered with red, her features blurred and indistinct, except for piercing eyes, which simultaneously appeal and indict. This artist has a deep interest in Caribbean colonial history; female stories told and untold; and narratives that relate or edit history, as it is passed down. In thinking about the violent saga of the Caribbean and its role today as a tourist mecca, she notes, "You're taught that the Caribbean is a space without history, that you've been transplanted there and are at the service of a pleasure complex for others." In *Memory Board Listening*, Báez creates a woman who is the personification of Clio, the Greek muse of history and proclaimer of deeds and accomplishments. The viewer may read the past in the eyes of this woman, a past she may not be able to speak through her lips darkened into silence in this work.

**Memory Board Listening (June 7th)**, 2015. Acrylic and Sennelier ink on yupo paper, 40 x 30 inches  
Collection of Emily Santangelo, Asbury Park, New Jersey



## GINA BEAVERS

Beavers portrays on grand scale a guide to achieving a perfect eye-makeup effect, from the naked eye to the fully painted, all in 15 distinct steps. Explaining her process she said, "I would follow a bunch of different accounts that do make-up tutorials and the conversations between the makeup artists would sound like conversations between painters. I am interested in these other communities of creators that are not directly fine art, and how they relate to the fine art hierarchy." Turning to her own work, she dramatically builds up thick layers of paint on the canvas, using foam to create compositions that hover between the painted surface and sculptural forms, so heavy that they seem in danger of sliding from the canvas. Beavers, who derives many of her images from social media, focuses on types of consumerism — a yearning for "things that I want" or "look at me."

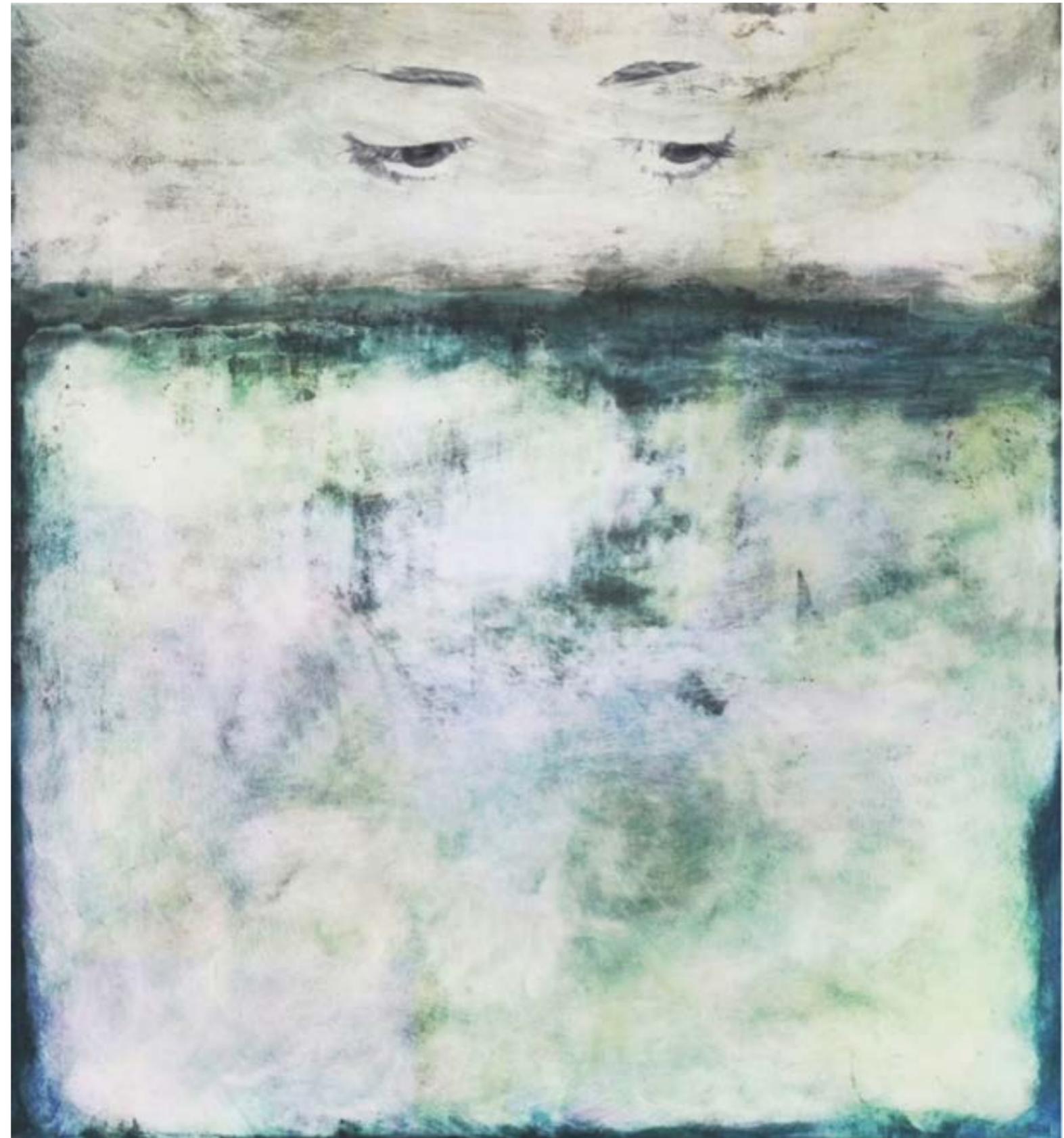
**Smoky Eye Every Step**, 2020. Acrylic and foam on linen on panel, 96 x 72 x 6 inches (GBE.17421)  
Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen © Gina Beavers



## ANGELICA BERGAMINI

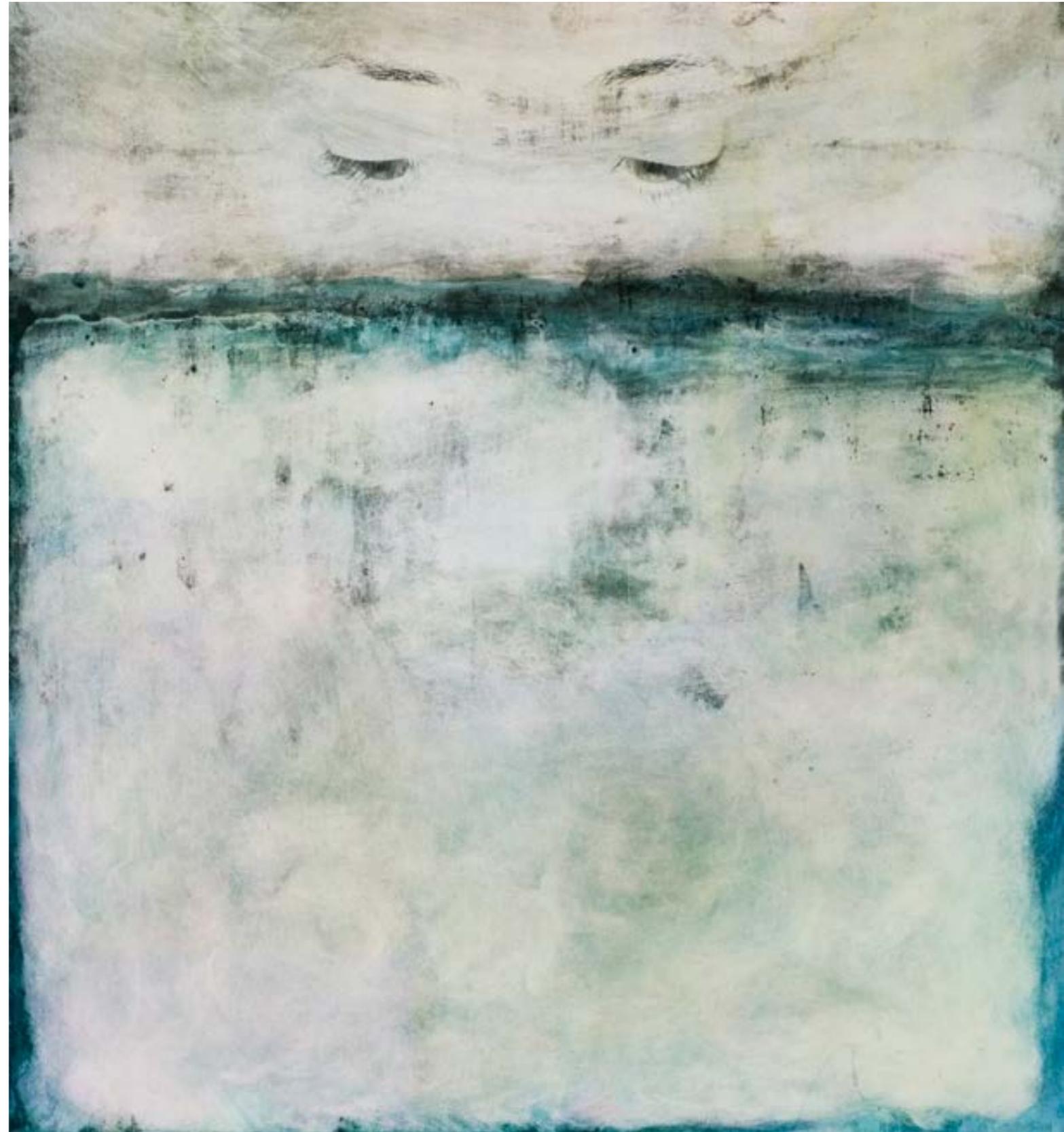
The artist describes her work as “a glimpse of the unconscious.” Bergamini’s two dreamlike pieces center around the eye. The first, a modestly scaled abstract painting in shades of blue and cream, shows a pair of eyes emerging from a sea of the same blue-and-cream color. The second, a video, animates the earlier painting’s composition, bringing to life the eye that now slides across the digital “canvas” blinking, and possibly following the viewer about the room. By using the same subject, the eye, Bergamini contrasts different media: traditional painting, and contemporary video, to show what is gained and lost to the artwork in each format. Stillness and studied observation of the painting may be sacrificed to the video’s sound, movement, and electric illumination but each format induces different contemplation. The artist said, “My work is a meditation on the search for balance between the inner and outer world; a reflection on what brings universality to the human experience and on the necessity for a radical reverence of life . . . I rely more on imagery and practice than theory to create a bridge between the unconscious and the conscious mind, ultimately in search of a more holistic view of the self and the world.”

**Untitled**, 2016. Single-channel HD video, 13 x 14 inches 2:22 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist



ANGELICA BERGAMINI

**Untitled**, 2009. Mixed media on Ilford Galerie Smooth Pearl Paper  
(Ink, archival Ink, mixed media, archival paper) 13 x 14 inches  
Courtesy of the artist



## H U M A B H A B H A

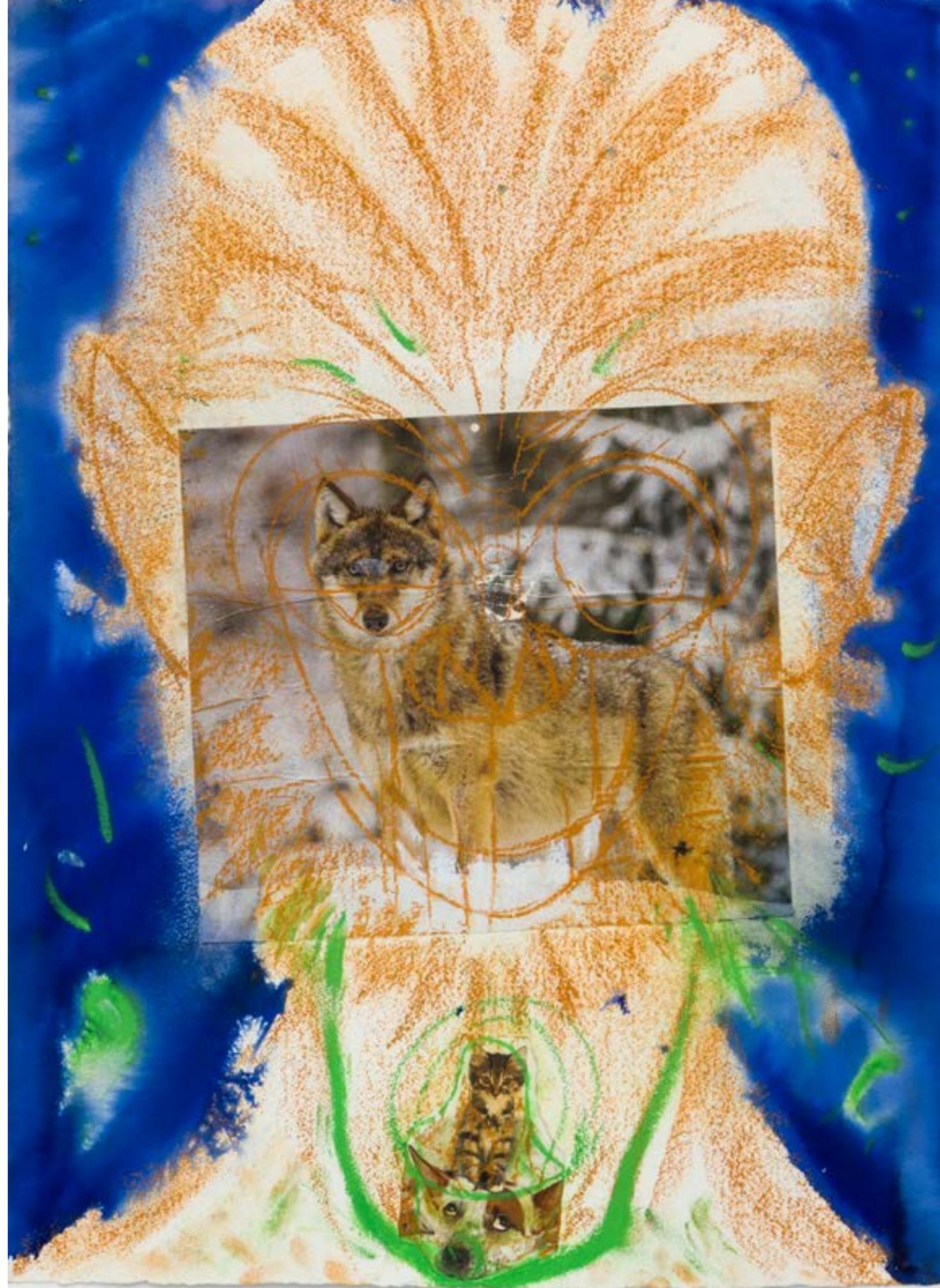
Bhabha creates two deeply unnerving visions of power laden with suggestions of violence. In her compositions, a human face is roughly scrawled, its lines seemingly etched into paper in spasms of rage, or a kind of lustful primitivism. The huge orbital sockets of these humanoid figures are overlapped with photographic imagery of wolves' staring eyes, intense and hungry. Drawing a direct parallel between the human and the animal eye, she asks the viewer to contemplate the evolving relationship between the hunter and the hunted. In Bhabha's work these effects lead to thoughts of evolution, as hunting animals evolved eyes on the front of the face allowing for direct, forward engagement, while those preyed upon developed eyes on the sides of the head to better scan for danger. Here the respective roles of human and animal are ambiguous. The eyes of both creatures are physically locked together, but in sympathy or battle? The artist said, "For me ghastly and horror mean sophisticated and beautiful," and, "horror and science fiction allowed me to use my imagination and be original in an unconventional way."

**Untitled**, 2014. Ink, pastel, and collage on paper, 30 1/4 x 22 1/2 inches (HB 471)  
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



HUMA BHABHA

**Untitled**, 2017. Ink, pastel, and collage on paper, 35 1/2 x 27 3/4 x 2 inches (HB 605)  
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



## ZACH BLAS

Blas, less interested in physical manifestations of the eye, is more concerned with the long-term societal implications of the “digital” eye and its growing watchfulness. His video is striking now because of the many aspects of digital observation and monitoring we experience every day. Just a decade ago constant monitoring seemed only at the threshold of possibility, but now is dangerous reality. Groups such as China’s Uyghur Muslim population are already placed under intense social control via digital technology. One of this artist’s concerns is how digitization can translate the identity and ideologies of minorities into discrimination that is intensified when mass surveillance is yoked to the desires of governments. Big business can also enhance stereotyping and categorization through digitizing information. *Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face* also puts forward the idea that there is political power in losing individuality to become a single, anonymous entity. Blas posits, “Wearing a ‘fag-face’ mask generated from the biometric facial data of many queer men’s faces allows you to wear the faces of many with a single mask.”

**Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face**, 2012. HD single-channel video, color with sound, 16:9, 8:10 minutes, looped. Courtesy of the artist



ZACH BLAS



Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face, 2012. Video stills



## JUSTIN BOWER

Bower's big, expressionistically painted face looks out, staring, from the canvas. It may appear to be serenely viewing the future or reflecting a slightly ominous manifestation of the present. According to the artist, the uncertainty in Spaceboy's face shows "the... the destabilization of the contemporary subject in an increasingly 'control society,' and I often use the digital realm to place it in." We see the blurred features of this face overlapping in multiples that suggest power of both sight and knowledge —the "third eye." Bower wants this face to be both familiar and disturbing, as it looks for its place in a new world. He asks, "Are we replacing religious thinking with almighty tech gods?" Using the traditional media of oil on canvas, the artist emphasizes the passing of tradition in a new and upcoming digital environment.

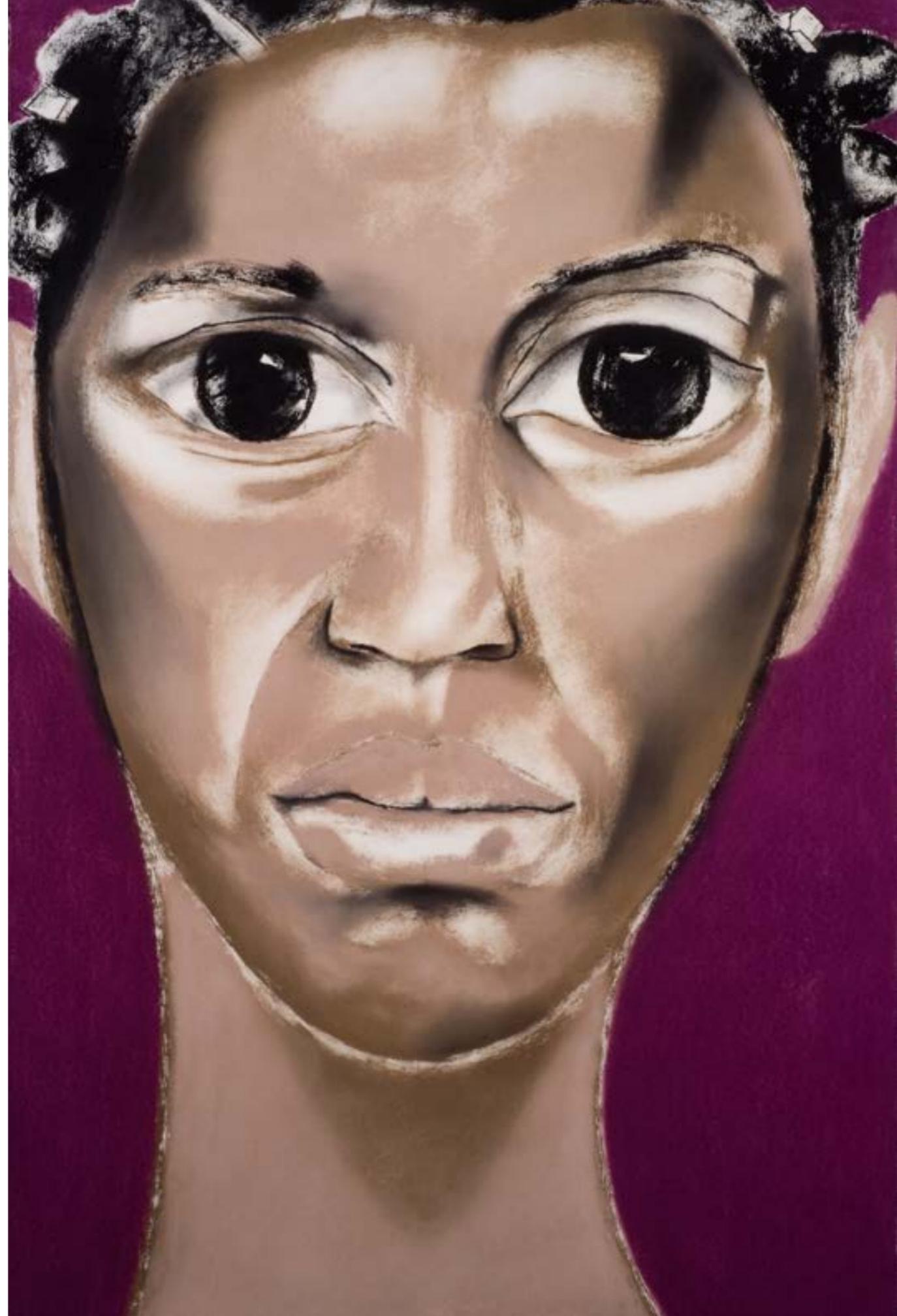
**Spaceboy**, 2009. Oil on canvas, 96 x 84 inches. Courtesy of Unix Gallery



## FRANSESCO CLEMENTE

Clemente recognizes that the human face claims our interest, and within the face the intimacy of its eyes demands even greater attention from us. In *New York Muses*, he creates a series of pastel portraits of women, whose huge eyes arrest the viewer. The artist said, "There is a kind of woman in New York who is truly unique, martial, a kind of Amazon who goes down the street without looking right or left. She is strong enough to catch your attention, but she doesn't play the game. For me that is very poetical. I draw these women larger than life, and although you feel very close to them when you look at them, the picture keeps part of them private because their bodies are left outside." Clemente's portraits become the stills of silent screen acting, where, lacking words, a tremendous amount of drama is communicated with the eye.

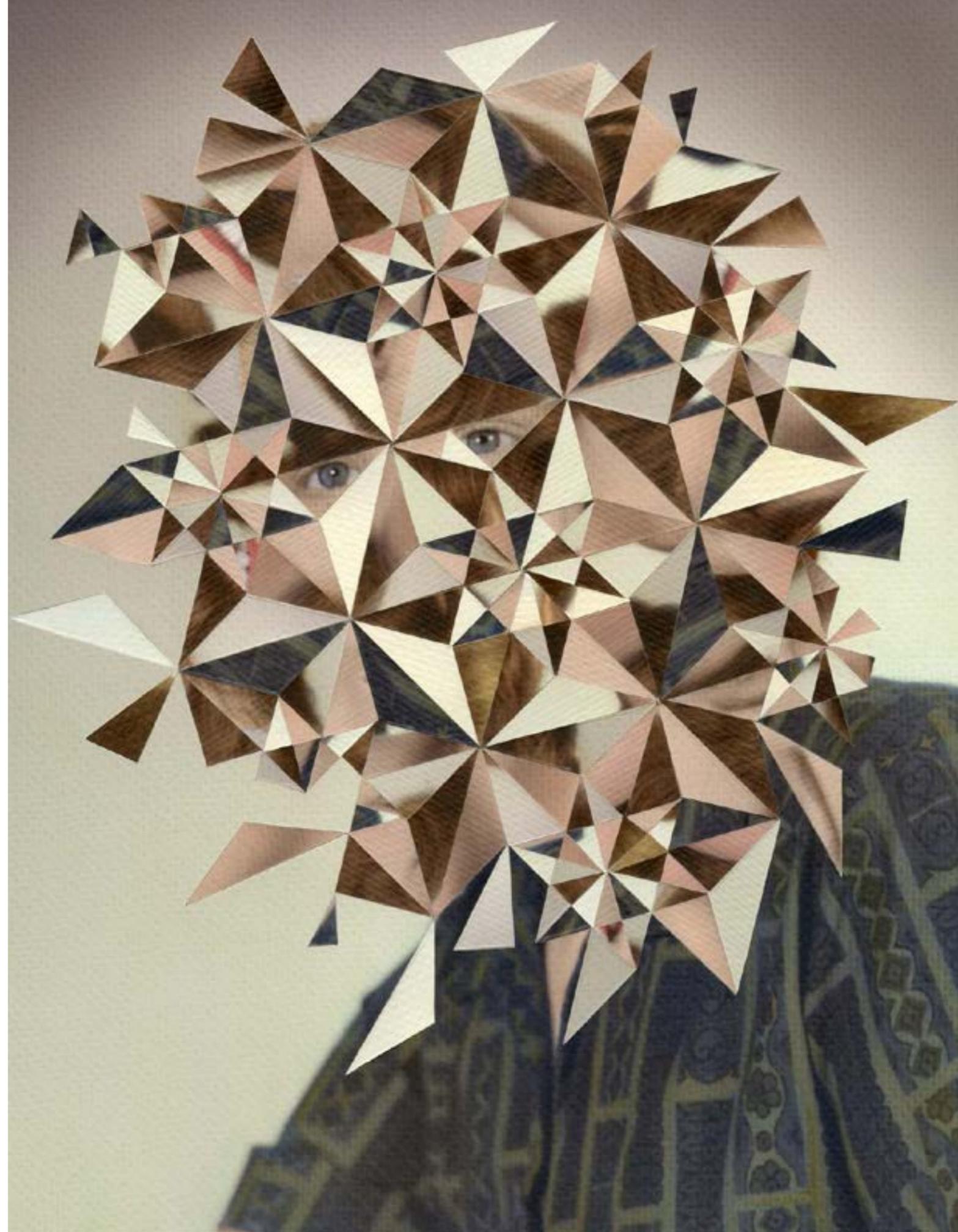
**Lysa (New York Muses)**, 1993. Pastel on paper, 40 x 28 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Lévy Gorvy, New York



## JULIE COCKBURN

Pinwheels of small eyes obscure the faces in this collaged composition of photographs. By losing focus on a single pair of human eyes with which to engage, Cockburn has created a composition that is profoundly alienating. None of the eyes, placed at angles focus on the viewer. Instead, a multitude of "seeing" becomes a blind face, and a blank canvas. The artist describes masking the faces, allowing them to become "everyman/woman," although they do so by sacrificing their identity. "Working with old photographs is similar to engaging into a dialogue," Cockburn said. "I am not working on a blank canvas. Rather, I am entering into a pre-existing conversation that took place between the photographer and sitter, and where I experiment with a personal visual language."

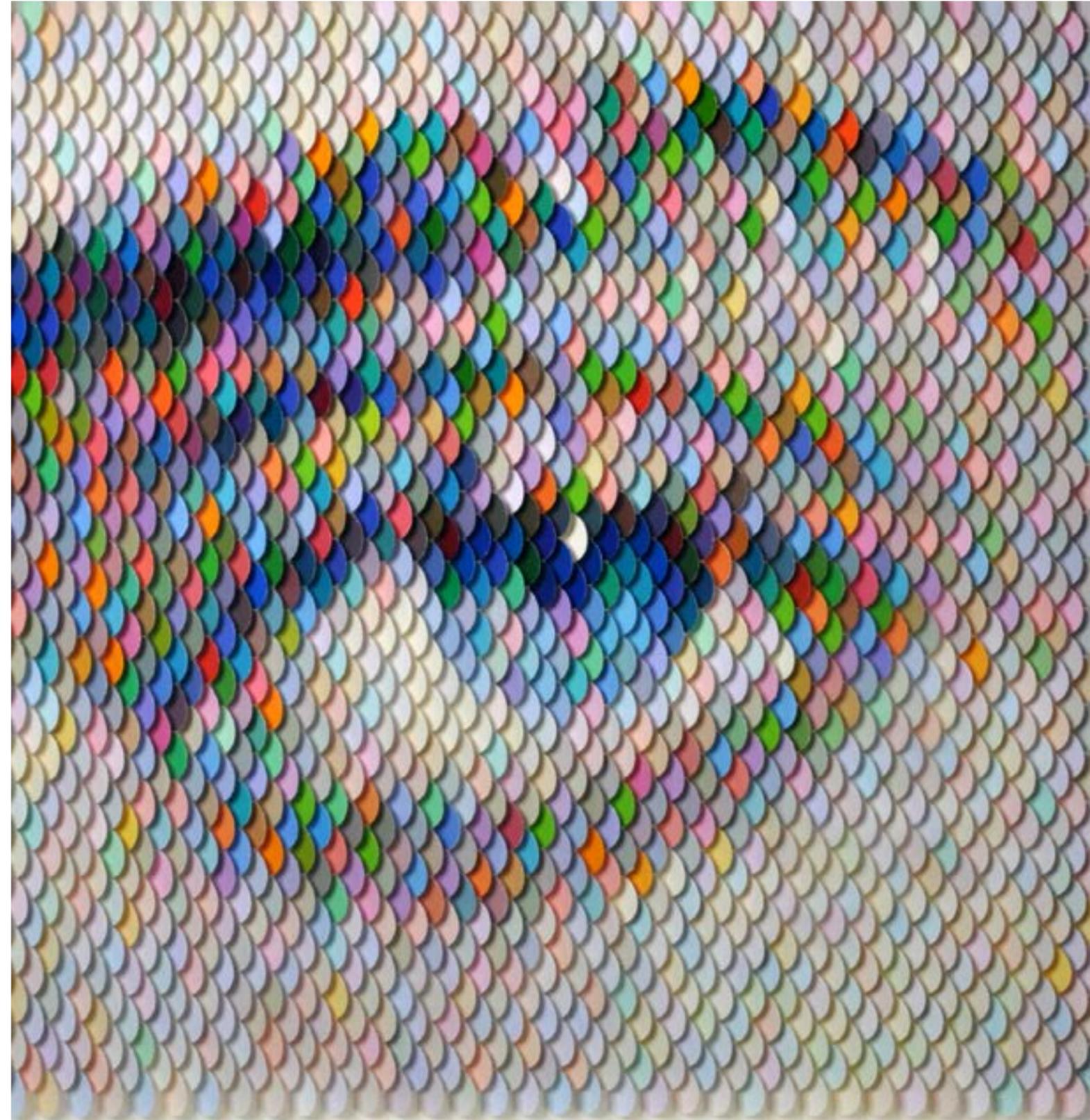
**Debbie Downer**, 2014. Photographs, altered found photograph, 10 1/8 x 8 inches  
Courtesy of Craven Contemporary



## PETER COMBE

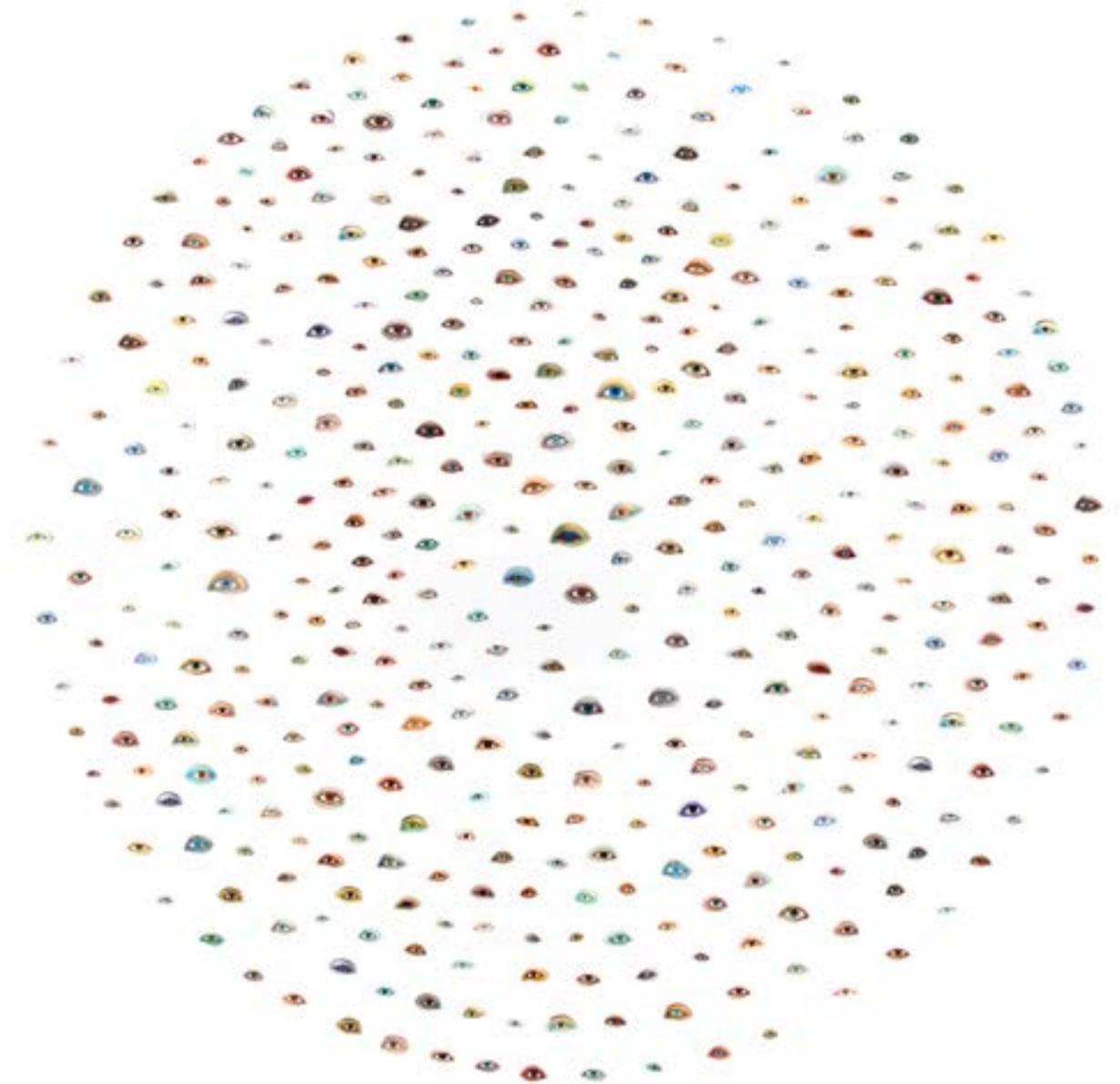
Combe creates his work from multitudes of tiny, commercially available swatches of color. He is inspired by French Neo-Impressionist Georges Seurat, who famously created his paintings from tiny dots of color of carefully juxtaposed color. "There is a magic that occurs," Combe says, "a trick of the eye, where color seems to occupy space — a void, at once ethereal, yet seen from another angle appears as if a ghostly image, veiled in gossamer." Creating illusion through light, he notes, "I am often perplexed that while working certain discs appear to be in the foreground, while others appear to be further away. It is, however, an illusion as they all project from the same plane."

**Cha Cha (Blue 45°)**, 2019. Mixed media (paint swatches). 18 x 18 inches  
Collection of the artist



## ESPERANZA CORTES

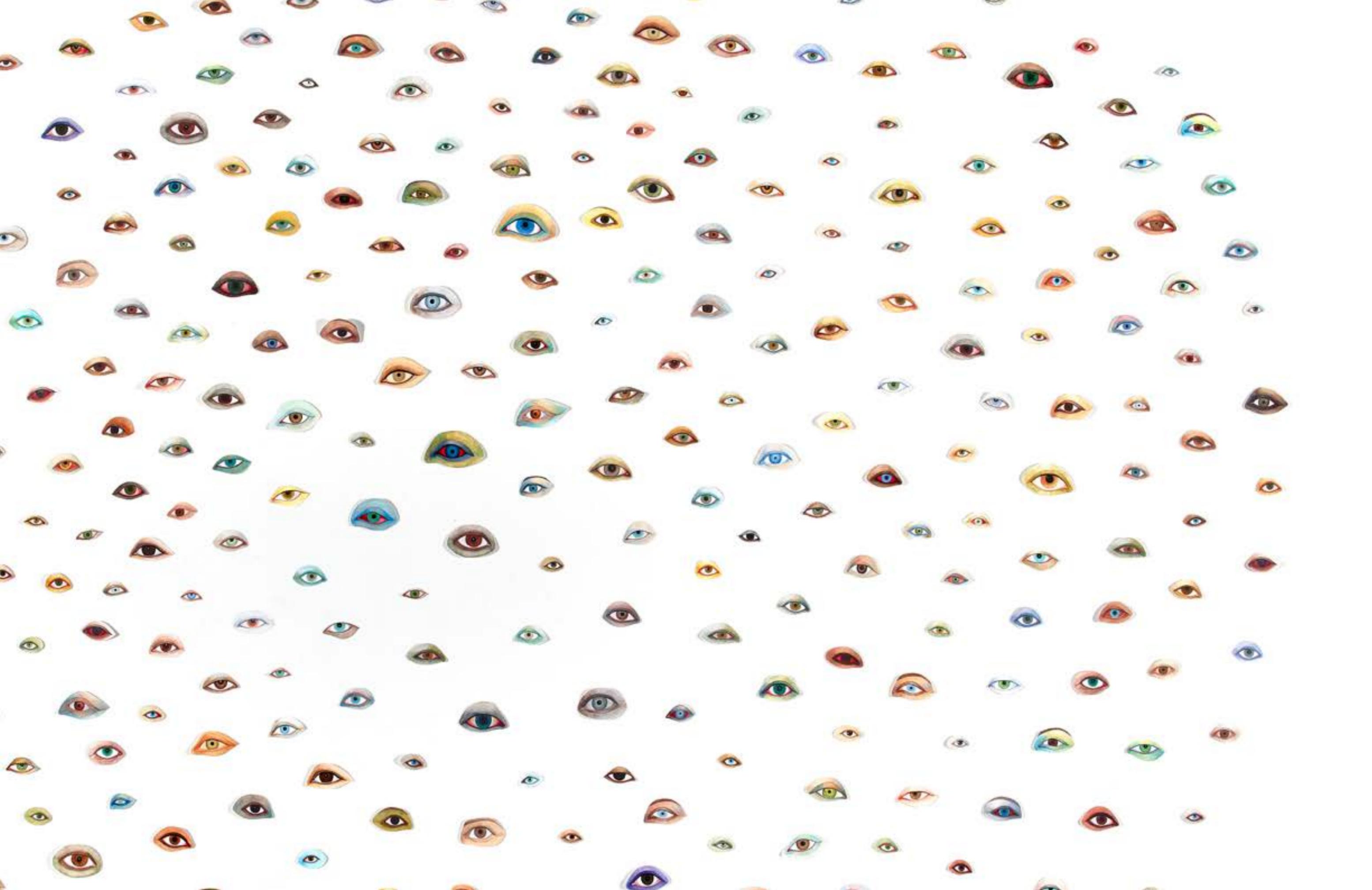
A large red radiating eye anchors Cortez' monumental panorama of 500 individual eye portraits. The red eye forms the shape of one singular orb — e pluribus unum, "from the many, one." The artist notes that two major happenings in her life motivate her work around the eye. The first, her father's blindness, which caused her to think about sight. The other, the destruction of the World Trade Center at 9/11. She said, "We lived in Tribeca . . . and then I hear this horrible boom . . . 'I think it sounds like a plane hitting a building' . . . So, we get dressed, we go downstairs, there's a crowd of people walking towards us, everybody is the same color, everyone's gray, skin is gray, clothing gray, the exact gray, except for their eyes; the only thing I could see were their eyes and their eyes were what distinguished them. The shape, the color, the emotion, the whatever it was, and it was shocking to me . . . and I'm looking at everyone's eyes, and then I thought, 'Well, is it possible that the eyes record emotion?' . . . I just felt like we are all seeing the same thing and interpreting it differently, but then I began to think about eyes seeing, but also being watched."



**OJO I**, 2019. 500 Eye Portrait Installation, archival print on paper, 12-foot diameter

Following pages: **OJO I**, details

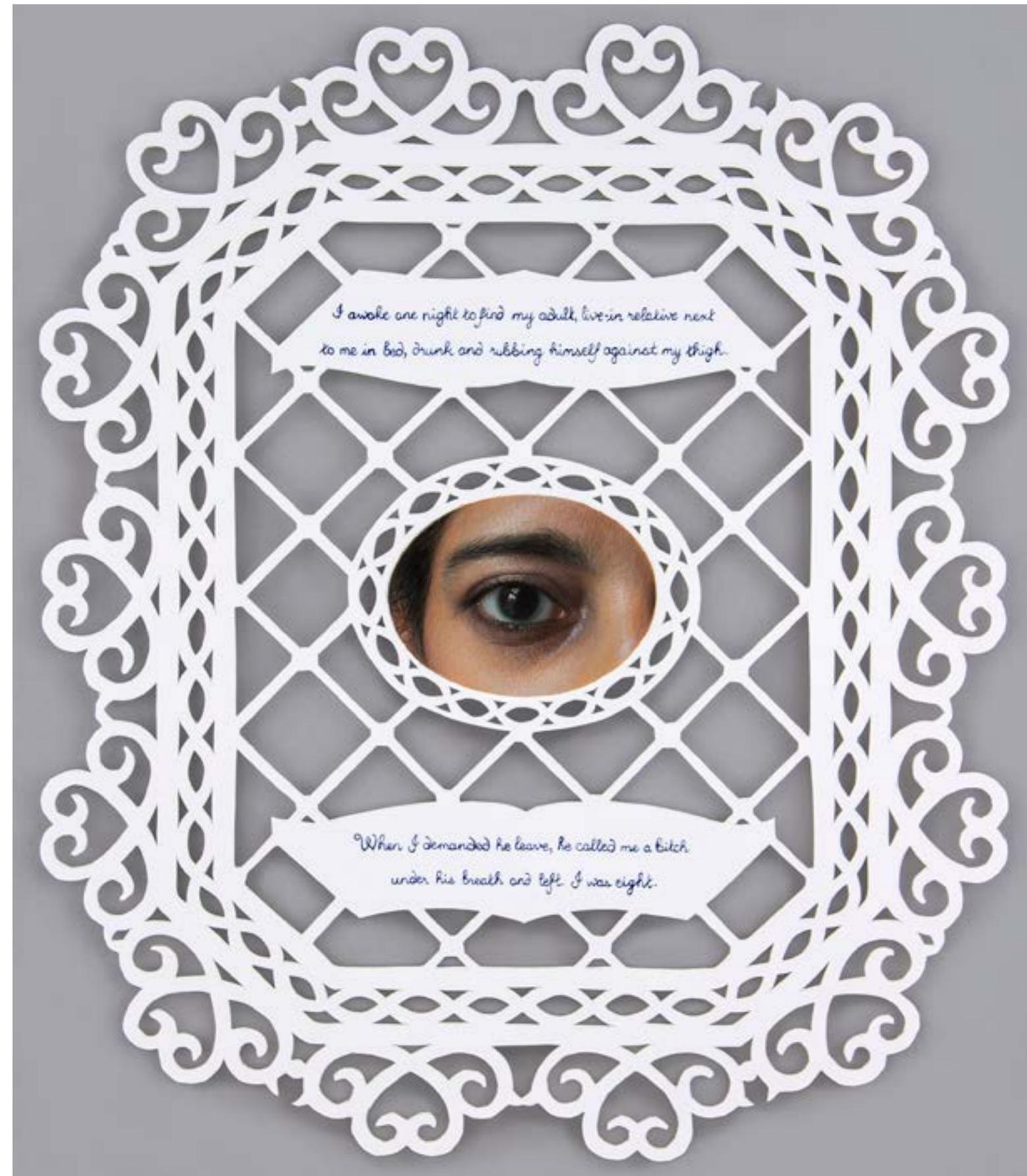
Collection of the artist



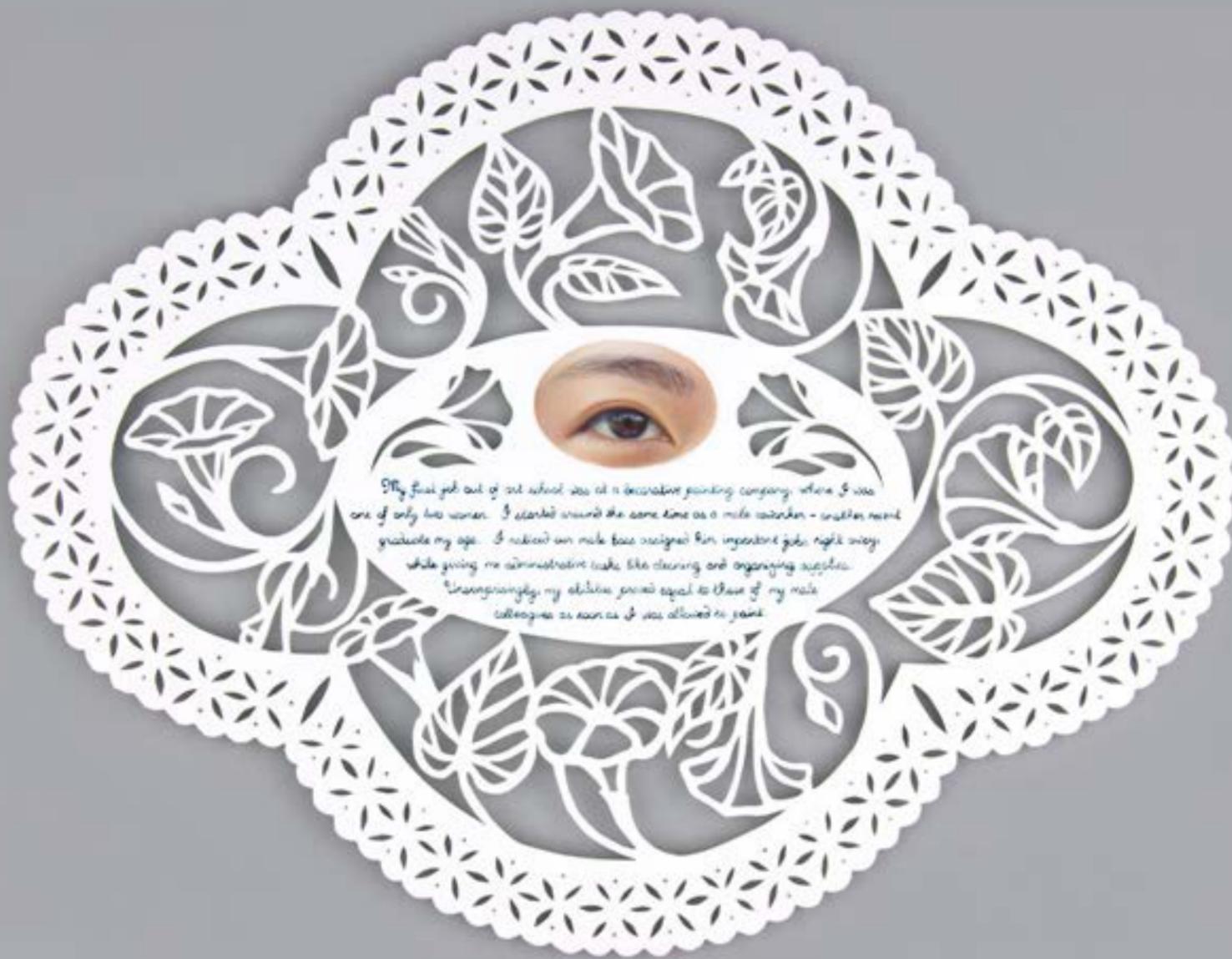
## DIANA CORVELLE

Corvelle's *Lover's Eye* series appears, at first, the epitome of lacy femininity. Exquisitely crafted by the artist from paper cut into charming shapes of hearts and fans, each provides the perfect frame for a gorgeously painted female "eye portrait," peering at the viewer. First impressions, though, can be deceiving. The frames of the eye portraits hold a handwritten narrative, often painful, occasionally ironic, about a woman's experience with unwanted male attention. Corvelle uses the dissonance between the whimsical, traditional form of lover's-eye miniatures or portraits and serious contemporary social content to heighten the impact of her work. The form of the painted lover's eye, particularly favored in France, dates to the 18th century. Often painted on enamel or ivory, the eye portraits, frequently worn as jewelry, could proclaim a lover but at the same time veiled the identity of the beloved. In today's landscape, the eye portrait becomes a way for a victim to maintain anonymity, while testifying to a disturbing experience. The artist says, "*The Lover's Eye* series is my way of honoring the women in my life through their stories . . . each eye portrait includes a written account of [their] experiences with misogyny, as it was shared with me, firsthand."

**Lover's Eye no. 6**, 2017. Gouache on cut paper, 7 x 8 inches. Courtesy of the artist



DIANA CORVELLE



*My first job out of art school was at a decorative painting company, where I was one of only two women. I started around the same time as a male coworker - another recent graduate my age. I noticed our male boss assigned him important jobs right away, while giving me administrative tasks like cleaning and organizing supplies. Unsurprisingly, my abilities proved equal to those of my male colleagues as soon as I was allowed to paint.*



*I was running late to my second job, so I rushed to change into my work pants in my cubicle while no one was around, as my male coworkers often did. Just then my boss walked in, ignoring me when I said I was in the middle of changing. He remained blocking the doorway, staring at me and talking casually as though nothing was wrong. As soon as I had finished he said, "all right I'll see you up there," and walked off.*

Above: **Lover's Eye no. 9**, 7 x 8 inches  
Opposite: **Lover's Eye no. 5**, 7 x 8 inches  
2017. Gouache on cut paper. Courtesy of the artist

DIANA CORVELLE



Above: **Lover's Eye no. 1**, 4 1/2 x 9 inches

Opposite: **Lover's Eye no. 17**, 7 1/2 diameter

2017. Gouache on cut paper. Courtesy of the artist

## VANEZZA CRUZ

Combining disparate elements of collage culled from popular sources, Cruz's work centers on experiences often overlooked by women. The artist identifies as Afro-Latina and makes representation of her identity a key theme in her work. Here, that visibility is manifested in her emphasis on the eye within a concealed face. In *En el eco de mi madre*, the eye, literally circled for emphasis, becomes the gravitational center of the work, and draws you into the composition. Cruz said, "During my process, I reveal invisible women; redefining my story as a disruptor and a storyteller—my existence that disrupts a normative visuality instituted on my Black body . . . . I look through my collection of ephemera and printed sources to find images that best reflect feelings of that moment in my life that reminded me of when I, and the understanding of who I am, met."

*En el eco de mi madre (The Echo of My Mother)*, December 2020

Handmade collage sourced from various magazines and printed papers, 13 x 9 7/8 inches

Collection of the artist



VANEZZA CRUZ



**En la bruma de la luna, yo veo (*In the Mist of the Moon, I See*)**, April 2019  
Handmade collage sourced from various magazines and printed papers, 10 x 7 1/2 inches  
Collection of the artist

## TIMOTHY CUMMINGS

Cummings presents a dapper figure, suited and wearing a bow tie topped with a stiff white collar, the hair slicked back with Brilliantine — a look distinctly reminiscent of the 1920s. The man covers his right eye with his hand in a gesture that seems to suggest the rising Surrealists of the era. The symbolism of covering one eye is infused with different meanings: to be half blind to truth; the metaphorical opening of the “third” eye to great mystical vision; and the power of God’s knowledge. One of the best-known figures in art history appears in Michelangelo’s *The Last Judgment* in which a man, condemned to hell, covers an eye with his hand, signifying he cannot bear to meet or to look upon his fate. Responding to the idea that his enigmatic figures often have a similar physiognomy to his own, Cummings said, “My face is the face I see most often.”

**Study for a Larger Portrait**, 2019. Acrylic on panel, 11 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery



## DAS INSTITUT (Kerstin Brätsch and Adele Röder)

Kerstin Brätsch and Adele Röder work together under the name DAS INSTITUT, focusing on their collaborative process. In the series of portrait photographs, *When You See Me Again It Won't Be Me*, the artists disguise themselves, presenting different "faces" to the camera in a meditation on what it means "to see and be seen." The works, inherently theatrical, show the two figures in odd, juxtaposed relationships, holding objects and attributes that suggest Renaissance portraiture. Brätsch says of the portraits, "We just photographed each other very simply, against a black background. We paint ourselves black in part, altering our silhouettes and profiles. It's an old cinema trick, before the green screen. Our bodies in that case are the templates from which we work."



**When You See Me Again It Won't Be Me (Yellow)**, 2014. Two Pigment prints, 19 1/4 x 28 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

## DENNIS DELGADO

Delgado's works are meditations on the limitations of the seemingly omniscient technology that surrounds us, and its flawed ability to "see" us accurately. The artist has created composite portraits of over 500 faces from movies that feature self-representation of African Americans and people of color. His art is a study on facial recognition systems and how they do not accurately detect a Black person's skin, resulting in Black people being wrongfully accused of crimes. The artist states, "My primary goal was just to raise awareness. It's good to look at the bias that is built into a lot of these technological systems. It's not just its ability or inability to detect faces of color, it's also gender, and other areas that reflect identity or this idea of identity that is perpetuated and I think is a big problem."

**Deep Cover, 2021.** Tagged Image Format File on iPad Pro, 14 1/3 x 8 2/3 inches  
Courtesy of the artist



DENNIS DELGADO

**Get Out**, 2021. Tagged Image Formatted File on iPad Pro, 14 1/3 x 8 2/3 inches  
Courtesy of the artist



## DALE DUNNING

Daedalus, a legendary inventor in Greek myth, was the father of Icarus, who, refusing to heed his sire's warnings flew too close to the sun. A pair of mechanical wings held together by wax and designed by his father propelled Icarus, but the wax melted in the sun's heat causing him to plunge to earth and his death. Icarus was blinded by hubris. In this work Dunning drapes wings over the eyes of a face. By blinding the face, the artist suggests that our own foolishness makes us unable to see the truth. Dunning made his cast of aluminum wings from the wings of an actual Canada goose and fashioned the head from repurposed lead type. Both welded together form a haunting mask that is asexual. The artist says he employs heads, "I don't see it as male or female . . . The thing I like about the head is that it sort of encompasses what we are. We live in our heads; we see everything that we've experienced sort of end up in our heads. So, I use the head as a container to suggest what is percolating underneath."

**Daedalus**, 2020, Aluminum, 44 x 27 x 9 inches. Courtesy of Oeno Gallery, Ontario



## LAUREN FENTERSTOCK

*Scrying*, also known by the names “seeing” or “peeping,” is the practice of staring into an object in the hope of detecting prophecy, inspiration, or revelation. The center of Fensterstock’s sculpture is Claude Glass, a black convex mirror supposedly developed by the painter Claude Lorraine, which creates a glossy central, reflective surface, which the artist surrounds with black, rubber-coated shells — the entire composition forming a giant eye that stares at the viewer. The artist said, “I think [black] is really a magical color. I think in the absence of light we’re able to see things that have always been there but that we’ve been overlooking. It forces your eye to change, and you suddenly can become aware of subtleties of tone and form and sheen. I’m really interested in that kind of close looking because I think if there is a spirituality or a magic in this world, it’s not one that’s abstract, it’s not one that’s far away. It’s one that is here all around us, and we just have to look a little bit closer to find it.”



**Scrying #3**, 2017. Mouth-blown glass, shells, rubber, 62 x 37 x 6 inches  
Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery

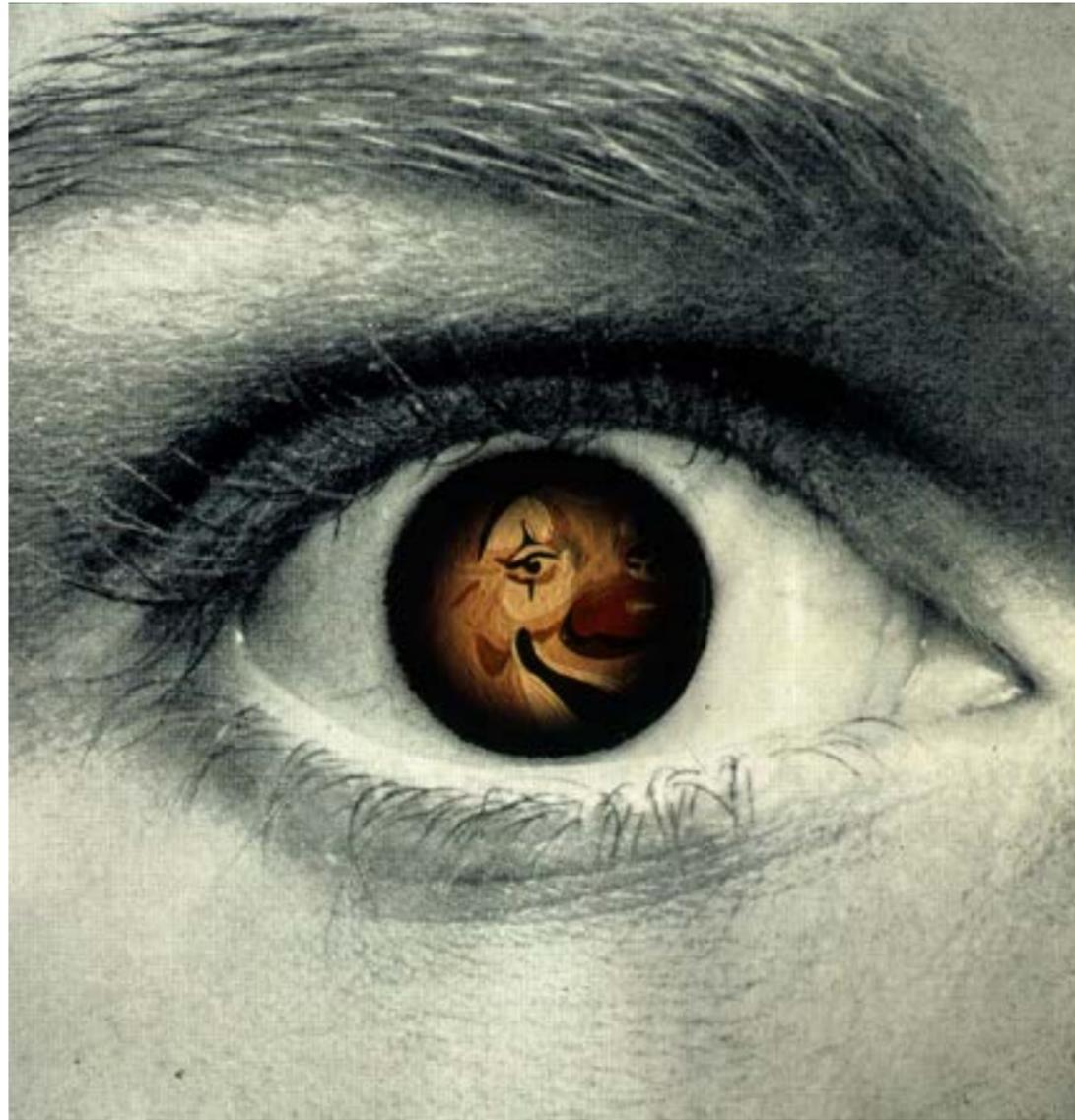
## STEPHEN FRAILEY

Photographer Stephen Frailey adapts a number of unnerving Surrealist contrasts to his work. The use of the eye is central to his photographs, ranging from a disembodied eye drying in the sand as it awaits the ministrations of an eyedropper, to a close-up of an eye, in which the pupil conceals a leering clown. Most remarkable is his photograph of a model that serves as a meditation on point of view: the model is observed by a couple, her face in shadow, one highlighted eye creating a dynamic of competing gazes, the interaction of all three witnessed by the viewer. Frailey's angling of light against the woman's face is reminiscent of 1940s' film noir. Photographers have long exploited the visual impact of the highlighted eye against darkened shadow.

**Untitled**, 1988. Polaroid photograph, 20 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist



STEPHEN FRAILEY



Above: **Untitled**, 1994. Digital C-print, 8 x 8 inches. Courtesy of Mary Ehni, New York  
Opposite: **Untitled**, 1988. Polaroid photograph, 20 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist

## CARLA GANNIS

Gannis is one of the leading artists who deals with aspects of artificial intelligence and how we portray ourselves in an increasingly digital and virtual world. Here she presents a self-portrait that merges the biological, the technological, and the astronomical into a powerful meditation on the changing nature of human existence. *Powers of Ten*, from her *The Selfie Drawings* series, replaces the artist's own eye in the composition with the "Eye of God," a bright planetary nebula located about 700 light years away in the constellation Aquarius, which is pictured within the iPhone [i.e., "eyephone"] Gannis holds. The artist said, "I am fascinated by contemporary modes of digital communication, the power (and sometimes the perversity) of popular iconography, and the situation of identity in the blurring contexts of technological virtuality and biological reality."

This work also has programmed Augmented Reality. When a person downloads the Blippar app onto the iPhone and scans the drawing, an animation of the artist will appear.



**Powers of Ten, The Selfie Drawings**, 2015-17. Drawing, 12 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist

## LAURENT GRASSO

*Cyclops* presents a single, glowing eye on a stand, its title suggesting the one-eyed giants who stride through the tales of Greek mythology. The eye and its meanings are central to Grasso's work. He engages with the idea of different eyes from different periods of history, all watching the viewer. The artist comments about the experience of museum-going: "People are fascinated by museums because they are observed by the portraits they are looking at. . . there is something more universal with this idea of different eyes from different periods, watching us. It's more about the gaze than vision itself."

*Panoptes*, following page, conjures the ancient and the eternal in three stone sculptures of the eye. The scale of each suggests it could be the fragment of a larger face or mystical talisman, perhaps a carving from a cave wall. Exquisitely sculpted in granite, onyx, and marble, Grasso's work reinforces association with the ancients by his title for the pieces, *Panoptes*, which refers to Argus Panoptes, the 100-eyed giant of Greek mythology, who gave rise to the term for being relentlessly followed or scrutinized — "watched by the eyes of Argus." Ironically, Argus famously failed in his watchfulness and for this infraction was killed. The artist describes the *Panoptes* as "a kind of dream, a very old dream: to be able to watch everything twenty-four hours, to be always online."

**Cyclops**, 2016. Neon, wooden pedestal, brass slab, transformer Unique  
16 5/16 x 8 11/16 x 2 3/4 inches Courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York  
©Laurent Grasso/ADAG, Paris, 2021



LAURENT GRASSO



**Panoptes**

Above: Blue granite, 2019. 7 1/2 x 9 7/16 x 4 3/4 inches

Opposite:

Above: Red marble, 2019. 8 1/4 x 10 1/4 x 4 1/2 inches

Below: White onyx, 2021. 7 7/8 x 9 1/16 x 5 1/8 inches

Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery. ©Laurent Grasso/ADAGP, Paris, 2021. Photo Jason Wyche

## GREGORY HALILI

Mother of pearl comes from the inside of oyster and abalone shells, and in *Sorrow II* Halili uses it to dazzling effect creating a series in the tradition of “lover’s eyes” but with a twist — his shell eyes are more deeply planted in the natural world, rather than hyper-refined works of art for the boudoir or drawing room. Halili creates the illusion that the oysters hauled from nets and shucked open present the seeker of riches only tearful eyes, instead of the longed-for-pearl. The artist said, “My theme has always been fragility in terms of life and death, you know, our connection with nature.” Halili arranges the delicate shells in a circle pattern that suggests connected cycles of nature and comments about the eye motif that appears in his work, “Throughout history humans have believed the eye is the window to the soul. I am interested in the idea of how the eye can transcend religion, become universal, and evoke emotion.”



**Sorrow II**, 2014. Oil on mother of pearl, 10 x 11 1/2 inches

Following page: **Sorrow II**, details

Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery



## PETER HAMLIN

A central theme in Hamlin's work is the relationship between the natural/biological world, the digital/mechanical one, and the increasingly porous divide between them. In the video *Watcher watching*, the artist presents us with a series of rolling, rotating eyeballs in his signature lurid hues. The viewer is urged to contemplate the action between the biological form of the eyeball as it transmutes into a *corps de ballet* of synchronized motion. What are these eyes designed to do and on what are they training their sights? Hamlin's work reminds us of the sinister aspects of technology. The ease, connectedness, simplicity, and access of modern technology and social media make it attractive for us to adopt for our every purpose and activity. It is onerous to stop to give sufficient thought to the vulnerability in which these conveniences place us. How open are we to observation and oversight by the watchful systems we so eagerly embrace?

*Watcher watching*, 2021. Video screen; 1-minute loop. Courtesy of Kenise Barnes Fine Art



## VALERIE HAMMOND

Although vision is central to the human senses and experience, humans do not have the strongest sight in the Animal Kingdom. One animal with legendary sight is the owl, which comes to life in two splendid works by Valerie Hammond. A nocturnal creature, the owl is famous for its eyes, huge in proportion to its body, which seem to glow in the night. Unlike most birds, with eyes that sit at an angle, owl eyes face directly forward, giving them strong binocular vision for hunting at night. Although an owl's large eyes can't move or roll as human eyes can, these birds can move their heads nearly all the way around, allowing them 270-degree range of vision, without moving their bodies. Hammond emphasizes the beauty of an owl's eyes, highlighting them with watercolor, so they seem to leap from her composition. In *Owl Moth*, following page, she amusingly portrays this bird, named for two creatures of the night — blending the distinctive "eyes" of its wing decoration with the actual owl, so that the overlapping wings become the "eyes" of the owl.

**Owl**, 2021. Ink and watercolor on indigo-dyed, handmade gampi paper, 18 1/2 x 25 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Littlejohn Contemporary Art, Inc.



VALERIE HAMMOND

**Owl Moth**, 2021. Ink and watercolor on indigo-dyed, handmade gampi paper, 18 1/2 x 25 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Littlejohn Contemporary Art, Inc.



# HORUX

“The eye is one of the main symbols I use in my work because I believe its esoteric meaning is deeply imprinted in the collective unconscious, making it a powerful symbol,” said HoruX, a Mexican artist who uses digital collage to shape a surreal reality. His love for the occult, the supernatural, and the power of ancient symbols is the driving force of his creations. While the backbone of his art is traditional painting and engraving, he embraces a range of media. Using digital manipulation, HoruX creates pieces that act as ritual and incantation to connect the viewer’s subconscious and spiritual forces. He incorporates a range of iconography into *The All Seeing Mother*, noting the deity exists under a variety of names, sometimes called Marah, Binah, or the Great Sea. HoruX considers “The All Seeing Mother” to be the archetypal womb from which the universe is born and receives energy — the energy to create what ultimately becomes and then to eventually expire.

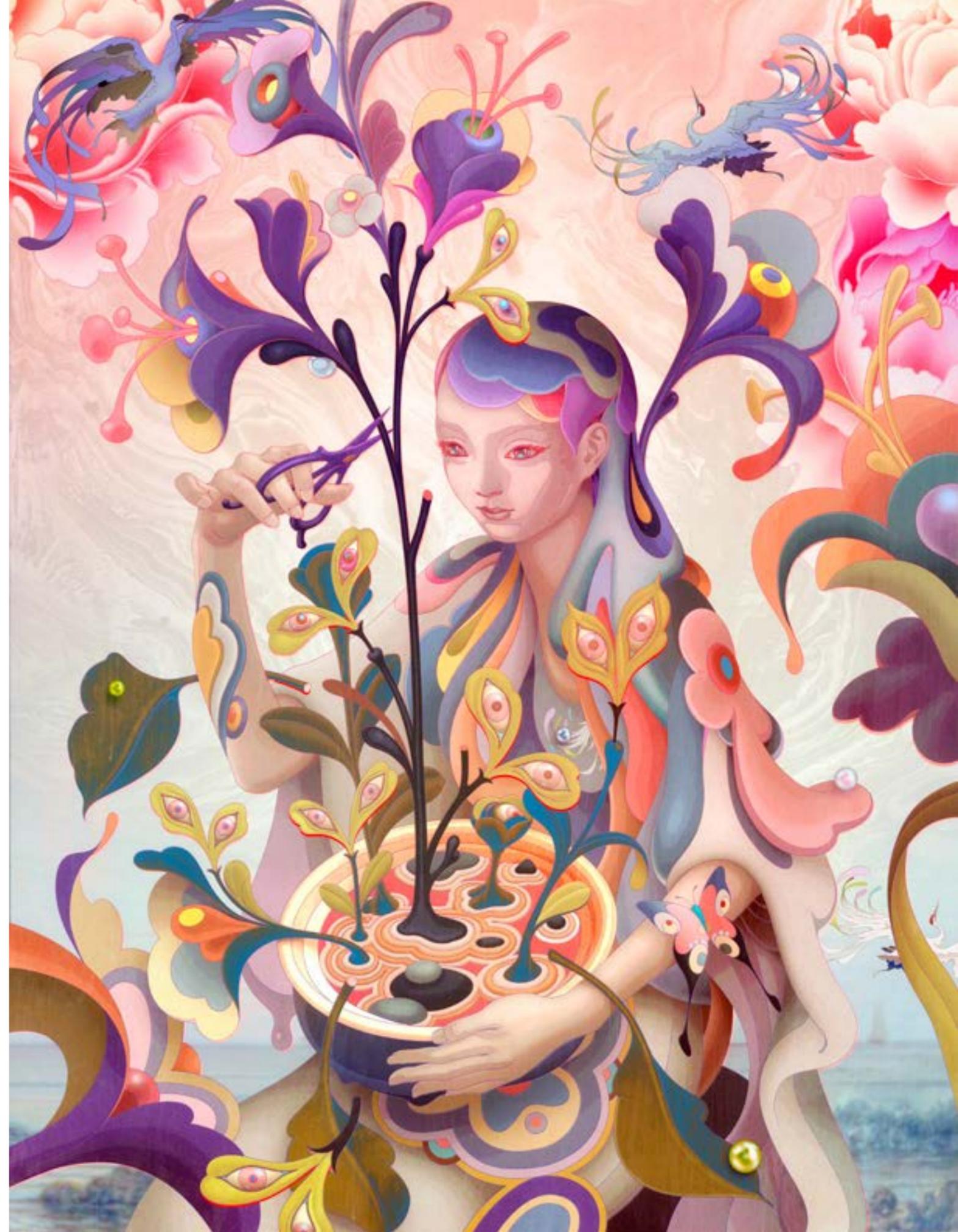
**The All Seeing Mother**, 2021. Digital print, 36 x 24 inches, Courtesy of the artist



## JAMES JEAN

Using a fluid flowing line and vivid coloration, James Jean creates an image bursting with creative force. The artist describes her figure, *The Editor*, as “pruning the branching narratives of her imagination emerging from a ceramic planter on her lap. The leafy shoots of the plant reveal pairs of eyes, each highlighted with a holographic sheen and sculpted in shallow relief. The eyes refer to a painting of Saint Lucy, the protector of sight, by Francesco del Cossa from the 15th century. *The Editor* wields her pruning shears carefully, letting the superfluous petals of her content fall to the cutting room floor. Within the planter are various touchstones regurgitated and left by the cranes flying in the distance. *The Editor* collects these touchstones as a way to evaluate the merit of each branching narrative, letting them steep in her witches’ brew.”

**The Editor**, 2019. Giclée print. 27 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches. Courtesy of the artist



## LAURA KARETSKY

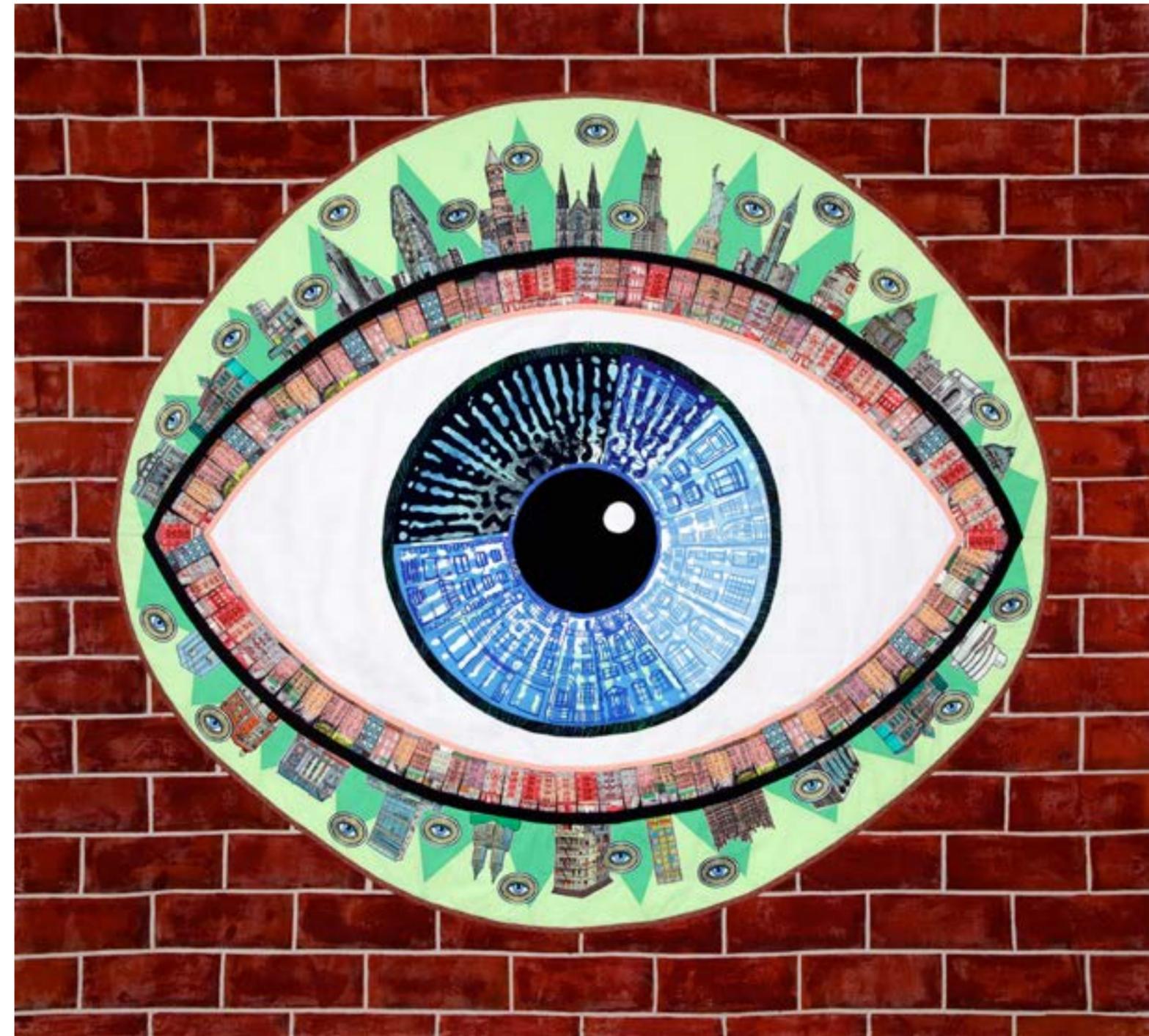
Karetsky made this humorous composition during the Covid-19 pandemic and it is a direct response to the masked environment of 2020. However, instead of revealing the eyes while concealing the mouth and lower portion of the face in a mask, Karetsky inverts the ubiquitous equation and shows herself wearing a pink night mask, with large bulging eyes printed on it. The piece begs the question of the title, *We're Going to Have to Learn to Read the Eyes a Lot Better*, and makes the viewer wonder about the deception of "artificial eyes" and how we can possibly learn to understand someone masked or disguised. This artist points out the importance of reading a face, saying "We're going to need to rely on the eyes a lot more. Whether masked in-person or through an analog portal, with so much concealed the idea of truth (and transparency) is being challenged as we learn to adjust and understand the complexity of the whole story, not just what is visible, or appears on camera."

***We're Going to Have to Learn to Read the Eyes a Lot Better***, 2020. Oil on wood. 18 x 14 inches  
Collection of the artist



## KATHERINE KNAUER

Knauer's dramatic quilt of a huge eye ringed with "eyelashes" made of a cityscape of buildings was inspired by frequent trips that took her to Peter Sis' public art installation, a mosaic called *Happy Time*, located in the MTA subway station at 86th Street and Lexington Avenue. Knauer modified that composition in textile, simplifying the design of the eye pupil, changing its coloration and contrast, and heightening the drama of the design through a process that included streamlined simplification and incorporating other inspirations, such as images from a construction barricade and a fabric entitled *All the Buildings of New York* based on drawings by James Gulliver Hancock. *Big Eye* at the center of the quilt, is an enormous single eye staring straight out at the viewer, referencing the ubiquity of security cameras in public areas — retail spaces and highly trafficked areas, such as subways. Knauer has mulled the tangled relationship between the security of observation and its oppressiveness. She said, "In 2015 the crime statistics in New York City had dropped considerably from previous decades, and I credited the ubiquity of cell phone cameras and building surveillance cameras, and felt very secure at all hours. I'm not so sure anymore."



**Big Eye**, 2015. Quilt, 66 x 72 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Jean Vong

## FAY KU

Ku details scenes of lush nature with fantastical backgrounds, in which magical events seem to occur and characters inspired by myth and legend roam. The artist said, "Mythology was my first love. . . that was sort of a view of the universe I could understand." Here, Ku gives female form to Argus, traditionally a male god with 100 eyes from Greek mythology. The body of Ku's Argus is covered with eyes, too, as she flies gripping a squawking peacock under her arm. Notably, her peacock, unlike its sacred mythical predecessor, has no "eyes" on its tail — the eyes of Argus, placed there as commemoration when that god failed to keep watch with his surfeit of eyes, and so was slain. In *See For the Trees*, Ku plays with the old expression of "seeing the forest for the trees." A gowned figure, her vision blocked, wends her way through a forest of birch trees, each studded with staring eyes. A frequent metaphor in Ku's work, the woman's covered face suggests how many women feel — they are seen but cannot see, and, in some fashion, remain faceless.



**Argus.** Graphite, watercolor on handmade Bhutan paper

Following page: **See For the Trees.** Graphite, watercolor, cut paper and glue on handmade Bhutan paper

Both: 23 1/2 x 32 inches. Courtesy of the artist



## CAROLINE LARSEN

Larson's exceptionally thick use of oil paint in *Eyes* creates a textural feel which, according to the artist, conveys an appearance that is "supposed to look woven, but it is actually an optical illusion." This matching of material to subject brings to mind the dramatic application of paint to canvas by such artists as Wayne Thiebaud in his famous paintings of cakes heavily heaped with frostings. In this unusual composition, Larson merges images of flowers, such as calla lilies, tiger lilies, and sunflowers, with surreal, colorful eye "blooms" — to create a bouquet of eyes of semi-circular shape that suggest the "eyes" in the unfurled fan of feathers in a peacock's train. Her bouquet bursts forth from a vase that recalls the 19th-century Aesthetic Movement, in which objects are painted against dramatic backgrounds that hover on the border of abstraction and representation. As the artist says, "For me, it's almost like a magic eye; when you first look at the painting you can't really tell what the subject matter is, but you know it's something familiar. Once you understand what the painting is, you can never go back to not knowing."



*Eyes*, 2019. Oil on canvas over panel. 48 inches round. Collection of the artist

## TED LAWSON

Come closer! Do you feel someone watching you? Ted Lawson embeds a pair of robotic eyes in *Daedalus*, the shiny, reflective blue disc that meets your own gaze and follows you about. The artist said, "My goal was to create an object that could observe the viewer and convey an emotional response through a computer-generated algorithm and robotic animated eyes. I wanted to know if the eyes alone had hooks deep enough to evoke a purely emotional response and a cognitive connection with a machine." The "uncanny valley" relationship between people and machines might appear to be a conundrum of our modern world, but the alluring, yet uneasy emotional response to machines has deep roots. In Greek mythology, Daedalus, brilliant architect and designer, made many automatons for King Minos, a legendary ruler of Crete.

### **Daedalus (Blue Robot #5), 2020**

Stainless steel, urethane, silicone, epoxy, computer parts, robotics. 47 x 47 inches

Edition of 3 with 2 APs 1/3. Courtesy of the artist and Josée Bienvenu Gallery

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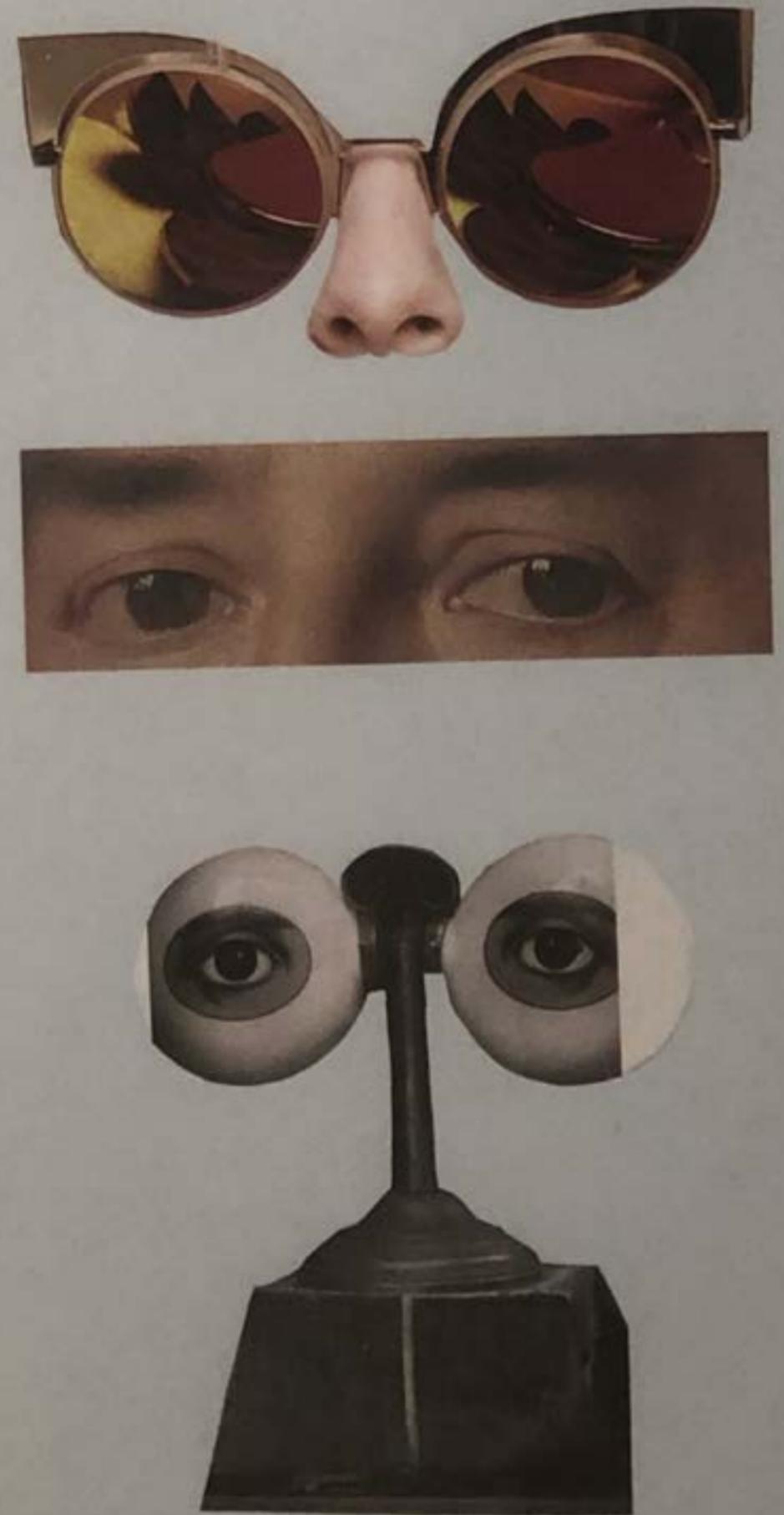




## LYSIANE LUONG

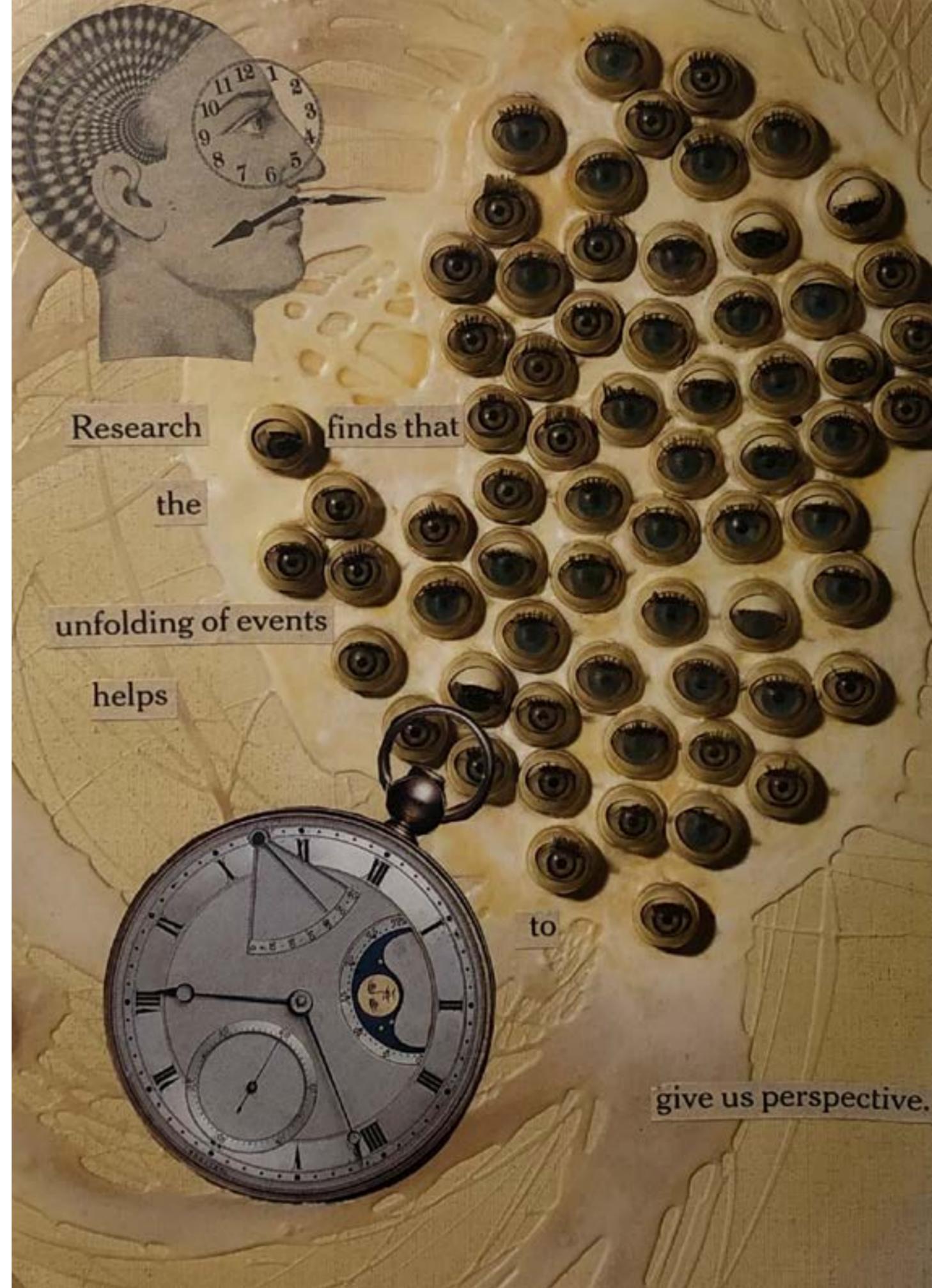
Luong humorously juxtaposes three sets of eyes in *Do You See What I See*. This artist has long employed collage in her work, creating whimsical and thought-provoking compositions that draw on art historical references in a way that suggest the compositions of 20th-century seminal collage artist Joseph Cornell, who used the Surrealist technique of juxtaposing found objects in unexpected ways. Luong draws elements for her collages from a huge collection of exhibition announcement cards she compiled over many years for source imagery. The physical exhibition card announcement, a rapidly disappearing artifact displaced by digital media blasts, thus becomes its own exploration of a quilt of art history, composed from thousands of large and small exhibitions “seen” during openings and closures across the New York art world. In *If Time Could Tell*, Luong plays with the idea of eye perception and perspective, both essential components of human sight. This artist, though, also explores the idea that Time gives us another “perspective” — the psychological — which may not be present in actual, physical vision at the moment events unfold. The concept of Truth emerging from clear-eyed Time is a frequent allegorical motif in art.

**Do You See What I See**, 2016. 5 1/4 x 8 1/4 inches, Collage on announcement card/unknown  
Collection of the artist



LYSIANE LUONG

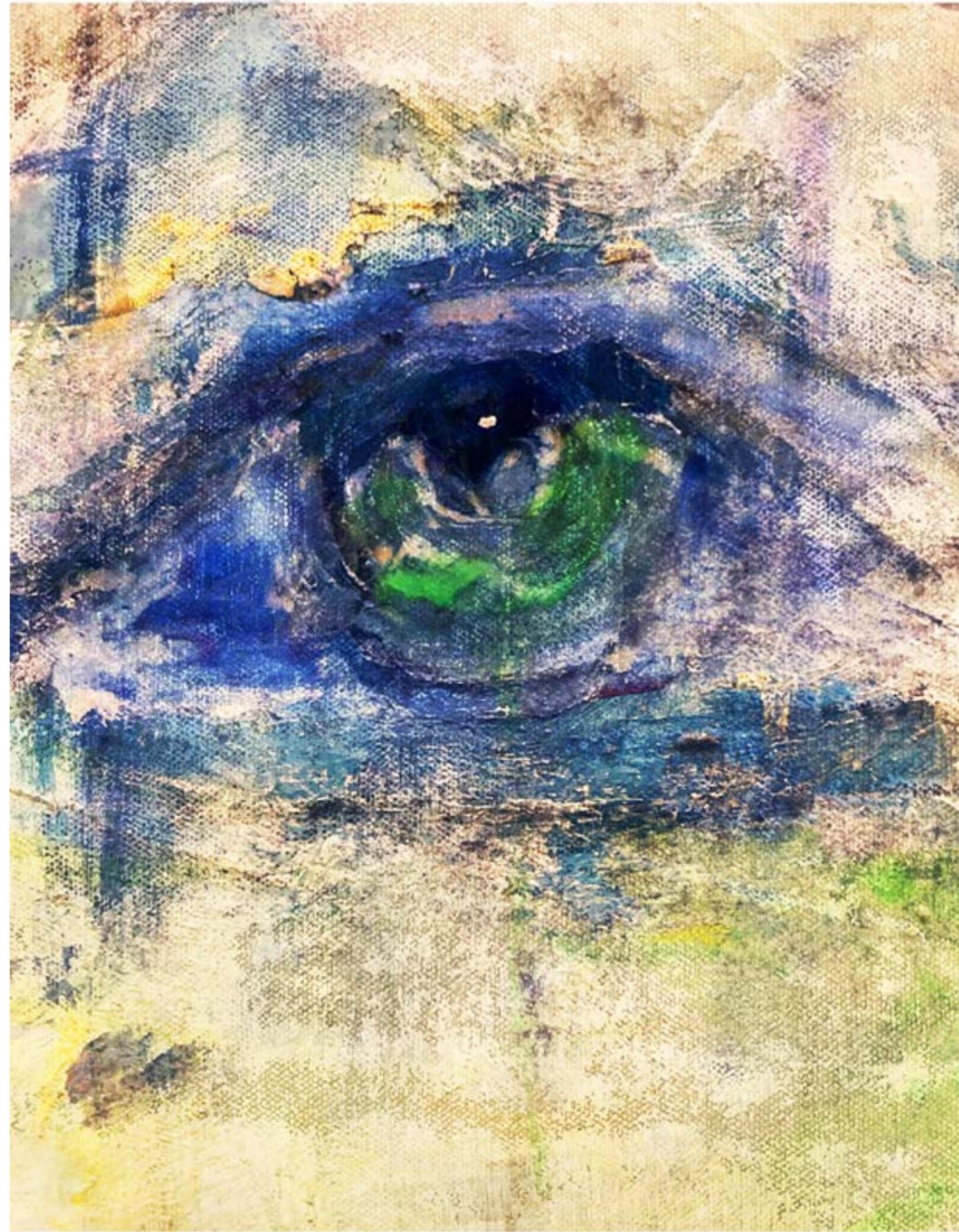
If Time Could Tell, 2015. 6 x 8 1/4 inches. Collage on announcement card/Carol Rama  
Collection of the artist



## CIVIL MILIEU

Reproachful, supplicating, and accusing, Milieu's orb is limpidly gorgeous and brimming with emotion. Working in a distinctly Expressionistic style, this artist employs lavish brushwork to imbue his compositions with heightened emotion. At the same time, Milieu's approach to both his work and the art world can be playful, as we see in the title he chose for this work to encourage the viewer to contemplate what it means to "actualize" the artistic value of an "actual eye." The artist and the viewer, both, ruminate on the evolution of emotions and how they enable artistic and financial value. The work presented is a small detail of an oil portrait digitally photographed by the artist, then translated back to canvas as a mass-produced photographic print. Thus, Milieu combines the traditional media of oil paint employed in his delicate original with the technique of mechanical reproduction, tipping his hat to Andy Warhol. About the eye, the artist says, "I love the idea of a single, representative symbol rooted in the familiar and traditional, but reexamined and reinterpreted in the boundary-busting, freely questioning, yet controversy-laden world of today."

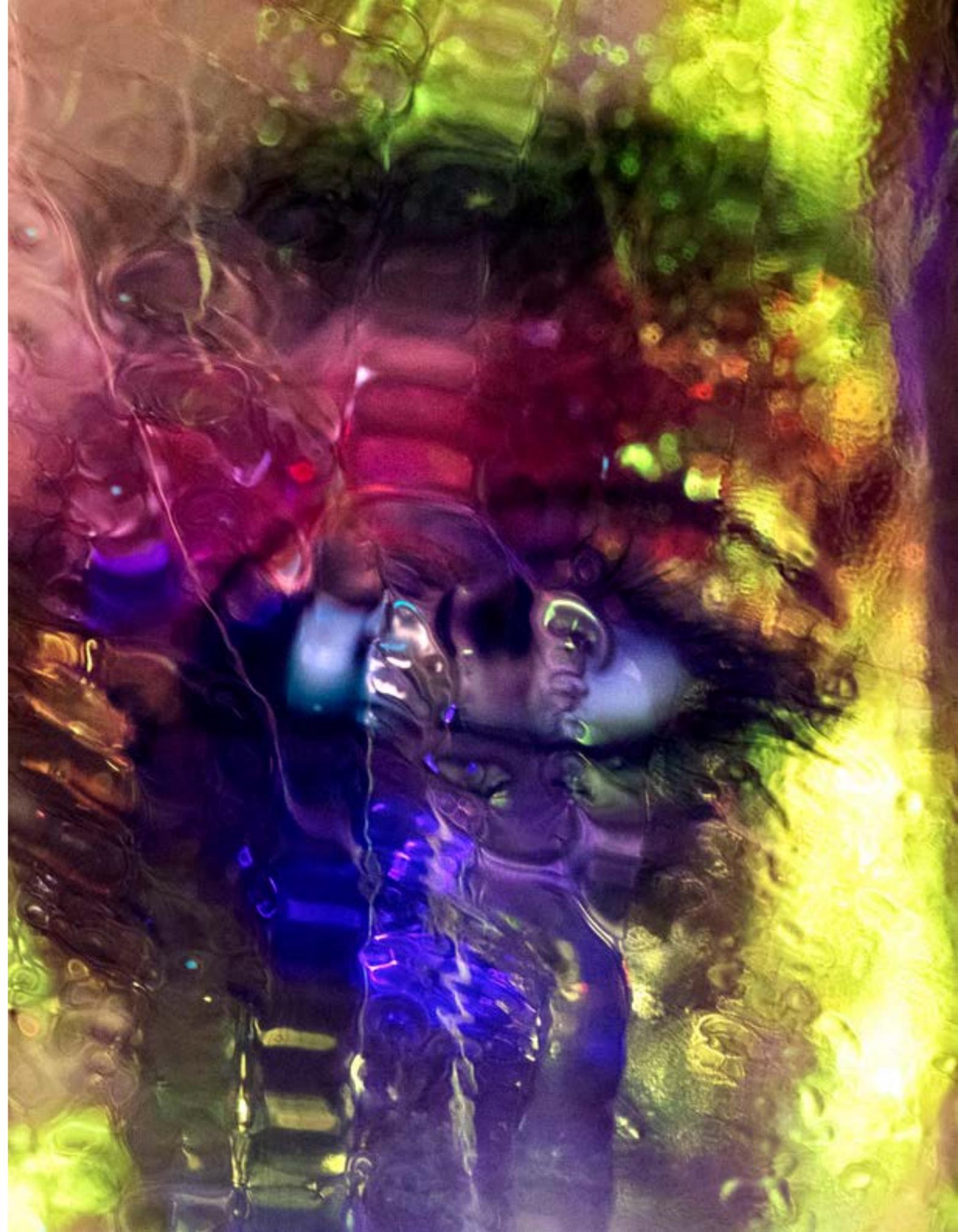
**Actual Eyes Value**, 2021. Photograph on canvas, 24 x 18 inches  
Courtesy of Ann Kendall Richards, Inc.



## MARILYN MINTER

Minter's work lies at the crossroads of Glamour and Gritty. In *Masquerade* the artist presents us with a blurred close-up of an eye heavily caked in makeup. The artist's trademark images of dirty sequins on wrinkled bodies, cracked heels in sky-high stilettos and long acrylic nails spotted with fungi all underscore the discomfort underneath the artifice of modern beauty. Minter explores attraction and repulsion — her images can veer towards the grotesque but are redeemed by an innate stylishness, even when its subjects tremble with pain, suggesting that the facade of beauty can crack. To achieve her characteristic blurred effects, Minter frequently photographs her models through a layer of steamed or wet glass, obscuring their identities. Minter's title here is telling: *Masquerade* suggests putting on a false show, a kind of pretense. The artist said, "I want to seduce my viewer with pleasure . . . When I'm shooting, I look for that one errant hair, or the spit strands that form when you open your mouth, or hair on the top of your lip. I like freckles, sweat, pubic hair, pimples, and wrinkles, but these attributes are erased in magazines. We pay a lot of attention to the way we look and the way we present ourselves to others, and that's not a shallow endeavor."

**Masquerade**, 2020. Dye sublimation print, 40 x 60 inches. Edition 1 of 5, 2AP  
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



## FELEKSAN ONAR

A “nazar” is an eye-shaped talisman believed to protect against the “evil eye,” particularly in Turkish culture. The concept of the evil eye spans numerous cultures, and it centers on the idea that the gaze of some individuals contains an energy which they can use to bring pain, illness, or even death to other humans or animals. Related is the belief that objects gazed upon with a jealous eye will be destroyed. To counter these ill-effects, various cultures developed artistic symbols and talismans to ward off the power of the evil eye. Onar, born and raised in Turkey, grew up with the deep influence of a cultural crossroads, and so the combining of cultures and the influences they impose upon one another are major themes in her art. Working out of studios in Turkey, Germany, and Italy, this cosmopolitan artist notes, “Many cultures have traditions and symbols to keep the evil eye away. I personally like ours [Turkish] as it is very aesthetic and enriches its surroundings, and it is almost always in glass!” The artist is a master of glass, and has moved seamlessly between historical craftsmanship, modern design, and contemporary art, employing a wide range of glass-making techniques, including the mouth-blown forms shown in *Nazar*. Creating art from glass demands significant technical skill and experimentation, bringing forth the immense potential of the language of glass that the artist has deeply embraced, as she transforms this medium into heightened artistic commentary.

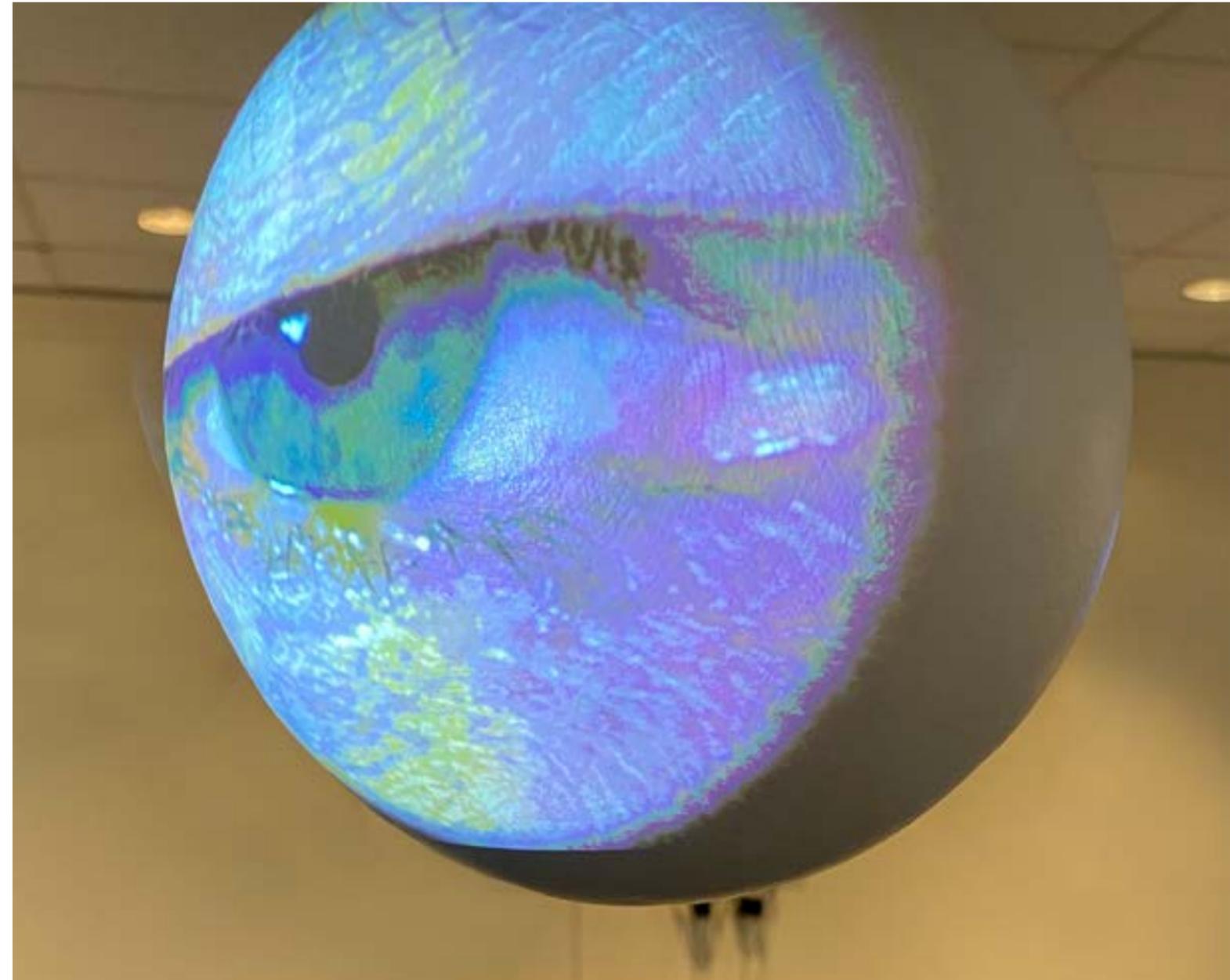


**Nazar**, 2021. Mouth-blown incalmo glass: Aegean Blue, Ruby, Amber, 4 3/4 inches  
Collection of the artist

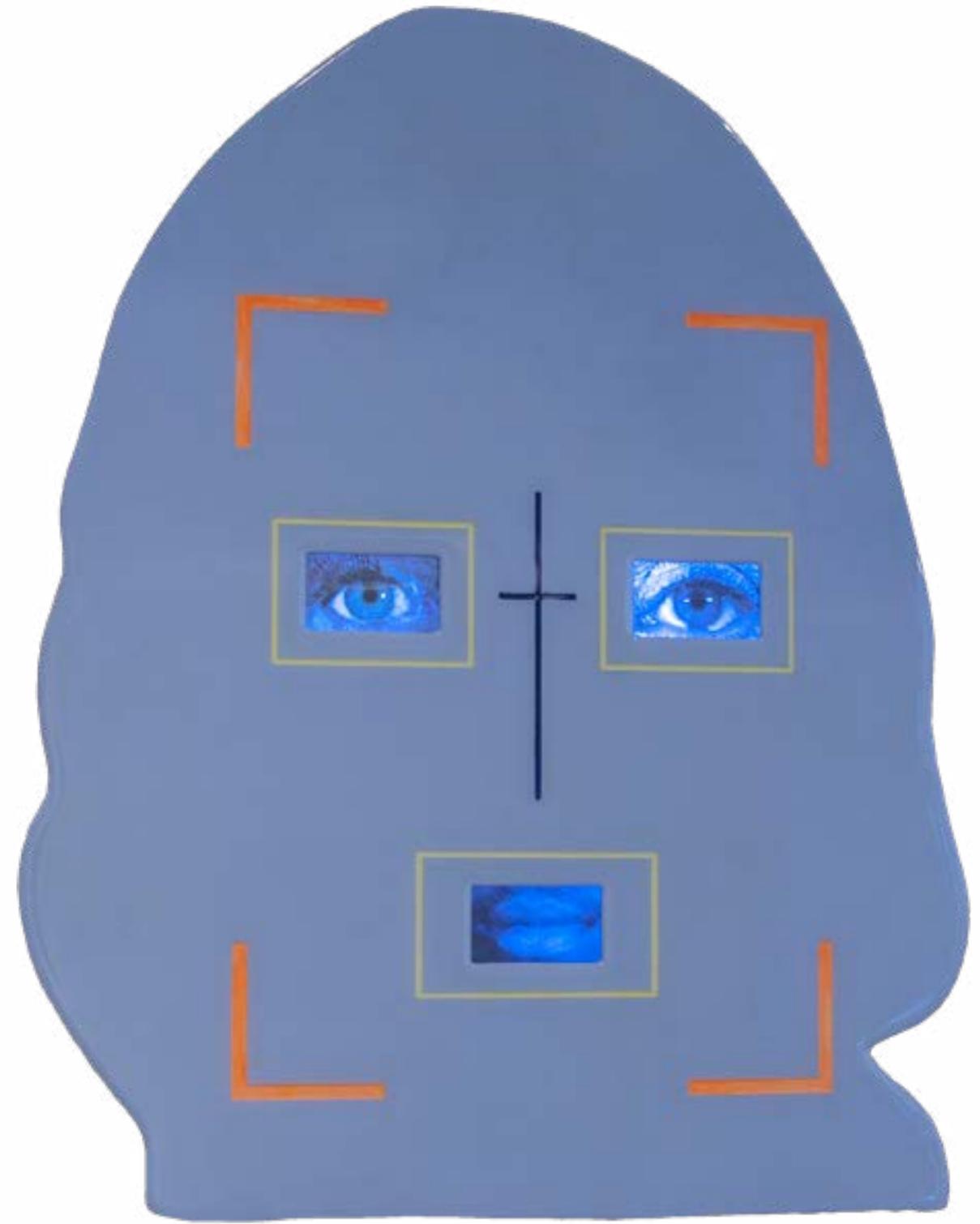
## TONY OURSLER

A blinking orb greets the viewer, seemingly merciless in its stare. Oursler is famous for his videos of distorted close-up faces, often accompanied by expletive-filled rants. Here *Eye*, devoid of a contiguous mouth, is silent. This work is actually a video of the gallerist Andrew Craven's eyeball, and its projection onto a sphere in darkened space gives us the unnerving sensation that we would experience if we saw the single eye of the mythological Cyclops floating in the darkness.

In *L%3M* Oursler composes a face of two eyes and a mouth of separately filmed body parts from different bodies. Spouting nonsensical phrases, the head, its outline reminiscent of Jacqueline Onassis' famous helmet hair style, contains what appears to be a crucifix, where a nose would normally be. The randomly recorded vocalizations chant, as in the reciting of a rosary, where prayers spoken aloud are counted on a string of beads. About the eye, Oursler has said, "...the isolated organ of the eye is incapable of showing emotion, which resides in the face which surrounds it. Real eyes are not so easy to read and people focus a lot of attention on them, trying to find something inside them."



**Eye**, 2019. Foam, resin, unique video, 8-inch sphere



L%3M, 2018. Aluminum, steel, media player, LED screens and acrylic, 20 x 24 inches  
Courtesy of Craven Contemporary LLC

## ALEX PRAGER

The shock of adrenaline. A crisis in a movie's staccato jump cut. In *Eye #5 (Automobile Accident) & 3.22pm, Coldwater Canyon*, Prager contrasts a scene of disaster with a close-up reaction to it. Highly cinematic, this work from the artist's *Compulsion* series draws the viewer into a split composition, where a dramatic scene plays out. Clearly the two separate images in *Eye #5* are related — the upward-looking eye observing the tilted car high in the air from which a body dangles. But the artist leaves out key pieces of visual information, cropping the composition so that the viewer's mind must fill in details for both accident and reaction. Prager's print elicits dramatic response from us because it is both danger filled and puzzling. We view the automobile accident in *Eye #5* from afar. We are alarmed but voyeuristic, making plain Prager's comment on us as observers, coolly detached; and his indictment of the emotional distance we can preserve as we watch events through the media. Subsumed in "disaster porn," we observe tragedy from safe sidelines, participating without the messiness of on-the-spot activity or emotion.



**Eye #5 (Automobile Accident) & 3.22pm, Coldwater Canyon, 2012**

Archival pigment print, Edition of 9. Left: 16 1/3 x 18 3/4 inches, Right: 35 7/8 x 14 2/3 inches

Courtesy of Craven Contemporary LLC

## JOSEPH RAFFAEL

A tour de force of watercolor, Raffael's *Owl* depicts one of the great birds of the Animal Kingdom. The artist, working from photographs, transformed this bird through brushstrokes to create one that sparkles with glorious sheen and shimmering transparency. Here this avian creature's eyes appear so inky black they seem to disappear altogether, leaving just the orbital sockets. Without eyes the owl is helpless, and the viewer staring into this owl's missing eyes is left to contemplate dark voids. Raffael's use of a kind of blindness to suggest a seer's second sight is a common motif in art. The owl's extraordinary night vision and far-sightedness outstrips that of human beings, but both species share a structural binocular vision similar to humans — they can see an object with both eyes at the same time. This gives an owl great ability to judge height, weight, and distance. Intensely sympathetic to his (often endangered) animal subjects, Raffael's picture making has been described as "a tender virtuosity without parallel in other American figurative painting." The artist increasingly drew his inspiration and sustenance from nature, noting, "The life in our garden is the inspiration for my paintings."



*Owl*, 2020 - 2021. Watercolor on paper, 39 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Nancy Hoffman Gallery

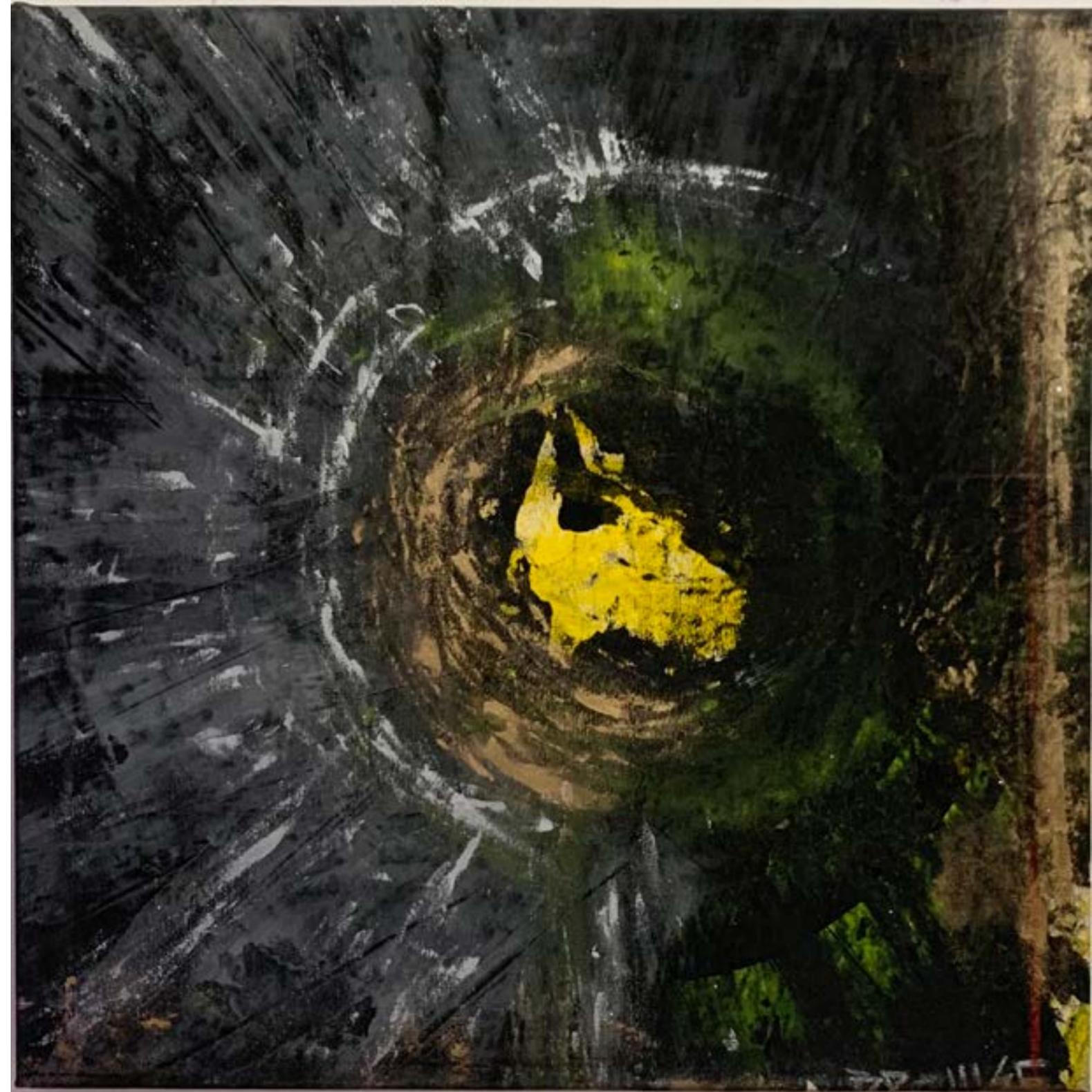
## JAMEL ROBINSON

Robinson's abstracted canvases of eyes, filled with swirling gestural brushstrokes, simultaneously conjure the dilated pupil of an eye writ large and the swirling 'eye' of a hurricane made small. Often this artist's restrained palette allows the viewer to concentrate on the vivid forms of his compositions. The meaning of the title *Abide* is telling. It is an accepting or agreeing to act according to a rule. The swirling form of the artist's work suggests the destructive power of a hurricane and the disordered rule that follows, such as homes and trees blown away. In *Promise* (following page) though, the daub of yellow at the center of the canvas recalls the queer content of Carson McCuller's famous novel *Reflections in a Golden Eye* and the film made from it, which tell a tale of sublimated gay longing. The "lashes" of the eye in *Promise* seem to radiate out like rays from the sun, both malignant and hopeful. The artist says of his work, "What has been personal is in fact universal—a desire to understand life, spirituality, and purpose through marks on a painted surface. Some of the marks reflect language and play an important role in the works, nodding to the internal through my own poetry and the external, coming out of songs that I listen to while creating."

**Abide**, 2019. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 30 inches  
Collection of the artist



JAMEL ROBINSON



**Promise**, 2019. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 30 inches  
Collection of the artist

## DAN SCHAUB

Schaub creates a glowing, wearable artwork that draws us to its mesmerizing presence. This intricately structured wooden mask, exceptionally detailed, was designed on computer and cut by laser to produce a perfect symmetry. Made to cover the entire head, the mask is so elaborate that it takes the viewer a moment to focus on the single large, central eye motif that covers the face. The artist says, "This wearable mask honors and represents the etheric entities that the mystic encounters during inward journeying. Covered in patterns and eyes like the angels and spirits of old, the entities are formed out of a living geometry. Experienced in brief moments of ecstatic reverie, these numinous apparitions dwell at the thresholds of the pareidolic (which is the tendency to see a meaningful image emerge in a random visual pattern), the visionary realms that one enters during meditation. Those who learn to close their two outer eyes and open their inner one long enough may encounter these beings of light coming out of the dark."

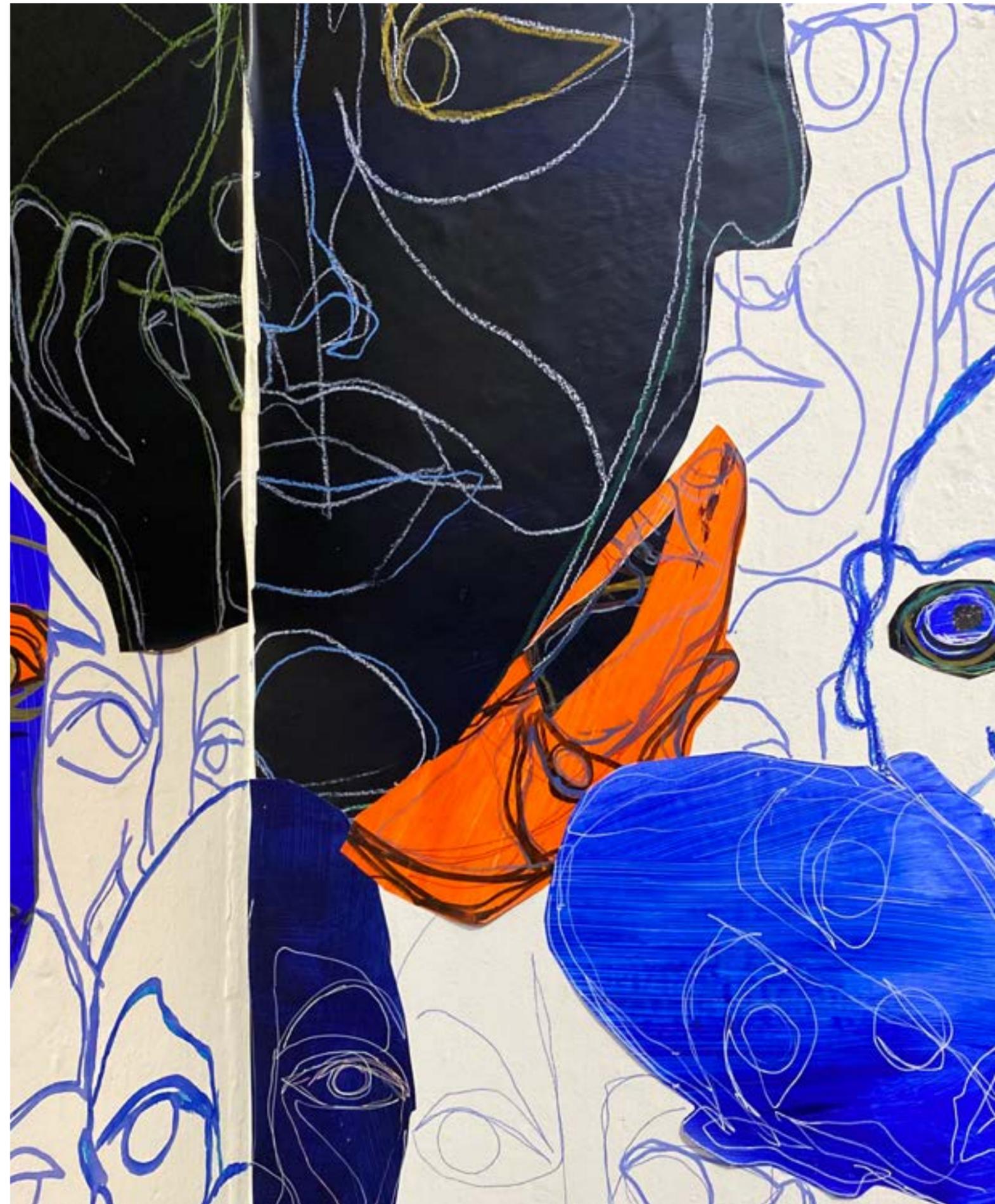


**Empress Mask**, 2021. Mixed media, 30-inch diameter. Courtesy of the artist

## SIMA I. SCHLOSS

In her signature style, Schloss creates a dynamic web of faces in bold orange, sapphire, inky black, and ghostly white colors, and adapts them to the Lehman College Art Gallery Rotunda, the space centered in architect Marcel Breuer's first building in New York City. Schloss incorporates a cacophony of faces around one of the building's distinctive massive columns, an environment where the sensation of being watched is the unavoidable outcome of entering the space. She underscores the significance and relationship of the eye to the face by emphasizing the orbital sockets, blacking them out in shadow, making them bold with contrasting colors, or dilating the pupils for artistic emphasis. Schloss said, "I want to address the physical and digital states of surveillance, which seems to be a byproduct of our 21st-century lives. We are under the all-seeing eye of both social media and (at least within urban environments) the ubiquitous CCTV cameras as well as facial recognition software, which supposedly offer increased safety. The eye functions as a stand-in for all of the ways in which we are observed: through a camera lens, video, digital tracking, or even through the literal eyes of others, and even in the mirror."

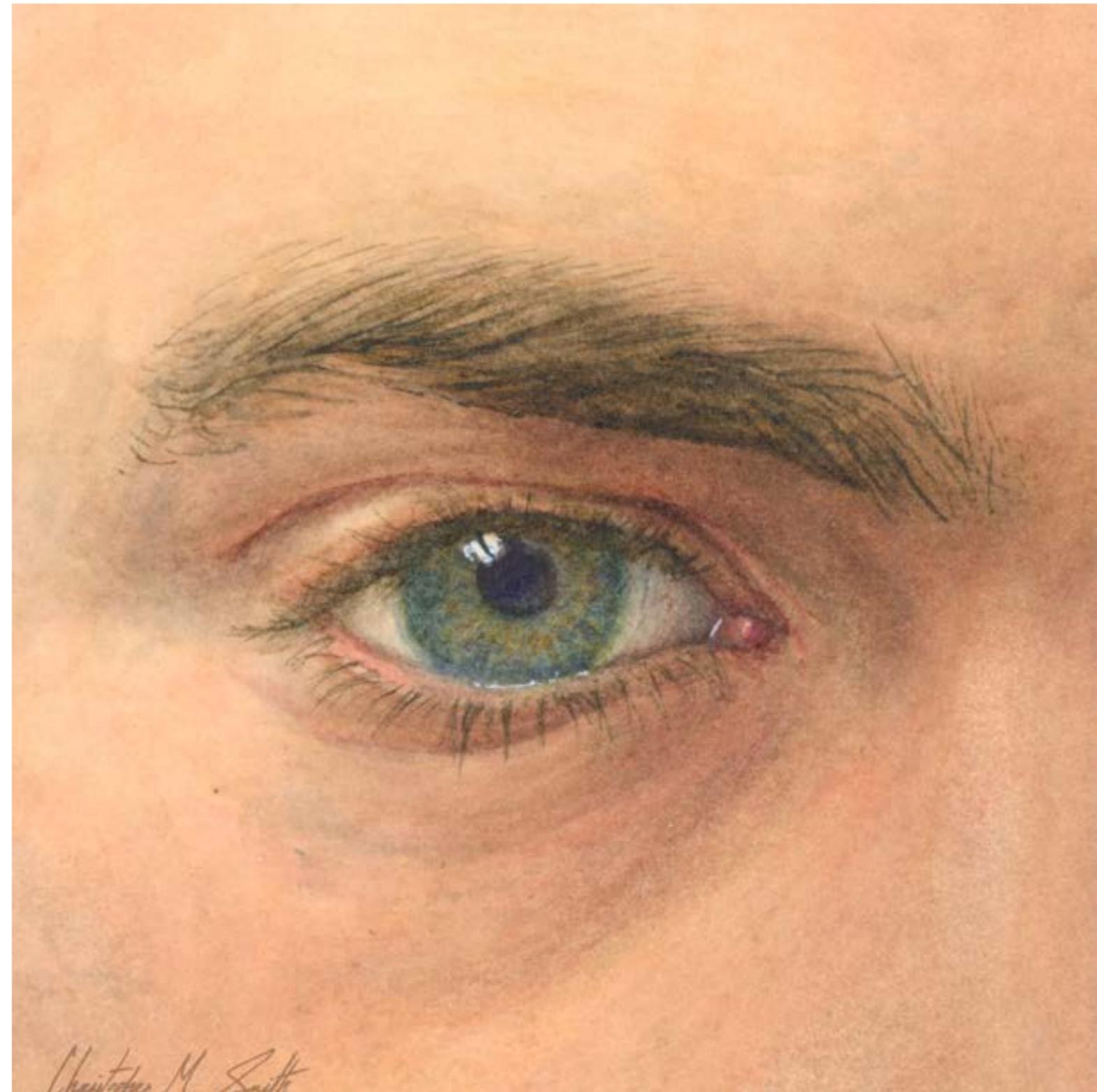
**The Eyes Have It**, 2021. Mixed media, site-specific installation, detail  
Following page: Lehman Art Gallery Rotunda. **The Eyes Have It**, 332-inch diameter  
Courtesy of the artist





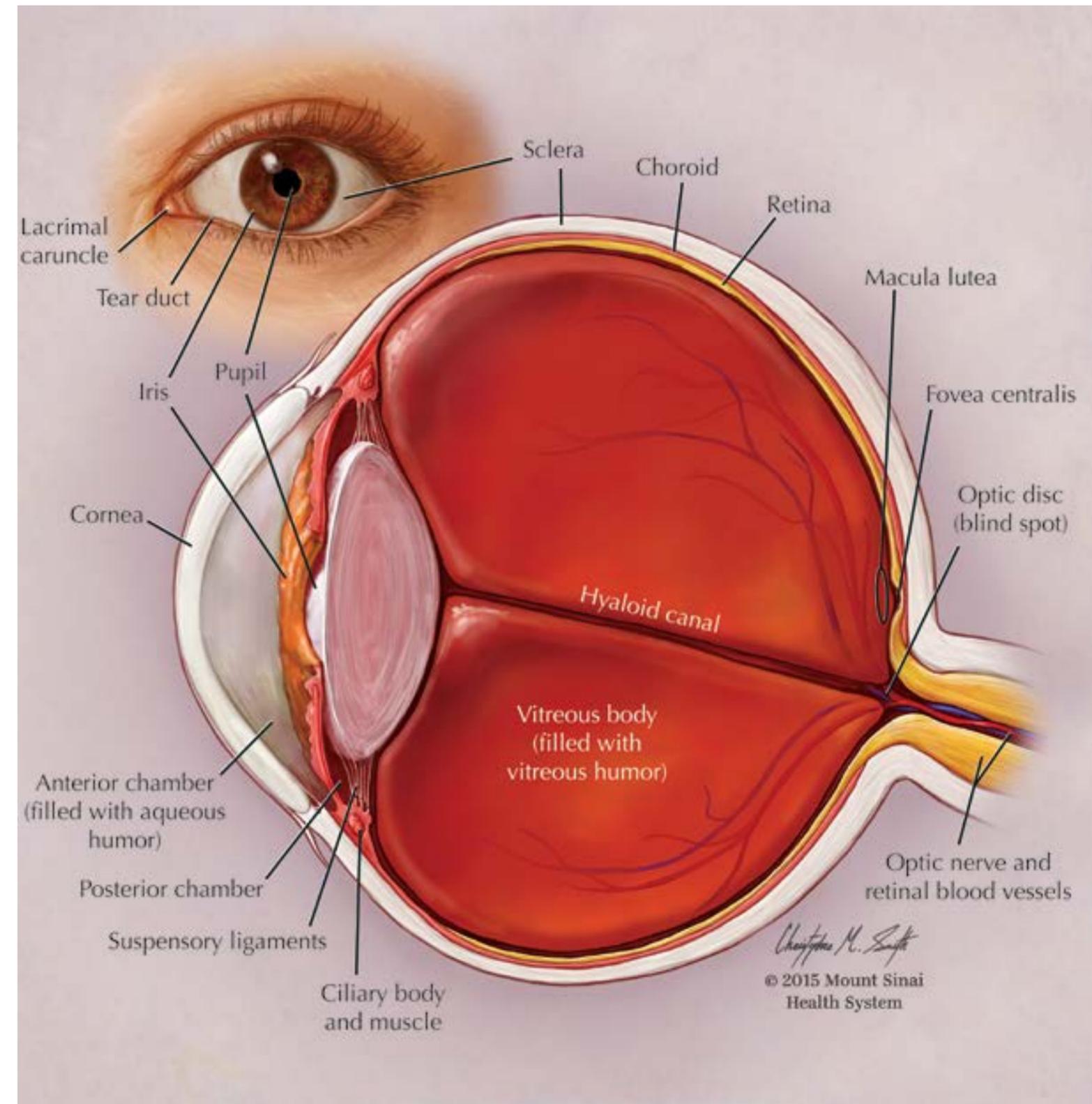
## CHRIS SMITH

The artistry of illustration lies in subtle questions of emphasis, simplification, and clarification, all aspects of composition with which artists must grapple. For *Self-Portrait Eye*, Smith uses his own eye as inspiration to create a watercolor that captures the surface form and underlying structure of the human orbital region, rendered to a high level of realism. Smith created this illustration in conjunction with a course for his master's degree in Ophthalmological Illustration at Johns Hopkins University in the Art as Applied to Medicine department. *Anatomy of the Eye* (following page) is a digital illustration that shows the interior anatomy of the eye in a cross section viewed from the side. A type of conceptual illustration, it depicts complex internal anatomy, while minimizing visual confusion through bisection of the eyeball. In contrast to a photograph, it shows only the most important structures in detail. Smith created this print as an educational piece for the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, merging his artistry with practical application.



**Self-Portrait Eye**, 2014. Original watercolor, 5 x 5 inches. Collection of the artist

CHRIS SMITH

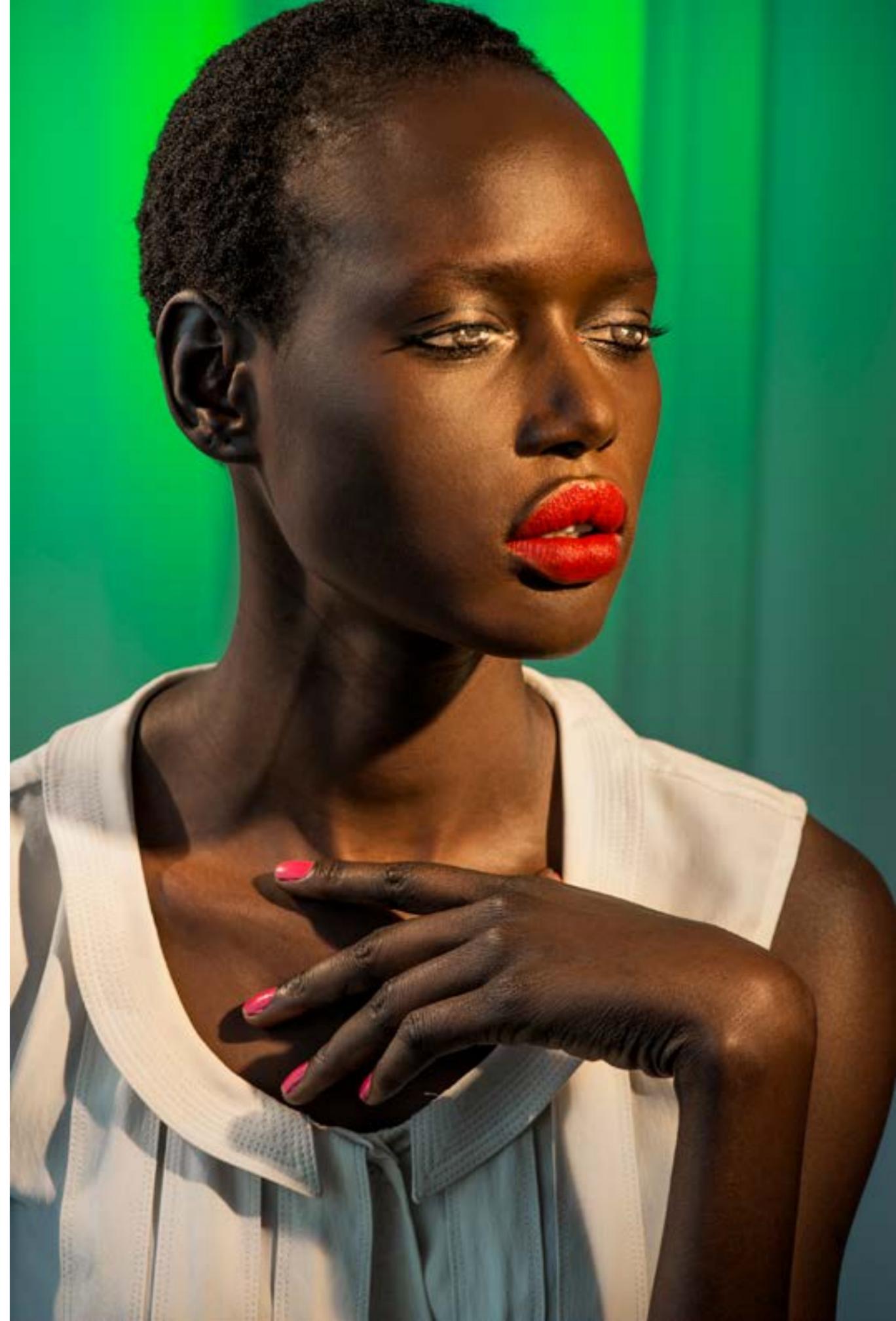


**Anatomy of the Eye**, 2015. Graphite and digital color print, 8 x 8 inches  
Courtesy of Mount Sinai Health System

## LAURIE SIMMONS

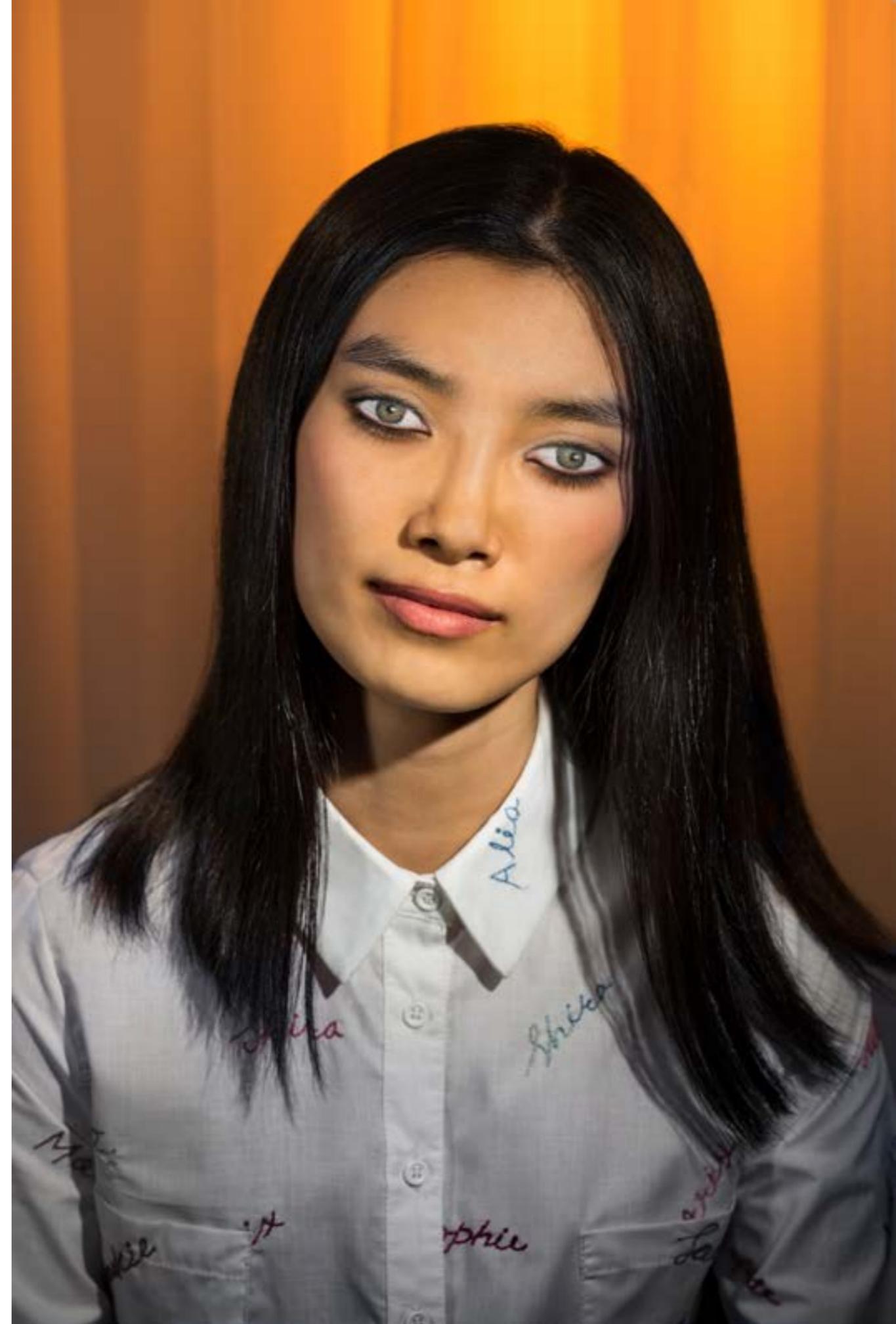
At first glance, the figures in Simmons' *How We See* series look upon us with blank eyes. Closer inspection of her dramatic large-scale photographs shows that she presents her models with eyes shut, the "eyes" that we see painted on closed eyelids. The artist was inspired by "watching a lot of Japanese online makeup tutorials where girls painted eyes onto their eyelids. I thought it was a rich metaphor for online culture — the culture of selfies and the idea that we never know who we are talking to or seeing, or who is seeing us." Simmons chose to portray a wide group of women in the prints, saying, "I tried to invite; I didn't specifically go after specific types of women, I tried to make these portraits varied." The deception that a quick glance at these photographs can impart is a subject that runs through much of Simmons' work — "When I picked up the camera, I was really interested in how a camera could lie; how it could deceive us. I was very interested in having the camera be a tool that didn't speak about the truth. That spoke more about my fantasies or even my personal idea about the truth." This series is notable as well for the brilliant coloration of its backgrounds that suggest Mannerist portraiture where expressive style, not naturalism, dominates.

**How We See/Ajak (Green)**, 2015. Pigment print. 70 x 48 inches. Edition 1 of 5, 2APs  
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



LAURIE SIMMONS

**How We See/Sis (Gold)**, 2015  
Pigment print. 70 x 48 inches. Edition 1 of 5, 2APs  
Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94, New York



## WILLIAM VILLALONGO

Two staring eyes peer at the viewer from the backdrop of a face concealed behind a swirl of chaotic paper in Villalongo's stunning image made from cut paper. The composition is only just held together and anchored by a pair of large hands on either side of the "face." "Holding it down" is a slang term for "keeping it under control," and this figure seems in imminent danger of compositionally losing control, spinning apart into a thousand tiny fragments. Villalongo describes his compositions as inextricably tied to his exploration of issues of race. He said, "Over the past 20 years, I've worked to express the absurdity, beauty and vulnerability of Black presence against the backdrop of race. The works become portals or navigational devices for thinking about the mystery within human experience through the poetics of history, myth and satire. . . Myth and satire became a way to speak about the poles between fiction and reality that accompany perceptions of black people and the relative absence and presence of the Black image in the Western historical context. Myths, for better and for worse, allow us to see the unimaginable or the not yet imagined."

**Holding it Down**, 2018. Acrylic, paper collage, and cut velour paper. 49 x 39 inches  
Photo Argenis Apolinario, NYC. Courtesy of ©Villalongo Studio LLC and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC





## **LEHMAN COLLEGE ART GALLERY**

Always free to the public, Lehman College Art Gallery has been serving the interests of our diverse audience from the Bronx and New York City since 1984. The gallery specializes in thematic group exhibitions that bring together famous artists with emerging talents. Education is an integral component of the Gallery's programming and provides the basis of community outreach to more than 25,000 individuals a year – from young students to senior citizens.

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THE EYES HAVE IT

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