

alexander a.

GOLODFARB

juried student exhibition

The Way It Needs To

Statement on jurying the 2023 Alexander A. Goldfarb Juried Student Exhibition

One artist in this year's exhibition spent the past semester meditating on the phrase "everything will happen the way it needs to." Theirs is one of the few works that incorporates text. The thickly painted words "THE WAY IT NEEDS TO" dissolve abruptly in mesmerizing swirls of color, into which the artist subtly embeds disembodied eyeballs and teeth. This painting touches on themes that ripple across the submissions and selected works, in particular, surrealist and mystical imagery and a dystopian tenor.

The works that engage with mysticism and illusionism are not escapist; in fact, many are informed by identity-based issues, including gender, sexuality, race, and especially mental health. Grief is an overarching concern, from tender depictions of relationships, to a loss of self, and a yearning for the past. The self-portraits are disquieting and uncanny, revealing a split between self and other. Landscapes appear in some works as pristine and sublime, and in others, as toxic—altered by humans and sullied by technology. A handful of works use humor and irony to lambaste political systems, homophobia, and reproductive rights. Finally, works that invite us into constructed spaces do so in a disorienting way, presenting architectures that feel precarious, unstable, vertiginous, or claustrophobic.

When jurying an exhibition remotely, there is a loss in not being able to see the technical details in person. However, there is something equalizing about the digital process; the largest works do not necessarily take up the oxygen in the room, since each work is more or less the same size on my screen. I tried to include a range of media and technical approaches. I was drawn to works that move beyond literal representation and into a psychologically complex or conceptual realm. I looked for coherence between the handling of the medium and the subject (e.g. not using a rigorously academic style to depict a scene of wild abandon). I gravitated toward works that engage with contemporary notions of the human as vulnerable and contingent, and of storytelling as non-linear and collective.

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