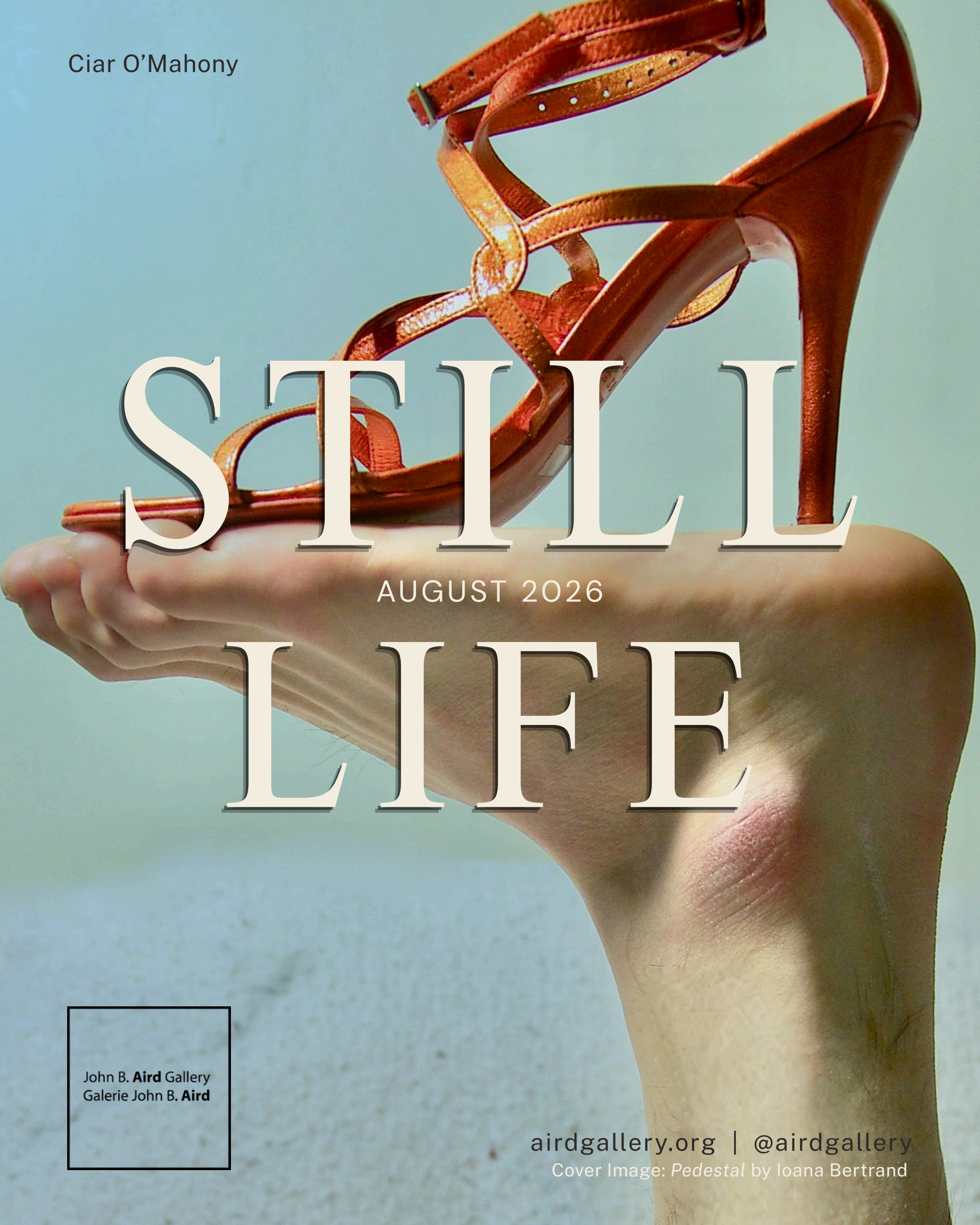


Ciar O'Mahony

A hand holding a high-heeled shoe with orange straps against a light blue background. The shoe is a strappy, high-heeled sandal with multiple orange leather straps. The hand is holding the shoe from the side, with the heel pointing upwards. The background is a solid light blue color.

STILL

AUGUST 2026

LIFE

John B. **Aird** Gallery
Galerie John B. **Aird**

airdgallery.org | [@airdgallery](https://www.instagram.com/airdgallery)

Cover Image: *Pedestal* by Ioana Bertrand

FOREWORD

STILL LIFE

ARNIE GUHA

15 AUGUST 2026

Why would an artist, practising in one of the wealthiest and most technologically advanced societies on the planet, wish to depict Still Life in 2026? What is it that we wish to depict? What do we want the viewer to see, or more importantly, experience?

One answer is as old as the form itself: Still Life has always been a way of taking inventory of both what we own, and what we notice. This, in any age of abundance, is its own kind of possession.

The notion of an inventory goes back to the earliest recorded depictions of Still Life. Ancient Egyptian tombs depict food, vessels, furniture and other possessions with near-ledger-like attention, creating a pictorial record of the material provisions required for another life. Roman painters later catalogue fruit, fish, game, vessels and other objects of abundance and hospitality. They might not have considered it “art,” but the depictions do answer one key question about what Still Life achieves: Still Life is one of the means by which a civilization leaves a record of its relationship with things.

By 1650, when the word *stilleven* appears in Dutch inventories as a collective term for paintings of stationary things, a key change seems to have occurred in their depiction: the shift in the artist’s

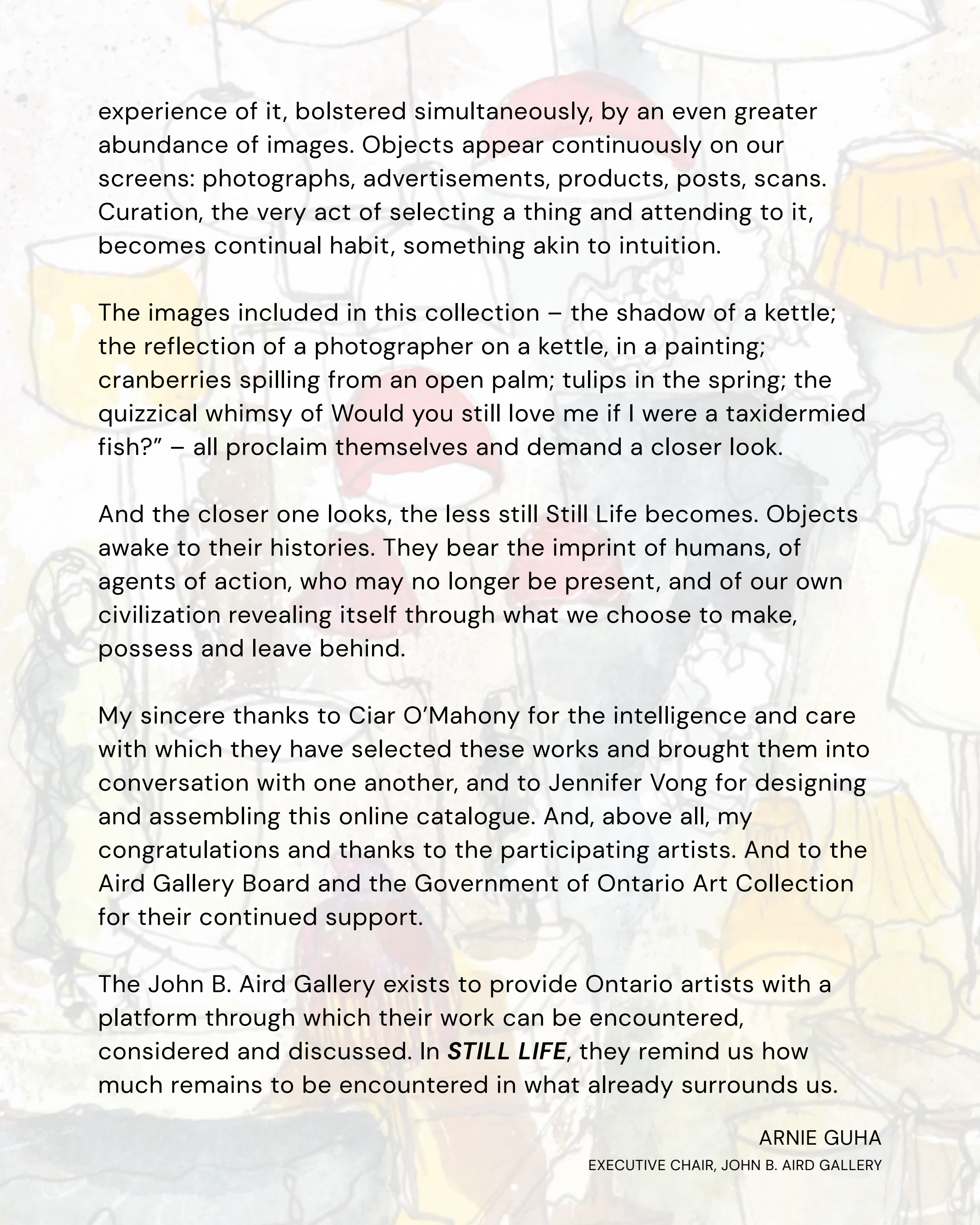
attention towards the human imprint on things. A lemon rind does not simply exist in a vacuum but is the direct product of human action. The very selection of objects to depict in art, as well as their posture and placement, and their relationship to light and texture, collectively imply a location of that object in time. It also places the object within a narrative framework that invites the viewer to speculate on the actions of an absent human agent, now made visible only through things.

Still Life becomes a viable and exceptionally effective record of our imprint on time: it invites us to examine the very nature of the civilization that left such a record of its relationship with things. And so it is with ***STILL LIFE***, which the John B. Aird Gallery is proud to present. Juried and thoughtfully assembled by Ciar O'Mahony, the exhibition brings together artists whose approaches range widely in medium, subject and sensibility. Ciar has organized the collection into four sections, each approaching that relationship from a different direction: Chiaroscuro, In Bloom, Embracing Mundanity and Resisting Reality. Collectively, the works move from close observation of the material world towards its disruption and reinvention, while retaining Still Life's enduring proposition: that things, however commonplace, strange or transformed, can reward the decision to stop and look.

And perhaps this brings us back to the question with which I began.

Why Still Life in 2026?

Because our relationship with things is changing again. We find ourselves in a world of extraordinary material abundance, and our



experience of it, bolstered simultaneously, by an even greater abundance of images. Objects appear continuously on our screens: photographs, advertisements, products, posts, scans. Curation, the very act of selecting a thing and attending to it, becomes continual habit, something akin to intuition.

The images included in this collection – the shadow of a kettle; the reflection of a photographer on a kettle, in a painting; cranberries spilling from an open palm; tulips in the spring; the quizzical whimsy of “Would you still love me if I were a taxidermied fish?” – all proclaim themselves and demand a closer look.

And the closer one looks, the less still *Still Life* becomes. Objects awake to their histories. They bear the imprint of humans, of agents of action, who may no longer be present, and of our own civilization revealing itself through what we choose to make, possess and leave behind.

My sincere thanks to Ciar O’Mahony for the intelligence and care with which they have selected these works and brought them into conversation with one another, and to Jennifer Vong for designing and assembling this online catalogue. And, above all, my congratulations and thanks to the participating artists. And to the Aird Gallery Board and the Government of Ontario Art Collection for their continued support.

The John B. Aird Gallery exists to provide Ontario artists with a platform through which their work can be encountered, considered and discussed. In ***STILL LIFE***, they remind us how much remains to be encountered in what already surrounds us.

ARNIE GUHA

EXECUTIVE CHAIR, JOHN B. AIRD GALLERY

Finding Meaning in the Everyday

CIAR O'MAHONY

It has been a genuine honour to be invited to curate this year's **Still Life** catalogue and to engage with a genre that has endured for millennia. Some of the earliest known still life paintings appear in the tomb of Menna in ancient Egypt, dating to the fifteenth century BCE. What is remarkable is how familiar many of their subjects still feel today: fish, crops, vessels, baskets, and other ordinary objects of daily life continue to appear in the works of contemporary artists.

Across centuries and cultures, still life has remained a remarkably adaptable form. Whether in painting or photography, artists throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas have used it to explore questions of memory, identity, labour, abundance, mortality, and beauty. The works gathered in this exhibition remind us that still life is not simply a historical genre, but a living one that continues to offer artists a way of looking closely at the world around them and finding meaning in the everyday.

As I spent time with this collection, which reflects the remarkable diversity of contemporary still life, four themes began to emerge. **Chiaroscuro** brings together artists whose dramatic use of shadow, darkness, and light lends everyday subjects a sense of

mystery and vitality. ***In Bloom*** gathers works that turn to the botanical world with approaches that are at once joyful, melancholic, and experimental. ***Embracing Mundanity*** celebrates the quiet poetry of ordinary life, where empty chairs, an iron resting in a window, and yes even taxidermied fish become worthy subjects of careful attention. Finally, ***Resisting Reality*** highlights artists who stretch the conventions of still life through collage, experimental photography, and imagined anatomies, expanding the genre beyond faithful representation into the speculative and surreal.

It was a pleasure to spend time with these works, and I hope you find them as enriching to look at as I did.

Biography

Ciar O'Mahony is a curator based in Tkaronto. They are a member of collectively run gallery the plumb, and co-direct SCaM Project Space. They received their BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London. Various, they have exhibited work, developed public programs, and curated exhibitions for South London Gallery, UK, The Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, UK, Cubitt Artists', UK, the plumb, The Aird Gallery, and Archer Beach Haus, US. Their work is carried by Art Metropole, and archived by Xpace. Their writing has been published by e-flux journal, Blackwood Gallery, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, YYZ Artists' Outlet, and Liminul Magazine.

List of Artist

Ioana Bertrand

Linda Briskin

Nancy R. Chalut

Yu-Sheng Chiu

Eva Christensen

Edward Donald

Matthew Ferguson

Monique Fouquet

Anne Fullerton

Katherine Hartel

Rhodri Kasperbauer

Nancy Kembry

Miklos Legrady

Sue Mackay

Dimitrije Martinovic

Claudia McKnight

Markus Moos

Deborah Percy

Jackie Rancourt

Leena Raudvee

Barbara Rehus

Dale M. Reid

Diane Royce

Irina Schestakowich

Lee Schnaiberg

Robert Charles Bruce Scott

Carolynn Smallwood

Andrew Stikuts

David Switzer

Kate Taylor

Corine van Hoeve

Kenneth Vincent

Janna Robins Walters

CHIAROSCURO



Kenneth Vincent



Fibonacci's Espresso

Oil on linen panel

20" x 12.5"

NFS

Anne Fullerton



Still Life with Porcelain Glove Mold

Photography

14" x 11"

\$250

Ioana Bertrand



Pedestal

Digital photography

10" x 8.5"

Miklos Legrady



Kettle Shadow

Acrylic on cardboard

28" x 42"

\$275

Nancy R. Chalut



Flow Blue

Oil on canvas

12" x 16"

\$1,800

Robert Charles Bruce Scott



Stamp Love
Oil on canvas
16" x 20" x 1"
NFS

Miklos Legrady



Kettle 2

Acrylic on cardboard

28" x 42"

\$275

Claudia McKnight



Life Stilled

Digital photograph mounted on birch
panel

40" x 30"

\$1,100

Anne Fullerton



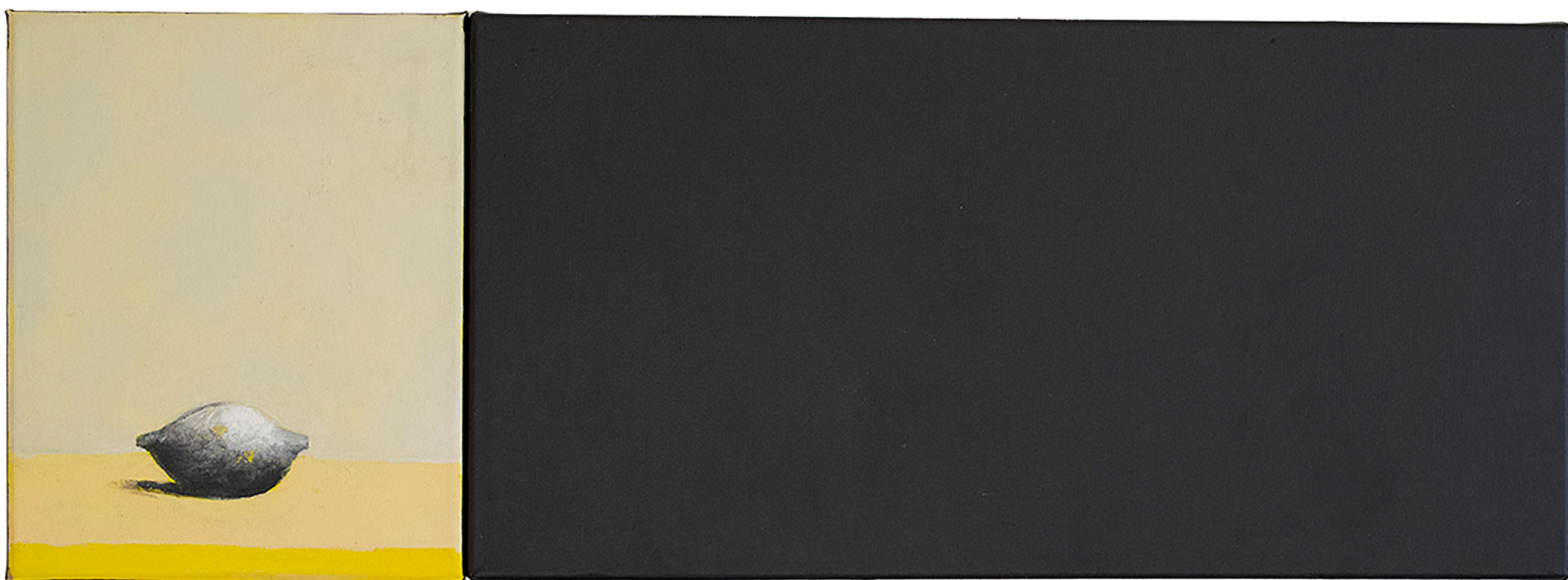
A Measure of Cranberries

Photography

14" x 11"

\$250

Nancy Kembry



Lemon - Still Life

Oil on canvas

10" x 28"

\$1,150



IN BLOOM

Deborah Percy



Down the Garden Path

Acrylic on board

23.5" x 23.5"

NFS

Katherine Hartel



Mushroom Life Cycle

Oil pastel on paper

11" x 15"

\$250

Claudia McKnight



The Shape of Water

Digital photograph mounted on birch panel

30" x 40"

\$850

Irina Schestakowich



HANG IN

Acrylics

16" x 12"

NFS

Edward Donald



Sharad Ritu: (Autumn)

Ink, prismacolor stix, pastels, conté on paper

17" x 23"

\$2,200

Dale M Reid



Oyster Mushroom 41

Silver gelatin print

16" x 16"

\$3,400

Sue Mackay



Where My Secrets Lie

Acrylic on plexiglass

12" x 12"

\$350

Janna Robins Walters



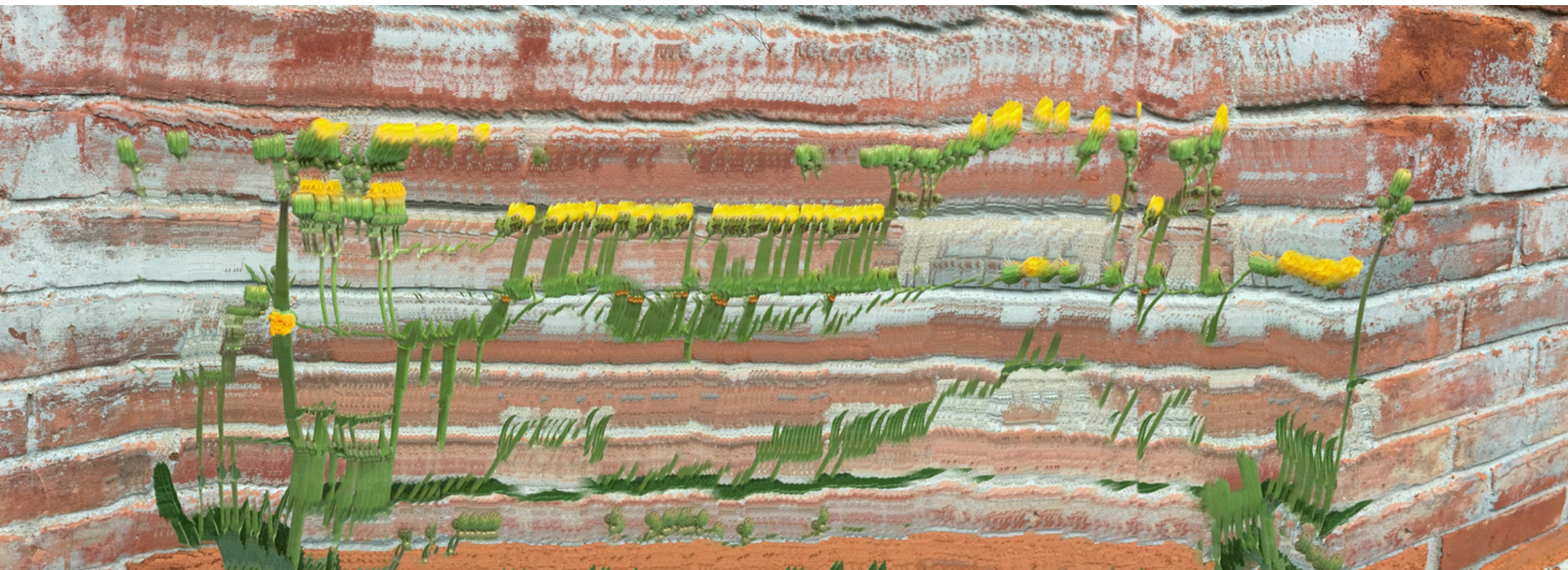
" I didn't start the fire"

Mixed media on paper

30 x 30 "

\$1400

Lee Schnaiberg



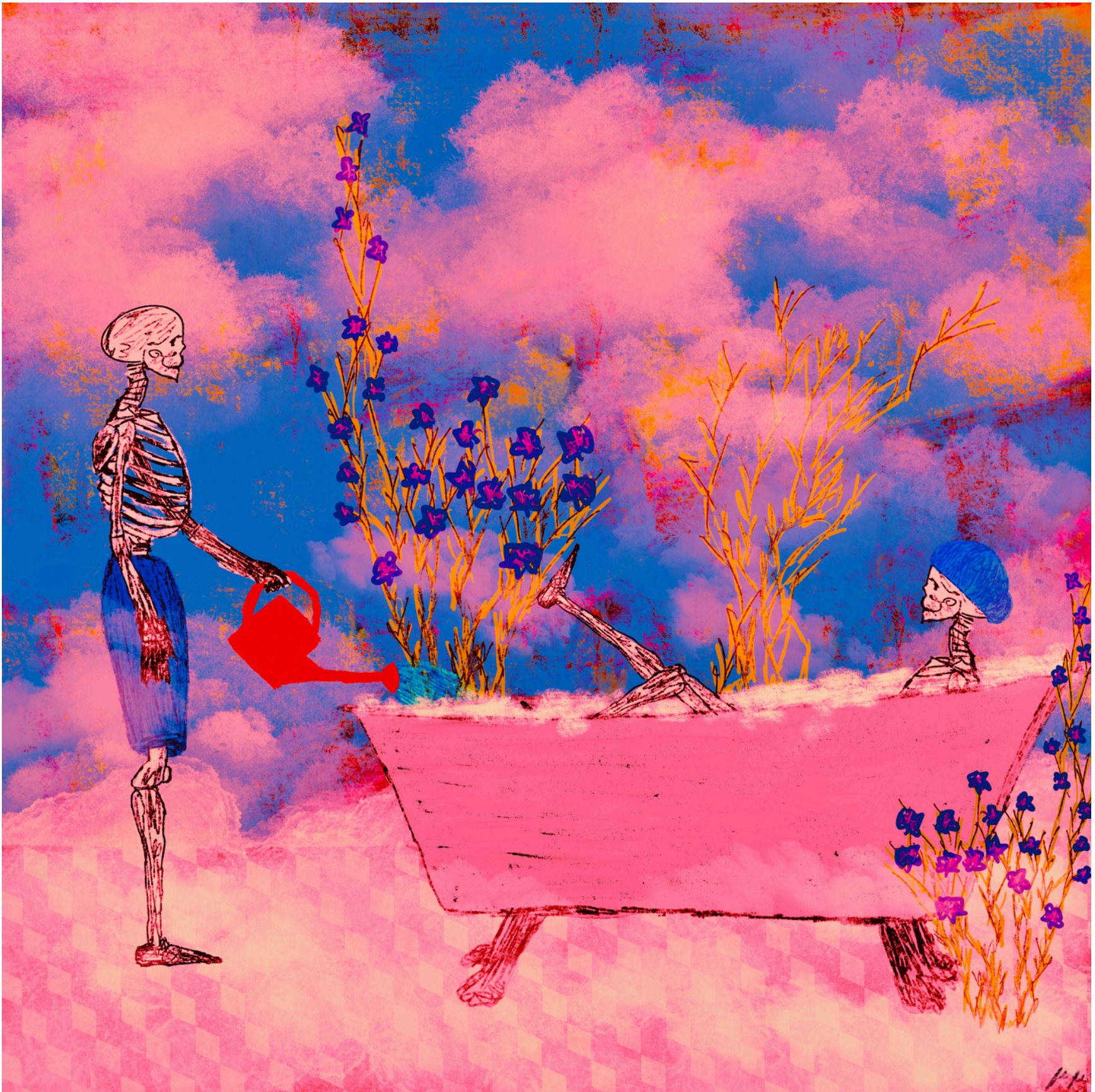
Écho d'un Presque-Rien

PANOart (digital photography)

24.35" x 8.77"

\$600

Markus Moos

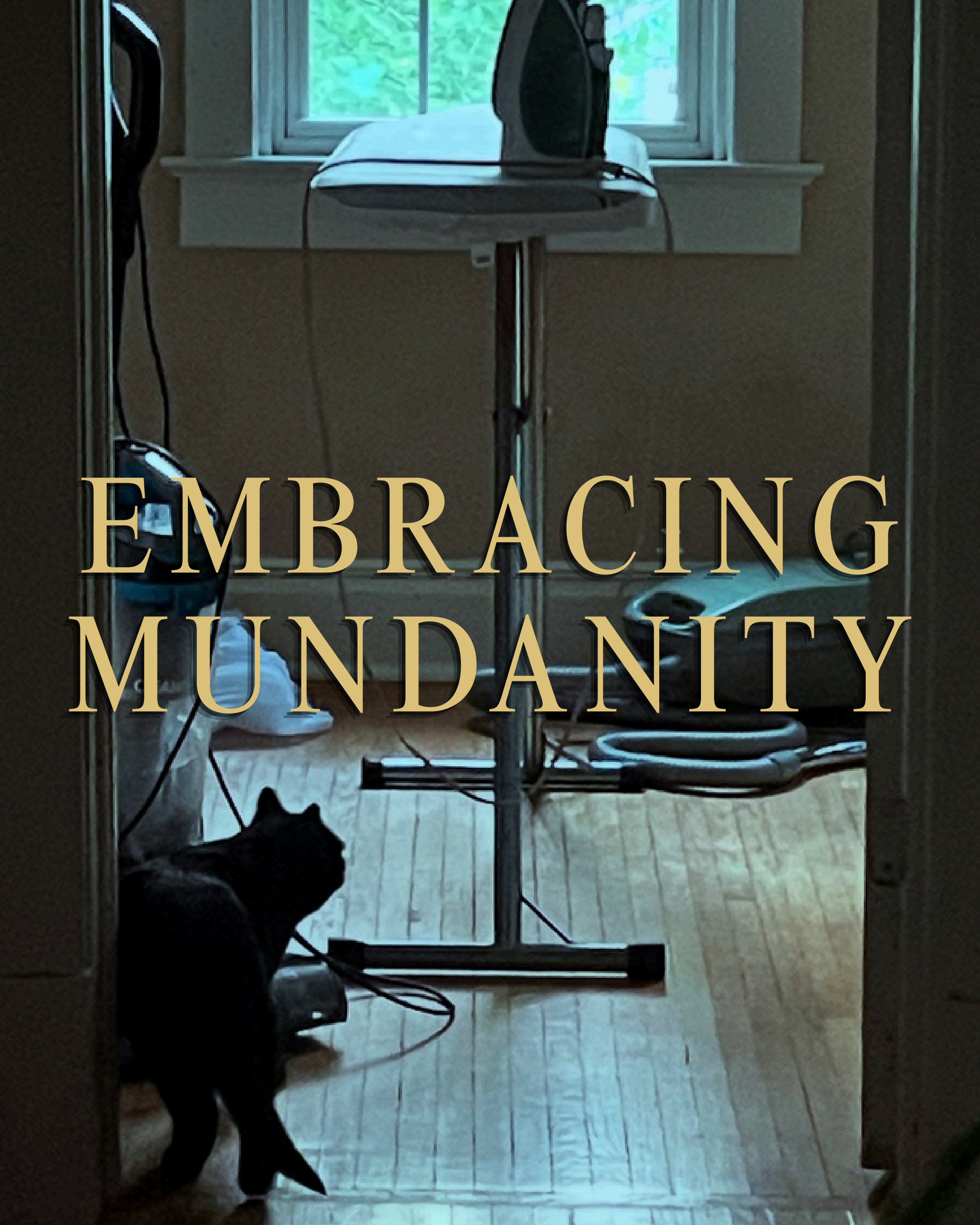


Selfcare

Framed fine art print of digital drawing

12" x 12"

\$350



EMBRACING MUNDANITY

Carolynn Smallwood



Potential
iPhone photo
9.89" x 13.51"
NFS

Andrew Stikuts



Unexpected

Oil on Arches Huile on cradled birch panel

12" x 16"

NFS

Corine van Hoeve



Untitled (Joker)

Oil on canvas

60"x40"

\$4,000

kate taylor



little boy's shoes

Photograph

variable

\$325

Linda Briskin

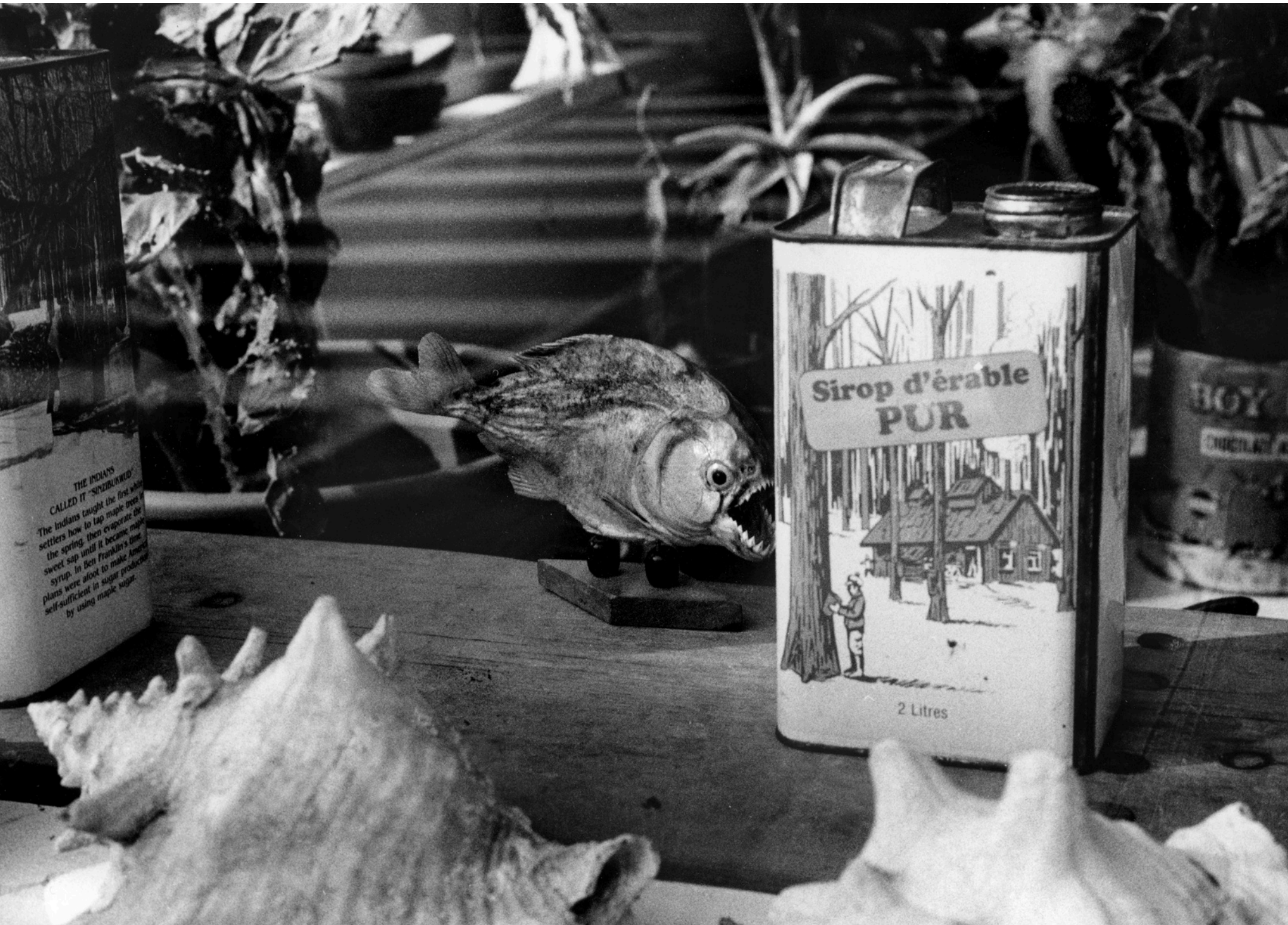


A Still Life (iii)

Photography

14" x 18"

Yu-Sheng Chiu



Would you still love me if I were a taxidermied fish?

Archival inkjet print

11" x 14"

\$350, ed 1/5

Eva Christensen



Merry Christmas, Please Don't Call
Watercolour and gouache on paper
12" x 16"
\$850

Katherine Hartel



Inheritance in a bowl: Mama's Spinning

Chalk Pastel on Vellum

11" x 14"

NFS

Jackie Rancourt



Orquevaux
Digital photo
8" x 10"
NFS

Carolynn Smallwood



Still Life with Mod Cons and Cat

iPhone photo

10.42" x 7.81"

NFS



RESISTING REALITY

Barbara Rehus



The Murphy Bed

Oil on canvas

14" x 11"

NFS

David Switzer



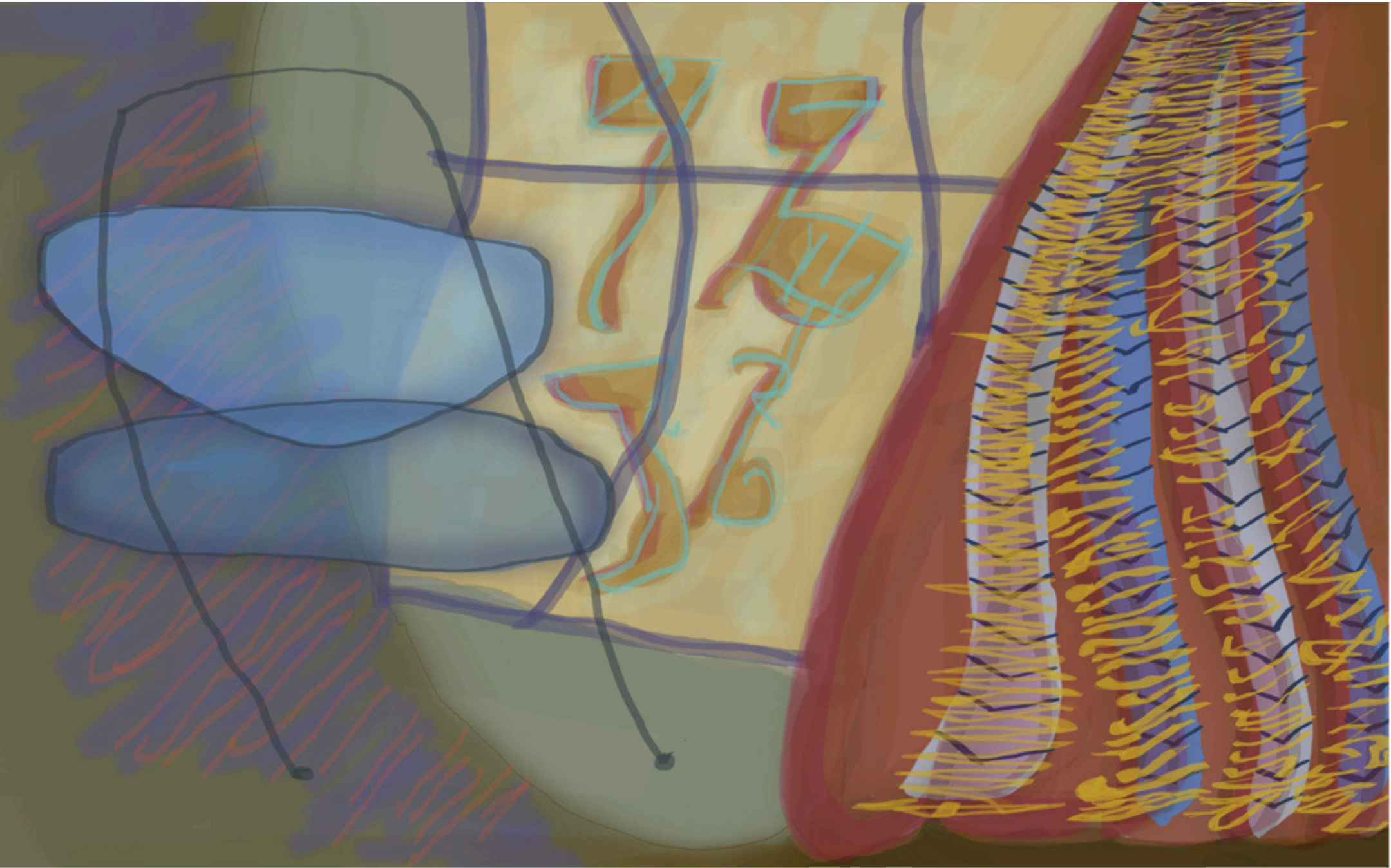
Still Light, Ossington

Acrylic ink on 300 gm paper

8" x 11"

\$375

Dimitrije Martinovic



Afternoon of the Following Day

Digital Painting

Edition of 10

36" x 24"

\$450

Leena Raudvee



Still Life with Chair

Collage

5.5" x 9"

\$400

Diane Royce



Desktop
Collage – various printed papers
9" x 12"
NFS

Monique Fouquet



Le Temps du Sommeil

Archival print on Arches paper

Edition of 3

19" x 17"

\$1000

Yu-Sheng Chiu



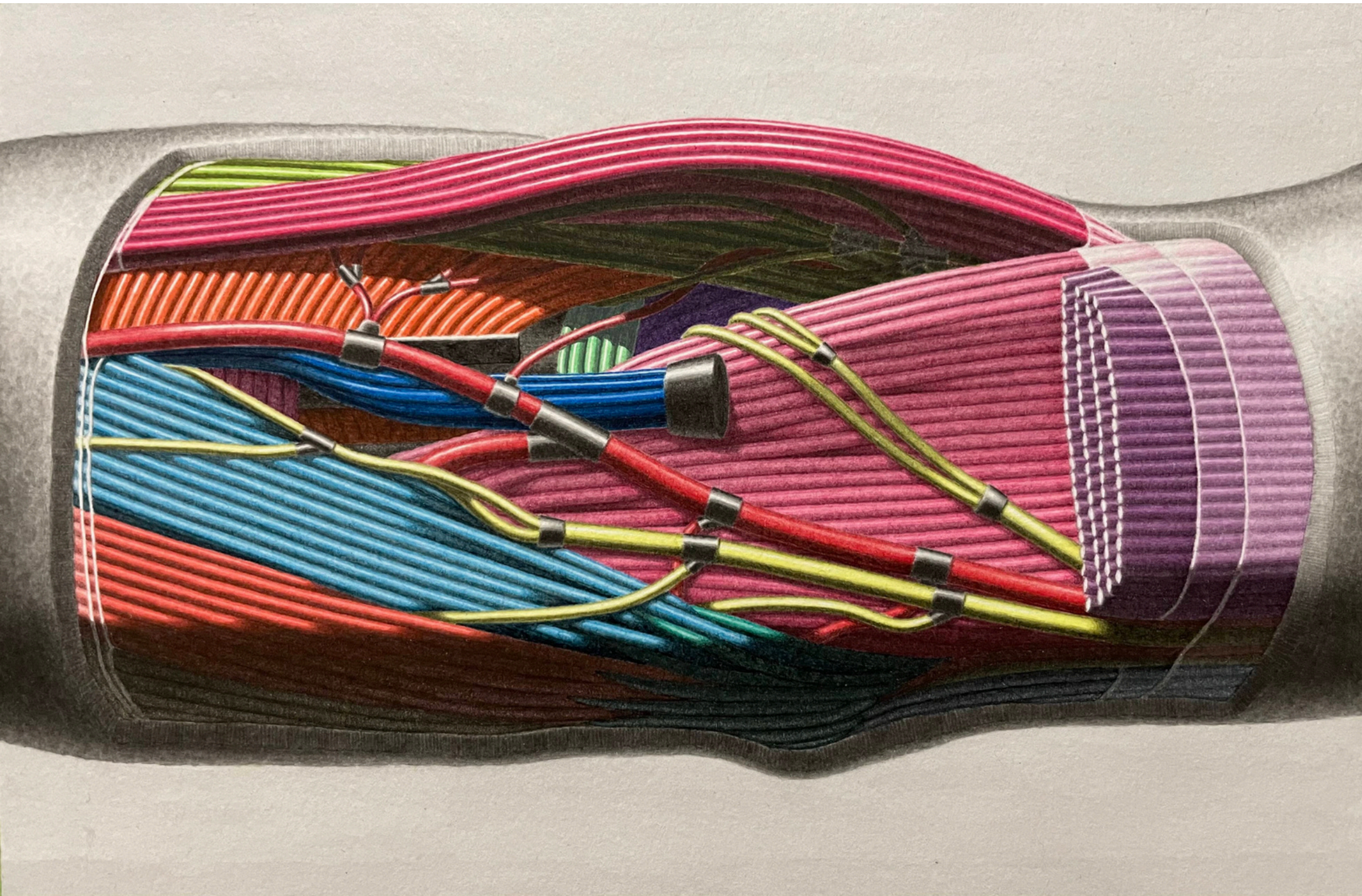
Sensitive Prosthesis No.4

Archival inkjet print

11" x 14"

\$350

Matthew Ferguson



Elbow Joint Study

Watercolour on watercolour paper

9" x 12"

NFS

Rhodri Kasperbauer



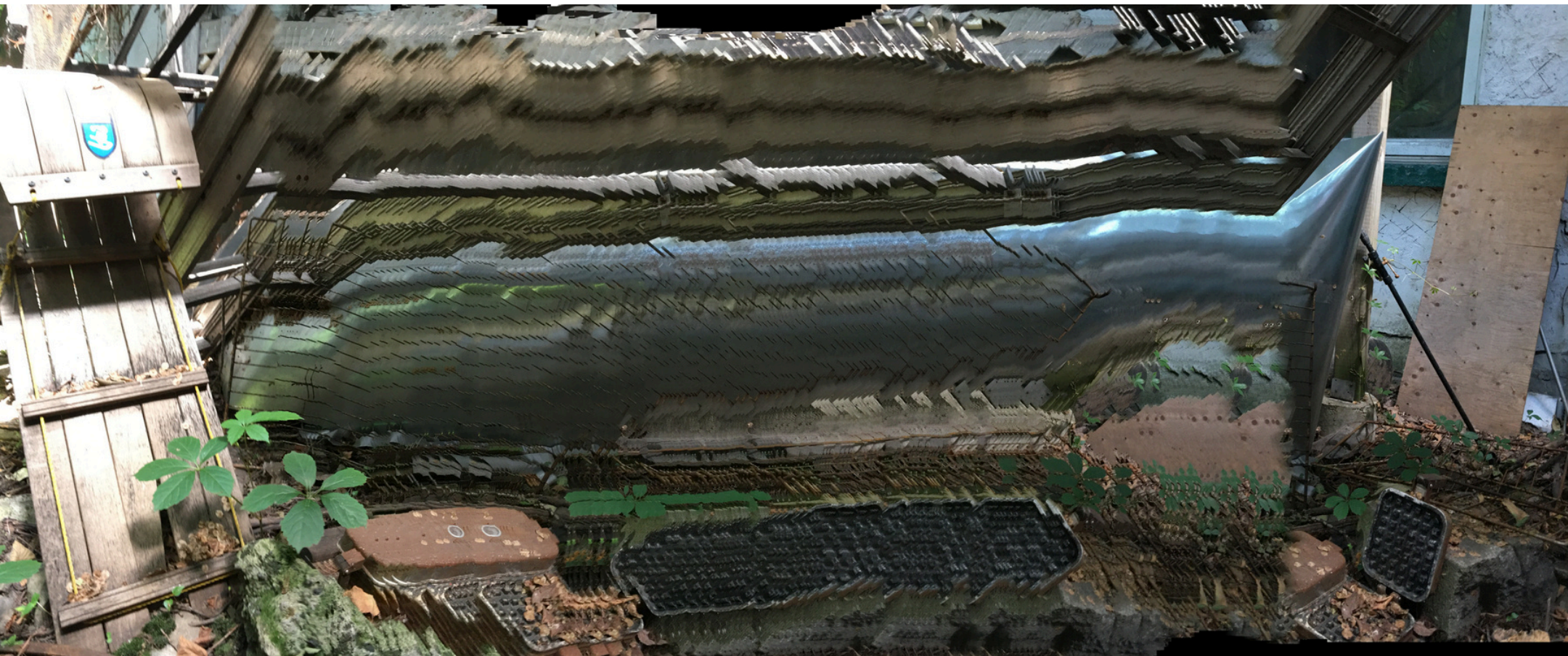
A Celebration of Spores

Mixed media collage

11.7" x 16.5"

\$4,000

Lee Schnaiberg



*Dabôgan, Moule à Oublies, et une Bobine D'Acier
Laminée à Chaud (Almost Geometry)*

PANOart (digital photography)

24" x 9.9"

\$600



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Image: Orquevaux by Jackie Rancourt