This is a precarious moment in which to look at, examine, and make works of art. After the events of the last year—namely the protests following the murder of George Floyd, the violence at the U.S. Capitol, and more than a year of quarantine amid a deadly global pandemic—it is an uncertain moment in which to simply exist in American society. And, like spring, it is also a moment of incredible hope, renewal, and dramatic change. The applicants to this year’s Utah Visual Arts Fellowship reflect the rich diversity of Utah’s artists and their various communities and cultural identities. I was excited to see the work of artists at various points in their professional career, from artists just out of graduate school to self-taught, mid and late-career artists working in several disciplines.

The winners of this year’s Utah Visual Arts Fellowship—Mitchell Barton, Annelisse Duque, Russell Albert Daniels, Levi Jackson, Anna Laurie Mackay, and Colour Maisch—are indicative of the depth, breadth, and quality of artistic talent found in Utah. They also reflect the cultural, generational and disciplinary diversity of this year’s applicant pool. The winners’ respective practices reflect the shifting artistic, social, and cultural landscape of Utah and the United States and their historical and political undercurrents.

Artists like Russell Albert Daniels and Annelisse Duque each use their practice as a means of exploring and deeply examining their cultural heritage, Native American and Filippino American respectively, while establishing their own unique voices in the process. The sculptural work of Colour Maisch is interested in what often goes unseen and exists beneath the surface, exploring and creating new forms in the process. Mitchell Barton’s interdisciplinary practice repurposes web development tools and digital media to explore and distort meaning and potentiality. Levi Jackson explores our relationship to the land and the natural landscape through video and sumptuous photographs which combine the Earth and manmade objects. Anna Laurie Mackay’s delicate works on silk tissue paper demonstrate the fragility and temporariness of memory. The respective practices of the 2021 Utah Visual Arts Fellows reflect the incredible diversity of artistic practice in Utah, incredible quality of work, and themes deeply relevant to contemporary discourse.
Flying Machines, Mutants 1, Molly Morin, 2020 Fellow

67 Poo, David Brothers, 2016 Fellow
It was an honor to serve as a juror for the Utah Arts Fellowship and I appreciated the opportunity to get to know the state through the issues, landscapes, and identities introduced through the artwork I saw. It was no small feat to select two artists from the broad range of truly compelling work, which included photography, design, sculpture, and conceptual works exploring issues ranging from faith, sexual identity, family myths and narratives, to climate justice and migration.

Both Andrew Alba and Molly Morin stood out to me as artists examining and subverting assumptions about our current world, calling into question some of the truths commonly held around identity. The soft edges of Alba’s paintings create a palpable tenderness that is simultaneously political and urgent. Morin’s use of technology, pattern, and digital repetition unravels some of the ways that control— both of the body and the mind— is navigated and gendered.

Both artists incorporate something gentle into otherwise rugged work and material, and this tension creates a space of understanding that is powerful and accessible as a viewer. Both artists also expressed an intention to use their work to engage more deeply with the community, in addition to advancing their individual careers.
Water Sample, Jane Christensen, 2020 Fellow

Strike 2, Lenka Konopasek, 2018 Fellow
There is a quotation that I keep on my office bulletin board, by a curator whom I admire, Nicholas Baume. It reads, “Simplicity in art is rarely achieved without a struggle.” It reminds me daily of the hard-won triumphs of artists, and that each art object is the product of an artist’s investment of time, talent, and technique. It is an act of courage to speak one’s deepest thoughts and convictions through making, to take that risk to create and be heard.

I thought of this quotation when I saw Jim Jacobs’ sculptures. He makes the seamless transition of wood from its natural form to its sculpted counterpart appear effortless. Yet, one recognizes simply by seeing Jacobs’ sculptures, the years of creative fortitude and accumulated knowledge about wood and sculptural methods that coalesced to make that transition so...simple.

Simple they are not, however. Jacobs’ sculptures disrupt. At first, there is a certain whimsy and wonder to the works. Is that toppled chair metamorphosing into a tree? Or, how is it possible for wood to transmute into hair? Slowly, the disjunction inherent in the object unsettles our sense of the “natural” order of things. Jacobs calls these transitions “grafting,” a decidedly scientific term that reveals an uncanny, even grotesque, insinuation of the works. How did such an anomaly as this object come to be? The answer, the artist tells us through his sculptures, is that modern society has had an unnatural impact on the natural environment.

Shane Deeter has mastered a different natural material, handled with equal finesse: leather. A saddlemaker, Deeter continues a traditional art form steeped in that iconic figure of the American West—the cowboy. His beautifully tooled-leather details embellish complex constructions that endure. But equally, one can appreciate his unembellished saddles for their deceptive simplicity.

Simple they are not, however. Deeter’s saddles breathe. On one saddle, Deeter fluidly sculpted a profusion of 50 blooming flowers, one for each
state flower. As a composition, the form is dense with imagery and vitality. Colored thread stitched in well-conceived patterns into other saddles is another form of mark-making Deeter uses. He approaches the saddle as a composition, looking to nature for inspiration, but also to other fields such as pinstriping and graphic arts.

Too often traditional arts are framed around notions of loss and revival. Artists such as Deeter contradict the idea that saddlery is at risk of extinction and is in need of revival. As long as there are horses, there will be saddles—and those who strive to make saddles that are the highest caliber of craftsmanship and artistry.

I was guided in my selection of Jim Jacobs and Shane Deeter by criteria one would expect in any juried selection: depth of vision over time, exceptional craftsmanship, a well-articulated conceptual framework, the potential of shaping one’s field for future generations of artists. At the same time, I am always compelled to recognize and affirm that human creativity appears in diverse forms, whether folk or traditional arts, crafts, art, design or any other category one might imagine. These diverse expressions of an inner need to create are what I sought to convey with this year’s fellowships. I easily could have—and wish I could have—selected a dozen more.
It was a great honor for me to have the opportunity to jury the 2018 Utah Visual Arts Fellowship, and to familiarize myself with the landscape of art being produced in Utah. The quality of the applicants was high and it was a difficult decision to choose Lenka Konopasek and D. McGarren Flack as the two recipients. Both of these artists have dedicated many years to their respective mediums, and in their own ways are concerned with pressing contemporary subjects. They both infuse traditional mediums with fresh energy and perspectives.

Lenka Konopasek’s paper constructions elegantly blend formal abstract beauty with a strong conceptual underpinning. Her works embody the violent energy of the natural and man-made disasters on which she seeks to comment, while being open enough to invite other interpretations. The undulating forms that constitute her works convey a sense of movement, which is intensified by the nearly all black palette that Konopasek employs. This award recognizes both the beauty and power of Konopasek’s work and her over two-decade commitment to developing her artistic practice.

D. McGarren Flack’s representational oil paintings are equally as beautiful as Konopasek’s constructions, while more directly addressing disconcerting subject matter. His works are informed by his experience working as a paramedic, encountering people in some of their most vulnerable moments. Flack uses models to devise scenarios, which he then renders at the scale of history painting, underscoring the importance of ordinary lives. His works maintain a delicate balance, inviting viewers to contemplate vulnerability without being exploitative. Flack approaches his subjects with sensitivity. On a formal level, his skillful paint handling imbues his works with additional layers of visual interest.

I would like to congratulate both Konopasek and Flack, and encourage them as they pursue the new projects and directions outlined in their applications. Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to the many talented artists who applied for the fellowship for the opportunity to learn about their work.
As the sole juror, I was pleased to get a sense of the artistic territory of contemporary artists living in Utah. A strong diversity of materials, gestures and cultures gave me a profound sense of a community wholly committed to the practice of art making. I felt an instant connection with the work of Jean Richardson. Feelings of isolation, or as she states, “the dichotomy of displacement and belonging” resonated very deeply with my current world view. Her video “Every Now And Then I Fall Apart,” seemed to poetically articulate a profound feeling of loneliness that we all feel either metaphorically or in actual fact through a very thoughtful and open ended way. It’s very difficult to effectively articulate through purely visual means these complex emotions and I feel her work did this through the conceptually-tight vocabulary of performance and sculpture. I linked aspects of Richardson’s recent work to the practice of Jonathan Frioux and his interest in abstract painting. Here there was an almost physical and formal correspondence through bodies of water that are used to singular ends. The instability of the ocean is used as a formal challenge to the traditional notion of the grid in Frioux’s paintings. This conceptual framework surprised me yet I fully bought into the originality of his investigation and practice. I must also acknowledge the work of Cara Krebs and Mary Sauer who each brought originality and rigor to their respective practices. In closing, I want to thank all of the artists who submitted their work for consideration. Now more than ever we need to be fearless and willing to go over the edge for what we believe, and I appreciate your willingness to participate in the cultural conversation of our time.

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS:
Jonathan Frioux
Jean Richardson
In a state known for its natural beauty, it is remarkable that artists with a tendency to look inward are creating what I deem to be the most compelling art coming out of Utah today. Both Pam Bowman and David Brothers have constructed detailed—even obsessive—alternative worlds. They are both storytellers, and those stories seize the imagination of viewers.

Pam Bowman’s fiber art transcends the rubric when her work is informed by the history of the site in which it is displayed. Her ambitious installations honor industrial labor and community, while her technique involves repetition and aesthetic contrast between delicate single threads and weighty skeins of rope. Her work is both humble and dazzling.

David Brothers’ extroverted practice conveys a distinct and comprehensive vision. He builds stage sets, produces, and directs the dramas that form the basis of his photographic images, which convey vaguely recognizable characters and incidents through a darkly compelling lens. The gaudy coloration and campy presentation of his propositions are tempered by a sense of urgency and risk-taking.

In serving as juror for the 2016 Visual Arts Fellowship, I looked for artists creating work that resonates with an awareness of the greater culture that surrounds us. While it is tempting for Utah artists to reflect the glory of the natural environment, I was drawn to work with a strong conceptual basis, with a specific point of view conveyed through the formal elements. As a museum curator with decades of experience, my research is not restricted to artists’ studios and exhibitions in the Northern Nevada region. I spend a significant amount of time visiting galleries, museums, and studios in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles, in addition to attending the Venice Biennale, Documenta, Art Basel Miami Beach, and other biennials and exhibitions that represents the leading edge in the art of our time. This continued study of the most accomplished work nationally and internationally informed my final decision on the artists that I selected for this coveted prize.
After perusing the broad array of styles and approaches presented by the applicants for this year’s Utah Visual Arts Fellowship, I have chosen two recipients who come from distinct parts of the artistic spectrum. While it would be an exaggeration to suggest that their vastly divergent approaches and concerns are somehow representative of the diversity inherent to Utah’s visual art community, I do think their selection points to the range of dispositions from which one can produce potent artwork at this particular moment in time.

Daniel Everett’s work is generated from the ordering principles and technologies of advanced capitalism. He smartly calls attention to the objective residue left in the wake of a culture driven by the promulgation of progress at any cost. His work employs the aseptic patina of 21st century quotidian aesthetics in the service of accenting the ever-present uncanny of our era. The work is formally sophisticated, wry, and disquieting. Everett’s understanding of conceptual precedent and self-reflexivity bolsters his impressive contribution to the field of critical art.

Hyunmee Lee’s work is predicated on the act of extemporaneous gesture as an evocation of affect. Influenced by Taoism and Buddhism, she is concerned with principles of immediacy, harmony, balance, and connectedness. Her painted compositions are at times playful and at others filled with pathos. The paintings adroitly situate themselves between multiple traditions of abstraction and work to conjure an emotional realm just outside the confines of language. Her assiduous practice has allowed her to produce work that embodies her intentions with supple dexterity.

I would like to thank the many talented artists who applied for the fellowship. It was a great privilege to have a view into your work and your lives, and to come to know something of a thriving community I had little knowledge of prior.
The applicants for the 2014 Utah Visual Arts Fellowship presented a rich and varied range of creative production. Taken together, these artists demonstrated key values that are fundamental to a thriving artistic community: experimentation, ambition, reflection, and great vision. Utah is home to painters, sculptors, printmakers, and photographers, and it is also home to risk-takers and complex thinkers.

The two artists selected for this fellowship offer distinctive bodies of work that differ greatly from each other. Wendy Wischer works with immaterial elements, like light, and finds elaborate ways to make them concrete. She creates large-scale installations inspired in part by the natural landscape. Harnessing the majesty of this terrain is an ambitious aim and she achieves this without falling into cliché or stereotype. She brings the scale of the big blue sky into the gallery and enables visitors to relate or respond to it in ways that are clever and beautiful.

David Wolske works on a much more intimate scale, producing delicate works on paper, often through moveable type and letterpress printing. He works with one of the oldest forms of artmaking and his relief prints demonstrate that there is strength and beauty when working in a more traditional medium. But he also pushes the medium of printmaking in exciting new ways, urging it to interact with different technologies and experimenting with the different possibilities he might produce. The clean lines and simple shapes of his letters and words belie a complex approach to image making.

Both of these artists develop their work with a sensitivity and curiosity to explore each medium as far as they might take it. While one works with the natural environment and the other works with the basic elements of our language, each artist is turning to (as a source of inspiration and for subject matter) something universal and fundamental to all of us—and helping us to see that in a fresh, new way.
FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

2013
Christopher Gauthier
Mark Hedengren
Juror: Richard Roth
Professor and Chairperson of the Painting and Printmaking Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

2012
Jared Lindsay Clark
James Charles
Juror: Chris Bruch
Visual artist, Seattle, WA

2011
Kathy Puzey
Alison Denyer
Juror: Kristen Evangelista
Associate Curator at the San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA

2010
Jan Andrews
Joseph Ostraff
Juror: Jon Stuart
Director of Photography Art Assoc., Jackson, WY

2009
Colby Brewer
Josh Winegar
Juror: Kristen Hileman
Curator Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC

2008
Adam Bateman
Eileen Doktorski
Juror: Raman Frey
Frey Norris Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2007
Amy Caron
Kaiti Slater
Juror: Susan Schreiber
Director of PS122 Gallery, NYC. Private dealer and independent curator

2006
Mark England
Jacqui Larsen
Juror: Jonathan Goodman
Art critic, writer and teacher at Pratt Institute and Parsons School of Design, New York City, NY

2005
Madison N. Smith
Paul L. Stout
Juror: Angela Ellsworth
Visual artist, teacher, performance artist, Los Angeles, CA

2004
Karen Horne
Steve Larson
Juror: Mario Naves
visual artist, teacher, art critic for New York Observer, NY

2003
Suzanne Kanatsiz
Bonnie Succe
Juror: Melissa Miller
Visual artist & professor of art, Austin, TX

2002
Jean Arnold
David Delthony
Juror: Townsend Wolfe
Director & Chief Curator, Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR

2001
Gary Barton
Gregory Schulte
Juror: Linda Durham
Gallery Owner, Galisteo, NM

2000
Amy Adams
Jane Catlin
Juror: Boris Bally
Visual artist, Providence, RI

1999
Tracy Villa Carrera
Catherine Downing
Juror: Fay Jones
Visual artist, Seattle, WA

1998
Jennifer Hillam Barton
Lupe Niumeitolu/Joseph Ostraff
Juror: Stuart A. Ashman
Director Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, NM
FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

1997
Cynthia Jeppson
Jeronimo Lozano
Juror: Kathy Vargas
Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX

1996
Craig Glidden
Jacqui Biggs Larsen
Juror: Gordon McConnell
Yellowstone Art Center, Billings, MT

1995
James Charles
Kathy Minck
Juror: Dianne Vanderlip
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO

1994
Alice Brown-Wagner
Amie Laird McNeel
Juror: Dennis O’Leary-Director
Boise Art Museum, Boise, ID

1993
Joseph Ostraff
Michael Pryer
Juror: Alan Fern
National Gallery, Washington, DC

1992
Susan Cotter
Mary Fish
Juror: Henry Hopkins
University of California, Los Angeles, CA

1991
Drex Brooks
Michael David Hall
Juror: Manuel Neri
University of California, Davis, CA

1990
Frank Anthony Smith
Christopher Terry
Juror: Leonard Lehrer
Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

1989
Carole Gallagher
Dan Lomahsfaewa
Juror: Patterson Sims
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

1988
Lee Udall Bennion
Moishe Smith
Jurors: Theodore J. Waddell Montana
painter, and Harold Tovish Boston sculptor

1987
Allen Bishop
David Dornan
Jurors: Peter Frank New York, NY
and Mary Cummings Missoula, MT

1986
Paul Davis
Bonnie Supec
Jurors: Muriel Magenta, Arizona State
University, Phoenix, AZ;
Dennis O’Leary, Director, Boise Gallery of
Art, Boise, ID;
LaVelle Moss, Brigham Young University,
Provo, UT