

Design Arts - Lee-Sean Huang

I am honored to serve as a juror for the inaugural year of the Design Arts category of the Utah Artist Fellowship Program. The Design Arts as a category, as well as this year's applicants, represent a broad range of crafts, media, and expressions. Design is the stuff that surrounds us: the clothes we wear, the spaces where we live and work, the images we use to communicate, the products and services we use. The breadth of the category makes generalization difficult, but I shall attempt to weave a through-line that connects this year's grantees.

Design in the broad sense, is about mediating the relationships we have with each other and with our environment. In doing so, designers' work involves navigating the tension between connecting and challenging. Connecting seeks harmony as it combines materials and techniques and bridges disparate disciplines and communities. Meanwhile, challenging is about defying expectations and pushing us out of our comfort zones and accepted best practices in order to evolve and innovate.

Brooke Smart's work ranges from the small scale of book illustrations to the large scale of murals and public installations. She explores family relationships and encourages empathy and understanding among diverse groups of people. Her work challenges dominant narratives by centering the voices of women and minorities.

Henry Becker connects his military background and his experience in the art world to his current design practice and pedagogy. He channels his observation skills from his time as a sniper team leader to create work that brings heightened awareness and a critical eye to make work that challenges our understanding of social and political issues.

Elpitha Tsoutsounakis is a designer, printer, and educator who bridges disciplines with her critical making and research based on community collaboration and partnerships. She uses pigments and materiality as an entry point to challenge us on issues of ethics, gender, and our relationship with the natural world.

Creighton Elinski connects his love of skiing and the environment with our pressing societal need for sustainability with his fresh approach to ski designs. His designs challenge the status quo of ski making through the use of unconventional materials and techniques.

Kylie Millward uses accessible media such as colored pencil illustrations and plush toys to evoke childhood nostalgia and connect emotionally with audiences. In doing so, she challenges unrealistic expectations and other societal pressures placed upon women and girls and opens up space to address topics like menstruation and the gendered nature of domestic work.