

Visual Arts - Leilani Lynch

It was an honor to serve as the visual art juror for the 2023 Utah Artist Fellowship. As a recently arrived resident of the Mountain West region, I was grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the bountiful artistic talent within the state of Utah. The five fellows have practices that are conceptually robust and materially rich ranging from painting and performance to sculpture, mixed media, and community-centered strategies. The selected artists create work situated within the context of Utah's landscapes and communities reflecting on the nuance and politics of place and identity.

Ronald Linn creates drawings, paintings, and mixed-media work that probe the connection between human and non-human nature, as well as their connections with memory, mythology and our personal and imagined histories. Linn uses the conceptual and physical framework of the grid to examine the fallacies of the sublime western landscape portrayed in 19th century landscape paintings. His layered paintings and installations contend with the genre's role in propagating myths of pristine, uninhabited land, which led to the forcible (re)ordering of space and dispossession of land from the region's indigenous peoples to make way for White settlers and tourists.

Focusing on the landscape of Utah's West Desert, **Jaclyn Wright** similarly scrutinizes the medium of photography and its role in the glorification of nature and its systemization by the US government. In recent work, Wright has used original images and archival photographs, maps, and diagrams to explore how photography has historically been mobilized in justifications of land use and settler colonial practices that systematically exclude and under resource communities based on race, sex, and class.

Citing community, connection, and love as important mediums in her practice, **Vaimoana Niumeitolu** believes in the power of art to build and sustain community. Often working collectively across different formats, ranging from painting to performance, Niumeitolu brings the Tongan tradition of Ngatu, a communal form of artmaking, to platform storytelling from Black and Indigenous people in their community. Through artworks created with and in community, Niumeitolu promotes art's potential to create connection and empathy.

Through his work, **Horacio Rodriguez** reflects on the repercussions of the act of migration, across physical and psychological borders. Using Meso-American symbols and drawing from pre-Columbian museum collections, Rodriguez references his culturally layered identity in complex installations with slip-cast ceramic sculpture, as well as painting, video projection.

In her multidimensional paintings, **Amber Tutwiler** examines the interplay of power within the intimate landscape of a bedroom. Resembling digitally collaged photographs, Tutwiler's paintings convey a fragmented sense of reality. Tessellating shapes depict bodies alluding to the amalgamation of somatic memories that reenact power dynamics of the gaze and fractured experiences of physical intimacy.

Thanks to funding from Utah Arts and Museums, these talented artists will receive vital support to continue to build and develop their diverse and powerful practices in Utah.