

Design Arts - Carla Diana

It was a delight to serve as a juror for the Design Arts category of the Utah Artist Fellowship Program. While it's tempting to think of design as something that's well defined, with established rules and a canon to follow, the best design is of the moment, acknowledging what we have learned from the talented creators that have come before us, while having the courage to explore contemporary ideas through new tools, techniques, and, ultimately, forms of expression. Great designers are driven by the desire to communicate their content in the best way possible without feeling the need to be limited by the bounds of a discipline's description, encompassing many aspects of creativity, and weaving diverse media together into a holistic experience. As a multi-disciplinary artist and designer in the midst of bringing focus to the blurry lines that define 4D Design practice at my own institution, I feel especially grateful for the effort the five fellows have put into developing unique practices with thoughtful approaches to subject matter manifesting in work that combines different design elements and is executed with a high level of craft.

Steven Chodoriwsky's research-centered practice includes artifacts and environments that expose core aspects of history, social behavior and culture through work that emerges as performance, environments, sculptures, graphic design, video, furniture and book design. The collaborative energy demonstrated not only in the creation of the work but through the ways in which the work is publicly shared is exhilarating.

Austin Namba's large-scale, outdoor murals are exquisitely crafted. His tightly-applied graphic design, bold typographic treatment, and bright colors result in publicly visible, technicolor urban landscapes that are both a breath of fresh air and a nod to the heritage of sign making that comes before them. A veritable love letter to his city, they elevate the walls they are on without designing past them, bringing larger-than-life forms and color to celebrate the joy of Salt Lake City.

Riley Ridd's furniture and sculpture combine wood, metal and fiber, resulting in unexpected forms and expressive shapes. Much of her work offers the warmth of the hand, yet results in completely polished final pieces. She honors the inherent characteristics of her materials, such as highlighting the raw pattern of rings in a beautiful piece of wood in all its natural glory. In other pieces, she embraces new technologies, allowing the process to inform her outcome, such as the unique and elegant 3D printed concrete reception desk.

Arika Schockmel's practice demonstrates a deep understanding of the complexities of theater, the power of abstraction, and the magic of props. She has an expert ability to evoke the suggestion of an object without having to show a literal version of it, thus creating a uniquely designed artifact that serves to amplify its dramatic value. Her creations show us how a prop can be an entity on the stage, deeply involved with the actors, and as critical to the storyline as any other aspect of the production.

Leah Wulfman's practice operates at the bleeding edge of 4D Design, where physical experiences blend with virtual ones, allowing visitors to play in mixed reality. Drawing on strategies from their architecture background, they combine AI visualization, robotics, installation, environment design and VR spaces with unexpected materials such as soil, tree branches and inflatable walls. In challenging the normative, intended uses of new technologies, they challenge us as viewers to question our own expectations and contemplate the ways we can challenge ourselves to think differently.