

THIS TOO SHALL PASS

MIRANDAH AKELEY
CORBETT FOGUE



This Too Shall Pass

Mirandah Akeley
Corbett Fogue

EMERGING ARTIST BIENNIAL EXHIBITION
Exhibition curated by
Heather Sincavage, Sordoni Gallery Director

The Emotional Body
Essay by Heather Sincavage, Sordoni Gallery Director

June 7 - July 15, 2017

Sordoni Art Gallery
Wilkes University
Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

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Heather Sincavage
Director, Sordoni Art Gallery

We must always remember that the Sordoni Gallery is a form of a classroom on Wilkes University campus. We have both the ability and responsibility to engage in topics that many commercial galleries might not exhibit and challenge viewpoints. We also are able to create opportunity for artists who are creating exceptional, thought provoking work.

This year, I founded **The Emerging Artist Biennial**. This is a themed juried exhibition that recognizes early career artists and provides them with a platform to share their work in a university setting under a curated theme. The juror and theme change with each exhibition. I chose to jury this inaugural exhibition, focusing on two artists who address the theme of loss. Each use performance and the body within their work- Mirandah Akeley and Corbett Fogue.

The title, *This Too Shall Pass*, is one of hope. We may feel the deepest pain in our lives but one must remember that pain is only temporary. As that pain passes, we learn more about ourselves. I want to thank both Mirandah and Corbett for giving so much of themselves in their work. I am proud to show them in the Sordoni.

A special thank you for the many people who helped make the exhibition possible. Without the support of campus staff, this exhibition would have been much more difficult to execute. Thank you, Ron Dennis, Senior A/V Support Technician and the Campus Facilities staff.

Thank you to Dr. Steven Thomas, Chairperson of the Performing Arts Division. Thankfully, the Sordoni Gallery was able to borrow a piano for a very special performance. Many thanks to Joe D'Alessandro for moving the instrument to the gallery and preparing it for exhibition.

Thank you to Olivia Caraballo for her support work on this exhibition. From painting walls to editing copy, she proved to be invaluable behind the scenes.

A final thank you to both my Professor Eric Ruggiero, Chairperson of Integrative Media, Art + Design and Dean Paul Riggs, College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences. Eric provided valuable advice and guidance to execute this exhibition, and, as always, Paul is a significant support of the Sordoni Gallery and its programming.

This is the last exhibition in the existing gallery space. After 43 years, the Sordoni will be moving and expanding its footprint on campus and in the community. I hope you join us for the exciting future of the Sordoni Gallery!



It was in that moment, the moment of complete disgust with the self, for having birthed her could not have been more vile, that she learned the transparency of her skin. She learned to protest and reject her body as if it had betrayed her. She abhorred her reflection and became the “other.” She purged all security to become a separate bag of skin. The ultimate rejection, coming into own’s own. The only contact between reality and the body through a perverse fluctuation between the edges of present slippages of certainty. The ability to relinquish one’s own flesh and become vulnerable. There is not delineation between art and reality nor security within the walls of its teaching. We cannot accept our sight as true until we abolish the denial of our preoccupation with the fracturing of the mind and body.

—Mirandah Akeley



The Emotional Body

by Heather Sincavage, Curator

In many respects, we all have expectations when we walk into a museum or gallery setting. We quietly pass through the doors and silently observe the objects on the wall or pedestal. We passively observe them, contemplate them, and move on to the next object. We leave the gallery, pondering the ideas these works brought forth and perhaps inspired to evaluate our own perspectives on the given topic.

The artists featured in *This Too Shall Pass*, Mirandah Akeley and Corbett Fogue, require more of their audience. Performing nuanced, even mundane, every day operations of the body, they rely on viewer response to complete their works. Like the artist, the viewer might gag, choke, or spit, as in Akeley's works, or inhale and exhale, along with Fogue. In each case, the artists contemplate the loss of a parent and perform their emotional body. While the viewer experiences their work, they are forced to address their own emotional response—immediately within the moment. They leave the interaction, changed, for better or worse and therein lies the artistry.

When considering Akeley and Fogue's works, the audience is vital, however the methodology of "viewing" must be addressed. Each artist, through their own "presence" within the work, encourages the audience's emotional "presence." They turn the experience back on the viewer to witness and experience for themselves.

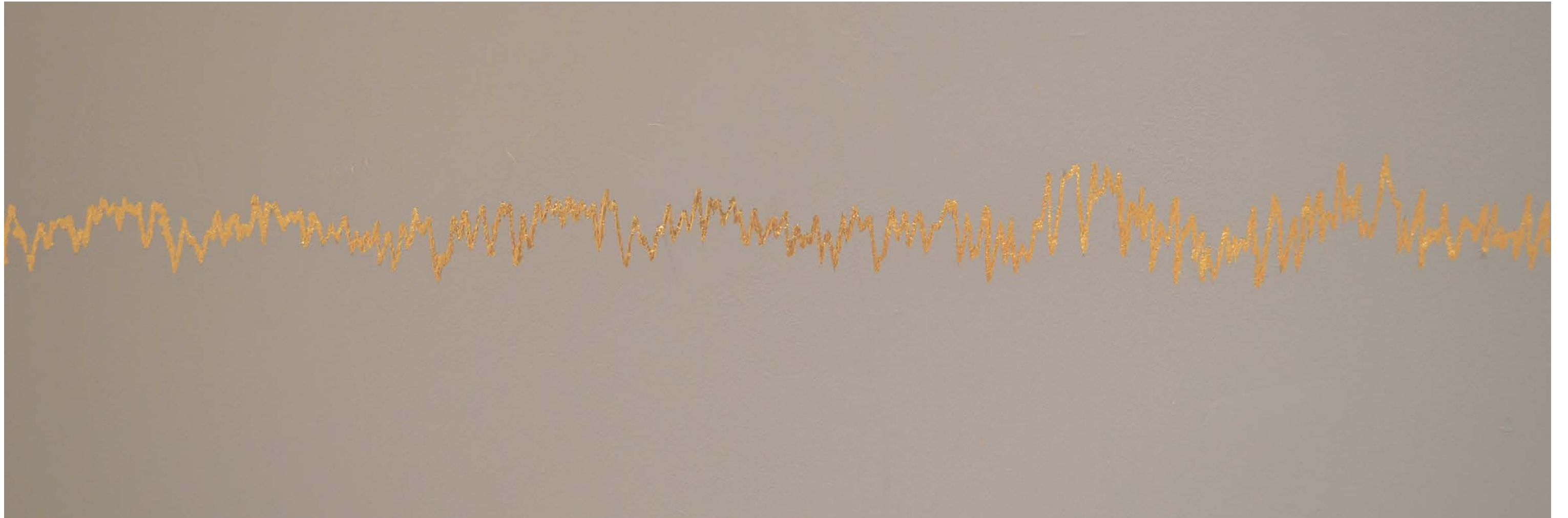
"When I think of the word immersive, I tend to think of artists who try to overwhelm the viewer. I've chosen to make art using rather spare reductive elements. I do this because I would like the viewers to recognize that their own presence is an aspect of the work. I know that this takes time. For those who walk away too quickly, they probably miss it... Perhaps rather than immersive, the word "engaged" might do better. The public sphere is very much a shared space. I don't want the viewer to feel as if I've totally taken it over. (Fogue)"

Corbett Fogue grapples with the loss of his father. He discovered performance while exploring his namesake, boxer Gentleman Jim Corbett. Fogue photographed men and boys taking boxing lessons at a local gym. Learning the sport along side them, he created an experience. While immersed in the culture of boxing, that experience of the sport became part of the content, resulting in raw, vulnerable portraits of both him and his classmates. This became a turning part for Fogue. His work became less about recording observations and more about experiencing his content.

Soon, Fogue's father succumbed to a 17 year fight with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis, a terminal lung condition. As a means of catharsis, Fogue began to address the "act" of breathing as *"both the means and meaning of the work (Fogue)."*

Mirandah Akeley entered work about family dynamics as a result of her parent's divorce. *"I make work to practice being present with myself. I had a very abusive relationship with my mother when she and my dad got divorced in 2002. For ten years, I spent my life trying to adapt to the abuse and anticipate the future. I never really got to live my childhood in the moment in which it was actually happening and through the work I try to accept the trauma of lost time and the absence of my mother. (Akeley)"*

In a way, both Akeley and Fogue are both exploring their own presence. Both experience a grief unique to them, yet universal to many. Their work explores the rich landscape of their emotional experiences and as a means of understanding them, each artist plays them out through the visceral experience of the body. Akeley's *The Sacrifice of Self* is uncomfortable to watch. In fact, the viewer might feel their own body respond to the work, prompting a gag reflex or hiding one's eyes. In Fogue's work, *Breath Study 12 (Requiem)*, we experience his father's last breath transposed into a musical score, while watching a video of his father's last conscious sunrise. In essence, Fogue provides the viewer to experience his father's final moments in a poetic, heartbreaking acknowledgment of our mortality.



Breath Study 15 (Nothing Gold Can Stay)
Corbett Fogue
Site Specific Installation (detail)
Gold Leaf on 18% Grey Latex

Each artist reclaims power in situations that have spun out of their control. By virtue of their acknowledgement of loss or grief, each endeavor to create a space where they contain the emotional weight of their experiences. Fogue's *Breath Study 8 (Worth its Weight)* displays the artist's control of breath in what is a fragile situation. Simply, the work can be described as a piece of gold leaf laid over the artist's nose and mouth, but it is more complicated than that. *Breath Study 8* explores layers of duality- inhale/exhale, strength/fragility, freedom/confinement. As the viewer experiences the work, they are faced with questions of whether the artist will eventually break the leaf and blow it away or perhaps nurture it with precision, keeping its form intact. In this situation, Fogue explores the precipice of our fragility, displaying that even the most tenuous of situations are a display of monumental strength.

Duality is also an exploration of Akeley. In *Spit Glass [1 of 14]*, Akeley spits into a glass, fills it, and drinks the contents. One could arguably consider spit as something we might expel from our bodies as unwanted and thus possibly could correlate as an allegory of Akeley's personal narrative. It is a visceral consumption of the Self. She states, "*concerning American culture... it is observed that human beings have become less in touch with their emotions, thus more detached from their bodies. [Akeley] deliberately calls attention to this cultural act of denial.*" *Spit Glass [1 of 14]* demands response from the viewer, recognizing that their own experiences in their bodies will prompt feelings of vulnerability and disgust. Akeley, however, promotes emotional presence by bringing viewers back to their bodies to experience it.

In conclusion, experiential art forms are not new. Artists Mirandah Akeley and Corbett Fogue call upon postmodern theology and draw from the likes of Marina Abramovic, Carolee Schneeman and Paul McCarthy. Their personal narrative moulds the viewer experience. The works, although displayed in a gallery setting, require audience participation. The viewer can no longer passively observe and must actively respond. The artist thus establishes themselves as the conduit for a situation that we encounter. They remind us of the experiences we overlook.

"I prefer to explore the small details of living that we all share. My work is political in that it does argue the experience of each individual is worth noting. The mundane is monumental (Fogue)."

*



*After my father's passing, it was clear to me that I would have to immediately tackle my situation and work to create a new normal. The work began as a means of catharsis. The work was very heavy, as one would expect such subject matter to be, but as I continued to create I quickly realized that the action of breathing became both the **means and meaning** of the work.*

—Corbett Fogue





Works Cited

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