

KNEW NORMAL

OCTOBER 17 – NOVEMBER 22

AUTOMAT

319 N 11TH ST, PHILA, PA 19107

AUTOMAT is very happy to present *KNEW NORMAL*, our 50th gallery exhibition and first members show. While we are physically separated for the foreseeable future, we come together in the space through our diverse work and practices. *KNEW NORMAL* is organized by Tessa Haas.

OPEN WEEKENDS FROM 12-4PM AND BY APPOINTMENT

ABOUT THE MEMBERS

Danielle Degon

Danielle Degon is a sculptor and curator in Philadelphia, PA. She received a BFA in Sculpture from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 2017, and later attended Tai Kwun Contemporary in Hong Kong, where she studied with art historians on the topics of labor and privilege. After returning from the Summer Institute at Tai Kwun Contemporary, Danielle wrote *The Edge of Precarity: Art-work, Productivity, and Public funding* for the exhibition she curated of the same name. Danielle maintains a studio practice in Glenside, PA, is a curatorial member at AUTOMAT Collective, an Exhibitions Committee member at Da Vinci Art Alliance, and is on the Steering Committee for Philadelphia Sculptors.

Artist Statement: I am a project-based sculptor and curator who uses multiple mediums to explore the effects of productivity on human psychology, biography, sociality, and the art-making process. My sculptural work often appropriates tools of industrialization to reveal the contradictions of ceaseless extraction, production, and profit.

I am passionate about art-work and artistic expression as a force against expectations of productivity. Using art-work to address the psychological effects of extractive production is the main focus of my practice and academic research. I believe in self-preservation through artistic expression and the potentiality of art as a method of knowledge sharing wherein people can divert their production from the exploitative nature of Capitalist production.

danielledegon.com

Emily Elliott

Emily Elliott is originally from Kissimmee, Florida and studied at Southeastern Illinois College and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, earning bachelor's degrees in painting and studio art with an art history minor in 2012 and a master's degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2015. Affected by a sense of quiet vastness and sublime associations of the astronomical and celestial, she works in between sculpture and printmaking to mimic conditions of atmospheric spectacle bonded with emotional response.

Artist Statement: I want spaces and places big and vast and wide that challenge my conception of size and scale and distance. To find big black skies at nighttime and to stuff fog into my pockets for safekeeping, stars inside my chest - I'd like a little door, right in the center, into which I can collect. I want Martian Territory at the same time as terre familia, where a spoonful is as affecting as the whole lot. Little Light Night Clouds, too. For this, I'd be grateful. I make objects that let me feel massively enveloping, as if I am the embodiment of silent sky. As my work starts with observation and consideration of heavens, land, and space, I've developed a great sense of parallel between my states of feeling and conditions of the atmosphere. My work strives to embody these situations of emotion bonded to atmospheric spectacle in tangible and intimate forms. To achieve this, I use a variety of media, seeking surfaces and textures that can recall those of other-planetary crusts or murky blackness of deep space. Using such materials as slick plaster, scarred carbon paper, grated charcoal, pocketed stones and gathered sand, I work to mimic characteristics of soft light, expanses of foreign topography, and palpable atmosphere, though I'm careful to maintain a delicate quality of material. Through the making of my art, I want to translate my field of vision into a field of touch, allowing me a chance to hold in my hands the ethereal things I watch, to make tangible the lofty firmament. My works are often quiet in nature but I hope for them to feel vast and ephemeral while simultaneously held inside one's own body.

T e s s a H a a s

Tessa is a Ph.D. student in Art History at Bryn Mawr College. Her research interests engage with computer and screen-based media. She has organized and assisted with exhibitions at AUTOMAT, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Phila), the American Philosophical Society Museum (Phila), Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, PA), Haverford College (Haverford, PA), The New School (New York, NY), Gallery Neptune & Brown (Washington, D.C.), and The Cooper Gallery at Harvard University (Cambridge, MA). Tessa is currently working on a multi-sited retrospective at the Woodmere Art Museum, Arcadia Exhibitions, and the University of the Arts (forthcoming 2021).

M o r g a n H o b b s

Hobbs is interested in the ways in which humans understand themselves through the creation and consumption of visual arts. Her studio work has been enriched by concurrent interests in social science concepts since her undergraduate studies in art and anthropology at the University of Central Missouri. In 2015, she graduated with my Masters of Fine Art from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Since then she has painted, drawn, sculpted, curated, administrated and taught within four energetic arts organizations in Philadelphia.

In 2019, she was awarded the Hemera Contemplative Fellowship and a residency at Vermont Studio Center. She has a solo exhibition slated for 2021 at VSOP projects, where she is represented in Greenport, New York. Her work has been collected and exhibited regionally and nationally. She lives and works in Philadelphia.

Artist Statement: Terror Management Theory states that "humans respond to the fear of an insignificant life and impending death by seeking to confirm self-importance and cultural significance". Meaning that subsuming oneself within the prevailing culture creates a distraction from the meaningless of a short, personal existence. These ideas manifest in my paintings and sculptures that hover uncomfortably between possible descriptions with conflicting or incongruent visual information. The works often depict symbols of western culture in ever-changing, unstable, natural and political environments.

Mari Elaine Lamp

Mari Elaine Lamp is a painter and installation artist currently living and working in South Philadelphia. She received an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2017 and attended the School of Representational Art in Chicago. She has an upcoming solo exhibition at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, NJ, and a group exhibition at the Alumni Gallery at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. She has previously shown at On Stellar Rays in New York, the Workhouse Art Center in Lorton, Virginia, and at the Katzen Art Center at American University. She is a member of the artist-run gallery space AUTOMAT Collective in Philadelphia and teaches drawing at Holy Family University.

Artist Statement: Do the surfaces and objects that surround our private world block us, release us, or remain ambiguous? In my current work, I'm interested in the idea of the interior being a "safe space" that can also- perhaps simultaneously- become a cage. Can the very things that protect us from discomfort become the means to close us off from the world? In this world, a window becomes a door, and the space between legs becomes a portal. Through grayscale and muted tones, these dense painterly paintings evoke a somber mood, an internal dialogue with the psyche. Close cropping and hyper-focus on a fixed space offer a meditation of sorts.

Behind this sort of meditation can also lurk dangers. In her 1892 short story "The Yellow Wallpaper", feminist author Charlotte Perkins Gilman's protagonist is confined to a small room in her home, diagnosed with a "hysterical tendency," but was likely post-partum depression. This confinement turns inward, and she images a ghost woman creeping behind the wallpaper that needs to be released. The silence and oppression of women's mental health in face of a strong patriarchal and capitalist mindset is as much a contemporary issue as a historical one.

Marielainelamp.com

Instagram: @marielainelamp

Jillian Schley

Jillian Schley is a Philadelphia-based artist and curator who earned an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2015 and a BFA in visual art from Arizona State University in 2012. She is a founding member of AUTOMAT Collective with a current practice focusing on media recontextualization.

Artist Statement: This photography series evolved from a body of work that utilizes poured paint as a material. The new series continues to incorporate working with paint in sculptural ways while introducing textiles, co-mingling of 2D and 3D elements, and a sense of staging and improvisation through the perspective of photography. The viewer is invited to explore the margins between painting, sculpture, and photography while questioning the nature of these boundaries. The works propose opportunities for materials and ideas to come together in open and imaginative spaces while revealing traces of the act of creation.

Lou Serna

Lou Serna is a Latinx/Native American curator and artist. He is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts with a current curatorial practice focused on own voices and visions. He lives and works in South Philly.

Artist Statement:

Phantasmagoric

Adjective.

having a fantastic or deceptive appearance, as something in a dream or created by the imagination. changing or shifting, as a scene made up of many elements.

These images are memories of moments of grand beauty, witnessed alone.

Website: www.louserna.com

Instagram: @lou_serna_

Lydia Smith

Lydia Smith is an artist based in Columbus, Ohio. She has also completed residencies at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, the Tyler School of Art Summer Painting Intensive, and the Yale School of Art Summer Session in Auvillar, France. In 2015 she was awarded a Watson Fellowship to spend a year traveling outside of the United States researching how cemetery landscapes can reflect varying cultural attitudes towards death. She received her BA in Anthropology and Studio Art from Rice University, and is currently pursuing her MFA at The Ohio State University.

Artist Statement: My interdisciplinary art practice unpacks multi-layered understandings of place through site-specific responses, particularly in the context of cemeteries, burial grounds, and historical sites. I uncover history overlooked and challenge our collective understanding of the past, questioning the narrative of what is and what should be remembered. My practice is rooted in research processes that include sensorial ethnographic fieldwork methodologies borrowed from anthropology, sifting through or reassembling the archive, and mapping through walking. I am interested in how to capture the vibrant affect of place through these multiple avenues leading to form, and the resulting work often utilizes photography or film as a document of time. I consistently ask what it means to represent place through the use of my own subjective hands and in collaboration with other voices. I ask us to persistently look closer and complicate our perception of landscape. Places remember things and I tell their stories.

Kate Testa

Kate Testa is a mixed media sculptor and installation artist based in Philadelphia. Her background is based in craft, receiving her BFA from The Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 2008 where she studied glass. After graduation she was selected for a yearlong residency at the New Street Glass Center in Worcester, MA, where she taught glassblowing and maintained a studio. After the completion of her residency in 2009 she relocated to Seattle, WA to pursue her glassblowing career. There she worked as an artist assistant and educator in the glass industry for the next 8 years. During this time Testa maintained her studio practices and exhibited throughout the north west. She also continued her studies and in 2015 received a Certificate in Museum Studies from the University of Washington. In 2016 Testa returned to the east coast to pursue her master's degree and received her MFA concentrating in sculpture from the University of Delaware in 2018. She then served as the Curatorial Fellow at The Delaware Contemporary where she facilitated and curated a series of 5 exhibitions for the University of Delaware that were held at TDC. Currently she teaches art history at Delaware College of Art and Design and sculpture at Rowan University.

Artist Statement: Using mixed media and repetitive forms of translation, my work explores themes of the metaphysical and the occult while investigating how the art making process can transcend into a spiritual practice. Using wood, fibers, glass, paper and found objects I create sculptural collages, ritual objects and installations that express these ideas. Using tedious and time-consuming methods, I focus my energies onto objects while I am creating them to activate and impart ritual significance. Taking influence from the absurdity of religion, I challenge the viewer to question my beliefs in these object's power, hoping to exist in a grey space between fantasy and reality. My intuition is usually right, I like to say I'm psychic and then tell people I'm half kidding. I'm not kidding.

For more information please visit her website at www.therealkatetesta.com