SOUR MILK
Transforming from its initial state, sour milk can materialize from a forgotten carton; tart, pungent, fermenting. Entropy and rot permeates but the velvety liquid becomes new, regaining agency, proving to be resilient. This exhibition considers what has soured, creating potential for positive change or harmful destruction. Consisting of works by Joseph Caster, Shelby Charlesworth, Rachel Dickson, Paul Michael, and Magdalena Pawlowski, each of these five artists embrace change to nurture growth.
ARTIST STATEMENT
The heavy midnight blue wraps around me as I peak through a brightly lit window. Inside, sheers lacerate strands of braided hair, and matchsticks dance around a table. Creating visual hybrids of personal memories and folklore, I paint moments of loneliness, loss, and discovery. I work primarily from memory, saved snapshots, and my well-worn diary. Egg tempera’s ability to create a delicate line allows me to painstakingly replicate minute details such as hairs on a spider leg, embroidery threads, scales on a fish, and coarse lace on a communion dress. Scenes are playfully and intuitively pieced together like a puzzle as I reinterpret the stories of my childhood.

BIOGRAPHY
Growing up on Nantucket Island, where the air tastes of salt, and beach plum, Magdalena Pawlowski migrated to the Quiet Corner of Connecticut, enveloping herself in a haven of yellow birch and hemlock trees. She received her BFA from the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts in Old Lyme, Conn., and studied at the Corcoran College of Art + Design in Washington, D.C. Recently awarded residencies include the Hale Residency on Nantucket, Mass. and Zaratan AIR in Lisbon, Portugal. Along with receiving the Wardlaw Grant from the Lyme Academy, and the Wood/Raith Living Trust Fellowship, she has participated in numerous regional exhibitions.

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Night Window
Egg Tempera on Panel
18 x 24 inches
The Journey
Egg Tempera on Panel
9 x 12 inches
Glove
Etching
9 x 12 inches
Night Moth
Egg Tempera on Panel
11 x 14 inches
PAUL MICHAEL

ARTIST STATEMENT
Who am I when I think you’re looking? Who are you when I look away? My work reflects the connection and isolation we feel when our lives are mediated through technology. Inspired by livestream video, I explore ways that social media creates the illusion of intimacy but ultimately leads to alienation, with social experiences guided by the fear of missing out (FOMO). I look to Instagram Live as a resource to compose detailed drawings of the people I observe on screen, acknowledging that an image, either on-screen or on paper, highlights a disconnect, falling short of any real connection. Like my drawings, my print-making serves as an analog response, documenting my process by depicting cameras, laptops, and furniture in an empty studio. My artwork points to the human desire to be seen and to be heard, and asks the viewer to consider how we listen.

BIOGRAPHY
Born in Maine, raised in Texas, and now working in Connecticut, Paul Michael is an artist who explores themes of intimacy and isolation. Michael’s work was recently published in Orange Blush Zine and Get Candid Magazine. Recent exhibitions include Fan Culture at the CICA Museum, South Korea, The Newport Annual at the Newport Art Museum, R.I., Being Without Being at the Alexey von Schlippe Gallery, Avery Point, Conn., and Circuits at the Marquee Gallery, New London, Conn. He received a BFA from the Lyme Academy where he was a recipient of the Chandler Scholarship. Michael is currently a MFA candidate in studio art, graduate instructor, and a student in the Arts Leadership and Cultural Management Graduate Certificate program at the University of Connecticut.

@paulmichaelartist
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Are you working in the field?
LIVE
Graphite + Acrylic Bound Books
3.5 x 7.25 inches each
2020-2021
LIVE_02
Three-Channel Video
2020–2021
SHELBY CHARLESWORTH

ARTIST STATEMENT
Tracing spaces once touched, seeking comfort in an absent hand, I ground my work in personal experiences and social context. Responding in an interdisciplinary manner, I investigate themes of loss, longing, grief, and collective trauma. My interests lie in the tension between absence and presence; the ephemeral and fixed. Porcelain, embroidery, printmaking, textiles, and found objects are utilized to explore the body’s lived temporality and imagined permanence. Repetition and labour are used as linkages to empathy and understanding. With cracked flesh and an aching back I persist, sifting through the residue as it falls through my fingers.

BIOGRAPHY
Shelby Charlesworth is an artist who relocated from the Canadian Rockies to an unfamiliar place called New England for graduate school. She received her BFA from Alberta University of the Arts in 2017 and attended an exchange program at Pacific Northwest College of Art in 2015. Charlesworth explores mortality through mixed media such as sculpture, installation and printmaking. Recent exhibitions include Being Without Being at the Alexey von Schlippe Gallery, Conn., Vanishing at This Gallery an online venue, works in Vol. 10 of Storied Stitches, and The Daily curated by Sharon Butler at the Ely Center of Contemporary Art in New Haven, Conn., which was also published in Two Coats of Paint.

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Any Piece Of Cloth Can Be A Rag (detail)
Embroidery on Cloth
2020–2021
Any Piece Of Cloth Can Be A Rag (detail)
Embroidery on Cloth
2020–2021
Absent Hand (detail)
Porcelain
2020–2021
ARTIST STATEMENT
The pivotal moments of a story revolve around blissful joys, great sacrifices, and inevitable despairs, but the smaller stories, the less heroic narratives in between interest me the most. Dystopias become monotonous: sleeping in moonlight, gathering by fire, private moments of naked introspection, or quiet death. We are able to construct fantasies of rescue and freedom, or power and brotherhood from touches, glances, and brushes of skin. Photography depicts such scenes with a watchful eye, revealing the insecurities and desires that begin to fill this place.

BIOGRAPHY
Joseph (Joe) Caster is interested in themes of camaraderie, queerness, sensuality, and sacrifice. He uses photography as a way to frame his experiences through these themes. His models serve the alternate purposes of stand-ins and vessels, reflecting traces of personal experience. Caster received his BFA from Rhode Island College in photography with a minor in art history. Selected works can be seen in publications including Soft Lighting, Cumulus Photo, and Analog Forever Magazine, work shortlisted for this past year’s Vogue Italia Photo Vogue Festival, as well as an upcoming exhibition titled Shame Radiant at RedLine Art Center, Denver, Colo.
Flame Sacrifice
Archival Pigment Print
2020
First Death, Small Death
Archival Pigment Print
2020
Checking On Brothers
Archival Pigment Print
2020
RACHEL DICKSON

ARTIST STATEMENT
There is this dream that repeats itself, and I begin to wonder if my memory has absorbed it. Trying to recall the night I saw flashes of white in the Spanish Springs foothills, or when the clouds rained green light over the city. Perhaps these things have happened, but the lines continue to blur; a membrane that soaks the mattress. Small fragments, stuck in time and space, come together and build something new. The moments become odd, diverging from a sense of consistency. It is not about fabricating a new world or reality, but questioning the one I’m already a part of. I consume, and consume, try to recollect, but the moments morph a bit more each time. Using photography, video, and book arts I aim to cement these things, to figure out what version I should hold onto or if I should settle for a place in between.

BIOGRAPHY
Rachel Dickson is an artist from Northern Nevada where she earned her BFA at the University of Nevada, Reno. Deciding to leave sagebrush and hundred-mile views, she drove east towards Connecticut to live under maple canopies. New England serves as her backdrop for explorations of desire, dreams, and the otherworldly while utilizing photography, video, animation, and book arts. Her recent exhibitions include HOME at Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, Ill., Self-Conscious, N.Y. Photo Curator an online venue, and Being without Being at Alexey Von Schlippe Gallery, Avery Point, Conn.

@_rayychie
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Sharp Web
Archival Pigment Print
2020
A Sweet Poison
Archival Pigment Print
2020
Untitled
Film Still
2021
Blunt Edge
Archival Pigment Print
2020
2021 MFA GRADUATES

Paul Michael, Magdalena Pawlowski, Shelby Charlesworth, Joseph Caster, and Rachel Dickson
Graduating during the time of COVID-19, the class of 2021 has encountered challenges never before imagined. Last year’s class bravely pivoted mid-spring while this year’s class continued facing a year of uncertainty. Blocked from their studios for months, they encountered and mastered alternate means of instruction, conception, production, and fabrication, always adjusting on the fly, driven by their will to create. This exhibition raised questions previously not encountered. What can be safely displayed in a museum when social distancing is a reality? What kinds of work look best online? Will the show in New York happen? The list of unknown variables and changes required for health and safety measures has been long for our MFA class of 2021, yet they have persevered assisted by faculty and the Benton Museum of Art staff.

Their graduation is at hand, and we celebrate their accomplishments. They challenged themselves, creating new work in unexpected ways that reflect their insights and development over the past three years. Their creative work asks questions and then asks more questions. Their art is visual poetry that will continue to grow and develop after graduate school. And one day, we hope they will look back on this time as the beginning of many meaningful experiences in their lives.

Joseph Caster, Shelby Charlesworth, Rachel Dickson, Paul Michael, and Magdalena Pawlowski faced more hurdles than any of us could have imagined. However, their spirits have been resilient, and we thank them for helping us all find a way to carry on and offer our sincere congratulations as they step into their new worlds.

— Janet L. Pritchard & Judith Thorpe
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to recognize our friends, families, and peers who have provided unconditional support throughout our time in this program. The direction, criticism, and encouragement of the faculty members has been invaluable to us and we would especially like to extend our gratitude to our committee members. Many thanks to UConn’s Design Center Studio for the creation of this catalogue and accompanying materials.

DESIGNERS
Michaela Abate
Darrell Knighton
Laura Skinger
Sarah Woodward
SHOW DATES

Traveling exhibition opens at the Benton Museum of Art, March 31st - April 9th.

uconnmfa.com

BENTON MUSEUM OF ART
TUESDAY - FRIDAY
10 AM - 4:30 PM

SATURDAY - SUNDAY
10 AM - 4:30 PM

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SOUR MILK