

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Alfred University

More or Less

by

Jaclyn Doyle

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
The Alfred University Honors Program
April 20th, 2021

Under the Supervision of:

Chair: Lydia McCarthy

Committee Members:

Kat Riesing

Angie To

Table of Contents

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Poem
- Artist Statement
- Introduction
- Poem by Samantha King Holmes
- Introduction Continued
- Citations
- Photographs/Documentation of Artwork
- Image List

Untitled

My mind is an ocean,
my thoughts are the waves.
I could drown in the current,
and be carried away

Artist Statement

I find release, freedom and play in working without restraint or expectation. I respond intuitively to the process of making and find importance in the labor and work. Combining an array of materials in abundant, repetitive layers, I relish in the indulgent qualities of various mediums. In this way, merge simple and accessible materials in extravagant ways that give them new life and unexpected qualities. It is not representational, rigid, or restricted but rather gestural, emotional, and spontaneous. I use no prior plan or outline for such works, they design themselves as materials build and decay upon their surface.

The result is similar to the process - countless details and moments invite a distortion of self and require a curiosity and presence from the viewer. The photographs and texts I collage into my work allow me to be vulnerable, while the layers obscure and protect me. I make photographs to be collaged into the work, using long exposure and high contrast, that contain elements of abstraction and distortion. In these images, I look at myself and my surroundings, documenting the mundane yet private moments from my daily life. The text I incorporate into my pieces is also intimate in these ways; journal entries, personal poems, and comments jotted in the margins of my notes. These subtle traces and details of my life enter the work in quiet ways yet hold the greatest significance.

Introduction

Throughout the first few years of my undergrad study, I had often imagined how marvelous my senior year would be, working towards not only mounting my senior exhibition, but also completing my Honors thesis project. I could never envision what my show might look like or all the little decisions that I'd have to make along the way to lead me there. I had my eyes on one single goal for nearly three years; I was confident I would succeed and enjoy the sense of accomplishment that came along with earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts and making my partner, family, peers and professors proud. It wasn't until the Summer of 2020 that I would realize just how unexpected and uncertain my senior year would look in reality. As the newly discovered virus, COVID-19, swept the nation signaling the start of a global pandemic, I found myself preparing for the most important time in my life: my final, pivotal year of college. Aside from working towards completing my senior thesis show and honors thesis, I looked forward to the experience of my final year on campus, the opportunities the college had available for students with my academic standing, and gaining the experience that goes along with creating art for exhibition/making it come together in real life. As we all now know, the year unfolded revealing countless disappointments and let downs that felt like hard blows I wasn't sure I could recover from. But, the greatest gift this past year gave me was ultimately a shift in perspective.

When it was finally time for me to return to school that Fall, I never actually ended up going back. With government regulations in place and most of my classes being held virtually, I committed to completing the semester working from my parents garage. While this seemed like a good idea in the beginning, I was faced with new and unexpected challenges that influenced the way my work developed. When the semester first began, I was feeling rather isolated at home and especially removed from the vivid, inspiring culture/atmosphere of school. When I received my first emails from my advisors encouraging me to prepare ideas for what my body of work could include, I had no idea where to begin. Naturally, being home with all my past work and missing seeing the ideas of my peers alive and evolving in the studio, I reverted to that archive as a way to ignite my own creativity again. There were a few

projects in particular which stood out to me, and I had always enjoyed the process required in making those works the most. In those compositions, I painted with thick oil paint, applied only with a palette knife, which resembled frosting a cake more than painting a picture. I took the techniques I had used to create those images and really allowed myself to get lost in the process. I started to digitally edit and manipulate my photographs, breaking them down to graphic images with only four values defining shapes and forms. I would draw large grids on my canvases as well as on smaller images that I would print from my computer. Using a grid-transfer process, I would hand draw my compositions onto the canvas. Once I completed transferring my image, I would select my color palettes. As the photographs only contained four values, I would assign four distinct colors to each value in my paintings and transfer the information. The color palettes were always very intentional and brought the work to life, serving as one of the most important formal elements present. Texture, from the thick oil paint lathered on the surface, always stuck with viewers. As the distinct choices of paint fall into their aligning sections on the grid, a clear pattern always reveals itself. Despite bringing the image from the photograph to life in an entirely new way, the texture of the work contributed to the cohesive feeling of the pieces.

As the semester continued on, I played with different variations and ways of conforming to the rigid and systematic process I had created for myself. I really considered color themes, playing with my palette choices. I explored new ways of making marks and creating texture on the surface of these works. As my painting practice followed this systematic approach, my photography practice was very loose and allowed for me to really express myself at that time. I was focusing on capturing self portraits, landscape photography, and documentations of my day to day life. I was aimlessly traveling around my hometown and neighboring cities daily to capture countless images, which would later be edited. Aside from never knowing what I would photograph and relinquishing my control over orchestrating a perfect image composition, I appreciated leaving it to chance. My photography professor at the time, Lydia McCarthy, was the greatest inspiration to me and really served as my life line connecting me to campus. She was providing me insightful feedback that semester, considering perspective and sources of inspiration that I

never would have considered on my own. She worked to keep me inspired despite being away from school, and at home, through weekly research requirements and other assignments. These projects gave me an opportunity to look beyond my practice to see how my regular daily interests could work their way back into inform my art. One fellow artist stood out in particular to me at that time, the work of Chris Martin. His ability to use accessible materials and pull from an archive that he built made so much sense to me. I was working with the tools and supplies that I had on hand, and it really broadened my perspective of what art could be. Martin uses structural foam, housing insulation and even moldy bread in his paintings. While I was still working from my rigid painting system during the Fall, these ideas would come back to mind in the spring and inform the transformation my work/practice experienced.

Upon my return to campus that Spring, I was very optimistic about how my final semester would unfold. The biggest change on the horizon, aside from physically being back on campus, was selecting new advisors to work with. I had reached out to Kat Riesing and Angie To to be committee members as I worked to complete my Honors thesis project. Having only experienced limited interactions working with the two my freshman year, I was eager to hear more of their unique and thoughtful insights about my work. And this decision proved invaluable. When I finally met with my advisors, I had a really helpful conversation with Kat in particular. After discussing how my work had been developing in the Fall, she suggested perhaps my conflict in the studio lay in the strict confines I was keeping my work contained to. She encouraged me to consider loosening up my process and that I might enjoy the act of making as well as the resulting works even more. Her advice to me essentially felt like her saying “start over from the beginning,” but in reality, it served as permission to explore and get messy in the studio. Although I was intimidated, it ultimately allowed me to discover my creative freedom. I just needed to figure out where to begin.

Canvas

Forlorn, lost

I thought I would have it figured out by now

I'm somewhere between

"Is this really my life?" and "Where am I right now?"

I measured who I was supposed to be

against the picture that you painted

Now I'm stuck with this brush, my chaotic thoughts,

and this canvas

I never wanted perfect, I just wanted happy

I'm still figuring out what that looks like

Introduction (continued)

After this pivotal conversation, my work ultimately began to shift from being rigid and created through a systematic process to becoming very fluid and having an expressive style of working. The process of making work became a meditative and freeing practice for me. Creating my own gestural language through repetitive and intuitive mark making was exciting and a way of working that I'd never explored before. Giving myself permission to see what I was capable of making before I had a plan for the shape the work would take was new to me. I struggled in ways to release that control and allow myself to trust my instincts. In a lot of ways, the shift in my practice of making art reflected my relationship with my life at the time. Because COVID was still causing uncertainty and fear, I was learning to go with the flow in ways that I never could before. Having crippling anxiety, I find it difficult to trust myself and my instincts. I gradually realized no level of preparation or answers to my endless insecure questions would provide relief. In my life and in my artistic practice, I was learning to let go of things that I couldn't control and believe in my ability to find solutions to creative problems.

Another central part of my practice was about layering materials through collage and decollage techniques. I was interested in combining an abundant array of materials as a way to play with texture and material relationships. Through building up and breaking down the surface of a painting, an interesting relationship begins to expose itself, showing the revealing and concealing of materials creating new and exciting textures on the surfaces of my works. These processes were sometimes unexpected, not knowing what layers would be visible under others once exposed, but the results would often be serendipitous. I quickly came to appreciate not always knowing what to expect of my art and working to find resolve for a piece. For me, the act of creating was becoming about the process; the labor of combining an abundance of materials and experimenting as a way to work towards finding resolution in the busyness of the surface. This way of working for me was largely influenced by the practice of artist Mark Bradford. He creates enormous paintings with incredible texture constructed on the surface of these works. Bradford utilizes personal materials, such as advertisements from neighborhoods that he has lived in and perm

paper for hair, inspired by his time working in his mother's salons. While the intimacy and meaning of those materials disappear into the layers of his paintings, it contributes heavily to the intensity of his pieces. Through his own process of constructing surfaces and breaking away elements, pattern and color emerge in pieces in unusual ways. Watching videos of the artist in his studio, reading countless interviews, and studying the work myself gave deeper insight into my own practice.

Despite my break from my past methods of working, formally my work remained similar. As central as it was to Bradford's work, color, texture, and pattern were still central elements to my own practice. Color is always intentional. It is sometimes chosen based on instinct, my emotions, or even reactions to colors already existing within a composition. Artists such as Sarah Cain described their color theory as being informed from childhood memories and that concept stuck with me. Cain recalled receiving royal purple ribbons for showing her artwork at the county fair at such a young age, and because of the vivid hues she witnessed in real life, these memories stuck with her. My palettes are decided upon in similar ways, always informed by personal motives the viewer might not always understand, but they're forced to confront it anyways. Texture in my pieces simply results from my process of layering paper and other materials on top of one another as mentioned above. Building the surface, and in many cases removing aspects of the composition, creates textures I never would have been able to mimic through an organized, structured procedure. The torn and ripped and burned edges of my composition are also dictated by chance. The nuances created by the parts of my practice that I can not control excite me while I am working and the viewer when confronting the pieces. This way of working came about, inspired by the advice of committee member Angie To. She urged me to consider breaking free from the rectangle, which painting and photography are so often confined to. Discovering new ways of presenting my paintings and photos, not in the traditional rectangular frame, influenced my process of working. The jagged and uneven edges served as a way for the viewer to become lost in the work and texture, and not be distracted by the perfect, sterile lines of yet another rectangle. To juxtapose marks resulting from texture, the inclusion of pattern is a way for me to reintroduce control or organization to resolve the chaos. I create pattern through the use of intentional gestures and brushstrokes applied to the canvas.

Often relying on existing imagery (such as photographs or printed graphics), tools such as stencils and text create repetition that mutes potentially unorganized or wild compositions. The grid is an example of a recurring pattern through my work. From the very first grid-transfer paintings I was creating in the fall, the intersecting lines kept resurfacing in my work again and again. Perhaps as a way to create unity or organize the information in my compositions, the grid served as a motif in my work. All of these formal elements recurring in my work show the progression of my studio practice from the Fall to the present, demonstrating what I am learning and how it continues to influence the work.

Another key component of the work is the inclusion of text and photography. Much of the photography comes from a personal archive, collected over the past four years in college and some from earlier periods in my life as well. Recalling these themes within my work is important as it works to memorialize the mundane moments, giving greater significance to these small moments of my life. Many of these images are high contrast, and I often utilize long exposure techniques to create a ghostly and dissolving effect within my images. When two frames become blurred together as one, I am able to say a lot more in a single image. The documentary style photographs capture simple moments in my life, including many self portraits from various times. Taking these snapshots forces me to focus more on these moments in time. I am able to witness them and see them in a different way; and strategically arranging these images throughout my paintings and collages is important. They need to be placed so that they do not overshadow other parts or even blend in and get lost in the composition. Studying the work of Lyle Ashton Harris gave me the agency to take charge of this while collaging. Harris works to combine various sources of information resulting in one cohesive message or meaning. He selects items as simple as magazine cut outs, ad clippings, and newspaper articles. He then arranges the items together, heavily considering placement and scale of each individual piece. In doing so, an overarching message can be derived from the work. His justification for his unique practice is that the images/objects belong together simply because he decides that. This simple yet powerful ownership over his practice is something I tried to embody and imitate when considering my own practice, especially while collaging. The same is true for text in my work. I use personal poetry, lines from journals, thoughts from the margins of my notes.

These very intimate and personal thoughts and images are information and clues about my life and the emotions that we are all experiencing. Many lines are often written flow of consciousness as I am working, but dominating text within the compositions is thoughtful and deliberately chosen. These phrases or poems are placed overlapping other materials at the end of my painting process. As if a final sentiment to my work, I feel it appropriate to include these direct comments on my pieces. These very vulnerable inclusions allow the audience to understand the story and the emotion my work attempts to illustrate.

As my work evolved this past semester, it became clear the process was essential to my practice. The way that I select, merge, layer, and ultimately combine a diverse array of materials is the interesting part of the work. Building new combinations of materials on paintings and deconstructing the surface in a way that reveals underlying layers often leads to fortuitous results. The final works I present are as detailed and intimate as my creative process with the elements I incorporate. Being vulnerable with the viewer through my practice and my message allows for deeper understanding. Without the guidance and help of my incredible committee and advisors, I wouldn't have had the support I needed to make these decisions or fully realize my potential. Through considering their critiques, referencing the work and practice of other artists, and exploring various ways of thinking about/considering art, this body of work wouldn't have been possible. The challenges of the past year have been a lot for anyone to face. With resilience and patience, we are able to navigate our path towards greater opportunity. Learning my practice could serve as an empowering, gratifying form of meditative work was the greatest take away this year.

Citations

Holmes , Samantha King. *Born to Love, Cursed to Feel*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2016.

Documentation of Work

Studio Space



Materials in use



View of the studio

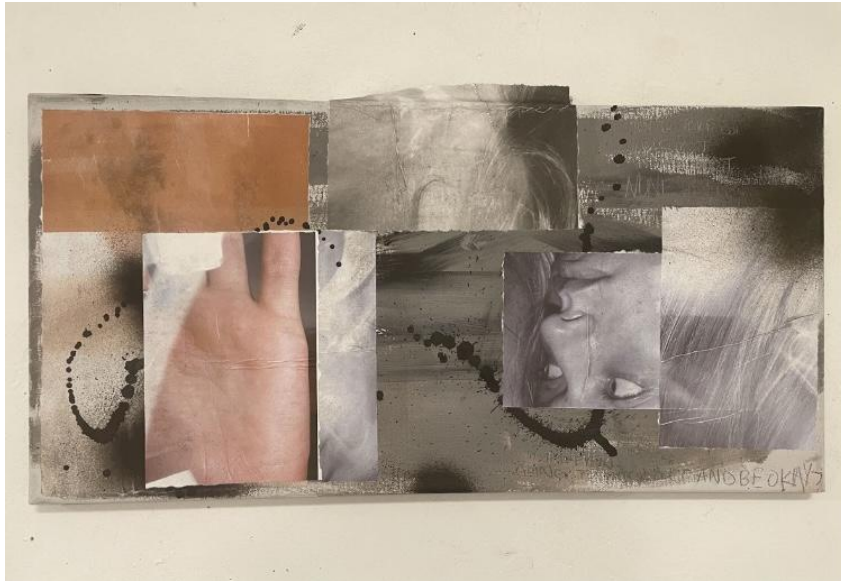


Self working in the studio during COVID restrictions

Sketches and Beginning Stages of Collages



Small sketches and sample pattern paintings with photographs being chemically altered



A collage in its first layers



A collage after numerous layers and various materials are added



Close up detail of a painting



Close up detail of a painting

Mid-Semester Critique



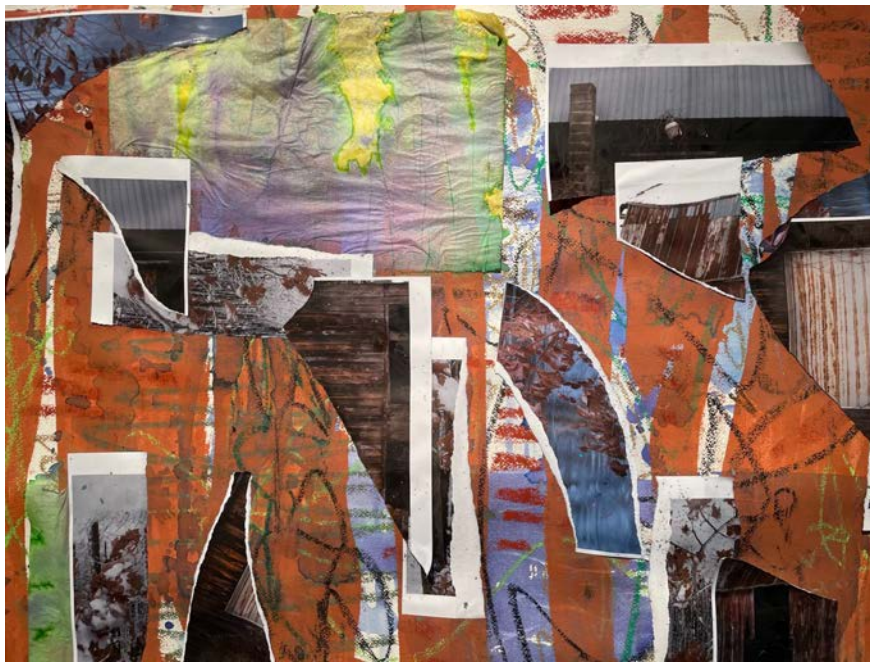
Install shot



Install shot



Detail shot



Detail Shot

Online Exhibition Photographs



Image 01

Jaclyn Doyle

Nostalgic

Watercolor, acrylic, spray paint, sumi ink, pastels, printed photograph, cardboard on paper

40 inches x 48 inches



Image 02

Jaclyn Doyle

More or Less

Acrylic, glue, glitter, construction paper, brown bags, magazines, sketchbook pages on wallpaper

30 inches x 40 inches



Image 03

Jaclyn Doyle

Awaiting

Watercolor, acrylic, spray paint, sumi ink, pastels, glue, party streamers, matches on paper
30 inches x 40 inches



Image 04

Jaclyn Doyle

Pieces of Tomorrow

Acrylic, pastels, bleeding tissue paper, glitter, photo test strips, torch, ash on paper
30 inches x 40 inches



Image 05

Jaclyn Doyle

By Hand

Acrylic, spray paint, sumi ink on paper
30 inches x 40 inches



Image 06

Jaclyn Doyle

Modern Emotion

Watercolor, acrylic, spray paint, sumi ink, pastels on paper
30 inches x 30 inches



Image 07

Jaclyn Doyle

Don't Mind If I Don't

Acrylic, spray paint, sumi ink on photograph
8 ½ inches x 11 inches



Image 08

Jaclyn Doyle

Lost In The Dream

Spray paint on photograph

8 ½ inches x 11 inches

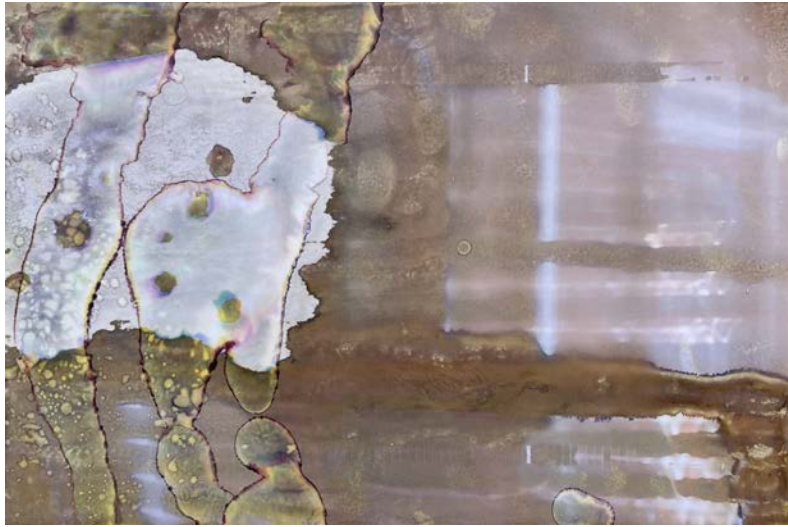


Image 09

Jaclyn Doyle

Blur (I Thought It Would Be Different)

Alcohol, acetone, bleach on photograph

8 ½ inches x 11 inches

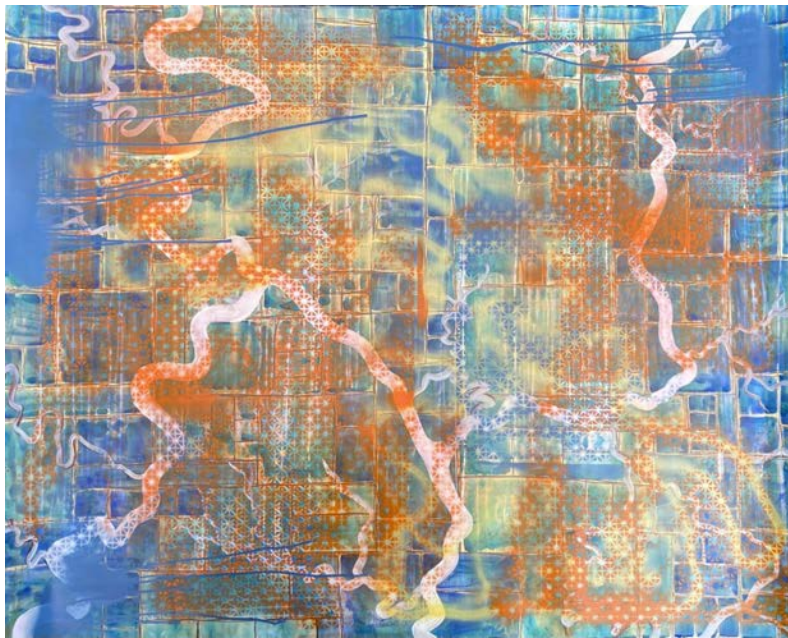


Image 10

Jaclyn Doyle

Evolving

Watercolor, gouache, acrylic, spray paint, ink, graphite on yupo paper

6 feet x 8 feet

BFA Exhibition



Installation shot



Pieces of Tomorrow

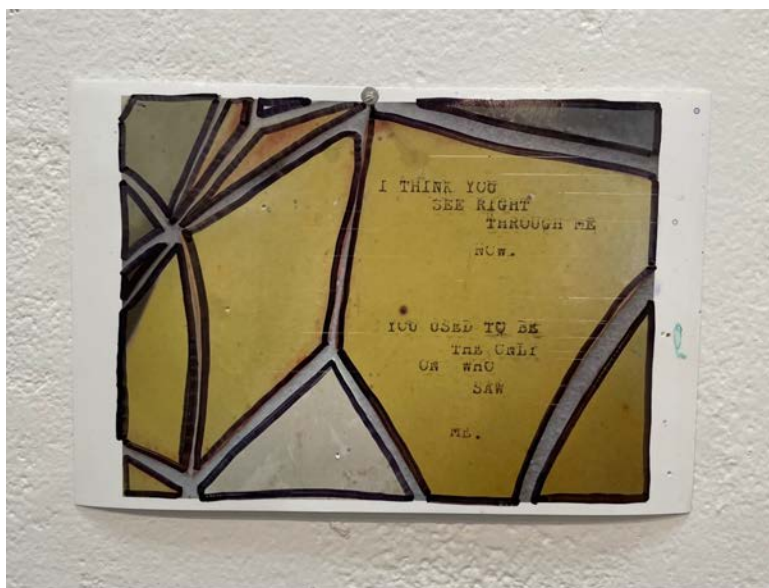
Acrylic, pastels, bleeding tissue paper, glitter, photo test strips, torch, ash on paper
30 inches x 40 inches



Untitled

Typewriter print on photograph

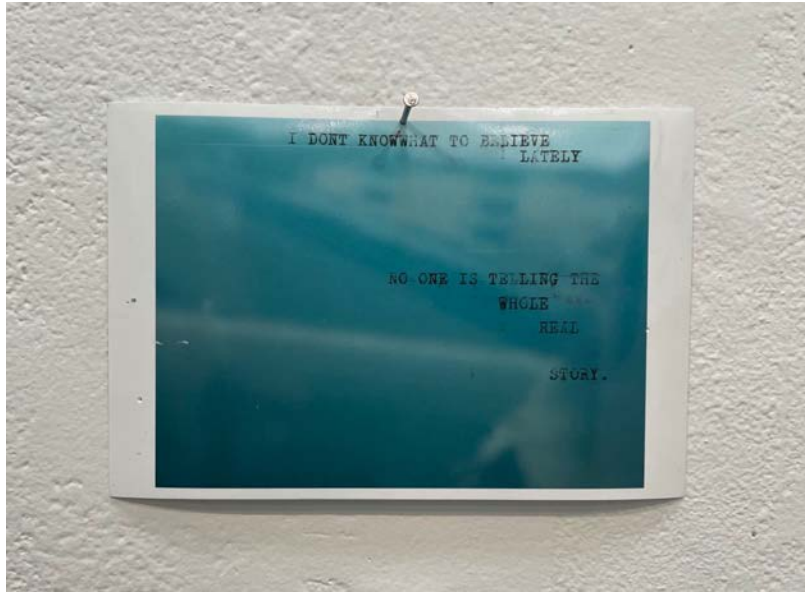
5 inches x 7 inches



Untitled

Typewriter print on photograph

5 inches x 7 inches



Untitled

Typewriter print on photograph

5 inches x 7 inches



Awaiting

Acrylic, pastels, bleeding tissue paper, glitter, photo test strips, torch, ash on paper
30 inches x 40 inches



Install shot



Detail shot



Detail shot



More or Less

Acrylic, glue, glitter, construction paper, brown bags, magazines, sketchbook pages

72 inches x 90 inches