

Richmond, VA - arspace is pleased to present a new gallery-wide exhibition, "Because OF," featuring: **Eric Anthony Berdis, Laura Boban, Samuel Brown, Min Haeng Kang, Andy Lowrie, and Paige Lizbeth Morris.** "Because OF" is a culmination of the first year of Graduate MFA Candidates in the Department of Craft/Material Studies at VCUarts. Exhibition dates are Friday, April 26 through Sunday, May 19, 2019. An Opening Reception for the Artists will take place on Friday, April 26, 2019, from 6:00-9:00 p.m. This event will be Free and Open to the Public.

Eric Anthony Berdis derives his work from childhood fantasies, through which he explores the metamorphosis of becoming. He writes that set among playful plush objects, sculptures, and drawings, "their performance seeks to simulate the jarring experience of being stereotyped while simultaneously examining the ways we navigate towards and create safe spaces." Loud sequined materials are reassembled as uniforms for a dystopic queer world. Each object holds a peculiar function, none of which are to clothe the body or to cover uncomfortable truths of shame. In unrelenting confrontation with the audience, he makes the viewer a mirror and forces one to reckon with their own reactions to what has been crafted as both one's best fantasy and worst nightmare. Originally from Erie, PA, Berdi received a BFA from Slippery Rock University in 2013. In 2016, he was awarded the opportunity to study at Tyler School of Art in the Fibers & Material Studies Department as a post-baccalaureate student. In 2017 Berdi completed the Fabric Workshop & Museum apprentice program. Eric has had solo exhibitions at Random Access Gallery, in Syracuse, New York, Practice Gallery Philadelphia, Bunker Projects, Pittsburgh and Project 1612 in Peoria, Illinois.

Laura Boban explores notions of the American Dream, belonging, and consumption as it relates to fulfillment and exterior projections of happiness within her fiber and installation work. Memories of framed Norman Rockwell prints, hockey games on the TV, and shelves lined with dolls and figurines are re-imagined to create a visual language where normative becomes blurry and ambiguous, and where the perceived sameness of suburbia becomes unpredictable and exuberant. The process of abstraction - tracing, fragmenting, and silhouetting - is an off-path route, or queering, used to generate new possibilities and fluid forms of image-making within her practice. In 2008 Boban received her BFA in art education and studio arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Before starting her MFA she was a high school art teacher for ten years for Chicago Public Schools. She has presented curriculum at the National Art Education Association Conference and participated in various teacher programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Samuel Brown's attraction to ecosystems and geology was heavily influenced at a young age by video game platforms, 1990s animation, and other screen related stimuli. "It was these controlled environments of color and geographically gargantuan terrains that pushed me to go outside and experiment with the physical," he says. Now he is constantly working to make ties between his findings in the real world and the fictional worlds created in this post digital age. "Making objects out of clay allows me to study landscapes that are present both inside and outside of the natural world," he says. "Woven amongst these digital worlds I found were visual studies of the real world finely tuned and visually appropriated by game designers and animators." Brown continues, "Clay and other minerals are my link back to these fictional places that my mind has visited." His process mimics the origins of fiction and non-fiction, the organic and inorganic. Brown's forms deviate in shape between vessels to sculptures reminiscent of nature. "The cultural connections to historical pottery within the context of region as well as place fascinate me," he says. "While the vessels I create do not literally imply utility, striking surfaces and multi-fired glazes act as a way of glorifying fantastical environments. The language of the organic elements present within my work attempts to portray how I see nature personified within this contemporary age." Brown received his BFA in 2016 from Appalachian State with an emphasis in ceramics.

Min Haeng Kang believes that making a work is a process of understanding her own thoughts and emotions and thereby expanding her understanding of human existence. “I became suspicious of feelings and thoughts I had believed to be my own,” she says. “I realized that instead of thinking of my thoughts and feelings as my own and trying to keep them, I was the one seeing them come in and out inside me.” She thinks of her own existence as a boundary and expresses its shape as a perforated shell. She began to aim at extending the scope of understanding herself as a social being, contemplating the artist’s role in society and what meaning her own works and creative activities can have socially, and expressing these through her works. Feeling that too much material already exists in the world and that it is only focused on creating new things, she is working with trash in the hope that her creative actions can contemplate a cycle, not a one-sided consumption of resources. Min was born in Korea and majored in Korean Literature and Photography during her university years. She started studying glass in Japan and graduated with honors from Toyama City Institute of Glass Art. A scholarship enabled her to create at the Utatsuyama craft workshop for three years with scholarship and she was awarded an honor researcher prize twice. She is the first person to receive the grand prize as a foreigner at the 69th annual Kanazawa Craft competition held in Kanazawa, a well-known ‘craft city’ in Japan. She is the first Korean to receive the grand prize at the Triennial International Exhibition of Glass Kanazawa competition in Japan. Kang has won multiple prizes and her work is in the permanent collections of the Cheongju International Biennale Committee, the Toyama Glass Art Museum, the Notojima Glass Art Museum, the Utatsuyama Craft Workshop and Toyama City Institute of Glass Art. Her work can be found in catalogs that were produced for several of the exhibitions mentioned above as well as in *New Glass Review #34*.

Andy Lowrie is interested in contemporary expressions of craft that challenge hierarchies of material value and embrace a mindful exploitation of material and process. He considers the body and its impermanence through a practice rooted in metalsmithing and adornment. In acts of mark making, surface manipulation, and erasure he explores the potential of process as metaphor. In recent work, he has presented found materials, altered objects and remnants of the making process together with in-progress studio crafted objects. In the way that an object can outlast its maker but is never truly fixed in time, place or form, he currently finds the idea of an unfinished object problematically compelling. Andy is a first-year graduate student in the metals area of the Craft / Material Studies department. He moved to the United States from Australia, where he earned his BFA from the Queensland College of Art. His work has been exhibited in the United States, Australia, Canada, Italy and China.

Paige Lizbeth Morris is a native of Allentown, PA and a 2012 graduate of Philadelphia’s Tyler School of Art where she earned a BFA cum laude with a concentration in glass. Morris seeks delicate exposure and not unraveling. “My work is an ongoing exploration of despair and pleasure, a complex combination of childhood memories of comfort and harrowing uncertainties as a woman,” she says. These experiences are distilled into the raw matter that structures her dreams in which unknown desires are unveiled by the mundane. Morris says, “Material choices offer tender support to the agonizing incidents that are physically manifested. I consider my own pain, as well as the adoption of another’s pain, in order to create sculptures that grant the silent a voice through an enigmatic support system.” In 2012, Morris was the Sculpture Emerging Artist in Residence at Millersville University. She is a recipient of the Jack Malis Glass Award and the Temple Creative Arts and Research Grant. Morris has exhibited work domestically in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Texas. She has taught at various institutions including Salem Community College and Tyler School of Art. Her work is included in *New Glass Review #34*.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 12-4 p.m. Please contact the gallery administrator at artspaceorg@gmail.com, or phone the gallery at 804-232-6464 for additional information. The gallery is located at Zero East 4th Street in Richmond, Virginia 23224, with a second door at 31 E. 3rd St., and online at www.artspacegallery.org.

-- News Release Prepared by Drury Welford, PR Volunteer