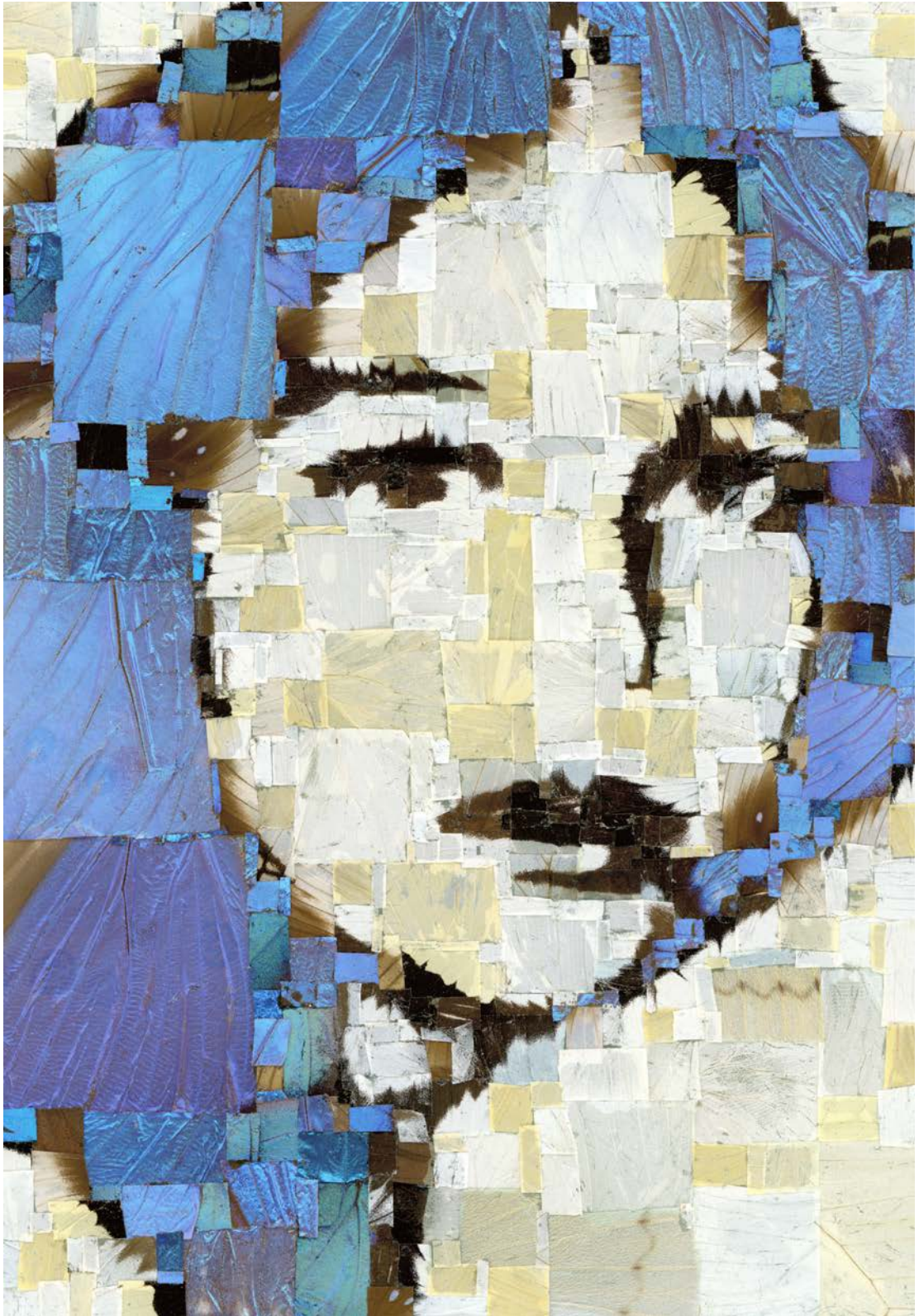


# LISA SETTE GALLERY

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# BENJAMIN TIMPSON

Rita Smith's hair is pulled back in a coruscating flash of blue morpho and her expression is enigmatic – a velvety black gaze reaching us from a distant moment in time. A folded serape neatly wraps her shoulders, its intriguing surface composed of hundreds of variegated patterned pieces. In the artist Benjamin Timpson's 2021 rendition of this 1920's-era black and white portrait, Smith is both ephemeral and radiant with lived humanity. Timpson's use of deconstructed and intricately overlapped butterfly wings as a medium of portraiture presents his subjects as woven from the complex materials of memory, nature, metamorphosis, and survival.

Smith was murdered a century ago, in a series of brutal homicides that were premeditated as a means to transfer Osage people's valuable Oklahoma oil holdings to wealthy white men in the area. Women were the primary target in this scheme: Smith's mother and two of her sisters were also killed during the Osage Reign of Terror. Says Timpson, "This has been going on for a long time, this pattern of destroying not just the woman herself, but the woman's power and strength in Indigenous societies."

Community groups estimate that as many as 80% of Indigenous women and girls are the victims of violence and sexual abuse. In 2017, after a DNA test confirmed his family's own generationally-concealed Puebloan ancestry, and a close relative was badly beaten by her boyfriend, Timpson began making portraits of such women—both identified and anonymous, past and contemporary—using responsibly-sourced butterfly wings, deconstructed and arranged against LED micro-controlled light boxes and in stunning large-format photographs of these arrangements.

Timpson's light box portraits operate on 13 minute cycles of increasing illumination as the microscopic wing structures present dramatically shifting hues and iridescence throughout this cycle. In addition to persuading viewers to slow their examination of his work, or to return for a second look, Timpson believes "the illumination also acts as a candle – as you would light a candle for a loved one." Titled with the names of their subjects, the deeply personal nature of these portraits is juxtaposed with the universality of the butterfly as an object of human fascination, and as a connection between humans and the natural world.

"People from cultures all over the world recognize the butterfly as a symbol of metamorphosis. Its life cycle is like the physical manifestation of so much of our mythology, and its image is ubiquitous. But most people don't get that close to butterfly wings. When people stand in front of a photograph with the pattern and structure of the wings blown up ten times, they're still mesmerized... if nothing else, I hope that people come away with an increased respect for nature, this incredible basis for life. As an artist I'm working to create a poetic loop, seeking a continuous cyclical interaction between the medium, the symbolism of the medium, and the composition."

Timpson collaborates with Caroline Felicity Antone, a Tohono O'odham person and founder of a nonprofit dedicated to protecting Indigenous girls, in locating survivors and family members—he shares the profits from his pieces with Antone's group. Similarly, Timpson worked with

Left: Benjamin Timpson, *Aielah Saric-Auger*, 2021, pigment inkjet print, 42" x 30" (52" x 39.5" framed), edition of 15

Cover: Benjamin Timpson, *Rita Smith*, 2021, pigment inkjet print, 70.5" x 46" (83.5" x 59" framed), edition of 15

representatives of the Osage Nation in researching the colors of Rita Smith's luxuriant Pendleton serape, which was designed and woven by Native women. When he contacted Rosetta Peters of North Dakota about making her portrait, Peters immediately sent him an 1880's photograph of Tatanka Iyotanka (Sitting Bull), sitting for a portrait with a monarch butterfly prominently displayed in his hatband. It was an image that Timpson had never seen before: "When Rosetta sent me that, and connected it to the symbolism in my work, it felt as though this project had come full circle," remarks the artist. Exemplified in the life of a butterfly, cycles of connection and collaboration across generations and geographical space have become an essential part of Timpson's process.

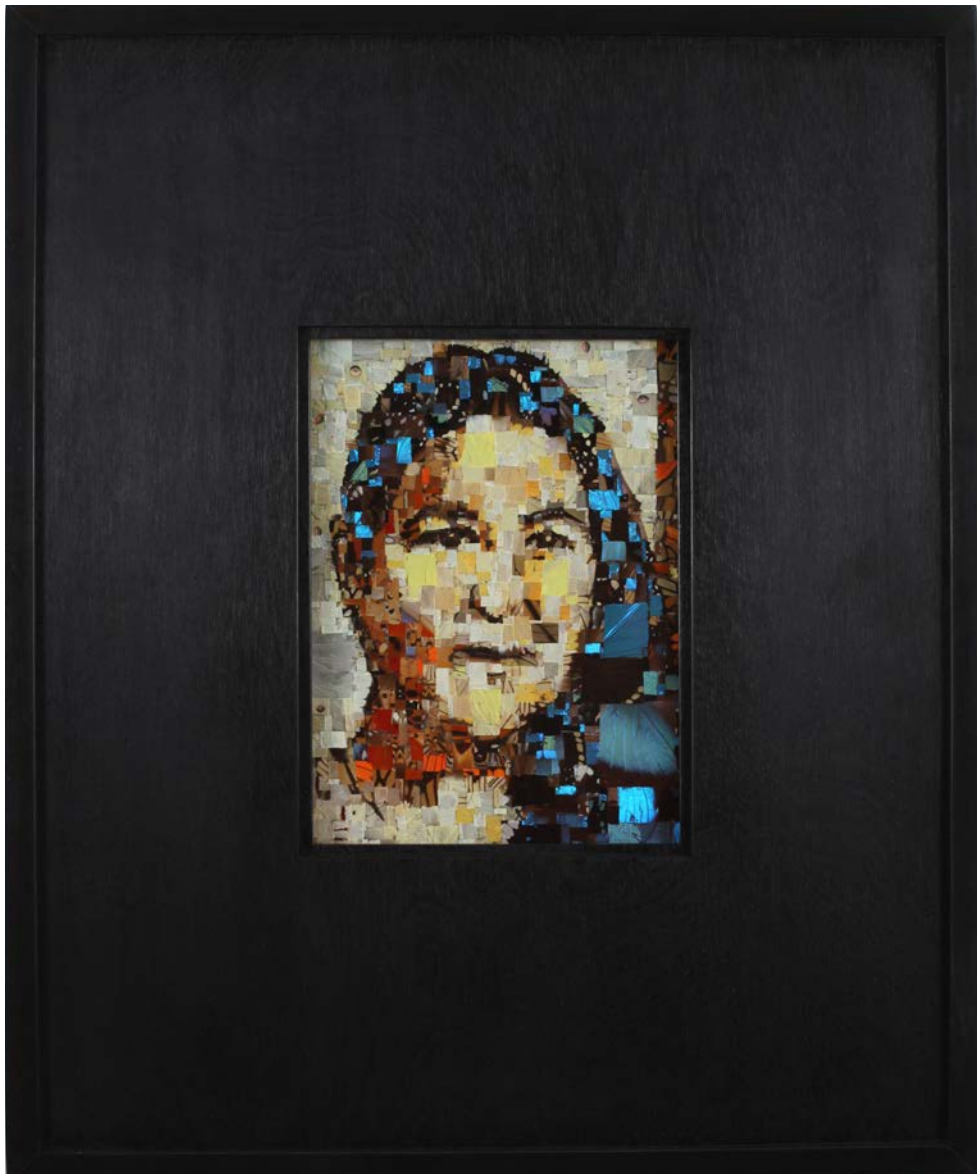


Benjamin Timpson, *Banff County Jane Doe*, 2021, butterfly wings on glass, wood, electrical components, 6" x 4" butterfly collage (18" x 15" x 3" framed within custom programmable LED light panel), unique



“When I gave Rebecca Plentywounds a portrait of her sister she thanked me for this image and told me she was going to hang it up forever. I feel like that’s what artwork is for—to carry this object forward with you on your journey, to be a marker of your culture and time.”

Although these portraits are intended to bring attention to the results of cultural violence and exploitation, Timpson’s works and the relationships he’s forged along the way ultimately represent vivid connections between families, individuals, and cultures, and a ritual reclaiming of the symbolism of survival and rebirth.



Benjamin Timpson, *Rosetta Peters*, 2021, butterfly wings on glass, wood, electrical components, 8" x 6" butterfly collage (18" x 15" x 3" framed within custom programmable LED light panel), unique



Michael Lundgren, *Target Flares over the Spiral Jetty*, 2010, archival pigment print, 32" x 40" unframed / 37" x 44.5" framed, Edition of 7

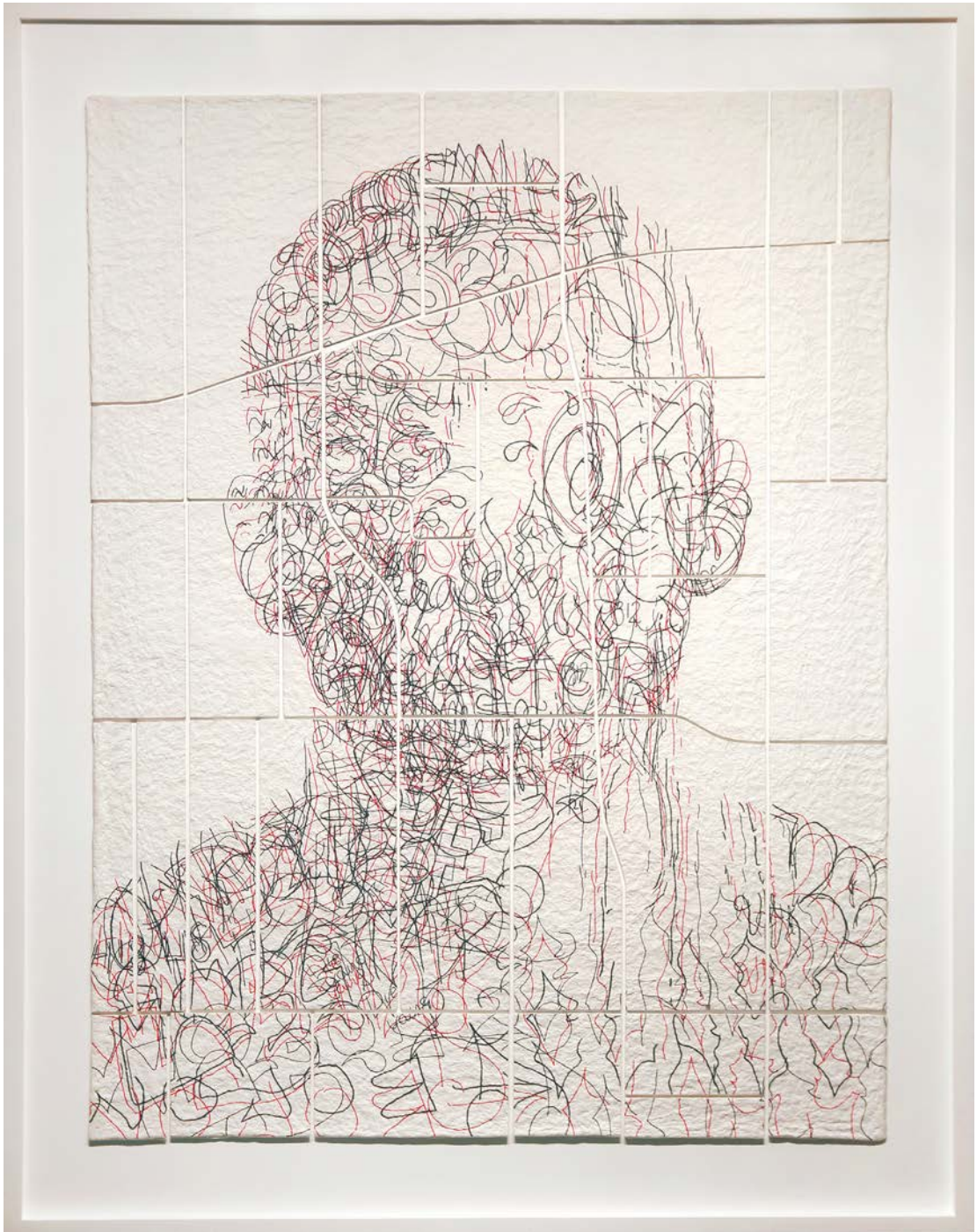


James Turrell, *Site Plan with Projected Section and Survey Net*, 1992, mylar, beeswax, emulsion, ink, liquitex, wax pastel  
41.5" x 60.5" framed, unique



Beverly Penn, *Drought*, 2019, cast bronze, 41" x 45" x 8"





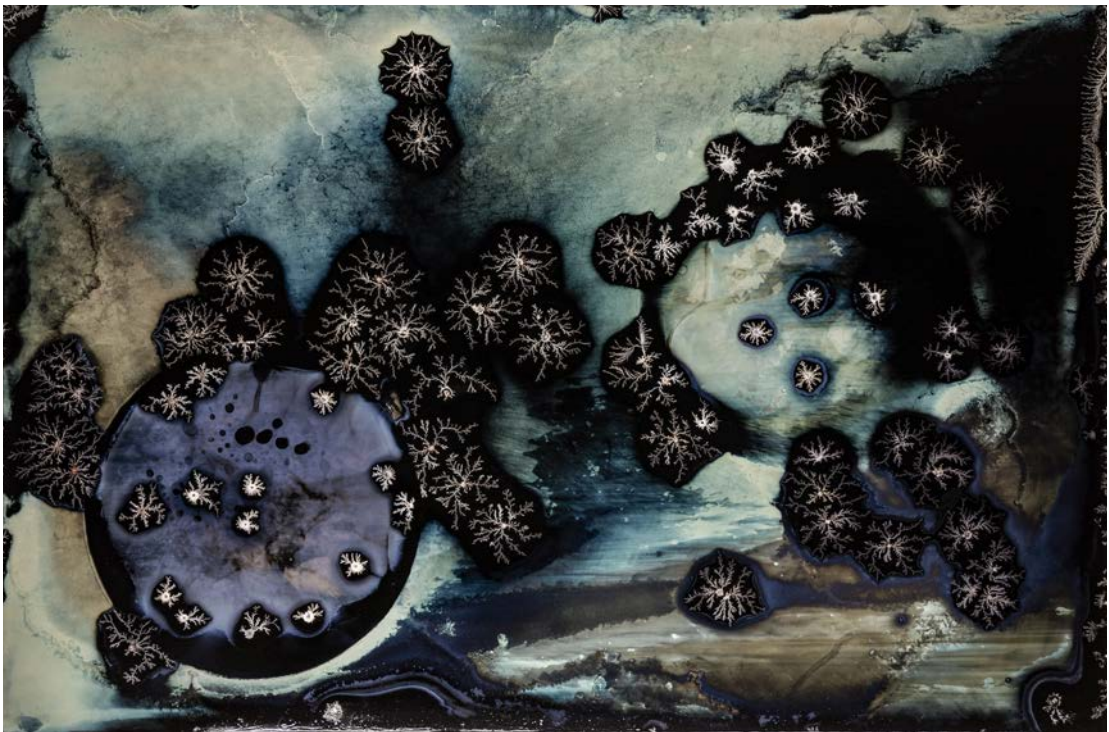
Ben Durham, *Daniel (Graffiti Map)*, 2021, ink and graphite on cut handmade paper, 59" x 43.5" unframed, 70" x 53.75" framed

# MICHAEL KOERNER

Tidal chemical eddies and aqueous palimpsests surge in the backgrounds of Michael Koerner's tintypes, in his haunting contemporary iterations of an archetypal photographic form. Koerner treats the surfaces of lacquered aluminum plates with a wash of viscous collodion then soaks them in a timed silver nitrate bath and employs various developers to produce vivid hues. The resulting burnished silvery surfaces resemble expansive microcosms in somber cyan and amber.

Koerner, a professor of chemistry, assays experimental solutions with a precision pipette to quickly develop reactions within these silver realms, provoking dendritic fractal inclusions that crackle and spread like stars, galaxies, or organic matter, reminiscent of the unpredictable mutations of our material universe and individual bodies.

"Everything I make has these fractals; they connote genetic mutations. These mutations are the basis of my work," remarks the artist. Koerner's mother grew up near Nagasaki and was 12 when the city was bombed; his father served on a US Navy ship in proximity to the Bikini Atoll nuclear experiments. Koerner is the only surviving member of his family, his parents and siblings having succumbed to cancer and other genetic disorders; the artist's own genetic architecture is riddled with abnormalities. The deaths of his family members and his own diagnoses spur him into a state of near-constant productivity. "I need to earn my right to exist," he states.



Above: Michael Koerner, *Worlds #0318*, 2020, collodion on tin, 8" x 12" plate

Right: Michael Koerner, *The Beast Diagnosis #8959T-#8955B*, 2019, collodion on tin plates, 24" x 8"; two plates 12" x 8" each







Mortal urgency becomes an exuberant creative force in Koerner's stunning experiments with the chemical elements of our world, producing a prolific collection of works that are as unflinching as they are delicately composed and aesthetically fascinating. Koerner's *The Beast Diagnosis #8959T-#8955B* (2019) references his father's final illness: fierce radial detonations extend vertically along the diptych's spine-like central column. The structure of DNA is a theme he returns to repeatedly; in *Blue DNA #1177L-#1181R* (2021) a shadowy dance of silver accretions coils across the mottled surface in a mysterious primordial choreography.

Our contemporary understanding is that genetic information and mutations pass through our landscapes and individual bodies – a more timeless concept of the world encompasses the material of memory and spirit as it travels through us. In the middle of the night and in the fervid, dynamic space of his darkroom, Koerner communes with his family. Amidst the making of *Worlds #0318* (2020), a piece that Koerner calls his most explicit anti-nuclear proliferation piece, Koerner heard a voice directing him to collect gelatine and baking soda from the kitchen pantry. In Koerner's mind, it was clearly the voice of his brother, also a professor of chemistry, who died of cancer at 32. "As a scientist, I have to say it isn't possible. But as an artist, I know this is never something I would think to do. Where did those words come from?"

In the 21st century we have unprecedented access to knowledge about the foundational, elemental structures of our universe – our contemporary world offers an indelible record of the ways these structures can be manipulated to harm. Koerner's work demonstrates how, as humans and as artists, we can use the materials of memory and urgency to tell a compelling story to future generations; voices speaking in the darkroom.





Above: Merryn Omotayo Alaka, *Lead With Your Looks*, 2021, pony beads, braided Kanekalon hair, 72" x 32.5"

Left: Michael Koerner, *Blue DNA #1177L-#1181R*, 2021, collodian on tin plate, 12" x 16"; two plates, 12" x 8" each





Carrie Marill, *Surfy Surfy*, 2022, acrylic on linen, 58" x 44"





Carrie Marill, *Astral Dawn*, 2022, acrylic on linen, 21" x 17"



In 1967, the year Donovan’s “*Wear Your Love Like Heaven*” first played on the radio, a generation of artists sought higher consciousness and citizens protested against global violence and inequality. In our current moment of conflict, poignancy and possibility, Donovan’s soulful directive echoes as an invitation to bear witness once again to our infinitely multiplying ways of being. The artists of *Wear Your Love Like Heaven* each use contemporary processes and concepts to propose a paradigm shift, suggesting a spectrum of existence beyond what we currently perceive, and portraying vivid, hopeful new ways of being, as well as courageous methods for perceiving—and loving—one another.

*Wear Your Love Like Heaven* includes recent works by the artists Merryn Omotayo Alaka, Rachel Bess, Enrique Chagoya, Binh Danh, Ben Durham, Ala Ebtakar, Angela Ellsworth, Sam Fresquez, Carrie Marill, Marie Navarre, Charlotte Potter, Ato Ribeiro, Julianne Swartz, and Benjamin Timpson. While recalling past social movements toward spirituality and sensuality, each artist proposes a contemporary template for honoring our miraculous multiplicity of senses and experiences.

In art and life, Ato Ribeiro is fortified by the Adinkra symbol of Sankofa, which “directs us to return and retrieve that which may be valuable or forgotten.” The Ghanaian-American artist’s fascinating hand-marqueted constructions of found wood reflect on the value of discarded materials as a metaphor for bodies and lives, and are inspired by his conversations with diasporic peoples throughout the American landscape. These stories resonate through the hypnotic combinations of symbols and patterns collected in Ribeiro’s work, just as the spiritual directive communicated by Sankofa threads through the works in *Wear Your Love Like Heaven*.







The mysticism of Donovan's anthem is but a moment in a deep chronology of spiritual seeking: Ala Ebtekar's *Zenith* series is influenced by writings of the 11th-century Islamic philosopher Suhrawardi, who proposed a framework for understanding the universe based on properties of illumination and intuition. In Ebtekar's rendering, the cyanotype process, in which an iron-red





ferrous solution is exposed to UV light to produce vivid cyan, becomes an alchemical technique merging earthly matter and myth, painting and photographic methods. The works in *Zenith* were exposed at the sun's zenith in the sky for a single day in each of the four seasons, connecting human and cosmic timescales.



Ala Ebtekar, *Zenith (IX)*, 2022, acrylic over cyanotype exposed by sunlight on canvas, 4 panels @ 30" x 20" each (30" x 80" overall)



Ancient materials of our universe generate and regenerate in vast permutations of life and meaning; in the spare and exhilarating photographic constructions of Marie Navarre, this cycle is made manifest via the mysterious arrangements of the natural world, which the artist captures in photographs and photo collages. Navarre's works seem to isolate silent moments of the world becoming and remembering, and her recent work is influenced in part by the writing of 1960's philosopher Alan Watts. The artist remarks, "My work is very much informed by the difficult state of the world at this moment but also by my sense that living beings do have the capacity—maybe even the nature—to bloom, or love, in the midst of the impossible."

*Wear Your Love Like Heaven* invites us to adorn ourselves in our individuality and be anointed by the spiritual substance of existence: our diversity of bodies, cultures, and earthly experiences. Its message resounds for us in 2022: this moment calls for a radical willingness to love one another, in all our resplendent colors and expressions.





Above: Marie Navarre, *the longing* ("found" series), 2022, archival digital print, photo rag paper, 20" x 14.125" unframed, Edition of 5  
Left: Binh Danh, *Untitled #17*, from the series, "Aura of Botanical Specimen", 2017, photogram on Daguerreotype, 7" x 5" plate, 11" x 9" framed



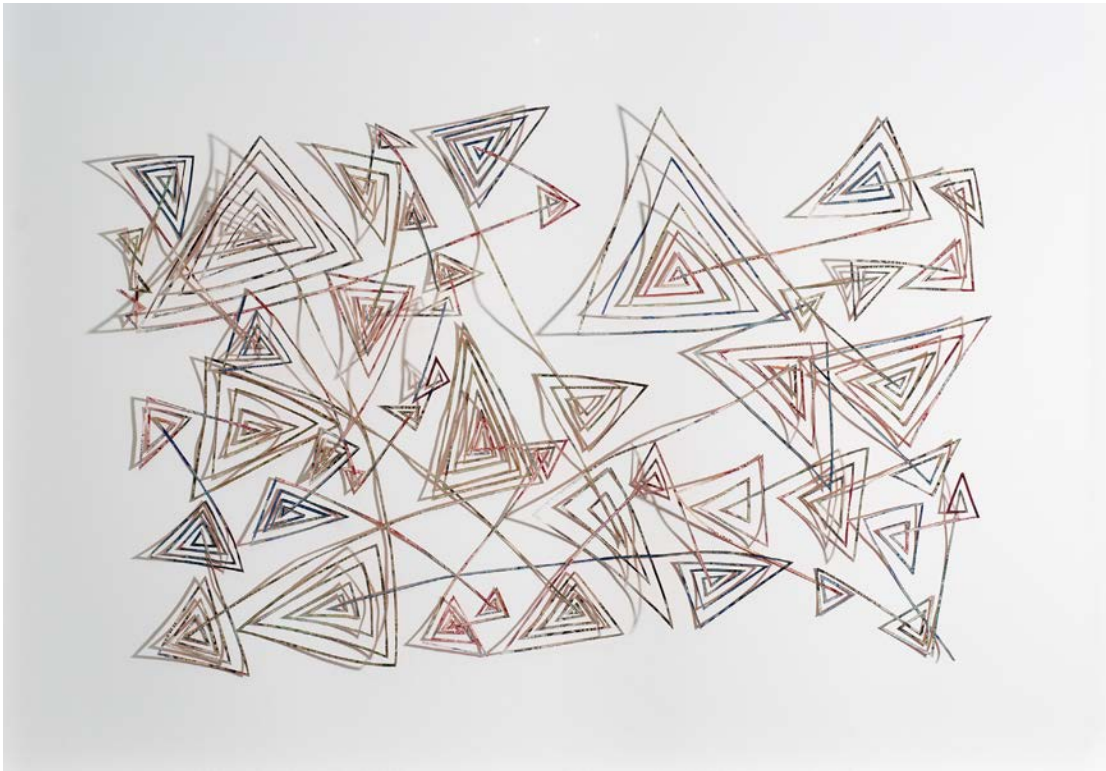


Above: Sonya Clark, *Albers Interaction (9/21)*, 2013 Combs and embroidery thread, 5.25" x 4.5" x 1"

Opposite: Sonya Clark, *Reach 2*, 2017, glass beads, 27.5" x 3" x 3"







Máximo González, *designios insondables / unsearchable designs*, 2016 collage: out of circulation currency 23.75" x 37.5" unframed / 35" x 49" framed

## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 2022

JANUARY – FEBRUARY

BEVERLY PENN: *RADICAL ADAPTATION*

MARCH - MAY

*WEAR YOUR LOVE LIKE HEAVEN*

JUNE - SEPTEMBER

*FACE*

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

BENJAMIN TIMPSON

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