

January 11, 2021January 11, 2021 / [General Arts In-Depth Inside scoop](#)

21 Artists to Watch in 2021: Part I of 2021's Movers and Shakers



ANTE mag is proud to shine a spotlight on the dedicated artists who are exerting an impact in the art world in 2021. From ongoing or upcoming solo exhibitions, to gaining recognition through artist talks, recognitions, awards and international residencies, these are some of the top artists we have an eye on as we move into the new year.

Below we center on the first 7 of our group of 21 artists selected for 2021. Each artist has images but click through to their websites to view more of their practice and familiarize yourself with your favorites!

Cecile Chong (<https://cecilechong.com/index.html>).

Lives and works in New York City



(<https://cecilechong.com/index.html>).

Cecile
Chong,
at the
Joan
Mitchel
l Center

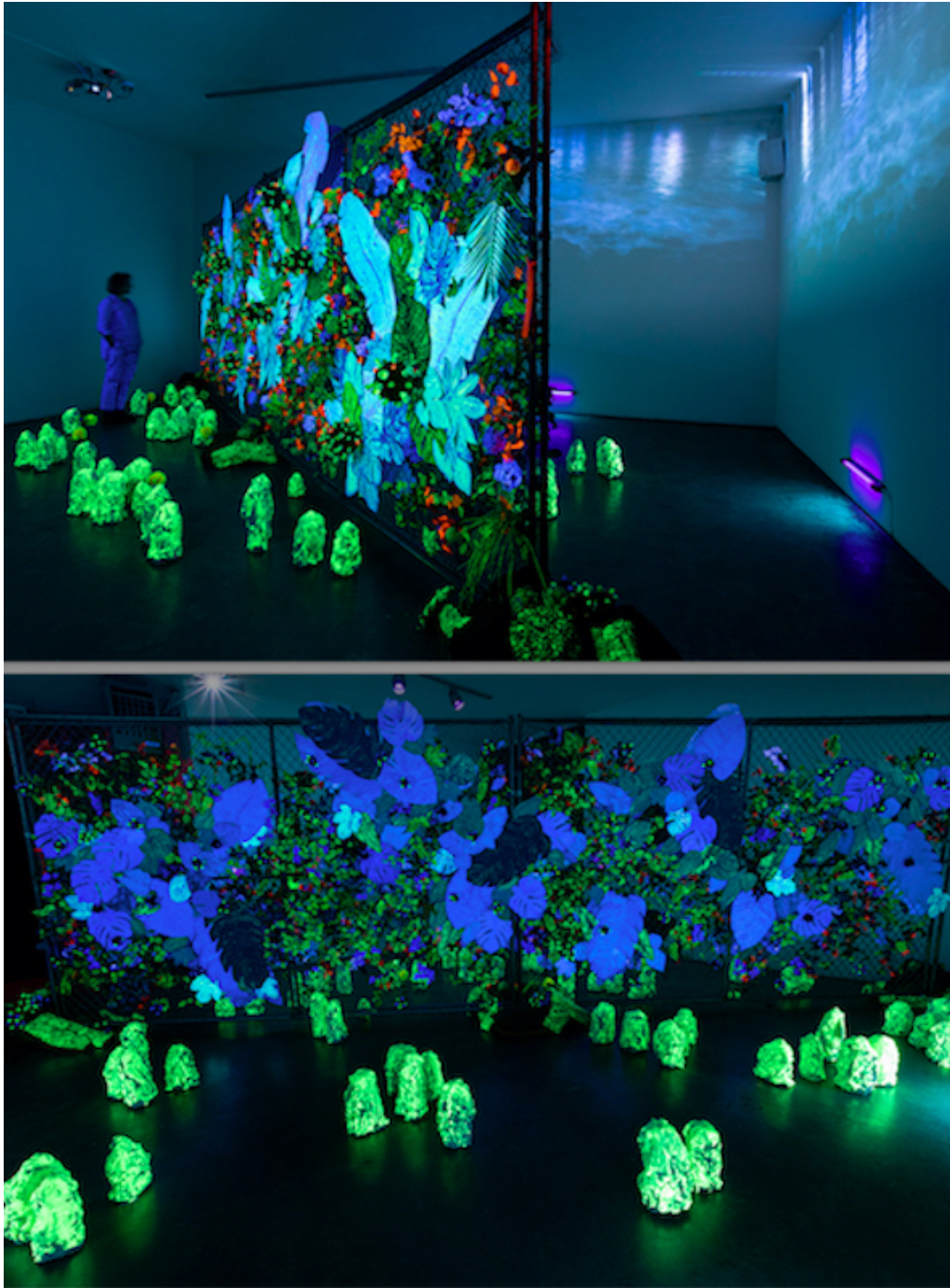
ANTE mag. Can you tell us more about the use of “layering” in your practice and how it applies to all artistic disciplines that you work within?

Cecile Chong. My work is about cultural interaction and interpretation. I layer different materials where they become signifiers representing a place or a culture for me. I was born in Ecuador to Chinese parents and lived in Macau with my grandmother for five years between ages 10 and 15. After that, I returned to Ecuador for high school and then came to New York at age 19 to study art. I came to realize that my early life and cultural experiences were very intense, with the transition from one culture to the other being very abrupt. It was as though I was the character of one story line and was suddenly plucked out of it and placed in another narrative in a different setting, speaking a different language. Those experiences also included different religions, socio-economic statuses and family dynamics. Looking back, sometimes I feel like I grew up in some epic movie. At age 10, I went from spending weekends celebrating indigenous festivals like Inti Raymi near the family hacienda in the Ecuadorian Andes, to spending school vacations in the rural family village in Canton China during the Cultural Revolution. I think that these experiences have giving me a lot of subject matter and insights to work with.

I love finding materials that I can incorporate into my work that have meaning or bring some kind of memory. My paintings have 25 to 30 layers of encaustic (heated beeswax, resin and pigment) and I embed different materials (rice paper, volcanic ash, circuit board materials, figures from different books) within those layers. I usually have other projects going on where I apply a similar layering approach with materials. In my “Stranger” Series I use beads from donated necklaces and accessories that are mostly plastic or glass and combine them with beads from different types of rosaries. I also use natural materials and seeds mainly from the Amazon forest like acai, tagua, pambil and huayruro. In my tapestries beside the conventional yarn and ribbon, I’ve also been finding meaning in different materials that I include like utility cords, tassels, feathers, LED lights, metal charms, pom poms, which makes me think of things like colonialism, natural environment and indigenous communities,

current technologies, colonialism, industrialization, labor, women's issues, rebellious teenage years, etc. In 2019, I started working with stop motion animation and began layering languages that I grew up with at home (Spanish, Cantonese, Hakka and English).

□



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/2.cecilechong-_othernature.jpg).

*"_other
Nature"
Cecile
Chong
at
Smack
Mellon.
Photo
Etienne*

□

ANTE mag. *Your practice is influenced by such a range of issues, including economic factors, environmentalism and culture. How do you balance this wide range of influences in your practice?*

CC. I react to different issues that resonate with my personal experience. I work intuitively. Some issues bother me, then nag me until they come out in my work.

I started *EL DORADO – The New Forty Niners* in 2017. It was a result of the president's hostility towards immigrants. I was also a public middle school art teacher for many years in Sunset Park. In 2016, I saw how the president's politics and words were affecting my students, their families and, I'm sure, thousands and millions of immigrants in this country and beyond. The atmosphere in my classroom was somber and tense with students being fearful of family members being deported. I then read that 49 % of NYC households speak a language other than English. I held on to that number and developed 100 colored "guagua" (Quechua for baby) sculptures. I painted 49 of them gold to honor that 49%. *EL DORADO (The Golden) – The New Forty Niners* became a public art installation traveling to each of the five boroughs of New York City, one borough per year, and presented as a contemporary archaeological site. The installation has been installed in four boroughs of NYC. It is now installed at the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art at Snug Harbor on Staten Island until March 28. Towards the end of this year, it will be installed in Manhattan as its final borough.

In 2018, I created a series of paintings addressing the cruelty and absurdity of the family separation policy at the US and Mexico border, which is driven by underlying racism towards people from Central and South America. This policy is a manifestation of the xenophobia and the general opposition to non-white immigration. The titles of my paintings such as *DNA Matching, Bully, Border Crossing, Caged In, Nearly Full Capacity, Not Summer Camp, Day in Court*, all came from reading about this issue and feeling frustrated and shocked about the cruelty being perpetrated. Unfortunately, as we know, up until last month, the parents of at least 628 migrant children still have not been located (<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wrc-news/628-parents-of-separated-children-are-still-missing-heres-why-immigrant-advocates-cant-find-them/>).

I have also been creating large scale installations. I have always used nature as a setting for my paintings. Earlier in my practice, I created installations with the idea of the viewers becoming the figures in my compositions. In 2019, I was spending part of my summer visiting my mom in Quito when the fires in the Amazon forest were everywhere in the news. Being one country away from the epicenter, I was devastated and numb. I thought about how we treat nature as though we are not part of it. We destroy, burn, divide the land and we treat mother nature as the other. For the title of the installation I took the "m" out of "mother nature" and created "other Nature" at Smack Mellon at the beginning of last year. *_other Nature* was a room-size installation with a fence dividing the room with one side lush and thriving and the other side stunted after human intervention.

I think that "balancing" the influences in my practice happens when I confront what bothers me. It is that "nagging" feeling that happens and that tension that needs to be released that makes me address different issues through my work.



□

(<https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/3.cecilechong-eldorado-statenisland.jpg>).

EL
DORADO –
The New
Forty Niners
Cecile Chong
at the
Newhouse
Center of
Contemporary Art

ANTE mag. Can you speak more on how your background as an immigrant artist impacts your work?

CC. The migration experience of my family and my own experience has allowed me to have multiple viewpoints and an outsider's perspective. Perhaps "fresh eyes," to look for clues and inspiration in the materials, history and people of a place, physical or spiritual, and to draw insight about its core essence. In the many places I have lived, I think I have been seen by most as somewhat of an outsider. In Ecuador, I was "la china". In China I was a "ghost girl" (foreigner). In the US, I'm an Asian woman with a Spanish accent. I'm okay with that. I look at my life's travels as a gift. As a result, I feel very connected to my community. I just define my community maybe in larger terms than most. I think when people arrive at a new place we try to find similarities between our old and new environment to anchor ourselves. I think when you spend enough time doing this you come to the realization that we're all more similar than different. In my work, I do want to depict those commonalities that we all share as humanity.

Nature is very important in my work. Culturally the move to Asia from South America was extremely abrupt and disorienting for a 10 year old. I struggled to look for clues to my previous life in Ecuador. Initially it was difficult finding a common thread in food, language or people, but it was easy finding the connection that I was looking for in nature, in grass, flowers, plants, rocks, clouds, the sky, the sun and moon. That finding was extremely comforting and reassuring. Living in a city (Quito, Macau, New York), many of these natural elements could be found in the cities' green spaces. My own experience of relocating makes me wonder how newcomers

benefit from city parks, and how city parks evolve and feed off of the arrival of these different immigrant communities. I'm excited that this year I will be participating in the Urban Field Station Artist Residency. (<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/urban-field-station-artist-residency/>) program to research the connection between city parks and their surrounding immigrant communities. This project somehow feels like an extension of EL DORADO to me.

Outside my studio I also want to collaborate and create opportunities for others and help recent immigrant artists navigate the NYC arts scene. Last year I participated as a mentor in NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program and loved it. I feel at this point that I have a lot to contribute as an immigrant artist, but also as a mentor to immigrant artists.

ANTE mag. What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?

CC. I look forward to be working and expanding on my "(in Blue) series" which is based on Blue and White ware, and its role throughout history in transmitting ideas and imagery across cultures. I love how it traces a global journey of migration and cultural exchange. I'm excited to be doing formal research on Blue and White ware through a fellowship which will complement the work I'll be doing in my studio.

Lionel Cruet (<http://lionelcruet.com/index.html>)

Lives and works San Juan, Puerto Rico and New York City



(<http://lionelcruet.com/index.html>)

Lionel Cruet

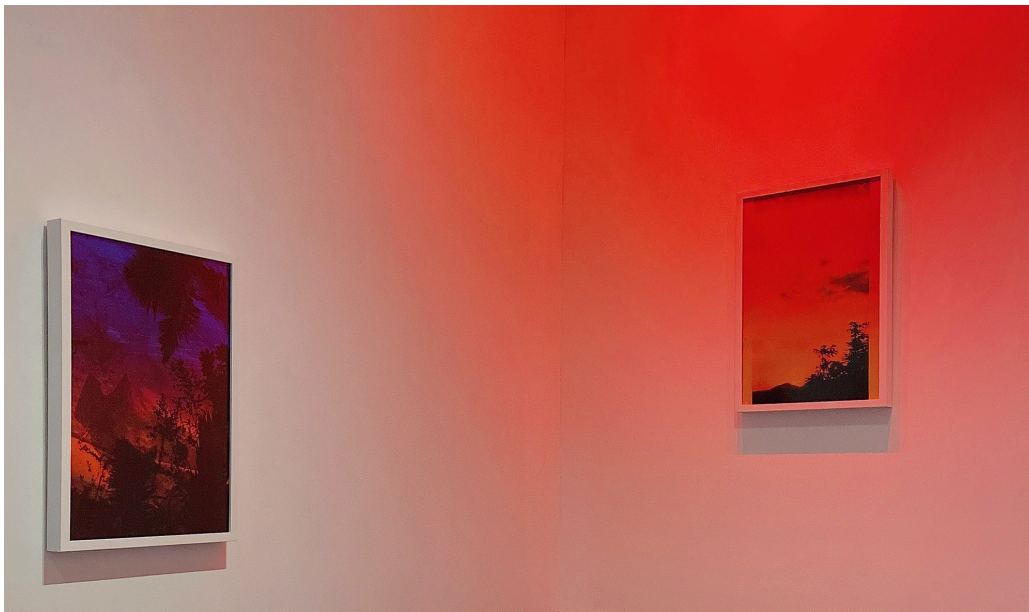
ANTE mag. Can you tell us more about your practice and how it evolved as a result of global forces (pandemic, travel bans, etc) during 2020?

Lionel Cruet. Surely, my studio space has evolved this past year 2020; and it has got completely reduced to the essential, more than before. I have focused more on visibility and communication using social media. I noticed that this year allowed me to communicate with my audience about nuances of my practice in a more effective

way. In regards to the practice I have done much more research than before and I have managed the ways to use and language and communicate the ideas of my artworks effectively. I will say that after all it has been productive. Traveling has been a bit stressful and risky but I have to say that getting all the correct information has been the key. □

ANTE mag. *Your exhibition at Yi Gallery, Dusk/Daybreak, in 2020 was immersive, forcing the visitor to focus and slowing their gaze. Can you expand on how encouraging the viewer to encounter your work in a specific manner is important to you? Is it critical to slow the gaze when encountering your most recent body of work?*

LC. When I was thinking about the exhibition there was a constant thought on making it immersive – as all other projects that I have created before – but this one was crucial to have an ambiance with a tinted red light as it made reference to multiple experiences. Most, importantly I wanted the audience to readjust their gaze and enter into an overarching visual and environmental effect. Recently there has been studies that state that the use of red light in coastal spaces helps to keep a balance and protect species like sea turtles that come out to land at night to nest. These red lights have been installed in some areas and I see it as a way to negotiate the spaces that these animals inhabit as well as different communities. Since the body of work references these alternative views of the coastal spaces, and the effects of natural and artificial light as well the relationships that happen in these areas, I thought it was necessary to flood the exhibition space with a red light.



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/lionel_cruet_02.jpg).

Installation shot, "Dusk/Daybreak" at Yi Gallery – solo show of new works by Lionel Cruet

ANTE. *How has your ongoing work as a teacher impacted your artistic practice and vice-versa?*

LC. I have to be super honest, I see both of them integrated. In my practice as an artist as well as an educator I perform lots of research, including social interaction and community building dynamics. In one way or another they feed each other. For the past year all academic activities have moved online and I think this is a positive new challenge to overcome. I have to bring all these dynamics into the virtual space and being in the academic practice as well in the arts for a decade now, moments like this make me rethink what I do, reduce and be more pragmatic and effective. □

ANTE. *What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?*

LC. Wow, I'm actually grateful to say that there's much I'm looking forward to in 2021, starting now with the release of this interview with you for *ANTE mag*. I'm also creating an installation art project at the Center for Contemporary Art in Quito (<http://www.centrodeartecontemporaneo.gob.ec/>) that is inspired by the entangled memories of mangroves. Additionally, I'm participating in a residency program in Quito, titled *Ventisca*, organized by La Planta. I will be focusing on subjects of ecological awareness and alternative forms of education. I'm also part of an upcoming exhibition *Mapping Disappearing Landscapes* curated by Bettina Pérez-Martínez at the 4th Space Gallery in Concordia University in Montréal. Last but not least, I will be participating in an upcoming online event titled *Charla Fun* from a microgrant project by the USLAF U.S. Latinx Art Forum. Stay tuned on my social media – including Instagram @lionelcruet @lionelcruetstudio – for updates.



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/lionel_cruet_01.jpg).

installation view of Lionel Cruet's for "*Entre Nosotros (Between Us II)*" for Spring/Break

Mark Eisendrath (<https://www.markeisendrath.com/>)

Lives and works in Baltimore, MD



(<https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/headshot-to-resized-to-800-tall.jpg>)

Mark
Eisendrath

ANTE. Tell us more about your journey as an artist: how did you get your start in your practice as a sculptor working primarily in wood?

Mark Eisendrath. I was working in paper and the things I was making were getting perilously close to falling apart due to the volume of texture, collage, and other media I was applying to the works. I was also using fire in

my pieces to get the effects I wanted. So I needed a more substantial material.

ANTE. During your virtual studio visit with Pelham Art Center, which I enjoyed greatly, you spoke to the conceptual approaches you mount in your sculptures, both free-standing and wall mounted, and I wanted to hear more about what you are considering in terms of philosophy and the other influences that impact your work.

Mark Eisendrath. What grabs me and pulls me into the shop is my materials. Not what they *are* but what they *can* be. I get an idea, I sketch it out, and sketch it again, and again. If it becomes an interesting drawing then I know it's worth considering bringing it into the physical world as an object. But I have to be careful- sometimes the drawings become so enticing that I try to make the sculpture exactly like that – and that's not enjoyable.

ANTE. We've spoken in the past about your narrow escapes from death and resulting impact on your everyday life in terms of visual impairment: in what ways do you think coping with the effects of y injuries have positively impacted your work?

Mark Eisendrath. I don't see the world in stereo – I see it in mono, which makes certain things pop out to me; while others are unavailable. This is a gift. I am drawn to flat picture planes- sidewalks, building facades, the earth at my feet, the end-grain face of cut firewood. All of these contain their scars and imperfections which is more than likely why I work with wood the way I do. I am stimulated by what I see, my injury causes me to miss some things, but I 'see' so much more.



(<https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/warlord-800x.jpg>).

“Warlord” by Mark Eisendrath (image courtesy the artist)

ANTE. What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?

Mark Eisendrath. I love how I feel after a day in the studio – I am physically and mentally taxed. It’s a beautiful thing to have your work be a workout. I look forward to what’s possible. Specifically, I am looking forward to making a series of prints from both my raw materials and sculpture created specifically for this printing process. There is also a series of pieces in my sketchbook that are hungry to see the light of day.



(<https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/a-diff-story-800-x-800-new.jpg>)

"A Different Story" by Mark Eisendrath (image courtesy the artist)

GOODW.Y.N (<https://www.instagram.com/goodw.y.n9/?hl=en>)

Lives and works in New York City



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/319837_10151031967997160_1432673413_n.jpg).

portrait of the artist, GOODW.Y.N

ANTE. *You participated in the Smack Mellon exhibition “Bound Up Together: On the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment.” Can you shed insights on your contribution to this exhibition?*

GOODW.Y.N. Performing *Ain’t I a Woman (?/!): Kingston Legacy II* at *Bound Up Together: On the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment* revealed to me how much of women’s history in the country is tied together in an entanglement of destiny. The struggle for freedom from oppression, the necessity to carve out our own futures, both with and outside the hands of men really made me think about my female/fem ancestors who were trying to create a place for themselves in this world free of bigotry. Our voices are imperative and our presence is needed. I push for that to be seen in my work.



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/img_9320.jpg).

Ain't I a Woman (?/!): Kingston Legacy II at Bound Up Together: On the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment – GOODW.Y.N at Smack Mellon in Brooklyn, 2020

ANTE mag. *This past year you produced several iterations of your performance series, “Ain’t I A Woman” across New York City. How did you choose the sites for this performance and how did you consider it as site-responsive in these multiple contexts?*

GOODW.Y.N. When it comes to choosing sites for *Ain't I a Woman (?/!)* I lean on historical, political and/or personal intricacies behind the “life” of each site. For example *Ain't I a Woman (?/!): Black August* was a response to the history of Black August (<https://ccrjustice.org/black-august>) and its celebration of Black radical leaders, and how that is tying into the BLM movement and murals in New York City now. When I did *Ain't I a Woman (?/!): HOMEBound, HOMEComeing* however, I was performing and crafting from a personal, internal place and time within the history of my life and I connected that to the ancestors who were resilient enough to survive slavery in the United States. I don't truly know if the site is responsive or not until I am performing on it. Every place has its own spirit, its own energy signature and I like to tap into that on-site.

ANTE mag. *Can you tell us how your practice is developing/has developed as part of your MFA education at DIAP at City College (Digital and Interdisciplinary Art Practice)?*

GOODW.Y.N. When it comes to my practice I've learned to lean on my words a lot more than I have in the past 6 years. The portraits I paint studying digital arts, and combining that with my other passions (body-performance, poetry) gives my work a unique flavor, a richness that never resided in it before. I am learning more and more about how I wish to tell stories, whether it be my own or someone else's.

ANTE mag. *What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?*

GOODW.Y.N. We're remodelling the home studio to include these classic posters around the walls, I really love the new energy that is coming to me from these posters! I think that they will inspire me to create new works that center around the state of affairs today and what tomorrow may look like.



(<https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/goodwyn-42-of-231.jpg>).

"Ain't I A Woman" by GOODW.Y.N at Trump Tower, Fifth Ave in 2020

Melissa Joseph (<https://www.melissajoseph.net/>)

Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/m_joseph_headshot.jpg).

Meliss
a
Joseph

ANTE mag. Can you introduce our audience to your practice and the type of mediums you work within?

Melissa Joseph. Hi Everyone! Thanks for taking time to get to know a little more about my practice. I am a visual artist and I work with fibers, found objects, my family photo archive, ink, watercolors, and collage. Most recently I have been exploring different types of felting with wool as a way to paint. I am also making an

experimental video, my first video project, as part of a residency at BRIC. My entire practice is an endless investigation of how different bodies are permitted to occupy space.

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(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/m_joseph_antemag_1.jpg).

Image courtesy Melissa Joseph

ANTE mag. During our discussions on your work, it's become evident that you're very dedicated to perfecting your methods working with fiber art. To this end you've completed a residency with the Textile Arts Center among other residencies you've completed. Can you tell us how you've arrived on the methods you use in your fiber art work in particular and the type of content you feature in these series?

MJ. I am a material artist, so connecting to an object's presence is important to my process. In my 20s, I was trained as a textile designer, which has broad applications, but was a language that I felt natural to a childhood found object maker like me. Humans' connection to textiles and the relationship textiles have to body and memory are so compelling. Fabrics hold the form of the body long after being removed. They become emotional and political spaces, which is content that I could mine this forever. In my work, I often start with Indian silk that is part of my material memory of my childhood and of my late father. He wore this material often. I print photographs from my family archive onto the silk, and then use needle and wet felting to create interventions or distortions to the imagery so that it more accurately reflects my lived experiences and memory.

ANTE mag. Can you talk to us about how your work as a curator feeds your practice as an artist, and vice versa?

MJ. I love this question! Seeing art feeds my soul, and by extension feeds my practice. I often stop to think about how, as artists, we all make such oddly specific work. I never get tired of looking, connecting and discovering new art. Curating provides the space to analyze, celebrate and share artists and work that I love. Some I love because it feels familiar, some I love because I think the message is important, some I love because I find it beautiful, some I love because it is technically mesmerizing— the reasons to love artwork are endless. When this enthusiasm meets the evolutionary tendency to sort and categorize things, magical things happen, like curation.

Curating also gives me a chance to zoom in on particular artists and artworks in a way that I might not get to do otherwise. It is a way of discovering relationships between people, ideas, and conversations that are happening across disciplines and content. I have a habit of obsessively sharing work with others if I think they might like it. Sometimes I even send images of art to strangers I follow on instagram if I think they might relate to it. □

ANTE mag. What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?

MJ. I am looking forward to my upcoming Workspace Residency at DieuDonne! Tatiana and Amy are so generous with their mastery of paper making, and I can't wait to see what is possible and how I might incorporate it into my practice.



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/m_joseph_antemag_3.jpg).

Image
courtes
y
Melissa
Joseph

□

Elaine T. Nguyen (<https://www.elainetnguyen.com/elaine>)

Lives and works in San Francisco



(<https://www.elainetnguyen.com/elaine>)

Elaine
T.
Nguyen

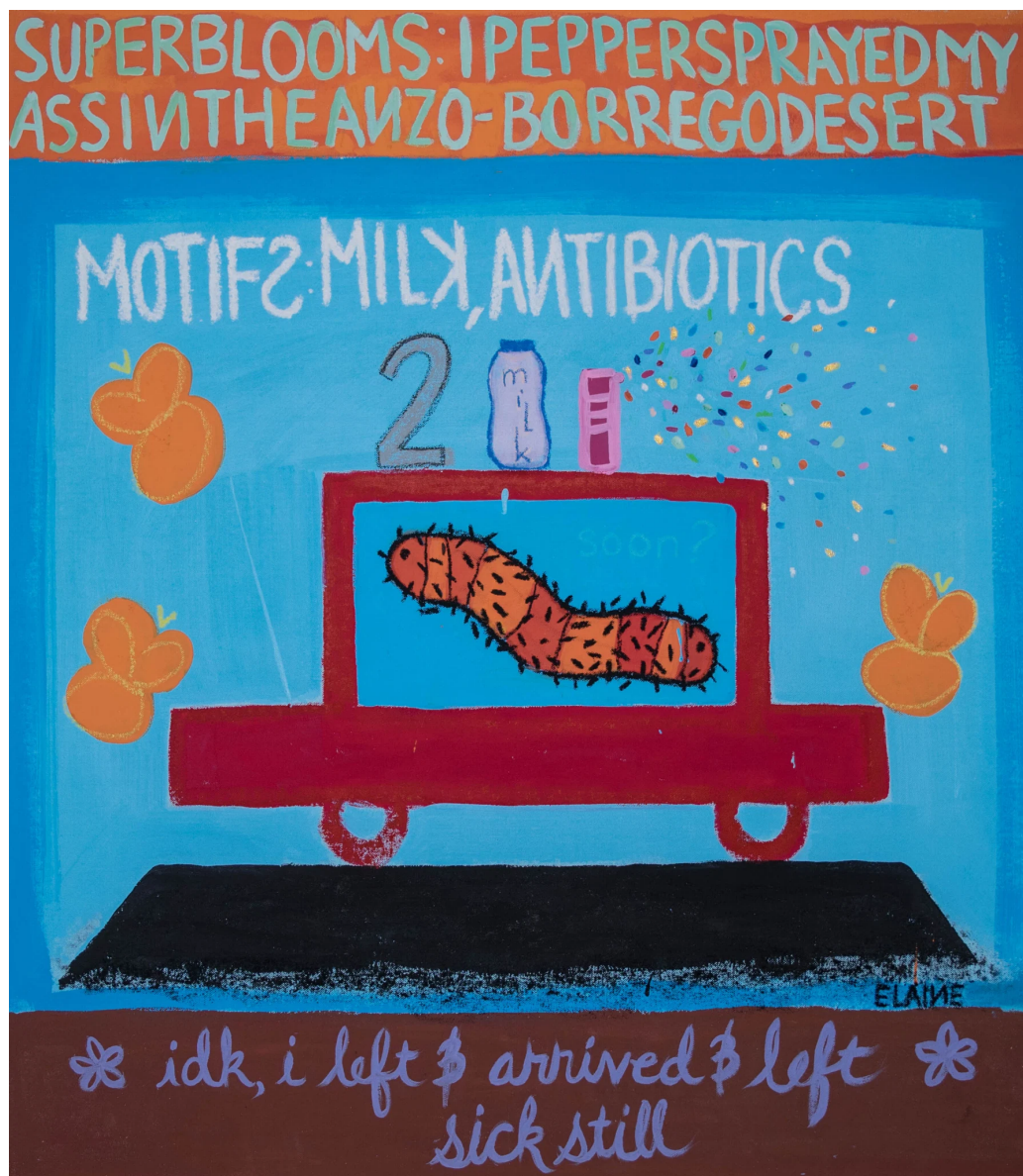
ANTE. *Can you introduce your practice to ANTE readers, starting with your “Chapters” series?*



Elaine T. Nguyen. *Chapters* is a reflective body of work addressing my lived experiences without the nostalgia that memory can bring. It is a recap of the significant moments in my life where my perspective and world shifted. The series is colorful and honest, each painting a new chapter with a cast, theme, or symbolic meaning

described in words or displayed through imagery. With descriptions setting a scene or time such as “I Pepper Sprayed my Ass in the Anzo Borrego Desert” or “The Summer of Snark, Playlists, and Chocolate Chip Waffles @ Midnight”. It is a visual story and one that is less emotionally driven than previous works. □

As part of my studio practice, I keep monthly sketchbooks, a process that dates back to 2015. It was through these books that I found myself in a reflective mood and one insistent on honest self-evaluation and growth. Chapters started out as a summary of different segments of life and that was made purely for me to reflect on and not something that was ever intended to become paintings. It was upon rereading those words that I realized how easily it could be transitioned into paintings with imagery and more importantly, how much I wanted this to exist not just as words in my journals. I created a ton of sketches of all these moments and the colors came easily, more about the feeling of certain colors than the colors in real life. It was the desire to have these be colorful that led me to the traditional stretched canvas and paint. I work on multiple paintings at the same time which allows me to continue making as one piece is drying and it also supports my color palette and how that can be seen across different paintings pulling them closer together. I go back and forth from painting to painting to sketching out new ideas and flipping through old sketchbooks when I am a bit stuck on a shape and sometimes even color combinations I created previously and never used.



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/elainet.nguyen_chapter-23_tap-it-in_41x37.jpg)

Chapter 23: Tap It In. Elaine T Nguyen, 41 x 37"

ANTE mag. "Chapters" marks a departure in many senses from your 2017 series I admire, "I Can't Wait to Remember This," although they share a sense of bright colors and memory-making. How does memory play in impact in your paintings?

□

ETN. What I find interesting about memory is every time you remember something it becomes less and less accurate. That's what started my series *I Can't Wait to Remember This*, this need to remember these glorious moments and more importantly how it made me feel. That's where the color came in, the vibrance and playful nature of mixed media with sparkles and tinsel, and a blend of colors is a reminder of how saturated these moments were with childlike joy.

This series, *Chapters*, was not so much about remembering or processing but about being honestly reflective of past events, the factual moments rather than the romantic nostalgia of memory. I didn't draw inspiration from the most beautiful moments in life but the most impactful, the times where my life and my perspective has shifted. Each painting is a new chapter, there is an element of growth and difference with these. Though my past events are memories, the focus here is on a larger idea of collective storytelling piecing together a visual book of sorts and an ode to all of the impactful things that shape who I am currently.

ANTE mag. During our conversation as part of your recognition in the ANTE mag 2020 open call win, we discussed your text-based works on fabric. Can you speak with us about the beginnings and evolution of this body of work?

ETN. *Blue Talks*, the text-based works we had previously spoken about, invited audiences in to discuss, the work not necessarily about me, but the experiences that I share with a marginalized group of people. The transition between *Chapters* and *Blue Talks* began with a creative break. During this time I read books and I also reread my old sketchbooks, all 60 of them. I went through years of my life finding connections, observing common themes and ideas, seeing my younger self grow. It got me thinking about how I would section my life: the conflicts, the friendships, the moments and places of significance. What started out looking like an outline to a book became intertwined with imagery, paintings easily coming to mind representing each new chapter of growth. *Chapters* is an autobiography, or rather, a memoir due to its selective memory and fluctuation in the timeline. The color choices are always based on how that memory feels, occasionally pulling from the actual colors of objects but it does lean more towards the colors that excite me, the ones that feel more accurate based on emotion. The beginning works of this series are paint based, but as I continue I find myself incorporating mediums I previously used such as cyanotype, fabric, and embroidery. I have become more invested in breaking out of the frame and being intentional with the display.

ANTE mag. What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?

ETN. As my work evolves, medium-wise, I find myself delving back into the draped fabric and a combination of that with stretched canvases. I am also finding myself incorporating the embroidery that I was doing but on sturdier surfaces and on top of the paint. Conceptually, I am moving away from real lived experiences towards making up memories that don't yet exist. I'm interested in this modern concept of "manifesting" our own realities and have been focusing on dreaming up my own future. There is so much unknown currently in the world but there is a lot personally known of where I would like to be and the memories that I want to eventually make. I am looking forward to manifesting my goals, envisioning trips and friendships, and also writing and painting my own future chapters. I'm looking forward to this body of work is the culmination of work I've made so far, one that you can observe and say it all speaks to each other in a fluid way rather than a part of a progression.

□



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/elainet.nguyen_chapter-21_what-ive-been-up-to_48x42-1.jpg).

Chapter 21: What I've Been Up To. Elaine T. Nguyen. 48 x 42"

Ziyang Wu (<http://www.ziyangwu.com/info/>).

Lives and works in New York City



(https://antecedentprojects.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/headshot_ziyang-wu.jpg).

Ziyang
Wu

ANTE mag. You have an ongoing exhibition on view through February 18th in NYC and an upcoming show in Singapore. Can you talk to us about each show, and what work you have included in each?

ZW. I'm showing my most recent project *Where Did Macy Go?* in both shows. The show in New York includes the main video and a large print (video still). The upcoming show in Singapore (My first solo exhibition in Asia) will include a large projection of the main video, 5 prints (video still) on aluminum, and a giant inflatable of the protagonist Macy (18 x 7 feet).

Where Did Macy Go? is an 11-episode animated video told through a series of reports of Macy's encounter with the epidemic, life during the quarantine, search for his grandfather's farm and his revival. The video discusses the collapse of old community structures, the emergence of a new community after decollectivization, Confucian

obedience vs. social obedience, as well as the new tele-republic of home, “mask politics” and social justice under the pandemic. Originally posted on TikTok to challenge the possibility of online exhibitions, the work is a response to this era of volatility, complexity and confusion.

□

Heavily inspired by Homi Bhabha’s *The Third Space* theory, my project often includes setting up a multi-layered system to trigger the collision of various conflicting or seemingly unrelated elements and topics from different social and cultural backgrounds. Due to Covid-19, it’s the first time we seen so many thinkers from all over the world writing about the same issue at the same time, from Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s techno-totalitarianism, to the argument between Slovenian philosopher Žižek and Korean-born German philosopher Han Byung-Chul: The re-invention of communism vs. the vigorous restoration of global capitalism, to French philosopher Bruno Latour and French writer François Gemenne’s argument on COVID’s influence on climate change, to Paul B. Preciado’s *Pharmacopornography* and *Tele-Republic of Home*. By juxtaposing all the complex and even conflicting arguments above, I was able to examine the “in-between” space of different social and political ideologies using COVID-19 as context.

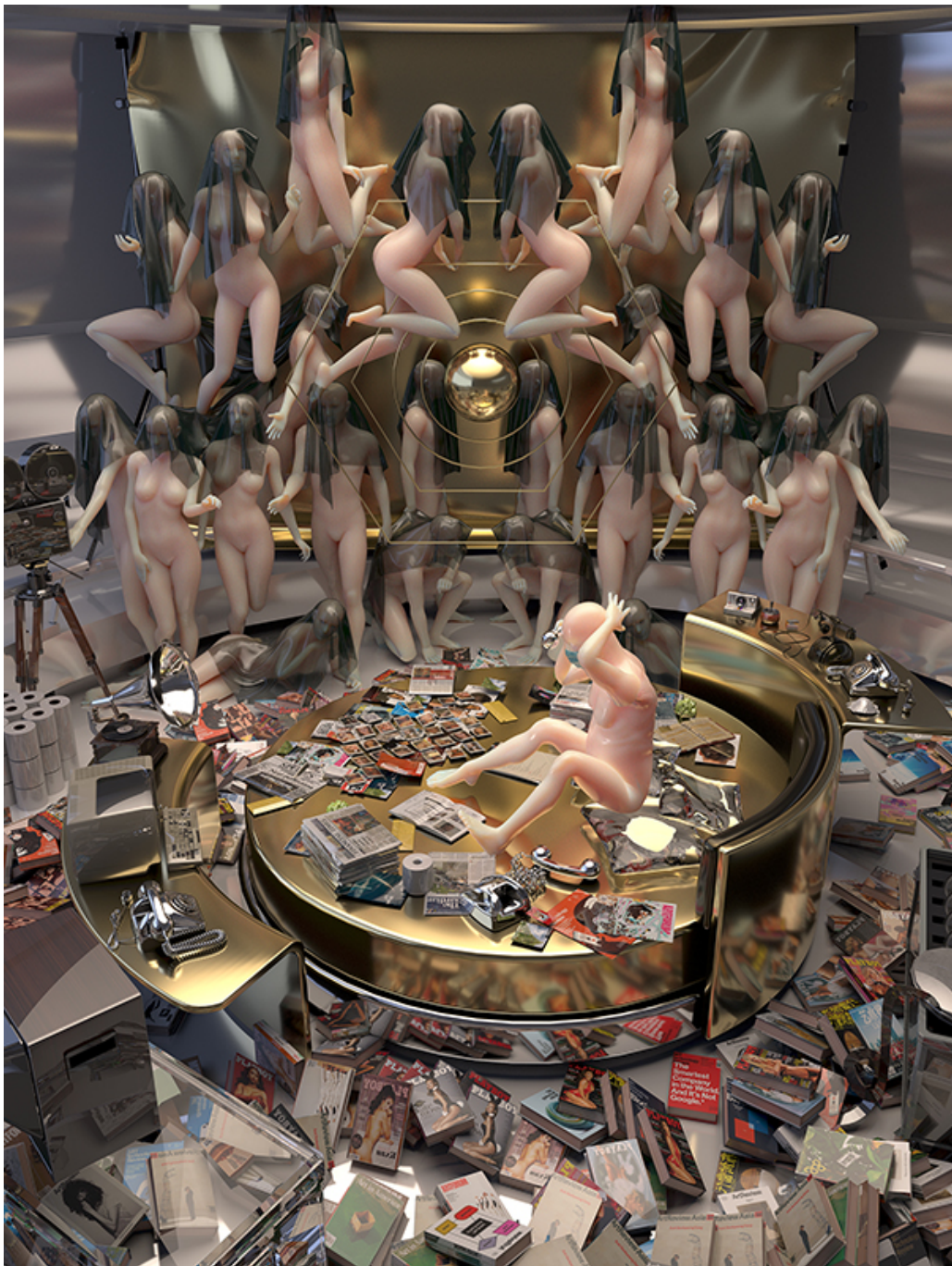
ANTE mag. As an extension of your practice you’ve been creating AR filters which are regularly becoming wildly popular across social media. Can you talk to how these filters expand your practice outside of perhaps a narrower view of what constitutes Fine Art studies at the university level for example?

ZW. Similar to posting the videos on TikTok, these AR effects and Instagram filters, which is a part of the project *Where Did Macy Go?*, are also my response to the current time where many exhibitions were trying to recreate an IRL experience on their own websites, while I prefer to take advantage of what Internet and social media does the best: sharing and redistributing. So far these AR effects have been shown over 100,000 times on Instagram.

I think they opened up some new possibilities for my work. For example, when using the *Macy (Split Face)* filter, every user becomes a version of *Macy*. When thousands of users post their own version of *Macy*, the dimension of this project are widely expanded (both conceptually and geologically), which is very important to the in-between space I was seeking to achieve. Additionally, when using the *Macy (Playboy)* application, for example, dozens of characters’ faces in the scene are replaced by the user’s face, which creates a new possibility for a collective narrative. It could also be seen/used as a new tool for performance works.

This mode of exploration and experimentation exists in all my works: They often start from an event, a moment, an emotion, or a stimulation that I have strong feelings about. I will then start my research including studying the related philosophy and history, collecting archives and data, and finding the most appropriate medium to realize the project, which often includes learning a new technique or collaborating with professionals in the related field. It is very important to examine what each medium is best at, and be able to choose the right medium that could convey your concept the most successfully and efficiently. Especially, each medium and genre have their own established ways of experiencing the works. When we utilize a particular medium, we already have a long history in its own field that serves as the context of experiencing the work, which could be either taken advantage of, and/or be used to challenge and subvert.

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ANTE mag. Speaking of academia, you are also busy working as an instructor at SVA and ITP. How do you find that teaching impacts your practice in the studio and vice versa?

ZW. As a visual artist, I have always believed that my responsibility and function (or what artists are best at) is to ask questions by constructing a visual experience, instead of solving problems (For example, activists, scientists and politicians are so much better at solving problems than artists).

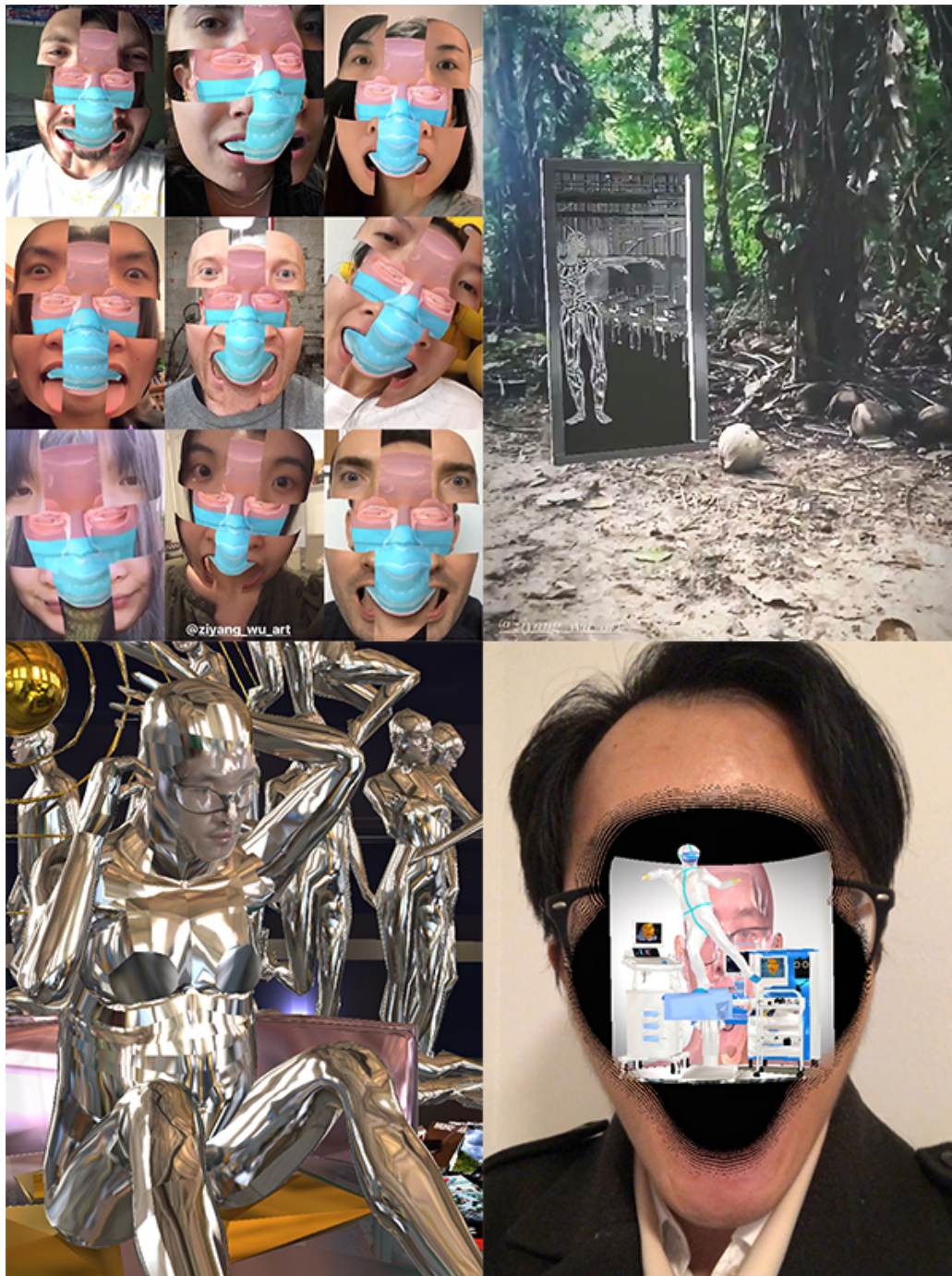
What teaching brought me, is the notion of solving problems through education, and achieving something through a collective manner, especially in today's unique context. I have been making a few collaborative projects in the past few years, and I'm hoping to do more in the future.

□

ANTE mag. What are you looking forward to in 2021 in your studio?

ZW. I'm currently working on a project titled *Networked Ecosystem* (in collaboration with artist Mark Ramos) – A live-simulation project that presents an ecosystem built of a variety of AI senses. Commissioned by NEW INC, Rhizome and Nokia Bell Labs, *Networked Ecosystem* takes LIDAR (location and distance), GECKO (temperature, humidity, air pressure and gas density) and other robotic vision and sensing data collected by Bell Labs' experimental robots and sensors over the past few decades, re-purposing it to drive a 3D environmental simulation that viewers explore and interact with the simulated world and each other in an ever-changing environment. In particular, the simulation will present AI's past, current (Covid-19), and future encounter and experience of climate change based on the massive collected climate related data, to contemplate questions about human's sensory relationships with robot and AI, and how they survive in the chaotic world we've created.

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