

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

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My work invites the viewer to experience the moment where the unfamiliar becomes familiar and when the expected becomes unexpected. I am curious about the way that our personal experiences affect how we process information and interact within a constructed environment. Patterns of recurring coincidences and the moment when information aligns are themes that I am continuously pondering. Exploring material, sensory, and spatial relationships in the studio, I contemplate the connections that develop between them.

My studio practice begins by finding common threads between different pieces of information. The information used in my work comes from conversations, dreams, reading, and movies to name a few. I create a taxonomy of this information, materials, and visuals. I then transfer this list of information and materials onto paper and organize it into categories. The resulting subject matter becomes the basis of a large-scale drawing, which acts as a second opportunity to edit my ideas and recognize things spatially. Then I create the final work in the form of a sculpture or an installation. Reorganizing the information into a sculptural form allows me to extend into space the concepts taken from my lists. The final step in the process is rationalizing the

surroundings by addressing the space around the work and its relationship to the drawings, sculpture, and installation.

When selecting materials, I formally respond to color and gravitate towards recognizable materials that have a preexisting identity and intended use that is commonly understood. I aim to challenge that identity by altering the materials and placing them in unfamiliar surroundings that defy their purpose. Doing so allows the viewer to gain a perspective foothold in the work and encourages questioning and exploration of the uncanny.

In this thesis, I will compare my process of creating personal taxonomies and the way that I process information to that of other thinkers and artists that I am conceptually and aesthetically align with. I will also consider how my sculptures and installations relate to the concept of the Surrealist object and Josef Albers's ideas of perception used in his classroom *matière* exercises. Surrealist objects inform my work because they challenge the vocabulary surrounding an object to broaden the scope of associations that the viewer makes with it. I share the goal of the surrealists in that these associations allow the viewers' minds to settle in the zone between the familiar and unfamiliar and creates space for the subconscious mind and the imagination. Josef Albers's *matière* exercises are based on the idea that a material's visual language can change depending on its context. With this philosophy in mind, I am expanding this idea past a classroom exercise, and am utilizing this concept to make finished work.

## INTRODUCTION

Through the alteration of everyday materials, I situate my work at the intersection of the familiar and unfamiliar, allowing the viewer to question their perceptions of materials and gain a perspective foothold within the work.

## TO BE ON TO SOMETHING: THE USE OF LINE-UPS

*The search is what everyone would undertake if they were not stuck in the everydayness of his own life. To be aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair.*

-Walker Percy (Weschler)

### LINE-UPS

Amidst the consistent influx of information in my everyday life, I often identify connections and relationships that are not always instantly apparent and am intrigued by how often these bits of information can align. At least once every few days, I come across a coincidence or what I call line-ups. Line-ups occur when I am presented with similar information multiple times throughout a short period. An example of this is if I have a dream about something, and then it is brought up in conversation without me first talking about it, that is a line-up. They are distinguishable because I have a framework of rules that surrounds their existence. Hearing related information from the same person or source twice in one day is not a line-up. It feels important for me to pay attention to these line-ups and coincidences because I consider them to be my "I'm onto something" moments. These overlays of ideas do not have to be grand or novel. I believe that sometimes being onto something, can simply mean recognizing a different way to look at objects and scenarios, and these relationships are the initial drivers for my work.

### LISTS

When I am in the process of developing new work, I keep several running lists so that I can see correlations over extensive periods. I then gather information from these lists and organize them into categories. Next, I create sub-categories, widening the range of information connected to the initial idea. The list-making process is essential to



my practice because it allows room for multiple connected ideas to find their way into a piece. Each list is a living document to which information is continuously added throughout the making process, meaning each piece is subject to changes while it is being made. When constructing a list, I do my best to include any information that seems relevant. In a way, the lists themselves are like the first sketch. The lists act as an archive of these instances and my thoughts surrounding them. Having this archive allows me to conceive how the drawing might evolve. Although these lists most directly affect the drawings, the ideas and questions presented in them are filtered into the sculptures and installation work.

My taxonomies make me curious about others' ways of looking at things, how they organize their thoughts, and how their thoughts manifest in creative work. I am intrigued by the way they describe their approach to gleaning and organizing information. Noticing these relationships is also a part of my process and is a way of figuring out where I situate myself in the world of thinkers and artists.

Dr. Temple Grandin, a professor who specializes in animal behavior and is an autism spokesperson, discusses her thought process as being purely visual; she stores information in her mind as images. She has described her process of accessing these visual memories as:

“[M]emories play like videotapes in the VCR in my imagination. If I allow my mind to keep associating, it will wander a million miles from the word “under” to the submarines under the Antarctic and the Beatles song “Yellow Submarine.” If I let my mind pause on the submarine, I then hear the song.” (Grandin, 14).

Grandin's wandering mind and her process of visualizing information resonate with the way I create lists and allow associations between ideas to become more abstract as a means of finding underlying relationships between ideas.

## THE WORK AND ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER ARTISTS

### DRAWINGS

Drawings act as a second filter that I use to arrange the information. After creating an initial list, I begin drawing. During this process, I may come across more information that is relevant to the work. When this occurs, I add it to the list associated with the drawing and am fluid with whether or not certain things from the list are included in the work. Even if everything on the list makes it into the drawing, some information may be removed by the addition of a painted layer. Recently, I was encountering a lot of symbolism revolving around "the stranger." Twice in one week, after not hearing it in years, *The Red Headed Stranger* by Willie Nelson played during a car ride and then again while I was dining at a restaurant. I made a note of this line-up, and a few days later, during a conversation, the television show *The Stranger* was recommended to me. I grew up watching Westerns, and amid my research, I recognized that "the stranger" is a recurring character within the genre. This topic led me to research a symbol of cowboy culture, the Stetson, which is used in early westerns to denote which characters are heroes and which are villains. The Stetson, as we know it now, began production in 1865. While researching other products that were patented that same year, I came across a less successful product, the removable horseshoe. Both the Stetson and the horseshoe relate to the cowboy, and I find it intriguing that they made their way into the market in the same year, one maintaining popularity to this day and the other being long forgotten. I used these two items, the traditional cowboy hat, and horseshoe, which are staples of cowboy culture symbolism, and research of "the stranger" to create the piece *The Stranger, But Not The Red-Headed One*.



*Figure 1. Kylie Price, The Stranger, But Not The Red-Headed One, 2020.*

## MATERIAL PROCESS AND SCULPTURE

I am curious about everyday materials, especially those that have a specific identity. Deliberately challenging the familiar functions of materials, I repurpose them in uncharacteristic ways, defying their intended use. For example, in the piece *///*, scouring pads were sewn together, making a carpet to denote an environment for the sculpture in the gallery space. I was considering the similarities in the texture of both carpets and scouring pads. Scouring pads are associated with cleaning dishes. By sewing them together to make a rug, I explore how making a carpet out of something that is used to clean changes the context of scouring pads and their purpose.

I challenge myself to alter the material, so it becomes unfamiliar to the viewer in both the alteration of its use and its appearance. I mimic textures that typically encourage engagement so that upon closer investigation through sensory interactions, the viewer may be able to re-familiarize themselves with the material. An example of this is my use of silver tarp to make fringe. The dimensions of the fringe, silver color and the woven pattern of the material closely resemble duct tape. We have a tactile relationship with duct tape because, in order to tear it off of the roll, it must be touched. This knowledge of material encourages the viewer to touch the tarp fringe and experience a moment of tactile realization that could not be understood through optical perception alone. This interaction between material and viewer, allows them to have a better understanding of the material and experience an "on to something" moment that is similar to the feeling that I get when I come across a line-up. The idea that interacting with a material can change one's understanding of it reminds me of Josef Albers's *matière* exercises, which he began at the Bauhaus and further developed at Black

Mountain College and Yale. Josef Albers' *matière* classroom exercises are built around his ideas of optical and tactile perception. The goal was to make one material resemble another, making the viewer question the material make-up of the piece. He argued that "All materials have a physiological effect on us... We perceive [material] qualities partly with the eyes and speak of "optical perception" of *Materie*... we perceive *matière* through the fingertips. We call this "tactile perception," (Horowitz, 127). This investigation of materials is what led me to do further research into Josef Albers's *matière* exercises. This opens up a more extensive range of material exploration because not only can I understand what the material can do within the boundaries of its intended use, but also know how it can transform to be physically and visually like another material.



*Figure 2. Kylie Price, III, 2019.*

## INSTALLATION

I am fascinated by how Robert Irwin's interests and works seem to be influenced by his perceptions of space. The first way he and I overlap is that we are both on our never-ending journeys to find the best fountain Coca-Cola. To me, his search seems to be heavily tied to his ideas of space. From my perspective, part of the fun in searching is getting to travel through and to different establishments and experience different atmospheres and environments. Sure, the search is for the best fountain Coca-Cola, but can one truly enjoy something if the atmosphere or space they are trying to enjoy it in is not correct?

When building an environment within a preexisting space, that space also functions as a material that can be altered. Space can also offer elements that can be included within the work, making it site-specific. The layout of a space acts as a perimeter for installation and allows for certain elements from the original space to be excluded or included in the work. My thoughts on utilizing existing spaces as a material align with Robert Irwin. He plans the installation but reserves "the right to change his mind once on site." He remarks that "There's no way to really mock-up or simulate what I'm doing until I'm there," he said. "An exhibition for me is not a statement but an experiment" (Finkel). This sentiment resonates with me, because like with any material, including space, I begin with a plan. Still, once the install starts, I am presented with the idea that I hadn't occurred to me initially. To be flexible and allow for intuitive choices and chance to shape parts of the work ties back into the foundation of the ongoing lists of line-ups, which is to make work that does not wait for things to happen, but can be fluid enough to let new information in when things align.



When you look outside and it is snowing, there is a fundamental understanding that it is cold and that the snow will affect your day in some way. Seeing the storm through the window, you are not directly affected by this until you step outside. For this reason, I am interested in including windows and other visual points of entry in my environments. This allows for the curiosity of the viewer to run through a similar scenario to seeing storm outside from a window. Windows typically allow someone to see inside or outside of a space. I question how our notions of space are challenged when a window is used to see from one inside space to another. Preconceptions about how space should appear drives my work to include familiar aspects of the space while rendering it uncanny. This way, the viewer is positioned at the intersection of the familiar and unfamiliar relating to the moment when ideas align.

My sculptures and installation align with the Surrealist object in that they are dream-like spaces that allow me to step away from rational thought and into an intuitive mode of responding to information, materials, and spaces. The goal of these spaces, both the smaller scale environments created for a sculpture and the large-scale spaces, is to coax the viewer to project their subconscious and imagination onto the constructed environment. This influences the way that they respond to the space and gives them a more personal roadmap of how to behave and move through the constructed environment.

*Sensory Room II* is an environment built inside of my studio that combines sand, tarp cut into fringe and landscaping fabric to create walls, a repurposed yurt cover acting as a window into an orange biomorphic space, and oscillating fans used to activate the biomorphic space as well as add an element of sound. The front room of

the installation was visible from the hallway through the window in my studio door. I purposely left out visual information from the door's window, so that the viewer could contemplate what was around the corner of the fringe walls. This allowed for preconceptions to be made, which added to the suspense of entering the room. When the viewer passed through the threshold, they entered an environment that was filled with sand and had walls made of tarp fringe. I chose sand to cover the floor because it typically exists in outdoor spaces, and I wanted to play with the expectations that surround being inside versus outside. Some viewers responded to the sand by removing their shoes as if they were at the beach, while others left their shoes on and commented on the strange sensation and sound created by walking on sand with shoes on. Once the viewers entered the fringe room, they were able to pass into a dark hallway, which led them around to a dark dead-end that offered an orange biomorphic opening, created by a repurposed yurt cover activated by hidden oscillating fans, in the wall. The viewer was able to see into the opening but was not able to enter it fully.

Tick marks are frequently used in my drawings. This installation stemmed from experimenting with different ways of conceiving this mark in three-dimensions. Tarp fringe is a three-dimensional manifestation of a tick mark. The form of two pieces of fringe next to each other influenced the shape of the hallway in *Sensory Room II*, which is comprised of a hallway with one turn where both segments are of equal length. The hallway of the installation is covered with black landscaping fabric. Landscaping fabric has a green plastic ribbon woven into it, which indicates measurements, but in this case, are used to reference an elongated tick mark. The idea of mark making is also seen in the sand, as viewers move through space, their tracks are left behind.

During the planning and building stages of an installation, I consider how the viewer will receive the work. I find that the entrance into the space and how the floor and ceiling are addressed is of the utmost importance. When these parts of the space are addressed, the viewer is transported to a new space, even if they have experienced the space before the installation. Everyone approaches the work from a unique standpoint that influences how they view the space. One viewer's experience of *Sensory Room II* was that they felt the piece was representative of a family vacation to the beach, during which a family member had fallen ill. The biomorphic form in the back part of the installation was an abstract representation of that family member's sickness, highlighting the body part where that illness existed. This reaction to the work is particular to this viewer, and they would not have been able to come to this conclusion without their previous experiences being drawn out of their subconscious by the visual, tactile, and auditory components of this work. I see these kinds of responses to the work concerning the way that:

"All Surrealist objects aimed to subvert reality with a dose of shock, which caused a revolutionary new way for viewers to interact with sculpture. Regarding this, Dalí stated that "people were no longer limited to talking about their phobias, manias, feelings, and desires, but could now touch them, manipulate and operate them with their own hands." (Surrealist Sculpture)

Exposure to Surrealist objects has helped to shape the way that I look at materials and objects. The Surrealists were constantly pushing the boundaries of how an object is perceived. They provided the viewer with an object with which to question their

perspectives by transforming everyday objects and materials into something surprising or unfamiliar.



*Figure 3. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Front Room), 2019.*





*Figure 4. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Hallway Entrance 1), 2019.*



Figure 5. Kylie Price, *Sensory Room II* (Hallway Entrance 2), 2019.





*Figure 6. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Hallway with Entrance View), 2019.*



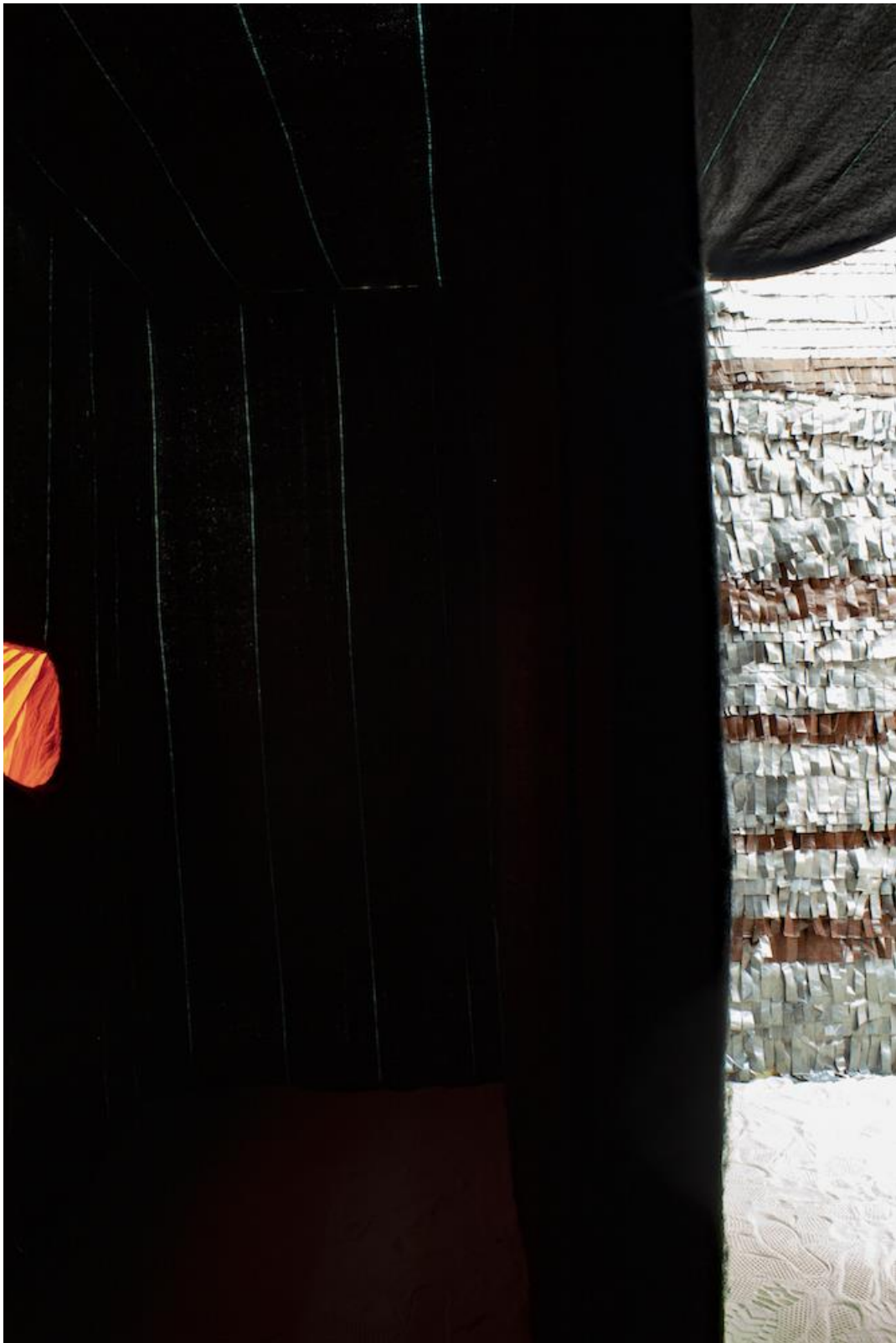
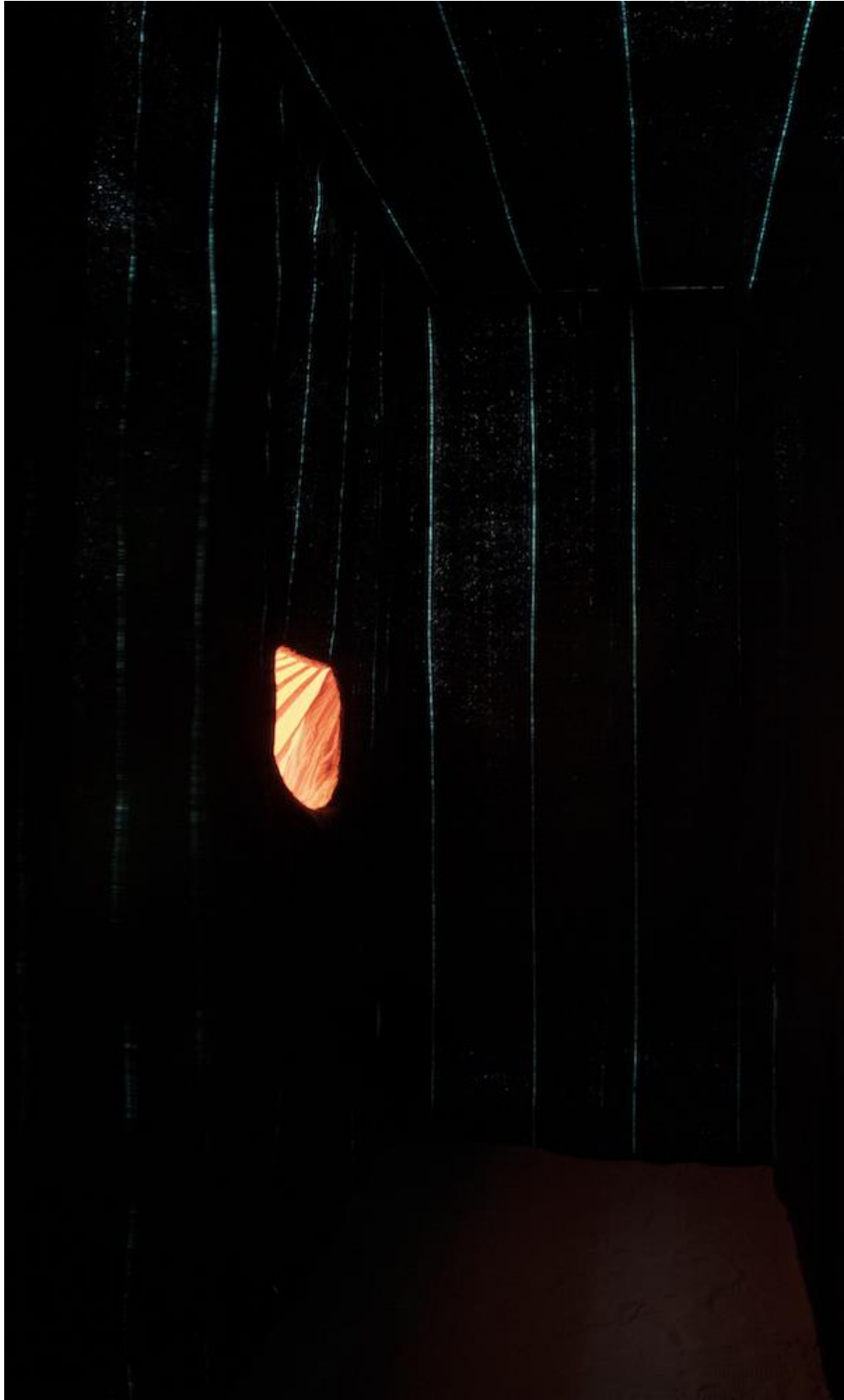


Figure 7. Kylie Price, *Sensory Room II* (Hallway with Entrance and Orange Window View), 2019.



*Figure 8. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Hallway), 2019.*



*Figure 9. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Orange Window), 2019.*



*Figure 10. Kylie Price, Sensory Room II (Hallway with Viewer), 2019.*

## CONCLUSION

The more I interact with an idea, material, or space, the more I understand that my perceptions of the things around me are fluid and subject to change. By using altered, everyday material, my goal is to cultivate this same understanding in the viewer and allow them to see their own personal associations with space and materials. My hope is that the realizations made in viewing the work can translate into new ways of noticing materials, objects, spaces and that the audience can find a new way to look at what is around them.

## INTERVIEW

George Hemphill is an art curator, dealer, and the owner of Hemphill Fine Arts in Washington, DC. He graciously agreed to interview me for the purpose of expanding on my work, thoughts, and process in a more conversational way.

George Hemphill (GH): Would it be possible to distill your artist statement into four descriptive sentences without the use of adjectives? Each sentence addressing a distinctly different aspect or interest, and not repeating anything in another one of the four sentences.

Kylie Price (KP): I alter materials with a preexisting vocabulary to create a perspective foothold for the viewer to investigate the work. Using materials that are easy to recognize, I contemplate my relationship with these materials and invite the viewer to do the same. The content of the work is driven by patterns of coincidence and moments when information aligns.

GH: Do you see the interests articulated in your Artist Statement as your current interests, interests of the moment, or as early steps in the beginning of a career. If early steps in the beginning of a career, how? (Might be best to answer this question after you have answered the first question.)

KP: I see these interests as ongoing and early steps at the beginning of my career. I have a heightened awareness of coincidences and line-ups and have felt compelled to keep a record of them for years. In 2018, I began using them as concepts within the work. When making work, I find it is important to me to feel like I am "onto something". The continuous experience and documentation of situations in which ideas and information line-up generate material to research and draw from.

For as long as I can remember, I've had an affinity for household and everyday materials. Growing up, I witnessed the people around me, collecting and repurposing materials to give them a new life. For example, my father is a farrier and would collect used horseshoes from various jobs. He would give them to a family member or neighbor to make yard art or decorations from the shoes. Seeing the horseshoes go from a tool to a piece of art is where my interest in altering something purely functional into an art object stems from. The mentality of reuse is ingrained in my thought process and will stay with me when I move on to the next body of work.

Both the line-ups and the way I repurpose materials relate through the idea of an "aha moment". When I come across a coincidence, a pivotal moment of realization occurs. I want my viewer to feel that same realization when confronted with a repurposed material

used in an unfamiliar way. This way of working has been sustainable up to this point and is something that I will continue to pursue.

GH: I have noted the closer an artist is to college, the more frequently the word "practice" is used as a substitute or "work" or "career." I am more interested in the everyday use of the word as part of preparation to perform or execute at the highest level possible. In light of this more normal use of the word practice, how did you practice as preparation to create the work in your show? And how did you practice for the show?

KP: "How can I make work that doesn't wait for things to happen, but can be fluid enough to let things in when they align?" This question is written in my studio, and it describes the way I work. There's a transition for me that happens when I write down an abstract thought. It goes from existing in my mind to existing in the world. Something about the physicality of a question written on a piece of paper makes it easier to answer. Writing and answering questions for myself is the first step in making work. Preparation to make consists of setting a framework, muscle memory of technique, and leaving space to make intuitive decisions.

Preparing for my show "Subject to Change" started with reflection, questioning, lists, and sketches. I have been constructing environments that explore how sensory stimuli created by familiar materials used in uncanny ways can draw out memories of lived experience to create a narrative that is unique to the viewer.

For "Subject to Change," I wanted to shift the kind of space I was responding to. Instead of altering a gallery space, I wanted to turn my focus to the space I have lived in for three years and focus on parts of the space that have become peripheral since I live with them every day. I cleared out the living room of my apartment but left behind the residue of my time living in the space (dust, marks on the walls, chips in the sheetrock, the ceiling fan that isn't entirely on track). I began creating rooms inside of my apartment that isolated and highlighted each peripheral aspect that I wanted to respond to.

The questions posed during the duration of this body of work are: What marks are created from living in a space for an extended period? How have I responded to my apartment differently, knowing that I will leave after I have completed my MFA? How do others react to living in temporary spaces?

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing concerns, I can no longer in good conscience invite people into my home to see the installation. I decided to deinstall the work at my apartment and take these components to the school. I will install them at the school once it is safe to do so. Aspects of the apartment that I had begun responding to have been documented and will still be included in the installation through drawing, projection, and sculpture. I am approaching this as an opportunity to practice flexibility and allowing this crisis to give me a new perspective of the work and space (since we are now under a Stay at Home order and spending more time than ever in my

apartment). I am continuing to respond to the space and have taken notice of more peripheral objects and elements of my environment that I had not noticed before.

At this point, the main way I have practiced for this show is by allowing my perspective to shift and continuing to be open to changes in the work that I can't control, but I can work with and respond to.

GH: With your affinity to household objects, does it speak to an interest in domestic symbols? Or is your interest in bringing out aesthetic experiences from unexpected sources?

KP: My interest is in bringing out aesthetic experiences from unexpected sources. I like household materials because they're recognizable to most. Even when they're altered, the viewer can understand the material upon closer inspection.

GH: You spoke of "aha moments". Please clarify; is this kind of moment something that happen exclusive for you? Is your goal to share what you've learned from the aha moment with the viewer? Or do you aim to have the viewer experience a similar aha revelation from looking at your work?

KP: Experiencing coincidences and co-occurrences of events can happen to anyone. I choose to keep track of these instances as they occur, and I think this has allowed me to be more aware of them than those who don't. Kind of like when you notice that you're looking at the clock at the same time every day. When that time is given the significance of "I always look at the clock at 12:34" then your brain is trained to notice that time, even if you've looked at the clock multiple other times during the day.

KP: Altering common materials is a way for me to translate the feeling of realization that I experience when I come across aligning information into the work. My goal is for them to have that "aha" moment and hopefully go back into the world with more awareness of the things around them that might be surprising when given a closer look.

GH: You mentioned "coincidences" several times, as pivotal moments. For the magician/mind-reader there is only the appearance of coincidence. For the scientist coincidences are phenomena where the logical has not yet been revealed. Do you feel there is something magical or mystical in coincidence?

KP: For me the coincidental can spark research and new interests and is heavily tied to the way that I look at the world. I don't necessarily see them as being magical or mystical, but more of a way of looking at the world that I can use to be more in tune with what's happening around me and my intuition or "gut feelings". But that's not to say that these moments of coincidence don't feel special or exciting. We have grown away from being in tune with this way of looking as technology begins to act as a stand in. For



example, the more reliant one becomes on their GPS the worse their sense of direction becomes.

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