

ESCAPIST IDEATIONS

by

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Escapist Ideations is a series of intaglio etchings exploring personal anxieties around global and systemic crises. Visualized as a series of escapist fantasies, each print represents a theme which is explored using representative objects staged throughout the scene. In the tradition of classic printmakers like Max Klinger, Bertha Lum, Mary Cassatt and Francisco Goya, this series of prints is contemplative and critical. With an emphasis on environmental and social issues, *Escapist Ideations* focuses on the role of the passive participant in a climate of reckoning and realization. Executed through traditional printmaking processes, the series is built upon an amalgam of influences from science fiction literature and film, and visually influenced by traditions of classicism. *Escapist Ideations* reflects a contemporary take on both fiction and process.

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A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

by

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¹ <https://lwcc.ecu.edu/indigenous-land-acknowledgement/>

² Adopted and adapted for regional inclusivity from University of Hawai‘I Provost Michael Bruno’s message found at <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2019/10/31/uh-manoa-land-acknowledgment-to-native-hawaiians/>

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Escapist Ideations- An Introduction

Escapist Ideations originates from a point of fantasy, realized in a series of seven traditional copper plate etchings. Finding myself at constant odds between my intentions and actions, this series of prints explores my internalized anxieties in response to a collapsing world. Dreamlike in their impression, these works are filled with reminders of cyclical abuse by my own species. Less than literally apocalyptic, themes of resource depletion, scarcity, colonialism, environmentalism, and war are represented through a menagerie of objects, vestiges of civilization that have piled up and become useless. The mementos littering these staged scenes show the inception of anxiety into my most sacred spaces- my dreams. The sources of these intrusions are rarely clearly definable. It would be more apt to describe the sensation as a vague, constant prickling. In moments of celebration and success, there remains a nagging reminder that there are much bigger issues at play. That very awareness, the knowledge of disparity and destruction, creeps into my deepest thoughts with sobering constancy. From my earliest recollection I was drawn to genre (non-realistic) fiction, specifically sci-fi and fantasy. The further a story could take me from reality, the more enthralled and distracted I was. Just as my childhood daydreams were interrupted by the rank smack of reality, my adult anxieties find purchase in the dreamscapes of *Escapist Ideations*. Like the fantastical cycles of Max Klinger³, *Escapist Ideations* is both whimsical and critical, speculative and reflective.

³ Austrian symbolist artist Max Klinger was widely celebrated when he produced the sequential symbolist narrative series entitled *Ein Handschuh*, or *Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove*, a portfolio of 10 etchings published in 1881. This “cycle” as Klinger dubbed it, is an exemplary example of early social commentary and symbolism through narrative, with influence on the later Surrealist and Expressionist movements (Salsbury, Britany)

One of the most alluring elements of escapism is the aspect of immersion. For those of us less grounded, the inclination to mentally wander is primordial. A fine line marks the threshold between dreaming and distraction, a fact that I have found frustratingly counterproductive to my creative progress. Where is the point where distraction becomes inspiration, and how can that be shepherded? Heavily influenced by paperback covers and later film, art and aesthetics are an integral part of my sustained attraction to fiction, intrinsically linked to the fantasies that compromise my mental storyboards. By the same hand, the detail needed to emulate my inspirations would demand the very type of focus that consistently eludes me. Choosing a process for *Escapist Ideations*, I knew I needed to source some immersion.

Printmaking, by necessity, demands an intensive level of concentration to grasp. As described by German expressionist and printmaker Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: “The technical procedures doubtless release energies in the artist that remain unused in the much more lightweight processes of drawing or painting.”⁴ Through chemistry, craftsmanship, and technology the field is constantly expanding and convoluting on itself. Experimentation, documentation, and dissemination are necessary not just to create a strong piece, but to create any piece at all. Through a myriad of innovations printmakers have consistently dedicated themselves to a mastery that is constantly evolving. Amongst the various printmaking processes, intaglio is even less intuitive than some of its counterparts. The chemistry of acid and metal, combined with working reductively contradicts much of what seems natural. Contemporary intaglio builds upon the precision and mastery of its predecessors while actively augmenting itself with modern technologies like photo-processes and digital prints. The careful articulations

⁴ Ernst Ludwig Kirchner referring to the differences between painting and printmaking (Kirchner, 226)

of erosion and protection on an intaglio matrix are created through a painstakingly specific series of steps, all of which become variables for exploration. It is this very specified form of creating that absorbs me.

Although I have a great love of many mediums, the focus I find while etching is as close to pure escapism as I can find in a productive world. The energy left un-released when painting or drawing is accessed through a more technical process. As someone prone to the pursuit of distraction, I've found only a few things that can maintain my attention in a lasting way. Throughout my life these few fascinations have been mostly imaginary, reading sci-fi books or escaping to fantasy worlds through games and escapist daydreams. In keeping with the very nature of escapist media, my mind prefers to be anywhere but here. Printmaking has become my most surprising escape. While creating a matrix, I find no need to daydream or self-disrupt. Printmaking introduces a level of tangibility and productivity to the otherwise chaotic tangents I find myself caught in. Although never detail oriented, my processes have evolved into a meticulous state of focus. The level of technicality required to replicate the realism of my escapist fantasies is magnified in an alchemical process- these steps demand attention or will not yield enviable results. A return to traditional techniques leads to a level of Greco-Roman inspired classicism within my prints. Mastering the technical process presents a challenge that keeps me enthralled. The subtle variations that occur between each print within an edition are reminiscent of memories and dreams, changing ever so slightly with each iteration, and never growing mundane. Printmaker Kiki Smith has said "Prints mimic what we are as humans: we are all the same and yet every one is different. I think there's a spiritual power in repetition, a devotional

quality, like saying rosaries.”⁵, an observation which I find relevant throughout both the technical process, and the fantastical concepts that each one visualizes.

Each print in the *Escapist Ideations* series reflects a different major theme, but the viewer will find that many of these go together. Sometimes tenuous, these items of symbolism repeat and evolve but continue to emerge. In the same way many of the global issues that distress me are tangled in a comorbid mess, the motifs and symbolism of *Escapist Ideations* work together as clutter contributing to a larger malaise. The environments and settings of each piece reflect the same air of displaced mundanity that can be found in a dream or fantasy. This idea became the architectural cornerstone of each of my dreamscapes. The spaces are self-contained, yet cohesively linked; maintaining cues that bind the works together into a singular dream realm. Artifacts of human past, present and future merge, and stack like a forgotten museum archive. The imagery and content are influenced by the past, but timeless in their incongruent placement and staging. Some of the objects have an established historical symbolism, some are obvious, and still others are intimate to me.

As the escapist, each of these prints features a glamorized proxy of myself. Within these rooms, an ego centric desire to glamorize combined with my own varied aesthetic inclination accumulates into a version of myself that is inspired and idealized. The dream denizen is always shown in repose. The denizen of this dreamscape is powerful. She may have begun as me, but she now exists as a neutral nexus, the solitary inhabitant of a recurring fantasy. Her gaze is confident but unapproachable, the viewer can glimpse into the room, but not invited to enter. My fantasies no longer feature the dragons and adventure of childhood, but by the creeping

⁵ Kiki Smith as quoted in the Daily Princetonian, December 11, 2003

restlessness that comes from inactivity and procrastination. There is nothing being actively carried out in these rooms; a lack of progress leaves the spaces dusty and stale. While my avatar is naturalized in the cosmic zone of dreams, she is no figure of action but a stoic monument, witness, and passive observer of the surrounding corrosion.

These etchings are seeded by a tradition of technical mastery and filtered through a contemporary lens. It has been suggested that the average human has seven dreams each night. Organized to provide context and visually guided by a small paper vessel, the following document will act as an annotated tour through the seven dreamscapes of *Escapist Ideations*.

Sand Gathering: The Escapist



Figure 1. *Katya Lee Hutchinson, "Sand Gathering", 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16"x20".*

“There is nothing quite like a ruin to turn the attention inward.”⁶

-John Harris

The accidental death of my mother obliterated our single-mother household, creating the type of grief and chaos that only unexpected loss can. Far away from the school where my teachers pinched me, and my classmates mocked me, my grandmother’s farm was an off-grid haven where I could create my own safety. It was here that I learned to escape. Without cable or internet, my grandmother shared her voracious hunger for fiction with me. Hours disappeared and school was easily forgotten as she told me grand space operas from her recliner. Her radio had broken on the highest volume setting, and we would blast AM radio dramas into the jungle clinging to every word. Despite the impracticality, I have remained an avid daydreamer, an active escapist. This may seem like a conundrum as, by its very nature, escapism is a passive mechanism.

Sand Gathering (fig.1) depicts a tendency to escape when confronted with the temptation of something grander. The evolution of this escapism is clear, beginning as a child with plastic dinosaurs engaged in weeklong wars across dirty floors. Books came next, hoarded from the library sales once a month and consumed voraciously in defense against the real wars of primary school. Eventually we finagled more solar power, and my world expanded with a one-hour weekly allocation of television. Abhorrent to most, discarded cigarette butts remind me of the overflowing ashtrays that sat in my periphery as a child, and later would become my own method of tracking long days in the jungle. An hourglass hints at the hours and days that I’ve spent indulging in fantasy, and the gleaming scarab is a wistful remainder of my childhood ideas

⁶ The work of John Harris is instantly recognizable due to the hundreds of Science Fiction covers he has created for many of the most famous authors in the genre. (Harris, 63)

of exotic mysticism. Piles of novels and anthologies become a horde of useless plots, adventures, and impressions, occupying space in my mind that can't be reclaimed for productivity. Like *kipple*⁷, the pages and characters have gathered and seem to multiply just out of eyesight.

While the term “escapism” was coined in the 1930s, the concept of escapism has presented long before and continues to ebb and flow in tandem with societal pressures. In the United States we can directly track the major movements of speculative and fantastical fiction as they run parallel with major movements in our national development. These escapist adventures bring relief from the monotonous mundanity of daily life, however the attention spent imagining creates a vacuum of concern for the real world. The safe in *Sand Gathering*, left unlocked and vulnerable, has failed to protect the only organic life in the dreamscape. In contrast, the facade of nature is showcased with the gaudy painted backdrop of a “beautiful” sky, there can be no risk of rain here. Fantasy spaces, removed from the expectations and applications of actuality, are safer, but the conquests in these places have no ramifications, they can right none of the real-world wrongs that no amount of pretense can conceal. The discerning viewer will notice a feather duster resting unused beside the figures hand, all attempts to clear the *kipple* have been abandoned and the useless facts have gotten tangled in a mess of dust and cigarette ash. The risk we run is to forget where we are grounded, the slip into apathy as we don our VR headsets and forget the stakes of the cumbersome and inconvenient state of our real world. Within the timeless ruins of *Sand Gathering* (fig. 1), I reflect on my own neglect and de-prioritization of reality in favor of escaping for a few hours into an imagined alternative.

⁷ “kipple” in Phillip K. Dick’s novel *Do Android’s Dream of Electric Sheep* (later adapted into the blockbuster film franchise *Bladerunner*) consists of all the useless objects that gather in the corners of seldom used abandoned spaces. In his dystopian universe, this kipple is described as seeming to breed and replicate until one day the world will succumb to “absolute kippleization”. (Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)

Tardibabe: Safe Space



Figure 2. *Katya Lee Hutchinson, "Tardibabe", 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16"x20".*

*“Her people, like all the other people on earth, were too self-centered, too introspective. Perhaps that was inevitable, for their isolation was well enforced. But as a result the healers has been too shortsighted; by protecting the dreamsnakes, they had kept them from maturing.”*⁸

-Vonda N McIntyre

The concept of a “contained space” is anxiety-inducing, it activates a primordial sense of vulnerability to know that safety is only guaranteed within a set parameter. Insulated from the surrounding milieu these spaces can be a refuge or a restriction. In the same way a spaceship, moon-dome, or undersea city would need to be independent of its environment, each of my dreamsets is similarly insulated. This distinction is quite literal, as shown by a lack of accessible entrances or exits in any of the visions captured in *Escapist Ideations*. No door is ajar, nor window left open to the space outside. The atmosphere and the realism of the moment is suspended within each room, and each room is suspended in a cosmic blur. Early aeronauts were quick to discover that the reality that we experience around us becomes much more complex past our atmospheric safety ring. Similarly, early oceanauts discovered that even on earth, distance would be the least challenging obstacle to exploration.

Tardibabe (fig. 2) toes the line between creating a safe space for protection and building up walls to maintain isolation. Leaving the farm and my grandmother in my late adolescence was a drastic awakening. After the encroaching trees and fertile air of Hawai’i, the mainland was foreign; the people, the concrete, the houses, and especially the air were caustic and dry. The physical scars that separated me from other children paled in comparison to the complete lack of context for the new world I was thrust into. Here, in the chamber of *Tardibabe*, my dream self

⁸ Vonda N McIntyre’s novel, *Dreamsnake*, is considered a hallmark of the second-wave feminist movement as realized in genre fiction, and won the 1978 Nebula Award, and both the Hugo and Locus Poll Awards in 1979. The protagonist, Snake, is from an ancient sect of nomadic healers whose sacred wisdom is ferociously guarded.

has created a bubble of clean air, spiriting away her precious cargo from the noxious clouds and bizarre otherness outside. While the sealed Nouveau-style windows ensure no air from the nearby oxygen cannister is lost into the cosmos, that same barrier creates an isolated space, where the denizen ultimately festers, alone in perpetuity.

The bundle protected in her arm is held with all the tenderness and consideration of an infant. However, the tardigrade she carries is a creature whose true potential is only realized once exposed to the vacuum of space⁹. Unable to let go of her fear of the unknown, all potential is stifled. This is the dichotomy within *Tardibabe* (fig. 2). While isolation can supply protection from the acerbic effects of outside pressure and harassment, it remains a vacuum that echoes too loudly.

⁹ Also called “water bears”, tardigrades are a microscopic Earth creature. First sent beyond the atmosphere in 2007 by the European Space Agency, the creatures survived the cosmic rays and radiation with an astounding success rate, prompting a more recent experiment at the International Space Station- ongoing since 2021.

Wunder Under: Water Worries



Figure 3. Katya Lee Hutchinson, “Wunder Under”, 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16”x20”.

*“The future. The polar ice caps have melted, covering the earth with water. Those who have survived have adapted to a new world.”*¹⁰

-From Waterworld

Within the metallic walls of *Wunder Under* (fig. 3) a basic human necessity has transformed into both a danger and a commodity. Much like Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*¹¹, there is water everywhere yet none to drink. Submerged in a darkened submarine, the isolation of the chamber recalls the rising pressure and tension found in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*¹². In modern society, this as a direct result of the privatization of water sources, redirecting and perverting the very essence of life to support infrastructure, industrialization, and warfare. Sea levels rise globally as a direct result of climate change enacted by industry, the metaphorical submersion hints at what will become a literal future when coastal cities begin dropping below the surface of the tides. The developed world has always sought to dominate both sea and stream, and the vastness of her waters have created a false sense of resiliency.

Seemingly out of place, a decorated Victorian settee rests squarely as a reminder of the history of colonial import and commodification of water passages. While beautiful and eye-catching, the settee does not fully obscure the darker undertows of war, pollution, and bureaucracy, depicted as a leaking ammunitions crate tucked in the shadows. Streams forced from this tainted crate are transformed into the canals and seaports needed to support a constantly expanding society and the man-made paper boats of commerce and trade traverse

¹⁰ Released in 1995, *Waterworld* depicted an apocalyptic future in which fresh water and land were fierce commodities after Earth became completely submerged by rising ocean levels (0:12-0:45).

¹¹ In Part II of the poem *The Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, describing the risk of dehydration for sailors despite the vastness of the sea.

¹² The classic 1870 novel written by Jules Verne relays the fantastical foray of the *Nautilus* into the deepest trenches of the unexplored oceans. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is often considered to have elements that would become fixtures of exploratory fantasy and fiction.

these tainted paths. Whether this benefit is for the goal of augmenting or restricting, the result is the same. Those who control the road, control the water itself. Even further, those who control the water have historically abused this power to subjugate and transport not just the resources of lands they raided, but the native shepherds of these waters.

The eggs within our denizen's grasp have been rendered infertile and reduced to decoration. Even after establishing precedents for water and waste management, the enforcement of these precedents has been corrupted by greed and privatization. This has led to the massive disparity in water access and integrity around the globe. Tainted water affects not just the drinker, but the ground, the air, and the residents who surround it. The golden eggs are a distraction from the harsh truth of chemical seeping and runoff- as they are gilded against the breakage caused by pesticides. Gleaming and extraordinary, the decorative shells obscure the infertility and fragility of living with contaminants, and the risk of embracing a *Silent Spring*¹³.

¹³ In reference to Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" one of the earliest calls for action for answers to questions about the unknown ramifications of widespread chemical pesticide usage. Carson is often accredited with being a leader in the modern environmental movement. (Carson 1962, Houghton-Mifflin)

Bessemer Bubbles: Cost of Goods



Figure 4. Katya Lee Hutchinson, "Bessemer Bubbles", 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16"x20".

“He has selected from amongst the innumerable foibles and follies to be found in any civilized society, and from the common prejudices and deceitful practices which custom, ignorance or self-interest have made usual”¹⁴

-Francisco Goya

Bessemer Bubbles (fig. 4) addresses the rights, roles, and costs of the goods and services used without thought in a post-industrial society. The timelessness of industrial abuse is found in scattered waste barrels. 19th century garments and vintage cosmetics are reminiscent of past digressions of industrialization, emphasizing the evolution of waste into more toxic forms as witnessed by the nuclear waste containment issues that still go unaddressed today. While the modern history of mass negligence in public safety and attention to workers’ rights stems from before the Victorian era, the abuse of workers and reckless adoption of industry has recently returned to the limelight discussion. The oppression of minority and at-risk populations is rampant, and our own systems of society are still actively functioning as enduring machines in this inequality.

In the congested warehouse of *Bessemer Bubbles*, the denizen indulges in a luxurious bath made toxic through corporate neglect. Unaccounted for are the dark rooms, tiny hands, and strained eyes of an outsourced laborer. Labor and hours committed are rendered invisible when considering the final product. Out of sight, out of mind. It is much simpler to notice the elegance, the product, the aesthetic than to acknowledge the conditions required to produce that garment at a mass-market price, or to give notice to the inevitable toxicity that a capitalist industrial market creates. Sears Catalogs from the late 1980s have been replaced by Amazon coupons and 80% off racks, at each step taking us further and further from the hands and bodies sacrificing to create

¹⁴ Goya's announcement about the series *Los Caprichos* in 1799 within the *Diario de Madrid*. (Hughes, 181).

that \$4 shirt bought because it is “trending”. Humans are not the only victims of our vanity, animal testing to determine margins of toxicity has been recorded for over a century. Clutched casually, the vacant cage has a somber history of tenants. This cage stands as an ignored memorial, vacant only for a sanitation period.

Piles of pigments augmented with lead and depleted aerosol cans exist in the same style of warehouse where workers in the early 19th century would have toiled to create laced cosmetics and tainted garments. These same underpaid people would have saved those wages to buy the same insidious products they produced in intolerable conditions. The avatar’s gown, hand stitched and dyed, appears luxurious as it drapes over the edge of a galvanized trough- glowing with the distinctly poisonous radiance of Scheele’s Green¹⁵. Once again, a passive participant, she is a victim herself to the industrial machine she supports. Cosmetics mixed with lead that would cause lesions and necrosis, asbestos woven into every ceiling tile, things that should not happen much less perpetuate in recurring cycles. It is difficult not to see immediate parallels with the carcinogenic warnings hidden on tiny stickers in goods we purchase every day, and even at the nearest drive-thru.

¹⁵ Once described as toxic enough to poison an entire ballroom, this arsenic laced colorant was marketed to women for its exceptional radiance in gas-lit parlors, becoming the trendiest color to own. Absorbed through the skin and air, the manufacturing company transitioned to wallpaper and curtains once physicians warned of its poisonous effects.

Noir Naturele- False Agency



Figure 5. Katya Lee Hutchinson, “Noir Naturele”, 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16”x20”.

“The symbol for the Environment Ministry is the eye of a tortoise, for the long view—the understanding that nothing comes cheap or quickly without a hidden cost.”¹⁶

-Paolo Bacigalupi

Growing up off-grid in areas of conservation and eco-tourism, there was never a time where I didn't see a problem between elements of humankind and nature. In Hawai'i, there is still a general reverence for the *aina*¹⁷, and a less than forgotten memory of a violent colonial aggression¹⁸. The Homesteading Acts¹⁹ and sovereignty movements that rarely capture mainland news are everyday parts of familial legacy for Native Hawaiian families. *Noir Naturele* (fig. 5), exposes how readily we become perpetrators of the capitalist and colonial legacies that are the backbone of most Western societies. However, disdain for the increasingly materialist loops that have become the path of least resistance is on the rise. We've begun to acknowledge en masse the historical maltreatment and abuse of land and person by corporate and government systems. Barely obscured by outdated office blinds, *Noir Naturele* (fig. 5) reeks of stagnant bureaucracy, encroached upon by an inefficient filing cabinet that has been illegibly labelled.

In the same era that *Noir* was popularized in American film, the precursors to the modern iteration of the Bureau of Land Management were formed when the United States appointed the Executive Branch to manage all activities on “public” land. This represented yet another rendition of an Agency proclaiming itself into existence. Emblematic of the tradition of abusing

¹⁶ From Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*.

¹⁷ In the Native Hawaiian language, the word *aina* translates most literally to “land”, however the *aina* is animate and sacred, both a gift and a responsibility bestowed upon the people; the word “land” is a vast simplification.

¹⁸ Queen Lili'uokalani was the last sovereign monarch of Hawaii when her throne was illegally taken by American businessmen in 1893, and the Hawaiian Kingdom was soon annexed as a part of the United States.

¹⁹ The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 set aside 200,000 acres of stolen Hawaiian land to be preserved for native Hawaiian homesteads. It was transferred as a provision of Statehood in the State Constitution in 1959. The Department of Hawaiian Homelands exists today and is currently facing continued backlash as the waiting list for Hawaiians to receive their parcels has now surpassed multiple generations for thousands of families. (United States Commission on Civil Rights)

stolen land by colonial populations, this move served mainly to bureaucratize this abuse of land. From lumber yards to railways, and the sanctioned seizure of resources by government agencies, often under the heel of private corporations, kept alive and well since the Western Expansion²⁰. The bear pelt rug and pasteurized milk are reminders that native humans are not the only people to be victims to this appropriation. A maple tap and spinning wheel beg the question: where is the line between stewardship and domination?

²⁰ The Western Expansion is generally considered to be the time following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, marked by The Gold Rush, and a burgeoning thirst for influence and economical power by the United States.

Hot Stake: Walking a Paved Path



Figure 6. Katya Lee Hutchinson, "Hot Stake", 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16"x20".

*“Women have no rights...except what men allow us. Men are more aggressive and powerful, and they run the world. When the next real crisis upsets them, our so-called rights will vanish like—like that smoke. We'll be back where we always were: property. And whatever has gone wrong will be blamed on our freedom, like the fall of Rome was.”*²¹

-Alice Sheldon

As the first species trying to reverse instinctive divides between genders, humans are at a crossroads of social advancement, but at every junction the tendrils of a standing tradition of Patriarchy create ruts that impede progress. Women’s rights wax and wane with the political weather, and a regression in equality for the sexes seems imminent. *Hot Stake* (fig. 6), the penultimate print of *Escapist Ideations*, exposes the insidious oppression of the patriarchy and highlights my own anxieties around femininity and the loaded histories of my favorite legacies. I pay homage to the legacy of women that have come before me, treating them as the scattered light sources throughout *Hot Stake* (fig. 6). Creators and artists who were forced to define their work by their designation as a “fairer sex”. Women like Margaret Cavendish²² and Mary Shelley²³, who revolutionized the science-fiction genre. Women like Bertha Lum²⁴ and Mary Cassatt²⁵ who made space in galleries they were told were off-limits. Women like my grandmother.

²¹ Alice Sheldon spent her entire career writing Science Fiction under the pen name of James Tiptree Jr.. Her gender and identity were only discovered near the end of her career in 1976. Since 1991 The James Tiptree Jr. Award has been bestowed upon authors that enrich and expand our understanding of gender.

²² Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, wrote *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* in 1666. This work is arguably one of the first pieces of true Science Fiction literature and discusses gender and sexuality in one of the earliest recounts of a Utopian society.

²³ Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, is often overshadowed by her male cohorts.

²⁴ Bertha Lum was an American printmaker and pioneer of the *Japonisme* style of relief printmaking. She trained in Japan under master printmakers and later innovated her own “raised line” technique which she incorporated into her moku-hanga works. (Cohen, 12)

²⁵ Mary Cassatt was an American painter and printmaker of the 19th Century whose impressionist works helped to establish her as an influential artist. She was one of the first women to exhibit at the Paris Salon in 1886.

A single-mother and lesbian, my grandmother has always been an active feminist and progressive, and I was lucky enough that my youngest years were free of most of the gender expectations placed on children. I watched her clear-cut her plot of land, design and build her house, and sustain off-grid while single-handedly raising her grandchildren. Later, I'd find old pins and signposts from her protest days- "Dip me in honey and throw me to the lesbians!", "Impeach Nixon!", and "God is coming, and SHE is furious!", collected in junk drawers and between old paperback books. After her recent mastectomy, we joked how much her new look suited her and I recall thinking she reminded me of ancient Amazonian Warriors, each with one breast removed to aid in their precise archery.

The armored breastplate donned by the denizen in *Hot Stake* (fig. 6) is both challenge and protection. Like Joan of Arc, the denizen is more than any one singular title. Simultaneously she exists as warrior, woman, saint, and heretic, and has been persecuted for each identity in turn. The artifacts cramped within her intimate space mark abandoned expectations and stand as cairns along a path paved by the women and feminists who broke ground before me. Our conversations around feminism and gender rights have transformed since my grandma's bra-burning days, and there are moments where I've forgotten my gender and existed as a person amongst people. But these moments are fleeting, and to see the steps and shouts and tears of early feminists be repeated decades later by the women of the #MeToo²⁶ movement is a bleak aide-memoire of the continued power discrepancy between the sexes.

²⁶ Originally used on social media in 2006 by sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke, the #MeToo movement gained recent widespread attention in the United States when the hashtag became associated with the 2017 mass allegations of assault and misconduct by Hollywood producer and convicted sex offender Harvey Weinstein.

Acting as a pillar, the titular stake, is repurposed from execution device to coat rack. She has earned the mink fur coat draped luxuriously over the coarse binding ropes through centuries of trial by fire. The connotations of the tousled bed linens are defied by her confronting gaze²⁷, but interrupted by the phallic wallpaper plastered around her. Even in this most intimate space, augmented by the beacons lit by generations of strong women, the male perspective dominates the room despite being pushed out of the spotlight.

²⁷ The gaze of the denizen was heavily inspired by Artemisia Gentileschi, the first woman to be granted membership to the exclusive *Accademia di Arte del Disegno*. An immensely gifted painter, much of her career was overshadowed by her participation in a very public trial against her rapist Agostino Tassi. Elizabeth Cohen goes into depth about the trial in her article “The Trials of Artemisia Gentileschi: A Rape as History”, published in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (Spring 2000).

Pygmalion: The Creator

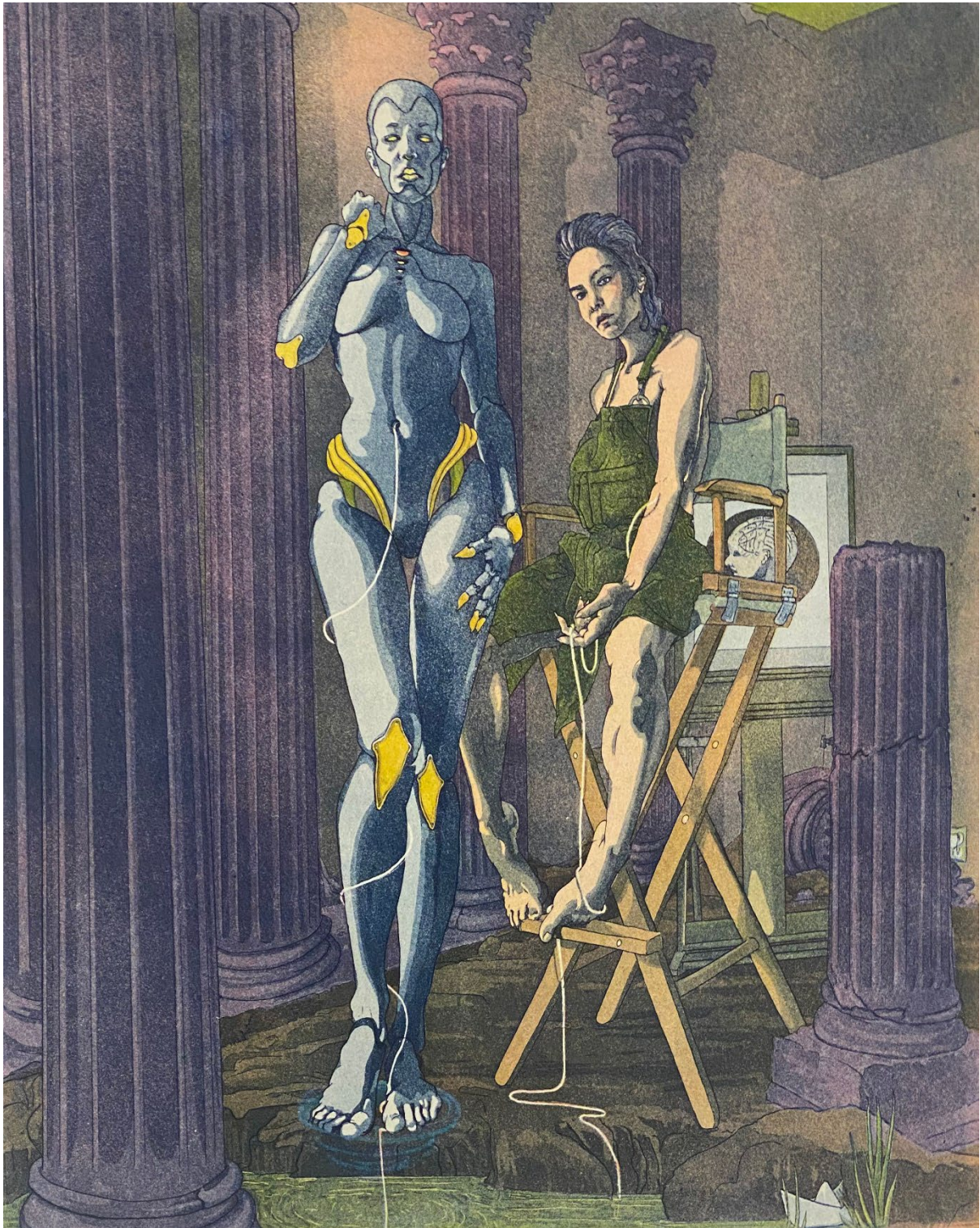


Figure 7. Katya Lee Hutchinson, "Pygmalion", 2022. Line etching and aquatint on kozo. 16"x20".

*“History wanted to be remembered. Evidence hated having to live in dark, hidden places and devoted itself to resurfacing. Truth was messy. The natural order of the entropic universe was to tend to it.”*²⁸

-Rivers Solomon

Within the last few years, the United States has been forced into another time of expedited change through multiple avenues. Long-standing and institutionalized systems of oppression have been brought to the limelight in dramatic events across the country. The current and ongoing Civil Rights movements encompass a larger audience than ever before. Indigenous voices, voices of color, and the voices of other under-represented people are being brought to the forefront of the conversation. Discussions have become global, and therefore more fully encompassing of a larger picture. The facts have emerged, the evidence and habits of digression are apparent, and just like “Global Warming” the world is beginning to accept these things as truth. The oppression of minority and at-risk populations is rampant, and our own systems of society are still actively functioning as perpetual machines in this inequality. Despite the lifting veils of disillusionment, I am not an activist, and I haven’t dedicated my life to resolving anything. I tell myself: *Well, at least I am aware....* There is still so much work to be done. *Pygmalion* (fig.7) acknowledges the bias and pitfalls of creating in one’s own image and asks how to reconcile with a problematic legacy.

The sculptor in *Pygmalion* (fig. 7) creates the ideal being from metal and electricity, forged in her own likeness. Having based *Escapist Ideations* around my own personal anxieties, there is no avoiding a bias of perspective. My background is ethnically and culturally diverse, and I have lived as both minority and majority at various stages. Despite my own experiences, I

²⁸ From *An Unkindness of Ghosts*. In Solomon’s universe, the rigidity of structural racism and gender typicality are explored through the lens of an Afro-futuristic, queer take on the generation ship concept.

seek to recognize the various veils of privilege that have been afforded me. Progress takes time and is rarely instantaneous. It comes as no surprise, amidst this chaotic time of realization, that the fantastical genres have entered a period of unprecedented revival. In the last year, Sci Fi dominates the film and TV charts. Classics have been reworked for audiences too young to remember their origin and found tremendous success in a wider market. But this resurgence in the genre's popularity should not come without warning. Like the phrenology chart hidden behind *Pygmalion* (fig. 7), there can be no history without perpetrators and victims. Racism, sexism, and problematic philosophies are at the core of most classic media, and Sci-Fi in the Western world is no exception. This fact is compounded by the very medium and environment I create in.

I acknowledge and reflect on the deficiencies within my field as a technical intaglio printmaker, a field which has been historically limited to the small percentage of people with institutional or private access to a professional printmaking studio. As seductive as I find the copper plates I revel in making²⁹, I am aware that the privilege to produce comes through non-equitable access. The printing press, metal shear, acid baths and ventilating booths that enable the process are rendered virtually inaccessible to the average artist by their cost, size and level of maintenance. But I am not content to let my perspective crumble in on itself like the columns in *Pygmalion*. Dismantling the legacies of our past and truly knowing our idols can feel like a part of our own personal history becomes perverted. But we cannot create blinders, cherry-picking the parts to be idolized and the parts to be erased, we need to consider our influences in their

²⁹ From her article titled "The syntax of print: in search of an aesthetic context", Ruth Weisberg describes intaglio: "Intaglio offers the swelling and tapering precision of the engraved line (too rarely mastered today), the eroded and insistent bitten line of etching, the grainy shadows of aquatint, and the velvet furrows of drypoint. For some, the making of an intaglio is just an excuse to work on the seductive metal plate." Cited in *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing since 1986* (Pelzer-Montada)

entirety, or risk absorbing the subverted themes we think we have shielded ourselves from.

Delicately balanced, the divine android of *Pygmalion* (fig. 7) hovers above a darkened pond. The stagnant pond is modelled after *Echo and Narcissus*³⁰, as a warning against blind vanity.

³⁰ A symbolist painting by John William Waterhouse, depicting the Roman myth of Narcissus, the beautiful youth it fell in love with his own reflection. This mythological man is the origin of the term narcissism.

Escapist Ideations: A Conclusion



Figure 8. *Katya Lee Hutchinson*, Installation shot: "Escapist Ideations", 2022. *Greenville Museum of Art*



Figure 9. Katya Lee Hutchinson, Installation shot: “Escapist Ideations”, 2022. Greenville Museum of Art.

“Fantasy, abandoned by reason, produces impossible monsters; united with it, she is the mother of the arts and the origin of marvels.”³¹

-Francisco Goya

In the concluding chapter of *Escapist Ideations* (fig. 8 and 9), the dreamscapes become physical, acting as their own mementos in the fully realized exhibition space. The room itself is small and contained, confined enough to protect from the perilous chaos of reality beyond its doors. Within the room, time is suspended. An unwound clock and toppled hourglass allow to viewers to slip into the fantasy and indulge in their own moment of escaping as they step into the

³¹From Goya’s epigraph for Capricho Number 43, a part of his series of 80 etchings, collectively referred to as *Los Caprichos*. (1799)

space. The dreamscapes are suspended in golden frames, each one mimicking the gaudy baubles sprinkled within the prints. Deep teal walls are reminiscent of the constant green blue gradients of the cosmos found in every window of the series (fig. 9). The velveteen couch is an antique, and the legacy and implied leisure wherein creates the cornerstone for the exhibition dreamscape. Perilously piled in every corner are the enticing covers of Science Fiction novels spanning over a century of escapist literature. The shimmering pashmina draped over the couch reserves the denizens place within the room, the delicate drapery congested amongst the mess. The guiding ships have all made dock without evidence of the oil left in their wake, idly polluting on standby. In a vain attempt to project the illusion of natural reality, the plastic flamingo looms over the settee, augmented with a bushel of fake plants (fig. 8). The safe from *Sand Gathering* (fig. 1) stays unguarded, beginning to overflow from the accumulated *kipple*.

Unlike the individual stationary prints trapped in their gilded frames, *Escapist Ideations* provides a door out. The throughway acts as a reminder that the role of passive participant is voluntary, and the escapist fantasies that once seemed so alluring can be left behind as the viewer exits into reality.

NOTES

1. <https://lwcc.ecu.edu/indigenous-land-acknowledgement/>
2. Adopted and adapted for regional inclusivity from University of Hawai'i Provost Michael Bruno's message found at <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2019/10/31/uh-manoa-land-acknowledgment-to-native-hawaiians/>
3. Austrian symbolist artist Max Klinger was widely celebrated when he produced the sequential symbolist narrative series entitled *Ein Handschuh*, or *Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove*, a portfolio of 10 etchings published in 1881. This "cycle" as Klinger dubbed it, is an exemplary example of early social commentary and symbolism through narrative, with influence on the later Surrealist and Expressionist movements (Salsbury, Britany)
4. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner referring to the differences between painting and printmaking (Kirchner, 226)
5. Kiki Smith as quoted in the Daily Princetonian, December 11, 2003
6. The work of John Harris is instantly recognizable due to the hundreds of Science Fiction covers he has created for many of the most famous authors in the genre. (Harris, 63)
7. "kipple" in Phillip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (later adapted into the blockbuster film franchise *Bladerunner*) consists of all the useless objects that gather in the corners of seldom used abandoned spaces. In his dystopian universe, this kipple is described as seeming to breed and replicate until one day the world will succumb to "absolute kippleization". (Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)
8. Vonda N McIntyre's novel, *Dreamsnake*, is considered a hallmark of the second-wave feminist movement as realized in genre fiction, and won the 1978 Nebula Award, and both the Hugo and Locus Poll Awards in 1979. The protagonist, Snake, is from an ancient sect of nomadic healers whose sacred wisdom is ferociously guarded.
9. Also called "water bears", tardigrades are a microscopic Earth creature. First sent beyond the atmosphere in 2007 by the European Space Agency, the creatures survived the cosmic rays and radiation with an astounding success rate, prompting a more recent experiment at the International Space Station- ongoing since 2021.
10. Released in 1995, *Waterworld* depicted an apocalyptic future in which fresh water and land were fierce commodities after Earth became completely submerged by rising ocean levels (0:12-0:45).
11. In Part II of the poem *The Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, describing the risk of dehydration for sailors despite the vastness of the sea.
12. The classic 1870 novel written by Jules Verne relays the fantastical foray of the *Nautilus* into the deepest trenches of the unexplored oceans. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is often considered to have elements that would become fixtures of exploratory fantasy and fiction.
13. In reference to Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" one of the earliest calls for action for answers to questions about the unknown ramifications of widespread chemical pesticide usage. Carson is often accredited with being a leader in the modern environmental movement. (Carson 1962, Houghton-Mifflin)
14. Goya's announcement about the series *Los Caprichos* in 1799 within the *Diario de Madrid*. (Hughes, 181).

15. Once described as toxic enough to poison an entire ballroom, this arsenic laced colorant was marketed to women for its exceptional radiance in gas-lit parlors, becoming the trendiest color to own. Absorbed through the skin and air, the manufacturing company transitioned to wallpaper and curtains once physicians warned of its poisonous effects.
16. From Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*.
17. In the Native Hawaiian language, the word *aina* translates most literally to "land", however the *aina* is animate and sacred, both a gift and a responsibility bestowed upon the people; the word "land" is a vast simplification.
18. Queen Lili'uokalani was the last sovereign monarch of Hawaii when her throne was illegally taken by American businessmen in 1893, and the Hawaiian Kingdom was soon annexed as a part of the United States.
19. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 set aside 200,000 acres of stolen Hawaiian land to be preserved for native Hawaiian homesteads. It was transferred as a provision of Statehood in the State Constitution in 1959. The Department of Hawaiian Homelands exists today and is currently facing continued backlash as the waiting list for Hawaiians to receive their parcels has now surpassed multiple generations for thousands of families. (United States Commission on Civil Rights)
20. The Western Expansion is generally considered to be the time following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, marked by The Gold Rush, and a burgeoning thirst for influence and economical power by the United States.
21. Alice Sheldon spent her entire career writing Science Fiction under the pen name of James Tiptree Jr.. Her gender and identity were only discovered near the end of her career in 1976. Since 1991 The James Tiptree Jr. Award has been bestowed upon authors that enrich and expand our understanding of gender.
22. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, wrote *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* in 1666. This work is arguably one of the first pieces of true Science Fiction literature and discusses gender and sexuality in one of the earliest recounts of a Utopian society.
23. Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, is often overshadowed by her male cohorts.
24. Bertha Lum was an American printmaker and pioneer of the *Japonisme* style of relief printmaking. She trained in Japan under master printmakers and later innovated her own "raised line" technique which she incorporated into her moku-hanga works. (Cohen, 12)
25. Mary Cassatt was an American painter and printmaker of the 19th Century whose impressionist works helped to establish her as an influential artist. She was one of the first women to exhibit at the Paris Salon in 1886.
26. Originally used on social media in 2006 by sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke, the #MeToo movement gained recent widespread attention in the United States when the hashtag became associated with the 2017 mass allegations of assault and misconduct by Hollywood producer and convicted sex offender Harvey Weinstein.
27. The gaze of the denizen was heavily inspired by Artemisia Gentileschi, the first woman to be granted membership to the exclusive *Accademia di Arte del Disegno*. An immensely gifted painter, much of her career was overshadowed by her participation in a very public trial against her rapist Agostino Tassi. Elizabeth Cohen goes into depth about the trial in her article "The Trials of Artemisia Gentileschi: A Rape as History", published in *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (Spring 2000).

28. From *An Unkindness of Ghosts*. In Solomon's universe, the rigidity of structural racism and gender typicality are explored through the lens of an Afro-futuristic, queer take on the generation ship concept.
29. From her article titled "The syntax of print: in search of an aesthetic context", Ruth Weisberg describes intaglio: "Intaglio offers the swelling and tapering precision of the engraved line (too rarely mastered today), the eroded and insistent bitten line of etching, the grainy shadows of aquatint, and the velvet furrows of drypoint. For some, the making of an intaglio is just an excuse to work on the seductive metal plate." Cited in *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing since 1986* (Pelzer-Montada)
30. A symbolist painting by John William Waterhouse, depicting the Roman myth of Narcissus, the beautiful youth it fell in love with his own reflection. This mythological man is the origin of the term narcissism.
31. From Goya's epigraph for Capricho Number 43, a part of his series of 80 etchings, collectively referred to as *Los Caprichos*. (1799)

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