

bee
longing

be/ longing

C O M M U N I T Y

I N B E T W E E N

D I A S P O R A

H E T E R O T O P I A

H O M E

Through intersectional imagery highlighting themes of displacement, migration, community, love, grief, and resistance, the FSU MFA 2023 cohort invites you to consider what it means

to be
to long for
to belong



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AnnaBrooke Greene

Camille Modesto

nik rye

Chayse Sampy

Chansong Woo

&

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Special thanks to the team at FSU MoFA, the College of Fine Arts staff, colleagues in the College of Art History, our committee members and mentors, and the unwavering support of the student community.

We are born and have our being in a place of memory...We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering.

bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*

As a burgeoning contemporary art historian, I am repeatedly struck by the breadth, theoretical richness, and sheer monumentality of this exhibition. The title alone is an exercise in intentionality—inviting the viewer to grapple with one of the most loaded words in the English language: belonging. In its deconstructed form, the suggestion seems to be that belonging is a state of mind, a liminal space inhabited by those who yearn for the lost or familiar. I suggest a further reading of this exhibition and its thesis as rooted in decolonial praxis: a vehicle for the recollection and preservation of memories that are oft held in the periphery of art historical and museological discourses.

Through its negotiation of complex manifestations of place, community, and memory, **belonging** invites viewers to grapple with what it means to reminisce with radical purpose and intentionality. To engage with these artists' works is to consider the stakes of recollection and the operative function of remembrance as a form of resistance. Each of the six artists uses memory to destabilize systems of power—including the authority-conferring "white cube" of the museum space. They are saying to us: when we remember, we inherently practice decoloniality by defying those who seek to erase us. **belonging**, now more

than ever, inspires us to think of our own experiences in these terms—to engage with our own memories as disruptive, powerful, and indelible.

The subversive memories to which I am referring appear distinctly in AnnaBrooke Greene's hauntingly beautiful meditations on ephemerality, gender, and the domestic sphere. In its retooling of found objects, *Poetics of Materiality: Time and Things from Home* underscores absence—drawing attention to what has been lost and what yet remains. Throughout the gallery, ritualized interventions intersect with spatial theory to create an environment in which the ghosts of femininity and domesticity linger. They are embodied through the materiality of the work: in the threads of a tattered dress, the delicate strands of hair woven into a quasi-self-portrait, and the commanding shadows cast by wrought iron. Here, past and present are temporally indistinguishable—threaded together by objects that are at once removed from, yet wedded to, their original contexts.

Punctuated by legacies of coloniality in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Christopher's *A Caribbean Present Haunted by a Colonial Past* similarly weaponizes material memory to reinscribe the persistence of colonial violence in the modern day. Sugar, which contributed heavily to the development of plantocracies across the Caribbean, is as inextricable from legacies of enslavement

as the sea. The artist's superimposition of the ocean, then, a locus of memory within the context of the transatlantic slave trade, reinforces this thematic undercurrent and artfully bridges several sites of memory and reckoning. Echoes of colonial trauma also find themselves manifested in Christopher's archival charcoal portraits depicting toiling men and women. Through the repeated employment and recontextualization of sugar, Christopher's medium and subject work in tandem with one another to deliver a visually striking commentary on colonial resource extraction and the exploitation of Black labor.

This symbiotic relationship between place and memory is further mined by Camille Modesto in *Nandito pa rin ako*. Comprised of archival and personal footage, the work serves as a poignant reminder of all that is cherished, and subsequently lost, in the process of migration. Scenes depicting the banality and beauty of life in the Philippines dance across luminous mosquito netting that paradoxically recalls and distorts memories of the archipelago. Despite its material implications, the netting's blurring effect creates recollections that are just out of reach—constantly suspended in space and softened by time and distance. In cultivating a carefully curated space, which includes traditional Filipino seating and a banana plant, Modesto invites us to remember alongside her: to participate in a wistful

environment in which we are simultaneously enmeshed in—and alienated by—the diaspora.

Chansong Woo parses this same concept of collective, yet unreliable, memory in *About a Thing*, a participatory installation work that melds the personal with the historical. In keeping with the work of Greene, Christopher, and Modesto, Woo interpolates the past into the present: inviting viewers to actively engage with the legacy of the Gwangju Democratization Movement in South Korea. In this work, memory is uncovered through action—gradually exposed through the systematic removal of the silver façade that obscures it. This figurative uncovering, reminiscent of the unfixed process of recollection, can be read as emblematic of the immense labor necessary to unpack and process unspeakable trauma. By inviting audiences to participate, however, Woo's work is activated as a site of shared remembering—compelling viewers to collectively bear witness to state-sanctioned violence and the pain in its wake.

Systems of embodied, communal remembrance see themselves equally personified in nik rye's *Stages of Grief (Just Keep Walking)*. The work, which addresses the murder of Keith Stafford, a local houseless man, preserves the memory of those who are held in the margins of society in both life and death. Its central placement in the main corridor of the gallery lends credence to the tensions that exist between hypervisibility and invisibility—both representationally and within the wider discourse surrounding

houselessness. These same rigidities exist in rye's *7 Days a Diamond and Sidewalk Ens*, two artistic interventions that publicly confronted the psychic effects of dispossession and displacement. In bringing these experiences to the museum space, rye eschews notions of museums as neutral spaces and instead forces a consideration of institutions as public forums for collective resistance.

Chayse Sampy's *The Things We Carry Wading in the Water* comparably engages with themes of defiance and community—drawing on monumental blue paintings and textile works that center, privilege, and cherish Blackness. By collapsing time and space through collaged archival images, Sampy skillfully interrogates who and what survives within the imperfect matrix of communal, intergenerational memory. This mosaic of recollection results in a series of cosmically beautiful portraits that resist erasure while simultaneously interrogating the full spectrum of the Black experience. Black mothers, athletes, youth, and servicemen converge in this body of work as a testament to persistence: a corporeal expression of what it means to thrive in the face of white hegemony. Sampy's engagement with craft, by extension, reinforces notions of resiliency through materiality—emphasizing the ability of marginalized communities to continuously transform, improvise, and adapt. It is through these renewals—through the constant transmutation of our minds and bodies—that we learn who we are and the definition of what it means to belong.



AMANDA ELENA BRITO

is a Cuban American art historian born and raised in Miami, Florida. She received her B.A. in Art History from Florida International University and is currently pursuing an M.A. in Museum and Cultural Heritage Studies at Florida State University. Her research focuses on Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean visual culture with a dedicated emphasis on socially engaged, decolonial art practice. Her curatorial philosophy emphasizes the social utility of art and often addresses themes of migration, identity, and exile. She has held positions and internships at the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the National Portrait Gallery, the Pérez Art Museum Miami, and Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center. She was the recipient of an ArtTable curatorial fellowship in the summer of 2022.



Jenae CHRISTOPHER

A Caribbean Present Haunted by a Colonial Past

I use charcoal drawing and three-dimensional installations to interrogate themes of place, coloniality, cultural identity and hybridity, violence, and memory. My work aims to develop awareness about my Caribbean culture and history and to investigate contemporary concerns, particularly with gun violence, of my place of birth, the US Virgin Islands. I center a narrative-based process and utilize objects/materials that speak to personal experience, memory, or research such as sugar and sound to reference the history of sugar production and enslaved African labor in the Virgin Islands. When I use charcoal, I see it as an expressive tool allowing me to make drawings more gestural and free while being less defined.

I constantly discover ways to connect my ideas to history for the reason that everything in the Virgin Islands is a product of its colonial past.

“History is the nightmare from which we are trying to awake.” -Derek Walcott
Intended to be shown in the Museum of Fine Arts, this body of work generally consists of a series of charcoal drawings with sugared glass and a three-dimensional hanging installation. Focusing on contemporary concerns of gun violence in the U.S. Virgin Islands, I am creating work that explores a relationship between events that happened during the colonial era and the present.





AnnaBrooke GREENE

My assemblage sculptural installations and wall works connect to ideas of the domestic space, memory, time, and the body through materiality. I identify found and personal domestic objects as poetic source materials that connect associations of gender, craft, and decoration as I draw on my personal relationship with the American South to explore the domestic space as a constructed narrative. Using labored processes and traditional women's craft skills, such as glue washing, hand sewing, and metalworking, I manipulate and reform mixed charged materials into uncanny echoes of what they once were as active investigations of the space in which they come from and the memory and history they hold. My investigations are propelled by operational questions such as: How did these objects function to uphold traditional ideals within the home? And how can my artistic action offer a point of subversion or complication of that narrative?







Camille

MODESTO

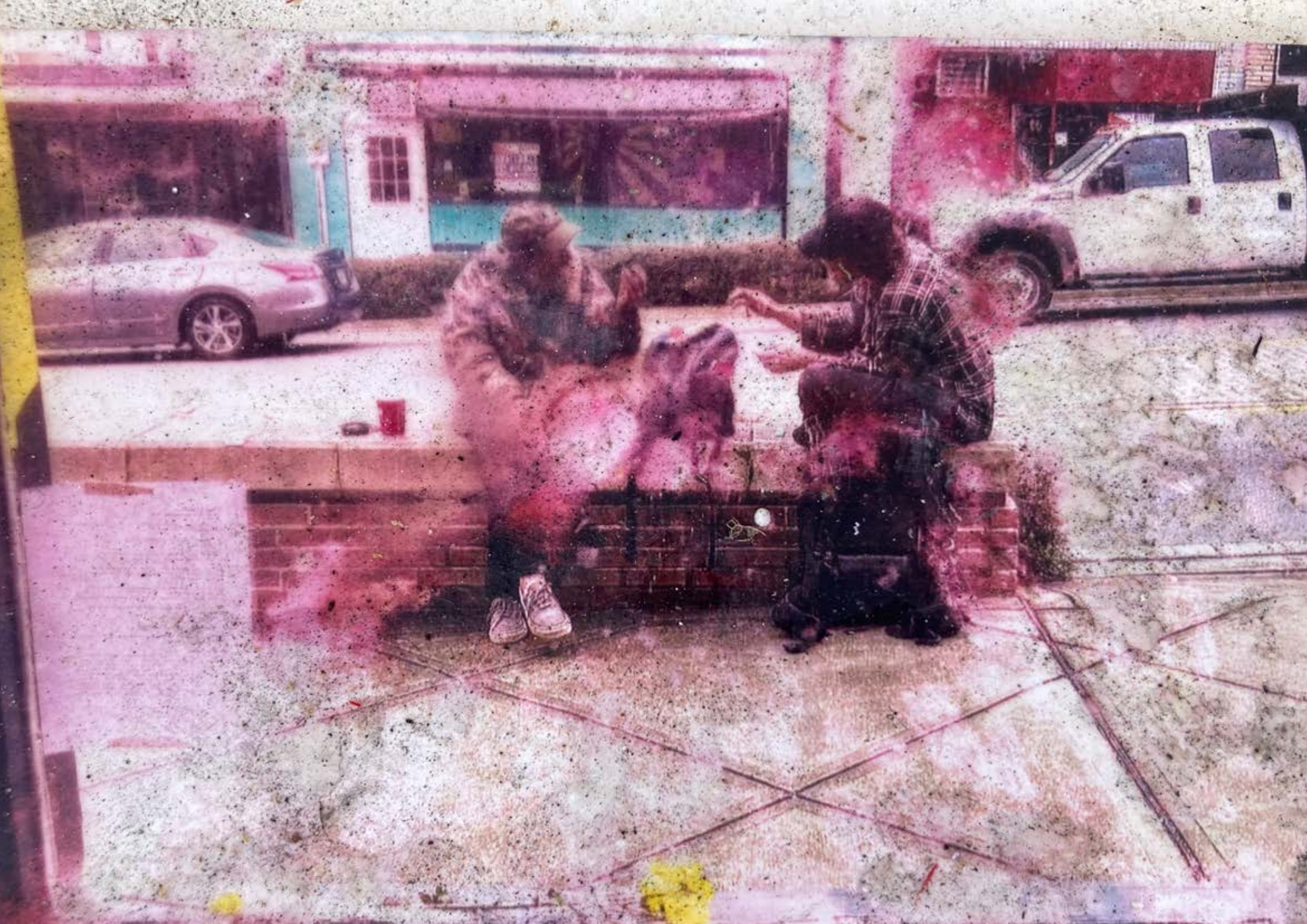
Nandito pa rin ako

Nandito pa rin ako is an installation work that explores themes of memory, nostalgia, and longing, focusing specifically on my own experience of grief and migration. I utilize mosquito nets as a symbol for home, hanging two nets - an old one from my grandmother's closet, and a newer one that I bought for nostalgia's sake. Using projection as a way to mimic the remembering of the past, I incorporate a collection of archival videos, family home videos, and photographs depicting life in the Philippines and as migrants in the West. In the net, personal and collective history coexists. It is the representation of the most tender and difficult moments in my life that I've placed into this canopy that evoke a strong sense of comfort from my childhood. I welcome you to be part of this experience and enter this space with a sense of uncertainty and possibility.









nik
RYE

Home is a Body

As a human rights organizer who has experienced houselessness, dreams of resistance pervade my art practice – community, freedom, solidarity, equity, radical love, and future joy. As a pathway to community-building and empathy, I playfully and passionately layer forms of communication as subversive protests. Through public intervention, I interrupt the formulaic qualities of the spectacle and its psychological effects on community engagement in hopes of public empowerment. Simply, I see myself as a community curator hellbent on sharing Home (IE connection, solidarity, communication, love) with everyone using temporary community access points that live in public spaces.



Chayse SAMPY

The Things We Carry Wading in the Water

This series of mixed media paintings are an invitation to the family reunion, a return to community with those known to us and by the wake. Within a sea of blue, *The Things We Carry Wading in the Water*, questions what it means to love thy neighbor. These large-scale narratives explore themes of grief, survival, transformation, community, and memory; allowing us to gaze at each other with compassion and empathy. Based on the enduring spirit of Black resistance, I highlight the shared and collaborative nature of blackness across space and time. Through expanded painting, textiles, embroidery, and found objects function as poetic source material; employing a tradition of fugitive creativity. As a manifestation of W.E.B DuBois' "double consciousness," these figurative pieces are monuments capturing the full scope of Black humanity, in all its dynamism and contradiction. I see this project as a love letter to blackness, to Black people; dead, surviving, and thriving.



It's not
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Chansong WOO

About a Thing

A large-scale installation work *About a thing* is made up of multi-panel achromatic drawings that focus on one social movement in South Korea, the Gwangju Democratization Movement, a symbol of people's struggle against military regimes for democracy in the city of Gwangju from May 18th to 27th in 1980. The surface of the drawings shines like a scratch-off ticket and attracts visitors' attention. Under the thin silver, the hazy charcoal drawings with delicate and detailed pen strokes are revealed gradually as visitors scratch off. The drawings represent my memory and its impression because when I try to remember the memory or images that I got from secondary sources such as photos and documentaries, that is always very blurry and hazy like a picture out of focus. Since memory is the recollection from the past, my memory is vulnerable and flawed due to subjective feelings and emotions have been involved. The narrative is a trigger for showing how historical memory and trauma transmit to post-generation who bears the trauma of their forebears and constitute their memories in their own right. Also, *About a thing* serves as a bridge between the past and present, and my memory/experience and viewers.







JENAE CHRISTOPHER

Born in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Jenae Christopher is a Caribbean-American artist pursuing an MFA degree in Studio Art at Florida State University. She received a BFA degree in Visual Art from Miami International University of Art & Design in Miami, Florida.

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ANNABROOKE GREENE

She is an interdisciplinary South Georgia artist living in Tallahassee, Florida where she is an Instructor at Florida State University and a recipient of the MFA Award and Andy McLachlin Memorial Award. Greene has been exhibited regionally and nationally including her solo exhibitions, In the Garden at Wall Space (2022) and Through the Looking Glass at Colquitt County Arts Center (2018) and group exhibitions including ArtFields (2023), Material Alchemy: Metal and Color at Athens Institute for Contemporary Art (2022), and Earth/Mother portfolio showcase from the SGCI conference, Puertographico. (2020).

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CAMILLE MODESTO

She is a Filipino-born interdisciplinary artist. Modesto has exhibited at Avenue 50 Studio in Highland Park, CA, University of Florida Health, CoRK Arts District, University of North Florida Gallery of Art, and Jacksonville Public Library.

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NIK RYE

They are an activist, artist, and curator who previously belonged to a collective for whom the Broward New Times headlined as *Activists Prank Fort Lauderdale Commissioners to Protest Homeless Hate Laws*. nik rye was awarded a Civil Disobedience Medal from the ACLU and is a recipient of the FSU Legacy Fellowship.

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CHAYSE SAMPY

Chayse Sampy is a mixed media, Afro-surrealist painter from Houston, TX. Sampy has exhibited regionally and nationally with recent projects including group exhibitions in the Nia Cultural Center (2021) and Working Method Contemporary Gallery (2022), and the Ritz Theater & Museum (2023).

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CHANSONG WOO

As an interdisciplinary artist, her recent interest lies in sharing how personal memory and trauma can be expressed as art and communicate with viewers although they have all different social, cultural, and political backgrounds. Born and raised in South Korea, she now lives in Tallahassee, Florida.

spacewoori.com

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