

# Department of Art & Art History



## Spring 2021 Commencement Ceremony Friday, May 7 at 10:00 AM

Virtual Event: Art & Art History, CU Boulder YouTube Channel



Art & Art History

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

[www.colorado.edu/artandarthistory](http://www.colorado.edu/artandarthistory)

## A Message from the Chair of Art & Art History

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This year, unlike any other year I've ever known, I've been repeatedly reminded about how essential art is, not just the work we see in galleries and museums, but the art that engages us across communities.

I think about lots of different projects that I've seen or read about this year. For example, when anonymous artists worked together with the mayor's office in Washington DC to transform a stretch of street with the words, Black Lives Matter, they demonstrated how powerfully art can change our understanding of a place, a movement, and our connection within a community. As Kyle Chayka of the New Yorker wrote about the intervention in DC, "Such art works generate visual force fields that make us more aware of our bodies in space... The mural reminds us that, by marching these recent weeks, we are using our physical presence in public to communicate, an action that's even more potent given the long isolation of quarantine and the lack of access to art caused by the shuttering of museums."

Other artists, drawn together by crisis, created collectives to sew and distribute face masks when PPE were hard to come by. No less forceful were artists who brought song to people in isolation, hiring themselves out to perform singing telegrams, a seemingly outdated form of communication, and shared over zoom.

Throughout this year, art helped us find our footing.

Resilience is the word that comes to mind as well.

There were our faculty who figured out how in this new world, to continue to deliver their curriculum in-person or redesigned their approach to teach remotely. There were our staff who supported students and faculty so that they could continue to work. And there were our students who kept coming to class.

So, I congratulate all of our graduates who persevered this year to make and study art, and through their hard work understood how essential art is to our sense of humanity.

*Yumi Janairo Roth, Professor of Art Interim Chair, Art and Art History  
Sculpture and Post Studio Practice*

# Commencement Address

By: Michelle Leach

Hello everyone. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Michelle Leach, and I am receiving a bachelor's in art history today... or in a week when you see this video.

When I was asked to give a speech about what it was like to be an Art and Art History student at CU Boulder graduating in 2021, I was extremely honored. I have loved my time as an art history student and am grateful for all of the extraordinary students and faculty I have met along the way, but this speech felt almost impossible. I haven't been in the Art and Art History building in 14 months. How in the world am I supposed to know what being a student is like? We have spent the last year taking classes remotely, seeing people as names and occasionally faces on a computer screen. It has been hard to feel connected to professors, peers, or the department at times. Because of this lack of connection, I felt completely unqualified to give a speech that summarizes our experiences in this program, but I recognize that this is probably a shared feeling. So, here I am anyway giving a speech to my kitchen, attempting to reconnect with all of you and knowing that there is no way I could really capture these final semesters.

When classes shifted online, I moved home. Due to weird Covid displacement, I ended up living with my parents, my older sister, and her three kids. I traded my quiet apartment for a house where three small kids, and one really big kid (me) were all attempting to take online class. I was going between doing my class work and teaching my younger niece how to read time on an analog clock. At one point, I had to buckle down and take a timed online midterm. Beforehand, I asked my mom if she would make sure everyone was at least semi quiet for an hour. Through the

whole exam, the only thing I could hear was my mother loudly talking in the kitchen. I have great memories of that time with my family, but it was a big shift. I had gone from studying all the time to doing the bare minimum to watch a Marvel movie every night with my nieces and nephew. Movies were a great distraction until the kids went to bed, and my mom and I would stay up and watch the news. This put everything into perspective and was a reminder of the emotional strain we were all going through. After I struggled through the end of that semester, I was so afraid of what the last year of my degree would look like, but it got better. And its not all bad. I kinda loved waking up 10 minutes before class started and not changing out of my pjs. We were forced to make new routines, and at this point it almost feels normal.

One of the few things that can lure me out of pjs is museums, so, naturally when I got the chance to see an art piece that I have been battling with since I started studying art history, I faced my fears and got on a plane to New York. This was meant to be a trip to visit a grad school, but really, it was a thinly veiled excuse to see the MET and the MoMA. This is how I found myself in the MoMA, standing in front of Meret Oppenheim's Object. The Fur Teacup or Breakfast in Fur. Whatever you want to call this ridiculous sculpture, I was excited to see it. When I took my first art history class, I absolutely hated The Fur Teacup. It is literally a teacup, saucer, and spoon covered in animal fur. I did not understand it, and I was not convinced it was art. It represented the thing I resented the most about modern art. It felt pointless and made me very uncomfortable.

Last semester I took my capstone course with Professor Alhadeff in Surrealism. I found myself writing my final paper on Meret Oppenheim and her works involving gender. The Fur Teacup went from being completely nonsensical to representing the story of a woman making a name for herself in a period dominated by men. It created an avenue for me to appreciate a whole genre of

art that I had previously overlooked. That paper turned out to be one of my favorite things I have ever written. I hope that each of you have had your own Fur Teacup moment in this department. Something that has pushed you forward and made you rethink what you had believed before. Whether that is a period, artist, artwork, practice, or medium, I hope that you have come to love or appreciate something new as an artist or historian during your time here.

I studied Oppenheim for a good portion of last semester. Looked at countless images of her work and read more opinions about the Fur Teacup than I can count but seeing it in person is just a different experience. Museums fear that by putting their collections online, people will forgo their institutions altogether, but there is something that feels so important to me about seeing the art in person that I have spent so much time studying. It is my version of a kid in a candy store. I cannot help but tell whoever I am traveling with the most interesting facts I have learned about a piece or an artist. My boyfriend's experience seeing Van Gogh's portraits would probably have been perfectly peaceful without my barrage of facts I learned in Professor Alhadeff's course. Beyond my own experience, I saw a renewed excitement in the visitors of the MET and the MoMA. I am not sure if people realized they missed places like museums over this last year. I definitely thought about it, but then again, my world revolves around art. We have all spent time watching everything on Netflix, taking all of the BuzzFeed quizzes, or doing some virtual museum tours if you're a huge nerd like me, but they are all disconnected and individual experiences that do not feel the same. I don't think I'm alone when I say that I cannot wait to get back to more in person interactions with art. To me, it feels like the perfect way to reconnect and reengage with the world outside my small apartment.

I was an intern this semester at Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art where once again the only

thing getting me out of pajamas was a museum. I helped install the exhibit from this spring titled From this Day Forward which was an extraordinary collection of eight artists. Each artist responded so transparently to the world around them. They commented on the problems of today and the experiences of the last year. They each took hardship and turned it into powerful pieces of art. The main goal was to make people contemplate where we wanted to go, and often how we could get there together. As art historians, we are taught to consider the world in which a piece is made and how that affects the art. This is what makes art so uniquely human and relatable. As creators, you have the responsibility of filtering the world around you into your work. This is a skill I will always admire. It will be the job of artists to guide the reconnection and reflection after this bizarre and uncomfortable time.

This world will always have problems. Things to stand up for, advocate for, and be passionate about. And I can say with complete certainty that this department does not lack passion, you all wouldn't be here otherwise. This last year has been tough for artists and museums, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I am not saying it will be easy, but what better time is there to go into the world as creator. Everyone is excited to reconnect with art and humanity, and I hope that both artists and art historians can play a role in that. Our problems in society will persist and we will keep fighting for them, but in some small way it feels like a bit of a new world we are graduating into. A world where people are excited to reconnect.

If you asked me six months ago what graduating would feel like, I probably would have said "scary," but instead, today I am hopeful. Of course, this not how any of us imagined our college graduation. I struggled with the idea of watching commencement on a computer or tv screen where it feels, weirdly, like it could be any other day. Although today I am not in my paja-

mas, and that sorta makes it special. It feels a bit anticlimactic, but do not let that diminish your accomplishments. We did it, and no one will ever claim that the class of 2021 had it easy. Even though we cannot be together today, I hope you find your own moment of joy and celebration in whatever way you can. I am excited to see what you all do out there. Go out, create, make people listen, and I hope that our paths cross again future. Congratulations and Thank you!

Michelle Leach  
BA, Art History  
Honors, summa cum laude

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## Bachelor of Arts

Adaline Adkins	Ava Kosty
Rob Balsewich	Michelle Leach
Allyson Barnes	Courtney Levings
Debby Bates	Rem Lindenau
Alexandra Berstein	Ellie Marcotte
Alexis Block	Brian Marolda
Milo Boyer	Aaron Miller
Rachel Brenner	Sheila O'Neill
Hailey Cade	Adeline Ouweneel
Camille Cain	Madeline Patterson
Sarah Callin	Shane Plaskett
Ainsley Carson	Sabrina Ruiz
Daisy Caxton Smith	Courtney Saindon
Leah Clayton	Joey Scott
Ashley Conner	Ignacio Sedano
Dzifah Danso	Siyani Shabazz
Cella DeSousa	Jade Shatkin
Anthony Drees Jr	Malea Vitt
Anne Feller	Madison Warp
Annabelle Gallegos	Madison Welty
Nathanial Goodman	Natalie Wurmel
Linlin Huang	
Cassandra Johnson	
Kyung Yul Kim	

## Bachelor of Fine Arts

Bryon Lee Allison  
Anne Feller  
Dilara Miller  
Audra Smith  
Madison Warp

## Master of Arts

Avery Glassman  
Jerryan Ramos Hernandez

## Master of Fine Arts

Alejandra Abad  
Román Anaya  
Cali M. Banks  
Samantha Bares  
Robert Martin  
Joelle Cicak  
William Dalton Frizzell  
Dallas Guffey  
Emily Irvin  
Shelby McAuliffe  
Chelsea Taylor  
Emily Van Loan  
Mikey Yates

## **FACULTY**

Albert Alhadeff, Art History  
Kirk Ambrose, Art History  
Mark Amerika, IMAP - Digital  
Scott Chamberlin, Ceramics  
Albert Chong, IMAP - Photography  
Matthew Christie, Printmaking  
Brienne Cohen, Art History  
James Córdova, Art History  
Annette de Stecher, Art History  
Kim Dickey, Ceramics  
Françoise Duressé-Stimilli, Painting & Drawing and Digital Art  
Alvin Gregorio, Painting & Drawing  
Marina Kassianidou, Painting & Drawing  
Robert Nauman, Art History  
Megan O'Grady, Critical and Curatorial Studies  
Jeanne Quinn, Ceramics  
George Rivera, IMAP - Integrated Arts  
Yumi Janairo Roth, Sculpture & Post Studio Practice  
Richard Saxton, Sculpture & Post-Studio Practice  
Hanna Rose Shell, Critical & Curatorial Studies  
Stephanie Su, Art History  
Alex Sweetman, IMAP - Photography  
Anna Tsouhlarakis, Foundations  
Luis Valdovino, IMAP - Video  
Melanie Walker, IMAP - Photography  
Mike Womack, Painting & Drawing  
Melanie Yazzie, Printmaking

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Yumi Janairo Roth, Interim Chairperson  
Evan Blackstock, CNC Lab Coordinator  
Katie Larson, Graduate Program Coord.  
James Córdova, Assoc. Chairperson for Art History  
Mike Womack, Assoc. Chairperson for Art Practices  
Annette de Stecher, Director of Grad Studies for Art Hist.  
Jean Goldstein, Administrative Assistant  
Michelle Erks, Office Manager  
Sarah Matsuda, Undergraduate Advisor  
Elaine Paul, Visual Resources Specialist  
Lia Pileggi, Digital Imaging & Technology Coord.  
William Rumley, Bldg. Proctor/Woodshop Supervisor  
Jason Sanford, Painting, Drawing, and Digital Studio Technician  
Richard Seydel, Undergraduate Advisor  
Kirsten Stoltz, Visiting Artist & Scholar Program Coord.  
Misuhng Suh, Sculpture, Ceramics, & Foundations Tech.  
Mariana Vieira, IMAP Area Tech.