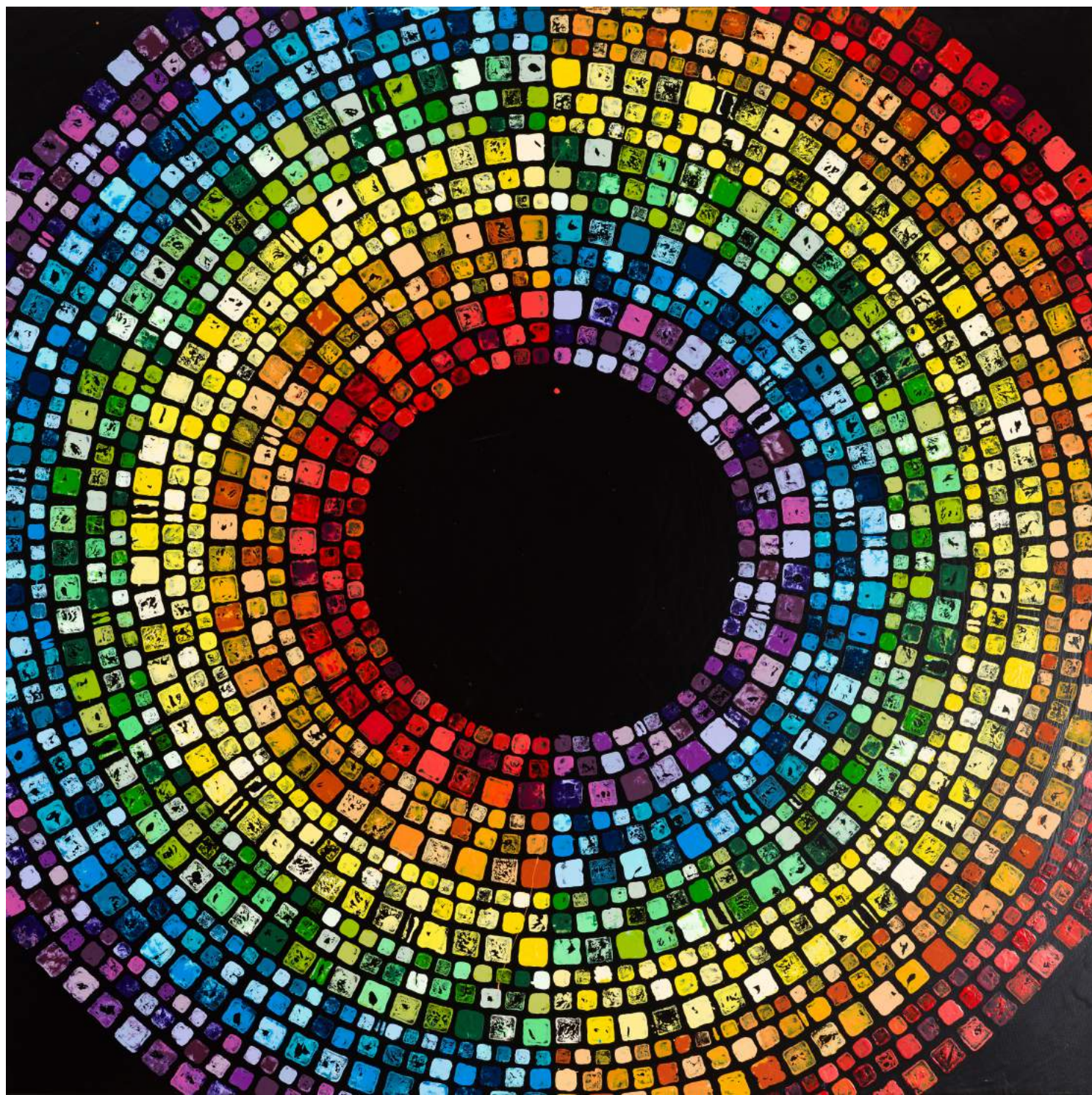


MULTITUDES

BART VARGAS

JULY 1 - DECEMBER 10, 2022

HODGES GALLERY



CONTENTS



- 1 EXHIBITION STATEMENT
- 2 ARTIST BIO
- 3 - 10 CURATORIAL STATEMENT
- 11 EDUCATION STATEMENT
- 12 - 17 INSTALLATION IMAGES
- 18 - 26 WORKS IN EXHIBITION
- 27 THANK YOU

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

MULTITUDES is a celebration of materials, form, pattern, and color through sculpture and painting. This twenty-year retrospective consists of objects and images built from salvaged materials. Many of these award-winning works have been exhibited across the nation and world, graced book covers and publications, but have not previously been exhibited in North Carolina.

Aspects of salvage, appropriation, and repetition run through all my works. I recover local materials deemed unwanted or useless, including trash, recyclables, and surplus items and then transform them into playful, approachable, and thought-provoking objects. This practice is most obvious in my sculptures, in which I use readily identified objects such as plastic bottles, cardboard, keyboard keys, and empty paint containers. I play with the familiarity of these materials by blurring their identities into universal forms like spheres, globes, maps, pyramids, pills, and skulls.



These works address such diverse topics as contextual regional geography, the damaging effects of plastic on our bodies and global environment, and the multitudes of waste created by technological advancement. My sculptures evoke the taken for granted nature of everyday materials in society.

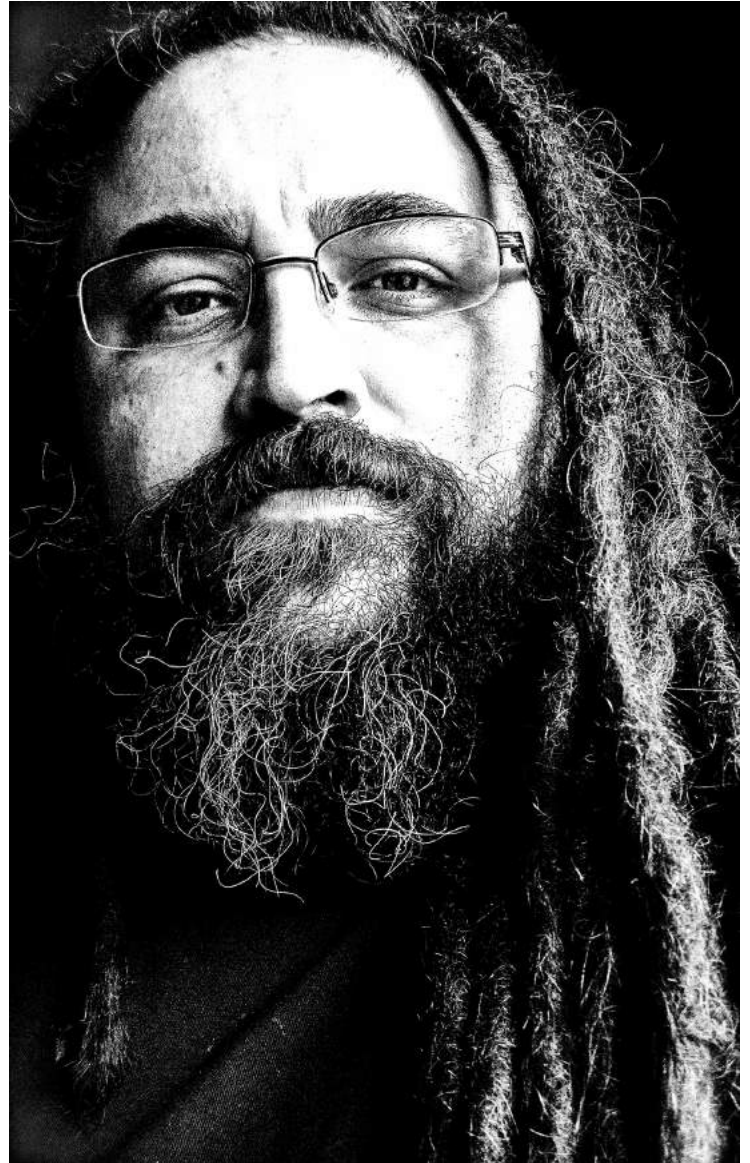
I want my creations to act as artifacts and evidence at the dawn of the Anthropocene, and of the early 21st century, an era of limited resources, extraordinary consumption, and waste.

Bart Vargas

ARTIST BIO

Bart Vargas is a visual artist, educator and advocate from Bellevue, Nebraska. He received his BFA from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and his MFA at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, and his work can be found in many collections throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, Australia and South America. His works have also been featured in many publications, including Sculpture Magazine, New American Paintings and HGTV Magazine. Vargas lives with his wife Bekah Jerde, and their 90+ plants in Omaha, Nebraska where they own and operate an international studio. Vargas is also an Instructor of Visual Arts at Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

bartvargas.com





CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The artwork of Nebraska artist Bart Vargas fits seamlessly into Appalachian State University's Mission Statement: "Appalachian State University prepares students to lead purposeful lives as global citizens who understand and engage their responsibilities in creating a sustainable future for all. The Appalachian Experience promotes a spirit of inclusion that brings people together in inspiring ways to acquire and create knowledge, to grow holistically, to act with passion and determination, and to embrace diversity and difference.



Sustainability at Appalachian State University is not a trend, it is a tradition. We are active stewards of our state's interconnected financial, cultural and natural resources. Through engaged scholarship, we balance critical, creative and global thinking in a living laboratory, transforming theory into practice and fostering responsible citizenship."



Part of Vargas's artist's statement includes this text perfectly illustrating why the Turchin Center's curatorial team thought it so important to host his mid-career retrospective in a solo exhibition, *Multitudes*, in the Hodges Gallery, the center's largest exhibition space.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

Vargas writes: "Aspects of salvage, appropriation, and repetition run through all my works. I recover local materials deemed unwanted or useless, including trash, recyclables, and surplus items and then transform them into playful, approachable, and thought-provoking objects. This practice is most obvious in my sculptures, in which I use readily identified objects such as plastic bottles, cardboard, keyboard keys, and empty paint containers. These artworks address such diverse topics as contextual regional geography, the damaging effects of plastic on our bodies and global environment, and the multitudes of waste created by technological advancement. My paintings also incorporate the practice of salvage, though to a less apparent extent. I utilize latex house paints from a regional collection site for hazardous materials and paint on wooden panels built from repurposed scraps gathered from theatre sets, construction sites and members of the community.

I want my creations to act as artifacts and evidence at the dawn of the Anthropocene, and of the early 21st century, an era of limited resources and extraordinary consumption and waste."

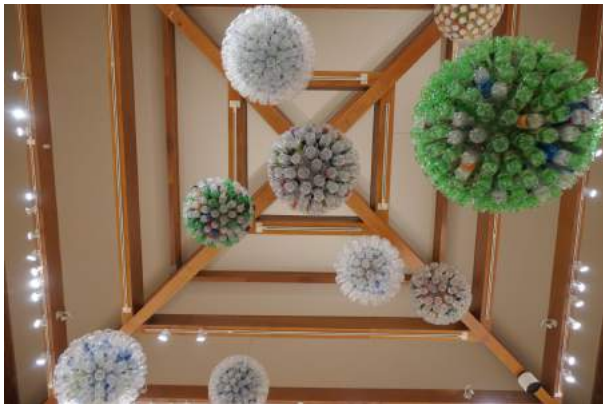




CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

One of the many things that is important to the multi-disciplinary artist is that he is able to create work that people can relate to purely visually, that there is a visceral, emotional connection to the work that goes beyond words. Vargas' use of color draws the viewer in. The gallery is an explosion of color. There is repetitive meditation in his painting, a desire to move beyond process to pure raw essence. It's possible to get lost in the individual paintings of *The Visible Universe* just as it is to stand back and get lost into the expanse of paintings flowing across the wall, extending beyond the wall, encouraging an entry into deep space, not the void, but a space where all is possible, where out of the blackness emerges all color, all light, all energy. *The Metaverse*, with its sly nod to the global domination of cyberspace, is more structure – as all algorithms are, but none-the-less, extends into infinity inviting the viewer, the intergalactic traveler, along for the ride.



Even while inviting the viewer along for the inter-planetary journey, Vargas acknowledges that the journey is not always easy. *IT IS REALLY HARD TO BE A HUMAN BEING RIGHT NOW*, 2022, was painted not long before Vargas drove his artwork from Omaha to Boone. Along the way, he was stopped by the police in Tennessee.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

As Vargas writes, this is the interaction that took place: "When I crossed over from Kentucky to Tennessee, I noticed three state troopers at the border. That's nothing new.

Shortly after, I noticed one of them driving parallel to the cab of the rental truck. I looked at him looking at me and kept driving. He slowed down and disappeared behind the box truck, so I looked at the passenger side mirror and noticed he had put his lights on. So, I pulled over, turned the vehicle off, and put my hands on the steering wheel.

He approached the passenger side of the vehicle and asked me to open it. My suitcase was in the way, so I leaned over it and complied. He asked me if I knew why I was being pulled over? I told him no, and he told me I was veering and was suspected of being under the influence. I told him I had been driving for thirteen hours and was a half hour from my hotel. He asked me for my license and to join him in his car.

He looked up my info, asked what my destination was, and what my business there was. I told him I was staying overnight near the airport and would be ultimately driving to Boone, North Carolina to install my Art for the twenty-year retrospective. He asked me if that was a real job and I told him I was a full-time Visual Artist and that I was a full-time College Instructor.





CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

He asked me what drugs were in the vehicle. I said none. He asked what weapons were in the vehicle. I said none. He asked how much cash I was carrying. I told him maybe a hundred bucks.

He asked me what drugs I was on, listing every drug I've ever heard of as a separate question. I told him that even though I look interesting. I was actually quite boring.

He told me the traffic stop had nothing to do with the way I looked, it was because I appeared to be under the influence.

He asked me to step out of his vehicle and stand by the side of the Interstate while he called in a K9 unit to circle the vehicle. He told me to stay still and not to move so that he and the arriving officers wouldn't be alerted and feel threatened.

The K9 officer went around the vehicle. I was informed that the dog alerted a positive for narcotics. I was informed that the State of Tennessee has every right to search any vehicle a K9 unit alerts to.



CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

I told them I understood, while they search my luggage and computer bag. They asked for the lock combination: I told them. They opened the truck, search my toolbox, and looked confused at my Art.

The original officer came back and continued to calmly ask me questions, while the K9 officer stood in my personal space and stared me in the eye. I found it very good cop/bad cop.

They asked me why I was staying at the airport? They asked me how much the hotel room cost? They asked me if that was a good price for a hotel room? They asked me who was paying me to drive the truck? I said I was, but that the college would reimburse me. They asked how much I spent on gas today? I told them and they asked who paid for it? I said I did, and that I would be reimbursed for it.

They asked why I would drive Art from Nebraska to North Carolina. I explained that I have a previous working relationship with the curator and that she wanted to organize a mid-career retrospective of the last twenty years of my Art career. They asked why would the college pay for that? I told them again that I was a Visual Artist and Art Centers and Museums pay to organize shows.





CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

They asked me again what drugs, weapons and money they would find if they completely unloaded the truck. I calmly told them none.

They conferred amongst themselves, came back, and told me that U-hauls were being used to smuggle drugs into Tennessee, and since they didn't find anything, they issued me warning for an "OTHER OFFENSE."

They gave me my license back, told me to close up the vehicle and be on my way. Two hours later I am finally settled at my hotel. I am exhausted, frustrated, and shaken up. While the whole ridiculous event happened, I stood perfectly still, breathed deeply, (worrying they were planting evidence.) I couldn't help but worry about someone younger than me, with less life experience, that would panic or lose their temper during such an interaction (interrogation).

Welcome to Tennessee."

These are difficult times at best. This was not an auspicious way to begin a residency here at the Turchin Center or any other place for that matter. Bart Vargas is resilient—he was determined not to let the difficulties of his journey effect his mood during his installation or opening reception.

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

WARNING TICKET

A.M. ☒	DATE: 6/21/22	DRIVER LICENSE NO.: 413992169	STATE: NE
Vargas		DATE OF BIRTH: 01/18/73	RACE: W
CITY, STATE, ZIP S 13th St Apt 304 OMAHA, NE			
REGISTRATION NO.: 321	STATE: AZ	YEAR: 22	

☐ WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD	☐ SEAT BELT LAW
☐ FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY	() Citation No.
☐ D.L. LAW	☐ LIGHT LAW
☐ D.L. CONDITION CODE	☐ TRAFFIC CONTROL DIS
☐ REGISTRATION LAW	☒ OTHER OFFENSE:
☐ MOTOR VEHICLE EQUIPMENT	55-8-122

STREET/HIGHWAY
W N S Clarkville Montg

Officer: Bargatzke, Devin
☒ THP
☐ MVE
☐ CP
 BADGE NO. 1601
 DISTRICT 3rd

HEADQUARTER'S COPY

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Continued

Together we filed a complaint with the Tennessee Department of Public Safety (italics mine).

Additionally, Bart shared this story during his gallery talk, making himself at once vulnerable and approachable. His audience was visibly moved.

The art Bart Vargas makes and the activism he brings to his life speak for themselves. Follow Bart Vargas on social media, watch his Ted Talk.

Be inspired.

Mary Anne Redding, curator

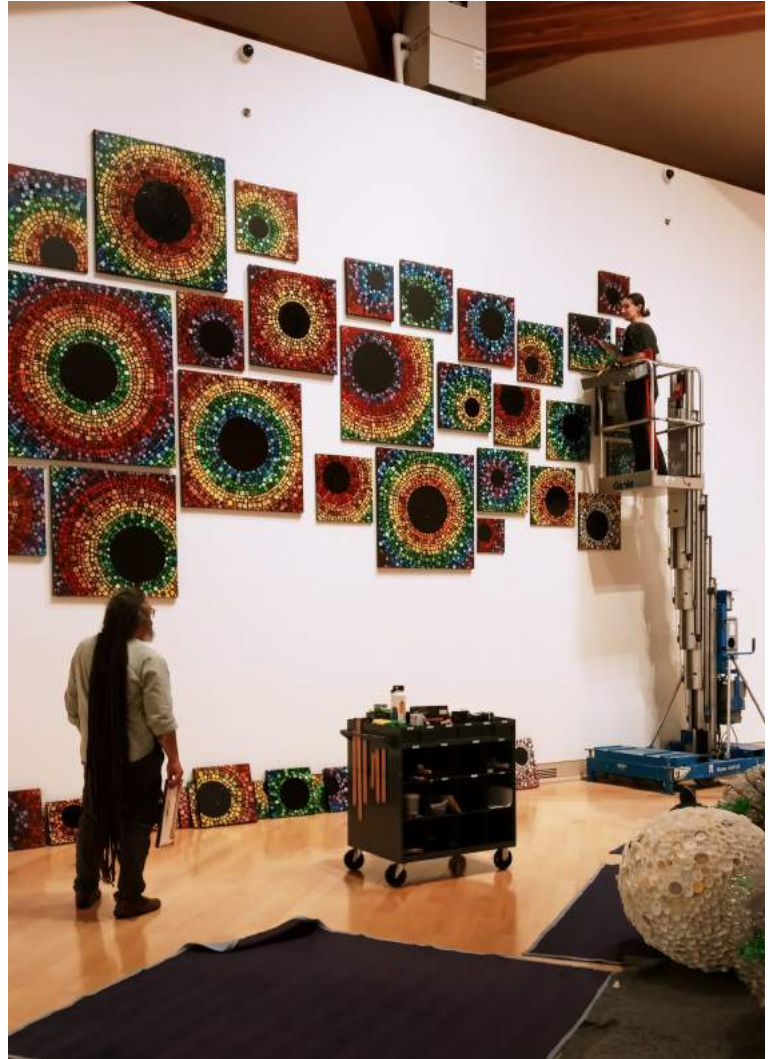


EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

Bart Vargas uses found materials to create artworks that speak to the damaging effects of plastic on our bodies and the environment. He uses repeating patterns with the materials he finds, like keyboards or bottle caps, and sculpts them into objects we are used to seeing outside of the museum or gallery space– like basketballs and maps! What kinds of materials do you throw away or recycle that could be repurposed as artmaking supplies? What might you make out of them that could transform the way others see them?



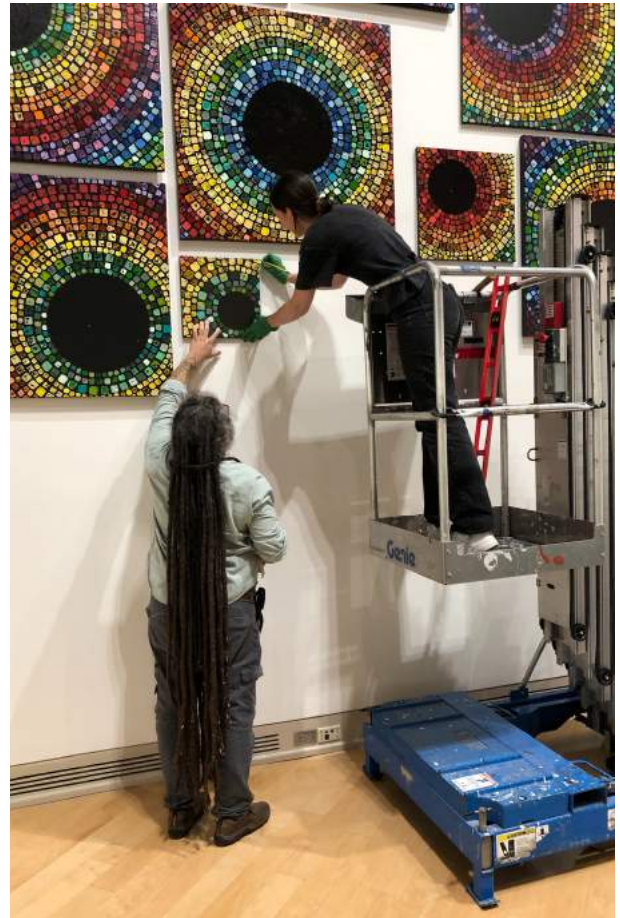
BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



BEHIND THE SCENES



WORKS IN EXHIBITION



There Are Places on the Map That Do Not Exist, 2019
Keyboard keys, hollow core doors, paint, adhesives, hardware



There Are Places on the Map That Do Not Exist, 2020
Keyboard keys, plastic bottles, paper, cardboard, constructions foam, paint, adhesives, hardware



Anthropocene Dawn; A World without Glaciers, 2019
Keyboard keys, plywood, cardboard, construction foam, paint, adhesives, hardware



Keyboard Skull, 2013
Keyboard keys, polystyrene, adhesive

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



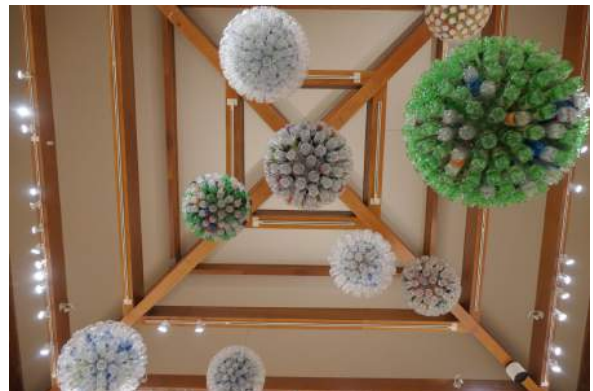
The Future, 2015
Keyboard keys, plastic form, paper, paint, adhesive



Artificial Intelligence 4.0, 2021
Keyboard keys, acrylic dome, adhesive



F Bombs 2.0, 2015
Keyboard keys, USB thumb drive, USB extension cable, cardboard, paint, adhesive



Bottle Balls Installation, 2010-2022
Plastic bottles, cardboard, adhesive, hardware

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



The Bitter Pill, 2011
Plastic bottles, cardboard, adhesive, hardware



The Sphere of Higher Education, 2002
Plastic bottle caps, plastic bottles, paper, paint, adhesive, hardware



The Plastic Future, 2020
Plastic bottle caps, plastic bottles, plastic form, cardboard, paper, paint, adhesive, hardware



Sockball, 2006
Used socks, plastic bottles, cardboard, paper, paint, adhesive

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



*Sponge Woman
Wonder Pants, 2017*
Assembled slip-cast
ceramic sculpture



Brogu, 2021
Assembled slip-cast ceramic
sculpture



C-3 Pee Wee-0, 2022
Assembled slip-cast
ceramic sculpture



The New Liberty, 2019
Assembled slip-cast
ceramic sculpture



*Intergalactic Pop Culture
Gangsta, 2018*
Assembled slip-cast ceramic
sculpture



The Rona, 2020
Assembled slip-cast
ceramic sculpture

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



Stormtrooper Jesus, 2018
Assembled slip-cast ceramic
sculpture



Bullseye 2, 2010
House paint on salvaged wood and panel



Half a World, 2019
Keyboard keys, plywood, cardboard,
construction foam,
paint, adhesives, hardware



Nova Triptych, 2011
House paint on salvaged wood and panel

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



The Metaverse, 2022
House paint on thrift store canvas



The Red Square, 2014
House paint on salvaged wood and panel



Desert Center, 2015
House paint on salvaged wood and panel

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



This Is Not My First Rodeo, 2022
House paint on thrift store canvas



Daily Drawing #1000, June 26, 2022
Ball point pen on Strathmore Drawing Paper



Smiley, 2015
Keyboard keys, cardboard, construction foam, paper, paint, adhesive, hardware

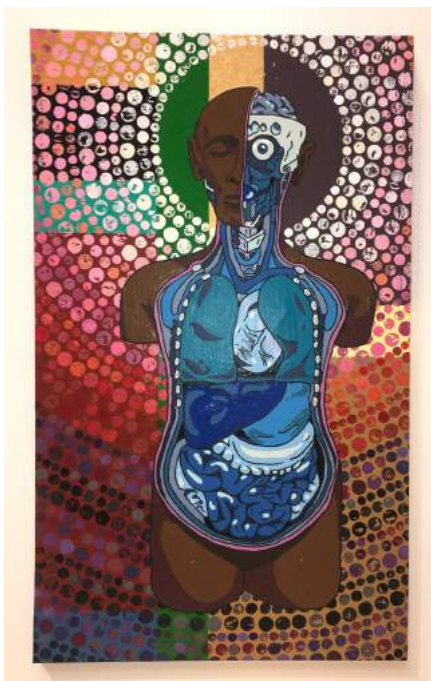


Pythagoras and the Golden Dodecahedron, 2011
Salvaged paint, spray paint, aluminum tape, cardboard, adhesive

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



The Visible Universe, 2022
House paint on thrift store canvas



IT IS REALLY HARD TO BE A HUMAN BEING RIGHT NOW, 2022
House paint on thrift store canvas



The First, 2019
Hand pulled serigraph

WORKS IN EXHIBITION



Portal #59, 2015
House paint, Epoxy resin on wood and panel

Portal #61, 2015
House paint, Epoxy resin on wood and panel

Portal #67, 2015
House paint, Epoxy resin on wood and panel

Portal #63, 2015
House paint, Epoxy resin on wood and panel

Portal #66, 2015
House paint, Epoxy resin on wood and panel



THANK
YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US AT #TCVAATHOME !

