



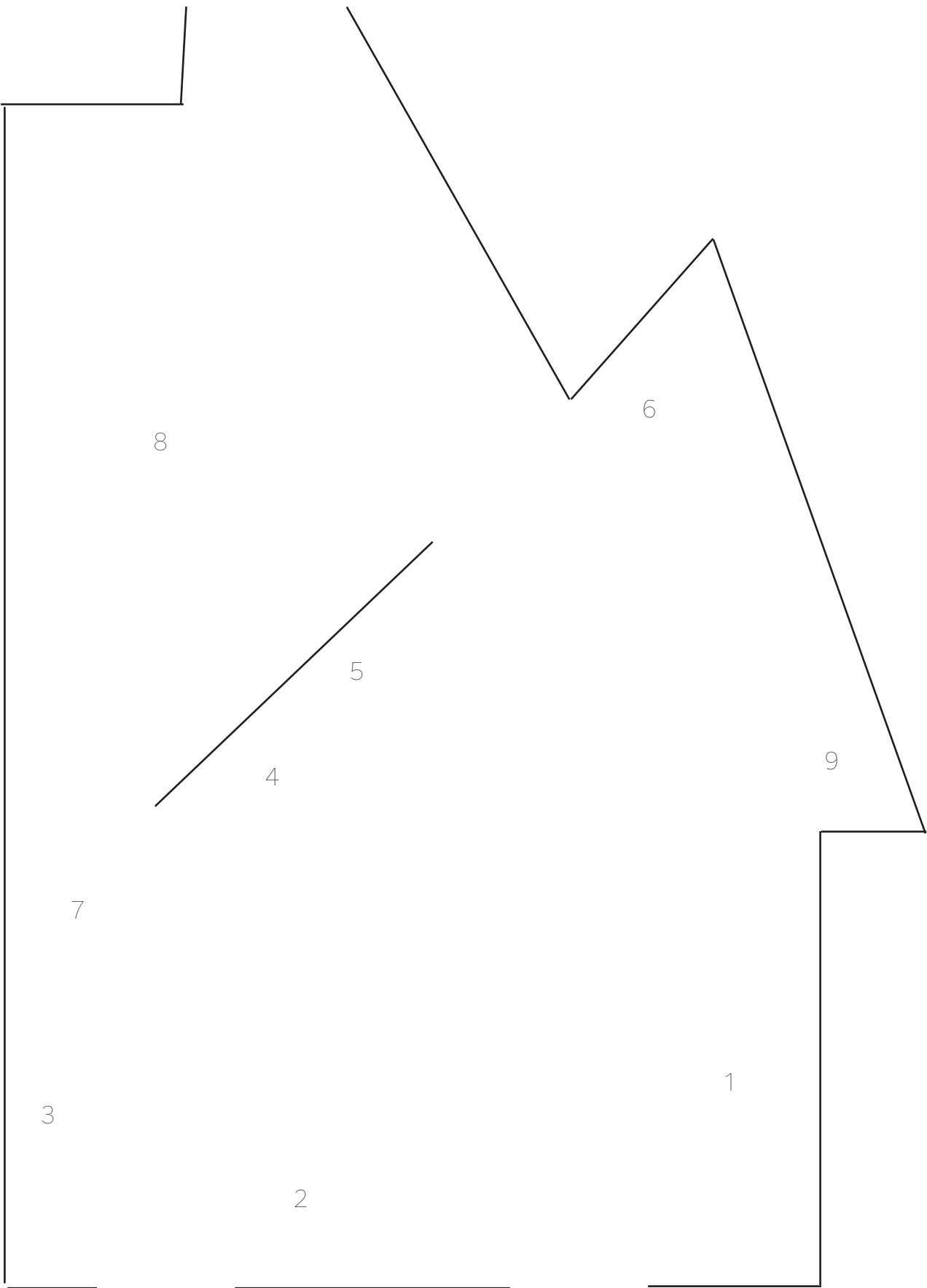
Oasis

**ACRE Projects at Drama Club
September 4 through 25, 2021**

Andy Davis
Dana Hemenway
J Noland

Curated by
Rachel McDermott

Oasis teeters between familiar and fantastical worlds. Andy Davis, Dana Hemenway, and J Noland shift expectations of the vernacular using abstraction to invite intimate interactions encouraging slow looking and attention through illusion, imagination, and instruction. The artists' invitations to self-reflect center questions that continue to arise in the pandemic like structures of stability, methods to process emotions, and ways to engage in experiences from afar.



1. J Noland, *Untitled (Phoenician Anchor)*, 2021, two-color silkscreen on paper
2. Dana Hemenway, *Untitled (Tile/Quilt)*, 2021, ceramics, glaze, metal mesh, hardware, and fibers
3. J Noland, *Eleusis*, 2021, April 1924 National Geographic Magazine pages with erasure, wild flowers picked while under the influence of LSD
4. Dana Hemenway, *Untitled (Wall Weave - No. 2)*, 2021, ceramics, glaze, LED tube light, wiring
5. Dana Hemenway, *Untitled (Latch Hook - black)*, 2019, ceramics, latex, cotton rope, wood, and paint
6. Andy Davis, *Annunciations*, 2020, fish glue, mineral pigments, and gouache on paper
7. J Noland, *Constellation*, 2021, fossilized oyster shell collected at the Yuha Shell Beds, hand-dipped beeswax candles, cyanotype on muslin, plastic bottle containing Pacific Ocean water, instant film photo of the sky when the ocean water was collected
8. J Noland, *Constellation*, 2021, Fossilized oyster shell collected at the Yuha Shell Beds, hand-dipped beeswax candles, cyanotype on muslin, Califone 3132AV cassette recorder, 3-minute looping tape of a 19th century Tibetan prayer bowl
9. J Noland, *Constellation*, 2021, Fossilized oyster shell collected at the Yuha Shell Beds, hand-dipped beeswax candles, cyanotype on muslin, ceramic vessel, mountain wildflowers

Andy Davis drifts between painting, pigment-making, theater, movement and moving image. Davis has performed and exhibited both within the US and internationally. Residencies and fellowships include Muong Studio (Hoa Binh, Vietnam); SOMA Summer (Mexico City, Mexico); FRAC Bourgogne (Dijon, France); The Wassaic Project (Wassaic, NY); Nakanojo Biennale 2019 (Nakanojo, Japan); ACRE (Steuben, WI); and in 2020 received a project grant from Galveston Artist Residency (Galveston, TX). Andy currently lives and works on the Atlantic Coastal Plain on Lenapehoking, the traditional homeland of the Lenape people.

andypdavis.com

Dana Hemenway is an artist, curator, and educator based in San Francisco. She received her MFA from Mills College and her BA from University of California Santa Cruz. Hemenway has had residencies at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE), ACRE (Stueben, WI), SÍM (Reykjavik, Iceland), The Wassaic Project (Upstate New York), Joya:Air (Velez Blanco, Spain) and in 2020 she was awarded a Residency at Recology San Francisco (now scheduled for October 2021). Dana is the recipient of The San Francisco Arts Commission Individual Artist Grant and a Southern Exposure Alternative Exposure Grant. She has a permanent public art commission in SFO's Terminal 1. Dana has exhibited her artwork locally, nationally, and internationally. From 2015 – 2017, Dana served as a co-director of Royal Nonesuch Gallery, an artist-run project space in Oakland, CA. She is represented by Eleanor Harwood Gallery.

danahemenway.com

J Noland is an interdisciplinary artist caught in an earthly realm. Hailing from the American Midwest, Noland now lives and works in Southern California. He received his MFA from the University of California San Diego, and holds a fourth Kyu ranking in Aikido from the United States Aikido Federation. He is co-founder of Helmuth Projects, an artist-run project space in San Diego focused on collaboration and experimentation. Most recently, Noland was artist in residence at Island Farm Press (San Diego, CA), where he created the print edition for this exhibition. Currently, Noland works as producer at Tender Claws, a digital art and VR studio in Los Angeles, CA. He has a deep and abiding love for birds and ocean swimming.

jnoland.org

Rachel McDermott is an arts administrator and a 2020-2021 ACRE Curatorial Fellow based in Savannah, GA. She is interested in questioning the vernacular every day and ways to alter how we move through social, ecological, and digital spaces. She earned her M.A. in museum and exhibition studies from the University of Illinois at Chicago and her B.A. in historic preservation and community planning from the College of Charleston. McDermott is currently the social media manager for SCAD Museums and has previously worked on curatorial and marketing teams at Galley 400, EXPO CHICAGO, ASMP Chicago/Midwest, and the Robert F. DeCaprio Art Gallery at Moraine Valley Community College.

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Through sculpture, painting, and prompts for connection, *Oasis* teeters between familiar and fantastical. **Andy Davis**, **Dana Hemenway**, and **J Noland** shift expectations of the vernacular using abstraction to invite intimate interactions. The artists encourage slow looking and attention through illusion, imagination, and instruction. The invitations to self-reflect center questions that continue to arise in the pandemic, like structures of stability, methods to process emotions, and ways to engage in experiences from afar.

My personal fixation on the word “oasis” began after a late-night drive past a neon-soaked gentleman’s club. Gleaming green and nestled between 2 major highways in Atlanta, the sign for “oasis” burned through the humidity, flanked by neon palm trees. A folder of all encounters with the word “oasis” since captures marketing moments selling sanctuary splayed across plastic boards for frozen drinks, eye drops, and laundry mats.

Over the past 18 months, the search for moments of “normalcy” inches closer to the search for an “oasis”. The desire for this sense of safety, security, equity, and togetherness. The clarity at the end of a meditative practice in Noland’s work. An ability to weave like Hemenway’s work through established systems to understand our contemporary ways. Opportunities to project narratives amongst imaginative landscapes in Davis’ paintings invite you to leave or find your way back to whatever you need. In response to the unknown, these moments of bliss and joy are embraced as a welcomed relief. It’s the fleeting moments of intense softness amongst the chaos. It’s a tall order to name an exhibition after a space of serenity. An expectation for transportation to a sublime or fantastical experience. A place of abundance amongst a sparse environment. Returning to viewing artworks made from vulnerability and care in person should be a space to host those same in-person emotions.

Dana Hemenway’s experiments with utilitarian objects and ceramics poke holes in notions of structure and stability. An industrial light emits a continuous beam of light that seamlessly passes through a gallery wall, anchored with ceramics disguised as metal fittings. Like a needle threaded with light, the stitch pierces the seemingly structural barrier. Stripping interior spaces to their simplest forms, Hemenway’s work asks how structural materials control how we act and interact in spaces. Her work questions the materials themselves, their vernacular purpose, and our gendered associations with objects. A curved circular form is an innie to the outie of the industrial light. Combed fibers dress a clay circle with a fringed exterior. Seemingly mechanical features made from wooden dowels and latex meet the fibers as they pass through to the interior. As an experiment with materials, the work pushes what a rug can be, nodding to the history of arts and crafts and pushing expectations of interior objects.

Undulating ceramic tiles create an aerial landscape of bodily-polyp-like forms across the floor. Attached to metal wiring resembling a gridded linen turns sharp materials soft. The paired ceramic and metal represent a kind of shag carpet of female forms rejecting touch. The ceramics are cast from 3D printed molds, a process of numerical patterns to print cylindrical and soft forms, questioning materials’ physical properties. The tension of gendering fibers and the history of feminist artists ring loud through the work’s associations to art history. The work connects back to Harmony Hammonds’ 1973 circular works “Floor Pieces” were made from braided industrial fabrics woven to weave similarity and intimacy.¹ The works were made the year Hammond came out and celebrate her queer identity while referencing the history of domestic women’s work and craft and rejecting the toxic masculinity of painting. Hammonds’ works continue to be compared to Carl Andre’s 1970’s violent floor sculptures, also often referenced as “rugs” that reject emotion and sentiment.² The tension between the two is seen in Hemenway’s work. From an art history lens, the work speaks to how if an individual were to tread upon it, the damage to the work would recognize the destructive ways in which women’s artwork is often associated and compared to men’s work. Hemenway’s transformation of function, intention, and perception reflect the ability to redefine and traverse spaces, creating pliant maneuvers through the confines of stringent political systems, gender structures, and built environments.

Andy Davis’ work dissolves boundaries between humans and their environments and is the result of quiet findings and attentive time spent with natural materials. The process of making and looking is one of pleasure and intensive slowness, fueled by the invitation to lose oneself in abstract landscapes.

1. Sharmistha Ray, “A Trailblazing Lesbian Artist Gets Her Due,” *Hyperallergic*, June 29, 2019.

2. Holland Cotter, “Harmony Hammond’s Art Is Bold and Prickly as Ever,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2019.

Annunciations rewards close-looking and imagination. Made in the pandemic, Davis' series of small 5 x 7 in. works define a shift back to painting and a reintroduction to green space in his vernacular environment. Spending time outside becoming familiar with local parks and green spaces in Philadelphia, Davis began to collect rocks and local plants to process into painting materials. Davis ground rocks and foraged and filtered pigments through an intensely slow process to make paints and brushes. Like Hemenway's examination of essentials, Davis' close attention to the key attributes of a painting extends hyper-familiarity with materials. Working in an improvisational mode of painting, each mark and shape responds to the previous one, allowing the forms to direct their own next steps. Multiple paintings are in process at one time and he moves fluidly between them adding the next mark and building until familiar shapes appear. Referencing the imaginative creatures in the margins of medieval books, Davis' forms morph from birds to tigers to floras and fields as they enter ambiguous moments sweeping and swirling across the paper. The paintings mark the passage of time in the pandemic as an outlet for emotions for the artist. On a table in the exhibition, visitors are encouraged to rest and enjoy the imaginative processes of getting lost in the paintings by picking up and spending time looking closely at the works on view.

J Noland, known for structuring meaningful engagements in exhibition spaces, creates opportunities for shared experiences. During the pandemic, questions of how to create relational experiences without physically gathering provided an opportunity to turn inward. The artist's meditative practices and experimentation with psychedelics provided experiences of intense self-dissolution and reflection.

A found image of a Phoenician anchor in Noland's home acts as a constant each passing day. The Phoenicians occupied the coast of the Levant and thrived as maritime traders in the eastern Mediterranean. Ripped from an old *National Geographic*, the image of an anchor resting in the overgrown grass against the remains of built structures. The addition of yellow to the image comes from a long immersion with the color after spending 2018 surrounded by yellow in an attempt to balance the Manipura chakra at the core of the body. The anchor plays on the double meaning of "grounding," providing a familiar image of safety and security through the wait/weight of uncertainty. Thanks to his residency at Island Farm Press, Noland gifts a series of limited edition prints for visitors to take home and live with. Installed mirroring one another, resembling an image reflected in water, the images greet visitors upon their entry and provide a designated place to let things go and be present. Like Davis' *Annunciations*, Noland's work invites connection and shared emotional experience between maker and viewer through vague but familiar forms. The tokens of generosity are invitations to encourage time for oneself and self-exploration, now and post-pandemic.

Dried flowers collected and arranged by Noland are set at various points in the exhibition. A bouquet hangs next to two images of an misidentified temple from antiquity, with a cross erased. Noland also arranges three cyanotype mats, like islands spanning across the exhibition, to create constellations of devotional objects. Each mat is self-contained, assembled with objects Noland uses in his own meditation practice. A handmade meditation candle is lit in the exhibition space during visitor hours, referencing light and sun, and stands within a fossilized oyster shell invoking connections to the sea and calmness. Beside it, the sacred materiality of the Pacific ocean fills a plastic water bottle. The flexibility and maneuverability creating comfort speak to Hemenway's exploration of assumed stability. The ad-hoc relationships between traditional and available push and pull on meditation as an activity structured by instruction, but one that is available and accessible through innovation and improvisations.

ACRE is like an oasis. A place to be present, a place for self-reflection, growth, and connection. A place to be yourself. Thanks to the health professionals, scientists, and frontline workers for your continued commitment and courage during the pandemic.

This exhibition is held on the traditional lands of the Three Fires Confederacy: Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi, and in an exhibition focused on moments of stability and security, we acknowledge colonial displacement and pay respect to Indigenous peoples past, present, and future.

— Rachel McDermott
Quarantined with a small dog Jet in Savannah, GA