

## ***Among and Between***

### **Juror's Essay by Kylie Linh Hoang**

Artists have a unique ability to visualize, translate, and inspire. Yielding their talent and dedication, they offer creative interpretations that encapsulate the intangible and humanize the historic record. While I strongly believe that art is always political, a call for art from Minnesotans in this particular moment must reckon with the historic and ongoing injustices that loom over our lives.

All of the selected artworks in this show are asking and responding to big questions. Broaching topics related to environment, mythology, identity, and memory, this installation is loosely grouped by theme but also acknowledges that these concepts transcend singular categorizations. Memory and identity, for example, can be considered on their own but are often intimately intertwined and inform each other; an encompassing understanding of who we are now must take into account where we have been. Other thematic elements of *Among and Between* are similarly complementary or curiously discordant. To be among something suggests congruity and likeness, but to be between is to understand contrast. The artworks in this show occupy all of the space among and between thematic categories, and they embrace the complexity and nuance of existing as both a part of something together and as wholly unique objects individually.

Acknowledging the imperfection of this organizational system, I am offering three entry points into this selection of artworks and the questions they arose within me.

### **Landscape/Landfill**

The relationship between land, resource, and exploitation was considered through multiple lenses in the artworks submitted. As exhibiting artist Braedon Baston eloquently, precisely, summarizes, many artists are grappling with the question of “who will be there when there is nothing left?” The interplay of familiar landscapes with those of lived realities far from the Twin Cities is a seismic shock to the cognitive dissonance that we experience in America. How can the quiet streets of the Twin Cities co-exist with the monumental piles of our waste that get shipped to developing countries? Where do the things we throw away actually go? How do we reckon with the consequences of our own overconsumption and reliance on capitalism?

## **Time and space**

Past, present, and future swirl in this section thinking about the cyclical nature of time and humanity's seemingly constant quest for meaning. A Filipino creation story, an ancient Mayan sacred grandmother, art historical references to "memento mori," and the abstracted interior of a contemporary catholic church create connections between different eras and cultures. Artists in this section use historic processes and reference ancient wisdom in artworks that resonate with the constant struggle toward realization in a highly secular age. Ecclesiastical contradictions and uncertainties about purpose, justice, and origin prompt the question of what it's all really for.

## **American dreaming**

Since the term was coined in the 1930s, the "American dream," has largely been defined by a belief in social mobility and economic freedom. This idea, one of an idealized American meritocracy built on respectability politics, has never been totally accurate. The American dream is heavily reliant on an investment in capitalist systems and refuses to acknowledge the inherent inequity within them. What happens to the American dream, then, when Americans are desperately pleading for things that are much more difficult to define and obtain than a healthy bank account? Where do safety, belonging, and understanding fit into the American dream? Are they central or antithetical? Responding to American imperialism, both at home and abroad, artists in this section offer critical and empathetic perspectives on immigration, war-mongering, and heritage.

## **Among, between, and beyond**

These entry points are by no means definitive. Each individual artwork in this exhibition could spark a dozen conversations by itself, with little need for curatorial intervention. Rather, I hope these thematic groupings can serve as jumping off points for consideration and expansion. Open Loop 2026 celebrates all of the connection points and chafing edges of our shared creative consciousnesses. Among similarities, between differences, and beyond.