

Journeys

DU Alumni

Artists

1987-2025

the DAVIS
gallery

January 22 - February 22, 2026

Journeys

Journeys brings together DU alumni artists who studied with and alongside painting professor Deborah Howard in honor of her retirement this year. She holds that her most meaningful artwork has come from teaching and collaborating with students, learning as much from them as they do from her. Like Deborah, these artists work across a range of media and styles. Their expressive and creative works engage with memory, the self, and the senses. This exhibition foregrounds the creative exchange that is at the heart of DU's School of Art and honors the generations of artists and teachers who have courageously pursued art at the college level and beyond.

Featured Artists

Patricia Aaron
Emma Beech
Alex Blom
Mark Brasuell
Justin Bravo
David Clark
Conor Dowdle
Faith Williams Dyrsten
Mark Elder
Austin Zucchini Fowler
Sarah Fukami
Grow Love
Amy C. Guadagnoli
Lindsay Smith Gustave
Cassandra Lillard
Wangui Maina
Laurel McMechan
LoriAnne McPherson
Mo Nguyen
Kathryn Oberdorfer
Morgan Price
Barth Quenzer
Julia Rymer
Lillian Schaffer
Naomi Scheck
Bailey Silva
Vero Silva

Patricia Aaron

Le Ciel

Wax, pigments, and mixed media

Patricia Aaron is an internationally recognized artist celebrated for her intuitive abstract style and dynamic mark-making techniques. She works with encaustic and mixed media on custom birch panels, linen canvas, and archival papers. Her extensive portfolio includes sculptural bronze works as well as hand-and-machine-sewn textiles. With over 45 solo exhibitions and numerous invitational shows, Aaron's work explores the intersection of the natural world and urban culture, often infused with compelling narratives. Her art is held in the permanent collections of institutions such as the Denver Art Museum | Kirkland Institute of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver, CO; Hafnarborg Museum of Culture and Art in Iceland, Nicolaysen Art Museum, Museum of Outdoor Arts and also including the Corporate Collections of Delta Airlines, Denver University Art Collections, Sun City Tower Kobe, Japan, Hogan Lovells, and Liberty Global. Aaron earned her MFA from the University of Denver and studied internationally in London, Paris, and Germany.

“Deborah exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding art professor. She always made time for critical critique and thoughtful suggestions and encouragement of how to push my work into new places. I am full of gratitude for her leadership and positive spirit.”

~Patricia Aaron

Emma Beech

Untitled (Blue)

Resin, pigments, acrylic paint

I create handmade resin sculptures that flow from memory and place, rooted in California's coastline and Colorado's mountain lakes, rivers, and reservoirs. Each piece captures the stillness and movement of water in all its forms, shaped by light and flow. Through the shifting color and depth of each piece, I aim to capture the feeling of belonging, movement, and stillness combined.

"Painting was my foundation, but Deborah taught me the most valuable lesson of all when it comes to making art: to stay curious."

~ Emma Beech

Alex Blom

monotype I and II (2025)

Oil based trace monotype on mulberry paper

Each 9 x 12 in.

self portrait (stain) (2025)

Hydrocal and fiber reactive dye

Dimensions variable

cole - march 12, 2025 (2025)

Cast wax

12 x 15 x 2.5 in.

Most recently, I've grown enamored by codes of intimacy as the impetus of my practice is shifting from an internally driven eroticism towards personhood reflected in others and the environments I inhabit. Articulated by creating molds and casts from lovers' underwear and using towels, bedsheets, and socks as both substrate and subject for my developing work, I'm interested in examining how ecstatic states from fleeting experiences can be preserved as relics. The process and resulting work capture the physical and emotional residue of intimacy – stains, imprints, signs of wear and care – while creating an elegy for the moments lost to time.

Mark Brasuell

Austrichten (Line Up)

Charcoal and pastel on paper

Mark Brasuell is a Denver-based abstract and figurative painter whose work explores the boundaries between emotion, memory, and the subconscious. For over four decades, he has been a central figure in Colorado's contemporary art scene as a founding member of EDGE Gallery, shaping its legacy of experimental and community-driven exhibitions. His vivid canvases—ranging from gestural abstraction to psychologically charged figuration—embody an ongoing dialogue between chaos and control, beauty and vulnerability. Brasuell's work has been exhibited widely across Colorado and beyond, reflecting his deep commitment to artistic risk, intuition, and authenticity.

“Deborah’s work was precise yet alive with mark-making and intention, which inspired me to loosen my own style and move toward abstraction.”

~Mark Brasuell

Justin Bravo

The Whole World Is Watching (2025)

Watercolor, acrylic, and polyurethane tarp

My name is Justin Bravo. I am an artist from western Nebraska, now based in Denver, Colorado. I create collage-based paintings that incorporate vivid colors, layers, and symbols. Through portraits, drawings, and figurative work, my practice is about inspiring dialogue around personal, cultural, and sociopolitical moments and developments.

David Clark

Light Manager (2025)

Oil on Wood

In a very dark age, a maker may reveal in her work an urgent quest for that which embodies light.

Conor Dowdle

Formicarium (2025)

Oil on canvas

16 x 20 in.

A Wilderness of Mirrors (2024)

Oil on canvas

24 x 20 in.

Lucky Pierre (2025)

Oil on canvas

22 x 14 in.

Fool's Gold (2021)

Acrylic paint, graphite, pastel, pencil on wood panel

Conor Dowdle is a visual artist living and working in New York City. His painting practice is rooted in observational drawing and centers on scenes drawn from both urban and rural environments. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a BFA from the University of Denver. His work has been exhibited in New York, Los Angeles, London, and other cities across the United States.

“The University of Denver has been a warmer, more inspiring, and more enriching place because of Deborah.”

~Conor Dowdle

Faith Williams Dyrsten

Delicate Cuts Series (Apple with Red Mason Bee)

TetraPak drypoint print, oil-based ink on BFK paper

Born and raised in Colorado, Faith Williams Dyrsten works as a public high school art educator in Aurora. Her art process is a curiosity-driven approach to human connection and how we use art as a tool for community engagement. Faith received a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master's of Education in 2012 from the University of Denver. Her artworks have been exhibited locally at Edge Gallery, CVA Gallery, and the Arvada Center – and nationally at Brown University and the National Museum of Wildlife Art. Her works are held in the collections at the Kirkland Museum and St. Joseph Hospital. She works in collaboration with non-profit organizations and scientists such as Endangered Species Coalition, Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, Xerces Society, Creature Conserve, and Wild Ones. She created the official illustration for the “Native Pollinating Insect Health Study,” a report commissioned by the Colorado Legislature in 2024.

“Deborah taught me a real and genuine love for drawing – and drawing for its own sake, not as a tool for another medium.”

~Faith Williams Dyrsten

Mark Elder

The Seven Days of Creation (1993)

Acrylic on wood

30 x 45 in.

The Third Day of Creation (1993)

Acrylic on wood

I was hiking in the mountains of Colorado in the summer of 1993, not far from Mt. Evans. It was here that I came across a Douglas fir tree. I happened to look up its trunk and had an epiphany as to the limbs of this particular tree. On this particular tree, I noticed that the limbs were like steps on a spiraled staircase. Not architecturally perfect, but, nonetheless, one limb was just a bit higher than the one previous to it. The sight of it made me think how universal the form of the spiral is in all creation.

It dawned on me then that I should paint as a theme *The Seven Days of Creation*, with the form of the spiral as the Hand of God. I also decided to use as reference, M.C. Escher's spiraled body parts as a point of discussion. Not only did I use Escher references with the body ribbons, but also with the evolving birds and fish ribbon on the 4th panel. Doing this and making references to the seven days as individual panels would allow the viewer to make connections to the various verses of Genesis concerning the particular days.

Even the frame, made by my good friend George Billings, has something to say about the Creation. As a theologian, George said that the form of the octagonal represents the Resurrection of Christ, the eighth day of creation. George made this frame with that symbolism in mind. The frame itself is made as a reliquary. A reliquary for sacred images. Which is why these images are painted on wood.

Austin Zucchini Fowler

Rise

Acrylic on wood

Austin is a Denver muralist aiming to spread gratitude across Denver. His current public work aims to spread gratitude across Colorado by highlighting different professions and people. He works in a unique pointillism style, mixing in spray paint and acrylic brush work. His themed “Walls of Gratitude” is an ongoing body of work that has only developed from generous support from the community.

“I have thought of Deborah often during my path as an artist post-college. I always appreciated her belief in me and her ability to challenge me without discouraging me when I was a student.”

~ Austin Fowler

Sarah Fukami

09657A (Hirosawa Frank) II (2017)

Photo plate lithography, screen printing,
and laser cutting on paper

Sarah Fukami was born and works in Denver, Colorado, and received her BFA with distinction from the University of Denver in 2014. She has completed residencies at RedLine and PlatteForum and collaborated with the Denver Art Museum and The Children’s Museum. She has and continues to participate in exhibitions locally and nationally. Her artwork focuses on identity, particularly in relation to the immigrant experience. Her Japanese family was interned during WWII, and her art is ultimately rooted in social justice.

“I greatly appreciate all I learned from Deborah as a teacher and friend; I do not think I would be the artist I am without her influence and care.”

~ Sarah Fukami

Grow Love

Flowers of Film (2025)

Spray paint mural at Alamo Draft House, Aspen Grove Market, Littleton, CO. 30 x 55 x 1 ft.

We Don't Waste Food (2024)

Spray paint mural in Denver, CO. 15 x 30 x 0.3 ft.

Garland of Hope (2023)

Spray paint mural for the Boulder Community, Boulder, CO Street Wise Mural Festival. 20 x 30 x 0.2 ft.

City of Wheat Ridge Public Arts Grant Mural (2023)

Spray paint mural. 28 x 40 x 0.2 ft.

Robyn Frances, professionally known as Grow Love, is a Denver-based artist recognized for their dynamic contributions to the street art movement and unwavering commitment to uplifting female and non-binary voices in the field. Through mentorship, spray paint education, and mural installation training, they actively cultivate space for underrepresented artists.

A graduate of the University of Denver (2007), Grow Love initially focused on studio arts before immersing herself in aerosol-based work in 2017, exploring both urban walls and canvas. In 2019, they co-founded Babe Walls, a nonprofit mural festival dedicated to promoting female and non-binary artists. Since its inception, the festival has grown into a national platform, with events held in cities including Atlanta and on the lands of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

Between 2023 and 2025, Grow Love has balanced large-scale public art commissions with a prolific studio practice. Their versatility across mediums continues to draw interest from public art programs and private collectors alike.

“Deborah’s grounded dedication to her own practice helped me build confidence in mine. Giving me the freedom to take risks, develop my voice, and trust my instincts.”

~Grow Love

Amy C. Guadagnoli

Tethered/Untethered (2021)

Woodblock print

Colorado native printmaker Amy C. Guadagnoli has spent the past 25 years living and working in the communities of Austin, Texas, Bangor, Maine, and just outside of Washington, D.C., in Silver Spring, Maryland. Throughout these diverse landscapes and climates, she's created colorful, abstract woodblock prints depicting images transformed from her surroundings and her subconscious—landscapes of the mind that at once reflect and obscure where she has been and what she has seen. Guadagnoli carves reductively into multiple blocks entirely by hand, and prints using a wooden spoon instead of a press, slowly building up her images with layers of colored ink. Through this process, Guadagnoli uses her artwork to investigate perception—specifically how we see, name, and construct narratives from visual stimuli, experiences, and memories.

Lindsay Smith Gustave

Offering (How to explain the feminine to a dead hare) (2022)

Chiffon, velvet, glass beads, thread, plaster, map pins

72 x 36 in.

Lindsay Smith Gustave lives and works in Greenville, SC. A multidisciplinary artist, she frequently utilizes objects found or inherited from family—beads, vessels, and figurines—and explores connections with those common objects to preserve relationships with family and depict the intergenerational lineage of inherited traits like trauma, mental illness, beliefs in social institutions, cultural constructs, and norms.

Cassandra Lillard

Number Ninety (2021)

Acrylic on canvas

Cassandra Lillard is a Colorado native who lives and works in Denver. She graduated from the University of Denver in 2005 with a BFA degree. Her hard-edge, abstract, geometric paintings titled the 'Number Series' aim to display unusual color combinations and successful compositions, while also exploring emotions regarding people and places. The paintings are titled in the order in which they were created. She has endeavored to be different from other hard-edge painters, thereby making contributions to this genre.

Wangui Maina

The Goddess (2012)

Stone lithograph and relief on Kozo paper

Wangui Maina combines her formal training as a printmaker with elements of drawing, installation, and performance, creating dualities that question ideas of perception and understanding. Her work references practices of adornment from the African diaspora that are time-consuming and laborious, but result in unique forms of fantastical beauty. Wangui explores the symbolism, both positive and negative, that shape ideas of Black identity through these cultural signifiers and the ways in which symbols morph and transform subjectively depending on the cultural context. Achieving these decadent adornments can often alter not only the way the wearer is perceived in society, but also how the person navigates physically through daily life. Her fantastical renderings of afro-textured hair become disembodied, erasing the person and transforming into their own living creatures, like a specimen inside a petri dish.

Wangui received her BFA from the University of Denver and her MFA in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work has been exhibited in numerous spaces across the U.S., including the International Print Center and Christie's, New York, Find & Form Space, Boston, RISD Museum, Providence, the Newport Museum of Art, and Frankling Street Works in Stamford, CT. In 2017, Wangui was invited as a visiting artist and guest lecturer at Hamline University, St. Paul, which also hosted her solo exhibition, *Embodiment*. Currently, she lives and works in Denver, CO, returning to her foundation in printmaking while teaching at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design.

Laurel McMechan

Heirloom (2025)

Oil, acrylic, organza, and U.S. Army uniform

Laurel McMechan's work is inspired by the warp and weft of memory and the present. Paint squeezed through woven netting is a metaphor for the way memory and experiences fuse together. The combination of fabric, ribbon, thread, and paint creates a patchwork of pattern, texture, and personal symbolism. Laurel's work has been exhibited nationally. She is a member of Spark Gallery in Denver and currently teaches at the University of Denver.

“Deborah continues to inspire me with her tenacity, creativity, and vision.”

~Laurel McMechan

LoriAnne McPherson

Clustering Sea Horse Eggs

Trace monotype, ink, oil paint, Prismacolor, watercolor, and litho varnish on rice paper

60 x 25 in.

Surging Jellyfish and Faltering Sea Fan

Trace monotype, ink, oil paint, natural dye, watercolor, and litho varnish on rice paper

Each 60 x 25 in.

The sights, sounds, and smells of the Ocean are awe-inspiring. Since childhood, the ocean has served as a resource for adventure, discovery, and inspiration for me. However, it was not until I migrated west for graduate work and found myself landlocked that I realized my spirit is forever tangled with the sea kelp, jellyfish, and flowing tides of the Atlantic. The collections, memories, and experiences I have had with the ocean are tied to a strong environmental ethic, which developed with the guidance of my father. When I was a precocious child, I thought the Atlantic Ocean protected me with its eternal life-sustaining beauty. My curiosity was enveloped in waters of pure discovery, and I was fearless in my exploration of this giving, selfless ocean. As an adult, I have developed respect for the ocean and its power, but now, I fear for the delicate state of survival to which the oceans and its creatures are fated. I find it agonizing to witness the destruction that the ocean endures in the face of human apathy. We are now in the situation where, 20 -40 years down the line, we will be out of fish to consume. The health of the ocean is essential to human survival, yet we are not involved enough in its preservation. It is these issues of ocean conservation that fuel my work. My goal is to create a strong dialogue that can visually communicate the negative human impact on the ocean and advocate for solutions to this global issue. My challenge lies in addressing the duality of beauty and destruction in this fragile environment using the strongest visual mode possible.

Mo Nguyen

Kind of Gravity (2025)

Intaglio print

Mo Nguyen's work lingers in the space between feeling and form. Through painting and printmaking, she translates internal experiences into tactile gestures and abstracted symbols. Her practice continues to evolve through observation and introspection, exploring how quiet moments, memory, and transformation shape the language of her work.

Kathryn Oberdorfer

NIGHTFALL (2021)

Acrylic and pastel on canvas

Kathryn Oberdorfer is an abstract artist rooted in the era of Abstract Expressionism. She is inspired by the sense of process that characterizes the works of Amy Sillman, Joan Mitchell, and Cy Twombly. Her focus is on the strategic placement of seemingly dissonant colors and linear elements. Kathryn is affiliated with Spark Gallery, where she exhibits regularly.

“I’m one of the lucky ones who studied with Deborah beginning in 1993. As I think back on those days, I realize so much of my art sensibilities were formed then.”

~ Kathryn Oberdorfer

Morgan Price

gut-shot (2025)

Hand-colored lithograph, hand-colored relief print, wood, nails, wire

20 x 8 in.

dodging bullets (2024)

Lithograph, monotype

6 x 4 in.

Morgan Price was born in rural western Colorado, where he cultivated an interest in rocks, insects, old tools, and cacti. As a young man, he forsook the countryside in search of opportunities in the big city, eventually earning a BFA from the University of Denver and an MFA in Printmaking from Wichita State University. He is currently an Associate Professor of Art at Illinois State University, as well as the acting director and master at Normal Editions- a professional collaborative fine art printmaking facility located within the Wonsook Kim School of Art at Illinois State University.

“Deborah’s humor and enthusiasm cultivated a nurturing and welcoming learning environment, while her questions and feedback challenged me to keep growing as an artist.”

~Morgan Price

Barth Quenzer

Subtle Body

Mixed media assemblage with print and light box

Barth Quenzer is a Denver-based artist, researcher, and teacher. He received his PhD from the University of Denver in 2023 and is currently teaching in Denver Public Schools in the Imaginarium, which is a learning lab for the educational imagination. Barth asks: What lies below the threshold of sense perceptivity? This question has stimulated in him a fertile ground for the study of mysticism in art and education.

Julia Rymer

Heart Map/Herzkarte #1 and #2 (2025)

Mixed media on wood panel

Working primarily in mixed media painting, my visual language, or Bildsprache, emphasizes the use of layers as a metaphor for time. The physicality of the work's creation is an uncovering – as if through archaeological techniques of digging, and carefully finding, analyzing – transforming the hidden into the revealed – and the meaningless into the meaningful. Randomness and choice play equal roles, much like the process of survival over the eras. Found materials like book and newspaper pages in German and Hebrew, topographical maps, plant-based papers, and natural objects make their way into the layers of my works, integrated with paint, fabric, thread, oil crayon, or ink. Collected during travels in the United States, Germany, and Israel, their selection is at times coincidental, a reference to my incomprehension of the language, at other times, their use is completely intentional. How one relates to the work will vary based on their understanding of the languages in each piece.

Julia is a multi-media artist and art educator. Through abstract paintings, prints, drawings, and fiber art, she evokes an emotional experience of the natural world, while investigating her relationship to time, history, nature's cycles, and Jewish practice and heritage. She holds an MFA in Painting from Pratt Institute (2004), and a BFA in Painting from the University of Denver School of Art & Art History (2000). Her 25-year art career spans numerous solo and group exhibitions and inclusion in many corporate, museum, and private collections throughout the United States. She is a faculty member at the Curtis Center for the Arts in Greenwood Village, Colorado.

“Deborah’s strength as an instructor is her ability to challenge her students to create work with both exceptional craftsmanship and a conceptual framework of depth and meaning.”

~Julia Rymer

Lilian Schaffer

Mangoes (2024)

Oil on canvas

Awareness of the self in the context of the human condition is naturally reflected through the act of painting and can be channeled into a sublime experience within a subset of the infinite. Breaking free from the constraints of hyper-realistic perfectionism to savor the experience of paint is ideal to give the conscious a rest, yielding large-scale controlled-chaotic intuitive painting regulated by visual analysis and academic knowledge.

“Deborah, thank you for being honest, kind, and invested.”

~ Lilian Schaffer

Naomi Scheck

Afterglow

Mixed media on paper

Naomi Scheck’s studio practice is influenced by her sense of awe and wonder for the natural world, and her artwork addresses themes of duality, such as growth vs decay, unpredictability vs control, and calm vs turbulence. Scheck uses mixed media processes and materials to create her abstracted surfaces. Working on a synthetic paper, she meticulously stains, paints, pokes, etches, and cuts the paper to create organic multi-dimensional forms. Due to the time-intensive nature of her practice, Scheck produces a small body of work annually. Scheck received her BFA in Studio Art from the University of Denver in 2006 and her MFA in Drawing from Colorado State University in 2013. Scheck currently lives and works in Denver, CO.

“Seeing how Deborah approached her own art practice shaped my understanding of what an art practice could be.”

~Naomi Scheck

Bailey Silva

‘Alenuihāhā Channel (Great Billows Smashing) (2020)

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 120 x 1.5 in.

Kilauea Rising (2018)

Acrylic, pastel, charcoal on paper

23 x 47 in.

Waves of Becoming (2022)

Mixed media on canvas, UV archival varnish

60 x 48 x 1.5 in.

Hawai'i-based artist Bailey Ferguson (BFA, University of Denver '08) creates gestural paintings that evoke the shifting, luminous qualities of water. Her current abstract practice, shaped by the 2018 Kīlauea eruption, uses ocean imagery to explore connection, impermanence, and a sense of fortitude. Experiences as an Artist-at-Sea resident, surfer, and volunteer in coral research deeply inform her work. In addition to her studio practice, Ferguson teaches place-based art education and works as a freelance designer. She exhibits regularly, with work held in private collections internationally.

“Deborah’s mentorship, insight, and generosity helped shape me as an artist and continue to echo through my work today.”

~Bailey Silva

Vero Silva

drained of desire (2025) and *VMH as ouroboros* (2025)

Mixed media on arches 88

Diptych, each 30 x 22 in.

How does one balance personal joy while feeling outraged at the injustices spreading globally? This diptych focuses on the simultaneous attraction and repulsion to our carnal desires while existing in an ineptly run nation.

‘drained of desire’- initially titled ‘dripping in desire’ transformed both physically and thematically as I found myself unable to stop catastrophizing when reading the news in late 2025. Similarly, ‘VMH as ouroboros’ exists as a physical record of grief, built off my concurrent and conflicting feelings which stem from our nations rising political tension.

I have no answer on how to exist properly right now; how to balance desire and disgust as I watch human rights flagrantly abused in high resolution, every day, every week. But I do know I must create, advocate, and educate.

These are the first two pieces I completed after graduation. When I was conceptually or logistically stuck on how to progress, I would reach out to Deborah, and she would always provide prompts and helpful feedback that would guide me towards where I needed to go next. Thanks to her advice, I was able to complete the diptych, and these pieces are now on display in my hometown of Santa Fe.

“Deborah has exposed me to countless opportunities and has shown me firsthand that she is always willing to help her students beyond the classroom. Deborah is more than just a professor; she is a lifelong educator and an artist whom I hope to emulate one day.”

~Vero Silva

A teal-colored organic, blob-like shape that serves as a background for the gallery's name.

the **DAVIS**
gallery

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