

VLM



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Filmmaker, Sculptor and Facilitator

www.virginialeemontgomery.com

virginialeemontgomery@gmail.com

VLM (b. Houston, TX, USA) is a metaphysical multimedia artist, working between Texas and New York, primarily in video, performance, sound, and sculpture. She received her BFA in Studio Art from The University of Texas at Austin in 2008 and her MFA in Sculpture from Yale University in 2016. VLM interrogates the complex relationship between physical and psychic structures. Her artwork deploys an idiosyncratic visual vocabulary of symbols—like circles, holes, and spheres and recursive gestures like drilling, dowsing, and reaching—to illuminate the mind's inexorable link to matter. Her work is paradoxically cryptic and literal, conceptual and hand-built, digital and physical. It shifts in subject matter—from ponytails to particle accelerators, to syrups, stones, moths, and machines—as VLM interweaves elements from feminism, panpsychism, and surrealism. Her artwork is also latently autobiographical. It is influenced by her career as a professional Graphic Facilitator, a job for which she travels the country to diagram the development of ideas at TED Talk events for clients. In her work as a fine artist, VLM turns this skillset of “mind map scribing” inwards to render the contours of her subconscious and the logic of her own dreams and memories. Collectively, VLM's symbols, forms, and gestures rupture material surfaces, opening portals into unknown psychic ends...

Selected Exhibitions

- "Sky Loop," Lawndale Art Center, TX (2020)
- "Screens Series: VLM," New Museum, NY (2019)
- "Honey Moon," Midnight Moment, Times Square Arts, NY (2019)
- "Pony Cocoon," False Flag, NY (2019)
- "Socrates Annual," Socrates Sculpture Park, NY (2018)
- "Crash Test," La Panacée-MoCo, Montpellier, France (2018)
- "An unbound knot in the wind," CCS, Hessel Museum, NY (2018)
- "Open Mind," Crush Curatorial with Hesse Flatow, NY (2018)
- "Material Deviance," SculptureCenter, NY (2017)
- "Particle Accelerator Memorial," Yale University, CT (2016)
- "Things you can't unthink," Banff Centre, Banff, Canada (2016)

Awards / Residencies

- University of Texas's Material Research Lab, TX (2019-2021)
- Crit Group, The Contemporary Austin, TX (2018-2019)
- Socrates Sculpture Park, NY (2018-2019)
- The Carving Studio and Sculpture Center, VT (2018)
- Socrates Fellowship, Socrates Sculpture Park (2018)
- Susan H. Wedon Award, Yale University (2016)
- Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship, Yale University (2016)
- Wright Laboratory at Yale Physics, CT (2015-2018)
- Vermont Studio Center, VT (2015)
- The Shandaken Project at Storm King, NY (2014)

Gallery Representation

Karen Hesse Flatow
Director, HESSE FLATOW

HESSE FLATOW
508 W. 26th Street, #5G
New York, NY, 10001
+1 (917) 881 – 5631

www.hesseflatow.com

karen@hesseflatow.com

Business Witch is what I call her, but she is me. I'm VLM, Virginia Lee Montgomery, a video artist, sound artist, sculptor, and professional mind-map scribe. Business Witch is my name for the mysterious working-woman-persona I portray in my artwork: a ponytailed problem-solver who walks between worlds. She is based upon my own very real experiences working for the past 10 years as a Graphic Facilitator—a career for which I travel North America to diagram ideas at conferences like TED Talks. In my work as a fine artist, I turn my skillset of “mind map scribing” inwards to render my own dreams. The output is art: a psychic terrain of revolving drills, digital glitches, prodding digits, and dripping liquids which together congeal, and reveal, a portal into the symbolic unknown.

As an artist, I map the boundary between thing and theory. To answer this metaphysical question, I cast an array of non-human collaborators in my artwork from ponytails to pastries, syrups, stones, moths, and machines. Next, I expand my query. I set my camera to document our unexpected choreographies and encourage new perspectives on empathy. My most recent video artworks interweave themes of psychology, entomology, and awakening. (In this particularly chaotic cultural era, it brings me great happiness to raise, film, and release native moths and butterflies in the name of video art!) This choice is intentional. Butterflies are symbols of rebirth and moths are symbols of dreams. In my artwork, all protagonists—moth, human, or machine—use their bodies as apparatuses for agency. Even the power tools I film assume a yonic quest as each bores a hole into filmic space. In my art, a core symbolic vocabulary of circles, spheres, and holes circulate. This is also intentional. Philosophically, I believe that every hole is a portal for something hopeful to appear.

In the studio, the ethics behind how an artwork is made is just as important to me as the final artwork itself. It is important to me that every aspect of my own artwork—from conceptual planning to physical production—is by my own hand. This includes every step in the creation of a stone sculpture—cutting, carving, polishing, or the crafting of a video artwork—storyboarding, directing, filming, editing, sound recording, and scoring. I believe one's own labor is what imbues a heartfelt aura within an artwork. My artwork is characterized by an active ethos of empathy, witchy energy, and a feminist impulse to blur, bend, and ask, “What is reality and can I penetrate it with a Dewalt drill?” Whether it's raising luna moths, traveling on business trips with a 3ft ponytail stashed in my suitcase, recording rainstorms, filming fingers, or carving marble ponytails—my movements reveal the surreal working relationship between physical and psychic structures.



SKY LOOP, Installation view, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX, USA. Photographs by Nash Baker, 2020

VLM: SKY LOOP

Solo Exhibition
Lawndale Art Center
Houston, TX, USA
Jan 18 – August 8, 2020

Exhibition Essay

The Butterfly Effect, Wendy Vogel

Works

Butterfly Birth Bed, Video
Honey Healing Hurricanes, Video
Sky Loop, Video
Sky Eye, Video
Mom's Canoe, Sculpture
Head Stone, Sculpture

Video Links

[BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED](#)

[SKY LOOP](#)

SKY LOOP is a video and sculpture installation inspired by the butterfly effect theory and VLM's own firsthand experience weathering Houston's epic natural disaster, Hurricane Harvey. The storm devastated the city of Houston in the summer of 2018. *SKY LOOP* presents VLM's psychic intervention to meditate the echo of Harvey's environmental and emotional impact. In the *SKY LOOP* exhibition, a peaceful soundscape cocoons viewers. Audiences are also invited to touch and sit upon two sensory sculptures: a plush memory foam mattress containing a large whirlpool stone and her family's vintage aluminum canoe filled soft bayou sand. The four films on display in *SKY LOOP* present a metaphysical analysis of Hurricane Harvey as told through Houston-specific symbols. Circulating imagery of eyes, holes, and swirling storms dominate her screens. To create the videos, VLM utilizes a combination of media sources and experimental techniques. Her videos include montages of archival NASA imagery, storm footage shot as she canoed Harvey's storm-waters with her mother, and visuals VLM captured as she raised native Texas butterflies for her symbolic film *BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED*. Collectively *SKY LOOP*'s gestures, textures, and sounds embody the ethos of the butterfly effect—the idea that any small change in our environment, even the gentle flapping of a butterfly's wings, can one day generate big change. VLM's vision conjures an elemental force for climatic change, hope, and healing.



VLM: SKY LOOP
Lawndale Art Center
Houston, TX, USA
Jan 18 – August 8, 2020

Media Link
[Exhibition Brochure](#)

The Butterfly Effect by Wendy Vogel

"You could not remove a single grain of sand from its place without thereby ... changing something throughout all parts of the immeasurable whole," wrote Johann Gottlieb Fichte in *The Vocation of Man* (1799). With this proclamation, the German idealist philosopher anticipated the butterfly effect by over 150 years. Put simply, the butterfly effect—a fundamental concept of chaos theory—explains how small changes can have big consequences. The meteorologist Edward Lorenz first observed in the early 1960s that natural microphenomena could cause catastrophic events, such as major weather systems. It may be hard to believe from today's environmentally-conscious perspective, but Lorenz's research went underrecognized for over a decade. A professor at MIT, he presented his findings to students with the understated metaphor of a seagull influencing a rainstorm. In 1972, the path to mainstream credibility followed after he presented a paper poetically titled, "Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?" Faced with the catastrophic reality of climate change, the butterfly effect surfaces again as an urgent metaphor for our times. Houston native Virginia Lee Montgomery (VLM) draws from the evocative imagery of these theories, building a richly symbolic language in sculpture, video, and performance art. In her practice, she postulates a feminist metaphysical approach to questions of consciousness and the natural world. VLM challenges patriarchal narratives about nature and technology that exclude female contributions, including spiritual practices, enacting a humorous modern-day sorcerer character called the Business Witch. *SKY LOOP*, her solo exhibition at Lawndale, focuses on the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey and how a society might heal itself in its aftermath.

In August 2017, the artist witnessed the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Harvey firsthand from her childhood home in Houston. Four large-scale projected videos in *SKY LOOP* draw from VLM's experience of the Category 4 storm. All videos created in 2020, *SKY LOOP* links the phenomenon of cascading sand, the eye of the hurricane, and fantastical powers of divination and healing as they might manifest through generations of women. The film begins with the artist drilling through a map of the hurricane's eye, then swirling a pile of sand on a beach. At intervals throughout the video, sand flows through the hands of three female relatives—VLM, her mother Mary Hunnell Smith, and grandmother Lee Adcock Hunnell—who the artist equates to the mythological Fates. In a later sequence, Texas honey—long recognized for its curative properties—drips over footage of the raging hurricane captured by the artist and organizations like NASA. In one stirring clip, the artist and her mother navigate central Houston's Buffalo Bayou in her grandmother's canoe. VLM utilizes fast cuts and reversals, making it appear as though her whirling storm and human gestures were a science fiction narrative; she understands, however, that news programs also deploy montage effects to dramatize stories like meteorological crises.

The surrealist-tinged video *BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED* depicts butterfly species native to Texas—the black swallow tail, the buckeye, and the painted lady—that VLM raised to hatch on the rails of a miniature Shaker bed. The eye of the Hurricane is projected where a body would lay. Shaker furniture has become an iconic American style, though its religious origins speak to proto-feminist subversion. Mother Ann Lee founded the religious Shaker sect in the late 1700s on the principles of celibacy and equal education for all genders. Considered Christ's female equivalent by her followers, Lee elaborated a theory that saw oppression of men through labor and the pain of childbirth as a result of the Fall. In VLM's moving-image work, we might envision an association between the butterflies' 'eyespot'—illusory markings that often detract predators from the insects' vulnerable bodies—and the hurricane's deceptively calm eye. Like the video work on view, the sculpture *Head Stone* (2016) at the center of the gallery reimagines the interaction between humans and inorganic matter. The artist invites viewers to recline on a stack of five memory foam mattresses, which also holds a found whirlpool stone. VLM considers it another healing gesture to give the rock—an ancient piece of compressed earth—a place to rest. This stone, after all, has witnessed centuries of upheaval. And as Fichte would tell us, one morsel of dirt can change the course of history."

VLM

Sky Loop

Installation views, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX. Photos by Nash Baker, 2020



VLM

Sky Loop

BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED



Video link

[BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED](#)

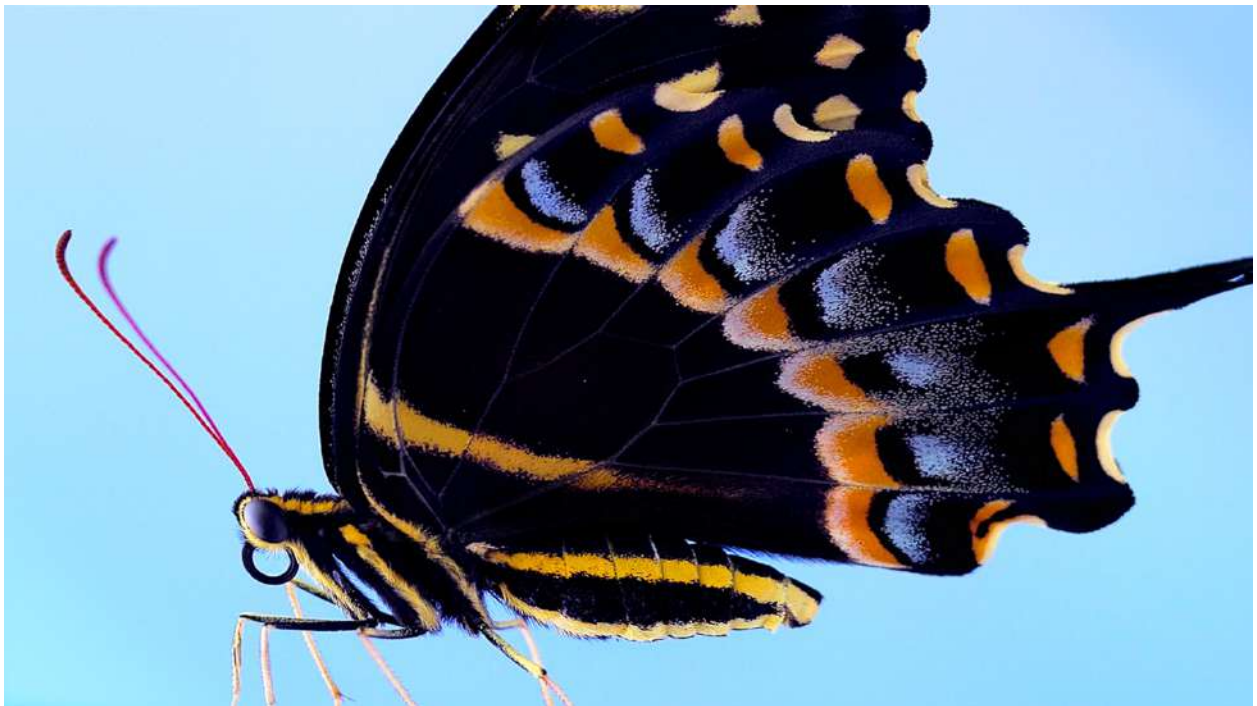
4k Digital Video, 5:35, 2020

BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED is a metaphysical video about regeneration. Inspired by 'The Butterfly Effect' theory, the film presents a surreal incantation of hope as live butterflies emerge from their chrysalises over a model Shaker doll-bed containing an image of a sleeping hurricane.

VLM

Sky Loop

BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED



Video link
[BUTTERFLY BIRTH BED](#)
4k Digital Video, 5:35, 2020

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**Video**[SKY LOOP](#)

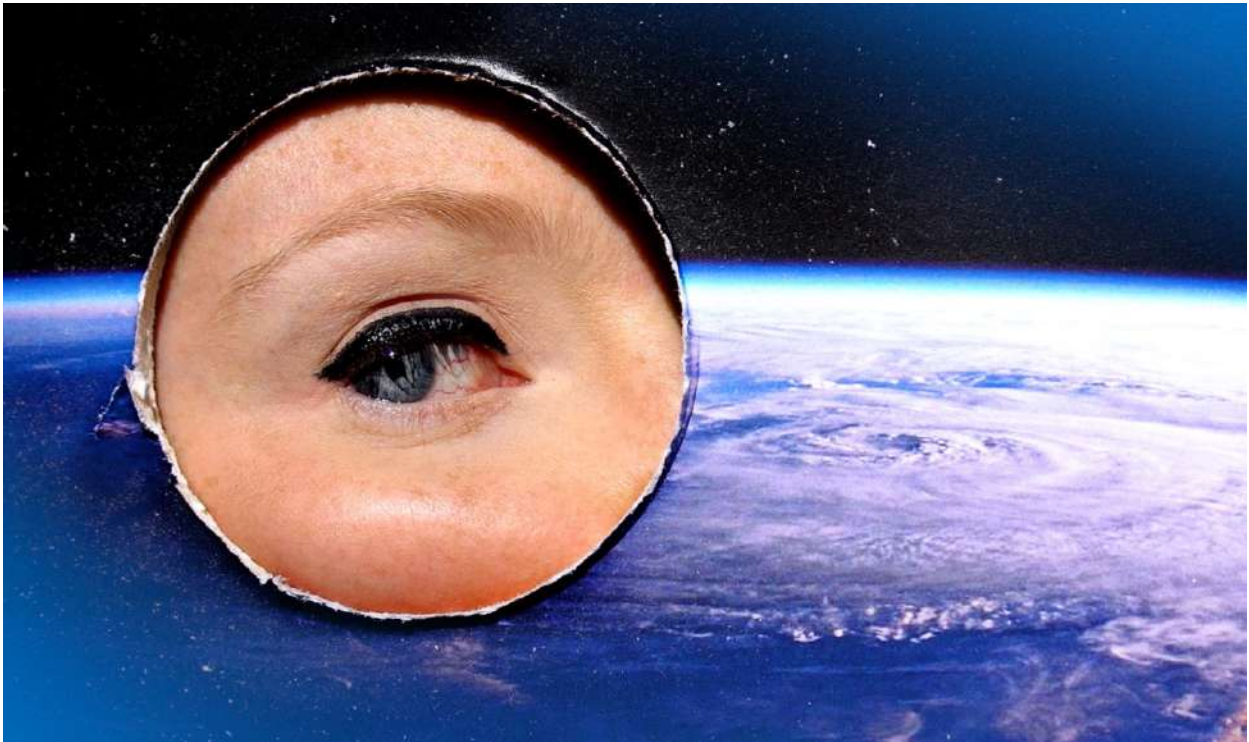
4k Digital Video, 9:35, 2020

SKY LOOP is a dream-logica video about hope, healing, and recovery. The work is a metaphysical analysis of Hurricane Harvey through a subconscious language of Houston-specific symbols. To create *Sky Loop*, VLM montages archival NASA imagery, footage as she weathered the storm, and footage shot in her own studio. Collectively, these surreal elements ask, "What sees the eye of the hurricane?"

VLM

Sky Loop

SKY LOOP



Video

[SKY LOOP](#)

4k Digital Video, 9:35, 2020

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Video
[SKY LOOP](#)
4k Digital Video, 9:35, 2020

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VLM

Sky Loop

HEAD STONE



Top photo by photographer Adam Pape, 2016. Bottom photo by photographer Nash Baker, 2020

Sculpture

HEAD STONE

Sculpture, Memory foam and stone, 72" x 84" x 33", 2016

HEAD STONE is a stone-on-foam sculpture that offers anybody—stone or human—a soft place to rest. While memory foam remembers nothing but itself (its selfishness is its value), a stone never forgets. *HEAD STONE* is touchable sculpture. It is comprised a rare 100lb whirlpool stone and five memory foam mattresses.



Photo by Ka-Man Tse for Times Square Arts, 2019



Honey Moon, 4k Digital Video, 2:60, 2019

HONEY MOON is a radically serene, multi-screen video installation at Times Square, New York. Times Square Arts commissioned HONEY MOON for its Midnight Moment public art program. The film screened every night at midnight from 11:58pm – 12:01am during February 2019 across 25+ jumbotron screens in Times Square. *HONEY MOON* is a serene short film about the uncanny flow of time. Coily literal, the video depicts a small moon cradled by a manicured hand as honey sensually streams from above, over the moon, and down into a dark void below. The immersive video installation conjures metaphysical contemplation. Its conceptual juxtaposition amidst the surrounding chaos of Times Square is bewitching, alluring, and calm. *HONEY MOON* is straightforward and surreal. Time Square Arts' Midnight Moment video art program is the world's largest, longest-running digital art exhibition of synchronized electronic billboards. Midnight Moment's estimated annual viewership is 2.5 million persons. *HONEY MOON* for Midnight Moment was also enabled by Socrates Sculpture Park, NY.

VLM: Honey Moon
Solo Exhibition
Times Square Arts
New York, NY, USA
Feb 1 – 28th, 2019

Video Links
[HONEY MOON Documentation](#)
4k Digital Video, 00:36, 2019
[HONEY MOON](#)
4k Digital Video, 02:60, 2019

VLM

Honey Moon

Exhibition



Honey Moon, Times Square, New York, NY, USA. Photos by Ka-Man Tse, Times Square Arts, 2019

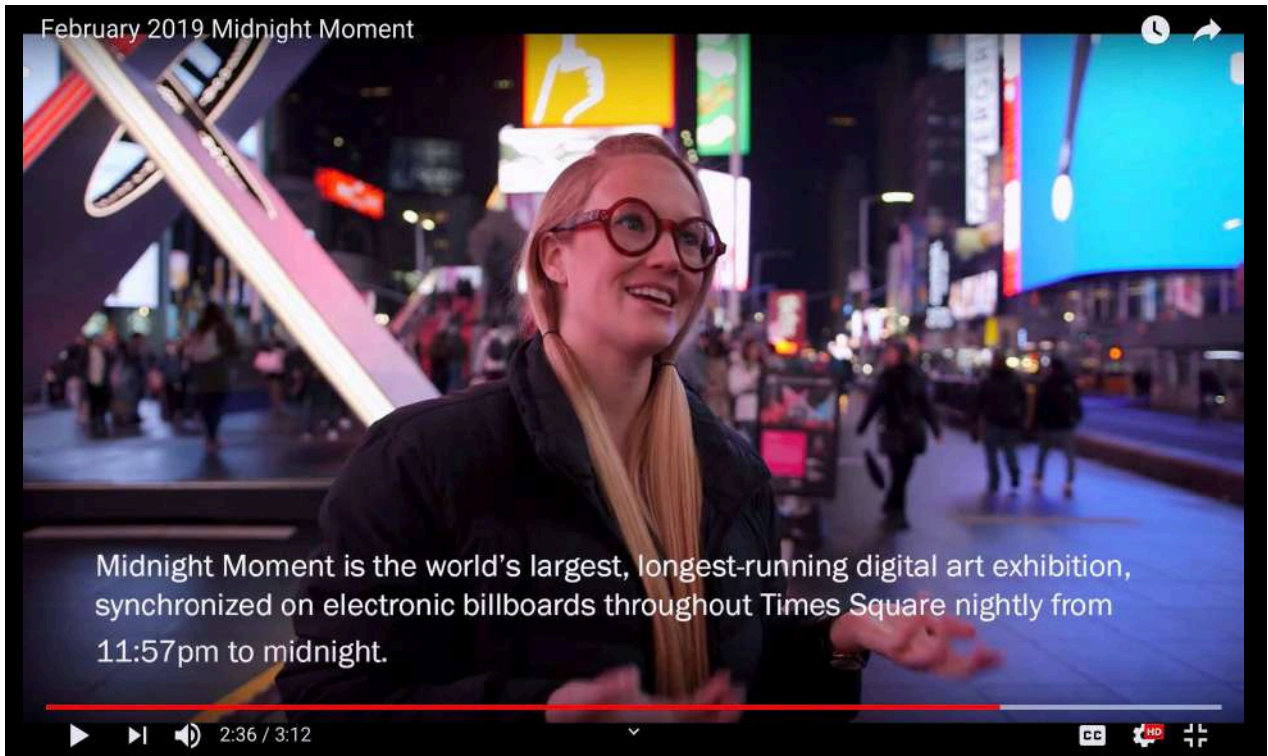
VLM

Honey Moon

Exhibition



Honey Moon, Times Square, New York, NY, USA. Photos by Ka-Man Tse, Times Square Arts, 2019



Honey Moon, 4k Digital Video, 2:60, 2019 (Top)

VLM 'Honey Moon' Midnight Moment Interview with Times Square Arts, 2019 (Bottom)

Video Interview Link [VLM For MIDNIGHT MOMENT](#)



PONY COCOON, 2019

PONY COCOON is a serene, short film depicting the cryptic birth of a luna moth from a disembodied blonde ponytail. Encapsulated in an intimate dreamworld of gesture, texture, and sound, the film interweaves themes of psychology, entomology, and awakening. In *PONY COCOON*, two doppelgängers are at work: Business Witch and the luna moth. Both protagonists use their bodies as apparatuses for mark-making to burrow out of containment. Shot in high definition macro footage in color palette of soft pastels, the dreamlike narrative of the film references the classical Greek myth of Psyche, the laboring butterfly wing goddess. Psyche is also the Greek word for 'spirit' and serves as the etymological basis for 'Psychology'. In the film's opening and closing moments, a metaphysical dynamic emerges: the video screen drips with real honey as both protagonists emerge onscreen. Symbolically, the film is also an analysis of labor. Half of the film footage in *PONY COCOON* was shot by VLM in a hotel room during a real business trip while the other half of *PONY COCOON* was shot in the artist's studio as she raised the moth in the film. The *PONY COCOON* soundscape is original and was constructed by the artist from field recordings of Texas thunderstorms, wind chimes, corporate hotel rooms, and a Dewalt drill. *PONY COCOON* is directed, edited, filmed, scored, produced, and performed by VLM.

Video Link[PONY COCOON](#)

4k Digital Video, 05:05, 2019

VLM

Pony Cocoon

Video



Video Link

[PONY COCOON](#)

4k Digital Video, 05:05, 2019

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VLM

Pony Cocoon

Video



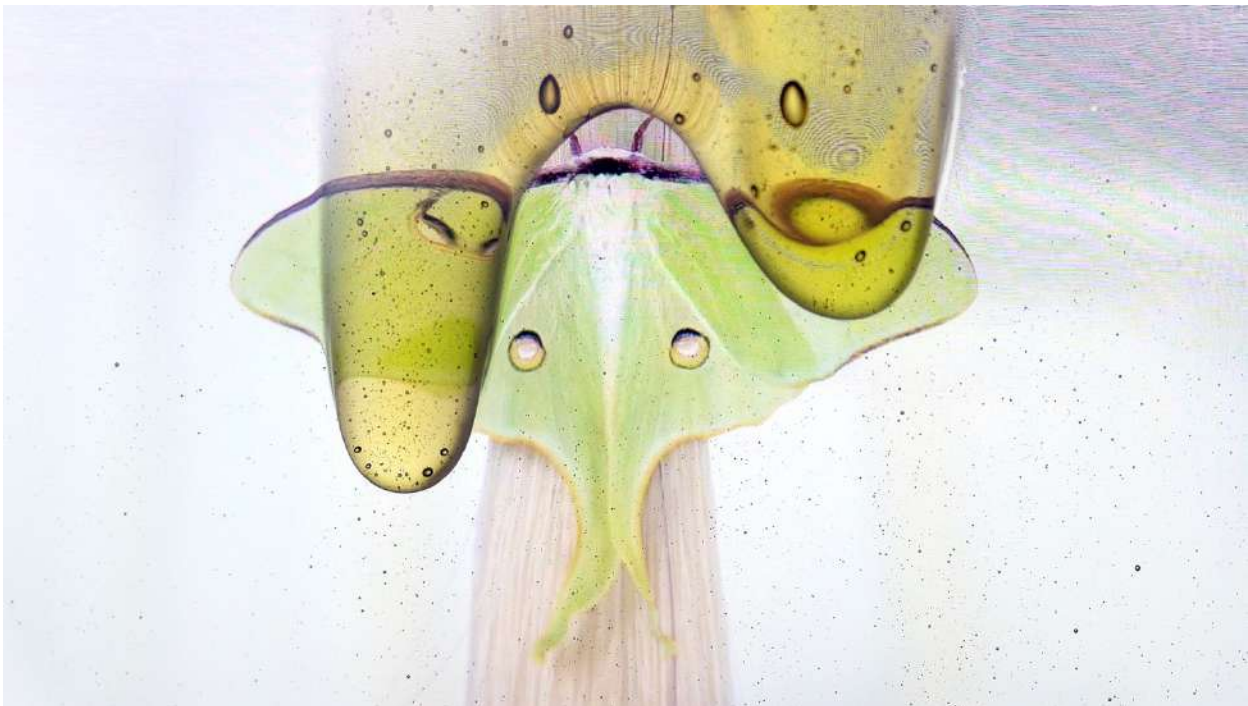
Video Link
[PONY COCOON](#)
4k Digital Video, 05:05, 2019

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VLM

Pony Cocoon

Video



Video Link
[PONY COCOON](#)
4k Digital Video, 05:05, 2019

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PONY COCOON, Installation image, False Flag, 2019



PONY COCOON, Install portrait by Will Laird, 2019

VLM: Pony Cocoon
 Solo Exhibition
 False Flag Gallery
 Long Island City, NY, USA
 Feb 23 – March 31st, 2019

PRESS RELEASE — False Flag presents *PONY COCOON*, a solo exhibition of new work by VLM (Virginia Lee Montgomery) in video and sculpture. Three meticulously polished marble sculptures extend motifs of the projected video into immediate, tangible form. Carved from the same aesthetic language, they are paradoxically cryptic and literal, conceptual & hand-built. Created by VLM at the historic West Rutland Marble Quarry (during a fellowship at The Vermont Carving Studio and Sculpture Center), they serve both as uncanny totems and material embodiments of the familiar. Working across video, sculpture, and performance, VLM interrogates the relationship between physical and psychic structures. Conceived, scored, edited, produced, & performed in its entirety by the artist, the show’s titular video piece, *PONY COCOON*, employs an idiosyncratic visual vocabulary to conjure a surreal yet familiar dreamscape. Populated by VLM’s ‘Business Witch’ persona, a luna moth, and ponytail, the film unpacks a range of cultural associations related to the moth: from joyful transformation to deathly harbinger. The film’s original soundscape is composed from field recordings of Texas thunderstorms, corporate conference hotels, a Dewalt drill, and a single moth emerging from her cocoon. *PONY COCOON* furthers VLM’s enduring inquiry into the link between material and mind. Her alchemical voice is both singular and clear: through her unexpected fusion of references, symbols, and histories, VLM offers a cerebral and seductive vision.



Moon Egg, Sculpture, Marble, 24x20x18, 2018 (Top)

Marble Ponytail II (L) and *Marble Ponytail I* (R), Installation view, *PONY COCOON*, False Flag, 2019 (Bottom)

VLM

Marble Ponytails

Sculpture



Sculpture
MARBLE PONYTAIL
Sculpture; Marble and string,
3" x 16" x 4", 2019

MARBLE PONYTAIL is a meticulously polished marble sculpture carved from the same aesthetic language as VLM's surreal and sculptural films. The sculpture serves both as uncanny semiotic surrogate and new materialist embodiment of the corporeal familiar. The *MARBLE PONYTAIL* engenders a cerebrally seductive study into "ponytail metaphysics."

VLM

Marble Ponytails

Sculpture



Sculpture
MARBLE PONYTAIL, Detail
Sculpture; marble and string,
3" x 16" x 4", 2019

MARBLE PONYTAIL is a meticulously polished marble sculpture carved from the same aesthetic language as VLM's surreal and sculptural films. The sculpture serves both as uncanny semiotic surrogate and new materialist embodiment of the corporeal familiar. The *MARBLE PONYTAIL* engenders a cerebrally seductive study into "ponytail metaphysics."

VLM

Marble Ponytails

Sculpture



Sculpture
MARBLE PONYTAIL II
Sculpture; marble and string,
35 " x 5" x 3", 2019

MARBLE PONYTAIL II is a meticulously polished marble sculpture carved from the same aesthetic language as VLM's surreal and sculptural films. The sculpture serves both as uncanny semiotic surrogate and new materialist embodiment of the corporeal familiar. The *MARBLE PONYTAIL* engenders a cerebrally seductive study into "ponytail metaphysics."



PONY HOTEL, 2018

PONY HOTEL braids together a tale of three ponytails: real, prop, and fantasy. The surreal short film blends montage imagery of fantastical studio footage alongside video footage VLM captured as she traveled across North America as “Business Witch” and documented her 3ft ponytail prop inside various hotel rooms. The film features vignettes of prodding digits, dancing ponytails, and mysterious dripping liquids. In *PONY HOTEL*’S culminating dream-inside-a-dream sequence, the film’s physical picture plane is penetrated by an offscreen Dewalt drill. The disruptive gesture creates a portal, which in turn, conjures the manifestation of a meta ponytail, The Rainbow Ponytail Supreme. *PONY HOTEL* is filmed, edited, scored, and performed by VLM.

Video Link

[PONY HOTEL](#)

4k Digital Video, 05:17, 2018

VLM

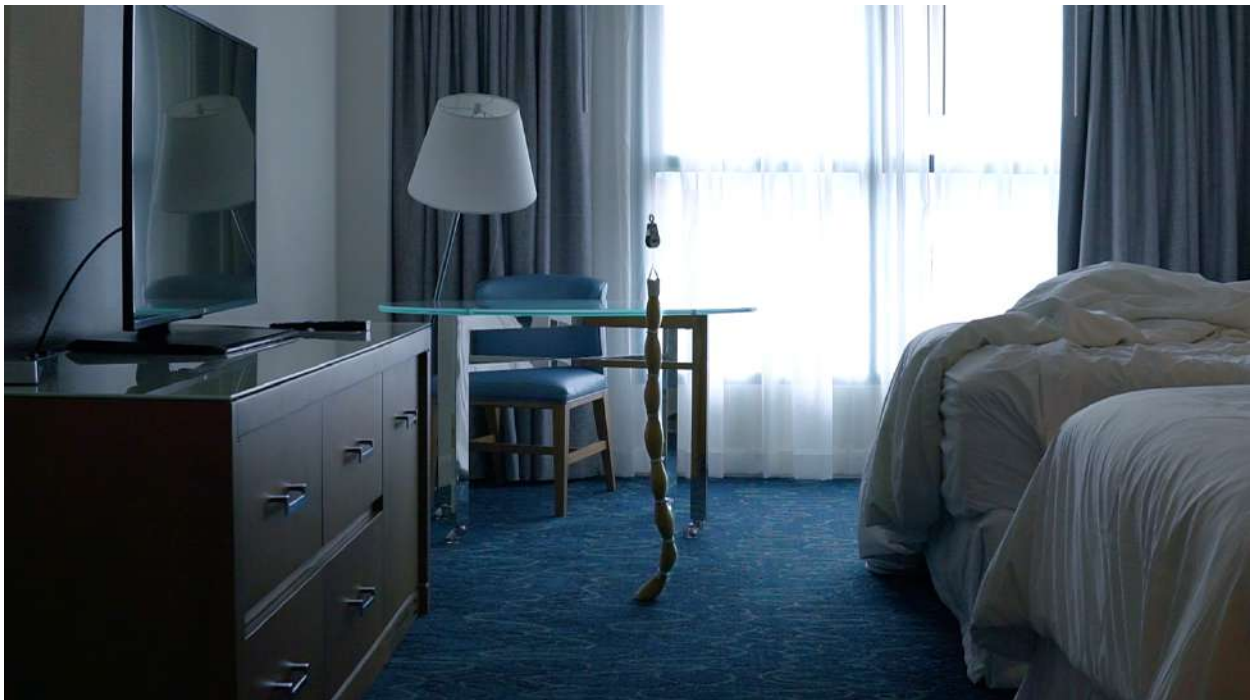
Pony Hotel

Video



Video Link
[PONY HOTEL](#)
4k Digital Video, 05:17, 2018

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VLM

Pony Hotel

Video



Video Link

[PONY HOTEL](#)

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Exhibition installation image with *WATER WITCHING* and *HEAD STONE, An unbound knot in the wind*, Curator Alison Karasyk, CCS Bard, The Hessel Museum of Art, NY, 2018

Sculpture

HEAD STONE

Sculpture, Memory foam and stone, 72" x 84" x 33", 2016

Video Link

[WATER WITCHING](#)

HD Video, 07:07, 2018

Commissioned by The Hessel Museum of Art for *An unbound knot in the wind*, Curator Alison Karasyk, CCS Bard.

WATER WITCHING is a metaphysical dream-logical film about conjuring the strength to weather chaos. Interrelating concerns of climate, weather, gender, and destruction, *WATER WITCHING* explores how agency may be conjured as a kind of internal resource via divination and amidst political adversity. Inspired by the artist's participation in the 2018 Women's March in Washington DC and global increases in climatic disasters, the film interweaves archival footages, glitch frequencies, and the artist's own performative gestures to construct a dowsing rod as an act of resistance. The film's textured soundscape is composed from field recordings of water, wind, machines, animals, and human protest. Collectively, these elements wield a dream that cuts across narratives of linearity.

VLM

Water Witching

Video



Video Link
[WATER WITCHING](#)
HD Video, 07:07, 2018

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VLM

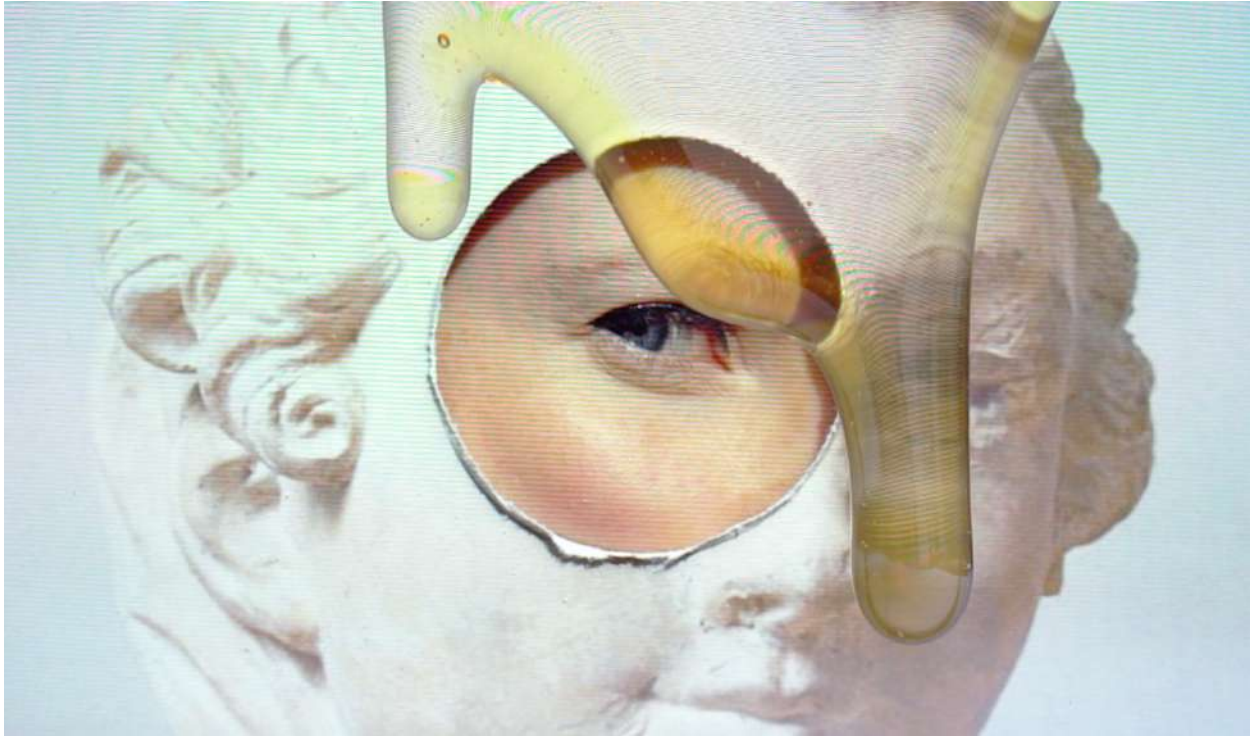
Water Witching

Video



Video Link
[WATER WITCHING](#)
HD Video, 07:07, 2018

WATER WITCHING is a metaphysical dream-logica film about conjuring the strength to weather chaos. Interrelating concerns of climate, weather, gender, and destruction, the film explores how agency may be conjured as a kind of internal resource.



CUT COPY SPHINX, 2018

CUT COPY SPHINX is a surreal and sculptural short art-film about metaphysics, myth, and destruction. A feminist twist on the classical myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx, *CUT COPY SPHINX* recasts the sphinx as the uncanny hero who endures 'cuts' across time. Shot en plein aire on a miniature prop-set with a Dewalt drill and a gallon of honey *CUT COPY SPHINX* syncs together themes from philosophy, feminism, and image theory. *CUT COPY SPHINX* is directed, edited, scored, and performed by VLM.

Video Link

[CUT COPY SPHINX](#)

HD Video, 03:30, 2018

Commissioned by Socrates

Sculpture Park for the 2018

Socrates Annual, NY, Curated by

Jess Wilcox, 2018

VLM

Cut Copy Sphinx

Video



Video Link
[CUT COPY SPHINX](#)
4k Digital Video, 03:30, 2018

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VLM

Cut Copy Sphinx

Video



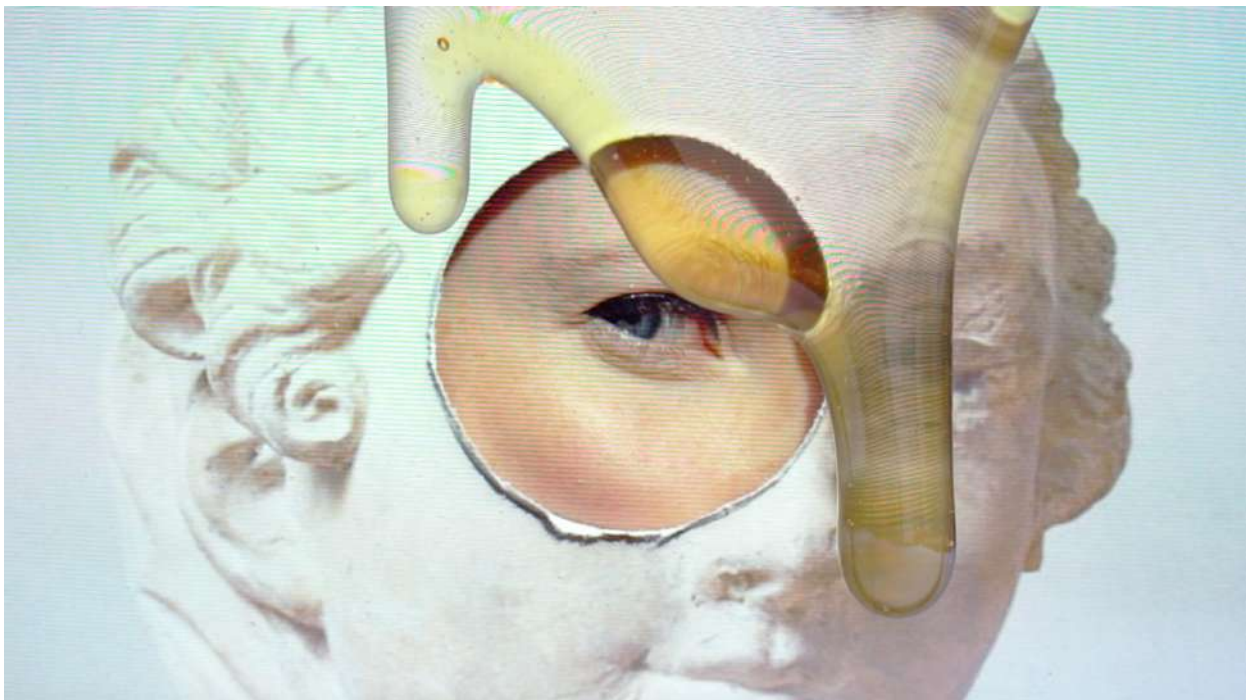
Video Link
[CUT COPY SPHINX](#)
4k Digital Video, 03:30, 2018

CUT COPY SPHINX is a surreal and sculptural short art-film about metaphysics, myth, and destruction. A feminist twist on the classical myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx, *CUT COPY SPHINX* recasts the sphinx as the uncanny hero who endures 'cuts' across time. Shot en plein aire on a miniature prop-set with a Dewalt drill and a gallon of honey *CUT COPY SPHINX* syncs together themes from philosophy, feminism, and image theory. It is directed, edited, scored, and performed by VLM.

VLM

Cut Copy Sphinx

Video



Video Link

[CUT COPY SPHINX](#)

4k Digital Video, 03:30, 2018

CUT COPY SPHINX is a surreal and sculptural short art-film about metaphysics, myth, and destruction. A feminist twist on the classical myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx, *CUT COPY SPHINX* recasts the sphinx as the uncanny hero who endures 'cuts' across time. Shot en plein aire on a miniature prop-set with a Dewalt drill and a gallon of honey *CUT COPY SPHINX* syncs together themes from philosophy, feminism, and image theory. It is directed, edited, scored, and performed by VLM.



SWORD IN THE SPHINX, 2018

SWORD IN THE SPHINX is an enigmatic public sculpture. The outdoor artwork includes a resin-cast copy of a historical French garden sphinx in the likeness of the 18th century court mistress, Madame de Pompadour, impaled with a hand-forged, artist smithed sword. The work was installed in Socrates Sculpture Park's far-left garden gazing towards New York City from 2018 – 2019. *SWORD IN THE SPHINX* was commissioned by Socrates Sculpture Park and completed while VLM was a Socrates Fellow and 2018 artist in residence. A companion video artwork, *CUT COPY SPHINX*, complements *SWORD IN THE SPHINX*.

Sculpture

SWORD IN THE SPHINX

Sculpture; resin, steel, concrete,
enamel. 42" x 1" x 108"

Commissioned by Socrates

Sculpture Park for the 2018

Socrates Annual, NY, Curated by

Jess Wilcox, 2018

VLM

Sword in the Sphinx

SWORD IN THE SPHINX, Installation views, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, 2018

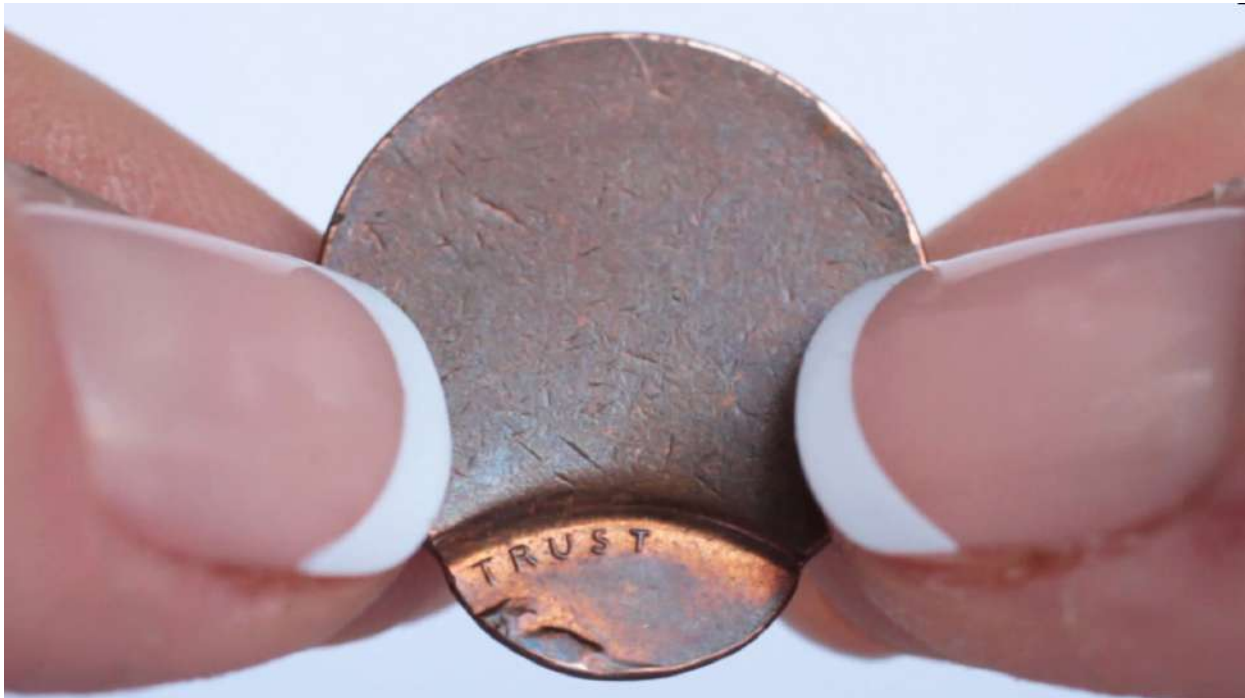


VLM

Sword in the Sphinx

SWORD IN THE SPHINX, Installation views, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, 2018





BEYOND MEANS, 2017

BEYOND MEANS is a short, sculptural, and energetic art film about glitches in materiality. By way of anomalous movements, spinning American pennies circulate off-center to escape the order of capital. Their irregular glitch markings allow them to subvert expectations. In the video, the glitch coins whirl in a manic choreographic succession of jump-cuts synced to the sound of distant drills. Offscreen, a Dewalt drill appears and punctures a hole through the video's filmic space. This allows a mysterious and gooey human hand to emerge from beyond the void. *BEYOND MEANS* explores intersection of materiality and movement in context to labor.

Video Link

[BEYOND MEANS](#)

HD Video, 02:17, 2017

Commissioned by SculptureCenter
for *In Practice: Material Deviance*,
Curated by Alexis Wilkinson, 2017

VLM

Beyond Means

Video



Video Link
[BEYOND MEANS](#)
HD Video, 02:17, 2017

BEYOND MEANS is a short, sculptural, and energetic art film about glitches in materiality. By way of anomalous movements, spinning American pennies circulate off-center to escape the order of capital and regulation. Their irregular glitch markings allow them to subvert expectations. In the video, the glitch coins whirl in a manic frenzy of jump-cuts synced to the sound of distant drills.

VLM

SOS Onshore Offshore

Exhibition



SKY LOOP, Installation view, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX, USA. Photographs by Nash Baker, 2020

VLM: SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE

Solo Exhibition
MEYOHAS Gallery
New York, NY, USA
Sept 16 - Oct 26, 2016

Works

DEEP SEE, Video
SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE, Video
MARBLE MEMORY FOAM, Sculpture
GLITCH COINS, Sculpture
BLUE VIEW, Light installation

Video Links

[DEEP SEE](#)

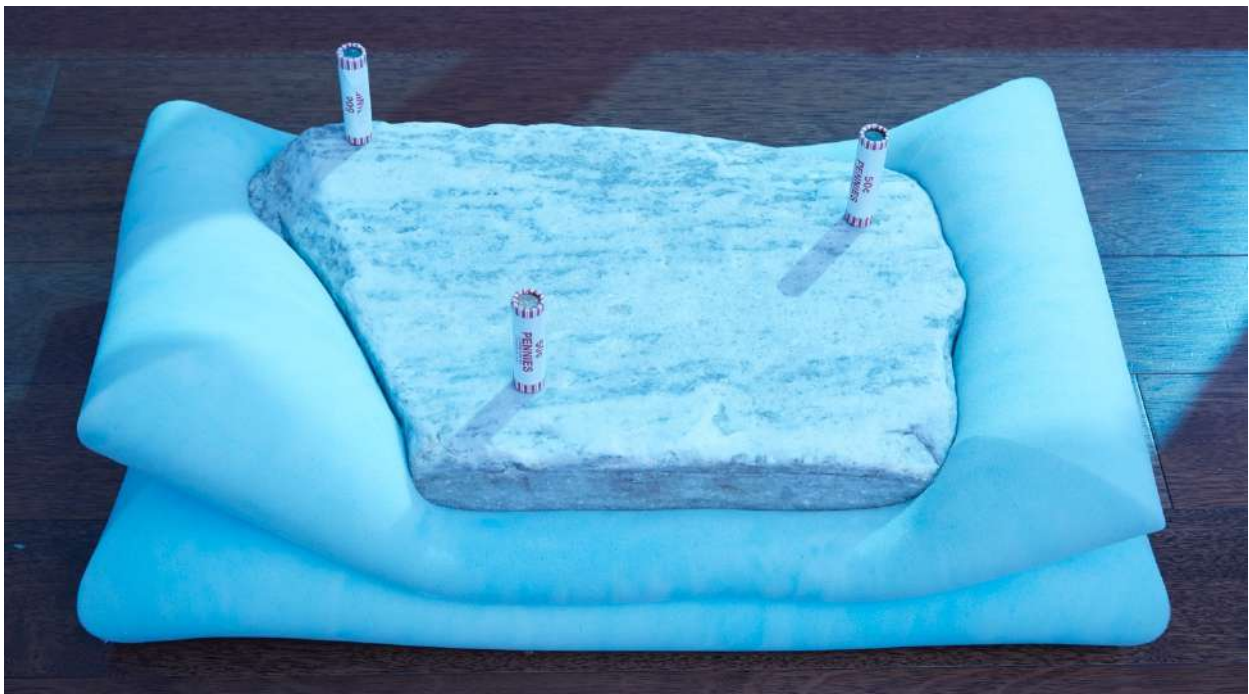
[SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE](#)

PRESS RELEASE – MEYOHAS presents *SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE* by Virginia Lee Montgomery. In her solo show, VLM braids together an associative material narrative of melted coins, broken marble, and a video of lonely ponytail traveling great liquid distances. VLM's props are ordinary but through clandestine activation reveal an intertwined account of neoliberal artifice amidst the Anthropocene and late capitalism. *SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE* suggests a metaphysical paradox: as global capital increases, its physical trace decreases. Offshore, VLM wields a witchy ponytail midst Grand Cayman Island's dying coral reefs. Onshore, she plots outside the island's notorious Uglad House, the invisible tax shelter from which 18,857 international corporate entities evade visibility via fictitious worksite residency. Here, the tides are rising. The 2016 US presidential election awaits. Is the American Dream melting? Reality is splitting, but it is speaking in fragments of whose dreams? VLM casts a defensive spell and tints the view blue...

VLM

SOS Onshore Offshore

Exhibition



Video Links

[SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE](#)
[DEEP SEE](#)

Sculpture

MARBLE MEMORY FOAM

PRESS RELEASE – In her solo show *SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE*, artist VLM braids together an associative material narrative of melted coins, broken marble, and a video of lonely ponytail traveling great liquid distances. VLM’s props are ordinary but through clandestine activation reveal an intertwined account of neoliberal artifice amidst the Anthropocene.



DEEP SEE, 2017

Video Link

[DEEP SEE](#)

HD Video, 01:17, 2017

DEEP SEE is a metaphysical short video. The work engages cognitive recursion as a poetic device via forms of blended perception. *DEEP SEE* depicts a disembodied 3ft blonde ponytail both situated inside an ocean themed film set and swimming free in the tropical Caribbean seas. *DEEP SEE* deploys simultaneous sensorial strategies of visual, auditory, and linguistic looping to cognitively construct a dream inside a dream. The film is directed, edited, produced, scored, and performed by VLM.



Video Link
[DEEP SEE](#)
HD Video, 02:17, 2017

DEEP SEE is a metaphysical short video. The work engages cognitive recursion as a poetic device via forms of blended perception. *DEEP SEE* depicts a disembodied ponytail both situated inside an ocean-theme filmset and swimming in the tropical Caribbean Sea. *DEEP SEE* cognitively constructs a dream inside a dream.



INNOVATION PORTHOLE, 2015

INNOVATION PORTHOLE depicts the symbolic activation of the laboring body. The frustrated office worker calibrates herself via absurdist activities to transform her body into a giant yonic totem, a gooey cheese danish, to escape the obstacle course of creative capital. *INNOVATION PORTHOLE* is directed, edited, performed, and scored by VLM.

Video Link

[INNOVATION PORTHOLE](#)

HD Video, 01:57, 2015



Video Link
[INNOVATION PORTHOLE](#)
HD Video, 01:57, 2015

INNOVATION PORTHOLE depicts the symbolic activation of the laboring body. The frustrated office worker calibrates herself via absurdist activities to transform her body into a giant yonic totem, a gooey cheese danish, to escape the obstacle course of creative capital.



ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE, Yale Thesis, Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT, USA. Exhibition photographs by Adam Pape, 2016

VLM: ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE
Yale Thesis Exhibition
Green Gallery, Yale School of Art
New Haven, CT, USA
March 5 – March 25, 2016

Works

ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE, Video
HEAD STONE, Sculpture
MOON STONE, Sculpture

Video Link

[ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE](#)

PRESS RELEASE – For the Yale 2016 MFA Sculpture thesis exhibition, VLM (Virginia Lee Montgomery) presents *ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE*, a sculpture and video installation. The installation’s namesake film is a two-channel dream-logica video depicting two doppelgängers at work: Business Witch and the ancient sea lamprey. Onsite, Business Witch secretly maneuvers inside the notorious Yale Business School to place her own bodily talismans throughout the austere management building. She sews strands of her blonde hair into the building’s soft padded walls and plants clippings of her fingernail into nearby pots of the decorative palms. Offsite, her animal-familiar, the parasitic sea lamprey, swims an ancient migration route from the Atlantic Ocean to the lakes of New England to breed, lay eggs, and die. Yet the migrating lamprey must now traverse a waterway populated with manmade barriers. In both videos, both characters insert themselves between the skeins of site to mark and conjure agency. Both witch and animal, must navigate tension in their respective ecosystems of labor. The *ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE* installation additionally includes two haptic sculptures: *HEAD STONE* and *MOON STONE*. Both sculptures welcome touch. Passing visitors may sit upon *HEAD STONE*. The sculpture offers any body, stone or human, a soft place to rest. In totality, the *ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE* installation offers an open moment of meditation regarding labor often gone unseen.

ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT, USA. Install photos by Adam Pape, 2016



Sculptures, *HEAD STONE* (Top left) *MOON STONE* (Top Right; Below) Photos by Adam Pape, 2016





ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE, 2016

ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE is a two-channel dream-logica video depicting two doppelgängers at work: VLM's alter ego, Business Witch, and the parasitic North American sea lamprey. Both protagonists use their bodies as apparatuses for mark-making. The witch embeds fingernails into potted plants, sews hair into conference walls at the Yale business school, and impacts her pheromones into New England river rocks with an oily cheese danish conference pastry. She is the creative other tasked to insert herself into the literal skeins of site. The alienation she reveals in both locations requires the invention of agency. In the final culminating scene, the mouth of the witch's circular drill and the mark of sea lamprey's burrowing teeth sync in action to penetrate the structures of their confinement and create a portal into the unknown.

Video Link

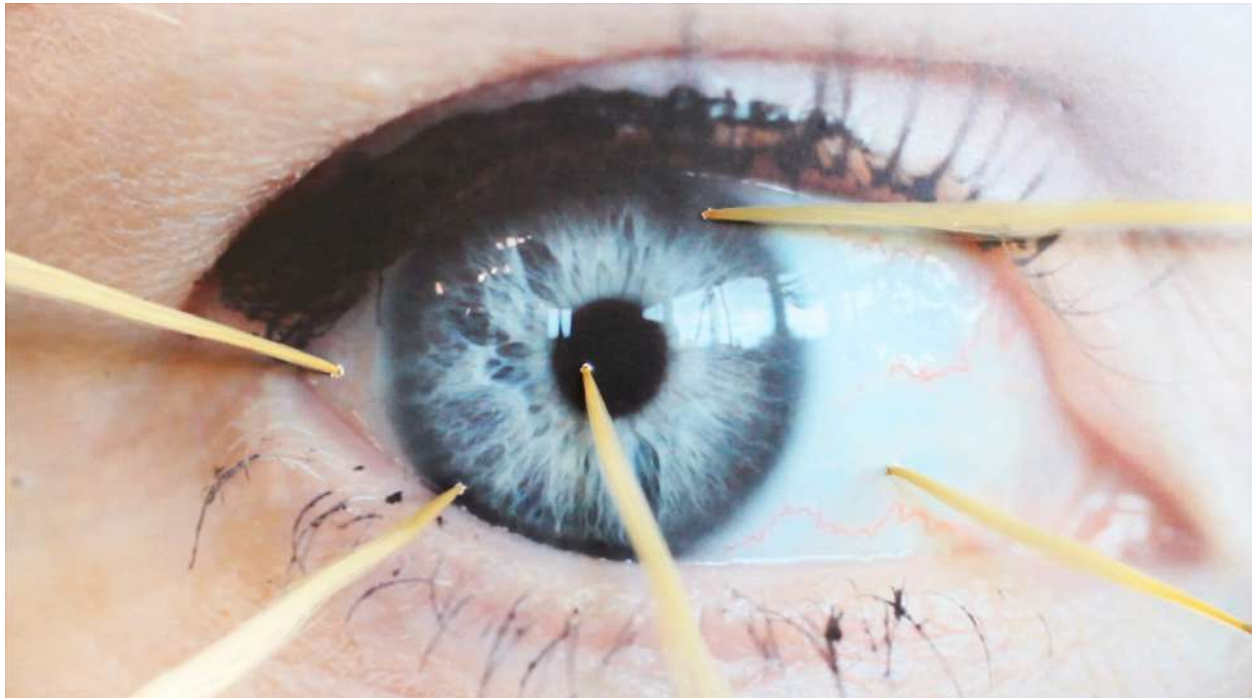
[ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE](#)

HD two-channel video, 08:14, 2016

VLM

Onsite Offsite Parasite

Video



Video Link

[ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE](#)

HD two-channel video, 08:14, 2016

ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE is a two-channel dream-logica video depicting two doppelgängers at work: VLM's alter ego, Business Witch, and the parasitic North American sea lamprey. Both protagonists use their bodies as apparatuses for mark-making. The witch sews hair into conference walls at the Yale business school and the lamprey grips the glass of a waterway dam to climb. The alienation they reveal in both ecosystems requires the invention of agency and ingenuity.



HAPTIC MAPPING is a metaphysical teambuilding and drawing workshop by VLM. Free and open to the public, the workshop interweaves choreographies from movement research dance and theories from metaphysical philosophical to facilitate a poetically absurd creative teambuilding workshop in the American vernaculars of Silicon Valley creativity-training sessions, western philosophy, and improvisational contemporary dance. In *HAPTIC MAPPING* there is no pro-business objective. Instead, the workshop's objective is simply to generate and share a playful and communal experience with metaphysical forces and rocks. The Walter Phillips Gallery presented and commissioned *HAPTIC MAPPING* for the Banff Centre of Alberta, Canada for the exhibition *Things you can't unthink* curated by Peta Rake in 2016.

Performance

HAPTIC MAPPING

Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre, Alberta, Canada, 2016
for the exhibition *Things you can't unthink* curated by Peta Rake

Photograph by Rita Taylor, Banff Centre, 2016

VLM

Haptic Mapping

Performance



Photographs by Rita Taylor, Banff Centre, 2016

Performance
HAPTIC MAPPING
Banff Center, 2016

HAPTIC MAPPING is a metaphysical teambuilding workshop by VLM. The workshop interweaves choreographies from movement research dance and theories from philosophy to facilitate a poetically absurd and artistic teambuilding event in the American vernaculars of Silicon Valley creativity-training events, western metaphysics, and improvisational contemporary dance. *HAPTIC MAPPING* was commissioned by the Banff Centre for the exhibit *Things you can't unthink* in 2016.

VLM

Haptic Mapping

Performance



Photographs by Rita Taylor, Banff Centre, 2016

Performance
HAPTIC MAPPING
Banff Center, 2016

HAPTIC MAPPING is a metaphysical teambuilding workshop by VLM. The workshop interweaves choreographies from movement research dance and theories from philosophy to facilitate a poetically absurd and artistic teambuilding event in the American vernaculars of Silicon Valley creativity-training events, western metaphysics, and improvisational contemporary dance. *HAPTIC MAPPING* was commissioned by the Banff Centre for the exhibit *Things you can't unthink* in 2016.

VLM

Particle Accelerator Memorial Project



The **PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORIAL PROJECT** was a multi-year, multimedia project about the material reincarnation of Yale's dark matter particle accelerator. Commemorating the accelerator's 30-year run, VLM created a collaborative project alongside Wright Lab's resident scientists while she was an artist-in-residence. Her project spans video, performance, drawing, and sculpture. The project generated a collection of artworks installed inside the lab and outside the Physics building. Together with Wright Lab, VLM created a large, blue, 14ft, 7-ton yonic monument to the particle accelerator. Made from the accelerator's original front entrance ring, the monument is named *PORTAL* and is on permanent display outside the Yale Department of Physics. *PORTAL* offers the public an opportunity to touch and sit upon the historic dark matter particle accelerator. The **PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORIAL PROJECT** affords the particle accelerator an opportunity to spend its afterlife outside in communion with the sun and stars.

Performance / Workshop

IDEATION ACCELERATOR, 2015

Drawing

BLIND PORTRAITS, 2015

Video Link

[MEMORY MOBILE VIDEO](#), 2016

Sculpture

MEMORY MOBILE, 2015

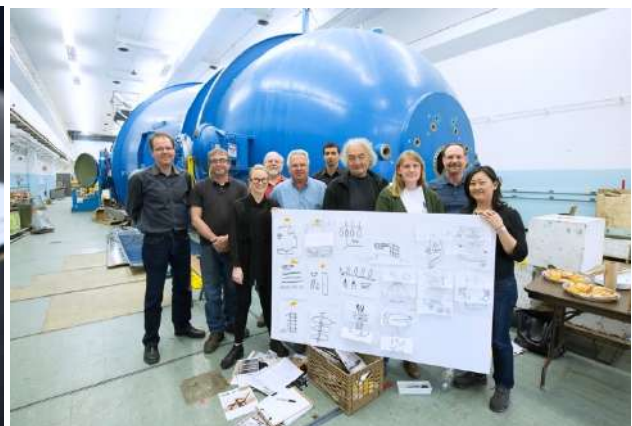
PORTAL, 2017

Photograph by Adam Pape, 2017

VLM

Particle Accelerator Memorial Project

Performance, Drawing, Sculpture & Video



IDEATION ACCELERATOR WORKSHOP, Wright Lab, Yale Department of Physics, Photographs by Raza Kazmi, 2015

Performance / Workshop

IDEATION ACCELERATOR, 2015

Drawing

BLIND PORTRAITS, 2015

The **PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORIAL PROJECT** was a multi-year, multi-media project about the material reincarnation of Yale's dark matter particle accelerator. Commemorating the accelerator's 30-year run, VLM created a collaborative project alongside Wright Lab's resident scientists while she was an artist-in-residence. She facilitated surrealist drawing games, like *Exquisite Corpse*, with the scientists to create collaborative portraits of the accelerator that conceptually mimicked the search for dark matter itself.

VLM

Particle Accelerator Memorial Project

Performance, Drawing, Sculpture & Video



PORTAL, Top, bottom right, Wright Lab, Yale Department of Physics, Yale University, 2017
PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORY MOBILE, Bottom left, Wright Lab, Yale Department of Physics, 2015

Sculpture & Video Link

[MEMORY MOBILE](#), 2015

Sculpture; re-cycled accelerator rings and resin beam, CNC pine
PORTAL, 2017

Sculpture; accelerator steel, concrete pedestal

The **PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORIAL PROJECT** was a multi-year, multi-media project about the material reincarnation of Yale's dark matter particle accelerator. Together with Wright Lab, VLM created a large, blue, 14ft, 7-ton circular monument to the particle accelerator. Made from the accelerator's original front entrance ring, the monument is named *PORTAL* and is on permanent display outside the Yale Department of Physics. *PORTAL* offers the public an opportunity to touch and sit upon the historic dark matter particle accelerator. The *PARTICLE ACCELERATOR MEMORIAL PROJECT* also affords the particle accelerator an opportunity to spend its afterlife outside in communion with the sun and stars.

VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY

Born in Houston, TX and lives in TX
Works between TX and NY, USA

EDUCATION

- 2016 Yale University, Sculpture, MFA
2008 The University of Texas at Austin, BFA

EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *DREAM COCOON*, Hesse Flatow, New York, NY — **SOLO** [upcoming](#)
After Carolee, Curator Annette DiMeo Carlozzi, Artpace, San Antonio, TX [upcoming](#)
WITCH HUNT, Curators Alison Karasyk & Jeppe Ugelvig, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark [upcoming](#)
Exquisite Corpse of the Surreal: Bring Your Own Beamer, Curator Mary Magsamen, Menil Collection, Houston, TX [upcoming](#)
In Union, Remotely, The Shaker Museum, Mount Lebanon, NY — [upcoming](#)
VLM: *SKY LOOP*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, TX — **SOLO**
Oxford Film Festival, Experimental Short Films, 2019, Oxford, MI
Virtual Dream Center: PreCog Screening, Queens Museum, Queens, NY
BAITBALL, Curated by Like A Little Disaster Gallery, Palazzo San Giuseppe, Polignano a Mare, Italy
2019 *HONEY MOON*, Midnight Moment at Times Square, Times Square Art Alliance, New York, NY — **SOLO**
PONY COCOON, False Flag Projects, Queens, NY — **SOLO**
Screen Series: Virginia Lee Montgomery, Curator Kate Wiener, New Museum, New York, NY — **SOLO**
THE PONY HOTEL: VLM & George Minne, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany — **SOLO**
An unbound knot in the wind, Curator Alison Karasyk, Berrie Center, Ramapo, Mahwah, NJ
CYFEST12 International: Personal Identity, Curator Victoria Ilyushkina, St. Petersburg, Russia
Exchange Rate, Curator Dennis Nance, Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, TX
The 2019 Film and Video Poetry Symposium, Cinema Cosmos, Moscow, Russia
Athens International Film and Video Festival 2019, Athens, OH
NYC Independent Film Festival 2019, New York, NY
New Orleans Film Festival, 2019, New Orleans, LA
Moscow Shorts, 2019, Cosmos Cinema, Moscow, Russia
Ann Arbor Film Festival - 57th Annual, Ann Arbor, MI
May Show: Looms, Sweetpass Sculpture Park, Dallas, TX
Vanishing Act, Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY
Proposition, Hesse Flatow, New York, NY
Positive Futures, Organized by Chloé Rossetti & Loraine Wible, Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA
Meaning Making Machines, Organized by Yolandé Gouws, Mitte Media Festival, Berlin, Germany
Towards the Last Unicorn, Curator Catarina Vaz, Art Research Map, 55SP, São Paulo, Brazil
Cosmic Rays Film Festival, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC
2018 *The Socrates Annual, Socrates Sculpture Park 2018*, Curator Jess Wilcox, Socrates Sculpture Park, LIC, Queens, NY
An unbound knot in the wind: Anna Betbeze, Louise Bourgeois, Youmna Chlala, Virginia Lee Montgomery, David Wojnarowicz, Curator Alison Karasyk, CCS Bard, Hessel Museum of Art, Hudson, NY
A kiss under the tail, Curated by Loreta Lamargese, Arsenal Contemporary, New York, NY
CRASH TEST: The Molecular Turn, Curator Nicolas Bourriaud, La Panacée, Centre d'art contemporain, Montpellier, France
OPEN MIND: Selva Aparicio & Virginia Lee Montgomery, CRUSH, New York, NY — **2 PERSON SHOW**
Sometimes however, Curators Arlene Berceiot Courtin and Thibault Vanco, FURIOSA, Marseille, France
The 2018 Film and Video Poetry Symposium, The Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Los Angeles, CA
Personal Identity, Curator Victoria Ilyushkina, Made In New York Media Center, Brooklyn, NY
Dangerous Professors, Curator Ruslana Lichtzier, Flatland Gallery, Houston, TX

- Out There*, Organized by Bianca Boragi, 254 Broome Street, New York, NY
- 2017 *MOONMIST: Alex Goss, Ryan Hawk, Shana Hoehn, Yue Nakayama, Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Moonmist, Houston, TX
- PORTAL, Particle Accelerator Memorial Project*, Wright Laboratory, Yale University, New Haven, CT — **SOLO**
- In Practice: Material Deviance*, Curator Alexis Wilkinson, SculptureCenter, Long Island City, NY
- Redirecting: Sam Ekwurtzel, Bill Jenkins, Virginia Lee Montgomery, Em Rooney, Valerie Snobeck*, Simone Subal, NY, NY
- Screening*, Curator Kiyoto Koseki, Harvard Film Archive, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY: BEYOND MEANS*, Plymouth Rock, Zürich, Switzerland — **SOLO**
- Freshly Painted Beige Walls, July*, Video! Video! Zine, LVL3 Gallery, Chicago, IL
- Twenty/20!*, Edward Cella Gallery, Edward Cella Art + Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
- RETREAT*, Organized by Maggie Goldstone and Peter LaBier, Mom's Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- Cabinet*, Organized by Adam Milner, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
- The way you look at me*, Organized by Nico Mazza, Gallery Protocol, Gainesville, FL
- Screening - The Boneyard*, Organized by Shana Hoehn, Blank Check Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2016 *VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY: SOS ONSHORE OFFSHORE*, MEYOHAS, New York, NY — **SOLO**
- things you can't unthink*, Curator Peta Rake, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada
- ALL BYTE: Feminist Intersections in Video Art*, Curator Terri C. Smith, Franklin Street Works, Stamford, CT
- All My Friends Are Rocks: Anissa Mack & Virginia Lee Montgomery*, 67 Ludlow, New York, NY — **2 PERSON SHOW**
- BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS*, Curators Isabelle Lynch and Sophie Lynch, Art Gallery of Guelph, Guelph, Canada
- PARTNERS*, Organized by Michael Queensland and Anoka Faruqee, Abrons Art Center, New York, NY
- ONSITE OFFSITE PARASITE*, Yale Sculpture MFA Exhibition, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT — **THESIS**
- Drawing for Sculpture*, Organized by Courtney Puckett, Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Brooklyn, NY
- ST(f)EM Gallery 456*, Chinese American Arts Council, New York, NY
- 2015 *IDEATION ACCELERATOR*, Wright Laboratory, Yale Physics, Yale University, New Haven, CT — **SOLO**
- Business as Usual*, TURF PROJECTS, Croydon, United Kingdom
- VideoMixer*, Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
- 2014 *Roving Room*, Inaugural Exhibition at Habersham Mills, Habersham Mills, Atlanta, GA
- First Call, MFA 1st Year Exhibition*, Green Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
- 2008 *Rose Colored Glasses*, Gavin Brown's Enterprise at Passerby, New York, NY
- DAUGHTER PLANET*, Texas Memorial Museum, Austin, TX — **SOLO**
- 2006 *Digital Showcase 36: SXSW*, Austin Museum of Digital Art, Austin, TX
- Heydays 2006*, Creative Research Lab, University of Texas, Austin, TX
- VIDEOTIME A/V Swap*, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX

PERFORMANCES

- 2019 *STONE PONY CAGE*, Soft Opening, Curated by Partial Shade, Co-Lab Projects, Austin, TX
- 2018 *DUST DEVIL DRILL, CRASH TEST*, Curators Noam Segal and Nicolas Bourriaud, La Panacée, Montpellier, France
- EGG ROCKS, Earworm x3*, Organized by Nate Flagg, Secret Project Robot, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 *BUSINESS WITCH BALANCES COINS IN NO-PROFIT ZONE*, DAMA, Curator Domenico de Chirico, Turin, Italy
- ORAL ECONOMICS: I dream of the elections*, Organized by Ruth Patir, Danspace Project, New York, NY
- CHEESE DANISH SPEAKS, Earworm x1*, Organized by Nate Flagg, Secret Project Robot, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016 *HAPTIC MAPPING*, Curator Peta Rake, Eric Harvie Theatre, The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada
- INNOPROVIZE: Team Building Ballet*, Digital Design Lab, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
- 2015 *COLLABIGUITY DRAWING WORKSHOP*, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT
- LIVE-SKETCHING LABOR*, ArtHandler Magazine with ALL GOLD at MOMAPS1, MOMAPS1, Queens, NY
- IDEATION ACCELERATOR: DRAWING DARK MATTER*, Yale Physics, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- 2014 *INNOPROVIZE*: Yale School of Management, Yale University, New Haven, CT

AWARDS & RESIDENCIES

- 2020 MRSEC, Artist in Residence, Center for Dynamics and Control of Materials at The University of Texas
- 2019 Crit Group, The Contemporary Austin, TX
- 2018 Socrates Sculpture Park, Artist in Residence, NY
- Socrates Artist Fellowship 2018 - 2019, Socrates Sculpture Park, NY
- The Carving Studio and Sculpture Studio, Artist in Residence, VT
- 2017 Coast Time, Artist in Residence, OR

- Wright Laboratory, Artist in Residence, Yale Physics Department, CT
 2016 Susan H. Wedon Award; Yale University
 Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship; 2016 Nominee in Sculpture, Yale University
 2015 Vermont Studio Center, Artist in Residence, VT
 Artists Supporting Artists Fellowship; Vermont Studio Center
 2014 The Shandaken Project at Storm King, Artist in Residence, NY

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- 2020 *Artist Finds the zen in Hurricane Harvey at Lawndale show*, Molly Glentzer, Feature, [Houston Chronicle](#), February 6, 2020
Virginia Lee Montgomery Reconciles with Hurricane Harvey, Caitlin Greenwood, Feature, [Sightlines](#), January 30, 2020
Houston Artist Creates Art Installation Inspired by Memories of Hurricane Harvey, Catherine Lu, Feature, [Houston Public Media](#), Jan 29, 2020
The Butterfly Effect, SKY LOOP exhibition publication, Wendy Vogel, [Lawndale Art Center](#), 2020
A Chat with the Business Witch: Face to Face with Virginia Lee Montgomery, Hall Rockefeller, Feature, [Less Than Half](#), 2020
 2019 *Virginia Lee Montgomery: Ponytails, Power drills, and Political Action*, Laura Demers, Feature, [Femme Art Review](#), 2019
Virginia Lee Montgomery's Abject Whimsy, Eileen G'Sell, Feature, [Hyperallergic](#), 2019
7 Artists to Watch in March 2019, [Artspace](#), 2019
THE PONY HOTEL: Virginia Lee Montgomery, Exhibition publication, Curator Antonina Krezdorn, [Museum Folkwang](#), 2019
Alumna Virginia Lee Montgomery presents new work at Socrates Sculpture Park, New Museum and Times Square, Feature, [University of Texas Austin Alumni News](#), 2019
Co-lab Projects and Partial Shade's Soft Opening, [The Austin Chronicle](#), 2019
 2018 *First Look: Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Wendy Vogel, Feature, [Art in America Magazine](#), October 2018
AN UNBOUND KNOT IN THE WIND, Exhibition catalog, Curator Alison Karaysk, [The Hessel Museum of Art](#), 2018
CRASH TEST - The Molecular Turn, Exhibition catalog, Curator Nicolas Bourriaud, [La Panacée](#), 2018
The Molecular Turn: While Social Media Flourishes Ecosystems Collapse, Max Andrews, [Erieze Magazine](#), February 2018
 2017 *In Practice: Material Deviance*, Exhibition catalog, by Curator Alexis Wilkinson, [SculptureCenter](#), 2017
Ruth Patir's "I dream of the elections" at Danspace Project, [dance enthusiast](#), 2017
Flashback: DAMA, Paratissima: aprono la settimana di Torino le tre fiere collaterali, [Art Tribune](#), November 2, 2017
Special Feature: DAMA 2017, [Art Viewer](#), November 5, 2017
Virginia Lee Montgomery: The "Portal" at Wright Laboratory, [New Haven Register](#), May 5, 2017
 2016 *Bytes and Biting Satire: Feminist Video at Franklin Street Works*, [artcritical](#), 2016
Things you can't unthink, Exhibition publication, Curator Peta Rake, Walter Phillips, [Banff Centre](#), 2016
Katherine Bradford and Drawing for Sculpture: Swimmers and Gender Politics, [ARTECITY](#), 2016
Drawing for Sculpture @ TSA New York, [Painting is Dead](#), 2016
 2015 *10th Annual New York Art Book Fair: Installation in Drawings*, [Art Handler Magazine](#), 2015
 2014 *Roving Room Review*, [Art Papers Magazine](#), 2014
Habersham Mills Brings High Art to the Hinterlands of Georgia, [Burnaway](#), 2014

INTERVIEWS

- 2020 *"Sky Loop" Heals Memories of Hurricane Harvey*, Catherine Lu, [Houston Public Media](#), NPR, Radio 88.7 FM, [Unwrap Your Candies Now](#), Podcast, 2020
Ilana Harris-Babou & Virginia Lee Montgomery in Interview, Bubbles Edition, Published by [Precog Magazine](#), 2020
Virginia Lee Montgomery, Interviewed by Brained Carey, [Yale Radio WYBCx](#), July 2, 2020
 2019 *Midnight Moment: Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Interviewed by Times Square Arts Alliance, [Times Square Arts](#), 2019
Virginia Lee Montgomery, Interviewed by William Jess Laird, [Image Culture](#), Podcast, 2019
Virginia Lee Montgomery: Episode 26, Interviewed by Amy Beecher, [The Amy Beecher Show](#), Podcast, 2019
THE PONY HOTEL: Virginia Lee Montgomery, [Museum Folkwang](#), 2019
 2018 *Artist Talk: Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Interviewed by Nicole Kaack, Published by [CRUSH Curatorial](#), 2018
 2017 *Artist Interview: Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Interviewed by Nico Mazza, Published by [SHE/FOLK Magazine](#), 2017
Virginia Lee Montgomery: Episode 11, Interviewed by Amy Beecher, [The Amy Beecher Show](#), Podcast, 2017
 2016 *ALL BYTE: Interview with Nicole Maloof, Sarah Lasley, and Virginia Lee Montgomery*, Interviewed by Curator Terri C. Smith, UCONN Department of Women and Gender Studies, Published by [Franklin Street Works](#), 2016
IT'S OK TO BE MANY THINGS AT ONCE, Artist Virginia Lee Montgomery, Interviewed by Curatorial Assistant Jacqueline Bell, Walter Phillips Gallery, Published by [Banff Centre](#), 2016

PANELS, PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

- 2020 *Panel Talk: A conversation between Catalina Ouyang & Virginia Lee Montgomery facilitated by Xingyang Cai*, New York, NY
Metaphysical Video Art Workshop, Department of Graphic Design, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RD
The Power of Dreams: Public Dream Workshop, Facilitated by VLM & Jungian Analyst Rodney Waters, Lawndale, Houston, TX
- 2016 *All Byte: Feminist Intersections in Video Art*, Women's Gender & Sexuality Studies Program, UConn, Stamford, CT
Assembling Bodies: Exchanges in Collaboration, New England Graduate Media Symposium, Emerson College, Boston, MA
- 2015 *Ideation Accelerator: Collaborative Making*, Wright Laboratory, Yale Physics, Yale University, New Haven, CT
Trauma, Anxiety, and Humor Symposium, Yale Art Gallery, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

TEACHING & INSTITUTIONAL ROLES

- 2020 Visiting Artist, Art Academy of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH
 Visiting Artist, Department of Graphic Design, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RD
 Visiting Artist, Department of Photography, Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
 Visiting Artist, Department of Theatre, Dance & Media, Video Art, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
 Visiting Artist, Department of Art and Art History, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
 Visiting Artist, Department of Art, Video Art, Williams College, Williamstown, MA
- 2019 Visiting Artist, Education Department, Dia Teens, Dia Art Foundation, New York, NY
- 2018 Visiting Artist, Department of Graphic Design, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RD
 Visiting Artist, Department of Art, Transmedia, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2017 Visiting Artist, Department of Visual and Studio Arts, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY
- 2016 Visiting Artist, Department of Art and Art History, The College of St. Rose, Albany, NY
 Visiting Artist, Design Lab, Department of Art, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
 Visiting Artist Instructor, Drawn to Nature, Banff Park Museum, Banff, Canada
- 2015 Teaching Assistant, Dean Robert Storr, Senior Studio Seminar, Yale University, New Haven, CT
 Teaching Assistant, Barbara London, Video and Beyond, Yale University, New Haven, CT
 Assistant, Visiting Artist Lecture Series, MFA Sculpture, Yale University, New Haven, CT
 Visiting Artist Liaison, MFA Sculpture, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- 2009 Art Educator, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
- 2008 Museum Intern, Blanton Museum, Austin, TX
- 2007 Museum Intern, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, TX
- 2006 Museum Intern, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX

CONTACT

- Ω VIRGINIALEEMONTGOMERY.com
 Ω VIRGINIALEEMONTGOMERY@gmail.com

Apple Podcasts Preview



48 min

PLAY ▶

EP 027: VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY

Image Culture

My guest is Virginia Lee Montgomery, whose new solo show Pony Cocoon is up now at False Flag in Long Island City through March 24th. The show is titled after her new film, following the birth of a Luna moth from a disembodied blonde ponytail, a frequently used symbol in Virginia's practice. Her films are diffused with these repeated visual motifs. Dripping honey engulfs an object; a power drill bores a perfect hole through the surface of an image; a narwhal's horn pierces the Arctic water. Images become like recurring characters through her films, which unfold like a surrealist mind-map attempting to make sense of free-associative thought. Concurrent to her art practice, Virginia works as a graphic facilitator, meaning she travels the country diagramming the flow of ideas and concepts for a variety of corporate clientele. The influence of this work is clearly felt in the way she edits her films, taking seemingly disparate ideas and finding the ways they're interconnected. This show is produced by Sarah Levine and our music is by Jack and Eliza.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-027-virginia-lee-montgomery/id1336342659?i=1000431610730>



Tamyra Gray and Virginia Lee Montgomery

Unwrap Your Candies Now

In this episode of the podcast "Unwrap Your Candies Now," Catherine Lu heads to Lawndale Art Center to interview Houston artist Virginia Lee Montgomery about her solo exhibition Sky Loop. Incorporating video, sound, sculpture and Houston-centric symbols, the immersive installation is inspired by the artist's personal experience and memories of Hurricane Harvey, on view through March 29. Then, Ernie Manouse talks with former American Idol finalist-turned Broadway star Tamyra Gray, who is performing in the North American-touring production of Once On This Island. Theatre Under The Stars presents the Tony Award-winning musical February 18 – March 1 at The Hobby Center.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/tamyra-gray-and-virginia-lee-montgomery/id1462113922?i=1000466324430>



1 hr 51 min

PLAY ▶

EPISODE 26: Round Two With Virginia Lee Montgomery

■

The Amy Beecher Show

Since her first appearance on the show (episode 11), Virginia Lee Montgomery has been making videos out of hotel rooms. With insects. On a \$200 budget. She is a Material Research Artist-in-Residence at the University of Texas at Austin Center for Dynamic and Controlled Materials and her solo show, The Pony Hotel, opened at Museum Folkwang in Essen on May 9th. Did I mention the insects? Lots of that on this episode.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/episode-26-round-two-with-virginia-lee-montgomery/id675424501?i=1000438151546>

Art in America

FIRST LOOK



Virginia Lee Montgomery:
Cut Copy Sphinx,
2018, video,
3 minutes,
30 seconds.

Virginia Lee Montgomery

by Wendy Vogel

SORCERY AND CORPORATE creativity don't make for the most intuitive pairing, but Virginia Lee Montgomery unites them in her persona of Business Witch. This presence haunts the artist's surreal videos, where, for instance, her Dewalt drill opens a portal to another dimension, and a three-foot-long ponytail from a blond wig (resembling Montgomery's own long tresses) bounces through a business hotel room.

Montgomery, who has an MFA in sculpture from Yale, lives in her home state of Texas. But she travels up to three weeks a month for her job as a graphic facilitator, diagramming the flow of ideas at focus groups and tech conferences. So it seems fitting that her art highlights disruptions in the smooth machinery of capitalism. This summer at Arsenal Contemporary in New York, Montgomery showed *Lincoln Looks at the Moon* (2017), a work from her "Glitch Coins" series comprising six misprinted pennies. On each coin, a sliver of the president's head appears beneath a bare copper planchette.

Montgomery's videos and readymades complement her sculptural practice, which is grounded in a feminist exploration of materials. Her recent work has focused on the witchy

aspects of myths and pseudoscience, reclaiming esoteric practices that once led to the persecution of women. In *Split Sword* (2017), a Y-shaped steel blade, evocative of medieval divining rods, leans against a black disk. (Such rods are still used to find oil in Texas.) A related video, *Water Witching* (2018), suggests causal connections between Y-rods, meteorological phenomena, and feminist protest. For this fall's annual exhibition of emerging artists at Socrates Sculpture Park in New York, Montgomery has created *Sword in the Sphinx*. The sculpture embeds an immovable steel sword in a garden sphinx featuring the bust of Madame de Pompadour, a brilliant intellectual and patron of the arts best known as the mistress of Louis XV. A video for the park's website dramatizes how an eighteenth-century sculpture of Madame de Pompadour as a sphinx, the authorship of which is disputed, has been copied for centuries in decor and knickknacks. A response to the #MeToo movement, Montgomery's work upends the masculine bravado of the tales of King Arthur and Oedipus. "In the myth, Oedipus kills the sphinx," Montgomery says, "but in my version she just keeps replicating." ○

COMING SOON
Work by Virginia Lee Montgomery in the Socrates Annual, Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, Oct. 7, 2018–Mar. 10, 2019.

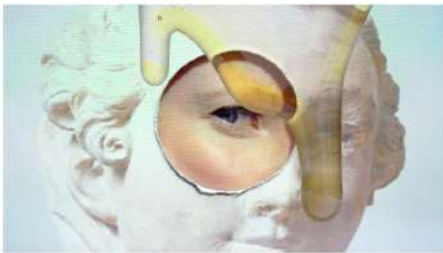
WENDY VOGEL is a critic, writer, and curator based in New York. See Contributors page.

HYPERALLERGIC

Virginia Lee Montgomery's Abject Whimsy

Virginia Lee Montgomery toys with the psychic space in which abjection is gendered, playfully prodding erotic hierarchies.

Eileen G'Sell February 23, 2019



Virginia Lee Montgomery, CUT COPY SPHINX (2018), still, 4K digital video, sound, color, 3:30 min (image courtesy the artist)

A blonde ponytail waits alone on an unmade bed. A drilled hole in a blue box reveals a blinking eye. Pliers snap a wire hanger, the hanger's corner trembling to the sound of windchimes. A cheese Danish is slowly punctured by a prim pointer finger.

Welcome to the dreamscape of Virginia Lee Montgomery (VLM, as she prefers to be called), whose recent videos charm — and alarm — in the New Museum's [Screens Series](#). A sculpture, video, and performance artist who has [described her work as](#) “a meta-structural argument for what it means for spirit to pass through form,” VLM marries an interest in the uncanny with a raptness toward the material. Error coins, dripping paint, Xeroxed cutouts of a smiling sphinx — the artist investigates each for its sensory properties, often referencing her professional history of diagramming ideas for corporate clientele.



Upon this rather sterile stage of inorganic matter, the bodily and visceral make cheeky cameos. Disembodied hair, colorfully woven or tied with humble strings, becomes a metonym for a roving female subject. Honey — which

VLM

Virginia Lee Montgomery, *PONY HOTEL* (2018), still, 4K digital video, sound, color, 5:17 min (image courtesy the artist)

What results is an intermittent and very whimsical sense of the abject, less horrifying than it is subtly unnerving — a poke in the proverbial id, a pinky in the ear of consciousness. A concept explored by Julia Kristeva in her seminal study *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), the “abject” is typically linked to excretions and waste, what the body leaves behind to remain intact. “[A]s in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live,” the French-Bulgarian philosopher writes. “These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being.”



Virginia Lee Montgomery, *CUT COPY SPHINX* (2018), still, 4K digital video, sound, color, 3:30 min (image courtesy the artist)

circles wherever they go, everything a potential orifice to peek and reach through, often to the tune of birdsong.



Virginia Lee Montgomery, *WATER WITCHING* (2018), still, HD video, sound, color, 7:06 min (image courtesy the artist)

the artist’s own curious face. In *Beyond Means* (2017), pennies spin across a white

Press

can sometimes look like urine — slides over a cardboard surface. Danish frosting (or lonely semen?) dribbles down from a rainbow braid.

Whereas artists such as Cindy Sherman, Louise Bourgeois, and Sarah Lucas have explored the abject from an overtly feminist angle (as, after all, female bodily functions have always been more stigmatized than male), VLM toys with the psychic space in which abjection is gendered, playfully prodding erotic hierarchies in which men and women have been historically fixed. Power tools take on an unexpected feminine zest, leaving perfect

VLM is a woman who knows how to drill — literally, a Dewalt power tool in her pale, French-manicured hand. In *DEEP SEE* (2017), the drill ruptures a 2-D seascape, a black-sleeved forearm entering to grasp at a human ponytail. In *PONY HOTEL* (2018) shots of a sunny business suite are ruptured by close-ups of a silver bit suddenly entering a void. *CUT COPY SPHINX* (2018) montages one drill shot after another — each hole a possible frame for

surface, the sound of a drill whirring in the background. As a portal forms in a wall, a clear, gelatinous substance oozes from its edges, the artist's by-now familiar hand invading to the sound of dripping water.

"Formally, I make work about circles — psychic or material ones, and what unexpectedly excretes out of open holes," said VLM in a 2017 interview with [She/Folk](#). "I can survey relationships between bodies, hierarchies between objects, genders, sounds, or forms, and thus allow forth a message to emerge from these intersecting realms of cognitive awareness and sensorial participation."



Virginia Lee Montgomery, *DEEP SEEN* (2017), still, HD video, sound, color, 1:57 min (image courtesy the artist)

WATER WITCHING (2017), the longest video on display, invests these relationships with more conspicuously political significance. The spinning drill cuts to a corresponding graphic of a fearsome tornado, which segues into shots of melting glaciers, then to a montage of archival footage of women's marches for reproductive rights. The hand-drawn hanger on a protest sign becomes an actual hanger

relentlessly severed, then reshaped, by the artist's fingers — as though carefully constructing some industrial talisman.

Whether bodies of water or bodies of women, cheese Danishes or a Dewalt drill, VLM perpetually tests the border between subject and object, matter and mind. "What is thing and what is theory?" her work seems to ask. What must we thrust aside to survive the tangible world?

Screens Series: [Virginia Lee Montgomery continues at the New Museum \(235 Bowery, Manhattan\) through March 3.](#)

Artspace

Artists To Watch in March 2019

By Artspace Editors

MARCH 7, 2019

With the New York art fairs in full swing this week, and with the Whitney's release of the artists participating in the upcoming 2019 Whitney Biennial, there were plenty of artists to choose from in this month's round-up of artists to watch. Here are the 7 we're most excited about.



VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY

False Flag, Long Island City, NY

February 2 - March 24

Still from Pony Cocoon via False Flag website

Multimedia artist Virginia Montgomery is serving seductive wackiness in impossibly polished packaging at False Flag in Long Island City until March 24th. The Yale MFA graduate and current Socrates Sculpture Park Fellow has been touting her brand of felt, gesture-driven cyber-subjectivity to greater and greater fanfare of recent months, making appearances at Crush Curatorial in Chelsea, the New Museum's Screen Series, and Arsenal Contemporary in New York, not to mention a debut of her video *Honey Moon* at Times Square Alliance's Midnight Moment exhibition in February. Her intimate, eerie interplay of video and sculpture ferment metaphysically in space, exhuming our funkier enclaves of affect in the process. Stay tuned for her upcoming solo shows at Crush Curatorial in Chelsea and the Lawndale Art Center in Houston.

FEMME ART REVIEW

An accessible source of art + culture

VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY: PONYTAILS, POWER DRILLS, AND POLITICAL ACTION

By Laura Demers

A blinking eye peers through a circular opening in a foam board seabed. A manicured hand then reaches through the hollow, extending its fingers towards a disembodied ponytail that dangles alluringly ([Deep See](#), 2017). The suspended blonde prop appears again on another display screen across the hall. The viewer is transported from a natural environment to a sterile business setting; this time, the prop slithers through a corporate landscape of hotel furniture ([Pony Hotel](#), 2018).



Pony Hotel (2018), video still. Courtesy of Virginia Lee Montgomery.

Texas-born, New York-based artist Virginia Lee Montgomery's video practice has recently received great acclaim; her work is accurately described as an exploration of "the economic, ecologic, and emotive uncanny"[1] that characterizes both psychic and daily life under capitalism. Upon first seeing VLM's work in the New Museum's Screens Series, I quickly became captivated by the narratives she conjures. Palimpsestic historical references, found footage, sensuous sound samples, and idiosyncratic visual motifs come together in surprising ways, thus "enabling surreal awakenings."[2] Drawing from materialist philosophy, metaphysics, semiotics, psychology, environmental activism, and personal experience, VLM makes masterfully layered videos. Beyond their initial hypnotizing effect, these pieces left me pleasantly bemused. I revisited her work online, again and again, eventually noticing the cyclical themes underpinning her works; psychic loops, redundancies in history, geological and meteorological patterns, the reproduction of labour, the circulation of symbols and signs, etc. Most striking, I think, is VLM's way of showing how feminist and elemental agencies are affected by —and implicated in — these cycles of hope and oblivion. Most of VLM's videos are set inside hand-built maquettes. She perforates the walls of these fabrications with a Dewalt hole saw, producing holes wide enough to allow parts of her body to interact with objects and substances embedded within. Fingers stretch, stroke, prod, and probe, sometimes wielding power tools or other instruments, while viscous liquids such as tar and pastry frosting drip across various surfaces. Her works bear the same magnetic effect as ASMR youtube clips; uncanny yet appealing.



Water Witching (2018), video still. Courtesy of Virginia Lee Montgomery.

At first glance, the works also remind me of Mika Rottenberg's absurd video installations where female bodies and body parts are compartmentalized according to their function in the production chain. Rottenberg exposes, with perverse humour, the structures that feed off of Sisyphean forms of labor and that embroil women across the globe in complex and rather dubious relations of power.

In *No Nose Knows* (2015), for example, “female workers cultivating pearls on an assembly line [in coastal China] take sustenance of noodles that are sneezed out of the massive nose of their [North American] manager.”[3] Likewise, with works like *Innovation Porthole* (2015), VLM is interested in the ways in which the body —and perhaps even more so, the psyche —experiences daily life within a neoliberal economy that “emotively engineers [its] employees.”[4] The artist drills through the fabric wall of an office cubicle to grab a gooey pastry from a platter that rests on the opposite side. She drills another hole in the back of a protective helmet in order to better accommodate her ponytail, adjusts the gear on her head, and proceeds to navigate her corporate surroundings like an obstacle course. “The activities you see in the video are [...] portrayals of ridiculous hoops that I must jump through, reach through, squeeze through in order to be acceptable”[5], she says. It is important to mention that aside from making art, VLM does graphic facilitation at conferences across the United States. In this particular professional context where women are largely underrepresented, she is required to present herself as a “businesswoman”, an identity that is somewhat at odds with her own —hence the “Business Witch” persona that occasionally makes an appearance in her artistic work.



Innovation Porthole (2015), video still. Courtesy of Virginia Lee Montgomery.

In one of her latest works, VLM’s focus seems to shift away from the corporate realm of cubicles and conference rooms, and towards the natural world. Water Witching (2018) suggests a scenario where the elemental world and feminism, together, take action against patriarchal structures of instrumentalization and domination. Weaving together images of nature and of feminist protests, this work is about “conjuring the strength to weather chaos.”[6] The artist re-contextualizes the ancient pseudoscientific practice of dowsing — a method by which diviners would, with the help of rudimentary instruments, locate underground rivers and buried minerals — to address current climate concerns. VLM’s interest in dowsing is the result of her foray into the history and

philosophy of various elemental materials such as rock, water, and metal, historically activated within theological or medicinal contexts by priestesses and healers. In her video, VLM cuts a wire coat hanger borrowed from a women's march protest sign (a poignant plea for reproductive justice and for the right to access safe abortions) and bends it into two L-shaped divining rods. The artists' manicured hands reappear once again, this time covered in blobs of black and blue dye, and re-enact the ritual so as to summon a stream of moving images depicting exploitative operations that continue to endanger the environment and women's lives/livelihoods. Documentary clips of decaying nature, habitat destruction, and resource extraction cascade at a rapid pace, along with current and historical footage of feminist manifestations, to the sounds of wind chimes, tornadoes, power drills, and field recordings.



Water Witching (2018), video still. Courtesy of Virginia Lee Montgomery.

The manifesto titled *Feminism for the 99%* was recently recommended to me by a friend; this book concisely addresses some issues that are also at play within VLM's work. Like the artist, the three authors advocate for feminism that does not *lean into* the capitalist ideology (by "empowering" select privileged women within corporate positions), but that instead seeks to dismantle it. Furthermore, the authors state that "if today's ecological crisis is directly tied to capitalism, it also reproduces and worsens women's oppression."^[7] Indeed, statistical data has shown that in situations of ecological catastrophe, women with precarious incomes and housing situations often become the sole supporters of their families and communities. Their exposure to poverty, displacement, and violence are also disproportionately exacerbated. Using self-organized women's groups who have struggled for potable water, clean air, and habitat conservation in their communities as case studies, the authors of the manifesto explain that: "In their refusal to separate ecological issues from those of social reproduction, [grassroots] women-led movements represent a powerful anti-corporate and anti-capitalist alternative to 'green capitalist' projects that do

nothing to stop global warming while enriching those who [contribute to its abstraction]. Women's struggles focus on the real world, in which social justice, the well-being of human communities, and the sustainability of nonhuman nature are inextricably bound together." [8] Similarly, through visual meta-structures and a panoply of signs that elegantly slip into one another, *Water Witching* (2018) points to the intimate connection between the exploitation of natural reserves, and that of women's bodies and social reproductive labour[9]— especially as both are seen as infinitely renewable resources. More broadly, the looping video alludes to circular rhythms and to humanity's perpetual indebtedness to nature's processes.



VLM's practice as a whole proves to be rather difficult to pin down and can raise more questions than answers. Yet her work, to me, begs for political action that encompasses ecological issues and shows us that for any iteration of feminism to fulfill its mandate (that of emancipation) it must necessarily align itself with environmentalist and anti-capitalist ethics. Her interests, as varied and wide-ranging as they seem, are embodied in the props, gestures, and visual associations that reappear from one video to the next, producing an overarching narrative in which feminist and ecological concerns are tightly enmeshed in the most whimsical and jarring of ways.

[1] <http://www.shefolk.com/creatorinterviewsrss/2017/8/17/8y115msefksjv3wanv5mqld34xziz>

[2] <https://www.banffcentre.ca/articles/its-okay-be-many-things-once-conversation-virginia-lee-montgomery>

[3] <http://www.leapleapleap.com/2016/02/mika-rottenberg-no-nose-knows/>

[4] <https://www.banffcentre.ca/articles/its-okay-be-many-things-once-conversation-virginia-lee-montgomery>

[5] <https://www.banffcentre.ca/articles/its-okay-be-many-things-once-conversation-virginia-lee-montgomery>

[6] <https://virginialeemontgomery.com/WATER-WITCHING>

[7] *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*, by Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser. Verso Books, 2019. p.47

[8] *Ibid.*, p.48-49

[9] The labour that occurs in the domestic sphere (and is therefore relegated predominantly to women, especially women of colour). This unpaid labour, despite being devalored and taken for granted within capitalist societies, serves to sustain the economic profit of others in the long run. These "people-making" activities, according to Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser, include, among many other things, the raising of children who will one day become compliant adults fit for the workforce, education, and healthcare work.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

ART & EXHIBITS

Artist finds the zen of Hurricane Harvey in Lawndale show

Virginia Lee Montgomery turns an eye toward the psychic side of Hurricane Harvey with her "SKY LOOP" video installation at Lawndale Art Center.

Molly Glentzer | February 6, 2020 Updated: February 9, 2020, 8:23 pm



Virginia Lee Montgomery's video installation "SKY LOOP," inspired by Hurricane Harvey, is on view at Lawndale Art Center through March 29. Photo: Virginia Lee Montgomery / Lawndale Art Center

What do butterflies and dripping honey have to do with Hurricane Harvey? These are among the images that intrigue me as I sink into the cushy seat in Lawndale Art Center's largest gallery to soak up Virginia Lee Montgomery's dreamy, four-screen video installation "SKY LOOP." The seat is actually a sculpture, "Head Stone," made of memory foam squares, which I have not previously considered so metaphorically. A largish river stone in the center creates a dimple: Mattress pile

meets Asian rock garden. “Mom’s Canoe,” an aluminum canoe filled with sand, also helps to ground the show. The installation’s four videos play on four large screens in a way that could make a visitor feel, well, a little loopy. In a good way. Each video is unique but shares a vocabulary of repeated images.

The star of the surreal “Butterfly Birth Bed” video is a miniature Shaker-style bed frame that has cocoons dangling from its rails. A buckeye hatches, and the “eyespot” on its wings echo an image of the eye of a hurricane that appears where a mattress would be. Wendy Vogel’s essay for the show explains that the butterfly effect is a fundamental concept of chaos theory, based on the ideas of meteorology professor Edward Lorenz, who proposed that even small occurrences in nature can have cause-and-effect relationships on a large scale. Montgomery’s choice of an iconic American bed style is a reference to the “proto-feminist subversion” of Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shaker sect. All of this is enlightening, but I am not in the mood to think too hard.

The videos cast a dark blue, watery light through the space along with mostly meditative sounds, including slowly plunking water, tones from water bells and spacey electronic music. The nine-and-a-half minute “Sky Loop” video captures the oddly tranquil sight of a woman rowing a canoe through a forested and flooded neighborhood in a steady rain. A golden substance drips in a slow layer over the landscape. Motor oil? No, this is honey, a substance recognized for its curative powers, Vogel’s essay says. Other scenes show the artist on a high, drifted bank of Buffalo Bayou, running her hands through the sand and close-ups of sand slipping a woman’s hand, as if through an hour glass. The hands belong to three women of different ages – Montgomery, her mother and grandmother. The artist also layers slow-dripping honey over satellite imagery of Hurricane Harvey’s aftermath and the city at night in the seven-minute “Honey Healing Hurricanes.” The signature recurring image, which seems to hold steady in the shortest video, “Sky Eye,” features the artist’s eye as she peeks through a hole she has drilled through a photograph of the eye of the hurricane.

Montgomery, a Houston native who earned her MFA in sculpture from Yale University in 2016, was at home with her mother during the storm, as the neighborhood where she grew up flooded. Circles, spirals, spheres and holes were already recurring symbols in her work, along with her surrealist approach and metaphysical interests. But they gave her a different way to process the trauma.

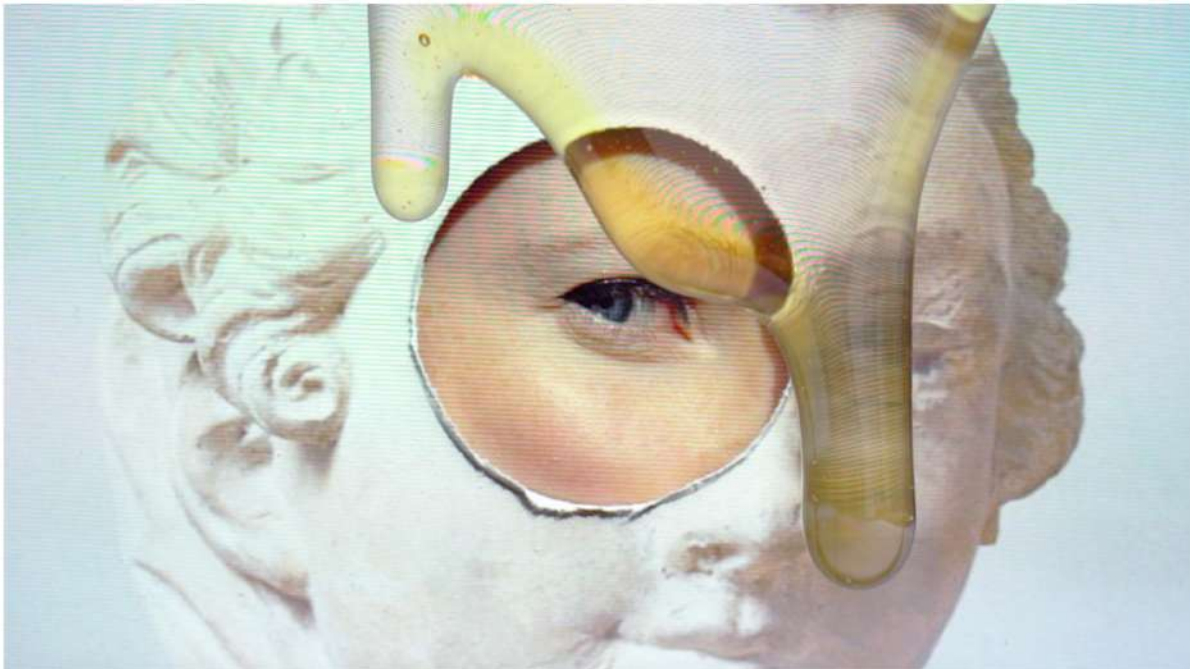
Her installation feels like what Houston needs now, this far on. Harvey changed the city psychically as well as physically, and a show like “SKY LOOP” reminds us that as time flows, it also can heal.

less than halfTHE ART WORLD WE'RE SEEING
IS LESS THAN HALF THE PICTURE

A Chat with the Business Witch

Hall Rockefeller | March 21, 2020

FACE TO FACE WITH VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY



Film still from *CUT COPY SPHINX*, 4k Digital video, 03:30, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

Standing and drawing as well as sleeping and dreaming are all in a day's work for video artist and "mind-map scribe" Virginia Lee Montgomery, or VLM, as she tends to be called. She does both for more hours straight than you thought possible (six and sixteen, respectively), as research for the content of her "radically serene" video work. As a mind-mapper, or graphic recorder, the artist visually synthesizes presentations at conferences, talks, and company meetings into a series of whiteboards—sometimes in front of audiences of hundreds of people—an occupation which has flecked her language with corporatese, though her speech is not without its own vocabulary of philosophy and metaphysics mixed in. She speaks about her art as if she were pitching it—her descriptions are straightforward, comprehensive, and rehearsed—something I appreciated, as it ensured I could follow her explanations. (She does, after all, describe herself as "Business Witch.")

If you take one look at the artwork itself, which she calls “moving image sculptures,” however, it’s immediately clear you’re dealing with no suit. Her videos range in subject from moths shedding cocoons to hotel rooms inhabited by a disembodied blond ponytail (not unlike VLM’s own), all set to an ASMR-like soundtrack of dripping water and distant bell chimes. Other frequent motifs include drizzling honey, whirring drill bits, and the artist’s flawlessly manicured hands. The action unfolds slowly, as if to inspire a trance, or perchance, a dream... Don’t expect a narrative from this work, as it is meant to evoke a feeling. As the artist is “aware that video art is time intensive,” know that you won’t necessarily have to strap yourself in for the long haul if that’s not what you’ve come for. The artist often asks herself, “how can I make a work where if someone only sees ten seconds of it they still have an affect?”



Installation image from *HONEY MOON*, 4k Digital video, at Times Square, New York, NY. Courtesy of the artist.

Much of the answer to that question is connected to the desired outcome of her practice, as she insists hers is “a visual art practice of philosophical metaphysics.” This means she is interested in you, the viewer, interacting with the processes of her mind. (Metaphysics, after all,

is the study of reality—how and why things are; therefore, put simply, VLM’s personal metaphysics are trying to communicate how she experiences reality.) This might feel a bit too jargony for you, but don’t worry. If VLM needed you to have a philosophy degree to understand her work, she would have written “academic papers.” Rather her intention has always been simply to “produc[e] through sight and sound.” And while she does describe her three-minute video of a hand holding a moon dripping with honey, as “a metaphysical moment of negation,” this philosophical language did not deter thousands of passersby (the majority of whom did not study philosophy) from watching it play on the jumbotrons in Times Square, as part of Times Square Arts’ February 2019 “Midnight Moment.”

Like all metaphysics, we don’t have to know Aristotle by heart to simply experience our realities—though life can be the richer for it. What is most intriguing about *Honey Moon* is that it does not

point to Philosophy as its main mover, but rather uses word play to get us to think about philosophical themes. We can engage with the work on a base level, simply smiling at the literal translation of a common phrase, bemused by our multifaceted language. Or we can use this as a point of departure for something deeper, such as an investigation of semiotics. (Oh *no*, not Saussure!)

VLM grew up dyslexic and could not read and write properly until the age of nine. She therefore has an unusual relationship with language, free from the typical marriage of signifier and signified. As a child, words were purely sounds that related to objects, effectively eliminating the middleman of symbol-based signifier from this linguistic equation. Her work does something similar by removing the temptation for a direct translation of the work. Instead it seeks out the “metaphysical baselines” of human life, such as the “desire to feel safe, the desire to be heard” and a “connection to the natural world.” Okay, okay—I can tell I’m losing you again.



Film still from *Pony Cocoon*, 4k Digital video, 05:05, 2019. Courtesy of the artist.

Really the point of all this is to give the viewer agency to feel rather than to be told how to feel, and in many ways, shifting the power to the viewer means taking it away from the artist. As

VLM is a lucid dreamer, she is much more aware of her mind’s functioning than we are and therefore much more aware of how little she is in control. The role of dreaming, as a space where decision making is most distant from the dreamer’s mind, is essential for coming up with her videos’ sequencing. “I’m a spirit inside a system. I don’t really know what’s going on, but I can behold the movement,” VLM says of her dreamworld, where she feels as if she is watching her “subconscious build a puzzle.” It is the pieces of the puzzle that she incorporates into her work. The metaphor of the puzzle is convenient because it seamlessly blends with one of language, as words fit together to form a sentence the way pieces do a puzzle. And while each of these words/puzzle pieces/motifs (like butterflies, ponytails, or drills) don’t *mean* anything per se, they certainly assemble and reassemble in variations to create the feeling that there is meaning there. This is all to say something quite simple. Watch the videos. Feel something. Repeat.

VLM

