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Conceptions of Flight

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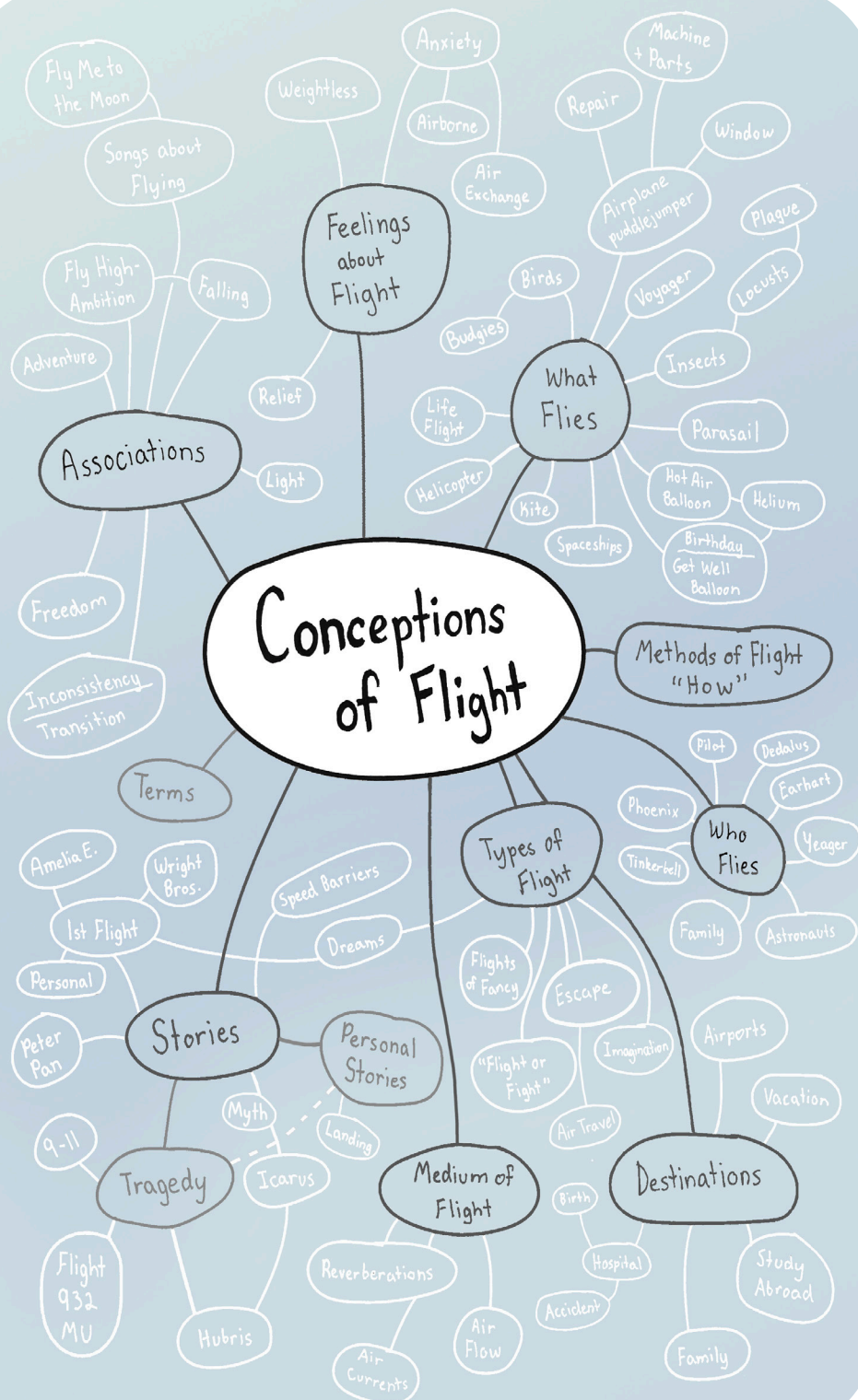


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Thank you to Lynne Edington, who was a dedicated and enthusiastic advocate at each stage of planning. Thank you to our state arts leaders who visited Huntington with the Governor's Arts Caravan in August 2021 to promote the American Rescue Plan grants, you were inspiring! Thank you to the Drinko Academy for creating an environment in which this project could be developed and thrive. Thank you to the School of Art & Design for a Special Project Resource Allocation toward the exhibition event receptions and to Associate Professor Hanna Kozlowski for the loan of pedestals for display of three-dimensional drawings. Thank you to Marshall University and its staff for providing the exhibition venue and printing this publication, which are valuable in-kind resources. Thank you to project collaborators, author Rachael Peckham and designer Savannah Julian, who bring meaning to this project and expand access to it. And finally, of course, thank you to the invited artists for courageous expression in these well-realized works of art.

**Sandra Reed
Professor of Art
Marshall University**

Conceptions of Flight

January 18 - February 18, 2022

Library Gallery
Marshall University Academic Center
South Charleston Campus
100 Angus East Peyton Drive
South Charleston, WV

Reception/Meet the Artists
Thursday, January 20, 6pm-8pm

Literary Event with Rachael Peckham
Thursday, February 3, 6pm-8pm

For questions, contact Sandra Reed at sandra.reed@marshall.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface - Rachael Peckham

1 | NICOLE CAREY

Familiar Skies

3 | HAYLEE REGGI

The Rise After the Fall

5 | BAYLEE GRUESER

Amur Leopard:
Critically Endangered

7 | KAYLEY DILLON

Secular Iconography

7 | ETHAN WILLIS

9 | JACOB WOOD

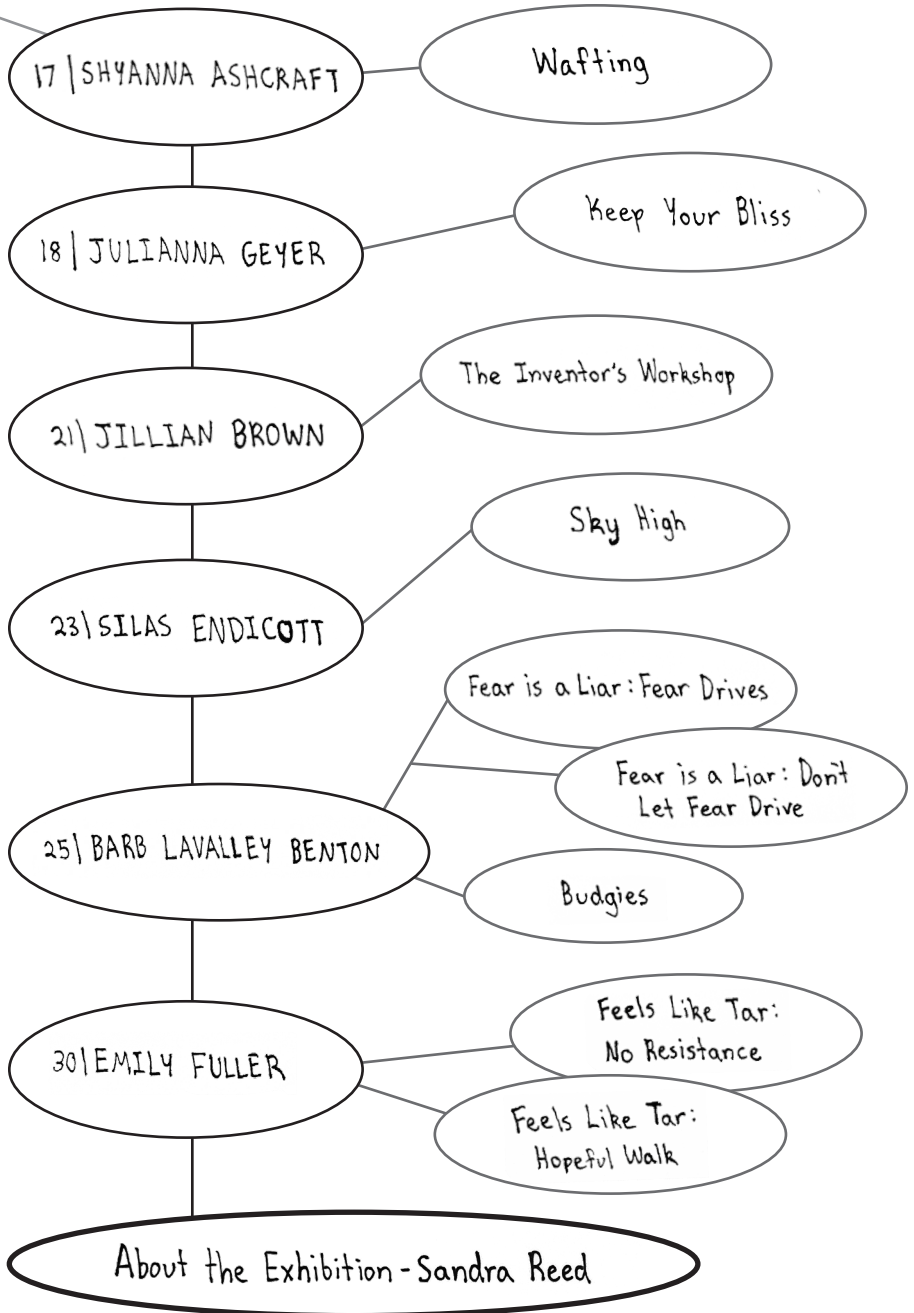
Clipped Wings May
Fly Again

11 | MADELYN HILL

Paper Trails

14 | GRACIE STEPHENS

A Flight of Flights



Preface

We are born from water, but we dream of sky. Our fascination with flight is as old as civilization itself, evidenced by ancient artifacts and myths from every culture. Gods ride on chariots of fire. Kings perch atop winged horses. Boats fly across the ocean. In every period of human history, in every pocket of the earth, we are united by our preoccupation with flight.

The impulse to reach new heights can't be understood without its equally high stakes. The Cold War ushered in more than fear toward whatever might drop from the sky—it launched us toward the moon. Flight is always fraught with danger and desire. As a metaphor, its meaning is multiple and varied, from freedom and escape to fleeing and falling. Naturally, it resists being pinned down and contained.

Likewise, I've been encircling the theme of flight for most of my writing life. It's less an obsession than a haunting that began with my grandfather and uncles' plan to fly instead of drive to a farm machinery show a few states away. This plan manifested in my family's worst nightmare when the pilot, for reasons we'll never know, flew off course and dove 300 knots toward ground.

The horror and grief at losing someone to flight—at their going up and never coming back down—feels distinctive from other loss. To my mother, her dad and brothers didn't die so much as vanish. Years later, I'd hear this same sentiment, uttered verbatim, by surviving family members of those who perished aboard Southern Airways Flight 932, also known as the Marshall plane crash.

The events of that day—November 14, 1970—in Huntington, West Virginia and Marshall's Bill Noe Flight School, recently installed at Yeager Airport in Charleston, West Virginia form a poignant backdrop for *Conceptions of Flight*, which features the artwork of fourteen invited artists displayed in the Library Gallery at Marshall University's Academic Center in South Charleston.

While the tragedy still looms large in Marshall's collective psyche—just as my family's history does in mine—the artwork exhibited here reveals a diverse and individual engagement with the theme. Some of the featured artists interpret flight as a rising up; a moving forward; a breaking free from struggle. Others have captured the thrill and wonder of travel; of the movement of clouds; of building new wings, mythopoetically. Whatever the interpretation, *Conceptions of Flight* provides an arresting look at the ways this age-old preoccupation continues to move the imagination and stretch the limits of our reach.

Dr. Rachael Peckham
Professor of English
Marshall University



Nicole Carey | Charleston, WV

Familiar Skies

17" x 14" | India Ink, Water Based Markers, Paint Pens

2021

Nicole Carey

My initial intention for this piece was to create an accurate representation of plane trails. I shifted that goal in order to fit what was happening on paper, so I ended up creating a more surreal interpretation of clouds.

The setting of this piece is right outside of my house. I chose this setting because it felt fitting for my interpretation of “flight.” I’ve never been in a plane or dreamt of flying, and I don’t have any familial ties to the activity. That being said, I do live pretty close to an airport. Close enough, at least, for the windows in my house to shake when a plane is a little too close when landing or taking off.

I wanted to capture the feeling of looking up past my house and seeing the remnants of the planes that pass by. The transition from old, worn teal to a bright blue and the perspective in this piece were both meant to create a sense of ascension. So, I felt comfortable letting go of my plan to illustrate plane trails. I wanted the focal point of the piece to be in the sky, either way, so I decided to embrace what I had going on. I wanted to create a sense of movement within this piece -- in both the clouds and the house. I included layers of line, hatching, and curving shapes to make the clouds twist and the wood more recognizable as wood.

Recently, I’ve been trying to experiment with different ways of rendering texture. This project was another instance of that. I decided to use a less representational approach with the house. The clouds, however, were even more stylized. I wanted them to seem wispy yet dense. The density was mostly to help anchor them as a focal point.



Haylee Reggi | Hurricane, WV
The Rise After the Fall
48" x 36" | Oil on Canvas
2021

Haylee Reggi

In Greek mythology, the phoenix is believed to be a symbol of perseverance, rising again and again despite their own demise. In my work, I wanted to convey flight as rising up from the depths of depression. I have encountered dark times, during which I have been consumed with feelings of hopelessness and despair. During these dark times I struggle to believe in things getting better.

However, every time I have fallen into these dark places, I have been able to endure the wicked feelings and thoughts I've had towards myself and the world. I've always been able to persevere and somehow talk myself off that ledge each time. It was this perseverance that I wanted to encompass in this piece; this flight of the spirit rising from the depths of despair and having the strength to continue on.



Haylee Reggi | Hurricane, WV
The Rise After the Fall, detail



Baylee Grueser | Racine, OH
Amur Leopard: Critically Endangered, detail
35" x 49" | Mixed Media (Paint Swatches)
2021

Baylee Grueser

For my piece, “flight” is that unwanted shove we all experience in a direction that causes you to either adapt, or disappear.

A quote from Steve Irwin, one of the most well-known conservationists, states: “We don’t own the planet Earth, we belong to it. And we must share it with our wildlife.” We live in an age of innovation, of technological advancements, of growth. Yet we are surrounded by the simplistic items and values of where we once started. Animal conservation is as complex yet simplistic as we wish to make it, and so is art. This was the concept I ran with for my piece. Paint swatches were the only grounds to create the Amur Leopard from. In order to see their complexity, you have to look closely at their fur, the location of their spots, their facial expressions.

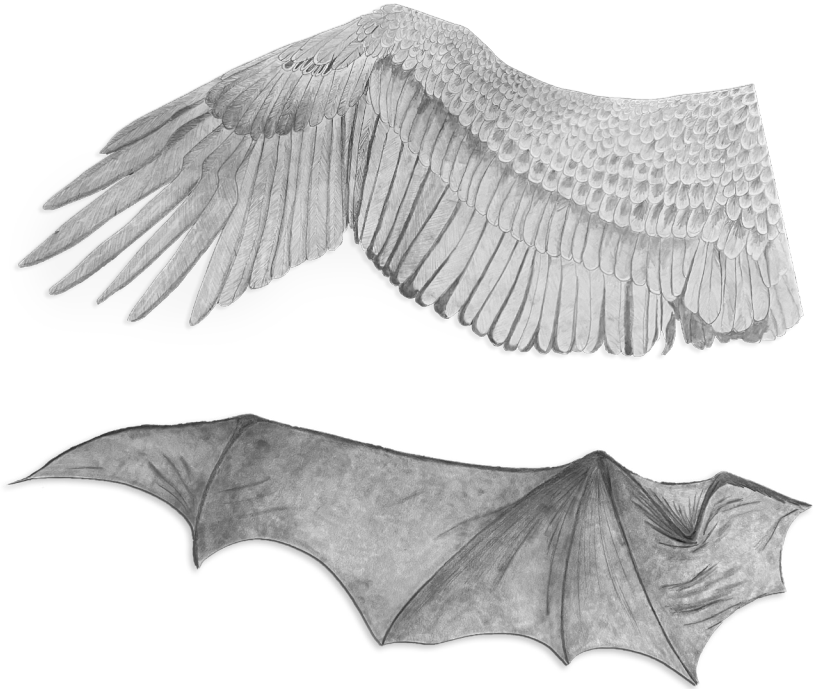
You have to ask yourself “Why am I doing this?”. There is an importance to recognition on the spot. We see these beautiful creatures, such as leopards and tigers, and are amazed by their colors and size, their existence. Yet we rarely ask ourselves if we will continue to see them outside a setting such as a zoo. How many animals have you seen that no longer exist? When you look at my piece, I want you to see the leopard first. Then, I want you to ask yourself these questions as you read deeper into why these animals matter.



Kayley Dillon | Milton, WV
Ethan Willis | Bridgeport, WV
Secular Iconography
App. 72" x 60" | Graphite
2021

Kayley Dillon Ethan Willis

This work is a collaboration between artists Kayley Dillon and Ethan Willis. We both decided that we wanted to work together. When thinking about the concept of flight we both found ourselves drawn towards creatures who have the natural ability to fly and their wings. The creatures whose wings we decided to draw are a bat, eagle, albatross, and a moth. We found them beautiful and wanted to capture their beauty in our drawings. To invoke a sense of awe we decided to make this piece huge, and each wing is spread outwards to show off its wingspan. While each pair of wings is unique they are spliced together and appear to form a mass of wings that reminds us of biblical angels. Truthfully, we had no intention to make this work religious, but we both love how it can be interpreted as some sort of being.





Jacob Wood | Kenova, WV

Clipped Wings May Fly Again

30" x 22" | Mixed Media (Blue Ballpoint Pen/Ink, Styrofoam,
Acrylic, Watercolor)

2021

Jacob Wood

Ballpoint blue ink represents me, and here the blue ink renders me exposed, fragile, and natural to the viewer. Though you cannot see my face, you can still share in this moment of triumph, pain, or regret. I have clipped my own wings in order to save myself. Do not be afraid to close a chapter of your life to start a new one. Do not be afraid to save yourself. Am I proud, or am I broken? Beautiful wings can take you wherever you want to go, but sometimes they fly too close to the sun. Sometimes they have a mind of their own, your brain says one thing, but your heart says another, and your wings are already flapping in the direction of your doom. Sometimes you need to clip your own wings in order to save yourself from yourself.





Madelyn Hill | Chesapeake, OH
Paper Trails, details

Madelyn Hill

When contemplating methods of flight, there are both literal as well as figurative forms of flight. I find the figurative flights to be the ones that most captivate me. Throughout my life, the one method of figurative flight that I can always rely upon is reading. When reading, I am able to be transported to any reality that I wish. Therefore, reading allows me “flight” from my everyday life. Regardless of what is occurring in my own life, I always have books to help me escape.

With this particular piece, I wanted to convey what reading feels like through a tangible form. I included five books in this piece: *Maximum Ride*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little Women*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Throne of Glass*. I chose these books because I read each in a pivotal point in my life; these books allowed me an escape when I needed it. Within each book cover, I created an image that I felt represented the specific book; however, each image is also able to stand independently from the books. This is because books can bring anything to life within their pages. All in all, this piece is meant to represent the “flight” from life that reading has always allowed me.

Gracie Stephens

I wanted to create something that would be both fun and interactive. I gathered up twenty four pieces of different colored cardstock to make my piece as colorful as I could. After giving each piece of cardstock its own watercolor background, I began to sketch. I wanted to draw things that reminded me of flight both literal and metaphorical. I have drawings of things that can actually take flight, to things that give more of a feeling to the word flight. I chose to display my drawings in a grid-form on the wall. This way, you can view all the pieces at once, comparing them from one another.

The copies underneath the main drawings are interactive. Please take as many as you like to make paper airplanes.

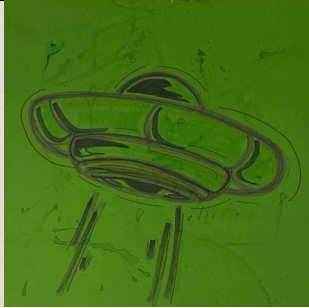
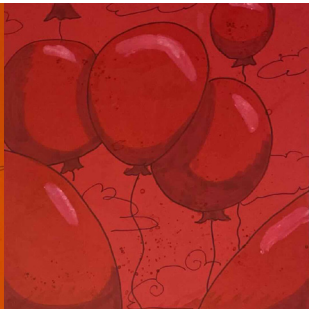


Gracie Stephens | Willow Wood, OH

A Flight of Flights

48" x 72" | Mixed Media (Watercolor, Paint Markers)

2021





Shyanna Ashcraft | Wayne, WV
Waiting
24" x 30" | Oil on Canvas
2021



Julianna Geyer | Charleston, WV
Keep Your Bliss
36" x 48" x 2" | Mixed Media
2021

Shyanna Ashcraft

For my piece, *Wafting*, I wanted to capture an element of the wonder of floating that I experienced as a child taking a ride in a hot air balloon for the first time. This is a memory that I treasure, and often look back on fondly. Seeing things from the basket of the hot air balloon is a wildly different experience to the way I experience things in an average day. Through my representation of the fabric as it is floating through the air, I wanted to create an experience of weightlessness and wonder for the viewers as they explore the painting. The use of the fabric in a painting related to flight was inspired by aerial dance, and the grace and elegance of the fabric and dancers as they float through the air. I wanted to combine this elegance with the joy and simple beauty of the hot air balloons that I have these fond memories of. I take great joy in creating the tiny nuanced details of fabric, and I worked to create a dynamic painting that communicates both this love and the feeling of a slow descent from above. Incorporating both the floating fabric and the hot air balloon offered me a chance to depict two different versions of fabric and what it can be and do. I want this painting to invoke the viewers to feel as though all is suspended within this piece, and as though they too have been transported into a slower space of time while studying the artwork.

Julianna Geyer

The current pandemic we are experiencing warped my perception of what it means to live and my world turned gray. Within the recent months, thanks to the technology of vaccines, I have slowly been able to start to live again. A pivotal switch in my perception was when I got to attend a concert with my sibling. We got to sing and dance with them to our favorite artist for the second time. The exact moment I saw the change in my point of view of flight was when I watched them with child-like wonder in their eyes as they watched confetti fall from the ceiling. I was able to attend four concerts last fall and every time, as soon as the lights drop and the rumble of the bass floods the floor, it feels like I'm flying.



Jillian Brown

It must've been nearly midnight, the candles had all burnt low a while ago, and two of them only trailed up smoke. He leaned in closer to the drawings. Yes, yes...after months of study and planning, He was finally ready to construct his greatest invention yet. It would be dangerous, of that there was no doubt, but it would be worth it when he and his son touched down on ground that wasn't shrouded in darkness and reeked of blood and rot.

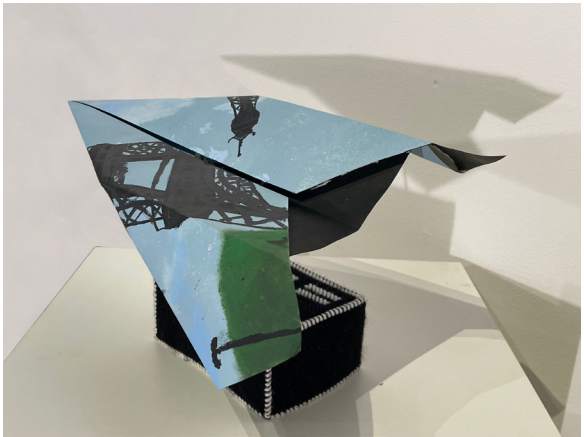
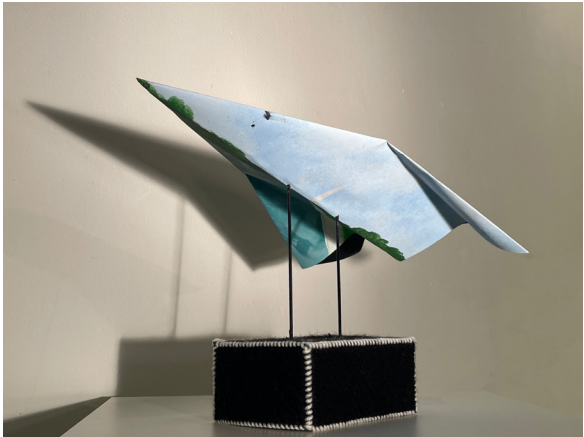
He sighed and took a step back to admire his work.

"Yes", he thought, "come morning, Icarus and I will fly."

The entire work is meant to represent the workshop of the great inventor, Daedalus, as he prepares the wings that will ultimately carry himself and Icarus to freedom. It is the last ditch, desperate attempt of a father to save himself and his son. We as the viewers know Icarus' fate, but there is none of it represented in this work. This piece is about Daedalus and the pride and accomplishment of finally seeing the result of all his studies and labor. The drawings are tacked to the board with push pins nailed in with a hammer. The books and papers on the desk are not tied down in any way, giving the viewer complete freedom to arrange the desk any way they choose, if they wish. This draws the viewer into the scene itself and begs the question of who we are as the viewers. Are we the great inventor himself? Are we the King who imprisoned him, stumbling upon the abandoned place? Are we just some passerby? Or are we Icarus, wandering into his father's workshop and staring bright-eyed at the wings that were supposed to carry him to freedom?



Jillian Brown | Bath County, VA
The Inventor's Workshop
 Installation, Size Variable
 2021



Silas Endicott

The title of this piece is *Sky High*. When I hear the word “flight” the first thing that comes to mind is traveling with my mother and so I created paper planes that appear as though they are ascending on a runway to invoke the feeling of air travel. Each plane has a drawing created using pochoir and acrylic paint that is based off of photos taken on our trips while the runways are made of plastic canvas and yarn. The first and last plane have numbers on the runway much like an actual runway. I wanted the numbers to be symbolic and so “19” represents 2019, which was the year of our first trip and “21” represents the number of our latest trip together in 2021. The first plane is of Stonehenge, the second is the Eiffel Tower, the third is the Washington Monument, and the final is a geode in the Smithsonian Natural History Museum.



Silas Endicott | Wayne, WV

Sky High

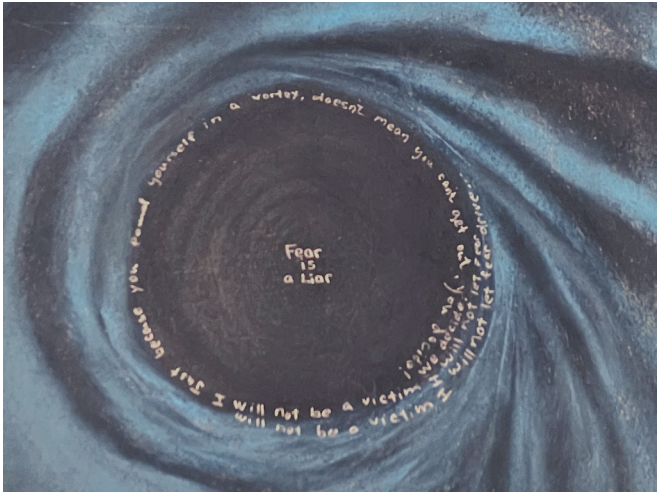
Installation, Dimensions Variable

2021



Barb Lavalley Benton | Kenova, WV | *Fear is a Liar: Fear Drives* (recto) | 30" x 44" | Soft Pastel on Paper | 2021





Barb Lavalley Benton | Kenova, WV
Fear is a Liar, details
2021

Barb Lavalley Benton

There was a time when I didn't know, in any given moment, if I was coming or going. *Fear is a Liar: Fear Drives* was a flight to escape reality. Fear and self-doubt created a vortex of confusion where I couldn't make decisions and I felt I didn't have a home. My foot propped on the front bumper of the jeep emphasizes that moment where I was consumed with panic and introspection, unsure of which way to go. The black hole stretched before me and a manic loop played in my mind of What does it all mean? *My life. Who am I now? How can I fix this?*

I realized I had built my identity around the love of someone else. I learned, fear is a liar. I learned, I had a maniac in my head that also lied to me. I learned, even if I had been broken into pieces that I could put myself back together. It would take time--some pieces were shattered. My biggest lesson was that I had to let those destroyed pieces go and not look back.

Fear is a Liar: Don't let Fear Drive is a second drawing created simultaneously. The fear and anxiety during this experience triggered emotions even while drawing, and I re-traveled many miles in my head. On this second piece, I focused on how I came through that fear and I used that healing. The lighter soft pastels and fluid motion together induced a sense of calm. The dove marks represent flight towards learning what drives and sustains me as a person, and as a spiritual being. Self-love and forgiveness were the first steps. I had to learn these truths before I could let go of regret and forgive others. This process was necessary for moving forward; for learning to hope for things I could not imagine on my own. For letting go, and moving from fear toward a place of peace no matter the circumstance.

29 | Lavalley Benton



Barb Lavalley Benton | Kenova, WV

Budgies

Installation, Dimensions Variable | Glazed Stoneware
2021

Budgies' ability to fly can depend on many factors. The budgie or budgerigar, which is native to Australia, is one species where mutations, genetic testing and selective breeding can have long term effects in their ancestry. One bird mutation, results in the Feather Duster budgie, who looks like "Mr. Fluffy". This abnormality is from a virus, and sadly, makes this bird not able to fly. A genetic result can also be asymmetrical wing size as shown with the bird attempting to take flight. He will not go far because his wings are unbalanced. This can be a result of interbreeding between siblings. This interbreeding can also create birds with too few feathers, shorter feathers, or other disproportionate effects.

Most budgies fly beautifully! They manage to steer free of a mutation that effects their ability to fly, but gain a different genetic, or interbreeding result. This can be a coloration presentation from the normal wild green and yellow, to fluorescent, mutant blue, or a lack of pigmentation altogether to produce white, cinnamon, mauve, olive, violet, speckled and more. This can happen from a single amino acid substitution expressed through the feathers such as in the case of mutant blue. This can even result in a bird that is called a half-sider, which means the color of the bird is divided bilaterally down the center. One last presentation this artwork addresses is how a mutation might be expressed in smaller than normal or larger than normal size budgies.

Note: Budgies was created during Fall 2021 in a ceramics course taught by Visiting Professor Allora McCullough.

Emily Fuller

I've heard some people say things like, creative minds can't break, but that's just not true, sometimes it can feel like it's already broken. These pieces are meant to connect the feeling of depression to that of a bird stuck in a black tar pit, unable to move. When it first starts, it's a hot liquid and it hurts, but as time goes on and the liquid cools, you're left calmer and almost comfortable, but it has hardened and you're stuck. When the sun comes back up and the tar begins to heat up, you start to feel that hot pain again, but you're able to move. You're able to get out again, and while it may hurt and take some time to do so, the sun will keep shining to help you stand up and walk away.

I'm sure many people can relate with struggling with depression and especially the pandemic making it worse. Sometimes it just feels like you're sinking and there's not much you're able to do. Once you feel like you're finally able to get up and start walking away from that, it's important to remember that may always be with you, you may not always be able to wash that tar off. It can stick to you and make it hard for you to fly but in the end we also need to remember that it will be okay. When you're really low it can take a long time to relearn how to be happy sometimes. In the same way that you have to learn how to crawl before you can walk, sometimes you have to take time relearning how to walk before you can fly.



Emily Fuller | Hurricane, WV
Feels Like Tar: No Resistance
9" x 12" | India Ink and Charcoal
2021



Emily Fuller | Hurricane, WV
Feels Like Tar: Hopeful Walk
12" x 9" | India Ink and Charcoal
2021

flight noun (1), often attributive

- 1 a : an act or instance of passing through the air by the use of wings
b : the ability to fly
- 2 a : a passing through the air or through space outside the earth's atmosphere
b : the distance covered in such a flight
c : swift movement
- 3 a : a trip made by or in an airplane or spacecraft
b (1): a scheduled airplane trip
(2): the airplane that is making a trip
- 4 a : a group of similar beings or objects flying through the air together
b : a selection of alcoholic drinks (such as wines, beers, or whiskeys) for tasting as a group
- 5 a : a brilliant, imaginative, or unrestrained exercise or display

flight verb

: to rise, settle, or fly in a flock: the ability to fly

flight noun (2)

: an act or instance of running away

About the Exhibition

Conceptions of Flight is a thematic invitational group exhibition. It is also a co-curricular activity for Marshall students from my Fall 2021 Advanced Drawing course. Participation was optional and subsequent to completion of the Advanced Drawing course. This is the third external group exhibition that I have coordinated for upper-level Marshall students. The reliability, vision, and results achieved by Marshall art students in both prior public exhibition venues gave me confidence to undertake this project, and the fourteen invited artists have validated this trust.

In 2014, Lynne Edington, then Graduate Librarian on Marshall University's South Charleston campus, made an open invitation for students from the School of Art & Design in Huntington, WV to exhibit artwork at the Library Gallery. This invitation is the point of origination for *Conceptions of Flight*. The felicitous juncture of several factors made such an exhibition possible now. These include the one-time American Rescue Plan Project Support for Individual Artists grant from the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture, and History and course releases provided with my appointment as the 2021-2023 Drinko Academy Fellow. In writing what became a successful grant application, I was attentive to this time and place, meaning, in 2020, the solemn acknowledgement of the 50th anniversary of the Marshall plane crash, and in 2021, enrollment of Marshall students in a new aviation degree program. The ARP grant provides a stipend for each exhibiting artist to offset the expenses of framing and transportation and for my own expenses to implement this exhibition and a subsequent solo exhibition. In addition to these standard financial considerations, the ARP grant inspired collaboration with an author and a designer as integral aspects of this exhibition project.

The arts contribute to civic wellness for artists through the benefits of making and for patrons through the benefits of viewing and reflecting. The acts of viewing and pondering a work of art—asking why it was made as it was and what it means—create human connections and opportunities for recognition of shared experiences, which can be rejuvenating for the viewer. Collectively, and in a form that is accessible for you, we hope that the *Conceptions of Flight* exhibition and this zine, as well as the corresponding website, video tour, and audio commentary, heighten your empathy for others and support your courage to engage with the world in all of its complexities.

**Sandra Reed
Professor of Art
Marshall University**



West Virginia Department of
**ARTS, CULTURE
AND HISTORY**

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