UO ART MFA 2026


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each year the terminal creative projects from our mfa candidates elevate and activate discourse and practice in the art department and across the college of design with an ethos of fearless possibility. their creative research of new knowledge, or their revisioning of canonical attitudes, brings with it the sense that new texts have been penned, and new discourses activated.

the 2026 university of oregon mfa terminal exhibition culminates three years of independent research and experimentation by a cohort of four artists whose various practices engage a broad range of inquiry, from expressions of personal memory, conflict, to histories and interpretation of landscape and place, narratives of image making and body, or formal explorations in material, surface, color, and form. each subject is enacted with singular vision and erudite, critical examination.

over the last three years these candidates have navigated the complexities of past, present, and future, while trying to transform their experiences and transcend the moment. in a time of conflict and uncertainty, these artists are establishing themselves as erudite and deeply considerate voices in the field of art, and we are humbled by their creative contributions to the shared endeavour of creative practice.

jovencio de la paz
director of graduate studies

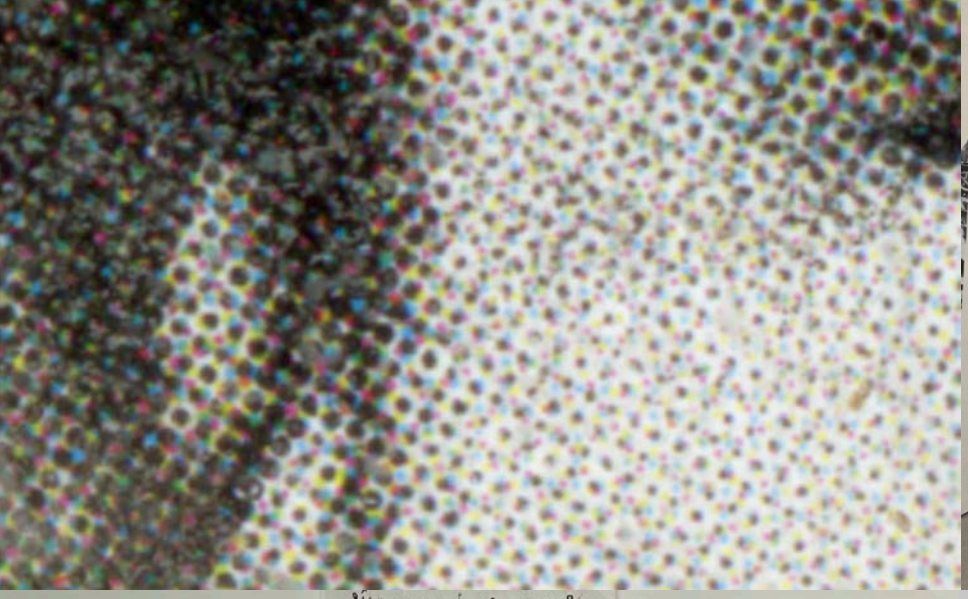


AfSaNEh JavadPour

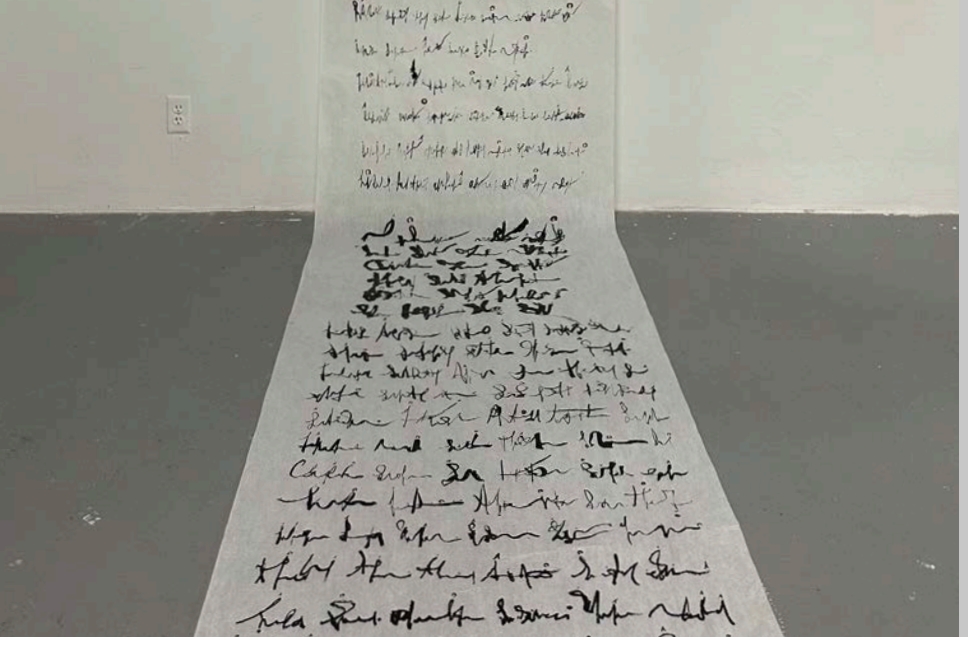
afsaneh javadpour (b. 1989) is an iranian artist, curator, writer and researcher based in the u.s. her interdisciplinary practice explores themes such as war, its victims, history, memory, and the distortion and erasure of truth from the past. drawing from phenomenological theories, she employs installation and multimedia approaches to emphasize embodied perception and physical engagement with space in her work. she holds a bachelor's degree in architecture (2014) and a master's degree in art research from tehran university of art (2023). currently pursuing an mfa at the university of oregon (2024–), her work continues to explore the intersection of war, media, and human experience in displacement and exile through projects that challenge and question the normalization of violence.

afsaneh's work explores the fragility of truth and the complexities of historical narratives. she addresses the accumulation of lost time through destructive processes that reconstruct fragments from erased pasts, revealing fractures and absences within the established historical record. her investigations examine the manipulation, rewriting, and censorship of history, particularly in the contexts of war, media, and collective memory.

with a decade of experience in the iranian contemporary art scene in several solo and group exhibitions, afsaneh continues to work as a curator while contributing specialized articles, interviews, and critiques to leading iranian art magazines and newspapers. she also founded and produced the iranshahr podcast, dedicated to visual arts in iran, where she served as the writer and host, focusing on contemporary iranian art, artists, and theories.









truth in history is never absolute. what we know is built upon narratives that have been rewritten, censored, and distorted or left entirely untold. whatever is erased leaves behind an absence, and it is precisely this absence that exposes the fractures of a hidden truth: one still undiscovered, and perhaps never to be discovered at all.

war is one of the most visible arenas of this exercise of power. just as power determines the course of war, it also constructs the collective memory of it. through erasure, manipulation, and the rewriting of narratives, war is not confined to the battlefield, it flows through the choices made in historiography, through the headlines of the news cycle, through the images that media selects and frames. the media does not depict war as it is; it constructs our very perception of it. and in this process, what remains hidden is precisely what we will never come to know.

in this body of work, destruction is not an act of erasure but an act of revelation—revealing the fragility of truth, a truth that has never been fully within reach. here, destruction becomes a form of creation: a retracing of the voids left behind by official narratives. the documentation of war has always been a kind of failure. every account silences another; every representation conceals a portion of reality. history, passed through layers of censorship and distortion, is no longer a record, it becomes a collection of

absences and fractures. what remains are only fragments of an unfinished narrative: pieces of what was spoken, what was erased, and what we may never be able to know.

these works do not offer answers; rather, they make visible the impossibility of any definitive one. what we know of war is only scattered remnants of an uncertain truth, altered by suppression, erasure, and manipulation, rendering any complete picture permanently out of reach.

the primary material of these works is books: histories of war. books that were meant to serve as documents, as witnesses, as records. yet i take them, excavate them, destroy them, not to annihilate, but to ask: did these books truly record anything, or were they themselves part of the very machinery of erasure? the fragments produced through this excavation are transformed into large-scale photographs, images built from the dust of dead narratives. in this transformation, destruction becomes creation, and absence becomes presence.

destruction here is not merely a method; it reflects history and media themselves, narratives that were meant to reveal the truth, yet remained incomplete, fragmented, and unresolved. what persists in this space is not an answer, nor a consolation but an invitation: to sit with the unknown, to tolerate ambiguity, to accept that a complete truth may never be recovered.





ELRI FRIEDMAN

elri friedman (b. 1993, baltimore) works in an expanded painting practice that moves between painting and wall-based assemblage. rooted in a background in philosophy of biology, friedman approaches abstraction as a site of morphological change, where differentiation and entanglement unfold simultaneously. their years participating in and organizing within seattle's diy trans techno and artist-run scenes continue to shape their understanding of unfamiliar and unrecognizable forms, improvisation, and collectivity.

their work reflects an ongoing investment in how forms recombine and differentiate, and materiality as the carrier of a secret will that insists on self-determining into new configurations.









parted-out paintings, piles of dried acrylic skins, tape, tarps, and other plastics are assembled from the floor onto the wall according to new affinities. i hold onto special accidents and other parts-without-a-place for years before they enter precarious choreography with one another. these parts hold together through difference, and do not assimilate to one another's terms. in the end, the failed pieces insist on their own necessity, becoming the condition for something unforeseeable at the outset.

this work centers the wound, in how it presses onward through cutting and makes mending and mark-making indistinguishable. the collage-paintings are later parsed-out again into new fragments, and with each round of processing, they toggle between stabilization and falling apart. here, instability becomes a means of progression. what emerges is a compositional holding-together that is threadbare, barely there, and still negotiating its coherence before you. the work treats the surface as a threshold rather than a boundary, staging relations that remain in the midst of becoming.

plastic is central to this inquiry. it can become almost anything, often serving as a second-generation substitute for objects once made of other materials—never the real thing, an awkward pretender, disloyal to lineage. its shininess creates visual slippages that loosen material and compositional recognition. working with these materials troubles the boundaries of legibility—and exposes our impulse to form within a fixed regime of recognition. its synthetic nature makes it especially effective for expressing bodies fictively cast outside the category of the "natural." it is a material i can coax into saying what i need, foregrounding the aesthetics of making-do, contingency, and necessary improvisation. and you can't talk about plastic without also talking about how bad it is, and i remain curious about working with that which we are encouraged to condemn.

here, abstraction visibilizes the slippage between what is and what might be or is otherwise. the paintings and collages wander between impulsive play and cosmological speculation. their material modesty and ordinariness brings you closer to presence with things as they are, while their enthusiastic, scrawly, naïve psychedelia of almost-recognizable forms carries you into the next world over, eking out its promise.





MARYAM KESHMIRI

maryam keshmiri is an mfa candidate in studio art at the university of oregon. her sculptural installations explore embodied perception and spatial thresholds through interactive, large-scale environments inspired by natural forms. she investigates how space becomes a lived, temporal experience through movement and bodily engagement.









my artistic practice emerges at the boundary between sculpture, installation, and the relationship between the body, space, and material. in my work, i investigate how perception, translation, and the body interact and how these three forces construct meaning within space. my process begins with encountering the unknown, a place where analytical thinking alone is insufficient. at this stage, space and material become tools for research and reflection, and making becomes a mode of thinking. i am drawn to thresholds between inside and outside, presence and absence, clarity and ambiguity. these in-between states carry uncertainty and occupy a liminal space that continually captures my attention. my works are often project-based and are not simply objects to be viewed; they are environments to enter, touch, and experience. meaning deepens through bodily engagement and sensory encounter; movement, touch, and sound become part of the work's language.

a significant part of my practice relates to the concept of "translation." for me, translation is not merely the transfer of words from one language to another, but an attempt to transform inner experience into external expression or, conversely, to draw external realities into an interior, felt understanding. it is an effort to represent sensations, perceptions, or truths that are unique to each person and never fully translatable. whether shifting between languages or trying to articulate a personal experience to someone else, translation always operates in an in-between state. the process is never final or complete; it exists on the threshold between understanding and not understanding.

through layered materials, composite surfaces, and shifts in scale, i question the stability of what appears solid. perception itself oscillates between clarity and obscurity, and i try to echo this instability within the work.

duality appears in my practice through the combination of natural and synthetic materials installations that simultaneously hold opposing qualities such as fragility and weight, superficiality and depth. the in-between space functions as a living threshold, a boundary that both separates and connects. within this space, perception moves beyond a purely cognitive act and becomes embodied and experiential.





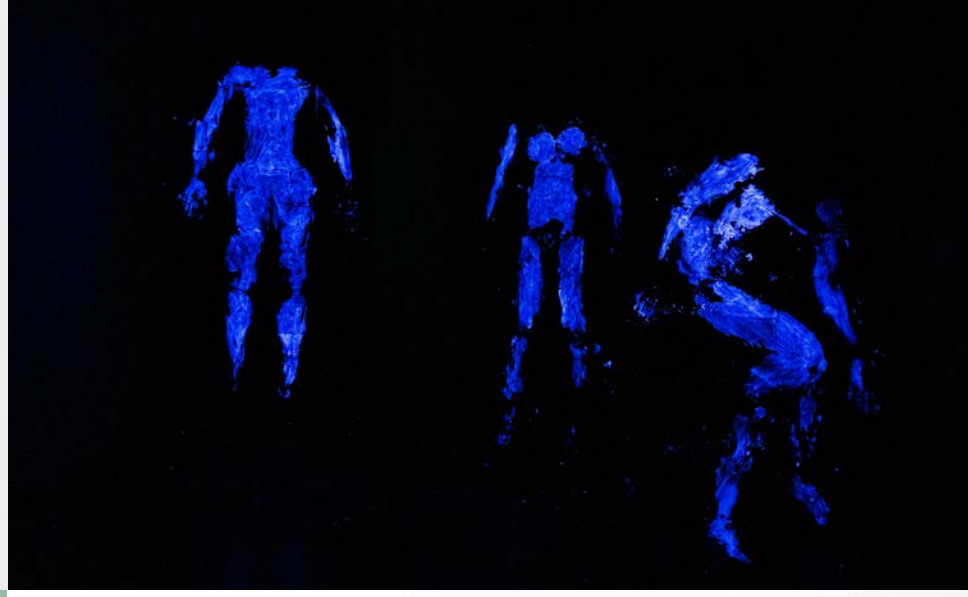
YALda

yalda eskandari is an iranian interdisciplinary artist whose practice centers on photography while expanding into installation and video. she received her b.a. in visual communication from alzahra university in tehran and is currently pursuing her mfa at the university of oregon, where she lives and works. eskandari has presented four solo exhibitions and participated in numerous group exhibitions in iran, austria, ghana, the united kingdom, and the united states. her work has also been featured in multiple international online exhibitions and residencies.

her practice investigates how visual systems construct perceptions of reality, with particular attention to the politics of representation and the body. working across photographic processes, spatial interventions, and moving image, she examines how cultural and historical narratives shape embodied experience and collective memory.

eskandari was a 2024 fellow at mass moca and the avax cultureonavax online residency. she is the recipient of the csws grant (center for the study of women in society), the tiny gallery award (knight library, university of oregon), and an honorable mention in the px3 prix de la photographie paris.









i am an iranian interdisciplinary artist whose practice and research investigate how visual systems construct what we accept as reality, particularly in relation to gendered bodies. growing up in iran, where images, especially images of women, are deeply regulated and politically controlled, i learned early on that images do not simply represent reality; they actively produce it. this understanding precedes my formal academic training and continues to shape both my artistic practice and my commitment to pursuing doctoral research.

photography lies at the conceptual core of my work, not only as a medium, but as a way of thinking. i am drawn to the camera's simple structure: light, aperture, a light-sensitive surface, and the inverted image of the world. this inversion functions for me as a metaphor for how access to reality is always mediated, framed, and reversed by systems of power. while photography claims a privileged relationship to truth, my work interrogates this claim and examines how photographic images naturalize constructed versions of reality.

throughout my research and artistic projects, i follow bodies, particularly those marked as feminine, to examine how visual histories frame them and how social, historical, and political forces shape their perception over time. my practice challenges normative narratives by tracing the visual genealogies behind conventions that are often accepted as natural. i examine how painting, photography, and later media forms accumulate authority, and how these layered systems continue to shape contemporary understandings of gender, identity, and embodiment.

my earlier projects engaged western painting as a foundational site for analyzing the gendered gaze. in a projector naturally sheds light onto a screen (2019), i examined how male artists historically represented female bodies within confined interior spaces, focusing on composition and spatial

limitation as mechanisms of visual control. in the door of no return (2022), my research turned toward displaced bodies, exploring the relationship between contemporary migration, the history of slavery, and the political condition of refugees. these works marked a phase in which historical inquiry and studio practice operated as mutually informing processes.

since relocating to the united states in 2023 to pursue my mfa, i have increasingly placed my own body within the work to question how self-perception is shaped by inherited visual histories. this shift led me to trace fixed notions of femininity across art history, philosophy, and sociology, and to move from painting toward photography's entanglement with representations of both women and nature.

in fragments (2024), i used cyanotype as both material and metaphor. the chemical process allowed me to construct hybrid forms that merge body and landscape, revealing how femininity and nature have historically been conflated. by printing my own body using black-light-sensitive ink, visible only under specific illumination, i introduced visibility itself as a controlled condition, echoing the politics of exposure and concealment. in camouflage (2024), through installation and video, i examined how perspective operates as a disciplinary tool, shaping not only how we see nature, but how the feminine subject is framed and defined.

in my most recent project, obscure (2025), i returned to the origins of image-making by working with a handmade pinhole camera, often described as photography's "purest" form. by manipulating this analog process, i challenge photography's presumed neutrality and expose its ideological foundations. drawing parallels between the historical treatment of landscapes and feminized bodies, both objectified within patriarchal and colonial systems, i position my own body as a connective thread between territory, productivity, and the myth of "mother nature."



university of oregon
department of art
2026 terminal project exhibition

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
COLLEGE OF DESIGN
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DEPARTMENT OF ART

5249 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
EUGENE, OR 97403-5249
OFFICE: LAWRENCE HALL, 254

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afsaneh javadpour

elri friedman

maryam keshmiri

yalda eskandari